

THE POPULAR SCHOOL STORY PAPER FOR ALL BOYS AND GIRLS

The Magnet 2^d

Billy Bunter's
Own Paper



OH, WHAT
A SURPRISE!

An Exciting School Story of HARRY WHARTON & CO., of Greyfriars, and MARJORIE HAZELDENE & CO., of Cliff House.

ON the TRACK of the TRICKSTER!



By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

Harry Wharton & Co. had almost given up hope of running the cad of Highcliffe down, when Ponsonby's bike skidded in a rut in the grassy path!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Spot of Bother for Bunter!

"**H**IS lacrimis vitam damus—" groaned Billy Bunter. "Construe!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

There were grinning faces in the Greyfriars Remove.

In fact, nearly every face in the Form-room was on the grin, excepting Mr. Quelch's, which wore a frown, and Billy Bunter's, which expressed dismal doubt and dismay.

Billy Bunter blinked at his Latin book through his big spectacles with a concentrated blink, as if he hoped, by the sheer force of blinking, to get some sort of a meaning out of it.

But there was nothing doing!

It was probable that Virgil had meant something when he wrote it. But what he might possibly have meant was wrapped in mystery so far as William George Bunter was concerned.

Bunter had been too busy for prep the previous evening. Bunter was often too busy for prep. He had been, in fact, frightfully busy—sitting in the armchair in Study No. 7, chewing toffee.

Fellows were not always put on "con." Lucky men escaped. Billy Bunter always hoped to be the lucky man.

But Quelch's gimlet eye had singled him out that morning. Bunter was put on.

Too late, he wished that he had given a little less attention to toffee and a little more to prep.

"Construe, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, his voice growing deeper.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Yes, sir!"

It was all very well to tell a fellow to construe. But how was a fellow to

translate tripe, of the meaning of which he had hardly the haziest idea?

The fat Owl of the Remove had chanced it once too often. Billy Bunter was rather like the schoolboy in the song:

"Who scamped his prep, and who skewed in con,
Whenever his Form beak put him on."

Bob Cherry, always good-natured, leaned a little towards the hapless fat Owl. He was going to venture on a whisper—rather a dangerous game under Quelch's gimlet eye.

"Cherry!"

The Remove master rapped out the name like a bullet. Bob sat upright again with great suddenness.

"Oh!" he stammered. "Yes, sir!"

"I think you were about to speak to Bunter, Cherry! You consider it a light matter for a member of this Form to be in complete ignorance of a lesson which should have been carefully prepared?" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

That, of course, was a beak's way of looking at it. Bob had only thought of helping a fellow out of a fix.

"Oh! Yes, sir—I—I mean, no, sir!" stammered Bob.

"You will take fifty lines, Cherry!"

After which, no fellow in the Remove was likely to attempt to whisper to Billy Bunter.

"I am waiting, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "If you did not prepare this lesson, Bunter—"

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I was mugging it up like anything yesterday, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I was—was sticking to prep like—like glue, sir! I—I like it!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Harry Wharton.

Truth and Billy Bunter had long been

strangers, but this statement was rather unusually steep, even for Bunter.

"Very well!" said Mr. Quelch, with intensifying grimness. "You may go on, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter would gladly have gone on.

But he couldn't.

Any fellow in the Form could have told him that it meant "To these tears we grant life." Bunter, really, ought to have known that it meant something of the sort.

But he didn't—and that was that!

Even Lord Mauleverer could have told him that much—but not under Quelch's eye!

Billy Bunter blinked round desperately through his big spectacles at grinning faces.

He had to make a shot at it.

It was then that Skinner of the Remove weighed in.

Skinner did not venture to whisper. He did not lean towards Bunter. He did not look at him. But he held up his own Virgil, as if to look more closely at the same, bringing the open book within Bunter's view—Bunter being behind him.

On the margin of the page Skinner had written in pencil. Bunter's despairing blink spotted the pencilled line. His fat face brightened.

In the anxiety of the moment, he forgot that Skinner was a practical joker, and seldom a good-natured one.

Skinner had pencilled a translation to meet his eye; he knew that, and that was enough for Bunter.

It did not occur to him that the playful Skinner had pencilled quite a wrong translation to pull his fat leg.

Instead of writing "To these tears we grant life," the humorous Skinner had

written "To the lackadaisical we give vitamins!"

Mr. Quelch, keen as he was, did not spot Skinner's little game. His gimlet eyes were fixed on Bunter, almost boring into that unhappy youth.

"You are wasting time, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice. "It is obvious that you have not prepared this lesson! Unless you translate immediately, I shall—"

"Oh, yes, sir! It—it's quite easy to me!" gasped Bunter. He thought that it was now. "I—I could do it on my head, sir!"

"Construe!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

And the Owl of the Remove went ahead, with cheery confidence:

"His lacrimis vitam damus: To the lackadaisical we give vitamins."

There was a moment's silence in the Remove room. Then there was a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh scissors!" gurgled Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch stood transfixed. He gazed at Bunter like a man in a dream. He had heard some extraordinary translations from Bunter in his time, but this put the lid on. Bunter had been known to turn "Arma virumque cano" into "The armed man and the dog." But this was richer and rarer than that. This was the absolute limit!

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Silence! Silence! This boy's crass ignorance is not a laughing matter!"

"Isn't it?" murmured Vernon-Smith.

"Bunter!" almost roared Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir!" groaned Bunter.

"Is-isn't that right, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Bunter, stand out before the Form! You have not prepared this lesson! Your ignorance is appalling! Your stupidity is almost unnerving! I shall not punish you for stupidity, Bunter—"

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"But I shall cane you for laziness and carelessness!"

"Oh lor'!"

"Stand out, Bunter! Bend over that form!"

"Oh crikey!"

Whop, whop, whop!

"Yarooooooo!" roared Bunter. "I say—Whoop! Oh crumbs! Wow!"

Bunter wriggled back to his place like a fat eel. The lesson went on, and Billy Bunter sat it out most uncomfortably.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Smithy is Too Suspicious!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars, glanced back over his shoulder and frowned.

The Bounder had walked down to the Sark, and turned along the towpath, down the river in the direction of Friardale.

He walked with an easy saunter, like a fellow going for a stroll, with no particular destination in view. But his backward glance was very keen, and he frowned as he spotted five figures on the towpath, following on at a little distance behind him.

Harry Wharton & Co., like Smithy, were sauntering like fellows who were not in a hurry. If they had observed the Bounder ahead, they had not heeded him; his movements had no interest for the chums of the Remove.

Vernon-Smith walked on with knitted brows. He accelerated a little, and the Famous Five dropped behind. But when he looked round again, it was to behold the five fellows breaking into a

trot, as if to make up for lost ground; and Smithy's brow darkened still more, and his eyes glinted. He came to a halt on the towpath, his glinting eyes fixed on the five.

Even then the chums of the Remove did not observe him, though the Bounder had no doubt that they did.

Their eyes were on a boat on the river.

That boat was at a distance, nearly as far off as Friardale Bridge; but they could see three girlish figures in it. They knew that two of them were Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, and the third, from its circumference, was evidently Bessie Bunter.

Wharton and Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, came along at a trot. The Bounder, under the trees by the towpath, watched them surlily; and as they drew near him, stepped out suddenly into their path.

"Hold on!" he rapped.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Smithy!"

The Famous Five stopped. They had broken into a trot at the sight of the Cliff House boat in the distance, but there was no fearful hurry. As the boat was coming up the stream, they could not miss it.

"Anything up, Smithy?" asked

The Famous Five are convinced that Ponsonby, the cad of Highcliffe, is the cause of Marjorie Hazeldene & Co. giving them the "marble eye." But the Cliff House girls remain unconvinced—until pressure is brought to bear on the culprit!

Harry Wharton, noting the scowl on the Bounder's face.

"Only you've come far enough, and you turn back right here!" answered Vernon-Smith curtly.

At which the Famous Five gazed at him in wonder. Certainly they had not the remotest idea of turning back, at the Bounder's order. But they wondered why he wanted them to do so.

"Mad?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Bought the river?" inquired Frank Nugent.

"How much did you give for it, Smithy?" smiled Bob.

"Do you think I don't know your game?" snarled the Bounder. "You've followed me from the school, because you've guessed where I'm going—"

Harry Wharton's lip curled.

"You silly, cheeky ass!" he said. "We came in the same direction, but that's not following you. I never saw you at all till now."

"And we can guess where you're going, as the Cross Keys is this way!" said Johnny Bull, with a scornful snort.

"But do you think we care two straws whether you go pub-haunting or not?"

"Don't be a fool, Smithy!" advised Nugent.

The Bounder's eyes gleamed at them. He stood directly in the way, with a scowling face and clenched fists. He could hardly have hoped to stop the Famous Five by force, if they chose to keep on. But he looked as if he was thinking of it, all the same.

"Gammon's no good," he sneered. "You put on pace when I did, keeping me in sight—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. He chuckled. "You howling ass, Smithy! You're not the only pebble on the beach! More attractive pebbles than you about, old man!"

"What do you mean, you fool?" snapped the Bounder angrily. "Think I don't know that you fellows have been hunting that Highcliffe chap, Ponsonby, for a week or more. Well, as I happen to be pally with him, you can leave him alone, see?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Does that mean that you're going to meet that Highcliffe blackguard?"

"You didn't know?" sneered Smithy. "That isn't why you followed?"

Harry Wharton laughed contemptuously.

"I suppose I might have guessed, if I'd thought about it, which I didn't," he answered. "I know you're thick with that Highcliffe crew, at present—to last, I suppose, till your next row with them! Well, if we come on Pon, we're going to make an example of the cad, whether you're pally with him or not—and if you barge in, we'll make an example of you, too! But if you used your eyes, instead of your tongue, you might see that there's something rather more agreeable in the offing, than a pair of smoky, dingy pub-haunters."

The Bounder, angry, doubtful, and surprised, glanced round. Then he spotted the boat down the river, with Marjorie and Clara and Bessie Bunter on board.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

"Got it now?" grinned Bob. "We're walking down the river, instead of up, because the Cliff House girls don't come so far up the Sark as Greyfriars, since the row. And we put on a trot when we saw the boat, not because we're fearfully interested in smoky swabs! See?"

The Bounder bit his lip hard.

It dawned on him that he had been a little too wary and suspicious, and that the Famous Five had known nothing, and cared nothing, about his appointment with the black sheep of Highcliffe near the Cross Keys. He had given that information away for nothing.

But now that they knew, there was a change of plan on the part of the Famous Five, and he could read it in their faces.

"Come on, you fellows!" said Harry Wharton. "If that Highcliffe cad is hanging about here, it's the chance we want."

"Thanks for the tip, Smithy!" chortled Bob.

"The thankfulness is terrific, my esteemed smoky Smithy!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin.

"Stand where you are!" The Bounder snapped the words between his teeth. "I'm goin' to meet Pon a bit farther on, as a pal—"

"Precious pal for a Greyfriars man!" granted Johnny Bull. "Ain't you jolly well ashamed to admit it?"

"You're not going to rag him!" snarled the Bounder.

"We're going to rag the cad bald-headed!" said Harry, quietly and deliberately. "We're going to give him the lesson of his life! He started this row with Cliff House by pinching the girls' boat and stranding them on Popper's Island, week before last—"

"Every man in the Remove knows that you did it!" snarled Smithy. "The girls won't speak to you because you did!"

"They think we did!" assented Harry. "That's why we're looking for

a chance to speak to them to get it cleared up! But we know that it was that Highcliffe cad——"

"Rot! You'd like to land it on Pon, because you're set down as a gang of rotten hooligans for what you did! You're not going to touch Pon!"

"We're going to touch him—hard!" said Bob. "Get out of the way, Smithy! Are you waiting to be shifted?"

"You're going back——"

"Don't be an ass! Jump out of the way!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith stood his ground, his fists clenched hard. When the Bounder's savage temper was roused, he was absolutely reckless. Clearly, he was going to dispute the way of the Famous Five.

"Come on!" said Harry curtly.

The five juniors moved on. They knew now—from Smithy—that Pon was hanging about the river bank farther on. They had been looking for such a chance for more than a week, and they were not likely to lose it now.

As Harry Wharton moved on, the Bounder, with a blaze in his eyes, struck at him, and he staggered back from a hefty jolt on the chest. The next moment he hit out, and Vernon-Smith fell in the grass.

He was up again in a flash.

"Come on, you rotter!" he roared. "You other cads can see fair play—unless you want to tackle a man five to one."

"And while we're scrapping, Pon will spot us, and clear off!" said Harry Wharton. "That's not good enough! Bob—Johnny—collar that cheeky fool, and walk him back to Greyfriars! I'll keep on and deal with Pon!"

"Oh, good egg!" chuckled Bob.

"The goodfulness of the egg is terrific."

"You rotters!" yelled Vernon-Smith. "I—I'll——" He struggled furiously as Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull jumped at him, and grabbed him. But either of the two was a match for the Bounder, if not a little more. Together they were quite irresistible.

They grasped his arms, and pinned them.

Vernon-Smith wrenched desperately, but he wrenched in vain. They had him pinned, and they kept him pinned.

"This way, old bean!" said Bob Cherry amicably. "Much better take a walk with nice fellows like us, than go pub-haunting with that Highcliffe cad!"

"Will you let go?" shrieked the Bounder.

"No, we won't!" answered Johnny Bull. "You're coming back to Greyfriars, Smithy. You can get a move on, or I'll give you my boot!"

"May save you from the sack, Smithy!" grinned Frank Nugent. "Suppose a prefect spotted you at the Cross Keys! Greyfriars men are expected to be a bit more decent than Highcliffe cads."

"Let me go!" yelled the Bounder. "I'll shout for help to the first person we pass——"

"That's a tip!" chuckled Bob. "We'll walk through the wood! Lovely scenery in Friardale Wood, Smithy, if you care for it."

Smithy did not look as if he cared for it! He struggled frantically as the two juniors hooked him off the towpath into the bordering wood. They disappeared from sight, the Bounder's enraged voice floating back. Then there was silence as the distance increased.

Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh exchanged

a grin. The Bounder was gone, unable to make further trouble, or to convey a warning to the Highcliffe man.

"That's that!" remarked Harry. "Now we'll trot on and interview Pon!"

And the three, with smiling faces, trotted on—to interview Pon!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Unpleasant for Pon!

CECIL PONSONBY of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School stood leaning against a tree a little distance short of the Cross Keys—an unsavoury establishment which had a gate on the towpath.

The Cross Keys was much farther from Highcliffe than from Greyfriars, and no doubt Pon considered himself safe from observation there, so far as masters or prefects of his own school were concerned.

For the rest of humanity the superb Pon cared nothing.

No doubt that was why he was smoking a cigarette as he stood there, careless of what eyes might fall on him.

His bicycle stood against the tree. He was waiting for the Bounder of Greyfriars to join him, and had been waiting some little time. He was booked for a much longer wait before he saw Smithy, if he had only known it.

Leaning on the tree, he faced the rolling, shining river, and his glance fell on a boat pulling up against the sluggish current.

He grinned at the sight of the Cliff House girls.

Pon was happily aware of the trouble that had been caused between Marjorie & Co. and their Greyfriars friends by the mysterious happening at Popper's Island a couple of weeks ago.

Having planned the whole thing, Pon was extremely satisfied with having got away with it so successfully.

Marjorie & Co. had not the remotest suspicion that it was Pon who had "pinched" their boat and left them stranded on the island.

He knew that the Cliff House girls cut their former friends dead, and so long as that state of affairs lasted there was no chance of an explanation—which might have cleared the matter up.

As the boat pulled by, well out on the river, Pon removed the cigarette from his mouth and raised his hat.

Marjorie Hazeldene acknowledged the salute with the slightest of nods—Clara with an even slighter one—Bessie Bunter with a blink through her big spectacles.

The boat pulled on.

Pon shrugged his shoulders and replaced the cigarette in his mouth. The sound of footsteps on the towpath caught his ear, and he glanced round, expecting to see Smithy, already overdue for his appointment. Instead of which, he saw three of the fellows whom he disliked most of all the two or three hundred at Greyfriars.

He favoured them with a scowl.

Then he grinned again as he saw them come to a halt and raise their hats to the schoolgirls in the boat.

This time not even the slightest of nods acknowledged the salute.

Marjorie and Clara, who were rowing, rowed on without a glance at the trio of juniors on the bank, though they certainly saw them. Their faces were icily expressionless. It was the cut direct.

Only Bessie Bunter took note of them. She turned her big spectacles on them with a disdainful blink, put a fat thumb to her fat little nose, and extended the fat fingers.

Pon chuckled.

Harry Wharton & Co. on the bank, had rather red faces. Bessie's antics did not bother them very much; but icy disdain from Marjorie and Clara did bother them considerably. They stood looking after the boat, as it pulled on, forgetful, for the moment, of Pon.

"Marjorie!" called out Harry Wharton.

"Esteemed and beauteous misses!" appealed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Won't you pull in a minute and let us speak!" called out Nugent.

Marjorie and Clara seemed deaf. From Miss Elizabeth Bunter came a brief reply.

"Yah! Cads!"

The boat swerved farther across the river, obviously to get out of earshot.

Pon grinned with satisfaction.

The three turned away from the river and came on. Harry Wharton's lips were compressed. His eyes glinted at the sight of the Highcliffe fellow leaning on the tree.

"There he is!" he said curtly.

Pon breathed rather hard as he caught the words—which indicated that the Greyfriars fellows were looking for him.

It was rather Pon's way, if he came on a Greyfriars fellow, with force on his side, to indulge in a "rag." But that was not the way of Harry Wharton & Co.; and he had expected them to pass on unregarding. The fact that they never saw Pon's nose without wanting to punch it would not have led them to punch that nose without cause.

Now, however, it was clear that trouble was in the offing.

The three turned from the towpath, facing him and cutting off his escape.

Penned in, Pon decided to be civil—very civil indeed. This was not time for the airy superciliousness with which he delighted to treat common mortals.

So he gave them a polite nod.

"Hallo, you men!" drawled Pon. "Seen anythin' of Smithy? He arranged to pick me up here for a spin!"

"Did he?" said Nugent. "A spin without a bike? Not a lot of room for spinning inside the Cross Keys, is there?"

"I don't quite follow," said Pon blandly. "I haven't seen you men at Highcliffe lately. Courtenay and the Caterpillar are quite missin' you."

"We're not calling on our friends at Highcliffe while we're looking for a Highcliffe man to punch him!" explained Nugent.

"Oh, don't let's rag!" said Pon amicably. "I'm waitin' here for a Greyfriars man——"

"No good waiting," said Harry quietly. "Smithy's been walked back to Greyfriars, with two fellows holding his arms."

Ponsonby gave a start.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "Then I may as well be gettin' off." He made a motion towards his bicycle.

"Don't get on that jigger," said Harry in the same quiet tone.

"And why not?"

"Because I shall knock you off again if you do!" explained the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

"The knockfulness will be terrific, esteemed and execrable Pon!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Ponsonby drew a deep breath.

"Raggin' a fellow three to one, is that it?" he sneered.

"Well, why not?" asked Harry contemptuously. "When you and Monson and Gadsby dropped on Bunter you ragged him. Isn't your own style good enough for you?"

"You set these shining examples, and don't like them to be followed!" grinned Nugent.

"But you needn't be afraid of Highcliffe style," went on Harry Wharton. "It's not good enough for Greyfriars. These two fellows will see fair play, Ponsonby."

Wharton pushed back his cuffs.

A hunted look came into Pon's eyes. Fair play did not seem to be what he wanted.

"I'm not scrapping with you," he said sullenly. "What the dooce is bitin' you? Can't you see a fellow from another school without a row?"

"I'll tell you if you don't know!" answered Harry. "A couple of weeks ago you bagged Bob Cherry's hat from him, and when we saw you later in a

truth for once. It's made all the Remove fellows look on us as a gang of hooligans who ragged a party of schoolgirls."

Pon grinned. He could not help it, alarmed as he was. There was no doubt about the success of his trickery.

"I dare say that amuses you," went on Harry. "But it's not quite good enough for us. You had the boat; so you were the fellow who pinched it from the island—the most cowardly trick you've ever played. They couldn't have seen you, because they fancy we did it—but we know, because we found you with the boat, and you denied ever having had it. Is that clear to you?"

Ponsonby was silent.

He had wondered once or twice whether the Co. would suspect him of having been the boat-pincher. But he

"This is as quiet a spot as we could want. I'm ready, when you are."

"Done!" said Ponsonby coolly. "And after I'm finished with you, you Greyfriars cad, I dare say you'll be sorry you asked for it!"

He stepped away from the tree and pushed back his elegant cuffs.

The Greyfriars juniors moved back to the middle of the towpath, to give room for the scrap. Ponsonby followed them.

Then, with startling suddenness, he whirled round, clutched his bike from the tree and rushed it on.

It crashed into Frank Nugent, sending him spinning. Nugent sprawled on the towpath with a yell, and Pon rushed the bike past him, throwing a leg over it as he went.



"You are wasting time, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice. "Unless you translate immediately I shall—" "Oh, yes, sir! It—it's quite easy to me!" gasped Bunter. He glanced at Skinner's book and read out the pencilled translation thereon: "To the lackadaisical we give vitamins—" Mr. Quelch stood transfixed, while the Remove fairly roared. "Ha, ha, ha!"

boat we bagged the boat from you as tit for tat! We thought it was a Highcliffe boat, as you had it, and tied it up at our school raft for you to send for. It turned out to be a boat that had been pinched from Popper's Island, leaving some schoolgirls of Cliff House stranded there. Got that?"

No answer from Pon.

"For some reason we don't understand the girls thought that we had pinched their boat," went on Harry, "and when it came out that we'd had it, and tied it up at our raft, that looked like proof."

Ponsonby did not speak.

"Your precious pal Smithy came over to Highcliffe to ask you about it, and you denied ever having met us on the river that day!" continued Wharton. "Nobody would have taken your word—you're pretty well known as a liar—but after what the girls had said it looked as if you might be telling the

had not given that much thought—it mattered little enough, as there was no possibility of proof in the matter. The Cliff House girls and the Greyfriars Remove condemned the Famous Five—and what they might or might not suspect did not worry Pon—till now.

"That's how the matter stands," said Harry Wharton. "And now you've got your choice—you can either own up to the Cliff House girls and set the matter right, or you can put up your hands and take the biggest hiding I can give you."

Pon sneered.

"You may be the fellow to get the hiding!" he suggested.

"I'll take my chance of that, of course! Anyhow, you'll get fair play. Which are you going to do?"

Pon laughed.

"Fair play—man to man, and nobody bargin' in?" he asked.

The fairness will be terrific."

"You can rely on that," said Harry.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jainset Ram Singh jumped at him at the same moment and barely missed.

The bike rocked, but Pon's feet found the pedals and he shot away up the river, going all out.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Cliff House to the Rescue!

"AFTER him!" roared Wharton. He leaped in pursuit of the bike.

The captain of the Remove could have kicked himself for having been taken in so easily.

Pon had not had the slightest intention of putting his hands up, if he could help it. He had simply thrown the Greyfriars fellows off their guard for a moment to make an attempt to escape.

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On foot, he would have had no chance; on the bike he had everything his way, if he once got clear.

He jammed his feet on the pedals and drove hard at them. Behind him Harry Wharton came speeding. After Wharton came the nabob. Frank Nugent, bruised and breathless, picked himself up and followed more slowly.

Harry Wharton, his teeth set, was going all out in pursuit. His feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground as he ran. Even the fleet-footed nabob could not keep up.

On a road, Pon would simply have walked away; machinery would beat muscle every time. But the towpath by the Sark was not like a road; it was rough and bumpy, and not easy going for a bike. Hard as the Highcliffe man drove at the pedals, he could not get full speed out of the machine on bumpy grass. Wharton had at least a chance of running him down. Moreover, people might come along the river bank at any moment and get in the way. The captain of the Remove ran his hardest. He was not going to let Pon escape if he could help it.

Neither Ponsonby nor Wharton noticed that from the boat on the Sark, three pairs of eyes were turned on the exciting chase. They had forgotten the Cliff House boat.

The fellow on the bike pulled ahead—farther and farther. Bumping and jolting, Ponsonby put every ounce of beef into it. But, as it proved, it was a case of more haste and less speed.

Harry Wharton, with all his efforts, was falling behind, and had almost given up hope of running the Highcliffe man down when the front wheel of the bike skidded in a rut in the grassy path.

The machine rocked over, and

Ponsonby landed in the grass, the bike clanging beside him.

He was up in a twinkling, panting hard, dragging the machine upright again, throwing a leg over it.

But it did not run. The crash had bent a pedal, and it jammed. Ponsonby had lost his mount!

He cast a savage look back at the set face some distance behind, and saw Wharton coming on. He pitched the bike against the trees by the towpath and ran on, on foot. The abandoned jigger had to take its chance. Pon left it, without another thought; his thoughts were concentrated on getting clear. He had a good start in the race, at all events.

But Wharton was gaining now, fast.

Casting another glance back, Ponsonby saw that the Greyfriars junior had reduced the distance between them by half.

He panted on desperately, his eyes seeking, like those of a hunted animal, for a way of escape. He thought of dodging into the wood, but there was little chance of getting away among the trees, with his pursuer so close behind. On the other side was the river. Pon's eyes fell on the boat. The schoolgirls had pulled a considerable distance, but he had overtaken the boat now, and was almost level with it.

He waved his hand, and shouted huskily.

He saw that Marjorie and Clara were resting on their oars, looking towards him, and Bessie Bunter was blinking at him through her big spectacles.

It was Pon's only chance of escape now—if they would give him a lift.

The fact that only a couple of weeks ago he had played a cruel and cowardly trick on those very schoolgirls made no difference to Pon. If they would help

him out of this, that was all that mattered.

His eyes were on the boat as he ran and waved. He saw Clara speak to Marjorie, who looked doubtful, but nodded.

The boat swerved in towards the bank.

Pon panted with relief.

He was still well ahead; there was time if they pulled in for him. What they would think of his flight did not worry him, at the moment. Anyhow, there were three fellows in pursuit, which looked as if he was fleeing from odds, though it was not actually the case. But what they thought was a trifling matter, if only they gave him a helping hand.

Clara waved a hand, as a signal that they understood, and were coming. Then she pulled hard.

The boat glided swiftly to the bank.

Ponsonby, breathless, almost exhausted, came to a stop on the margin of the river. He was breathing in gurgling gasps, almost in sobs, with hardly a run left in him. His cigarettes were taking their revenge now. Wind was short, when he needed every ounce of it.

Harry Wharton came swiftly on.

Pon looked round at him, with hate in his eyes. It was a matter of moments now. It was useless to keep on; he would have been run down in a very brief space. All his hopes centred in the Cliff House boat.

It surged to the bank, but had not reached it when Harry Wharton came speeding up.

Another moment, and his grasp would have been on the Highcliffe fellow.

Pon made a desperate spring.

He left the grassy bank, cleared the intervening space of water, and landed in the boat, sending it rocking wildly farther out into the stream.

"Oh!" gasped Clara, as a splash came over the gunwale.

"Oooooogh!" spluttered Bessie Bunter.

Pon stumbled, nearly pitched out. But he regained his balance, and fell, rather than sat, in the stern seat, beside Bessie.

Harry Wharton stood on the bank, staring at the boat.

Marjorie carefully did not look at him. But Clara did, with cool mockery.

"He, he, he!" came from Bessie Bunter.

"You rotten funk!" roared Wharton.

"The funkfulness is terrific!" panted the Nabob of Bhanipur, coming up breathlessly. "Esteemed and beauteous misses, please to put that execrable and disgusting funk shorefully."

"Rats!" retorted Clara.

"Yah!" giggled Bessie Bunter.

Marjorie did not speak or look. Her face was icily expressionless. She pulled at her oar.

"Marjorie!" called out Harry. "Listen to me! It was that cad who bagged your boat from the island a fortnight ago—"

"Liar!" called back Ponsonby.

"Oh, you cad, if I could get at you!" panted Wharton.

Ponsonby looked back at him coolly. He had recovered his coolness, with the boat fifteen feet out from the bank.

"You'll get at me easily enough when I come on you alone!" he answered. "I can't handle three fellows at once."

That remark was made chiefly for the benefit of the Cliff House girls. Now that he was safe, even Pon preferred not to be regarded as a funk, if it could be helped.

"You rotter!" roared Wharton.

BUNTER OF BUNTER COURT

"Hallo, you fellows!
Here's a Book-Length Yarn
about me you're sure to
like!"...

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"Come ashore and pick which man you like!"

"Can't trust you," said Ponsonby. "You can hardly expect me to trust a fellow who's mean enough, and rotten enough, to pinch a boat and leave a party of girls stranded!"

Harry Wharton clenched his hands helplessly as he heard that.

"Marjorie, I tell you it was that cad—" he panted.

"Miss Hazeldene is not likely to believe a rotten lie like that!" said Ponsonby cheerfully. "When I heard of what you'd done, I made up my mind to thrash you for it, Harry Wharton, and you've got it coming the first time I meet you without your pals to back you up!"

"Oh! You—you—" gasped Harry. The boat pulled out farther into the river.

Bessie Bunter put a fat thumb to her nose and extended fat fingers, which appeared to be her favourite method of expressing scorn.

Harry Wharton was left panting for breath and red with wrath.

Frank Nugent came up and joined his chums.

Far across the river the boat was pulling up the Sark.

Ponsonby smiled back at the exasperated Greyfriars fellows.

"Well, he's gone!" gasped Nugent. "The gonefulness is terrific."

"And they've helped him get away!" breathed Wharton. "The very fellow who played that rotten trick on them, if they only knew it!"

With bitter feelings, he turned from the river. Ponsonby was not likely to risk coming near Greyfriars again, now that he knew what to expect. The Cliff House feud was still going strong; and the plotting rascal who was the cause of the trouble was out of reach—and certain, after this, to keep out of reach.

The chum of the Remove walked back to Greyfriars in an intensely exasperated frame of mind.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter on the War-path!

"**B**OB, old chap—"

"Seat!"

"Johnny, old fellow—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"I say, you fellows—" urged Billy Bunter.

"Hook it!"

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull were in the quad, after walking back to the school with Smithy.

Heedless of the Bounder's deadly fury, they had walked him back to Greyfriars, and not relinquished him till they were in the quad.

After that, he was left to his own devices as it was, of course, far too late for him to think of keeping that appointment with Ponsonby. The Bounder's strenuous objections, en route, had made the walk rather a long and a slow one.

Smithy's first impulse, on being released, had been to pitch into the two fellows who had walked him home. But he restrained his fury, and went savagely into the House. Bob and Johnny were thinking of going back to the river, to see how their comrades had got on, when Billy Bunter rolled up.

The fat Owl blinked at them seriously through his big spectacles.

"I wish you'd listen to a chap, instead of jawing," he said peevishly. "I say,

Bob, Quelch gave you fifty lines this morning in class."

"Your fault!" grunted Bob. "Shut up!"

"Wouldn't you like to pay him out?"

"No, ass!"

"Well, I jolly well would!" declared Bunter. "And there's a jolly good chance now. Mind, I'm not thinking of paying him out for whopping me. I'd forgotten all about that. But giving you fifty lines, old chap—"

"Park it!"

"Look at him now!" said Bunter. He pointed with a fat thumb.

The juniors looked.

Mr. Quelch was seated in a deck-chair, under his open study window. He had a pile of Latin papers on his knee, which he was correcting—enjoying at the same time the balmy breezes of summer. His attention was concentrated on his occupation.

"See?" grinned Bunter. "You don't often get a chance like that, Bob, old chap! He's sitting right under his study window—"

"What about it, ass?"

"Well, suppose a fellow got into his study," breathed Bunter. "The window's open, and he's got his back to it. A fellow could get into his study easy enough—see? What about slinging an inkpot at the back of his neck?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Safe as houses, what?" grinned Bunter. "Pay him out for whopping a chap—I mean, for giving a chap fifty lines! You're a bit of a chunsy ass, Cherry, but you could do it all right."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

Bob liked "lines" no more than any other Remove fellow. But assuredly he had never thought of retaliating for lines, by slinging an inkpot at the back of his Form-master's neck! Brilliant ideas like that only occurred to the podgy brain of William George Bunter.

"Easy as winking, what?" said Bunter. "You'll do it! You've got lots of pluck, old chap! You're not afraid to rag a beak!"

"Heaps and heaps," grinned Bob.

"But I'm not slinging any inkpots at Quelch, you potty porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, I've asked Toddy, and he turned it down—and Bolsover funks it, too! You've got pluck—"

"Fathead!"

"I say, Bull, old chap, you've got more pluck than that funky beast, Cherry! You get into Quelch's study, and—"

"Idiot!"

"Well, what a rotten pair of funks!" said Bunter, in disgust. "Here I take the trouble of thinking out a perfectly safe scheme for getting even with Quelch, and you funk it! Too jolly funky to do anything but rag school-girls!" added Bunter, with withering scorn.

"What?" roared Bob.

"Yah! Who pinched the boat, and stranded them on the island?" jeered Bunter. "Rotten set of—yoo-hoo-hooooooooooooop!"

Two pairs of hands grasped Billy Bunter, at the same moment, and swept him off his feet. He landed on the earth with a bump, and roared.

"Got any more to say?" bawled Johnny Bull ferociously.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Anything else?" grinned Bob.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Leaving the fat Owl roaring, the two juniors walked away, to meet their friends by the river.

Billy Bunter picked himself up, gasping for breath.

"Beasts!" he gurgled.

He turned his spectacles again on the figure of Mr. Quelch, busy with Latin papers, under the study window.

It was, Bunter considered, a glorious opportunity.

Quelch had been sitting there an hour—during which time, Billy Bunter had had this bright idea in his fat mind—an idea which, bright as it was, had found no takers. Peter Todd and Bolsover major had turned it down—so had Russell and Ogilvy—so had Skinner. Now Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull had done the same. Bright ideas seemed at a discount in the Remove.

It was really rotten. Quelch was getting to the end of those Latin papers, and he would not sit there for ever. If he went in, the opportunity was lost.

Billy Bunter, still feeling a few twinges from Quelch's cane, felt that that opportunity was too good to be lost—much too good!

But it was growing clear to Bunter, that if any Remove man was going to sling an inkpot at the back of Mr. Quelch's neck, from his study window, the name of that fellow had to be W. G. Bunter.

As Bunter had explained to fellow after fellow how perfectly safe it was, there really seemed no reason to hesitate.

But Bunter did hesitate!

He hesitated long!

Yet really it was safe as houses! Quelch, getting that inkpot in the back of his neck, would, no doubt, lose no time in looking for the slinger thereof. But the fellow in the study could nip out, before he was fairly out of his chair—long before he could get into the House.

It seemed so absolutely safe, that the fat Owl made up his mind at last. If a fellow was spotted, it meant a Head's flogging. But as Bunter was not going to be spotted, that was all right.

He rolled into the House at last. Masters' Studies, generally a dangerous spot, now seemed quite clear. He had seen Prout, Capper, and Wiggins in a group in the quad. Mr. Lascelles was on Big Side with some Sixth Form cricketers. Monsieur Charpentier was ambling under the elms. Mr. Hacker had gone out. Not one of the beaks was in his study. The coast was absolutely clear.

Only the absence of danger was required, to make Billy Bunter as bold as a lion. Danger was absent now.

Bold as a lion, he rolled down Masters' Passage, and whipped into Quelch's study, closing the door softly behind him.

His fat heart beat a little unpleasantly when he found himself there, however. If Quelch happened to shift, and come in—

Cautiously, Billy Bunter crept to the study window. He was going to make absolutely sure that Quelch was still there. It would be just like the beast, to get up and walk into the House at the most awkward moment for the fat junior who had felonious designs on the back of his neck!

If Quelch was gone, Bunter was going to be gone, also!

He approached the window very cautiously. It was a large window, and wide open, and as it was on the ground floor, it could be seen into from the quad, by any fellow tall enough to look over the high sill. Bunter did not want to catch the eye of a master, or a Sixth Form prefect, who might happen to glance in that direction.

There were heavy curtains at the

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window—hangings that extended to the floor. They were pulled back, on either side, leaving the window completely clear. Billy Bunter screened himself behind the bunched curtain, on the left of the window, and peered out.

Below, a deck-chair met his view—empty!

Bunter blinked at it.

That bright idea had simmered in his brain too long! He had left it too late! Quelch was no longer there!

It was, perhaps, just as well for Bunter!

Ink-slinging at the back of a beak's neck was a fearfully perilous amusement!

Bunter gave the empty chair one blink of concentrated fury, and turned from the window. His proceedings, since he had entered the House, had occupied five or six minutes. Quelch, if he was coming in, might arrive any moment, and if he found Bunter in his study, the fat Owl's presence there was a little difficult to explain. Prompt retreat from that dangerous spot was indicated.

Bunter made one step—only one. As he made it, he heard a footfall in the passage.

He stopped dead!

Not only the ink-slinging act, but retreat, too, had been left too late. For a thrilling second Bunter stood transfixed with terror. If it was Quelch coming—

The next second Bunter had backed behind the bunched curtains at the side of the window. Palpitating in cover, he listened, hoping that the footstep would pass on, instead of which it stopped.

The door handle turned.

Bunter suppressed a gasp of dread. He had one comfort—the heavy hangings bunched round him completely hid him from sight. If the beast did not stay in the study, there was a chance yet.

He listened. If the beast had only come in for something, and was going out again, he wouldn't shut the door. If he did—

Bunter heard the door shut. The hapless Owl of the Remove could have groaned aloud in his dismay. But, very carefully, indeed, he didn't.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

High Words in Study No. 4.

THE cheeky cads!" said Herbert Vernon-Smith, between his teeth.

He was tramping to and fro in Study No. 4 in the Remove.

Tom Redwing, his study-mate, was putting away the tea-things. It had been a far from happy tea in Study No. 4.

The Bounder was in his most savage temper.

In that temper he was liable to quarrel with friend as well as foe, and Tom Redwing answered little or nothing his continual angry outbursts.

"The cheeky cads!" said Smithy, "Barging in between a man and his friends! By gum, I'll make them squirm for it! The fellows are beginning to forget that rotten trick they played on the Cliff House girls. I'll jolly well see that it isn't forgotten! I'll rub it in hard! The rotters—the cheeky cads!"

He turned his glinting eyes on Redwing.

"You don't agree?" he snarled.

Redwing smiled faintly.

"Leave it at that," he said. "You're not going to row with me, Smithy. If you've got a row on with five fellows in the Remove, you've got enough trouble on hand, without rowing with your pals."

"Think I can't see what's in your mind?" growled the Bounder. "You're not blaming them for barging in, and preventin' me from meetin' Pon."

Redwing did not answer.

"Afraid to speak?" snarled Smithy.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" said Redwing sharply. "I dare say you know what I think. I'll tell you, if you're keen to hear. You're a fool and a rotter to have anything to do with that Highcliffe cad! It was a bit high-handed, perhaps, to walk you off, but it was a jolly good thing for you. And you can't blame them for wanting to snaffle that cur, when they believe that he did what they're accused of doing themselves."

Now that Redwing was driven to speak, he spoke in plain English. The Bounder glared at him in savage anger.

"You know as well as I do that that gang played that cowardly trick the week before last!" he roared.

"I don't," answered Redwing coolly.

Mauly believes they didn't, too."

"Mauly's a fool, and you're another!" snarled Vernon-Smith. "The girls might have been stranded for the night if Coker hadn't happened along in a boat, and taken them off. They told Coker that Bob Cherry had pinched their boat. Do you think they were telling lies?"

"I think they made a mistake."

"There was no room for a mistake. They knew, or they didn't know. Hazel would have scrapped with them for playing his sister such a rotten trick, if he'd been able to stand up to them, and if he had the pluck of a bunny rabbit. If Marjorie was my sister, I'd have smashed them!"

"They'd deserve it, if they did it; but I don't believe they did."

"You know they did. They had the boat, and had the cheek to tie it up at the raft here. Isn't that proof, besides what the girls said?"

"They've explained that they took that boat from Ponsonby—"

"Pon's told me that he wasn't on the river at all that day."

Redwing shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"I wouldn't take Ponsonby's word at any price? You wouldn't, either, only you choose to!" he snapped.

"Not if the girls hadn't backed it up by what they said. Marjorie Hazeldene's word is good enough for me, if not for you."

"There was a mistake, somehow—"

"There wasn't, and you know it."

Redwing gave the Bounder a look, and crossed to the door.

"Leave it at that," he said quietly.

"I don't want to knock you across the study, Smithy! I'll get out!"

"Look here—"

Unheeding, Redwing left the study, and went down the Remove passage.

The Bounder scowled after him. Left alone, he tramped moodily about the study for some minutes.

He looked at the clock. It was now after six, and he had no doubt that Ponsonby had returned to Highcliffe by that time, whether the Greyfriars fellows had handled him or not.

Smithy was anxious to get word with Pon. He had intended to fix up arrangements for the next half-holiday with the black sheep of Highcliffe. Not only had the jaunt to the Cross Keys been washed out, but nothing had

been arranged for Saturday, as he had not seen Pon. And if Pon had been thrashed, as seemed probable, it was quite likely that he would have his back up, and refuse to fix up anything at all.

Smithy gritted his teeth with rage at the bare idea of his affairs being knocked on the head by the high-handed interference of Harry Wharton & Co.

If Pon was back at Highcliffe, however, it was easy to get word with him. At Ponsonby's end the telephone was available. Mr. Mobbs, his Form-master, allowed his dear Pon to use the phone at his own sweet will, and was always satisfied with the reasons Pon gave.

At the Greyfriars end it was not so easy, but there was not much difficulty to a fellow like the Bounder.

A Greyfriars man was allowed to use the telephone if he asked leave, and gave a good reason. Otherwise, he had to borrow one when the owner was not on the spot.

Smithy, certainly, could not give his reason to any beak—his reason being that he wanted to fix up a visit to the races with another young rascal at another school. That was not exactly a reason that could be given to a Form-master.

But he had borrowed a phone often enough, and was ready to do so again.

He left the study at last, and went down to Masters' Passage. He took an unfinished Latin exercise in his hand.

That was to be his ready excuse, if he was caught in his Form-master's study. But he was very careful not to risk being caught, if he could help it.

He stopped at the tall window in the passage, and looked out into the sunny quad. He had a view of Mr. Quelch, with a sheaf of papers in his hand, walking towards a group of masters who stood by the old elms—Prout and Capper and Wiggins.

The Remove master joined the group, and the four stood in conversation.

Like Bunter a few minutes earlier, the Bounder realised that the coast was unusually clear. It was the chance he wanted.

He cut swiftly down the passage to Mr. Quelch's study, opened the door, and went in.

The study was vacant—or, at least, seemed so. There was a faint rustle of the bunched curtain at the side of the open window, which Smithy, if he noticed it at all, attributed to the summer breeze from the quad.

He closed the door.

Little did he dream what dismay that action caused to a fat heart palpitating behind the curtain at the window.

Bunter, seeing the deck chair under the window empty, had no doubt that the person who had entered the study was Mr. Quelch.

The short-sighted Owl had not spotted the Remove master standing with the other beaks at a distance, under the shady branches of the elms. It was quite a natural misapprehension on the fat Owl's part for nobody, of course, had a right to enter Mr. Quelch's study in his absence. It did not occur to Bunter at the moment that the newcomer had no more right there than he had himself.

Quite unaware of the fat Owl's proximity, Vernon-Smith crossed quickly to the telephone, lifted the receiver, and gave a number.

His voice reached the fat junior behind the curtain hardly four feet

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As Wharton reached out to grasp Ponsonby, the cad of Highcliffe leaped from the grassy bank and landed in the Cliff House girls' boat, sending it rocking out into the stream. "Oh!" gasped Clara Trevlyn, as water splashed over her. "Ooogh!" spluttered Bessie Bunter.

away; but the heavy hangings muffled the tones, and Bunter did not immediately recognise it.

It only struck him that it did not sound like Quelch's sharp bark.

A few moments, and Mr. Mobbs' rusty voice came through from Highcliffe School.

"May I speak to Master Ponsonby, sir?" asked Vernon-Smith, making his voice as deep as he could.

"Who is speaking?"

"From Parkins', sir, about Master Ponsonby's new hat," answered Vernon-Smith glibly. Parkins was the hatter in Courtfield, who was honoured by the custom of the dandy of Highcliffe.

"Very well; I will send for Ponsonby! Please hold the line!"

Vernon-Smith grinned and held the line!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

In Hiding—and Out!

BILLY BUNTER grinned, too, behind the curtain.

He knew now that it was not Quelch in the study.

Quelch certainly would not have asked to speak to Master Ponsonby; still less would he have stated that he was speaking from the Courtfield hatter's.

"Smithy!" breathed Bunter.

The fat Owl was rather inclined to step out from behind the curtain and make Smithy jump. Undoubtedly Smithy would have jumped!

But it was fairly certain that, after being given such a start, he would have punched the fellow who had made him jump. Likewise, Bunter would then have heard nothing. The Peeping Tom of Greyfriars was always curious to hear what did not concern him.

He grinned cheerfully at the idea of overhearing a talk which the Bounder fancied was a deep, dark secret.

"Hallo!" came a drawl over the wires.

"That you, Pon? Smithy speaking!"

"I guessed that one, old thing! Carry on—Mobby's not here."

"Good! I say, I'm fearfully sorry I couldn't get along this afternoon—a mob of cheeky cads barged in and dragged me off—"

"I know!"

"Oh, you know? Did you get into a shindy?"

"No, that was all right!"

"Good! About Saturday afternoon—"

"Wash it out, Smithy! I'm not comin' anywhere near Greyfriars again! Man can't keep on gettin' mixed up in rows with a mob of hooligans!"

Vernon-Smith's lip curled over the telephone. He was quite aware of Pon's reasons for steering clear. But he was not there to tell Pon what he thought of him.

"Lantham's nowhere near Greyfriars," was his answer.

"Lantham?" repeated Pon.

"Yes! I suppose you know what's on there on Saturday?"

Herbert Vernon-Smith glanced a little uneasily over his shoulder, and lowered his voice as he went on. The Bounder had plenty of nerve—more than was good for him, perhaps. But his heart beat faster at the bare thought of his Form-master hearing such talk as this. Smithy did not want to toe the line at Greyfriars; but he did not want to be walked in to his headmaster for the sack!

"Go on, Smithy! What—"

"You're game?" asked Smithy. "Lantham races begin at three. It's ten miles from Greyfriars—more from

Highcliffe. I'm game if you are. I'll pick you up in a car, if you'll come!"

"I'm your man!" came Pon's answer at once. "Keepin' it to ourselves, or takin' a party?"

"Keep it to ourselves—risky enough for two," answered the Bounder. "A gang of us would be simply askin' for it!"

"Well, look here, you'll have to come for me—I'm not comin' anywhere near your school!"

"Easy enough in a car. Walk along from Highcliffe to Courtfield on Saturday afternoon, and I'll pick you up at the stile. I can get there by half-past two."

"Done!"

"That's settled, then!" said the Bounder satisfied. "Hallo, what—"

"Mobby's comin'—next bit for Mobby!" came Pon's voice over the wires.

The Bounder chuckled and waited. Evidently Mr. Mobbs was coming into his study, over at Highcliffe, where Pon sat at the telephone. A moment or two, and Pon's voice went on, in its cool drawl:

"That's all right, then, Mr. Parkins! I'll call for the hat on Saturday afternoon—I shall be in Courtfield then. Thanks!"

Ponsonby rang off.

The Bounder, grinning, replaced the receiver. He had "fixed it up" with Ponsonby, after all, in spite of Harry Wharton & Co. and all their works. Now he had to get out of the study before he was discovered there.

He crossed quickly to the door and opened it.

There were footsteps in the passage. Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout were coming in together.

The Bounder breathed hard. But he was quite cool. He had his Latin

exercise in his hand, and the door was open—and Mr. Quelch was not near enough yet to have seen that it had been shut.

Smithy could not enter from the study without being seen. He had to be found there. He leaned on the doorpost in a careless attitude, as if waiting there, just inside the study, the Latin exercise well in view.

With his back to the window, he, naturally, did not see a fat face and a fat head pop out from behind the curtain, and a big pair of spectacles glimmer at him.

At the sight of the Bounder, still in the study, that fat head popped back again very quickly, like that of a tortoise into its shell.

Bunter did not intend to show up till the Bounder was gone, after having overheard that secret talk on the telephone. Spying and prying generally earned him more kicks than ha'pence; but, in the Bounder's case, it was a very dangerous game to play. He almost felt already the thud of Smithy's boot!

The fat Owl wondered impatiently what Smithy was hanging about for, instead of getting clear now that his telephoning was over. But he knew in another minute.

Mr. Quelch stopped at his study door, Prout passing on to his own study. The Remove master glanced at Vernon-Smith inquiringly.

There was nothing to excite suspicion in finding a boy of his Form standing just inside the open doorway, apparently waiting for him. And Mr. Quelch, though keen as a razor, was not a suspicious man.

"What is it, Vernon-Smith?" he asked.

"I've got a bit puzzled over this, sir," said Smithy smoothly, holding up the Latin paper. "I wondered if you'd look at it, sir, if you could spare a minute or two."

"Certainly, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch, quite benignly.

He did not often receive a request of that kind from that particular member of his Form, and he was pleased.

"Thank you very much, sir!" said Smithy meekly.

"Not at all!" said the Remove master kindly. "Draw a chair to the table."

They sat down to it.

It was probable that Smithy was not very keen in elucidating that Latin exercise. But he seemed keen enough as his Form-master kindly went through it with him.

Behind the curtain, Billy Bunter glared through his big spectacles with a glare that might have cracked them.

He quite understood the Bounder's dodge, though Quelch did not suspect it.

Smithy was getting by with it—but where did Bunter come in?

Now that Quelch was in the study the fat junior cringed at the thought of being found there.

He had not thought of a dodge like Smithy's; neither would a Latin exercise, if he had thought of it, have accounted for the fact that he was hidden behind the window curtain.

Billy Bunter could only remain where he was—and hope for the best while he feared the worst!

Ten minutes sufficed for Mr. Quelch to make that puzzling exercise clear to the attentive Bounder. Then Vernon-Smith thanked him and left the study—and did not grin till the door was closed.

Mr. Quelch was left in a very good humour. This desire for knowledge on the part of the most troublesome

member of his Form, naturally pleased him. He hoped that it was a sign of amendment in Herbert Vernon-Smith.

After Smithy had gone, the Form-master stood at the table for a few minutes, shifting papers there.

Bunter listened in anguish! Was the beast going?

Alas, the beast wasn't! Having finished that sheaf of Latin papers, Mr. Quelch was at leisure, and he was going to enjoy his leisure. His idea of enjoyment was not that of the boys of his Form. He picked up a volume—a Greek volume—and sat in a chair by the open window.

Deep in *Æschylus*, Mr. Quelch sat silent—so silent that Bunter began to wonder, at last, whether he was still in the study.

Mr. Quelch's face was towards that bunch of hangings that hid Bunter—but his eyes were on his book.

Slowly, cautiously, a fat head was projected, and a pair of large spectacles blinked round for Quelch.

Bunter gave quite a start, as he saw his Form-master sitting, and facing him.

His eyes almost popped through his spectacles in his horror.

At the same moment, Mr. Quelch looked up, perhaps having caught a rustle of the curtain.

He gave a violent start.

Believing himself alone in the study, it was undoubtedly startling to see, suddenly, a fat face glaring at him from behind his window curtain!

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "What—Bunter!"

Back popped the fat head—rather too late. There was an audible gasp behind the rustling curtain.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet, laid down the entrancing Greek volume, and picked up the cane from his table.

"Bunter!" he said in a deep voice.

No reply from Bunter. If the fat Owl still hoped that Quelch did not know that he was there, it showed that he had a very hopeful nature. Perhaps he was too terrified to speak. Anyhow, he was silent.

"Bunter!" barked Mr. Quelch. "I saw you, you utterly stupid boy! Stand out from behind that curtain at once!"

"Oh crikey! I—I'm not here, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Stand out this moment!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

To accelerate the fat Owl's movements, he delivered a swipe with the cane at the lower part of the curtain.

There was a loud yell

"Yaroooh!"

"Bunter—"

"Oh crikey!" Billy Bunter rolled out into view. "Oh lor'! I—I—I wasn't hiding behind that curtain, sir! I—I—"

"I find you," said Mr. Quelch grimly; "concealed in my study, Bunter! I can only conclude that you came here to play some disrespectful trick! You will bend over that chair, Bunter! As I have caned you once already to-day, I am sorry to have to cane you again!"

"Sus-sus-so am I, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'd rather you didn't, if—if you don't mind, sir!"

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

"Bend over that chair at once, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"You may go, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, laying down the cane. "On another occasion I shall punish you more severely!"

Billy Bunter departed, yelping.

Mr. Quelch sat down once more with

Æschylus, and gave himself up to enjoyment.

But there was no enjoyment for Bunter. Billy Bunter, for quite a long time, was looking and feeling as if he found life a weary burden, hardly worth the trouble of living!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Pulls the Strings!

"WHAT the dickens do you want?"

Hazeldene of the Remove asked that question as Harry Wharton stopped at the door of Study No. 2 after tea the following day.

Tom Brown, who shared that study with Hazel, had gone out. But another fellow was there—Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Smithy was sitting on the corner of the study table, talking to Hazel, who sat in the armchair. Both of them looked round at the captain of the Remove—Hazel with a scowl, Smithy with a mocking sneer.

Hazel's greeting could not be called polite. He had been looking quite cheery a moment ago, as if deriving satisfaction from his talk with the Bounder. But he turned on a scowl at once for Harry Wharton's benefit.

Wharton compressed his lips, but he answered quietly:

"I wanted to speak to you, Hazel. I didn't know Smithy was here. I'll leave it till another time."

"Better leave it altogether!" sneered Hazel. "I want to have nothing to say to fellows who rag schoolgirls!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned the Bounder.

Wharton stood in the doorway. He did not expect the Bounder to forget or forgive what had happened on the bank of the Sark the previous day. For his resentment he did not care two straws. He rather expected something in the way of retaliation, and was quite indifferent to it. Now it occurred to him that that retaliation was going to take a disagreeable form.

It was not like Smithy to seek Hazel out in his study, nor like Hazel to look as if he derived great satisfaction from a talk with Smithy. All the Remove knew that Hazel had landed himself in some scrape of late with some disreputable acquaintance outside the school. There was hardly a fellow in the Form of whom he had not tried to borrow money during the past week—for which reason the Bounder, who had plenty of money, but plenty of sense to take care of it, had been giving Hazel the marble eye till now. Now there was quite a change.

Wharton's lip curled contemptuously.

He knew, as if he had seen it, that the wealthy Bounder had lent the hard-up scapegrace the sum he wanted to see him through his dingy scrape, and he knew that Smithy had not done it for nothing. To the Bounder, who had more fivers than other fellows had half-crowns, a few pounds more or less mattered little or nothing; but he was not the fellow to part with a single quid without a motive.

"You can keep your distance, Harry Wharton," went on Hazel—"you and your precious pals! If I were up to your weight, I'd knock you into the passage for having the cheek to barge into my study!"

"And why?" asked Harry, determined to keep his temper.

The weak-kneed Hazel, at the present moment, was little more than a marionette worked by the Bounder. The hand was the hand of Esau, but the voice was the voice of Jacob, as it were. It was

not very useful to get angry with a fellow who jumped when another fellow pulled the strings.

"You know why!" sneered Hazel. "It's two or three weeks since you stranded my sister and her friends on Popper's Island! No thanks to you that they weren't left out all night! Think I've forgotten?"

"It's not true," said Harry quietly. "And true or not, you weren't in a hurry to get your back up about it."

Hazel's face flamed.

"Yes, I know what you're driving at!" he snapped. "I asked you to lend me some money to see me through a scrape! You refused!"

"I don't think you'd have asked me if you'd believed what you say you believe now!" said Harry scornfully. "You didn't believe it then; you believe it now. Any more evidence come to light?"

Hazel did not answer that. As a matter of fact, the matter stood exactly where it had stood when he had asked the captain of the Remove to help him out of his dingy difficulty. Perhaps he did not realise that his views were coloured by the fact that Wharton had been unable, or unwilling, to give the required assistance.

"Hazel's mentioned that he doesn't want you in his study!" drawled the Bounder, coming to Hazel's rescue.

Wharton's eyes flashed at him.

"You can mind your own business,

Vernon-Smith! If I'd had what Hazel wanted, I should have helped him out—and I can't afford to chuck money away as you can. Every fellow in the Form knows that he tried to stick you for it, and he had no luck till now."

"Are you going?" snarled Hazel.

"Shut the door after you!" drawled Smithy.

Wharton paused.

"No!" he said deliberately. "I came here to speak to you, Hazel, and I'm not going till I've said what I came to say! I've told you already that I and my friends had nothing to do with pinching that boat from the island—"

"And I've told you that I don't believe you!" said Hazel coolly.

"Well, I want you to believe me," said Harry. "I asked you once to take a hand in the matter. The girls at Cliff House have got it fixed in their minds that we did that rotten trick. They won't see us or speak to us, and give us a chance to clear it up. As Marjorie's brother, you can see her when you like and get at the facts. You ought to do it!"

"Everybody knows the facts already!" sneered Hazel.

"Only too jolly well!" added the Bounder.

"Why Marjorie and her friends think as they do I haven't the faintest idea," went on Harry, as if neither of them had spoken. "It wasn't because we had

the boat—they thought so before it came out that we had the boat—and I want to know why. You could clear that up, Hazel, if you liked."

"It's clear enough for me now! They think you did it because you did it! Your having the boat was a little extra proof, that's all!"

"I've told you how we came to have the boat. That cad Ponsonby bagged Bob Cherry's hat, and we bagged his boat afterwards, and left him to walk home. We never dreamed at the time that it was a Cliff House boat; we never knew that the girls were on the river at all!"

"Pile it on!" sneered Hazel.

"Do you think we should have tied the boat up at the school raft, to be sent for, if we'd pinched it from Marjorie?" snapped Wharton.

"I know that you did!"

The captain of the Remove breathed hard.

"Ponsonby had the boat. He denied it afterwards when he was asked. That proves that Ponsonby was the man!" he said.

"You didn't pick Pon to land it on because he's unpopular here?" grinned the Bounder.

"Plain enough that you did!" said Hazel. "You had to find a scapegoat when you were bowled out! You picked Ponsonby! Mean trick, too!"

"Rotten mean!" agreed the Bounder.

(Continued on next page.)



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"I don't think any fellow here would take Ponsonby's word if it wasn't for what the girls had said," Wharton went on quietly. "That's what we want to clear up, Hazel, and you're the only fellow that can help. You can't want this rotten row to go on all through the term."

"I'll tell you what I want!" said Hazel. "I want to see you and your gang put through it for what you did; and if the Form will back me up, you're going through it!"

Wharton looked at him—then at the sneering, sardonic Bounder.

So that's your game, Vernon-Smith!" he said. "You're getting your own back by working that fool like a doll on wires!"

Hazel jumped out of the armchair. His face blazed with rage as he came towards the captain of the Remove with clenched fists.

"Get out!" he shouted shrilly. "That's enough from you, Harry Wharton! Get out before I knock you out! Get out of my doorway!"

And he came at him with lashing fists, forgetful, in his burst of passionate rage, that one punch from the captain of the Remove would have spun him across the study.

Wharton's hands went up in a flash. Hazel's fierce blows were knocked aside—so sharply that he gave a gasp of pain.

Harry stepped back into the passage. "That's enough, Hazel," he said. "Chuck it! If you won't do as I've asked I'll find some other way—but I'm not going to scrap with you."

"You are!" hissed Hazel, following him into the passage. "You shouldn't ask for what you don't want, you rotter!"

"Don't be a silly ass!" Harry Wharton backed farther away. "Keep off, you fool!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a roar from Bob Cherry in the passage. "Chuck that, you duffers!"

"Go it, Hazel!" yelled Skinner.

"Give him beans, old man!" roared Bolsover major.

There were a dozen fellows in the Remove passage, and nearly everyone gave encouragement to Hazel.

Bucked by the general support, and no doubt, also, by Harry Wharton's unwillingness to scrap, Hazel followed the captain of the Remove, hitting out furiously.

"Will you chuck it, you fathead?" roared Wharton.

"Take that!" was Hazel's reply, and he dashed his fist at the face of the captain of the Remove.

His fist was knocked aside, and then Wharton grasped him.

The next moment Hazel was twisted off his feet and pitched back bodily into his study, where he dropped, panting, under the eyes of the grinning Bounder.

Leaving it at that, Harry Wharton walked away to the stairs. He had no doubt that that brief handling would cause Hazel's unwonted burst of warlike fury to peter out, and he was glad of it—the last thing that he wanted was a scrap with Marjorie's brother.

He was right—when Hazel picked himself up, dizzy and breathless, he did not emerge into the passage again; the door of Study No. 2 closed with a bang!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Backing Up Hazel!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I think," said Billy Bunter, with dignity, "that you might be civil to a chap when he speaks to

you. There's not a lot of fellows in the Form would be seen speaking to you in quad!"

The Famous Five had to admit that there was some truth in that.

The Co. were in very low water at present in the Remove. Nevertheless, few friends as they had left in the Form, they did not seem grateful to Billy Bunter for extending the right hand of fellowship. They glared at him.

"The chaps are in the Rag now," went on Bunter. "They're talking about a Form ragging!"

"Buzz off, bloater!"

"Of course, you jolly well deserve it," went on Bunter, blinking at them through his big spectacles. "A lark's a lark, but what you did was altogether too thick. My sister Bessie missed her tea when you left her on that rotten island. She might have missed her supper. If that's what you fellows call a joke, I can jolly well tell you I don't! That's serious. I say, you fellows, don't walk off while a chap's talking to you."

The Famous Five walked off, however, heedless of the voice of the charmer.

All the five were looking worried.

That unfortunate affair at Popper's Island had caused them plenty of worry and trouble. But, like everything else, it would gradually have fallen into oblivion. The Remove fellows had plenty of other things to think about, especially with the cricket matches coming on. Now, however, it had revived more vigorously than ever—and they knew whose hand was behind it.

Hazel, hitherto sullen and sulky, had changed the passive for the active, so to speak. One of the girls stranded on the island in the river was his sister Marjorie, which gave him a natural right to take the lead in the matter. So far, he had not seemed fearfully keen to do so; indeed, his thoughts had been chiefly concentrated on his own dingy troubles and the difficulty of meeting the demands of some disreputable sharper to whom he owed a debt he could not pay.

That little difficulty, obviously, was over. From the fact that he was no longer dunning the Remove fellows for loans that much was evident. Some kind friend had exuded the necessary quids. Harry Wharton & Co. did not need telling that kind friend's name, nor why he had done it.

With that trouble off his mind, Hazel was free to concentrate on his grievance against the Famous Five—if he wanted to!

Left to himself, probably he would have been contented with sulks and sneers. But he was not left to himself.

The Bounder, as Wharton had said, was working him like a doll with wires. And the fact that Wharton had said it in Hazel's hearing was more than enough to rouse Hazel's bitterest resentment. Like every fellow who was easily led, he hated the imputation of being led easily.

Now he was taking the lead in the matter—pushed on from behind by the unscrupulous Bounder.

Vernon-Smith certainly believed that the Famous Five were the guilty parties, and that they had picked on Ponsonby as a scapegoat because the dandy of Highcliffe was disliked and despised at Greyfriars. But that belief was not Smithy's motive now—or only partly his motive. Smithy was out to make them sorry that they had barged into his affairs and walked him home forcibly—an affront the Bounder could not possibly forgive.

There had been talk already of send-

ing the five to Coventry, also of a Form ragging. It had come to nothing so far. Now it looked like coming to something, with Marjorie's brother taking the lead in the matter.

Of all the Remove only three fellows stood by them—Lord Mauleverer, Tom Redwing, and Mark Linley. Other fellows with whom they had always been friendly, such as Squiff and Tom Brown and Monty Newland, kept open minds on the subject. But the great majority of the Form took the view that the thing was clearly proved—and if Marjorie's brother was keen to take it up, most of the Remove were ready to give him hearty backing.

"It's getting too thick!" said Bob Cherry dolorously. "If we could only get a chance to clear it up—"

"Hazel ought to do it, instead of playing the giddy ox, as he's doing at present!" growled Johnny Bull.

"It's got to be cleared up!" said Harry Wharton. "And there's only one way that I can see—Ponsonby's got to own up that he did it."

"Catch him!" said Nugent. "It would be a satisfaction to thrash the cad; but that wouldn't make him own up—rather the reverse."

"That's so," agreed Bob. "If you'd got him yesterday he would have got a whopping, but that wouldn't make him tell the truth."

"This is pie to that Highcliffe cad!" said Johnny Bull. "He wouldn't own up unless we got him into a quiet corner and twisted his ears till he did!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We might manage it that way if we could lay hands on him," he said. "But after what happened yesterday he's not likely to give us a chance."

"The likeliness is not terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his head.

"They seem to be getting busy in the Rag!" remarked Bob.

Harry Wharton glanced at the open window of the Rag.

A buzz of voices came from that apartment, which, he could see, was crowded. Nearly all the Remove seemed to have gathered there. He wondered whether a Form rag were under discussion, as Bunter had declared.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hear that?" murmured Bob Cherry. The chums of the Remove came to a halt as Hazel's voice, raised and shrill, floated out.

Hazel, they could see, was mounted on a chair, addressing the meeting of the Form. The Bounder stood by him, apparently as his chief supporter. Hazel's words came clearly into the quad:

"You know what those rotters did. A fellow can't thrash a gang of five of them one after another. I'm not going to say that I could do it—there's no man in the Form can stand up to Bob Cherry, even Smithy. They're banking on that to get by with this rotten game. Ragging a party of schoolgirls like a mob of cowardly hooligans—and nothing said or done."

"Nice!" murmured Bob.

"The niceness is preposterous!"

"There's been plenty said, old man!" came the Bounder's voice. "Nothing done so far! But every fellow here will back up a man who stands up for his sister."

"Hear, hear!" roared Bolsover major.

"Every man here is down on them, Hazel!" said Skinner.

"Lot they care for that!" said Hazel. "The Form ought to send them to Coventry for what they did! No decent chap ought to speak to them."



With his right leg bent up at the knee and secured there, Vernon-Smith stood leaning against the tree. "Now," said Harry Wharton, "you can hop back to Greyfriars—or you can stay there and wriggle loose!" "You—you rotter! You—you——" gasped the Bounder. "I'll make you squirm for this!"

"Now you're getting down to brass tacks!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'm willing, for one."

"Rot!" came Redwing's voice.

"Shut up, Redwing!" came a roar.

"Bosh!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Shut up, Mauly!" came another roar.

"I think you fellows ought to take their word." It was Mark Linley's quiet voice this time.

"Shut up, Linley!"

The Famous Five, under the window, exchanged grim glances. No other voice was heard in their favour.

Hazel, mounted on the chair, had seen them now, and his eyes gleamed at them. The Bounder, spotting them also, gave them a mocking grin.

Hazel's voice went on, a little louder than before.

"Hands up for sending those cads to Coventry!"

A forest of hands shot up. Evidently Marjorie's brother had very extensive sympathy and support in his Form.

"That's that, then!" said Vernon-Smith.

Bolsover major put his head out of the window and glared at the five.

"Hear that, you cads?" he roared.

"You're sent to Coventry by the Remove! See?"

"Won't you speak to us again, Bolsover?" asked Bob.

"No, I won't!"

"Thanks!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"The thankfulness is terrific, esteemed Bolsover," grinned Hurree Singh.

Bolsover major glared, speechless. Some of the fellows in the Rag chuckled.

"And won't you, Smithy?" went on Bob. "Aren't we ever going to hear anything more about sure snips and dead certs?"

Bolsover major slammed the window shut. The Famous Five walked away—and nearly walked into Billy Bunter.

The fat Owl grinned at them. Evidently he had heard, too!

"I say, you fellows, you're for it," he remarked. "Serve you jolly well right! That's the last you'll hear from me!"

"The very last?" asked Bob. "Won't you even tell us when your postal order comes?"

"Yah!" retorted Bunter. And he rolled away with his little fat nose in the air.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter the Ambassador!

"WHAT about Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry, after class the next day.

"Bunter!" repeated Harry Wharton. "Well, what about the fat ass?"

"We're in want of a giddy ambassador!" exclaimed Bob, with a grin. "Hazel, won't play up! Bunter's sister Bessie was one of the girls stranded on the island. Hazel won't go over and get the facts from Marjorie. What about scooting Bunter over to get the facts from Bessie?"

"Um!" said Harry.

"There were four of them on the island that day," argued Bob. "Marjorie, Clara, Dolly Jobling, and Bessie Bunter. Well, Fatima must know as much about what happened as the others. Something put it into their heads that I bagged their boat—and then, as we had it from Pon afterwards, they fancied we were all in the game. I can't imagine what put it into their heads in the first place—but any of the four could tell us, if they'd only speak."

"They won't!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"That fool Hazel could have set it right long ago, I'm sure of 'bat," said Harry Wharton, frowning. "He prefers to keep his back up—and now Smithy's got him on a string. But Bunter's such a blithering idiot—"

"Same applies to Bessie!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Well, yes; but Bessie must know what happened, if anything did," said Bob. "If she told that fat owl, and he told us, we could set it right! We've only got to spot where the mistake came in."

"Well, I suppose it won't do any harm, if it doesn't do any good," said Harry Wharton slowly. "Let's speak to the fat ass, anyhow. We've got to get this rotten tangle straightened out somehow."

It was easy to find Billy Bunter. He was standing with his eyes, and his spectacles, glued on the window of the school shop. Bunter's postal order, for some unknown reason, had not yet arrived; and he was feasting his eyes, as a more solid repast was not to be had.

The Famous Five, as they bore down on him, passed several Remove fellows in the quad. Bolsover major, Skinner, and Snoop, gave them blank stares, making it very plain that they were in Coventry so far as those youths were concerned. Russell and Ogilvy looked uncomfortable, and did not seem to see them.

Hazel, walking with the Bounder, gave them an aggressive glare; Smithy, a mocking grin. Nobody spoke to them.

The sentence of Coventry was by no means unanimous in the Remove; neither was it very effectively carried out. But there was enough of it to

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On the Track of the Trickster!



(Continued from page 13.)

make matters thoroughly uncomfortable for the Famous Five.

Smithy undoubtedly was "getting his own" back for that episode on the banks of the Sark. Using Hazel as a stalking horse, he was making things almost intolerable for the chums of the Remove in their Form.

Billy Bunter, chiefly from sheer fat-headedness, was very keen on the side of the Coventry party. The fat Owl rather fancied turning up his fat little nose at fellows who had been leaders of the Form.

So when they arrived at the school shop and the fat Owl observed them, he gave them a lofty blink through his big spectacles and turned his back on them in the most marked manner.

The next moment, Bunter wished that he hadn't. The impact of a boot on his tight trousers gave him a tip that it was not judicious to show his scorn in that particular manner.

"Wow!" gasped Bunter.

And he faced round again quite quickly.

"Looking for you, old fat man!" said Bob cheerfully.

"Yah!" retorted Bunter. "Don't speak to me! You're in Coventry! I'm cutting you dead! Yah!"

"You won't tea in the study with us?" asked Bob sadly.

"Oh!" Bunter's look became considerably less lofty at once. "I say, you fellows, of—of course. I don't want to rub it in. You're a lot of cads, of course—"

"You potty porpoise!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Look here, Bunter, we want you to do something," said Harry Wharton. "If it turns out all right, we'll stand you the spread of the term in the study!"

Bunter became quite affable.

"My dear old chap, give it a name!" he said cordially. "The fact is, I thought that Coventry idea was all rot. I told Hazel so—at least, I was going to tell him. What do you want me to do, old fellow? Talk to you in the quad, what, and show the fellows that I'm not turning you down? I'll do it like a shot!"

"Oh, my hat! No! I can do without your conversation," said Harry, laughing. "The less, the better, in fact."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Now, look here! We want you to cut over to Cliff House, and see your sister Bessie—"

"No fear!" said Bunter promptly. "Bessie makes out that I owe her five bob. She would begin on that at once."

"We'll stand the five bob to square!"

"Oh!" said Bunter. "Well, that's all right! I'll let you have it back out of my postal order, of course."

"Of course!" said Harry solemnly. "Quite! Now, when you see Bessie, you ask her why they think that Bob snaffled that boat—see?"

"No need to go over to Cliff House for that," said Bunter, staring. "I can tell you that now, if you want to know."

"Oh! Why was it, then?"

"They must have spotted him at it!" explained Bunter.

"You fat, frabjous, frowsy frump!" roared Bob. "Can't you get it into your thick head that I never did it?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Do have a little sense, Bunter," said Harry Wharton patiently. "Look here, the point is that Bob did not do it, and we want to know why they think he did. They won't tell you they saw him, because they couldn't have done so. But they'll tell you why they think so, and that will give us a start at clearing it all up."

Bunter winked.

"I catch on!" he said. "Getting tired of Coventry already, what? But look here, if I make up a yarn like that to—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I'll do it to oblige a pal," said Bunter generously. "I'd do more than that for fellows I really like. What do you want me to say?"

"Oh, kill him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"You burbling bandersnatch!" gasped Harry. "We don't want you to make up a yarn. We want to get at the truth."

"But the fellows know the truth already," said Bunter, puzzled. "They all know that you sneaked that boat—"

"Shut up, fathead, and listen! You're to go over to Cliff House, and—"

"And come back and explain that there was a mistake?" said Bunter. "I know—I catch on all right! But you'll have to tell me what you want me to say. I'll say anything you like—but I want to know what, of course."

The Famous Five gazed at him.

Really, it was not easy to deal with William George Bunter.

"I'll do anything I can," said Bunter. "It was pretty rotten of you to strand those girls, as you did. Still, now there's a row on, it's prevented Bessie coming over here about that five bob—I'm not forgetting that. No need for me to go all the way to Cliff House—it's three miles, you know. So long as I tell the fellows I'm going, that will be all right, won't it?"

"Oh, dear!" said Harry.

"I'll go out of gates for a bit, and then come in," said Bunter. "That will look all right. Then I tell the fellows I've seen Bessie, and she's owned up there was a mistake. I quite understand. But they may want to hear the particulars—and in that case, what do you want me to say?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob.

Evidently, with a spread in the study in prospect, Billy Bunter was prepared to be fearfully obliging. He was willing to say what was required, like the celebrated witness who was prepared to swear "in a general way, anything."

"Will you try to understand, you fat, fibbing frowster?" gasped Wharton.

"We don't want you to tell any lies, you blitherer—"

"Don't you?" asked Bunter, in surprise.

"No!" roared Wharton.

"Then what the dickens do you want?" asked the perplexed Owl. "I'd stretch a point, to oblige you. But it's no good telling the fellows what they know already, is it? They all know you did it."

"We want to get at the truth!" shrieked Wharton.

"Well, that's the truth, isn't it? Wharrer you mean?"

"We mean that there's a mistake, you fat Owl—we want you to ask Bessie exactly what happened—"

"Blessed if I see the use of that. You know best what happened, as you did it—"

"The point is, that we didn't!" howled Wharton.

"Well, you can say that here," said Bunter. "But it's no good saying it to Bessie, when she knows."

"Oh, kick him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Look here, Bunter, try not to be such a blithering chump!" urged Harry. "Go to Bessie and ask her why the girls believe that we pinched their boat that day. Come back and tell us exactly what she says. Got that?"

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter. "I don't see any sense in it, but I'll do it, if you like. Bessie will want that five bob, though, the minute I see her."

Five shillings were sorted out at once. It was worth more than that to get this troublesome mystery cleared up, in the opinion of the Famous Five. And they were going to see that Bunter did not drop into the school shop before he started—in which case, that five shillings would not have been likely to get far from Greyfriars.

"Leave it to me," said Bunter cheerfully, slipping the cash into his pocket. "I'll go at once—almost at once."

"Quite at once, you mean!" said Bob, with a grin.

"Well, I want to speak to a chap in the shop—"

"You can speak to him later."

"The—the fact is—" said Bunter, with a longing blink at the tuckshop.

"The fact is, that you're not going to blow Bessie's five bob in tuck!" growled Johnny Bull. "Are you going or not?"

"Oh, really, Bull! If you can't trust me with five bob—" said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"You've got it!"

"Beast!"

"We'll walk part of the way with you, Bunter," said Harry. "Come on!"

"If you think I'm going to walk three miles, and back, because you don't want to lend me your bike, Wharton, then—"

"I'll lend you my bike."

"Oh, all right! You'll have to put the saddle down a bit—I'm not a spindle-shanked hop-pole like you, you know!"

Billy Bunter unwillingly turned his back on the delights of the tuckshop. The Famous Five walked him down to the bike-shed. Then the saddle of Harry Wharton's machine was lowered to the lowest limit, to accommodate the short fat legs of the fat Owl. And then, at long last, Bunter started.

The Famous Five watched him plugging away down Friardale Lane, till he was lost to sight.

"That's that!" said Bob.

And—though Billy Bunter was certainly not the ambassador they would have chosen, had there been a choice in the matter—the chums of the Remove hoped that that was, indeed, that!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not a Success!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came into the Rag after tea.

They found a crowd of Remove fellows there—not including Billy Bunter.

As it was a couple of hours since he

had sailed away on Wharton's bike, and as a spread awaited him when he returned, they expected even the fat and lazy Owl to roll in before long. Six miles on a bike was little enough to any other Remove fellow; but to the fat Owl, it was rather an expedition. And he had to put in some time at Cliff House, getting the facts from Bessie. Still, with a study spread in prospect, even Bunter was not likely to lose time if he could help it.

Wharton glanced out of the window, into the quad. But there was no fat figure rolling into view, so far.

Lord Mauleverer joined them at the window. Tom Redwing made a movement; but the Bounder's eyes glittered at him, and he paused. Tom was in rather a difficult position, for he did not want a row with his chum.

Bolsover major shouted across the room to Mauly.

"Leave those cads alone, Mauly, they're in Coventry!"

Mauleverer glanced at him.

"Shut up, old bean!" he suggested. "I've told you before that you talk too much!"

"Are you backing up a gang of rotten cads, Mauly?" asked Hazel, with a sneer.

"No fear! I'm leavin' you and Smithy severely alone!" answered Lord Mauleverer innocently.

"You cheeky ass!" hooted the Bounder.

"Now, look here, Smithy, shut up!" said Mauleverer. "If you're goin' to send my friends to Coventry, why can't you send me, too? It's not fair to let them off your conversation, and land it all on me."

At which there was a chuckle in the Rag, and a scowl from the Bounder.

His lordship leaned on the window, with his hands in the pockets of his elegant bags. He had taken the trouble to lift himself out of an armchair, to demonstrate his loyalty to the ostracised five—for which they were duly grateful.

The fact was, that so long as old Mauly stood by them, a good many other fellows in the Form remained undecided about taking part against them, and the Bounder's success was very far from complete.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as a fat figure appeared in view.

Billy Bunter was rolling towards the House, at the leisurely pace of a very old and very fatigued snail.

"Waitin' for Bunter, you fellows?" asked Mauleverer, puzzled.

"Our giddy ambassador!" grinned Bob.

"Eh! Which?" ejaculated Mauly.

"Bunter's been over to Cliff House," explained Harry Wharton. All the fellows in the Rag heard him, as he intended them to do. "We got him to go and see his sister, Bessie, and ask her what the row was about!"

"Good egg!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Jolly good idea! If the girls only explain what put the idea into their heads, you can get it out again."

"That's the idea!" said Harry. "Bessie Bunter was one of the party on the island, and she must know why they fancy that Bob pinched their boat. She turns up her nose at us—in fact, puts a grubby paw to it—but I suppose she will explain to her brother Billy when he asks her."

"Sure to!" agreed Mauleverer. "Hazel ought to have done it, but I dare say Bunter will work the oracle all right."

The Remove fellows looked at one another. The Bounder sneered, but the

other fellows looked dubious. Even Hazel, sulky and resentful as he was, gave the Famous Five a curious look. Peter Todd whistled.

"Look here, you men, you mean to say you've sent Bunter over to get at the facts," asked Todd.

"Yes, ass!" answered Harry.

"Well, most of us fancy we know the facts already!" said Peter. "I can't imagine any reason why the girls should say you pinched their boat, unless you did it. But if there's any mistake in the matter, I'd be jolly glad to hear of it, for one."

"What mistake can there be, fat-head?" snapped the Bounder. "Either the girls know who pinched their boat, or they don't!"

"Yes, it looks like that," admitted Peter. "Still, mistakes do occur. Let's hear what the jolly old ambassador has got to say, anyhow."

There was a general movement of interest in the Rag, as William George Bunter rolled into that apartment.

He did not look so fearfully tired as he might have been expected to look, after six miles on a bike. A smear of jam on his fat face hinted that there had been light refreshments about.

He blinked round through his big spectacles, surprised by the concentrated interest that had turned on him.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Cough it up, Bunter," said Harry, with a smile.

For once in history, the Famous Five were eager to hear from Billy Bunter!

They had no doubt that the facts were coming out now. Whatever it was that Bessie had told her brother Billy, it would give a clue to the extraordinary mistake that had arisen.

But Bunter, generally keen—in fact, too keen—to talk, seemed to hesitate a little now; he blinked furtively at the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows, what about tea?" he asked. "I'm jolly late for tea! I'd rather have tea first, if you don't mind."

"We do mind!" answered the captain of the Remove. "You fat ass, it won't take you a minute to tell us what Bessie said!"

"Yes, but—"

"But what?"

"Oh, nothing!"

All the fellows in the Rag eyed Bunter. There was something peculiarly furtive about his look, which was hard to understand.

So far as any fellow could see, there was no reason why he should not tell a plain tale—and tell it at once. But he was evidently in a state of uneasy hesitation.

"Get going!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "Whatever it was Bessie told you, we want to hear it. You went over to Cliff House—"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, you've seen Bessie, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, but—"

"But what, ass?"

"Nothing!" mumbled Bunter.

"You fat Owl!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "Why can't you speak? Bessie's told you that they saw Cherry pinching their boat—is that it? You needn't be afraid to get it out; nobody's going to rag you."

"Oh, that's it!" said Hazel. "The fat chump's afraid they're going to rag him for showing them up!"

"Don't be a rotter, Hazel!" said Harry Wharton. "Get going, Bunter, you duffer! Whatever Bessie's told you, we only want to hear the truth."

"Oh, yes, but—"

"Well, what have you got to tell us?"

"Oh, nothing! I—I mean—" stammered Bunter.

"What's the jolly old mystery?" asked Peter Todd. "What is the blithering bloater burbling and babbling about?"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Look here, cough it up, Bunter!" roared Johnny Bull. "What did Bessie say?"

"N-n-nothing!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I mean, she wasn't there! I—I mean, she's gone home, so I wasn't able to see her," stammered Bunter. "That—that's what I mean. See?"

"Then you asked one of the others?"

"Oh, yes! I mean, no!"

"Why didn't you ask Marjorie, then?"

"She—she's gone home, too!" stammered Bunter.

"Marjorie's gone home!" repeated Hazel. "You fat, lying toad, my sister's at Cliff House all right! What do you mean?"

"Oh, I—I mean she'd gone out on her bike!"

"Not much difference!" remarked Russell. "What on earth is that fat ass telling whoppers for?"

"Oh, really, Russell—"

"If you couldn't see Bessie or Marjorie, you could have asked Dolly Jobling or Clara Trevlyn," said Harry, with a very suspicious look at the fat Owl.

"They—they were gone out, too!" gasped Bunter. "Sorry, you fellows, but all four of them had gone home—"

"Gone home?" yelled Bob.

"I—I—I mean, gone out on their bikes! I waited hours—"

"You've only been gone two hours."

"I mean, I waited an hour," gasped Bunter.

"Has he been to Cliff House at all?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! Of course I—I went straight over; I never stopped in Friardale for a minute. I pedalled straight through and—and kept on to Cliff House. I hope you don't think I stopped at Uncle Clegg's."

"You stopped at Uncle Clegg's!" roared Wharton.

Light dawned on his mind now.

The fat Owl had been carefully barred off from the school shop before he started, but Uncle Clegg's tuckshop in the village had been available half-way to Cliff House.

"No!" gasped Bunter. "I've told you I didn't! Never thought of it! Of course, I went straight to Cliff House, but all the girls being gone home on their bikes—I mean, being gone out on their bikes—I couldn't speak to them. Besides, it wouldn't have been any good seeing Bessie; she'd have started about that five bob at once—"

"You fat villain, we stood you the five bob for Bessie!"

"Oh, yes! I—I—I mean—" stammered Bunter. "I—I—I lost it!"

"You lost it!" howled Bob.

"Yes; it—it slipped through a pocket in my lining—I mean, the lining in my pocket—and—that's why I never went—"

"You never went?" shrieked Bob.

"Oh, yes! I—I mean, I—I went, of—of course! Didn't I say I would? But that five bob being lost, I couldn't see Bessie—I mean, she had gone out, and that's why I couldn't see her. I hope you fellows don't fancy that I spent that five bob at Uncle Clegg's? I haven't tasted jam tarts for days!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar all over the Rag. There was evidence on Billy

Bunter's fat face that he had tasted jam tarts quite recently.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter. "I'm sorry, you chaps, but the five bob being lost through Uncle Clegg's shop—I mean, through the lining of my pocket—it was no use seeing Bessie—that is, I mean that I couldn't see her as she had gone home—I mean, on a bike—"

"You podgy pirate!" gasped Harry Wharton. "We've been waiting for you to come back from Cliff House, and you've never been farther than the village tuckshop—and you've blown our five bob on jam tarts—"

"I haven't!" yelled Bunter. "Old Clegg made out that I owed him half-a-crown from last term, and he took it out of the five bob."

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

"Not that I went into Uncle Clegg's, you know!" added Bunter hastily. "I quite forgot there was such a place in Friardale at all, really! I never got off the bike till I got to Cliff House; and if you fellows don't believe me, I can jolly well say—Whoop! Yarooop! Help!"

The fat ambassador roared as five pairs of hands clutched him and swept him off the floor.

Bump!

"Yarrrrrooop!"

"Boot him!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled all the Rag. The juniors were almost in hysterics at that remarkable result of Bunter's ambassadorship.

Whatever the Famous Five had expected to come of it, they had not expected that. Bunter the ambassador had been a hopeless frost.

The nett result of his mission to Cliff House was jam tarts for Bunter at Uncle Clegg's.

While every other fellow roared, the Famous Five bumped the egregious fat Owl—bumped him again and yet again. Then they walked out of the Rag, leaving Billy Bunter roaring with anguish, and every other fellow with laughter.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Mauly Takes a Hand!

LORD MAULEVERER dismounted from his bike, leaned it against a fence in Pegg Lane, and then leaned his noble person on the fence beside it.

Having covered three miles on a bike his lazy lordship was in need of a rest.

In the distance, coming up from the beach, were three girlish figures, and rolling on behind them the substantial form of Miss Elizabeth Bunter.

Mauly's eyes were on them as they came.

Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, and Dolly Jobling glanced at the elegant figure leaning on the fence as they came by. Bessie Bunter gave it a blink through her big spectacles and sniffed.

Mauly stepped forward, raising his straw hat gracefully.

"Might a fellow speak for a minute?" he inquired.

The three girls stopped. Bessie gave another sniff.

"Yah!" she remarked.

"Dry up, Bessie!" said Clara.

"Look here, Clara, we're not speaking to any of those cads!" said Bessie. "Except Hazel; he's Marjorie's brother, though he's just as bad as the rest really, or worse."

"Be quiet, dear!" said Marjorie.

"Shan't!" said Bessie.

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"Frightfully sorry to displease Miss Bunter!" said his lordship apologetically. "I'm not really a man to butt in, but if you'd let me speak a minute—"

"Can it!" said Bessie.

"Will you be quiet, Bessie?" asked Dolly Jobling.

"No," answered Bessie. "I won't! Brutes! Leaving us stranded on that beastly island—"

"But I never did, Miss Bunter," pleaded Mauleverer. "Even if somebody else did, it's really not cricket to slang me for it."

"Yah!" said Bessie. Miss Bunter evidently was implacable, and she lumped all the Greyfriars Remove together as unworthy of her kind regards.

"What is it?" asked Marjorie. "We are just going in—"

"Yaas, I rather thought I should spot you here," said Mauleverer. "That's why I've biked over. I'm an ambassador."

"A which?" ejaculated Clara.

"Jolly old ambassador! Picked up the idea from Bunter," explained Lord Mauleverer. "He was comin' over, but was stopped half-way by important and urgent business that couldn't be neglected, so I pinched the idea, and came."

Marjorie coloured. She guessed from this that Mauly was an emissary from her former friends in the Greyfriars Remove. Her lips set a little.

"Nobody's sent me," added Mauleverer, reading her thoughts quite easily. "Just hopped off on my own."

"Now go back!" said Bessie.

"Yaas. I'll relieve you of my borin' company just as soon as I possibly can," said Mauleverer. "Only want to ask a question. Week before last you were stranded on the island in the Sark—"

"We don't want to talk about it," said Marjorie.

"Oh, quite; but I do!" explained his lordship. "Give a man a chance. My idea is that there is some mistake in this little matter—"

"There isn't!" said Clara decidedly.

"Not at all," said Dolly Jobling. "No good talking about it. We'd better go on, Marjorie."

"Won't you tell me first why you think that Bob Cherry snaffled your boat that day?" pleaded Lord Mauleverer. "If you say you saw him do it, I shall believe you, of course; but I shall never take a fellow's word again if old Bob turns out to be a liar!"

"We did not see him," said Marjorie.

"I thought not," said Mauly, in relief. "Bob says he never did. And he could no more tell lies than he could jump over the jolly old moon."

"Rubbish!" said Bessie.

"Let's have it out," said Mauleverer, unheeding. "You never saw who pinched your boat?"

"We couldn't," said Marjorie. "We were picnicking in the middle of the island, under the trees. The boat was gone when we came back for it. We saw nobody."

"Might a fellow ask, then, why you think that the pincher was a chap who's always been friendly to you, and who would be chopped up into cats-meat before he'd play a rotten trick on any girl?" asked Mauleverer.

"Oh, rot!" said Clara. "He knows how we know. He must have missed his hat after he went away with the boat."

"His hat!" repeated Lord Mauleverer blankly. "Did—did you say his hat, Miss Trevlyn?"

"Yes; I did say his hat!" snapped Clara. "He dropped his hat in the

willows on the island when he was taking the boat. And I suppose he was in too much of a hurry to get it back. Anyhow, we found it there."

"Impossible! I—I mean— Sure it was his hat?"

"His name was in it."

"Oh gad! That's right! We all have our names in our hats. What the merry thump can Bob's hat have been doin' there?" exclaimed Mauleverer, in amazement.

"Oh, walked there, perhaps!" suggested Miss Clara sarcastically. "Ever noticed straw hats walking about?"

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"Can't make it out," he said. "I quite understand what you thought, findin' it there. Bob's never mentioned that he was on the island at all that day, so I don't see how he dropped his hat there. This beats me! Still, I wouldn't find a man guilty of a rotten trick, just on the evidence of a dashed old hat lyin' about!"

"Fathead!" said Bessie Bunter.

"Oh gad! Thanks, Miss Bunter!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "I dare say you're right. I never was very bright. All the same—"

"I did not feel sure," said Marjorie quietly. "It looked a certainty, but I could not believe it till— Oh, what is the use of discussing it?"

"Lots!" said Mauly. "Heaps! Get at the facts that way."

"We know the facts," said Dolly Jobling.

"Oh, quite; but I don't!" urged his lordship. "What else was there beside the jolly old tile?"

"They had the boat," said Marjorie. "I never made up my mind till I heard that. But we saw the boat-builder at Friardale—Mr. Jones. He had fetched the boat back from the Greyfriars raft, and had the names of all the boys who had left it there—five names."

"Same gang that pinched it!" snorted Bessie Bunter.

"Oh!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Well, I can't explain the hat—that's got me flummoxed. But I can explain the boat. They've told us about that. They got it away from a Highcliffe man—man named Ponsonby."

"Stuff!" said Bessie.

"They think it was Pon pinched the boat, and they've been on the warpath, lookin' for him ever since," said Mauleverer.

"Gammon!" said Bessie.

"There's no doubt that Ponsonby had the boat," said Lord Mauleverer.

"How do you know that?" asked Clara.

"Bob and his friends told me so," answered Lord Mauleverer innocently. "They told all the fellows."

"Rats!" said Bessie.

"Nonsense!" said Clara.

"We never saw anything of Ponsonby that day. We hardly know him," said Marjorie Hazeldene. "Why should he play such a miserable trick on a party of girls he hardly knew?"

"Why should Bob?" asked Mauly.

The Cliff House girls were silent—even Bessie! It was hard to think of any reason Pon could have had for such a dastardly trick. But undoubtedly it was harder still to think of any reason Bob Cherry could have had.

"Does Ponsonby admit having had the boat?" asked Dolly Jobling, with a curl of the lip.

"Oh, no! But he's a fearful fibber! Awfully bad hat, you know! He says he wasn't on the river at all that day. That looks as if he was."

"Bosh!" said Clara decidedly.



Ponsonby was quite unaware that anyone was at hand till a grip was suddenly laid on his collar from behind. "Got him!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Leggo! I—oh! Ow! Ooooooh!" spluttered the dandy of Highcliffe, as he was heaved bodily over the stile.

"Rot!" said Bessie.

Marjorie smiled faintly.

"It's very good of you to try to clear up what you think is a mistake," she said, "but—"

"I'm not only going to try—I'm goin' to get by with it!" declared Lord Mauleverer. "I'm a go-getter when I get fairly goin'! Takin' it that Wharton and his friends never pinched that boat, all we've got to do is to spot the jolly old pincher, and all's calm and bright—what?"

"They took it!" said Clara.

"I don't think so, Miss Trevlyn."

"Can you think?" inquired Miss Bunter. "You don't look to me as if you can."

"Oh! Um! I—I try sometimes, Miss Bunter!" gasped Mauly. "I know I'm not one of those brilliant blokes, but—"

"You say they took the boat from Ponsonby," said Marjorie quietly. "I should like to believe it, of course. But surely it is very unusual for schoolboys to take a boat away from a boy belonging to another school."

"Circumstances were unusual, you see," explained Mauleverer. "They've told us all about it. Pon was shootin' peas at some of them, and they knocked his hat into the river, and it sank. Bob comes along later, and Pon grabs his hat and gets away with it, in revenge. Later still they spot Pon in the boat, and grab it off him for grabbing Bob's hat. That's how it happened. Thinkin' it was a Highcliffe boat, they tied it up at our raft to be sent for—leavin' Pon to walk home. That's it in a nutshell."

Marjorie gave a start.

"He had Bob's hat?" she exclaimed. "Yaas!"

"Oh!" gasped Marjorie. "If you're sure of that—if he had Bob's hat—he

might have dropped it on the island—as we supposed that Bob did."

Lord Mauleverer gave a jump.

"Oh gad!" he gasped. "You've got it, Miss Hazelden! If that dashed old hat was all the evidence you had to go on—"

"Oh!" gasped Clara.

"Rot!" said Bessie Bunter. "They've made all this up to get out of it. Just like my brother Billy! He would!"

"Brother Billy might, Miss Bunter," grinned Lord Mauleverer; "but I assure you that—"

"Rubbish!" said Bessie. "They did it! First they make out that Ponsonby had the boat, then they make out that he had the hat. I'll believe it when Ponsonby says so."

"Be quiet, Bessie!"

"Shan't!"

Marjorie's face was very troubled. Always at the back of her mind had been a lurking doubt.

The whole thing hinged upon Bob Cherry's hat having been dropped by the fellow who had pinched the boat. That any other fellow—especially a fellow from another school—could have been wearing Bob's hat, was so improbable that it had never occurred to her mind. Yet what Lord Mauleverer had stated made it seem probable enough.

"If—if we've been wrong—" stammered Marjorie.

"We haven't," said Clara.

"Not in the least," said Dolly Jobling.

"You're soft, Marjorie," said Bessie Bunter. "In fact, silly! We all know they did it. Now they want to get out of it. They're trying to land it on somebody else. If a burglar left his hat in a bank, it wouldn't be much use for him to say that somebody else had been wearing it."

Barbara Redfern came whizzing by on a bike.

"You'll be late for gates!" she called out.

"We must go!" said Marjorie. "Tell Bob—"

"Nothing!" interrupted Clara implacably.

"Tell Bob—"

"Rats!" said Bessie Bunter.

"Tell Bob," said Marjorie, for the third time, "that if there's been a mistake, I'm awfully sorry—but I don't know what to think. Tell him that from me."

"Not from me!" said Clara.

"Or from me!" said Dolly Jobling.

"Tell him from me to go and eat coke!" said Bessie Bunter. "And tell him that, if I wasn't so lady-like, I'd smack his face!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Mauleverer.

The Cliff House girls walked on, three of them as implacable as ever, and one—Marjorie—sorely troubled and distressed.

Lord Mauleverer remounted his bike and rode mightfully back to Greyfriars. He rode at his usual leisurely pace, arrived late for gates, and received a hundred lines from Mr. Queleh—which, fortunately, did not upset his lordship's noble equanimity.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Cake for Bunter!

"Y OOOOOP!"
Bump!

Billy Bunter entered Study No. 1 in the Remove quite suddenly. He flew in, and landed on his hands and knees on the carpet.

Evidently, a boot had assisted him in. Harry Wharton & Co. were in the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,530.

study. They stared—or, rather, glared—round at Billy Bunter. The grinning face of the Bounder was glimpsed for a moment in the passage. Apparently, it was Smithy's boot that had helped the Owl of the Remove into the study.

The Bounder walked on, laughing. Billy Bunter sprawled and roared.

"Get out, you fat freak!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Owl! Yow! Wow!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, that beast Smithy kicked me!"

"Good!"

Billy Bunter resumed the perpendicular. He wriggled painfully as he stood. The Bounder's boot seemed to have landed hard.

"Roll out, barrel!" snapped the captain of the Remove.

Instead of rolling out, Billy Bunter shut the study door. He preferred to remain where he was till Herbert Vernon-Smith was off the scene.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up!" roared Bob.

The Famous Five were not in the best of tempers. Bunter's ambassadorship had been a ghastly failure. They were as far as ever from clearing up the tangle, and matters were going from bad to worse in the Remove. Giving Ponsonby what he deserved would have been a comfort, but there was now not the remotest prospect of that. It was certain that the cad of Highcliffe would give Greyfriars an exceedingly wide offing now.

"I say, you fellows, that beast Smithy says you're in Coventry, and he kicked me because I was speaking to you!" wailed Bunter.

"Good!" said Bob. "I'll kick you, too, if you go on doing it!"

"Beast!"

"You podgy, piratical porpoise!" growled Bob. "You've let us down! Get out before I burst you all over the study!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I'll go over to Cliff House again to-morrow, if you like!" declared Bunter. "You lend me that five bob to square Bessie, and I'll go over and—"

"You'll go over with a bump if you don't clear!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I can't go without the five bob," said Bunter. "You know what girls are; they ain't reasonable like us. Bessie makes out that I still owe her that five bob, because I haven't paid up yet. I could talk to her till I was black in the face, but she'd still make out that I owed her five bob. I suppose you fellows can trust me with five shillings?" added Bunter, with dignity.

The Famous Five gazed at him.

"I mean to say, there's fellows who can't be trusted with money," said Bunter. "But I hope I'm not one of them. I say, you fellows, I got back late for tea. I've had nothing but a few jam tarts. If you've got a cake or anything—"

"Boot him!" hissed Johnny Bull.

"I jolly well know you've got a cake in that cupboard!" said Bunter. "Pretty mean to keep it there when I've missed my tea on your account! I've been kicked, just because I speak to you fellows when you're in Coventry. This is what comes of sticking to one's pals when they're down on their luck—and you don't even offer a chap a slice of cake!" said Bunter pathetically.

"Get out!" roared Wharton.

"Beast! I'm going to wait here till Smithy's gone into his study!" yapped Bunter. "Think I'm going to be booted all over the Remove passage to please you! I jolly well hope that cad will be copped to-morrow!"

"Who, fathead?"

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"That beast Smithy! I jolly well wish Quelch had heard what I heard him saying on the telephone on Wednesday!" grunted Bunter. "Serve him right if I told Quelch! Wow!"

"If Smithy's waiting in the passage to kick him," remarked Bob thoughtfully, "we can't do better than boot him out and let Smithy get on with it!"

"Go it!"

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter backed warily to the door. "I say, no larks, you know! I say, I heard what you fellows were saying when that beast came along and hoofed me into the study! I wasn't listening, you know!"

"You heard without listening?" asked Bob.

"Exactly, old chap—I—I mean, I—I was just coming in, but I stopped to tie my shoelace! Look here, you were saying that you want to get hold of that Highcliffe cad," said Bunter.

"What about it, fathead?"

Bunter winked—a fat wink.

"Suppose I could help you collar him?" he asked.

"Fathead!"

"Well, I know what I know!" said Bunter. "To-morrow's a half-holiday, and I know where that cad could be found if a fellow wanted him. Smithy doesn't know I know; but I jolly well do—see? He, he, he!"

"Boot him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Hold on a minute!" said Harry Wharton hastily. "If Smithy's meeting that Highcliffe cad again on Saturday—and it's likely enough, after we stopped him on Wednesday—"

"Oh!" said Johnny.

"What the dickens does Bunter know about it if he is?" asked Nugent.

"The knowfulness of the esteemed spyful Bunter is often terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Billy Bunter grinned.

"I can tell you fellows, I jolly well know all about it," he said. "I don't mind telling you, as pals, if you'll be decent about the cake—"

"Gammon!" growled Johnny Bull.

"That's all you know!" grinned Bunter. "Perhaps I was in Quelch's study when Smithy came in to phone, and perhaps I wasn't! Perhaps I heard him fixing it up with Ponsonby, and perhaps I didn't! That's telling!"

The chums of the Remove exchanged a quick glance. It was on Wednesday afternoon that the Bounder had been forcibly walked home, preventing his meeting with Cecil Ponsonby. It struck them as very probable that Smithy had got on the telephone to Highcliffe to fix up another appointment with the dandy of Highcliffe. They had not thought about it before; but now that they did think of it, it seemed likely enough.

"I'm not going to tell you anything unless you're decent about the cake!" said Bunter. "I may have heard Smithy fixing it up to meet Pon at Courtfield stile on Saturday afternoon; I may not! As I said, that's telling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I know I jolly well shan't say a word unless you're pally with the cake, after I've missed my tea!"

The Famous Five chortled. Bunter, evidently, was going to keep that secret, unless for value received. But he had his own remarkable and inimitable way of keeping a secret.

"Cough it up, you fat frump!" said the captain of the Remove, laughing. "If you've got it right, you can have the whole cake!"

Billy Bunter's little round eyes glistened behind his big round spectacles.

"Mean that?" he gasped.

"Yes, ass!"

"Good! I can tell you how to cop the cad!" gasped Bunter. "Smithy's meeting him at Courtfield stile on Saturday—honest Injun!"

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

Billy Bunter seemed happily unaware that he had already imparted that piece of information.

"I say, you fellows, it's straight!" exclaimed Bunter. "Wharrer you sniggering at? I tell you I heard him on the phone."

"And Smithy let you hear him?" grunted Johnny Bull, suspiciously.

"No fear!" grinned Bunter. "He didn't know I was there—see? I thought it was Quelch coming into the study when Smithy came in, and I got behind the window curtain—see? He jolly well never knew I was in the study."

"Oh!" said Johnny. "You eavesdropping little beast!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"What time is Smithy meeting the cad?" asked Harry Wharton, with a very sharp look at the grinning Owl.

"Half-past two," answered Bunter.

Smithy's going to pick him up in a car. Pon won't come this side of Courtfield, you bet! He, he, he!"

Bunter chortled.

"I couldn't hear what Pon said, of course," he went on, "but I jolly well know that he said he wouldn't come near Greyfriars, from what Smithy said. They're going to Lantham races—just those two, Smithy said. He said it was risky enough for two, and a crowd would be asking for it. I say, you fellows, if Quelch knew—"

"Well, Quelch isn't going to know," said Harry, "though it would serve the shady rotter right to be spotted and sacked. By gum! If that Highcliffe cad is at Courtfield stile at half-past two on Saturday afternoon—"

His eyes gleamed.

"But Smithy—" said Nugent.

"Smithy won't find it healthy to butt in!" said the captain of the Remove grimly. "Smithy's been asking for it a lot lately, and he may get more than he wants. Never mind Smithy—"

"I say, you fellows, you won't tell Smithy I mentioned it!" said Billy Bunter anxiously. "He would be shirty if he knew. I don't want to have to thrash the cad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—look here, don't you let on to Smithy that you got it from me—"

"Right as rain, old fat man," said Bob Cherry, laughing.

"And I say, what about that cake?" asked Bunter. "You said the whole cake—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the bell! Come on, you men—"

"I say, that cake—" roared Bunter.

"Calling-over, fathead—"

"But that cake—"

Harry Wharton laughed and threw open the door of the study cupboard. Within lay a cake—as Billy Bunter was well aware, as it was that cake that had drawn him to Study No. 1, when the Bounder booted him at the doorway. The fat Owl grabbed the cake as the Famous Five left the study to go down to Hall.

Bunter was rather late in Hall, and when he arrived there were cakey crumbs added to the smears of jam on his fat countenance. And from a bulging pocket his fat hand drew segments of cake, to chew surreptitiously while Prout called the names. He gave Herbert Vernon-Smith a jammy, cakey grin. Smithy had booted him—and Bunter's opinion was that on the morrow Smithy

would have cause to be sorry for that booting! Which, very probably, was going to be the case.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Few Words From Mauly!

"GENTLEMEN—" "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" "—chaps—" continued Lord Mauleverer. "What the dickens—" "—and sportsmen!" went on his lordship.

"Making a speech?" asked Bob, staring at Mauly.

"Yaas!"

"Oh, go it, then!"

After prep that evening most of the Remove had gathered in the Rag, as usual. Not as usual, Lord Mauleverer made himself prominent in the public eye.

Most eyes were on him as he stepped on a chair and stood surveying the crowded room with a placid gaze.

Mauly, it seemed, had something to say. Having gained the general attention, his lordship proceeded:

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen!"

"We've had that!" remarked the Bounder.

"Shut up, Smithy!"

"Gentlemen, sportsmen, and Smithy!" resumed his lordship imperturbably, amid loud chuckles. "I've a few words to say to the Remove, if nobody minds, and—"

"The fewer the better!" snapped the Bounder.

"Will you shut up, Smithy!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Silence!" shouted a dozen fellows.

"Go it, Mauly!" said Peter Todd encouragingly. "What the dickens is it about? Heard of something new in neckties?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got somethin' to tell everybody about that row with Cliff House!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Takin' a tip from our plump friend Bunter—"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"I biked over to Cliff House without stoppin' at Uncle Clegg's on the way and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I've had the pleasure of a chat with Miss Hazeldene and her friends," went on Mauly, "and I sort of think I've rooted out the jolly old facts."

There was a general movement of interest. Most interested of all were the Famous Five.

Hazeldene favoured his lordship with a scowl.

"Like your cheek to butt in!" he said.

"Think so?" asked Mauleverer.

"Yes," grunted Hazel. "I do!"

"Well, I dare say you can't help bein' a cheeky ass, old bean, so I overlook it," said his lordship graciously. "But don't say any more!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've found out how they spotted those cads pinchin' their boat?" asked the Bounder.

"I've found out how they made the mistake, Smithy."

"Rats!"

"Good old Mauly!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Go it, old chap!"

"Cough it up, Mauly!" exclaimed a dozen Removites.

The Bounder had a black look on his face. He was not prepared to welcome any news that would checkmate his campaign against the Famous Five. Hazel sneered and shrugged his shoulders. But it was clear that nearly

(Continued on next page.)

The STATELY HOMES of GREYFRIARS

MONTY NEWLAND

By

The Greyfriars Rhymester



One of the best and true blue is Monty Newland, the Hebrew of the Greyfriars Remove, who forms the subject of this week's snappy verses by our Greyfriars Rhymester.

(1)

If Bunter were asked to describe
The home Monty Newland inhabits,
He'd say that this Israelite tribe
Are bunched together like rabbits;
That Monty has come from a shop
Full up with old clothes, boots, and
fenders,
With three balls of brass on the top
Of "Newland & Co. Moneylenders."

(3)

But when you've gone out of the place
You leave the old scamp in high feather,
A sinister smile on his face
While rubbing his thin hands together.
He counts up his money each night
(And swindles himself in the process!)
Then chuckles with sordid delight
While rubbing his outsize in noses!
(Wot a rhyme!)

(5)

He sniffs and calls Monty a few
Choice names, such as Shylock and
Sheeny.
Says Bunter: "I can't bear a Jew,
Like Hitler and Dooce Mussolini!"
But good-natured Monty will smile
And answer: "Yes, fatty, you've said it!
If you have the Englishman's style,
I'm sure it's not much to their credit!"

(7)

The villa at Hove is select,
Quite close to the sea—and quite costly!
The neighbours, as you may expect,
Are brigadier-generals mostly.
Retired and long since past their primes,
These antediluvian jokers
Stroll out to talk over old times
With pensioned-off Stock Exchange
brokers.

(2)

And when you're in want of a bob
To purchase a few lemon-squashes,
You'd better give Newland the job
By "popping" your spats and
goloshes.
"Mein gootness!" old Newland will say,
"This stuff—well, it's not vorth the
taking!
Vun shilling is all I can pay!"
And it seems that his tough heart is
breaking!

(4)

Thus Bunter! And needless to state,
We laugh at what Bunter may tell us.
The reason he likes to relate
Such stories is just that he's jealous.
For Monty, though fearfully rich,
Won't lend him a bob till to-morrow,
Or cash any cheques for him, which
Fills Bunter with sadness and sorrow!

(6)

So let's have the truth just for once,
Our Monty's a ripping good fellow.
He certainly has lots of "bunce,"
And looks on the gold when its yellow!
His rich Uncle Isaac at Hove
Supplies him with cash in full measure.
My uncle's a different cove,
Say, Monty, I'll change him with
pleasure!

(8)

There Monty lives peacefully when
He has to go home for vacations,
Unless at the college some men
Are ready with kind invitations.
Perhaps it is dull, you may say,
For he has no sisters or brothers.
But Brighton and Hove are so gay,
They're bound to suit Monty—and
others!

Next Week: THE TUCKSHOP.

all the fellows were keen to hear what Mauly had to say.

Most of the Remove were "down" on the supposed delinquents; but if a mistake had been made, were more than willing to set it right.

"Carry on, Mauly!" exclaimed Russell.

"Pile in, old bean!" said Ogilvy.

"Silence for the chair!" called out Peter Todd.

Lord Mauleverer went on with cheerful calm:

"You've heard already that Wharton and his pals bagged that boat off Ponsonby, because Pon bagged Cherry's hat that day—tit for tat!"

"We don't believe it!" sneered the Bounder.

"Shut up, Smithy!" roared Bolsover major. "Can't you let a chap speak?"

"Well, it comes out that it was a hat—just a simple, necessary, harmless hat, that did all the mischief!" said Lord Mauleverer. "The girls fancied that Bob had pinched their boat because they found his hat on the island."

"Wha-a-t?" gasped Bob.

"Rot!" said the Bounder.

"My—my hat!" stuttered Bob. "Pon had my hat; his own went into the river and he bagged mine! He hadn't got it, though, when we took that boat away from him, or I'd have had it back—"

"Shut up, Cherry! Carry on, Mauly!"

"Man who pinched the boat dropped his hat, in gettin' it away," continued Lord Mauleverer. "Man in a hurry—what? He would be in a hurry! Well, after they missed the boat they found the jolly old hat, with Bob's name in it. Knowin' that it must have been dropped by the chappie who bagged the boat, what were they to think?"

"So that was it!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"They jumped to it that Bob had done it," said Mauleverer. "Can't quite blame them, in the circe. Miss Hazeldene appears to have had doubts and—"

"Rot!" sneered Hazel.

"Your sister said so herself, Hazel! But when they heard that the chaps had had their boat, she came to the same view as the others! Really, it looked like it—what?"

"Jolly like it!" sneered the Bounder. "Looked like what it was!"

"I'm relatin' this interestin' story in public," said Lord Mauleverer, "so that every man in the Remove will know how the matter stands. Man who pinched the boat dropped his hat, as they supposed; but he was wearin' another man's hat, as it happened, owin' to somethin' they hadn't heard of. Naturally, they never guessed that a Highcliffe man was wearin' a Greyfriars hat!"

"Especially as it doesn't happen to be true!" sneered Vernon-Smith.

"Chuck it, Smithy," muttered Tom Redwing, "you know it's true!"

"I know it isn't!" said the Bounder coolly. "Never heard a thinner yarn!"

"Thin enough, and no mistake!" said Skinner. "Why, anybody could spin a yarn like that. Where's the proof?"

"Echo answers where!" remarked Snoop.

"You can pack that up, Skinner!" said Peter Todd. "It looks jolly likely, to me. I remember seeing Cherry come in without his hat that day, too."

"By gum, I remember that!" said Ogilvy. "But look here, Mauly, mean to say that that was all they had to go on?"

"That was all!" said Lord Mauleverer.

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"I've had it from all four of them—Miss Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, Dolly Jobling and Bessie Bunter. Mind, I don't see that they could have thought anythin' else, findin' Cherry's hat there and then hearing that the chaps had had their boat. But it was all a mistake, as I've said all along—and that's that!"

"And you've told them——" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yaas; I've told them your side of the affair, old beans," said Lord Mauleverer. "That's the lot!"

Mauleverer stepped down from the chair.

"Hold on!" exclaimed the Bounder maliciously. "You haven't told us yet whether they believe that fairy tale about Pon havin' Cherry's hat."

Lord Mauleverer walked to the door. He did not seem to hear the Bounder.

"Answer that, Mauly!" called out Hazel.

Mauleverer glanced round.

"I've said my say!" he answered. "If you fellows don't choose to see the facts, now you know them, it's your own look-out! I'm done!"

And with that Lord Mauleverer walked out of the Rag.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged a glance and followed him. Mauleverer had made his statement in public to clear up the mystery, but they could see that there was something more that he did not choose to state in public.

The Rag was left in a buzz.

That explanation, now it had come, was simple enough. Vernon-Smith either did not, or would not, believe a word of it. But it was easy to see the effect on the other fellows.

The belief hitherto had been that the Cliff House girls knew who had stolen their boat from the island; that they had, in fact, seen the fellow who had done it. Now it transpired that they had not seen him, and that their belief was based on evidence which, convincing as it looked, could be explained away.

The result was a general change of opinion in the Remove. Even Hazel was looking doubtful. The Bounder was almost the only fellow who kept his opinion unchanged; and that, doubtless, was chiefly due to an exasperated determination not to change it. His campaign against the Famous Five had been only partially successful; now it was falling to pieces on all sides. The sentence of Coventry, never fully enforced, was evidently a thing of the past now—much to Smithy's chagrin. Whatever might be the opinion at Cliff House, the Famous Five were on their old footing in their own Form at Greyfriars.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mauly Knows How!

LORD MAULEVERER, stretched elegantly on his elegant ottoman in Study No. 12, nodded and grinned as five fellows looked in from the doorway.

"Trickle in, old beans!" he said.

The Famous Five trickled in. Harry Wharton shut the door.

"You'll excuse my bargin' in, I'm sure!" went on his lordship. "Took the tip from Bunter! Bunter havin' been held up in the tuckshop——"

"You're a good sort, Mauly, old man!" said Harry. "First of all we want to thank you all round——"

"Vote of thanks, passed unanimously, also nem. con.!" said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"The thankfulness is terrific, my

esteemed and absurd Mauly!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Not to say preposterous and ludicrous, you know!" added Bob, with a grin.

"Right man in the right place!" said Johnny Bull.

"Fearfully obliged, Mauly!" said Frank Nugent.

"Speech taken as read!" yawned Lord Mauleverer. "But I dare say you've guessed that there's a few details I didn't mention in the Rag—what?"

"Well, yes," said Harry. "I fancy you've set the matter right at this end, Mauly; but we'd like to know how Marjorie and her friends look at it."

"There's the rub!" said Lord Mauleverer ruefully. "They seem to have got it fairly fixed in their heads that you fellows did it. Miss Hazeldene has changed her mind—I could see that! But Clara and Dolly Jobling haven't—and Bessie Bunter is absolutely ferocious."

"I fancied it was something like that!" said Harry. "It's no good getting shirty about it, of course—they had a lot of evidence to go on; that cur Ponsonby fixed it up carefully enough."

"Beastly unlucky he was wearin' Cherry's hat at the time!" said Mauly. "Still more unlucky that he dropped it there—what?"

Wharton's lips curled.

"You don't know that cur as we do, Mauly! I've been wondering ever since it happened why even a cad and hooligan like Ponsonby should have played such a cowardly trick on a party of girls who've never given him any offence. I don't think even Pon would have done it, except as a knock at us. It was because he had Bob's hat that day that he did it."

Lord Mauleverer whistled.

"You don't think——" he began.

"I don't think—I know!" answered Harry Wharton quietly. "It's beaten me to guess what the rotten rascal's motive was. I know it now. He did not drop that hat by accident when he was stealing the boat. He stole the boat because he had the hat and could leave it there to make it look as if Bob had done it. The whole thing was a dirty trick to start a row between us and our friends at Cliff House."

"Oh gad!" said Mauly faintly. "That suspicion, which had occurred to the Famous Five at once, had not entered Mauly's mind."

"We played into his hands by taking the boat away from him," went on Harry. "He was ratty at the time, when we made him walk back to Highcliffe—but he must have been glad afterwards, for it fairly landed the thing on us. If we'd had the faintest idea——"

"Of course we hadn't!" said Bob. "Never knew that the girls were on the river at all that day. That cur spotted them picnicking on the island, and saw his chance to put a spoke in our wheel."

"Plain enough now!" said Johnny Bull.

"The plainfulness is terrific."

Harry Wharton clenched his hands.

"We knew he'd done it—we never knew why and never dreamed that he had planned to make it look as if we'd done it," he said. "But if they won't believe what really happened I don't see how we're to set it right—even now we know. But we'll make that cad squirm for it, that's a comfort."

"Miss Hazeldene told me to say that if there was a mistake she was awfully sorry!" said Mauleverer. "I'm sure she understands."

"Marjorie's got a lot of sense!" said Bob. "If her brother had half as much he wouldn't be half the fool he is. But



Hazeldene went on, with blazing eyes, hitting out right and left. Ponsonby put up his hands and gave blow for blow, backing away as he did so. "Hazel!" called out Marjorie, looking over the wall. "Oh, let him rip, old dear!" said Clara. "Why shouldn't that rotter have his nasty nose punched?"

we want to make it clear—and how the thump are we going to do it?"

"We can get hold of that Highcliffe cad to-morrow and wring his neck till he owns up!" said Johnny Bull savagely.

"That's all very well, but it won't help!" said Harry. "If they don't believe about Bob's hat and about the boat they won't believe that Pon's owned up if we tell them."

"Um!" said Johnny. Lord Mauleverer sat up on the ottoman.

"How are you goin' to grab him?" he asked. "Seems to me that Pon's best guess is to keep clear of any spot where he's likely to fall in with you fellows."

"Information received, old man!" grinned Bob. "We've got a tip where to pick him up to-morrow afternoon."

"Sure thing?"

"Quite!" said Harry. "That's all right! That blackguard Smithy is picking him up in a car at Courtfield stile to-morrow to go to the Lantham races. Keep that dark, of course—we're not telling Smithy that Pon's going to be picked up by quite another party."

Lord Mauleverer chuckled.

"Smithy's going to miss that jolly old appointment, same as he missed the last!" said Bob. "We're keeping it for him."

"By gad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Look here, Ponsonby would own up if you twisted his ears long enough. Suppose the girls heard him?"

"Eh? We can't walk him into Cliff House School and twist his ears there, can we?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Nunno! Not quite!" chuckled Mauly. "I don't advise it! Not exactly! But—" Lord Mauleverer rubbed his noble forehead. "Suppose you got the story out of him with the girls somewhere around to hear it. with-

out Pon knowin' they were on the spot? For instance, suppose they went picnicking on a half-holiday at Sark Abbey—that jolly old ruin the other side of Courtfield—"

"That's a jolly long way from Cliff House," said Bob.

"Yaas; but you can reach it on the river—good pull up in a boat," said Mauleverer. "I'm no end of an oarsman when I get goin'. Suppose I got them to come up the river to picnic at the old abbey—might be able to wangle that, nice-mannered chap like me, you know—"

"Go on, Mauly!" said Harry, listening very attentively. "I think I get the idea—but carry on!"

"Picture me, surrounded by a bevy of beauty, sittin' eatin' buns in the abbey ruins!" said Mauleverer. "T'other side of a wall or somethin', you arrive with the admirable Pon—and ask him questions!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob.

"He doesn't know anybody's in hearing!" continued Lord Mauleverer. "He coughs it up, thinkin' only you fellows are present—and t'other side of the wall they lap it all up—"

"By gum!" said Bob.

"But they'd have to be kept quiet!" said Johnny Bull. "Can girls be got to leave off talking?"

"If it weren't too much trouble to get up, old man, I'd punch your nose for that!" said Lord Mauleverer severely.

"Still, that's a tip—the good Bessie mustn't be there—she's got a chin too much like brother Billy. Marjorie and Clara and Dolly Jobling—they're givin' you men the marble eye, but they ain't fierce with me; besides, I dare say I can get Hazel to join up for a free feed—and that will work the jolly old oracle."

"And then—" said Harry thoughtfully.

"It's only a short cut across the fields from Courtfield stile to the abbey ruins. Couldn't you men persuade Pon to take a walk with you there—and get him talkin' when he gets there? Pullin' his ears, or somethin' like that."

"By gum!" said Bob again.

The Famous Five looked at one another. Then they looked at Lord Mauleverer. Mauly was generally regarded in the Remove as rather an ass. But it was evident that his aristocratic intellect could work when he set it going.

"Mauly, old man, this is a winner!" said Bob.

"Yaas; struck me rather like that," assented Lord Mauleverer. "Half an hour to dorm—lots of time to settle the details. You fellows do the talkin' while I take a rest."

For the next quarter of an hour there was deep discussion in Study No. 12. In that time every detail was settled, and the plan of campaign laid down for the morrow.

When the Famous Five left Lord Mauleverer's study, it was all cut and dried, and the chums of the Remove were looking forward keenly to the morrow, and, if all went well, to the end of the Cliff House feud.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Smithy!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH, in break the next morning, had a black brow.

Redwing wore a faint smile. Both of them, looking at the Famous Five, could see the difference that had been made by Lord Mauleverer's intervention in the troublous matter of the Cliff House feud.

Nobody would have guessed that morning that there had ever been a suggestion of sending the cheery five to Coventry.

The whole Form had come round now that the matter was explained. Fellows like Skinner, who would have liked to keep the trouble alive, realised that there was nothing doing. Other fellows, like Squiff and Browney and Peter Todd, and a dozen more, had told the chums of the Remove frankly that they were sorry they had ever put that rotten trick down to them, which they had only done in the belief that the stranded schoolgirls knew the facts, and had stated the same.

It was clear to them now that Marjorie & Co. did not know the facts, but had been the victims of a cunning deception. That settled the matter for nearly all the Form.

The Bounder, in fact, was left alone in his opinion, and even Smithy had a lurking misgiving that he, too, would have "come round," but for his personal resentment.

Anyhow, his campaign was a ghastly failure, which was a deeply irritating and annoying disappointment to the Bounder in his present temper. All he had to cling to was the fact that while the Remove fellows were easily convinced, the Cliff House girls remained unconvinced. The feud was still on, so far as there was any satisfaction in that.

"Look at the rotters!" muttered Smithy.

"Who?" asked Redwing. "Skinner and Snoop—"

"Don't be a fool! Thick as thieves with everybody again!" growled the Bounder. "After a rotten, sneaking trick—"

"Oh, cut it out, Smithy!" said Tom. "You don't want to see the truth—that's where the shoe pinches. They had nothing to do with it. It was a dirty trick of Ponsonby's; everybody knows that now."

"The Cliff House girls don't, anyhow!" sneered the Bounder.

"They will," said Tom. "I hope so, at least! It's rather rotten to think of

a quarrel going on to please a rotten outsider like that Highcliffe cad."

"Pon's a pal of mine!" snarled the Bounder.

"Then you ought to be jolly well ashamed to admit it!" retorted Redwing. And he left his chum with that, leaving him scowling more blackly than before.

Vernon-Smith joined Hazel, noting, with bitter feelings, that Hazel did not seem greatly bucked thereby.

"I'm still backing you up, old chap, whatever those silly asses may do," said Smithy, referring thus largely to the rest of the Remove.

"Are you?" said Hazel dubiously. "Looks to me as if there isn't anything to back up about, after what Mauly said."

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth.

"Are you coming round like the rest, and making friends with those cads who stranded your sister on Popper's Island?" he sneered.

"Looks as if they never did. It's just one of Pon's dirty tricks, and you know it as well as I do, Smithy. That fellow's cad enough for anything." Hazel was evidently feeling very dubious. "I'm not going to speak to them, if that's what you mean; but I don't feel at all sure about it now."

"They're makin' Pon the scapegoat. He wasn't on the river at all that day; he's told me so."

"Well, a fellow like Ponsonby would say anything."

The Bounder breathed hard.

"Look here," he said. "I'm meetin' the chap this afternoon. We're goin' on a jolly trip. Join up with us."

Hazel was by no means the fellow Smithy wanted as a comrade in his disreputable excursion that afternoon. The offer was a last effort to keep the wavering fellow up to the mark. Hazel was generally keen to join the Bounder in painting the town red.

But he shook his head now.

"Sorry—I've fixed up the afternoon with Mauleverer," he answered. "He's asked me to go on the river with him."

The Bounder's feelings were deep, when the bell rang, and the Remove

went in for third school. Hazel was wavering; Skinner was as malicious as he could venture to be. But, with those exceptions, all the Form had veered round in favour of the Famous Five. The net outcome of Smithy's campaign against the cheery Co. was precisely—nothing!

When the Remove were dismissed that morning, anyone who was interested—which probably nobody was—might have noticed that Billy Bunter was looking extremely bucked.

His fat face was, indeed, irradiated by happy grins.

"I say, you fellows, will one of you lend me a bike this afternoon?" he asked the Famous Five.

"No!" said five voices, in unison.

"I say, don't be beasts, you know!" urged Bunter. "I've got to go over and call for Bessie immediately after dinner, or we shall be late."

"Diddled somebody else out of five bob?" asked Nugent.

Sniff from Bunter.

"A pal may have lent me five bob," he answered. "Some fellows can trust a fellow. No bizney of yours if Mauly lends a chap five bob."

"Oh, it's Mauly this time, is it?" said Bob. "How many times have you borrowed that five bob for Bessie? And when is she going to get it?"

"Yah! Look here, will you lend me a bike to go over to Cliff House?"

"Do you mean to Uncle Cleggs'?"

"No," roared Bunter. "I don't! I've got to call for Bessie to take her to the Theatre Royal at Courtfield. I've got seats," added Bunter, with dignity. "There's a matinee this afternoon, and I've got two seats."

"Whose?" asked Bob. "I remember you had seats for a matinee before, when Coker of the Fifth dropped some tickets."

"These tickets ain't Coker's, you silly ass! I've got two five-and-six stalls. Some fellows can afford stalls!" said Bunter loftily.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five. They guessed the source of those stalls without much difficulty.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter crossly. "Mauly's going on the river, he says, so he won't want them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean, I booked them by phone—I never got those tickets from Mauly—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cackling!" hooted Bunter. "Look here, Mauly's made it a point for me to take Bessie, so I've got to fetch her, see? I mean, I want to see her specially to settle that five bob, and I'm going to take her to the theatre as a treat. I think a chap ought to be affectionate and generous to his sister. When I've got money I spend it, see? Nothing mean about me."

"I'll lend you my bike," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "If you damage it, I'll damage you."

And Billy Bunter rolled away, satisfied, leaving the chums of the Remove chuckling. Mauly evidently had made his arrangements for disposing of Bessie Bunter that afternoon, as that attractive young lady was not desired to hook on to the picnic party.

After dinner that day quite a number of the Remove had special business on hand. Billy Bunter, fat and cheerful, rolled away on Wharton's bike to call for Bessie at Cliff House. Lord Mauleverer and Hazel walked away together soon afterwards, and a little later Herbert Vernon-Smith went out of gates, and strolled in a casual manner in the direction of Courtfield. And

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Immediately after the Bounder started, five smiling fellows started, too, in the same direction.

At the corner of Oak Lane a handsome car from Courtfield Garage was waiting for the Bounder. Smithy was going to step into that car, out of sight of any Greyfriars eyes, cut across to the stile on the other side of Courtfield, and pick up Ponsonby there. That, at least, was Smithy's programme—which was not destined to be carried out.

Smithy did not reach Oak Lane. Half-way there was a patter of feet on the road behind him, and he turned his head, to stare with angry suspicion at the Famous Five.

He was quite unaware that they knew anything of his plans for that afternoon, but he could see at a glance that trouble was brewing. The Famous Five came up at a trot and surrounded him.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Smithy, between his teeth.

"You," answered Harry Wharton coolly.

"You cheeky fool, hands off!" roared the Bounder furiously, as his arms were pinioned by Wharton and Bob Cherry.

He struggled fiercely.

"This way!" said Harry, and in the midst of the Famous Five the struggling, infuriated Bounder was walked off the road into a narrow track through the woods.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Taken for a Walk!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. walked quickly, and the Bounder, resisting every inch of the way, went with them.

He was more surprised than enraged; but he was deeply enraged, and his face was crimson with fury. They halted at a distance from the road, the Bounder panting from his efforts to break loose. The grip on his arms did not relax.

"You fools, idiots, funks, rotters!" he panted. "What are you up to? Is this a rag—or what? Look here, I'm in a hurry—"

"That's all right!" said Bob cheerily. "Pon can wait."

Smithy started violently.

"Pon! What do you mean? I'm going to the pictures at Courtfield."

"And Pon isn't waiting at the stile t'other side of Courtfield?" asked Bob banteringly.

"You—you meddlin' fool! I don't see how you know! What bizney is it of yours?" yelled the Bounder.

"None at all, except that we want to see Ponsonby," answered Harry Wharton. "This is our chance for getting that cad—and we're not missing it!"

"Will you let me go?" roared Vernon-Smith.

"No," answered the captain of the Remove coolly. "You can ask for the sack next half-holiday if you're keen on it. There'll be races at Lantham again, I dare say—heaps of swindling and blackguardism for you to get up to the neck in! Just at present you're going to keep out of the way while we get hold of that Highcliffe cad."

"You—you rotter! You meddlin' fool!" Herbert Vernon-Smith was almost foaming. "I'll make you pay for this! I'll—"

"Send in the bill whenever you like, old man!" said Bob. "If you'll give us your word to chuck it and walk

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

SOME time ago I mentioned in my chat that I had received a letter from a reader who complained that there was "too much Bunter." Since then, I have received shoals of letters from loyal readers all over the country breathing indignation and anger that any reader should say that we have too much of Bunter.

One of the most spirited replies comes from John Bell, an ardent reader in the Isle of Wight, who, speaking on behalf of a large group of "Magnetites" on the island, asserts that the disgruntled reader who opened up the controversy must have a very poor sense of humour. "Leave out Billy Bunter!" he says. "Why the jolly Old Paper wouldn't be the same without the prize porpoise of the Remove!"

My Isle of Wight reader is certainly

straight to the point, and what's more his opinion is shared by thousands of other correspondents. Well, I can promise you all that Mr. Frank Richards will not "kill off" Billy Bunter, neither will he "put him to sleep." My thanks are due to all you fellows who so stoutly defend the famous Falstaff of the Greyfriars Remove.

Now for a word or two about

"BUNTER ON THE SPOT!"

By Frank Richards.

next week's grand yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars. As the title suggests, Billy Bunter takes the leading role. Very much annoyed at Billy barging into his affairs and spoiling his half-holiday, Vernon-Smith decides to teach the fat junior a lasting lesson. Bunter falls into the trap set for him and incidentally meets with one of the most exciting experiences of his life which ends in his reaping a rich reward.

Fun, thrills and excitement form the ingredients of this magnificent yarn, and you'll vote it great, just as you will the other features included in next Saturday's MAGNET. Don't hesitate, order your copy at the earliest opportunity.

YOUR EDITOR.

straight back to Greyfriars and stay there we'll let you rip."

"Fool!"

"Thanks! Trot out that cord, Johnny."

"You—you—you dare—" panted the Bounder.

"Oh, don't be a fool as well as a rotter!" said Wharton contemptuously. "You'd be sacked for your rotten game this afternoon if you were spotted. Keeping you out of it may save your bacon. Anyhow, you're not going blagging to-day; you'd be in the way."

The Bounder struggled frantically, but he struggled in vain; and Johnny Bull knotted the cord. The Bounder's right leg was bent up at the knee and secured there; another length of the cord tied his wrists together. He stood leaning against a tree on one leg.

"Now," said Harry Wharton quietly, "you can hop back to Greyfriars on one leg, or you can stay there and wriggle loose. Either will keep you busy for an hour—which is all we want. After that you can do as you choose; lots of time to get on to Lantham, and you'll find plenty of shady blackguards there if you miss Pon's company."

"You—you rotter! You—you—" The Bounder choked. "I'll make you squirm for this! I—I'll—"

"Take it smiling, old bean!" said Nugent. "All in the day's work!"

"The smilefulness is the proper caper, my esteemed rorty Smithy!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

Smithy did not look like smiling; he almost foamed as the Famous Five stepped away, leaving him leaning on the tree.

"Come on!" said Johnny Bull. "That blackguard's safe for an hour. Hop or wriggle, Smithy, just as you like. Come on, you men!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked back to the road.

The Bounder's eyes burned after them.

He was not likely to hop back to the

school on one leg if he could help it. He decided to wriggle. The bonds had been nicely calculated to keep him busy for at least an hour. He wriggled and wriggled, panted and perspired, and vowed unlimited vengeance. Leaving him to that cheery occupation, the chums of the Remove walked on towards Courtfield Common.

They smiled at the sight of a handsome car waiting at the corner of Oak Lane, with a chauffeur standing beside it. Smithy was welcome to take the car in an hour's time if he liked. He would not have the company of Cecil Ponsonby, but there was no doubt that he would be better off without it.

On the road over the common the juniors picked up the motor-bus from Redclyffe, which bore them on through Courtfield.

They alighted on the farther side of the town and walked on towards Highcliffe School.

Courtfield stile was the first stile on the country road and not far from the town. There, they had no doubt, Ponsonby was already waiting for Herbert Vernon-Smith. But there was little doubt that if he saw the Greyfriars fellows coming up the road he would not continue to wait—for which reason they left the road and proceeded by the fields.

Coming in sight of the stile from a field path, they spotted an elegant figure leaning on it—its back to them, naturally, as Ponsonby was watching the road for a car from Courtfield.

Ponsonby—leaning on the stile, with one foot on the step—was looking quite merry and bright, anticipating a happy afternoon in disreputable company with the reckless scapegrace of Greyfriars.

He did not hear footsteps on the grassy path behind the stile, and was quite unaware that anyone was at hand till a grip was suddenly laid on his collar from behind.

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He gave a startled howl and tried to turn his head.

"Got him!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Let go my collar, you Greyfriars cad!" shrieked Ponsonby.

"Bag his fins!" said Bob.

"Leggo! I— Oh! Ow! Ooooooh!" splattered the dandy of Highcliffe, as his arms were grasped and he was heaved bodily over the stile into the field.

He sprawled on the grassy path, his hat falling off; he scrambled up, in the centre of a circle formed by the Famous Five.

But Pon's proceedings were very different from Smithy's in similar circumstances. Smithy was the man to resist desperately, regardless of odds, so long as he had a kick left in him. The Bounder might be rather a black-guard, but his pluck and determination were unlimited. It was quite different with Pon.

So far from resisting the whole party, Pon would have taken to his heels rather than have tackled the least formidable member singly—which made him a much easier proposition than the tough Bounder.

Not for a moment had he expected—or dreaded—to fall in with Greyfriars fellows so far from Greyfriars and so near his own school, but there they were—and he was caught!

He gave a wild glance towards the road, in the hope of seeing other Highcliffe fellows passing.

The Co. closed in on him.

"Come for a walk?" asked Bob affably.

"No!" hissed Ponsonby.

"I'm going to boot you if you don't."

Pon decided to walk.

It was not necessary to grab him as the Bounder had been grabbed. So long as he was within reach he was safe, and the Greyfriars fellows took care that he had no chance of dodging out of reach.

He gave them savage, bitter looks as he went, but he was more puzzled than alarmed; quite at a loss to guess what was on.

They crossed the field, and then another, and came out on a track across a solitary pastureland, with the Sark winding away like a silver ribbon in the distance.

"Look here, where are you going?" panted Ponsonby at last. "What silly-fool game are you fellows playing? I've got an appointment to keep this afternoon."

"Don't worry about that," said Bob reassuringly. "Smithy's rather delayed; you're not likely to see him to-day."

"Where are you taking me?" hissed Pon.

"Don't you like a walk on a nice summer's afternoon with nice fellows like us?" urged Bob. "What about strolling along the river and taking a squint at those jolly old abbey ruins?"

"Will you let me go?" asked Ponsonby, between his teeth.

"Too fond of you, old bean."

"The fondfulness is terrific, esteemed and disgusting Ponsonby."

"You can rag a fellow, five to one!" hissed Pon.

"Not at all!" said Harry Wharton. "We've got time to kill, as it happens; and if you like you can pick your man and fill in time with a scrap, and the rest of us will stand round and see fair play."

"And cheer!" said Bob.

"The cheerfulness will be preposterous."

Pon did not think of accepting that offer. He trudged on sullenly in his unwelcome company.

He was growing more and more puzzled. If this was a "rag" it was a little difficult to understand. The Greyfriars fellows walked by solitary paths over the wide sweep of pasture, apparently with no other object than to fill up time. If they were waiting for something, Pon was quite unable to guess what they were waiting for. It was not till half-past four that they seemed to settle on a definite direction. Then they headed—with Pon—for the deserted ruins of the old abbey on the bank of the Sark.

Why they were taking him there Pon could not begin to guess. They could hardly be seeking solitude now, for the sound of a portable wireless announced that some party of picnickers was in the ruins somewhere.

Bob Cherry began to whistle, and the radio died away. A few minutes later the party came to a halt by an ancient, ivied wall; and Ponsonby was planted against that wall, with the Famous Five facing him.

"And now," said Bob, "we'll come down to business, Ponsonby! Where's my hat?"

"Your hat?" stuttered Pon blankly. "You've got it on, you fool!"

"I don't mean this one! I mean the one you pinched from me the week before last, that Wednesday afternoon on the river! Chap can't afford to lose a hat," said Bob solemnly. "Cough it up, Pon! Where's that hat?"

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

On the Spot!

"JOLLY here!" said Clara Trevlyn. "Topping!" agreed Dolly Jobling.

"Thumping long pull up the river!" remarked Hazeldene. "Blessed if I know how Mauly lived through it."

"Oh, I'm a fearfully strenuous man at times!" declared Lord Mauleverer. "Burstin' with pep, and push, and go, and things."

"You look it!" said Clara.

Marjorie Hazeldene smiled.

Lord Mauleverer did not look, at the moment, as if packed with pep. Sitting in the grass, he leaned back on a mossy, ivied wall, and looked almost too lazy to go on breathing.

It was a very cheery picnic party. Mauly had "wangled" that party easily enough, by the simple device of enlisting Hazeldene.

Marjorie had been very pleased when her brother came in at Cliff House and asked her to come, with her friends, on a picnic up the river. Clara and Dolly, though not fearfully keen on Hazel's society, were willing to join up—and they rather liked Mauly. Everybody rather liked Mauly. And nobody was sorry that Bessie Bunter had already started, with her brother Billy, for Courtfield and the theatre.

Mauly, slacker as he was, had quite distinguished himself in the pull up the river. He could exert himself when he chose—and he did. Hazel would have preferred to stop short, at Popper's Island, or at some little back-water on the way up, but Mauly seemed deter-

mined on the abbey ruins, past Courtfield; and there, at length, they arrived, and camped.

The picnic-basket, packed by Mauly's special orders, was a marvel. Everything that could possibly be desired was there, and a few over. Mauly was lavish in these little matters.

And along with the picnic-basket was Tom Brown's portable wireless, which Mauly had borrowed for the occasion from the New Zealand junior.

It was, as Clara said, jolly!

They had camped under the shade of one of the old walls, thick with ivy, in the abbey ruins. Round them were old masses of masonry, broken walls, dismantled windows. The Sark flowed by at a little distance. They had the place to themselves, at present—it was not much frequented at any time.

There was a cheery buzz of talk, though one topic was carefully avoided—that of the feud. Marjorie, perhaps, had made up her mind about that; but her friends had not, nor her brother. Mauleverer said nothing on the subject. Soon after four o'clock he proposed putting the radio on, and the abbey ruins echoed with the alleged music of the B.B.C.

Certainly, it did not occur to any other member of the party that the wireless was a signal to anybody!

The radio roared at intervals. Any fellow within a considerable distance must have been apprised that a picnic-party had camped in the ruins. Every now and then Mauly shut it off; and when he picked up the sound of a distant whistle he shut it off for good.

"Shove that cake this way, old man!" said Hazel.

Mauleverer shoved the cake.

"Who says ginger-pop?" asked Clara.

Everybody said ginger-pop, and glasses were filled.

Then Lord Mauleverer gave a little cough. He sat up, seemed to listen for a moment, and turned to the Cliff House girls with a cheery grin.

"Now I've got rather a surprise for you," he remarked.

Marjorie Hazeldene gave him rather a quick look. Possibly it had occurred to her to wonder whether there was anything behind that picnic excursion to the old abbey on the Sark. Clara and Dolly looked mildly interested. Hazel stared.

"Give it a name!" said Hazel.

"I want you all to keep perfectly silent for five minutes," said Lord Mauleverer. "Not askin' too much, I hope?"

"Easy enough for us," answered Miss Clara calmly, "but I don't see how two boys are going to keep quiet for five whole minutes."

Lord Mauleverer chuckled.

"Well, we'll try—what?" he said. "Easy enough for you three, as you say, and Hazel and I will try our hardest."

"But what on earth's the game?" asked Hazel, mystified.

"I want you all to hear somethin'," explained Lord Mauleverer. "The performance can't take place if the performers see the audience. It's just goin' to begin, I think. Now, is it a go?"

"Certainly, if you like!" said Marjorie, smiling.

"Oh, all right!" yawned Hazel. "Blessed if I see the joke—if it is a joke! But I don't want to jaw, for one."

"Honest Injun all round?" asked Mauly.

"Yes, fathead!" said Hazel.

"Honest Injun!" said Marjorie, Clara, and Dolly, all puzzled; but getting rather interested, and wondering what on earth was going to happen.

There was silence.

A long minute passed, then another. Then there was a general start, as a voice was heard from the other side of the ivied wall, in the shade of which the campers sat! It was the voice of Bob Cherry.

Marjorie started. Clara and Dolly exchanged a glance. Hazel frowned. Lord Mauleverer held up his hand to remind them all of the pledge of silence. And with varying expressions they sat silent, while Bob Cherry's voice floated distinctly to their ears, and Ponsonby's in reply.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Putting It Plain!

PONSONBY, backing against the ivied wall, stared blankly at the Famous Five.

For whatever reason they had bagged him at the stile and walked him about for miles, and then walked him to the old abbey ruins, he had never dreamed that it was to inquire about the hat he had taken from Bob nearly three weeks ago. Pon had lost a hat that day, and forgotten the loss by this time; Bob, it seemed, remembered, and wanted to know.

"You silly fool!" snarled Ponsonby. "What the dooce do you mean? Think I've got your silly hat in my pocket?"

"Hardly! I want to know where it is, that's all," said Bob. "You can't expect to be allowed to pinch a fellow's hat!"

"You silly chump, I threw it into the river, same as these cads did with mine," snapped Ponsonby. "You can dive in the Sark for it if you want it!"

He was puzzled by the smiles that appeared on the faces of the Famous Five.

Pon did not know, as they did, that the Cliff House picnickers were on the other side of that ivied wall, and that they could hear all that was said.

In their hearing, Pon had admitted having had the hat in his possession on the day of the stranding on Popper's Island. But he was going to admit more than that before the chums of the Remove were done with him.

"Let's have this clear!" said Harry Wharton. "That Wednesday, the week before last, you shot peas at us, and we heaved a turf at you, and knocked your hat into the river. When Bob came along, later, you hooked his hat away with a boathook, making out that you wanted it in place of your own."

"You shouldn't knock a fellow's hat into the water!" said Ponsonby. "Think I was goin' all that afternoon without a hat, when I had a chance to bag one? If you're fearfully upset about it, I'll pay for the hat."

"Nobody wants you to pay for it!" answered Frank Nugent. "If you simply bagged Bob's hat because we knocked yours off—"

"Well, I did. I told Cherry so at the time."

"But what I want to know is, what became of the hat?" said Bob. "You had my hat on when you pulled down the river, with Gadsby and Monson, towards Popper's Island. It was hours later that we saw you again, in a

different boat, and without your pals, and you never had the hat on then."

"I tell you I dropped it into the river."

"Well, if you dropped it into the river, the same way as your own went, I'm not going to kick up a fuss about it," said Bob cheerfully. "You're willing to own up that you had my hat that day?"

Ponsonby stared at him.

"What the dooce do you mean? You know I had it, as I hooked it off your silly head with a boathook."

Bob chuckled.

"That's all right!" he said. "Now we're coming to the second item in the jolly old programme. Where did you get that boat we found you in?"

Ponsonby set his lips.

"If you've brought me here to rag me—" he began savagely.

"We've brought you here to talk to you in this nice quiet spot," said Johnny Bull. "Nobody's going to rag you if you tell the truth. But we've been accused of bagging that boat; you know that."

"And we want the facts, to pass on to the Cliff House girls, who believe that we did it," said Harry Wharton. "You were asked about that boat, Ponsonby, and denied that you had been on the river that day—the day you've just admitted that you hooked off Bob's hat with a boathook—"

"I'll deny it again!" said Ponsonby savagely. "You've got me here, and you can carry on as you like. But do you think I'll stand by anything you get out of me now?"

"No," said the captain of the Remove contemptuously. "I don't expect anything of the kind from you. You played a rotten trick to cause us trouble, and you'll keep it up as long as you can; but you're going to tell us the truth, at any rate."

Ponsonby laughed.

"Much good may it do you!" he said. "You know I had the Cliff House boat, as you grabbed it from me—and I was jolly glad afterwards that you did: I knew they'd hear that you'd had the boat, and that that would fix it. You couldn't have done anything I liked better."

"You pinched that boat from Popper's Island?"

"What's the good of jaw?" snapped Ponsonby. "You know I did. Tell everybody you like that I said so, and I'll say it's another of your lies."

"Yes, we know you did," said Harry. "And we couldn't understand at first why even a cad like you had played such a rotten trick; not till we heard that they'd found Bob's hat on the island and fancied that Bob had done it."

"Oh, you've heard that, have you?" sneered Pon. "I knew you were bound to hear it sooner or later; but you'll find it pretty hard to make the girls believe that I left it there. Do you fancy I let them see me?"

"They'll believe it when they hear you say so," said Harry.

Ponsonby laughed again.

"Likely!" he jeered. "Well, they won't hear me say so in a hurry. But I'll tell you what they will hear. I'll see Hazeldene as soon as I can and tell him I've heard that you're trying to put it on me, and ask him to make it clear to his sister that I never had anything to do with it. You've got him against you now—and it's easy enough to pull that weak-kneed fool's leg, anyhow."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry; and the other fellows grinned.

Pon was happily unaware that Hazel

was within hearing of that flattering description of himself.

"Anythin' more to ask?" sneered Ponsonby. "What you expect to get out of this beats me. Do you think you'd get me to say a word that anybody else could hear? You've got me here to say what you knew already. Go and tell everybody you like that I said it. I'll deny every word."

"That's your sort, isn't it?" said Johnny Bull.

"You won't find it easy to pin me down," said Ponsonby. "You know what I did. Nobody else does; nobody else is goin' to. The Cliff House girls won't believe a word of it; if they would, you wouldn't be botherin' with me now. Think I don't know that?"

"Oh, quite!" agreed Wharton. "What we wanted was proof that you did it, you worm! We knew; but, as you say, others didn't—"

"And they won't!" jeered Ponsonby. "I've put a spoke in your wheel, and you can't wriggle out of it. Even if Miss Hazeldene and her friends make up their minds to believe you, they'll always have a doubt left. You'll never get over that. The same with Hazel. He's glad to get somethin' against you, because he's got a rotten, sulky temper, always on the watch for grievances. He won't part with this one in a hurry."

"Oh, shut up!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I'll shut up as soon as you like. I never asked for this conversation," said Ponsonby coolly. "You've got me here and you're goin' to rag me, but that won't set you right with Cliff House. Nothin' will set you right there, except my ownin' up that I pinched their boat and stranded them, and left Cherry's hat to give them a chance of making fools of themselves about it. And do you think I'm goin' to do that? Think again!"

"You've done it, you worm!"

"The donefulness is terrific, my esteemed and execrable Ponsonby," grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Yaas," said an unexpected voice over the ivied wall. "I rather fancy that it's pretty clear now. If you young ladies would like to see a real genuine specimen of a sneaking, crawlin', cringin' worm, just look over this wall—look at the reptile before it's kicked out of sight!"

Ponsonby spun round almost convulsively.

He stared at the low, ivied wall.

Five faces looked over it at him—Mauleverer's, with cold contempt; Hazel's, red with rage; Marjorie's and Clara's and Dolly's, with scornful disgust. The dandy of Highcliffe stood rooted to the ground, staring at them.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

The Clouds Roll By!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. raised their hats politely.

They were all smiling now.

Ponsonby stood with staring eyes, gasping. Slowly he realised how the matter stood and knew why he had been brought to that particular spot. He knew that the Cliff House girls on the other side of the wall must have heard every word he had uttered and that they knew all. Even the cad of Highcliffe was conscious of a sense of shame. The crimson came into his cheeks, and his eyes dropped under scornful glances.

"Pretty clear now—what?" asked Lord Mauleverer amiably. "I'm sure you young ladies will forgive me for

wanglin' this happy meetin', as it's turned out—what?"

"The awful rotter!" said Miss Clara. "So it was he! My hat! If I were a boy I'd mop up the ground with him!"

"Same here!" said Dolly Jobling.

"All serene! We're all ready to oblige!" said Bob Cherry.

"The readfulness is terrific, honoured and beauteous misses!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Marjorie hastily. "No, don't! Let him go. We know now; that is enough. Don't touch him!"

"Just a kick or two—" pleaded Johnny Bull.

"No, no—please!"

"Oh, all right! You can cut, Ponsonby. Get out of sight, for goodness' sake!" said Harry Wharton.

Ponsonby gave the Famous Five a look of hate. He turned to go, but turned back.

"I'm sorry, Miss Hazeldene," he said. "I'd never have done it—so far as you and your friends are concerned. It was up against these Greyfriars cads. And you'd never have been left on the island as you supposed. I phoned to Cliff House that evening, and found you'd got back; otherwise, I should have come down in a boat to take you off. I never meant—"

He broke off as Hazel dropped over the wall.

"Hazel!" exclaimed Marjorie.

Her brother did not heed her. He ran straight at Ponsonby, and the dandy of Highcliffe backed quickly away.

"Keep off, you fool!" he muttered.

"Weak-kneed fool, you mean, don't you?" jeered Hazel. "Well, put up your hands, you cad, and see how the weak-kneed fool is going to handle you!"

And with that Hazel came on, with blazing eyes, hitting out right and left. Ponsonby put up his hands and gave blow for blow, backing away as he did so.

"Hazel!" called out Marjorie again.

"Oh, let him rip, old dear!" said Clara. "Why shouldn't that rotter have his nasty nose punched?"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Lord Mauleverer. "It's all right, Miss Hazeldene. Pon won't stay for a lot of punchin'. This is goin' to be a foot-race."

Marjorie smiled faintly, and Clara and Dolly chuckled.

Ponsonby was backing faster and faster, fending off Hazel as he went.

Hazel pressed him harder and harder, landing punch after punch; and Ponsonby backed still faster, till he caught his foot in a trailing root and sat suddenly down.

Hazel dropped his hands, glaring at him.

"Get up, you cur!" he snapped.

"You're not licked yet!"

Ponsonby scrambled to his feet. But as soon as he was on them, he ran. Mauly evidently was right. Pon was not going to stay for a lot of punching.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five, as the dandy of Highcliffe flew across the field towards the nearest hedge, with Hazel rushing in pursuit.

"Put it on, Pon!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Look out for a boot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pon was putting it on—desperately. He reached the gap in the hedge just ahead of his pursuer. But as he reached it, Hazel put on a spurt and reached Pon.

His foot flew out, and landed with a heavy thud.

Ponsonby flew.

A yell floated back as the dandy of Highcliffe disappeared through the gap and landed with a crash on the other side.

Hazel came back breathlessly.

Pon was not seen again, except for a moment. A brief glimpse was had of him streaking across the next field. Then he vanished, and nobody was sorry to see the last of him.

Hazel panted for breath and rubbed his knuckles.

"Sorry, you fellows!" he said. "I—I really thought it was all right after what Mauleverer said, but—but—well,

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I know it's all right now. But—but you know how it looked. Still, I'm sorry!"

"And I am sorry," said Marjorie softly.

"You needn't be," said Clara. "You never really believed, all the time, that they had done it. I did. Sorry, old beans!" said Miss Clara affably. "But if you let other fellows wear your hats, and they leave them about, what the dickens can you expect?"

"If you'd told us," said Harry, "we could have explained."

"How could we, when we weren't speaking to you?" asked Clara. "We couldn't tell you without speaking to you, could we?"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"That's a boy all over—no gump-tion!" said Clara.

The Famous Five blinked at her.

They did not quite think that the lack of gumption was on their side. However, in their great satisfaction that the trouble was cleared up at last, they were more than willing to let it go at that.

"We haven't finished that jolly old picnic!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "What about you men joinin' the happy circle?"

"Please do!" said Marjorie. "We're all friends again now, I hope."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific, beautiful miss! Now that the infuriated frown of disgruntled animosity has given place to the idiotic smile of absurd friendliness, the rejoicefulness is preposterous."

"Oh my hat!" said Clara.

The Famous Five clambered over the low, ivied wall and joined the picnickers. Every face was bright and cheery, now that the clouds had rolled by. It was agreed that that unhappy misunderstanding, now happily washed out, should be buried in oblivion.

When the picnic was over, and it was time to go, Lord Mauleverer touched Bob Cherry on the arm, with a very serious look.

"Do me a favour, old bean?" he murmured.

"Give it a name, old chap!" said Bob. "We owe all this to you, Mauly. Any jolly old thing you like to ask—"

"Good man! I've got fearfully fagged pullin' that boat up the river. I'd rather walk back if I could get another chap to take my place in the boat."

Bob looked at him.

"If you wouldn't mind, old fellow—"

Bob grinned.

"Thanks, old chap!" he said.

Bob joined Hazel and the Cliff House girls in the boat to go down the river. The brightness of his face was rather like that of the summer sun at noonday. When the boat had pushed off, Lord Mauleverer walked away with the other four members of the Co. And if the walk tired his lazy lordship, as probably it did, he found comfort in the reflection that Bob was going to see Marjorie as far as the gates of Cliff House, and that that made Bob the happiest man in the county of Kent.

THE END.

Harry Wharton & Co. had almost forgotten the Bounder. A black, scowling face reminded them of him when they got back to Greyfriars. But if they had trouble to come from Smithy, it did not worry them in the very least in their state of happy satisfaction at the end of the Cliff House feud.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss next week's grand yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. It's entitled "BUNTER ON THE SPOT!" by Frank Richards. You'll enjoy every line of it.)

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SPRING-HEELLED BIRCHEMALL!

By DICKY NUGENT

"Yah! Boo! Rotten!" Jack Jolly of the Fourth started violently as these words fell on his ears.

He was in a corner of the St. Sam's playing fields, practising the high jump, in readiness for the Open High-Jump Kontest for the Frederick Funguss Cup, which was dew to take place on the following day. He had just cleared 3 feet 6 inches when he heard a newcomer clearing his throat.

Then the scornful shouts rang out—and the kaptein of the Fourth finished his jump and then jumped!

"What the merry dickens—" he began.

"Yah! Call that a high-jump? Why, I've seen performing elephants do better! Of all the feeble footling efforts—"

"Grate pip!" gasped Jack Jolly. "It's the Head!"

"Right on the wicket!" And Doctor Alfred Birch-mall, the revered and majestick headmaster of St. Sam's, came sauntering across from the pavilion wearing a simnickal smile on his skollarly face.

Merry and Bright and Fearless, Jolly's pals, who were standing nearby, doffed their caps to the Head of St. Sam's with grate respect, while Jolly himself simply blinked.

"Eggscuse me, sir," he said. "Did I here you criticising my high-jump?"

Doctor Birch-mall bust into a skolling larf.

"Bless my sole, Jolly! What else would you egg-spect? Why, your feeble effort is hardly worthy of a Second Form fag—let alone a lanky yung atherlete like you!"

Jack Jolly frowned.

"My pals were just tell-ing me, sir, that it was a jolly fine jump. I fancy it's good enuff to win the Cup with to-morrow, any-way!"

"No harm in your fancy-ing anything you like, my dear Jolly!" retorted Doc-tor Birch-mall, with an un-plezzant leer. "But I can tell you for a fakt that you'll never win the Cup. Becawse why? Becawse I know another atherlete who is going to nock you into a cocked hat!"

"And who's that, sir?"

"Little me!"

yelling with larfter. "You won't larf to-morrow when you see me fly through the air with the gratest of ease, I can promiss you! Stop larfing at once, you dis-respectful yung raskals, or I'll birch you black and blue!"

"Oh, crums!"

"Sorry, and all that, sir!"

"So you ought to be!" snorted Doctor Birch-mall. "I'm going to win this high-jump to-morrow all hands down—landing on my feet every time! As for you, Jolly, I shall make your paltry performance look like the puffing prancings of a puny protender!"

"My hat! Then I shall have to mind my p's and q's, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" snorted the Head. And, with that dignified retort, he lifted his nose high in the air and walked away.

A cunning gleem came into Doctor Birch-mall's shifty eyes as soon as the chums of the Fourth were out of site.

"Ha, ha!" he muttered to himself. "Little do they dream of the braney wheeze by which I intend to beat all comers at the high-jump to-morrow! I must get to work now so that everything will be ready."

With these words Doctor Birch-mall hurried back to the Skool House and made his way to the little room at the back of the building where Binding, the page, cleaned the boots every morning.

"Good-afternoon, Bind-ing!" he said, craning his ostrich-like neck round the door of Binding's room. "Got a last?"

Binding looked ser-prized.

"No, sir; the last edition of the evening neospapers isn't out yet, sir. But if you want to know the winner of the three-thirty—"

"Binding! How dare you suggest that I am a gambler on horse races?" wrapped out the Head, indignantly. "I wouldn't dream of lowering myself to bet on such events—in fakt, I never bet at all apart from having an oc-casional flutter on the dogs!"

"But you asked me for a last—"

"Eggscactly—a shoe-maker's last!" said Doc-tor Birch-mall. "I have—ahem!—a little repairing job to do, Binding, and I need a shoemaker's last. Got one?"

"Suttinly, sir! Why



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didn't you say you meant that kind of a last at first?" grinned Binding. "This do, sir?"

He handed Doctor Birch-mall a last, and the Head grinned and nodded.

"Thanks, Binding!" he said. "I'll let you have it back as soon as I have done the—ahem!—repair."

With the last tucked underneath his arm, Doctor Birch-mall hurried along to his study.

Reaching that sellybrated sanktum, he looked the door and stood the last up against his armchair.

Then, chuckling to him-self, he nelt down beside the sofa and started groping about under it.

The Head's sofa was a classical piece of furniture of the umpteenth century; and it was in a bad state of repair. It didn't take the Head half-a-minnit to re-move a cupple of the power-ful springs that supported its interior.

With the springs in his hand he skipped across the room to an old oak chest where he still kept the odds-and-ends of sporting kit which he had used in the days when he was an undergraduate at Oxbridge. Rummaging about inside that chest, he soon brought to light a pair of white canvas tennis shoes.

"Now to do the desprit deed!" he mermered.



He sat down in the arm-chair and set to work. First he cut away the heels of the tennis-shoes from the uppers. Then he put in the springs. Finally, he sewed the heels to the uppers again, inserting a strip of soft leather between the two so as to give the springs sufficient space.

Having finished his lab-ours he took off his every-

day boots to test the spring-heeled tennis-shoes.

With the tennis-shoes on, he took a short run across the study and jumped from his heels.

The result was simply remarkable.

Before he knew quite what was happening he had bounced up from the floor and caught the ceiling a resounding thwack that brought down a grate shower of plaster!

"Woocooop!" yelled Doctor Birch-mall.

But although he rubbed his napper rather rewfully, he was grinning all over his face as he picked himself up from the floor.

"I've got the Frederick Funguss Cup in my pocket!" he said, with a gloating larf, as he took off his spring-heeled shoes again. "It's all over bar shouting!"

On the following after-noon a large crowd assem-bled to watch the kontest for the high-jumping cham-pionship, and there was grate eggssitement when Doc-tor Birch-mall turned up. The fellows had a good larf to themselves at the thought of an old fogey like the Head attempting atherlet-ick feats at his time of life; but their larfs changed to gasps of amazement when he got to work.

He soared into the air like a rocket, making the other competitors' efforts look quite comical in com-parison. His first jump carried fully fifteen feet high—and nobody else jumped more than a third of that distance!

"Few!" wissled the crowd.

Then there was a wild burst of cheering, which the Head acknowledged with a hawty bow.

"Looks as if you need some more uprights, Jus-tiss!" he remarked to Mr. Justiss, who was the cheef of the judges. "Hadt'n you better get something about four times as high as these here?"

"Impossibil, sir!" gasped Mr. Justiss. "These are regulation size, sir."

"Then why not put the crossbar up to the top hole right away, my dear fellow, and save my time? After the rest of the competitors have failed to get anywhere near it, I can then skip over it and the Funguss Cup will be mine!"

"Ahem! That's not quite correct according to the

rules and regulations of the kontest, sir—"

"Want a thick ear, Justiss?" inquired Doc-tor Birch-mall, sharply.

"Nunno, sir!"

"Then do as I'm telling of you—and do it now!"

"Yes, sir! Of co'se, sir!" gasped the flustered aster of the Fifth. And he hur-riedly pegged the cross-bar up to the top hole.

The Head was strutting about like an old peacock now, feeling quite certain that the coveted Funguss Cup was already as good as his!

But there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, as the old motter remarks. While Mr. Justiss was carry-ing out the Head's order, Fearless of the Fourth, who was not a competitor, was wispering a few w in Jolly's ear.

"It's as plain as a pike-staff that the old buffer has fixed up springs in his heels," he was saying. "If I could only put them out of setion, he wouldn't be able to jump for toffy!"

"My hat!" grinned Jack Jolly. "I wish you'd try, old chap!"

Fearless' eyes gleamed. "I'll do my best, any-way!" he said. "I can't do more!"

While the competitors were trying one after another to reach the dizzy height that Mr. Justiss had set them to jump, Fearless sat down on the grass just behind the spot where the Head was standing.

He waited till the Head was properly engrossed in the jumping. Then, sud-denly, he seized his oppor-tunity. Leaning forward, with a pocket-knife opened in his hand, he cut each shoe with a litening-like movement, right through the soft strip of leather that covered the space where the springs were conceal-

Then before you could say "Nife!" he was mingling with the crowd again!

One by one the best of the St. Sam's atherletes failed to reach the top hole. Burleigh of the Six... came very near to doing it, and Talloby was beaten by a matter of an inch or two, but most of the fellows failed by feet.

But Jack Jolly stopped the rot! He was the last man left with the eggsep-tion of the Head, and he made up his mind to do, or perish in the attempt.

Gritting his teeth, he took a short run and bounded upwards. And there was a deffening roar of applawse as it was seen that he had just done it!

"Hooray!"

"Well done, Jolly!"

The Head then stepped forward. His rinkled face was almost green with jealousy.

"Pooh! That was nothing!" he sneered. "You watch me, and there won't be any two opinions

Not notissing, in his egg-sitement, that the springs had shot out of his heels the moment he made a move, Doctor Birch-mall took a run, then jumped.

He quite eggsspected that he was going to shoot up half-way into the stratter-sphere.

But his eggsspectations were not realised!

Instead of springing high up into the air, the Head sprang up a cupple of inches, and instead of clearing the

then about who should have the cup!"

So saying, Doctor Birch-mall prepared to do a spring-heeled jump that would simply nock spots off Jack Jolly's effort.

crossbar over the top he cleared it underneath! His head didn't even reach up far enough to dislodge it!

For a moment the fellows were too serprized to say a word.

FOR CLASSWORK— IS KNITTING FITTING? "No!" Says HARRY WHARTON

This is a serious question. It is being seriously suggested in some quarters that knitting should be taught in boys' schools as well as girls' schools. And the people who advocate it make pretty tall claims for it as a subject, saying that it gives boys quickness of eye and hand, as well as steadiness of nerve.

Imagine Quelchy beam-ing at us over his desk, with a pair of knitting needles in his hands, twit-tering "Two purl and one plain, boys!" Whoopee!

Boys should be brought up as boys, that's my idea! Anything which tends to make them in any way girlish is wrong. And surely knitting does! Knitting and all similar subjects belong strictly to the domain of domestic science—and domestic science belongs to the

domain of the fair sex!

"YES!" SAYS H. VERNON-SMITH.

Wharton, of course, would hold the notion that knitting is effeminate! But the truth about it is that knitting is just about the most masculine pastime known!

Dash it all! Soldiers, sailors, and explorers are all able to darn their own socks, aren't they? Does Wharton deny that soldiers and sailors and explorers are he-men?

And it's perfectly true that knitting trains the eyes and hands and soothes the nerves. And why we at Greyfriars shouldn't get that training as well as girls beats me completely!

I say let's have knitting classes at Greyfriars—and darn those who object to 'em!

BOLSOVER—A GREAT BRICKLAYER! Says DICK RAKE

In the past, the name of Bolsover has been associated mostly with many a foul punch.

But since he started bricklaying, he's a fair knock-out!

Give credit where credit is due. In the annals of Greyfriars there's not a single case of a fellow making a hobby of bricklaying. But Bolsy has done it—and he's proud of it, too!

It was a rare stroke of genius on his part to think of putting a low brick wall at the bottom of his little plot in the Lower School allotment. The Head was quite pleased with him about it and readily gave his permission.

For weeks Bolsy spent most of his spare time

trundling barrowloads of old bricks to his plot and mixing mortar and carefully laying the courses. With a trowel in one hand and a brick in the other hand he became quite a familiar figure on the allotment.

Slowly the wall rose at the bottom of his little garden. Admiring visitors declared that it was just like a real wall.

Admittedly, from some angles it looked a little unusual. If you looked at it from the side, for instance, it seemed to twist in and out rather like a snake; and if you looked at it from the front it was a little irregular. There was nothing much wrong with it really, but it reminded you slightly of a wall that had been struck by lightning.

Hard luck, Bolsy, old bean! But experience teaches. Next time you build a wall you'll probably keep it together with stamp edging and make a real job of it!

FAG STARVED IN MIDST OF PLENTY!

Senior Charged With Neglect

A shocking case of neglect was brought to light this week when Gerald Loder, Sixth Form, was brought up before Judge Brown at the Woodshed Sessions, charged with neglecting to provide for his fag, Dicky Nugent.

Prosecuting for the Society for the Promotion of Free Feeding for Fags, Mr. Peter Todd, K.C., said that he had never in all his vast experience heard

of a worse case of fag neglect than this.

Prisoner was a notorious bad hat, who had many times previously been convicted of cruelty to Second and Third Form infants, but this time he had surpassed himself.

Mr. Todd then went on to give several specific instances. On one occasion, he said, Loder had made Nugent clean out his study, leaving him with a mere half-dozen doughnuts and two bottles of lemonade to work on. (Sensation.) On another, he had ferociously assaulted Nugent when the latter, driven to desperation by the pangs of hunger, helped himself to a piffing little snack consisting of two pork pies, seven bananas, a two-pound currant cake, and half a pound of chocolates. (Cries of "Shame!")

Dicky Nugent, in the witness-box, willingly bore out counsel's statement. He stated that all the time he had been fagging for Loder he had never been given more than six meals a day, and most of these were hardly more than snacks, barely sufficient to keep the average elephant going.

Prisoner, refusing legal aid, warmly denied that he had kept Nugent short of food. On the contrary, he said, the fag had eaten him out of house and home, and he was only too glad in the end to swop him for another fag with a less voracious appetite.

Judge Brown, however, found prisoner guilty and sentenced him to be used as a floor-mop when the court was cleaned up after the session.

The sentence was greeted with loud cheers by a large attendance of fags in the public gallery.

Barring one little accident, Bolsy would have considered his brick wall a great success.

The little accident was most unfortunate. Having finished his work, Bolsy made a heap of the scraps of wood and other odds and ends he had used in the construction of the wall and set fire to them.

As the fire didn't go too well, he borrowed a pair of bellows and used them to get it going. And, by a bit of bad luck, he puffed out some of the air on to the wall.

Possibly it was only a coincidence. But whether the bellows did it or not, the next moment the wall came tumbling down and six weeks' work was turned into a mere mound of bricks!

Hard luck, Bolsy, old bean! But experience teaches. Next time you build a wall you'll probably keep it together with stamp edging and make a real job of it!