

"BILLY BUNTER'S EASTER TRIP!"

Exciting
Holiday-Adventure
Yarn of . . .

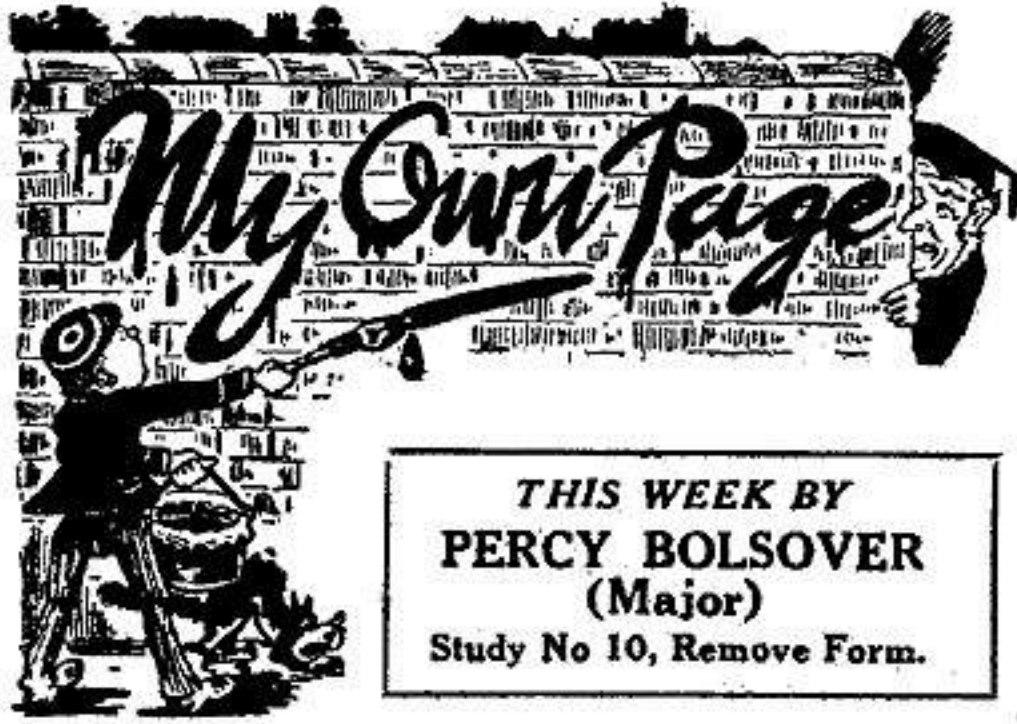
Harry Wharton & Co.

The Magnet ^{2^D}

Billy Bunter's
Own Paper



**BUNTER'S THE ONE
WITH THE SPECS!**



THIS WEEK BY
PERCY BOLSOVER
 (Major)
 Study No 10, Remove Form.

I WAS born on October 10th, sixteen and a half years ago, though I don't remember much about it; but I believe I was a well-built baby, with plenty of muscle. (Crumbs! He's going to write the story of his life!—ED.)

At the age of five I could whop any infant in the kindergarten I went to; and I did whop most of them, and I had to stand in a corner until I had learnt ANT spells Ant, and BAT spells Bat, and CAT spells Cat, which took a long time. But I didn't care.

I was sent to the Fernhurst Preparatory School, though my pater wanted to send me to some school for Backward and Beetle-brained Boys. But that was just his joke, for, though I don't say I'm fearfully clever, my brains are as good as most fellows', and I'd like to meet the fellow who says they're not! (Bolsy is so fond of long sentences that he'll end up by getting about twenty years.—ED.)

At Fernhurst I could whop all the fellows in the school, and I did whop most of them; and the silly old geezer of a Head put on my report that I was a slightly badly tempered and quarrelsome child, but there was lots of good in me and only wanted drawing out, and he hoped before long to draw it out in a manner that would surprise me, or perish in the attempt.

He used to whop with a ruler, but it didn't hurt a bit because he funk'd putting it on hard; and as soon as a fellow began to yell he would leave off. So we all used to yell like fiends at the first stroke, and that stopped his little caper.

When I came to Greyfriars, I was too big for the Second, so they bunged me in the Third with Wiggins, and I had the time of my life, because I could whop all the fellows in the Third, and I did whop most of them, and Wiggins is just a dithering fathead and doesn't take any notice of anything.

When I was put into the Remove, I thought I could carry on in the same way. But I'm bound to admit that things were different, because Quelch started educating me in a way that was perfectly new to me, and if I had the cane once I had it forty times in the first term. Also I started off by trying to whop George Bulstrode, who was captain of the Form in those days. But Bulstrode is a burly beast with plenty of pluck, and I had such a hard job that we still haven't settled the matter, though we're friendly enough now.

Then Nap Dupont was put into my study, and I began to show him who was cock of the walk in Study No. 10, but he is such a small fellow and has such a lot of pluck that I couldn't whop him too hard, and in the end we became friends. And if there's any fellow who wants to say anything against Nap Dupont, I'm willing to knock daylight out of him!

I hope in time to enter for the Public Schools Boxing Championship at Aldershot, which I shall win and thus bring the heavyweight title to Greyfriars. When I leave school I am going to Sandhurst and then into the army, and I hope to be able to whop all the fellows at Sandhurst, and also to whop all the other officers in my mess—just in a sporting and friendly way, of course!

BEAUTIFUL BOLSY!

I want to say a few words about my face, because Skinner and Penfold and other silly asses who write in the MAGNET have made jokes about it, though I have whopped them each time. I think my face is pretty good, as faces go, and I wouldn't change it for any other face at Greyfriars. What's the matter

with it, anyway? It's a jolly sight handsomer than Skinner's or Penfold's, or any other face in the Remove, because it has strength of character and good, firm lines.

Skinner likes to make out that he can see a sort of monkey look in the arrangement of my features, but that's only his rotten joke, and I have whopped him for it; and, anyway, if Skinner had hair on his face he could walk straight into the monkey-house at the Zoo and look perfectly natural.

As for Penfold, he has a bottle-nose and a silly grin, and I'd rather be a parrot than poet, and the next

time he looks at my face and grins I'll alter the shape of his own features for him, which will be a bit of luck!

BRITAIN! By BOLSOVER

This is a little essay on Britain, because I'm a Briton and not ashamed of being one; in fact, I'm proud of it, and I wouldn't be anything else for a million pounds. What other country in the world has produced such famous men as Tommy Farr and Richard Cœur de Lion, and Dick Turpin and Queen Elizabeth? (Surely Queen Elizabeth is the most famous man of all?—ED.)

There's no other country in the world where you can find the Sussex Downs or the Norfolk Broads or the National Sporting Club or the Boat Race, and that's why I'm proud of Britain. I ask you, where else in the world could you go to see Oxford and Cambridge on the Thames? And you must admit, if you're honest, that only good old Britain can supply your need.

I'm writing this before the Boat Race, because the paper goes to press weeks before it's on sale; but, anyway, I fancy Oxford will win again this year, and if any fellow thinks otherwise he's only got to say so. It's about time Oxford had a run of luck, and I'm backing Oxford because my pater went to Oriel when he was young, and would have rowed in the boat only they didn't think it was fair on Cambridge; but, anyway, he got into the finals of the boxing and would have won the

title, only he had a touch of hay fever and his eyes were watering, and the other fellow hit him in the eye before he could see it coming.

Personally, I think it better to win at boxing than to get a rowing blue, because boxing you do all yourself, while at rowing there are seven other men helping you. So I hope I have now told you why I prefer Britain and why I won't belong to any other country in the world!

JOKES!

Here are some good jokes to fill up the paper in case what I have written isn't enough.

A MAN (meeting another man in the street): "I say, excuse me, but can you tell me the quickest way to get to the hospital?"

THE OTHER MAN (having a joke with him): "Yes, rather! All you've got to do is to walk under a bus." (He meant that the other man—the first man—would be taken to hospital on an ambulance. See?)

ANOTHER MAN (meeting a man in the street): "I say, excuse me, can you tell me where I shall catch a tram?"

THE OTHER MAN: "Yes, you will catch it in the small of the back if you don't get off the tramlines!" (Though, of course, the first man must have been a fool not to have noticed the tramlines, don't you think?)

A LADY (going into a shop): "Please give me a mousetrap quickly because I want to catch a train!"

THE MAN IN THE SHOP: "I'm afraid they're not big enough for that, lady." (He thought she meant that she wanted to catch the train in the mousetrap, the silly ass!)



MY DRAWING!

My drawing shows what I'd like to do to Virgil if I could have got hold of him. I'm sorry about the blots, but the pen splutters. I bought it off Fishy for two bob, and it was a rakk swindle—though, of course, I whopped him for it.—P. B.

FACTS WORTH KNOWING

The reason why Prout is bald is that he tore out all his hair in dealing with Coker.

ARITHMETIC PROBLEM. This morning Bunter's circumference was 6 ft. 8 in. This afternoon I bought a cake having a diameter of 1 ft. 3 in. What is Bunter's circumference this evening?

There is no emergency staircase outside the building at Greyfriars, but there is a safe and comfortable drainpipe which Skinner tells me answers just as well.

There is no telephone here for the use of juniors, but they may use a master's phone upon payment of six whops when caught.

Mrs. Mumble's tuckshop dates back to monastery days. In fact, it's nearly as old as the slab of home-made toffee in her window.

PERCY BOLSOVER

Bolsover is Bolsover major because he has a young brother in the Third. Percy is the biggest fellow in the Remove and something of a bully, though less now than when he first came. He has little compunction in "whopping" fags, and tries to rule others by strength of muscle. This policy did not pay in the Remove; and Bolsover has sobered down into a slow, heavy, rather obtuse fellow, who has only very occasional bursts of "fag-slaughter." He's not really a bad fellow, and is straight enough in his way. His most redeeming feature is the old and unexpected championship of little Napoleon Dupont, his French studymate. The two are great friends, and no one dares try to bully "Nap" while Bolsover is about. Bolsover is not brilliant at sport, though he tries hard, and at boxing his tactics are too windmill-like for success, though he has tons of pluck. There are plenty of worse fellows at Greyfriars.

(Cartoon By HAROLD SKINNER.)



WE'RE ON! An invitation to spend a holiday, free, gratis and for nothing, is a chance not to be missed—at least, so think Harry Wharton & Co. But they little realise what an amazing series of adventures they are embarking upon.

BILLY BUNTER'S EASTER TRIP!

By FRANK RICHARDS



"All is ready, gentlemen!" said Powser. "Mr. Tregelly, the boatman, will take you across to the island." Tregelly glanced from one to another of the schoolboys.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Row In The Remove!

"HARK at 'em!" grinned Billy Bunter.

Some of the fellows in the Remove passage at Greyfriars chuckled. Some of them looked serious.

Everybody could hear the voices from Study No. 4.

"Smithy's going it!" remarked Bob Cherry.

It was not uncommon for Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, to go it. Smithy had plenty of temper, and he did not always keep it in control.

It was rather a puzzle in the Remove how Smithy's studymate in Study No. 4—Tom Redwing—stood Smithy's temper. No doubt it was because Redwing himself was one of the best-tempered fellows in the Remove.

Often and often the Bounder's rather strident voice was heard in raised tones. Seldom or never was Redwing's voice raised. But on this special occasion Tom seemed as angry as his clam. His voice, for once, came loud and sharp.

"No! I won't!"

"You cad!" came the Bounder's reply.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Letting a fellow down——"

"Rubbish!"

"You rotter!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter, greatly entertained. "I say, you fellows, Smithy's fearfully shirty about something. He's calling his pal some nice names, ain't he?"

"I'd give him something to cure all that, if I stood in Reddy's shoes!" granted Johnny Bull.

"Same here!" remarked Bob Cherry. "What Smithy really wants just now is a jolt on that jaw he's using so much."

Opening Yarn of a Grand New Series, telling of the Exciting Easter Holiday Adventures of HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS.

"Oh, listen to the band!" sang Skinner.

The Bounder's angry voice came again.

"You rotter, I tell you! It's only a word to Quelch, and it will see me through. There's no other way! You call yourself a pal, and you won't pull a dashed beak's leg to see me through."

"I won't go to Quelch and tell him lies, Smithy. You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself for asking."

"Hear, hear!" said Frank Nugent.

"I tell you there's no other way!" It was almost a roar, from the angry Bounder. "I've got to get off a few days before breaking-up. You know that."

"I don't know anything of the kind."

"I've told you! You can see me through——"

"Well, I won't!"

"Oh, you worin!"

Harry Wharton stepped along the passage to the door of Study No. 4.

He gave a bang on that door and threw it open. Billy Bunter, and Skinner, and some other fellows, were entertained by the row going on in Smithy's study, but the captain of the Remove was not in the least entertained. He was feeling more disposed to give the angry Bounder a spot of what all the fellows in the passage considered that he was asking for.

He looked into the study, meeting a scowl from Herbert Vernon-Smith, who glared at him.

Tom Redwing stood with a flushed face and set lips.

"What the thump do you want, Wharton?" snapped Smithy.

"Nothing!" answered Harry. "I thought I'd tell you that your voice can be heard all along the passage, that's all."

"No bizney of yours."

"Do you want to bring a prefect along here to shut you up?"

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"Go and eat coke!"

"Look here, Smithy——"

"Shut up, and get out of my study!"

Smithy was on more or less friendly terms with Harry Wharton & Co. But when Smithy's angry temper was roused he had no civility to waste on anybody. Probably he would have checked a Sixth Form prefect at that moment, had a pre looked in.

Harry Wharton compressed his lips. He did not get out of the study. He made a step in, his eyes gleaming.

"You cheeky sweep——" he began.

"I said shut up!" snarled the Bounder.

Tom Redwing hastily interposed.

"It's all right, Wharton! Nothing the matter, really! Only Smithy's a bit stuffy because I can't do something he wants——"

It was like Redwing to say what he could for his headstrong and unreasonable chum, even in the midst of a row.

"Something you won't do, you rotter!" exclaimed the Bounder. "Easy enough, if you liked! What do you think of that rotter?" went on Vernon-Smith. "He's leaving a few days before the vac to join his father on a coasting trip, and he refuses to ask Quelch to let me join up."

Harry Wharton stared. A dozen fellows, grinning round the doorway of Study No. 4, stared also.

Everybody had taken it for granted, as a matter of course, that Smithy was to blame for the row. So that statement was rather surprising.

All the juniors knew that Tom Redwing, the sailorman's son, was going on a coasting trip with his father in the Easter holidays, and that he had leave to go a few days before the rest went. But that the Bounder wanted to join up for a trip in a little coasting craft, instead of spending his holidays in his usual expensive and magnificent way, was astonishing. And it was still more astonishing if Reddy did not want him to do so.

Tom Redwing's colour deepened.

"If you're going to tell everybody about it, Smithy, you'd better tell them how the matter really stands!" he snapped.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Billy Bunter. "Fancy Smithy going for the hols in a coasting lugger! I say, has your pater gone bankrupt, Smithy?"

"Gammon!" grinned Skinner.

"Of course I'm not going!" went on the Bounder. "I want to get leave a few days ahead of the vac, and that's the only way."

"Oh!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. He understood now.

"Just a word to Quelch would work the oracle!" panted the Bounder. "The old ass would be glad to hear that I was going with Redwing. He would let me off, like a shot. No questions asked, either. I'm not going on the lugger—I wouldn't be found dead on it! I want to get off three days early—and Redwing could work it for me. And he says he won't!"

"I should jolly well think so!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What sort of a rotter do you call yourself to ask a fellow to go to a beak and tell him a string of lies?"

The Bounder's eyes flashed at him.

"I've had enough of that from Redwing!" he roared. "I don't want any from you. Get out of my study, before I throw you out!"

And the Bounder, with clenched fists, came towards Wharton, who stood like a rock, clenching his own.

Tom Redwing pushed between them at once. He shoved Smithy back with an arm that was twice as strong as the

Bounder's, and, with his other hand, gave the captain of the Remove a push towards the door.

"Do get out, old chap," he said. "What's the good of a row?"

Harry Wharton nodded, and stepped out of the study. Redwing shut the door after him. The next moment the angry altercation was recommencing. The Bounder's voice was louder and angrier than before.

Evidently, Smithy did not care a straw whether that row brought a beak or a pre to the spot or not.

Harry Wharton & Co. went out of the passage, having heard quite enough of the Bounder's tantrums. But quite a number of fellows remained there, grinning, and, as Skinner put it, listening to the band!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Spot Of Ventriloquism!

"I SAY, you fellows——" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Listen to the band!"

"But I say——" persisted the fat Owl. "I say, I'm jolly well going to make Smithy jump! Suppose he thought Quelch had come up——"

"Quelch won't come up," said Skinner. "He can't hear this from the masters' studies."

"You know what a wonderful ventriloquist I am——"

"Give us a rest!"

"I'm jolly well going to make Smithy think Quelch has come up!" grinned Bunter. "You fellows just watch!"

Billy Bunter rolled nearer to the door of Study No. 4. His podgy face was irradiated by a fat and expansive grin.

The other fellows watched him, grinning also—while they listened to the Bounder's angry voice from the study.

Bunter gave a fat little cough.

That was the Remove ventriloquist's usual preliminary to a spot of ventriloquism.

Bunter could do ventriloquism. If he could do nothing else, he could do that. His gift for imitating any voice that was a little out of the common was really remarkable. He had made Fifth Form fellows jump by imitating Mr. Prout's deep boom; he had made Remove fellows bound by rapping out the sharp, staccato voice of their Form-master behind them. Now he was going to make the Bounder bound—which seemed to Bunter frightfully funny.

There was no doubt that the Bounder would bound if he heard Mr. Quelch's voice at his door in the midst of his angry tirade. And, the door being shut, he could not see whether Quelch was there or not when he heard that sharp voice reproduced by the fat ventriloquist.

"Urrrgh!" coughed Bunter, clearing the interior of his fat neck for the performance.

"You rotter!" came the Bounder's angry shout from within. "You cad! I've got it all fixed up to join a jolly party if I can get off a few days ahead of the vacation. You know I've got to join my father when the school breaks up; he wants me in Devonshire, dragging me over a lot of landed property he's been buying there. I can't get out of it; you know that. I want a few days off before the vac, and you could fix it."

"Oh, chuck it, Smithy!" said Redwing wearily. "Do chuck it! If you'd really come on the sea-trip with me

I'd be jolly glad, and you know it——"

"Don't be a fool!"

"But I can't go to Quelch and say you're coming with me if you're not. Do be a reasonable chap!"

"I tell you I've fixed it up with Ponsonby and his pals at Highcliffe, relying on you to see me through——"

"The less you see of those Highcliffe cads the better."

"Are you going to give me a sermon now, you namby-pamby nincompoop?" roared the Bounder.

"Oh, shut up!"

"You rotter, you've got to do this for me! Do you hear? You've got to! There's no other way! I can tell you——"

"Vernon-Smith!" came suddenly from outside the study.

It was a sharp bark.

The Bounder's angry roar broke off quite suddenly. That sharp, barking voice from outside penetrated into the study and startled his ears.

Angry as he was, and reckless as he was, the Bounder of Greyfriars sat up and took notice at the sound of his Form-master's voice.

There was a suppressed chortle in the passage. A dozen fellows there could see the Remove ventriloquist at his performance. But the voice was so like Quelch's that they could almost have fancied that Bunter had borrowed it from his Form-master.

"Oh!" came a dismayed gasp within.

It was from Redwing. The bare thought of Quelch having heard what the Bounder had been saying dismayed the Bounder's chum.

"Vernon-Smith!" barked Bunter, with great enjoyment. "I heard what you were saying, Vernon-Smith! How dare you suggest to Redwing that he should come to me and utter untruths! What do you mean by this, Vernon-Smith?"

There was a dead silence from Study No. 4. The Bounder, with all his headstrong recklessness, was probably as dismayed as Redwing.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Skinner. "Smithy thinks it's Quelch here all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gas suddenly turned off!" grinned Bolsover major.

"Go it, Bunter!" whispered Hazeldene.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

And the fat ventriloquist went it.

Bunter was always glad to show off his wonderful ventriloquism. Generally Remove fellows were fed-up with Bunter's ventriloquial stunts. Now, for once, he was getting quite an appreciative audience. Every fellow in the passage was prepared to enjoy the entertainment of Smithy's leg being pulled.

"Vernon-Smith, do you hear me?" came the staccato bark that was so amazingly like Quelch's. "I heard every word you were saying to Redwing. I am shocked, Vernon-Smith—I am utterly shocked and disgusted! I shall have no alternative but to punish you for this, Vernon-Smith."

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Skinner.

"Go it, Bunter!" giggled Snoop.

"Vernon-Smith, follow me to my study!" barked the imitation of Henry Samuel Quelch's voice.

The grinning fat Owl stepped back from the door. The fellows in the passage watched breathlessly for what would follow.

The door flew open. From the silence in that study it was evident that Smithy was completely taken in. He fancied that his Form-master had heard his exasperated tirade—which he could



“Outside, please!” said Bob Cherry, rising to his feet. “Reddy may stand your tantrums, but you can’t throw your weight about in this study, Smithy! Get going!” Smack! “Ow!” roared Bob, as the Bounder landed an open hand on his face.

not have failed to do had he happened to come up to the Remove passage while it was going on—and that Mr. Quelch had ordered him to follow. Vernon-Smith came out of the study with black brow and compressed lips.

Billy Bunter grinned expansively. But the expression on the Bounder’s face caused the grins to die away from other faces. Never had even the Bounder of Greyfriars been seen to look so savage and sullen.

He stared down the passage; then he stared at the crowd of Removites. Having been ordered by Quelch’s voice to follow Quelch, he naturally expected to see Quelch there. But no Quelch was there.

For a moment the Bounder was utterly astonished. There was no time for Quelch to have got out of the passage before he opened the door, even if Quelch had run for it—which, of course, he couldn’t have done. For one amazed moment it seemed to Smithy as if his Form-master must have melted away into thin air.

“Where——” he gasped.

“He, he, he!”

“Where’s Quelch?” gasped the Bounder. “Where——”

“O where and O where can he be?” sang Skinner.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Then the Bounder grasped it. Quelch was not there, and hadn’t been there; only Quelch’s voice. The expansive grin on the fat face of the Remove ventriloquist enlightened Smithy.

“Bunter——” he stuttered.

“He, he, he!”

“You—you——” The Bounder made a spring, almost like a tiger.

The fat grin vanished from Bunter’s fat face; he gave a yell of alarm.

“Oh crikey! It wasn’t me, Smithy! Besides, it was only a joke! Can’t you—yarrooh!—take a jig-jug-joke? Yoo-woop! Beast! Leggo!”

Thump, thump, thump!

“I say, you fellows——”

Thump, thump, thump!

“Yaroo! It wasn’t me, you beast!” yelled Bunter, wriggling frantically in the Bounder’s angry grip. “I never—I wasn’t—I didn’t—I wouldn’t—I—Yaroo! I say, you fellows, draggin-off! Yooooop!”

Thump, thump, thump!

Tom Redwing stepped from the study. He grasped Vernon-Smith by the shoulder and wrenched him away from Bunter.

“That’s enough, Smithy!” he rapped.

“Let me go, you cheeky fool!” panted the Bounder.

“Better cut, Bunter!” grinned Skinner.

Billy Bunter did not need telling that. The moment the Bounder’s grasp was off him Bunter flew, a yell floating back as he flew.

“Will you let me go, Redwing?” roared the Bounder, crimson with rage.

“No,” answered Redwing coolly. And his grasp did not relax till Billy Bunter, yelling on his top note, vanished down the Remove staircase.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

About Easter!

“ABOUT Easter——”

“Oh dear!” sighed Lord Mauleverer.

“Anything the matter, Mauly?” asked Billy Bunter in surprise.

“Yaas.”

“What is it, old chap?”

“You!”

“Look here, you silly fathead—I mean, look here, dear old chap——”

“Comin’!” called out Lord Mauleverer.

“I say, there’s nobody calling you, Mauly——”

Whether there was anybody calling Lord Mauleverer or not, his lordship answered the call. He answered it swiftly, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after him through his big spectacles with a very irritated blink.

“Beast!” breathed Bunter.

It was annoying. In break that morning Billy Bunter had tracked Lord Mauleverer from the Form-room, he had rounded him up in the quad, and he had been just going to begin a pleasant chat on the subject of the Easter holidays, when Mauly rushed off in this unaccountable manner.

There was a chuckle close at hand, and Billy Bunter blinked round at five grinning faces—those of Harry Wharton & Co. The Famous Five seemed rather entertained by the abrupt end of Bunter’s interview with Mauly.

“I say, you fellows, what’s the matter with Mauly?” asked Bunter.

“He told you!” grinned Bob Cherry.

“You!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Oh, really, Cherry! I say, are you fellows fixed up for Easter?” asked Bunter. “We break up in a few days, you know.”

“The fixfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bunter,” answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

“Well, I expect I shall be at Mauleverer Towers,” said Bunter. “But I don’t seem to be able to get anything definite out of that shilly-shallying ass, Mauly. You saw how he rushed off just now.”

“We did,” grinned Frank Nugent.

“Well, he rushed off just like that yesterday, when I was going to speak to him about Easter——”

“Not really?” ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"Yes, really, and the queer thing is, that just the same thing happened the day before—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter crossly. "A fellow wants to know where he stands, you know. I've been wondering whether I should be able to give you a week, Wharton. If you'd like me to put in a week at Wharton Lodge—"

"I don't mind."

"Oh!" Billy Bunter's fat face brightened. Harry Wharton's reply could hardly be considered a pressing and enthusiastic invitation, but it was more than good enough for a fat Owl who, as per usual, found difficulties in planting himself out for the hols. "That's all right, old chap! Count on me for a week! I may be able to make it longer, if I don't get things fixed up with Mauly—"

"Do!" said Wharton.

"Well, I'll do my best for you," said Bunter. "Wharton Lodge isn't much of a place—hardly what I'm accustomed to—but I'll give you all the time I can. I can't say more than that, can I?"

"Make it the whole vac," said Harry.

"Oh!" Bunter blinked at him in surprise. This was very unusual.

It was, in fact, so very unusual that a brighter fellow than Bunter might have guessed that there was a catch in it, somewhere.

For, fascinating fellow as Billy Bunter knew himself to be, the life and soul of any party, it was an undoubted fact that Greyfriars fellows did not, as a rule, yearn for his company in the holidays.

Why they did not, Bunter didn't know. But he knew that they did

not. They seldom left him in any doubt on that point.

"Well, look here—dash it!—I'll make it the whole vac," declared Bunter. "Serve Mauly jolly well right, for not being able to make up his silly mind!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Poor old Mauly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will the other fellows be there?" asked Bunter, blinking round at grinning faces, and wondering why they were grinning. "Of course, you can ask anybody you like to your own place, Wharton—"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. "Can I? Thanks!"

"Still, I don't see that you want Cherry there," said Bunter. "He played rotten tricks on me last time—pulling a cushion from under a fellow's head when he was going to have a nap, and all that. I feel bound to say that I should like it better if Cherry wasn't there, Wharton."

That was William George Bunter all over. William George only required the smallest spot of encouragement to spread himself.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's all right," he said. "Cherry's not coming to Wharton Lodge these hols."

"Good!" said Bunter. "And if Bull was left out, too, I shouldn't mind."

"Johnny isn't coming, either."

"Oh!" Billy Bunter looked satisfied. "Nothing against you, Bull, old chap, but you're a bit of a hooligan about a place, you know."

"Am I?" queried Johnny Bull, in a deep, growling voice, not unlike that of the great huge bear.

"Yes, if you don't mind my men-

tioning it. Same with you, Cherry—always rushing about and kicking up a row. I can stand Nugent—"

"Thanks!" said Frank, laughing. "But I shan't be there, either, old fat man. You won't have to stand me."

"Only Inky coming?" asked Bunter, rather perplexed.

Generally the Famous Five were to be found in a bunch, both at school and on holiday.

"The answer is in the esteemed negative," grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "I shall not be at the estimable Lodge, Bunter."

"Us two by our ourselves—what?" asked Bunter, blinking at the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, no, I shan't be there!" answered Harry Wharton cheerfully.

"Eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What do you mean, you silly ass?" demanded Bunter warmly. "How can you ask a fellow home for the hols if you're not going to be there?"

"But I haven't asked you, old fat bean! I said I didn't mind," pointed out the captain of the Remove. "And I don't mind—not in the least."

"You—you—you blithering idiot!" roared Bunter. "Think I'm going to spend the hols with your old uncle and aunt at Wharton Lodge?"

"Oh, no! They won't be there, either!"

"Wha-a-t?" stuttered Bunter.

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

The expression on Billy Bunter's fat face was really worth a guinea a box at that moment.

"Then who will be there?" hooted Bunter.

"Nobody."

"Nobody?" howled Bunter.

"Only a caretaker, as the servants will be given a holiday, everybody being away—"

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Bunter. "You—you—you— Is—is that why you said you don't mind?"

"Exactly. If I was going to be there, I should mind very much," explained Wharton. "But as nobody will be there, nobody will mind—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stay there as long as you like," said the captain of the Remove heartily. "There won't be anybody to make the bed, or cook—in fact, there won't be any food. But put in the whole vac, if you like—I don't mind. Really and truly, I don't mind at all."

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five walked away chortling.

Billy Bunter glared after them with a glare that almost endangered his big spectacles.

Bunter was not yet fixed for the hols, and he had a lingering misgiving that he might still be in an unfixed state when the school broke up for Easter. But he was not thinking of accepting that invitation to Wharton Lodge.

He blinked round again for Lord Mauleverer.

But the bell was ringing for third school—break was over. Billy Bunter had wasted his time, having his fat leg pulled, and there was no time left to track Mauly to his lair.

Billy Bunter rolled away to the Remove Form-room, his fat brow corrugated in a frown that was like unto the frightful, fearful, frantic frown of the lord high executioner.

The Owl of the Greyfriars Remove was still unfixed for Easter. It looked like Bunter Court—unless something else turned up.



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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Chucked Out!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH kicked open the door of Study No. 1 in the Remove, and walked in with a knitted brow. Five fellows looked at him rather expressively.

Harry Wharton & Co. had come up to tea in the study. Smithy was more than welcome to tea, if that was what he had come for. The chums of the Remove were hospitable, and willing to be friendly. But Smithy did not look very friendly. And the kicking open of the door did not indicate that he was in a good temper—rather the reverse.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Is that the way you learned to open a door in your millionaire's mansion at home, Smithy?"

"Don't be a fool!"

"Thanks! Did you come here to ask for a boot?"

Vernon-Smith gave the cheery Bob a scowl. But he checked the angry reply that, only too plainly, rose to his lips.

He had not come into Study No. 1 for a row. But he looked in a mood for a row, as undoubtedly he was. Not accustomed to controlling his ill-humour, the Bounder found it difficult to be civil.

The Famous Five smiled.

Smithy's face was expressive, and they could see that he would have liked to slang them all round, and was only restrained by the fact that he wanted something. What he wanted they could not guess, but clearly he had some reason for keeping his angry temper in check.

"Squat down, old man, and put on a smile!" suggested Frank Nugent. "We're just on the holidays, you know—so why not look merry and bright?"

"I haven't come to tea!" grunted the Bounder. He kicked the door shut. "Look here! I suppose you fellows are fixed up for Easter?"

"Oh, yes, all cut and dried!" said Harry.

"Anything specially good?"

"Well, rather good," said Harry, rather surprised by the Bounder's interest in the matter. "We're all going off with Bob—his pater's getting busy on National Service stunts—"

"Is that all?"

"Well, we shall be in camp, and may get some flips in the air," said Harry. "Major Cherry's running a plane—"

"Oh, all right! If you're fixed, you're fixed!" said the Bounder irritably. "You wouldn't care to change it for a trip on the Devonshire coast, I suppose?"

"Well, no, thanks all the same!"

The Famous Five were more and more surprised.

Smithy, it seemed, had come to ask them on a Devonshire trip in the vacation. Plenty of fellows would have jumped at it—indeed, the Famous Five would have liked the idea quite a lot, if they had not been otherwise booked. But why Smithy should have arrived in an angry and irritable temper to extend that invitation was quite a puzzle.

"Well, look here," said the Bounder, after a pause, "it won't be a bad trip. My father's in Devonshire now, and I'm to join him as soon as Greyfriars breaks up. He's on business there, of course—he's always on business! He's been buying land up and down the coast—and an island off the coast, too,

I hear—one of his speculations, you know, and he wants me to go through it all with him."

The Bounder gave an angry shrug. He was, as a matter of fact, keenly interested in the business operations of Samuel Vernon-Smith, millionaire. Smithy was a chip of the old block. His father took him into his confidence in every way, preparing him for handling the huge fortune that would some day be his.

But, at the moment, Mr. Vernon-Smith's plans did not coincide with the Bounder's. That was the rub.

"You see the newspaper sometimes," granted Smithy, "and I suppose you listen-in sometimes to the gabble they call news on the radio. Every two or three months there's what they call a crisis and a scare. Land in Devonshire and Cornwall will soon cost more than in Hampstead, if it goes on. That's where the pater comes in—getting in before the crash."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"The pater's always a step ahead of the market." Smithy's face lost its irritable expression as he dwelt on Mr. Vernon-Smith's sagacity. "He's bought some old island out in the Atlantic for a few thousands—and all sorts of places—and every idiotic crisis and every silly scare will put up the value. Look here, it wouldn't be a bad trip—rolling about Devonshire in a car and sailing out to an Atlantic island."

"Sounds good!" said Bob.

"From what I hear, there used to be smugglers on the island—big sea-caves, and all that!" said Smithy. "That's in your line—you fellows like risking your necks, and taking a chance of getting drowned!"

The Famous Five chuckled.

"Well, why not change over, then?" asked Vernon-Smith. "I'll try to be as nice as I can—and the pater will be glad to have you or any friends of mine. And Quelch and the Head would give you leave to start early."

"Start early!" repeated Harry.

"A few days before the vac."

"Oh!"

"You're Mr. Quelch's head boy, Wharton—trusted, and all that!" The Bounder tried to repress a sneer, but did not quite succeed. "You're all favourites of Quelch's!"

"Don't talk silly rot!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You mean that we don't get Quelch's rag out by checking him in class, and don't get whopped for breaking bounds and smoking cigarettes!"

The Bounder's eyes gleamed. But he repressed an angry retort.

"Anyhow, you've a jolly good chance of getting early leave," he said. "Your people would ask for you, and you'd get it all right. I suppose you'd be glad to get off?"

"Yes," said Harry slowly, "but I—" He fixed his eyes on the Bounder rather grimly. "You know we heard a good deal of your row with Redwing yesterday," he said quietly. "I don't want to be suspicious, Smithy, but this looks to me like another trick of the same sort! If we did join up for the Devonshire trip, and if we did get early leave, and if we did leave with you—do you mean that you'd slip away and go off on your own?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

Snort from Johnny Bull! Johnny, at least, had no doubt about it!

The Bounder scowled.

"What would that matter to you?" he muttered. "We all go off a few days early, if we can fix it, and I'm sure we can. Quelch thinks, at this

end, that I'm with you—at the other end, you tell my father that I'm coming along at the usual time, when the school breaks up."

"Cut off at that!" said Harry Wharton. "You're going to make use of us to spoof Quelch, as you wanted to do with Redwing! Try some other study!"

"Look here—"

"Anyhow, we're fixed for Easter," rapped the captain of the Remove. "and if we changed our minds, we certainly shouldn't change them to put up a spoof on Quelch and help you to get off on a blackguardly trip with that Highcliffe crew. Don't say any more!"

"You goody-goody, namby-pamby fool!"

The Bounder's temper, held in check till then, broke out savagely in his disappointment.

"That will do! Better travel!" said Harry. "We don't want a row with you, Smithy, just before the hols. Leave it at that!"

"You mob of dashed little Erics!" roared the Bounder. "I might have known I'd get nothing but a sermon in this study!"

"You might have known that you wouldn't find spoofing rotters like yourself here!" exclaimed Nugent. "Shut up and buzz off!"

"You cheeky milksop—"

"Outside, please!" said Bob Cherry, rising to his feet. "Reddy may stand your tantrums if he's ass enough, but you can't throw your weight about in this study, Smithy! Get going!"

Smack!

"Ow!" roared Bob, as the Bounder, quite losing what remained of his temper, landed an open hand on his face with a loud concussion.

The next moment, Vernon-Smith was in the grasp of two powerful hands, and struggling savagely.

Harry Wharton threw the study door wide open.

"Chuck the cheeky fool out, Bob!" he said.

The Bounder went whirling through the doorway. He landed with a crash in the Remove passage.

There he sprawled, and panted, crimson with rage. He bounded up, and rushed back into the study.

Five fellows met him this time, swept him off his feet, and tossed him into the passage again, bumping.

Harry Wharton closed the door.

Vernon-Smith did not open it again. That second crash in the passage seemed to have satisfied him.

The Famous Five sat down to tea.

"Of all the rotters—" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, Smithy ain't a bad chap!" said Bob tolerantly. "He's got a lot of good points. He's had his own way too much, and he's got a spot of the blackguard in him—but he ain't a bad chap, really. I dare say he will have got over his tantrums by the time we see him again."

That hope proved ill-founded, however. When the Famous Five saw Smithy in the Rag after tea he bestowed on them the blackest of black scowls. Evidently, he was far from having got over his tantrums.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Accidents Will Happen!

"ONE for me?" asked Billy Bunter.

In morning break, the Owl of the Remove was blinking up at the letters in the rack with an anxious blink.

Billy Hunter was expecting a postal order. It seemed rather a long time on its way to Greyfriars; but hope springs eternal in the human breast.

"No!" grunted the Bounder. Smithy was taking down a letter, addressed to him in his father's hand.

"Sure?" asked Bunter. "I'm expecting a postal order!"

"Oh, shut up, you fat owl!"

Smithy's reply was far from polite. Smithy had never been famed for politeness at any time; but of late, what manners he had seemed to have quite deserted him. He was perpetually disgruntled.

Having fixed up a gorgeous trip with those entertaining young gentlemen, Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe, Smithy had taken it for granted that he would be able to wrangle early leave for the vac. Now he had learned that he had taken too much for granted.

He had to join his father in Devonshire when the school broke up. That was fixed and immutable. But Pon & Co. were getting away early; and if Smithy got away early, too, that made it all right. Tom Redwing could have seen him through by letting Quelch suppose that he was joining him for the sea-trip in old John Redwing's lugger. Redwing had let him down, as he regarded it.

Spoofing Quelch was a light matter to the reckless Bounder. It was not a light matter to his more thoughtful chum.

Harry Wharton & Co. had failed him in their turn. The Bounder probably had not hoped much from them; but it had been a chance, and he had tried it on. It had failed, and now he was non-plussed.

He had no idea of giving up the planned trip with Pon & Co. It was like the Bounder to grow more and more obstinate the more difficulty and opposition he encountered.

But how he was going to work it he did not know. It was useless to ask Mr. Quelch himself; Quelch would have wanted to know too much! Smithy's system of spoofing beaks naturally did not make beaks trust him.

So, being thoroughly disgruntled, and having no politeness to waste on anybody, he snapped Billy Bunter's head off, as it were, receiving an indignant glare from the fat Owl in response.

"Look here, you cheeky beast—" began Bunter.

"Shut up, you fool!"

Smithy was opening the letter from his father, and he had no use for Bunter's conversation.

The fat ventriloquist was inclined to rap out Quelch's voice just behind the Bounder, which certainly would have made Smithy jump. But he was rather too close to Smithy's boot for that, and he grunted, and turned to the rack again.

"I say, isn't that one for me, Smithy?" asked the fat Owl, blinking up at a letter a little out of his reach.

"Will you shut up?"

"Look here, you beast, you tell me whether that letter's for me!" hooted Bunter. "You know I'm a bit short-sighted!"

"It's for Cherry, you blind Owl!"

"Oh! Is it?" said Bunter. "Well, if it's for Cherry hand it down, and I'll take it to him. He's gone out without looking for letters."

The Bounder turned away without replying; then he turned back.

Letters were never safe in Billy Bunter's hands; they were so liable to come open by accident. After what had happened in Study No. 1 the previous

day, however, Smithy's feelings towards Bob were far from cordial. If Bunter wanted to take that letter to him Bunter could. If anything happened to it Smithy was not going to worry. He handed the letter down to Bunter, and walked away with his own.

Billy Bunter blinked at that letter through his big spectacles. It was plainly addressed to Bob in Major Cherry's hand, which Bunter knew quite well; Bunter knew many things that did not concern him. Only too clearly, it was not a letter for W. G. Bunter.

The fat Owl was interested in it, all the same.

He rolled out into the quad, where Bob Cherry was punting a footer with his friends, not having yet looked for letters. Bunter blinked at him from the distance, and then sat down on a bench under one of the old elms, with the letter in his hand.

Bunter was not going to open that letter. He would have disdained the thought! He wriggled it about in his fat hands, without even admitting to himself that he hoped it would come open.

The fact was that Bunter had reason to be keenly interested in that letter from Major Cherry.

Bunter was still unfixed for Easter. Lord Mauleverer was still irritatingly elusive. Harry Wharton, he had learned, was not going home, so Wharton Lodge was washed out. What the Famous Five were going to do Bunter did not know; they had not told him, and seemed, indeed, not to want him to know.

Bunter wanted to know. His own plans depended on theirs—if that ass Mauly let him down, as seemed only too likely. From a word caught here and there, he had an impression that they were all going off with Bob, but not to Bob's home. This was much too vague for Bunter. He wanted to know, and in that letter, he had no doubt, was the information he desired.

An unscrupulous fellow like Skinner might have opened that letter with the steam of a kettle in his study. Bunter was incapable of such unscrupulousness. He was far above such mean tricks as that!

Unless that letter came open by accident, Bunter would never know what was in it.

Somehow or other, it did come open—by accident. Perhaps the flap was not stuck down very tightly—or perhaps a fat thumb, accidentally, had something to do with it.

Whatever the cause, the envelope was open before Bunter had wriggled it and twiddled it for more than a few minutes.

Reading another fellow's letter was absolutely nothing to Bunter. He would not have opened it. But now that it had come open by accident, he had no scruples about looking at it.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter, as he looked.

"Dear Bob,—I'm sorry to tell you that the plans we have made for your Easter holiday must fall through. I am sure you will realise, my dear boy, that a man who has volunteered for National Service is not quite his own master. I am required to undertake training of recruits in an air camp, and I cannot, of course, even delay for a single day. I am letting you know in plenty of time to make other arrangements for your school holiday, and hope that you will not be too much disappointed, or your friends, either.

Your affectionate father,
"R. CHERRY."

Bunter stared at that letter.

He grinned.

Whatever it was that the Famous Five had planned for that vacation, it was now, obviously, washed right out. It had depended on Bob's father, and Bob's father was called away—the call of duty.

"Ho, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter.

Bunter was amused. Whatever it was, the beasts hadn't been going to ask him, so serve them jolly well right! They wouldn't be looking so merry and bright if they knew what Bunter knew.

The bell for third school interrupted Bunter's entertaining reflections. He jammed the letter back into the envelope and shoved it into his pocket.

For the present it was all right in Bunter's pocket. Later on, he could think of some way of passing it on to the owner, without revealing the fact that it had passed through his fat hands. In the meantime, Bunter cheerfully dismissed it from his mind as he rolled off to the Form-room.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Is Wanted!

"CAN'T!" said Smithy

"Oh, all right!"

Redwing's face clouded a little.

The Bounder grinned.

"Don't be an ass, old man! I can't come out this afternoon because my father's coming! I had a letter from him this morning."

Redwing's face cleared at once.

That afternoon Redwing was going up to Hawkscliff to join his father, who was putting to sea in his coasting lugger early the following morning.

It was yet some days to break-up, but the sailorman's son had special leave. Finding Smithy looking rather less disgruntled that afternoon, he asked the Bounder to go up to Hawkscliff with him, hoping that the late disagreement had blown over. It was very painful to Tom to part with his chum on bad terms, and perhaps at the last minute the Bounder felt the same. At all events, he was now more friendly and cheery than he had been for days past.

"I'll walk a bit of the way, though," said Smithy. "The pater can't get in before half-past five."

"You mustn't risk missing him, Smithy. But I'd be glad of your company as far as you can come."

"Come on, then."

Harry Wharton & Co. said good-bye to Redwing at the gate. They looked after the rather ill-assorted chums a little curiously as the two went up Friardale Lane together.

"Smithy seems to have got over his tantrums!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Time he did!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, I'm glad he's chucked rowing with Redwing, anyhow," said Harry Wharton. "I suppose he's given up that fatheaded idea of getting off with Pon & Co. now he knows it can't be done."

"Catch Smithy giving up any idea so long as it's fatheaded and obstinate and unreasonable!" said Johnny. "More likely he's thought of some way of wangling it, and that's why he's so bucked."

Which sage remark the chums of the Remove had reason to remember afterwards!

Vernon-Smith and Redwing walked in silence for some time. Redwing's face was bright and happy, and the



"Herbert! How dare you suggest such a disrespectful trick!" It sounded like the deep, rich, rolling voice of Vernon-Smith's father. The Bounder's eyes almost popped from his head in alarm and amazement, as he spun round to the door.

Bounder, glancing at it, felt a twinge of remorse. Smithy really was not, as Bob had said, a bad sort—when his temper was not roused or his lordly will crossed. And at the bottom of his heart he was deeply attached to his chum, often as he slanged him in the study.

"Forget all about it, Reddy," said Vernon-Smith, after a long silence. "You knew I was an unpleasant brute when you were fool enough to chum with me."

Redwing laughed.

"I knew you were one of the best fellows breathing, Smithy, if you'd only do yourself justice!" he answered. "I'm jolly glad you've come to understand that I couldn't do as you asked. I knew you wouldn't want me to after you'd given it a little thought."

The Bounder laughed in his turn.

"You don't know me yet!" he said. "But it's all right—you're not much like me, Reddy, and I don't think I'd like you any better if you were. I've thought of another way out—that's why I'm being so nice now!" He chuckled. "I hope you'll have a topping time on that jolly old bargo. I dare say you'll enjoy it more than you would a trip with Pon & Co."

"I'm quite sure of that!" said Redwing quietly. "And—and I wish you'd chuck that idea, Smithy."

"I'll watch it," said Smithy. "I've got to cut right off when we break up to join my father. I can't turn him down, and I don't want to, either! But I want to shake a loose leg first for a few days. The pater's written that he's dropping in to-day; he'd had to return to town, and he's got something or other on at Folkestone, so he's giving me about a quarter of an hour of his tremendously valuable time. I'm going to ask him to get me off, with the Head, a bit early for the vac."

"Oh!" said Redwing.

"He could work it if he liked," said Smithy.

Redwing was silent. It was not for him to preach to his chum, but that spot of unscrupulousness in Smithy was a sore trouble to his honest, straightforward mind.

"If he doesn't play up, I've got another way!" went on Smithy. "I won't tell you what it is, because it would make you pull a face as long as a fiddle. But I'm handling it all right. You can bank on my getting away three days before the rest." The Bounder's jaw jutted aggressively. "I'm not a fellow to be beaten when I'm set on a thing."

"I wish you were sometimes, Smithy."

"Rot! Let it drop!" said the Bounder. "Look here, Reddy, old man, after my run with Pon & Co. I shall be in Devonshire with the pater, and if your father comes round by Bideford and Clovelly in his jolly old lugger we may see something of one another in the hols—see?"

Redwing's face brightened again.

"We're going to work round the south coast and up the west coast," he said. "In a week or two we shall be running past that island you've told me of, that your father's bought off the Devon coast. We're sure to put in at Bideford."

"Good man!" said Smithy.

And they walked on, in amicable discussion, till Smithy had to turn back at the corner of Pegg Lane. Redwing went on, on the long tramp up to Hawkscliff, his heart light for having parted with his chum on the old friendly terms, and all the Bounder's angry words washed out of his mind.

Vernon-Smith walked back to Greyfriars, with a thoughtful frown on his face. He, too, was glad that he had had his unruly temper in hand before Tom left; and for some time, as he

walked, he was thinking of Tom and what he thought a holiday—helping his father work a little lugger along the coast; a holiday that had no appeal for Smithy. Smithy's taste ran to theatres, expensive hotels, magnificent cars, evening clothes, and cigarettes—with a spot of racing and roulette thrown in if he had the chance. It was not for nothing that Smithy had been nicknamed the Bounder at Greyfriars.

But as he drew near the school Vernon-Smith's thoughts concentrated once more on himself and his own plans. He was glad that Reddy was going to have the kind of holiday he liked, and he himself was going to have the kind of holiday he liked—for a few days at least, if he could wangle it; and he considered that he could.

"Seen Bunter?" he asked Lord Mauleverer, as he came into the quad.

"Yaas," sighed Mauly.

"Well, where is he?"

"Watchin' for me on the Remove landin', I think. That's why I'm walkin' in the quad."

Vernon-Smith went into the House.

On the Remove landing a pair of big spectacles turned on him as he came up.

"Is that you, Mauly, old chap? Oh! Beast!" Bunter gave a grunt of disappointment as he saw that it was the Bounder. Then he added: "I say, Smithy, seen Mauly? I wonder why he doesn't come in."

"Never mind Mauly," said Vernon-Smith. "My pater's coming this afternoon, Bunter—"

"Bother your pater!" grunted Bunter.

Bunter was not in the remotest degree interested in Smithy's pater!

Vernon-Smith's eyes gleamed for a moment. Bunter had, for that moment, a narrow escape of being booted across the Remove landing.

"He's stopping for tea in the study!"

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went on Smithy. "At least, I'm going to ask him! Like to come?"

Billy Bunter almost jumped.

The Bounder's study in the Remove was next to Mauly's, the one into which Bunter was keenest to butt. But he seldom had a chance of butting into Study No. 4. That study was like unto a land flowing with milk and honey; but there was always, so to speak, a lion in the path—in the shape of Smithy's boot.

Seldom did Smithy let the fat Owl butt in. And on an occasion when his father came he was least likely to do so. On the rare occasions when Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith tea'd in his son's study at Greyfriars, Smithy sorted out better company than Bunter's.

"Pulling my leg?" asked the fat Owl suspiciously. Really, that invitation sounded too good to be true.

"Fathead! Coming?" asked the Bounder irritably.

He wanted Bunter, for some mysterious reason; that was certain, or he would not have asked him. Smithy was no long-suffering fellow like Mauly, neither was he good-natured like the Famous Five; no fellow that he did not want ever butted into Smithy's study.

Why he wanted him, any fellow would have found it hard to guess, especially when his father was there. But evidently he did!

"Certainly, old chap!" chirruped Bunter. "I'll stand by you, old fellow! I understand what you want, old bean."

Vernon-Smith started.

"You understand?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, rather! I'll play up!" said Bunter reassuringly. "I'll let your pater fancy we're friends! Rely on me."

"Wha-a-t?"

"If you want to show off to your pater that you know decent fellows here I'll see you through," assured Bunter.

"You fat idiot—"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

Vernon-Smith again controlled an impulse to kick Bunter across the landing!

For whatever mysterious reason he wanted Bunter, certainly he did not want to show him off to his father as a special school friend! Really and truly Bunter was about the last fellow at Greyfriars that he would have selected with that object in view.

"Cut down to the tuckshop and get something for tea," he said. "You can change this pound note."

"What-ho!" chirruped Bunter.

He rolled away happily.

Lord Mauleverer, in the quadrangle, sighted him and walked round the elms.

But for once Mauly need not have taken the trouble to dodge! Bunter had forgotten Mauly and the Easter holidays; his fat thoughts were concentrated on the coming feast in Study No. 4.

Bunter expended the pound note on tuck for tea—and there was no change out of it. Neither was there quite a pound's worth of tuck when Bunter arrived in Study No. 4; the fat Owl took rather a long time to reach that study, but he had not wasted his time! He arrived sticky and jammy and beaming.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Why Bunter Was Wanted!

MR. SAMUEL VERNON-SMITH, millionaire, leaned back in the best armchair in Study No. 4 and crossed one plump leg over the other and smiled genially.

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An extremely busy gentleman, Mr. Vernon-Smith had not long to stay.

He had whizzed up from Devonshire to London on some urgent business call. Now he was whizzing down from London to Folkestone on some other urgent business call. Early on the morrow he would be whizzing off to Devonshire again.

He had exactly half an hour to give his son—a pause in his whizzing! He declined tea in the study; he was going to dine at Folkestone. Neither, probably, did schoolboy tuck appeal to Mr. Vernon-Smith very much. He was long past the age of jam tarts and cream puffs.

Bunter, fortunately, was not!

He was having a good tea—an ample tea! The fact that the millionaire did not want any tea was a welcome fact to Bunter. The fact that Smithy gave all his attention to his father, and did not seem to want any either, was another welcome fact. It left all the more for Bunter.

Bunter was quite equal to all demands. Bunter was prepared to clear the table.

But, busy as he was on parking the foodstuffs, Bunter could not help feeling a little puzzled at being there at all. True, he was the kind of fellow that any fellow might have been proud to show off, as a fellow he knew, to a visiting relation. Bunter had no doubt of that.

Still, even allowing for that, it was a little perplexing. Only Bunter was having tea. The champing of his podgy jaws went on incessantly, like the unending melody in Wagnerian music. He had little time for speech—but if he spoke, the Bounder shut him up at once. Clearly, Bunter's conversation was not wanted.

Unless Smithy wanted to exhibit Bunter as a really remarkable consumer of foodstuffs, it was inexplicable why he had him there at all, and was standing him that ample spread.

With no spread, of course, there would have been no Bunter! He was not the fellow to stand a fellow's pater for nothing!

Only the spread brought Bunter there, and kept him there! And all Smithy seemed to want, was for Bunter to sit there and shut up!

Mr. Vernon-Smith glanced at him once or twice, perhaps wondering why his son had him there! Then he forgot his existence.

The millionaire was talking to his son, with considerable satisfaction, of his deals in land, houses, mansions, and cottages, in the glorious county of Devon. He was very keen on taking his son over all those new acquisitions in the holidays, and Smithy was keen enough, too—once his little run with Pon & Co. was over!

Mr. Vernon-Smith ran on almost without a stop; his fat, rich, rolling voice filling the study.

Smithy listened with dutiful attention.

For one thing, he was interested in the subject. Keen business dealing had plenty of interest for him. And though Smithy would have scorned to scuttle off at an alarm of a bombing raid, he had no objection to making profits out of the foolish people who did. And Mr. Vernon-Smith's latest business deals were going to bag enormous profits, when the next crisis sent the scuttlers scuttling!

For another thing, Smithy particularly wanted to get his father into the best humour possible, with a view to the request he had to make.

So Mr. Vernon-Smith's rich, rolling voice rolled on, while the Bounder listened and Bunter ate! Smithy heard and heeded—Bunter heard and did not heed!

But Mr. Vernon-Smith, at length, glanced at his watch, and rose to his feet. Then the Bounder came to the point that was in his mind. He hoped little from it, but he was going to try it on. If it failed, he had another scheme up his sleeve, as he had told Redwing.

"Everything's arranged, what?" said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Come straight down to Devonshire when you break up here, Herbert—"

"I was going to ask you something, father!" said Smithy meekly.

"Well?"

"Some fellows have asked me for a few days before break-up, if I can get off! If you'd speak to the Head—"

"Who are they?"

Smithy had hoped that his father would not ask that question. But the hope had been faint.

"Some Highliffe fellows—" he faltered. With all his faults, the Bounder would never have answered his father untruthfully.

Mr. Vernon-Smith's plump face grew grim. He was an indulgent parent—over-indulgent. But there was a limit.

"One of them named Ponsonby?" he asked.

"Well—yes!"

Grunt, from Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"I've told you, Herbert, that I don't like you knowing him. He's a young rascal! What sort of a holiday are you going to have with this Ponsonby?"

"Oh, runnin' round in a car, and—"

"I can guess the rest!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith grimly. "Wash it out! Now come down and see me off."

"But—"

"That's enough, Herbert! Drop that subject!"

Vernon-Smith dropped it, at once. There was nothing doing, and he knew it. Obediently he went out of the study with his father, and down the stairs, to see him off in the big car that waited below.

Billy Bunter was prepared to suspend, for a moment, the demolition of the foodstuffs to say good-bye to Mr. Vernon-Smith. But he was not called on to make that sacrifice. Mr. Vernon-Smith, having forgotten his existence, did not remember it.

He left the study without a glance at Bunter. The Bounder followed him, and Bunter was left on his own.

He did not miss his company! He had better company—spread on the table. Bunter munched and crunched, and crunched and munched.

He was still munching and crunching when, ten minutes later, Herbert Vernon-Smith came back to the study. The big Rolls had rolled away with the millionaire; Samuel Vernon-Smith was whizzing on his way to Folkestone. The Bounder came in and shut the door.

Then he stood looking at Bunter.

Bunter munched and crunched. He was slowing down—but there were still eatables on the table, and Bunter was not the man to leave them there.

"Haven't you finished yet, you fat porker?" asked the Bounder.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, Smithy! If that's the way you talk to a fellow, after pressing him to come to tea—"

"Well, chuck it for a bit! I want to speak to you."

"You can speak while I eat cream—"

puffs, I suppose." Bunter went on munching and crunching.

"The other day you played a silly trick on me, here, making out that Quelch was in the passage!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Eh?" Bunter looked alarmed. "Look here, you beast, are you going to rake that up—after asking a fellow here! I never did it, really—besides, as I told you at the time, it was only a joke—"

"That put an idea into my head, when I was thinking it over afterwards," went on Vernon-Smith.

"Eh? Did it?"
"You had Quelch's voice to a T. I've heard you do Prout, and Monsieur Charpentier. Now, you've been listening to my father for half an hour! Do you think you could pick up his voice?"

Bunter stared. He even forgot cream-puffs, in his astonishment.

"Eh? Yes! Of course I could!" he answered. "But why—"

"I think you could!" said the Bounder, with a nod. "You're the biggest fool at Greyfriars—you can do nothing else, but you can do that—"

"Look here, you cheeky beast—"

"Well, that's what I want you to do!" said Vernon-Smith. "If you can do it, Bunter, I'll stand you a quid. That's why I had you here—to listen to him—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"And if you can do it—"

"No 'if' about it!" grunted Bunter. "You know what a wonderful ventriloquist I am. Any voice a bit out of the common—easy as pie to me. And a throaty grunt like that—"

"What?"

"A throaty grunt like that comes easiest."

Vernon-Smith's eyes glittered. The scheme he had in his mind could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be called respectful to his father. But a word of disrespect from any other fellow roused his bitterest ire. He made a step towards Bunter—with so expressive an expression on his face, that the fat Owl jumped up in alarm.

"Here, you keep off, you beast!" gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't mean a throaty grunt! I—I mean a rich, deep voice, like an—an—organ! That's what I really meant to say, Smithy."

"You fat fool—"

"J-j-just like an organ, old chap!" protested Bunter. "Full and rich and deep, and—and mellow—not like a pig grunting at all—"

The Bounder checked his temper.

"Well, give me a sample of what you can do, and let's make sure!" he snapped.

"Wait till I've finished those cream-puffs—"

"You fat pig—"

"Oh, really, Smithy! The fact is, I—I always ventriloquise better after a meal, and—and I haven't finished yet."

Again the Bounder checked his temper, and he waited, with angry impatience, till Bunter had finished the cream-puffs. The fat Owl cast a longing blink at a cake that still remained. But Smithy was looking so dangerous that he hesitated to begin on the cake.

"Get going, will you!" snapped Smithy.

"I—I think it would come better, after a spot of cake—"

"Get going, or I'll boot you round the study!" roared the Bounder.

Evidently he was tired of waiting!

"I—I—I mean, I—I'd rather have the cake afterwards—"

And the Remove ventriloquist at last got going.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Smithy's Scheme!

BILLY BUNTER gave his fat little cough. He was ready.

Why Smithy wanted him to imitate the millionaire's voice was quite a mystery to Bunter. Still, if Smithy wanted that sample of his wonderful powers as a ventriloquist, Bunter was ready to oblige.

Only he would rather have polished off that cake first! He was not quite sure that it would still be at his disposal after the performance. It was annoying; for it was a scrumptious cake, and Bunter still had space to fill.

"Gurrgh!" coughed Bunter.

"Oh, get going, do!" snapped the Bounder.

MORE PRIZES FOR OVERSEAS PALS!

IN the Overseas Section of the November "Footer-Stamped" Contest, PRIZES OF TEN SHILLINGS have been awarded to the following two competitors who submitted entries with the highest totals of "goals" scored:

Stanley Gregory, 22 D, College Avenue, Penang, Straits Settlements.

Basil Smith, 12, Flat Westcliffe, West Street, Durban, South Africa.

PRIZES OF FIVE SHILLINGS have been awarded for the twenty next-best scores which ranged from 173 down to, and including, 94 "goals," the winners being:

D. B. Archibald, North Vancouver, Canada.
Dennis Arlow, King William's Town, Cape Province, South Africa.

Lewis Bell, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.
Saw Chu Beng, Penang, Straits Settlements.
Mike Borisk, Box 372, Fernie, British Columbia, Canada.

A. Carew, Northern Rhodesia.
Leslie Carter, Auckland, New Zealand.
Yon Chew, Singapore, Straits Settlements.
Tau Aik Chu, Singapore, Straits Settlements.

Ronald Emberg, Quebec, Canada.
Saw Tiang Eug, Perak, Federated Malay States.

J. Garrard, Johannesburg, South Africa.
W. J. Goodman, Collardy, New South Wales.

H. Harvey, Leederville, West Australia.
Jerome Horne, Cape Town, South Africa.
Pentti Koinwkoski, Ontario, Canada.
Charles Pang, Perak, Federated Malay States.

G. D. Pringle, Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

P. S. Wong, Perak, Federated Malay States.

G. C. Zouves, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Much, from Smithy's point of view, depended on whether the Greyfriars ventriloquist could do it. Nothing, so far as Bunter could see, depended on it; and he was not to be hurried.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Will you get going?" hissed Smithy.

"Not if you keep on interrupting me!" said Bunter firmly. "I'm willing to entertain you with my wonderful ventriloquism after you've stood me a spread—but if you keep on interrupting me—"

"If you want me to boot you, you won't have to ask again!" howled the impatient Bounder. "If you can turn out an imitation of my father's voice, get on and do it, so that I shall know."

"Herbert! How dare you suggest such a disrespectful trick!" came a deep, rich rolling voice behind the Bounder.

Herbert Vernon-Smith leaped clear of the floor in his amazement and alarm. He spun round to the door, gasping.

He could only suppose that his father had, unexpectedly, come back for something, and reached the study just in time to hear his words. He could hardly suppose anything else, when he suddenly heard Mr. Vernon-Smith's unmistakable voice behind him!

His eyes almost popped from his head as he saw that the door was still shut.

His father was not there—but the amazed Bounder, not catching on for the moment, opened the door and looked into the passage.

He had a glimpse of Harry Wharton & Co. coming into tea—but of no one else.

"He, he, he!" came a faint cackle from Billy Bunter.

The Bounder turned again and looked at him.

Then he shut the door of the study and looked at Bunter again with a deadly gleam in his eyes. He understood now what had happened.

"You fat rotter!" He breathed rage. "It was you—"

"He, he, he!"

"By gad, I'll—I'll—" panted the Bounder.

"Here, you keep off, you beast!" yelled Bunter, skipping round the table. "You asked for it, didn't you, you beast?"

Vernon-Smith paused. Certainly, he had asked for it; but he had not expected it to come just like that! For the moment he had believed that his father was there—and even now it was hard to believe that the Remove ventriloquist had reproduced that distinctive voice so exactly. But it was, at all events, the proof he wanted that Bunter could do it.

"It was you?" he repeated.

"Of course it was!" grinned Bunter. "I've heard your pater talk, often enough, when he's been here—and I've been listening to him for the last half-hour. I could do it on my head!"

Vernon-Smith eyed him. It was really a remarkable gift. He had heard stars on the radio giving imitations that were no better than this—some of them not so good. Obviously, it was a gift; Bunter could have done nothing that required a spot of brains.

"Like another sample?" grinned Bunter.

"Go it!" said Vernon-Smith.

"You are a young rascal, Herbert! Let me catch you going off with Pensonby, that's all!" came the rich, rolling voice.

It came from Bunter—obviously, this time! But it was the fat voice that had been rolling in that study that afternoon! The Remove ventriloquist had it to the last tone.

"Well, my hat!" Smithy drew a deep breath. "That does it! How a fool like you can do anything of the kind—"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"But you can do it—that's what matters." Vernon-Smith looked at his watch. "Plenty of time to get to Courtfield and back before lock-up."

"I'll finish that cake while you're gone, old chap—"

"You fat ass! You're coming with me!"

"Eh? What do you want me to come to Courtfield for?" asked Bunter in astonishment.

"To get on the phone there at the post office," grunted the Bounder.

"On the fuf-fuf-phone—" stammered Bunter.

"And call up the Head—"

"The Head!" gasped Bunter.

"And speak in that voice you've just put on—" went on Smithy.

"Eh?"

"The Head will think it's my pater speaking—"

"Oh!"

"I'll stick beside you and tell you what to say!" snapped the Bounder. "You can play vocal tricks, but you haven't any sense—"

"Look here, I'm jolly well not going to phone the Head and pull his leg!" exclaimed Bunter in alarm. "Why, a fellow might get flogged—"

"Where's the risk, you fat ass? Even if it came out that my pater hadn't phoned, nobody would know you did. And it can't come out—the pater's off to Folkestone now—and to-morrow he will be back in Devonshire—"

"Yes—no—but—but I'd rather not, Smithy! I—I'd rather stay here and—and finish that cake—"

"Shut up, fool! My pater saw the Head for a few minutes while he was here—and ringing him up will look as if he forgot to mention something, see? I've got it all cut and dried. Come and get your cap—"

"I—I say, it—it's a jolly long walk to Courtfield—"

"We'll go on the bus."

"And a jolly long way back—"

"I'll stand you a taxi back."

"Oh!" Bunter brightened considerably. "That's all right! But—"

"And I'll leave you at the busshop with a quid to blow, if you pull it off all right."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'll come—I mean, I'm willing to oblige you, Smithy—being a pal! Of course, I can't take money from you! Hardly the sort of thing I could do."

"Please yourself about that!" snapped the Bounder.

"I mean to say, if you weren't such a bounder, Smithy, you'd know that a fellow couldn't touch your money!" said Bunter, with scorn. "I'm not the fellow to accept money, I hope! If you like to lend me a pound—"

"You fat fool!"

"You can call a fellow names," said Bunter; "but I can't, and shan't, accept money from you! There's a limit, though I hardly expect a fellow like you to understand it. But if you like to lend me a pound, I'll settle out of a postal order I'm expecting on—on Saturday."

The Bounder breathed hard. It was not his way to be patient—especially with a fatuous ass like Bunter. But the extraordinary scheme he had planned for getting away from the school a few days before break-up depended wholly and solely on the Remove ventriloquist. Bunter, for the moment, held the trump cards in his fat hand.

"If you agree to that, all right!" said Bunter. "If not, there's nothing doing! I can do with the quid—I admit that! I've been disappointed about a postal order! But if you fancy I'm a chap you can give money to—"

Smithy choked down an almost irresistible desire to take Bunter by his fat neck and bang his fat head on the table.

"All right!" he hissed. "Now come on!"

And—that important point being settled—Billy Bunter came on.

He stayed only for a mouthful—a large mouthful—of cake, and with a chunk of the same in a fat paw followed the Bounder down the passage to the stairs.

Ten minutes later they were rolling away on the motor-bus to Courtfield,

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Billy Bunter's fat mind still rather hazy as to what the Bounder exactly wanted him to do, but dwelling with great satisfaction on the prospect of a quid at the busshop and a taxi back.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Tricked On The Telephone!

BUZZZ!

Dr. Locke, headmaster of Greyfriars, cut off a sentence short, and reached out to the telephone.

Mr. Quelch, with whom he had been engaged in conversation, waited for the call to be taken.

On the Head's writing-table lay a slip of engraved paper, which bore the figures "£250," and the signature of S. Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Vernon-Smith had seen the Head during his brief call at Greyfriars. He had stayed five minutes in the headmaster's study, and left the Head a little breathless when he left. He had also left a cheque for the handsome sum of £250, a contribution to the Governors' fund for A.R.P. shelters at Greyfriars School.

Mr. Vernon-Smith was a somewhat overwhelming gentleman. He always left Dr. Locke, when he came, with a tired feeling, inclined to gasp a little. But on this occasion, though five minutes of his energetic presence had made the headmaster feel tired, as was usual, he had certainly left a pleasant impression behind him—with the cheque. It was the largest contribution that had been made to the A.R.P. fund.

The Head was discussing that little matter with Mr. Quelch when the telephone bell rang. He stared a little at the voice that came through.

"Dear me!" he ejaculated.

Mr. Quelch half-rose.

"Pray do not go, Mr. Quelch!" said the Head. "It is Mr. Vernon-Smith. Yes?" he went on, into the transmitter. "Dr. Locke is speaking."

It was a rich and rolling voice that came through over the wires. Dr. Locke knew that voice—or, at least, had no doubt that he did. Only an hour ago that rich voice had been rolling in his study.

"Dr. Locke, I am sorry to trouble you, but there is one small matter I forgot to mention while speaking to you."

"Indeed!" said the Head. "Pray proceed, Mr. Vernon-Smith!"

"I remembered it, sir, on my way, and have stopped at Canterbury to ring you up," went on the millionaire's voice. "It concerns Herbert. It slipped my memory while I was speaking to you. A little favour, sir, which I hope you will be so kind as to grant."

"Certainly, Mr. Vernon-Smith!" said Dr. Locke.

"I should be very glad, sir, if Herbert could be allowed to join me in Devonshire, a few days before the date of breaking-up at Greyfriars?"

"Oh!"

"I desire his presence there, sir, for very particular reasons, in connection with certain business matters that I wish him to understand. I suppose the matter can be arranged?"

Dr. Locke paused a moment.

"I should be much obliged, sir," went on the millionaire's voice, which Dr. Locke was far from dreaming proceeded from a personage who was anything but a millionaire.

"One moment, sir!" said Dr. Locke.

"Your son's Form-master is now with me, and I will speak to him on the subject."

"Very good, sir!"

Dr. Locke turned to Mr. Quelch.

"Mr. Vernon-Smith desires that his son may be granted a few days' leave before the Easter holidays begin, Mr. Quelch. He wishes him to join him in Devonshire. If you have no objection—"

The Remove master pursed his lips a little.

Smithy was not the fellow in his Form to whom he was specially keen to grant concessions. He was the most troublesome fellow in the Remove. He was a fellow upon whom Quelch had a suspicious and doubting eye. He was often careless, and often lacking in respect. On his own account, Mr. Quelch would not have been disposed to grant the slightest concession in such a matter to Herbert Vernon-Smith.

But a request from a parent was, of course, another matter. It was scarcely possible to refuse such a request—especially in view of the handsome cheque that lay on the Head's table.

"I do not see how Mr. Vernon-Smith can be refused, sir," said the Remove master, after the briefest of pauses.

"Quite so," agreed the Head.

He turned back to the telephone.

"Your son will be permitted to leave before the usual date, sir," he said. "On which particular date?"

"To-morrow, Dr. Locke."

"Very well. I will speak to Vernon-Smith on the subject," said Dr. Locke. "He will leave to-morrow, sir."

"Thank you, Dr. Locke! Good-bye, sir!"

"Good-bye!"

Dr. Locke replaced the receiver.

Mr. Quelch was not looking wholly pleased. He did not in the least consider Herbert Vernon-Smith entitled to an extra holiday; and he disliked extremely any interruption of regular Form work. And, like all schoolmasters, he objected to the barging in of parents.

However, the matter was settled now, and was dismissed, and the two masters resumed the discussion of the A.R.P. operations that were to go on during the school holidays.

"Perhaps you will speak to that boy of your Form, Mr. Quelch, and tell him what has been arranged," remarked the Head, when the Remove master rose to leave the study.

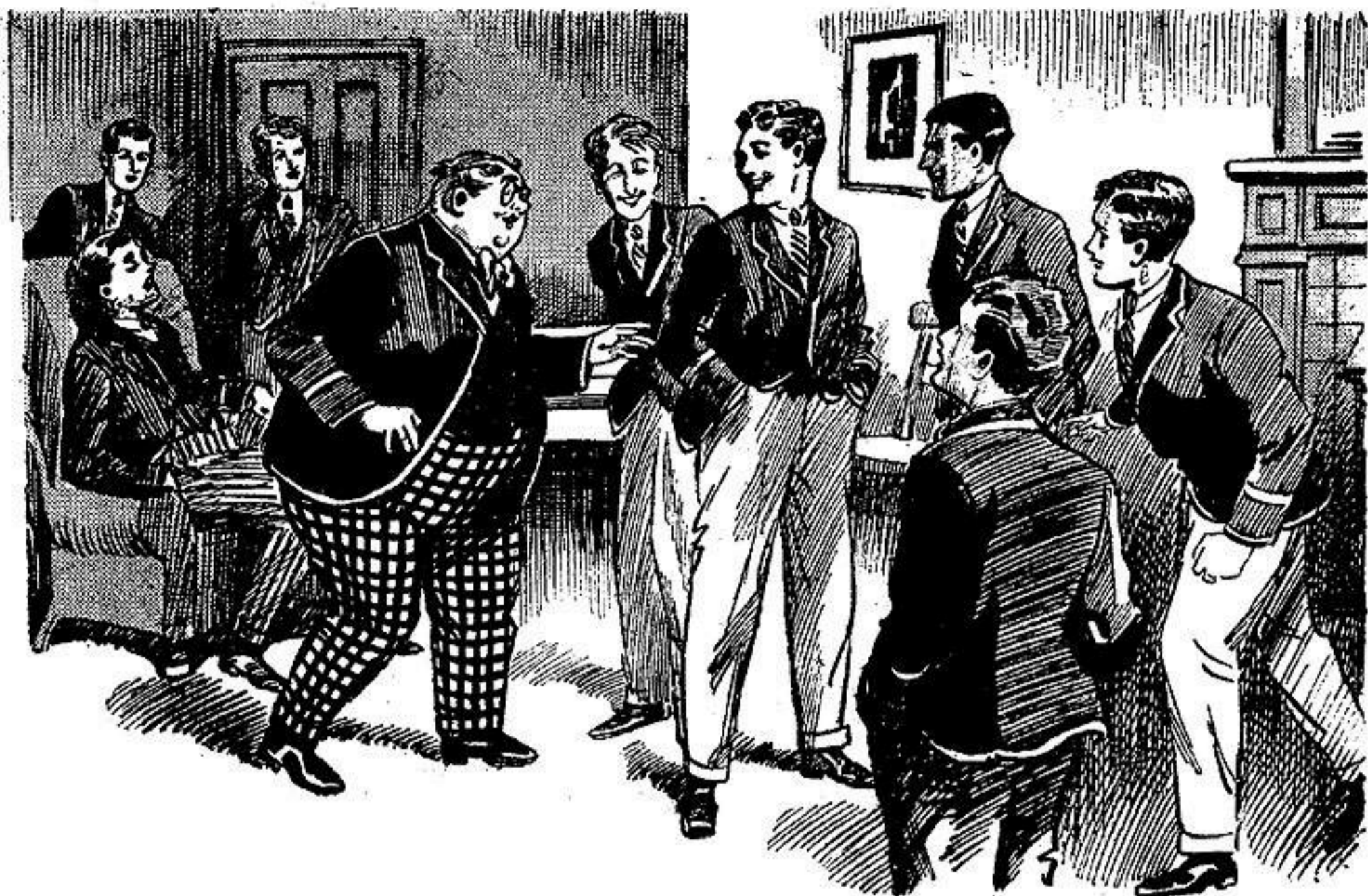
"I will do so at once, sir."

But Mr. Quelch was not able to do so quite at once, for when he returned to his own study, and sent for Herbert Vernon-Smith, it transpired that that member of his Form was out of gates. Exactly how that member of his Form had been occupied out of gates, certainly did not occur for one moment to the Remove master's mind.

At lock-up, however, he saw Vernon-Smith, and called him into his study.

The Bounder came in with an expressionless face, but with a rather quick beating at his heart.

The trick he had played, with the assistance of the fat ventriloquist, was safe enough—undiscoverable, so far as Smithy could see. But in the event of discovery, the consequences would be simply terrific. A shocked headmaster, an angry Form-master, and an exasperated father, formed a trio that even the hardy and reckless Bounder would not have cared to face. As he stood before his Form-master, Smithy, perhaps, wished for a moment



"If Smithy stands me a holiday," said Bunter, "why shouldn't I let him show off as a fellow who knows fellows like me at school? One good turn deserves another." "Oh, my hat!" "You see," continued Bunter, "these Smiths have tons of money, but no distinction!"

that he had not played that extraordinary trick.

But he was soon reassured.

"I have to tell you, Vernon-Smith, that your father has requested Dr. Locke to give you leave to go tomorrow, instead of at the end of the term," said Mr. Quelch. "This request has been granted, and you will, therefore, make preparations for joining your father in Devonshire tomorrow."

"Thank you, sir!" said Vernon-Smith demurely.

And he did not grin till he was safe outside the study.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter, Too!

"GRATERS, old man!" said Skinner.

"Thanks!" yawned the Bounder.

"Some fellows have all the luck," remarked Peter Todd. "Roaming round glorious Devon, while we're still saying 'Yes, sir,' and 'Oh, sir!' and 'Please, sir,' and 'No, sir!'"

The Bounder grinned.

He had his leave, and he was going the next day. But he was not going to the glorious county of Devon, where his father certainly would have been very much surprised to see him before the school broke up for Easter.

Quite a different programme was before the Bounder.

He was joining up with the festive Pon & Co. Their plans included a brief trip across the Channel, and a flutter at the casino in Boulogne. It was going to be gorgeous—from the Bounder's point of view. Afterwards, he was going to join his father in Devonshire, as if he had come straight

on from the school on breaking-up day.

Smithy was in high feather.

Not only was he going to have a high old time, but he had had his own way, which was an important point to the obstinate and arrogant Bounder.

"I suppose your pater wangled it while he was here," remarked Bolsover major. "Did you tell him you were going on the spree with that Highcliffe crowd?"

"Eh! Didn't you hear what Toddy said?" asked the Bounder innocently.

"I'm going down to Devonshire."

"I don't think," grinned Skinner.

"My dear chap, that's why I've got special leave."

"Changed your plans, since you were rowing with Reddy in the study the other day?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Oh, quite!"

"Gammon!" grunted Johnny.

The Remove fellows were in the Rag before prep, and Smithy's stroke of good luck was an interesting topic there.

Smithy had got his leave, but few fellows believed that he was going down to Devon. That row in Study No. 4, not long ago, had not been forgotten—neither had the Famous Five forgotten the other row in Study No. 1. Smithy had gained his point, and was going off with Pon & Co. That was the general opinion, which was well founded.

"But how the dickens are you going to fix it with your pater?" asked Hazeldene curiously. "If he's asked leave for you, he will expect you, won't he?"

"He, he, he!" from Billy Bunter.

Smithy gave the cachinnating fat Owl a warning look. He had to trust Bunter—in the peculiar circumstances. But he was uneasily aware of the

length of Bunter's tongue, and the difficulty Bunter found in holding the same.

Bunter favoured him with a fat wink.

"All right, Smithy," he said reassuringly. "I ain't going to say anything. He, he, he!"

"What do you know about it, fat-head?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, nothing! He, he, he!"

"I'm going down to Devon, of course," said the Bounder. "If anybody doubts it he can ask Quelch. Quelch knows."

"The knowfulness of the esteemed Quelch is probably not terrific, my esteemed spoofing Smithy!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton was looking very keenly at the Bounder.

Twice Smithy had tried to gain that point by trickery, and had failed. Now he had succeeded, and the captain of the Remove could not help suspecting that there was some sort of trickery in it, somewhere. However, that was no business of his, though he had his own opinion of the Bounder's schemings and shufflings, and he said nothing.

Smithy was evidently tremendously bucked, and few fellows were likely to believe that he was so bucked at the prospect of getting down to Devon a few days earlier than would normally have been the case. Something more exhilarating than that was plainly in the Bounder's mind.

When the Remove went up to prep Vernon-Smith strolled cheerily into Study No. 4, and sat down to smoke a cigarette there. As he was leaving on the morrow he had no prep to do that evening, and he sat thinking over his plans for the morrow, and grinning through the smoke of the cigarette.

(Continued on page 16.)

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BILLY BUNTER'S EASTER TRIP!

FRANK RICHARDS



(Continued from page 13.)

The grin left his face when the study door opened and a fat face and a large pair of spectacles looked in.

He gave Billy Bunter an unwelcoming glare.

"I say, old chap—" began Bunter. "Better not be spotted out in prep, you fat ass!" said Smithy.

"Oh! You're right!" agreed Bunter, and he came into the study and shut the door after him. "Safer inside the study—what?"

That certainly was not what Smithy had meant. He glanced round for a missile.

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"Better not chuck that dick at me, Smithy!" he remarked calmly.

Vernon-Smith breathed hard. On second thoughts he realised that he had better not, and he dropped the dictionary.

"Cut!" he snapped.

"I've dropped in for a chat—"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Will you get out?"

"No!" said Bunter cheerily. "I've got something to say to you first. You're going off to-morrow, Smithy. I've got you early leave. He, he, he! I say, I wonder what the Head would say if he knew who phoned him?"

Bunter chuckled.

Smithy did not chuckle. The bare idea of Dr. Locke learning how he had been deluded gave him a cold feeling down the back. He gave the fat Owl a deadly glare.

"But it's all right!" grinned Bunter. "The Head's rather a soft old duck! I say, though, it gave me rather a jump when he said Quelch was in the study! Didn't it you?"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Well, to come to the point," said Bunter. "You're all fixed up for the hols, Smithy, with extra leave thrown in. He, he, he! I'm not. You'd hardly believe it, Smithy, but after shilly-shallying for days on end that silly ass Mauly has let me down, after all."

"There's the door."

"Of course. I wasn't very keen on going with Mauly, but it leaves a fellow at a loose end!" explained Bunter. "I can't go with Wharton and his gang now their trip is washed out."

"Is it washed out?"

"Eh? Oh!" Bunter started. Bob Cherry's letter was still in his pocket, and he remembered that that spot of information was known only to himself, so far. "Oh! I—I didn't know! I don't know whether it's washed out or not, Smithy! How should I know?"

The Bounder's lip curled.

"Was it in that letter you pinched this morning?" he sneered.

"Who pinched a letter?" demanded Bunter indignantly. "I was taking that letter to Bob, as you jolly well know. If it came open by accident

that's not my fault, I suppose. People should stick their envelopes safely. Besides, it never came open."

"Oh, my hat!"

"If it had, I shouldn't have read it," went on Bunter. "Nothing inquisitive about me, I hope! I never even looked at it, and I haven't the faintest idea whether the trip's washed out or not."

"I wonder why they sent you to Greyfriars?" remarked the Bounder. "Wasn't there a home for idiots available?"

"Oh, really, Smithy! But I say, as I was saying, I've got rather left, over the hols, what with Mauly letting me down, and—and so on. That's why I was thinking of coming along with you, old chap."

"What?"

The Bounder jumped.

"I mean to say, I'm not going home these hols," explained Bunter. "They've got the decorators in at Bunter Court, and the usual big Easter gathering is washed out—"

"You blithering idiot!"

"I'm only making a suggestion, of course," said Bunter, blinking at him. "If you don't want my company you've only got to say so. It would give you a bit of a leg-up—socially, I mean. You can make out that you know me at school. That will do you a bit of good—what?"

Vernon-Smith's grasp closed on the dictionary again, almost convulsively. But he did not hurl it.

"That's where you come in—see?" explained Bunter. "After all, that's why you new-rich fellows are sent to a Public school—to get to know fellows of good family, and so on. Well, so far as that goes, you can rely on me to back you up, if we go on the hols together. Tell anybody you like that I'm your closest pal at school, and I'll stand for it. I won't let you down, Smithy."

Smithy did not speak. Perhaps he was beyond speech! But his look was fearfully expressive.

Bunter, heedless of the danger signals, rattled on cheerfully.

"Well, what about it, old fellow? I can't come with you to-morrow—no good asking me that. Quelch wouldn't let another fellow off. I mean the Devonshire trip. I suppose you'll be putting up at pretty good hotels, and so on, while you're scurrying about Devonshire? I should expect that, of course! It will do you some good to have a really decent fellow with you—Public school man, who looks the part! Dash it all, you can pass me off as a relation, if you like!" declared Bunter, in a burst of generosity. "I don't mind. So long as we don't meet any nobby people I know, of course! What do you say, Smithy?"

Smithy did not say anything.

He hurled the Latin dictionary with sudden but accurate aim.

Crash!

"Whoop!" roared Bunter, as it landed on a podgy chest.

He staggered, and collapsed, with a bump! He sat and roared.

How long he would have sat and roared cannot be said. The Bounder was coming across the study at him, following up the dictionary. Twice his boot landed before Bunter could lift his weight.

Then the fat Owl, yelling, scrambled for the door.

Twice the Bounder's foot landed again as he tore the door open. Once more it crashed as Billy Bunter leaped through the doorway.

A yell faded away down the Remove

passage. Billy Bunter faded away also. Vernon-Smith kicked the study door shut.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

How It Was Done!

"I SAY, you fellows—" "Prep!" said Harry Wharton. "That beast—"

"Prep!" said Frank Nugent. "Blow prep! That cad—ow! I believe he's after me! Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, that beast Smithy—Wow!"

Billy Bunter rolled into Study No. 1 and shut the door. He stood gasping and gurgling for breath, and wriggling painfully. Smithy's boot had landed hard.

"Prep!" said Wharton and Nugent together.

"Blow prep!" snorted Bunter.

"What on earth's the row?" asked Harry, staring at the gasping, gurgling fat Owl. "Been snaffling Smithy's tuck?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Well, if you've got no prep to do, we have!" said the captain of the Remove. "Can't you go and grunt in your own study?"

"Beast! I say, you fellows, fancy that beast kicking a chap, after all I've done for him!" gasped Bunter. "He jolly well wouldn't have got his leave if I hadn't helped him out. Now—ow—now—Wow—ow!"

"You helped him?" asked Nugent, in astonishment. "How could you help him, you fat chump? His pater must have worked it for him."

"That's all you know!" grunted Bunter. "I did the whole thing. Nobody else could have done it! I've a jolly good mind to go and let Quelch know—that would wash out his leave fast enough. Ow!"

Harry Wharton compressed his lips a little. He already suspected that there was trickery of some sort in that special leave for Smithy. Now he could see that Bunter was mixed up in it somehow, though he could not imagine how.

"Well, get out, fathead!" he rapped. "Don't tell us anything about it!"

"I'm not going to tell you!" snorted Bunter. "If it got to Quelch I should get into a fearful row! I wish I hadn't done it now, Smithy being such an ungrateful beast! Ow! Kicking a chap! Wow! I say, you fellows, can you hear him coming?"

"No, you blitherer!"

"Well, I'll wait here a bit. I don't know why he got his rag out; he broke out all of a sudden while we were having a chat about the holidays. You know his rotten temper! Chucking a dick at a chap, and then springing at him like a tiger! Wow! Serve him right if I told Quelch! Only—only I suppose the Head would be fearfully waxy."

"Ring off!"

"What do you fellows think?" asked Bunter, blinking at the studymates of Study No. 1. "Mind, I'm not going to tell you—too awfully dangerous for that—spoofing the Head and that sort of thing. It's safer not to say a word about it, even to pals like you chaps. But, putting a case—only putting a case, you know—suppose a chap was a wonderful ventriloquist—"

"A what?"

"A wonderful ventriloquist—not me, you know; some other chap, as I'm only putting a case," said Bunter astutely. "And suppose he could imitate anybody's voice, same as I did Quelch's the other day, when Smithy was rowing

with Redwing in the study. And suppose—

"Mind supposing in your own study?" asked Wharton. "We've got a spot of prep to do here!"

"Suppose," continued Bunter, unheeding—"suppose Smithy asked that chap to tea while his father was there to pick up his throaty grunt, so that he could imitate it—see? Not me, you know. I'm only putting a case, of course—"

Wharton and Nugent gazed blankly at the fat Owl.

"Well, suppose a fellow put on the old Obadiah's voice to oblige the young Obadiah—see?" continued Bunter. "Suppose he phoned the Head, and the Head thought it was the old Obadiah speaking, asking leave for the young Obadiah—"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Mind, I'm only putting a case," said Bunter hastily. "If anything of the kind happened, I know nothing about it, of course—nothing at all. But suppose, putting a case, that it did happen, what do you think Quelch would do if he heard of it?"

"You fat, fozzling, frumptions Owl!" said Harry Wharton. "Is that how Smithy wangled it?"

"Oh, no! I was only putting a— a case. I told you I was only putting a case."

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath. "So Smithy put you up to imitating his father's voice on the phone and asking leave for him!" he said. "I suppose you could do it—"

"Eh? Of course I could! Easy as pie! Not that I did, you know. I was only putting a case."

Harry Wharton's brow darkened. Frank Nugent whistled. They knew now how the Bouncer had got leave for his trip with Pon & Co.

"I say, you fellows, what do you think?" asked Bunter anxiously. "Suppose Quelch got to hear of it—not that it actually happened, you know, as I'm merely putting a case. But suppose it did happen, and suppose Quelch got to hear of it, what do you fellows think Quelch would do?"

"Take most of your skin off, I think, to begin with," said Harry, "and most of Smithy's after that!"

"Well, I shouldn't mind if Smithy was whopped!" said Bunter. "But—but—I don't want to be whopped myself. I—I suppose Quelch would be pretty waxy?"

"Mad as a hatter, I should think!"

"Of course, I shan't let Quelch know. I'm no sneak! It might get out by accident—not if I'm going to be whopped, though! But if Quelch knew he would jolly well stop Smithy's extra leave, wouldn't he?"

"Like a shot!"

"Well, I ain't going to tell Quelch. But I ain't going to have dicks chucked at me; and Smithy ain't going to kick me, either! Not after all I've done for him, you know! Kicking a chap after I got him extra leave with my wonderful ventriloquism! Jevver hear of such an ungrateful beast? Talk about ingratitude being a sharper child than a serpent's tooth!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, what would you fellows do?" asked Bunter. "I don't see letting him get by with that extra leave—not after kicking me like that, you know! I did the whole thing for him, and now—Wow! I shan't be able to sit down to prep! Ow! If it didn't mean a whopping I'd jolly well go to Quelch, and say— What are you going to do with that Latin grammar, you beast?"

"Chuck it at you if you don't get out of the study! Hop it, you fat, frumptions fraud!"

"Oh; really, Wharton! I—I say, suppose that beast Smithy is looking for me in the passage? He looked fearfully fierce—absolutely ferocious! I don't know why, but he did! I say—"

"Are you travelling?"

"Beast!"

Bunter reopened the door of Study No. 1.

Harry Wharton was taking aim with the Latin grammar. Frank Nugent had picked up a Virgil—only too evidently with the same intention. Billy Bunter gave a hurried blink out into the passage. The Bouncer was not to be seen—which was a relief. But whether he was on the watch to renew hostilities, Bunter did not feel at all sure. He hesitated to leave the shelter of Study No. 1.

As he hesitated a Latin grammar whizzed, and at the same moment a volume of Virgil!

The grammar landed on the back of Bunter's fat neck. Virgil caught him on a fat ear.

There was a roar from Bunter that woke the echoes of the passage and the landing. He tottered out of the study, roaring.

"Yaroo! Beasts!" roared Bunter. He spun round and glared back into the study. "Yah! Rotters! I've a jolly good mind to come in and wallop you! Yah!"

Harry Wharton picked up the inkpot. "Stand steady!" he said, taking aim. "Beast!"

Bunter jumped back and slammed the door. The grammar and Virgil seemed as much as he wanted, and he had no use for the inkpot.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bumps For The Bouncer I

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH scowled.

His scowl was directed at five fellows, who looked in as his study door was opened after prep.

Smithy had been putting some things together in the study, ready for packing in the morning. But he was no longer looking so bucked as before; there was an uneasy cloud on his rather hard face.

He did not regret his dealings with Bunter, but he was quite aware that it might have disagreeable results.

The fat Owl had been intensely exasperating. Bunter had only to talk, and Smithy's game was up. A flogging, at the very least, for such a disrespectful trick, and, worse than that, the cancellation of his extra leave. And booting him out of the study was really not the way to keep him from chattering.

That he had, in fact, been chattering, the Bouncer saw at once when Harry Wharton & Co. stepped into his study. The expressions on their faces were enough for him, and his own grew dark.

"Want anything?" he snarled.

"A word or two with you, Smithy," said the captain of the Remove quietly.

"If it's a sermon, keep it packed up!" sneered the Bouncer. "I get enough in that line from Redwing!"

"It won't do, Smithy!"

"What won't do, you fool?"

"There's a limit! You can't do this sort of thing!" said Harry. "I suppose you can guess that Bunter has been babbling since you kicked him out of the study. I don't know how many

fellows he's told so far, but you can bet that plenty of fellows will hear; you know Bunter."

"I'm not interested in Bunter's babble! Go and tell some other fellow in some other study!"

"Look here—"

bawled Johnny Bull. "And take Bull along with you to do his shouting somewhere else! I've no use for any of you!"

"You've played a rotten trick on the Head!" said Harry, unheeding. "I thought there was some trick in it; now I know! You've made use of that utter fathead! Bunter hasn't sense enough to know better, but you have! You're treating your own father with rotten disrespect in doing this, making use of his name—"

The Bouncer's eyes blazed.

"Stop at that if you don't want a fist on your jaw to stop you!" he said, between his teeth. "That's no concern of yours!"

Harry Wharton's words gave Vernon-Smith a very uncomfortable jolt. In point of fact, Smithy had a genuine affection for his father, and meant, at least, to be a respectful and dutiful son. As so often happened, his obstinate and arrogant temper had hurried him over the limit; but he did not want to realise it. He had to realise it when it was put into plain English; but the effect was to rouse his bitterest resentment.

"Dirty trick!" said Johnny Bull.

"It's a bit too rotten, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry. "Think it over again, old fellow, and wash it out."

"The wash-outfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed Smithy!" urged Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The goodfulness is not enough."

"Just a word of friendly advice before you put your foot right into it, Smithy," said Frank Nugent amicably.

The Bouncer scowled from face to face.

"Is that the lot?" he snarled.

"That's about the lot," said Harry. "It won't do, Smithy—if you weren't such an obstinate and pigheaded ass you'd see it—it's not the sort of thing that can be done."

"It's done!" sneered Smithy. "You seem to have screwed it out of Bunter, so you know."

"It can be undone," said Harry quietly.

Vernon-Smith burst into an angry laugh.

"You'd like me to walk in to the Head's study and tell him I've spoofed him and pulled his leg!" he jeered.

"Likely! I want to get away tomorrow. Think that would see me clear?"

"I want you to chuck it, Smithy."

"Are you going to sneak to the Head?" asked the Bouncer in his most unpleasant and sardonic tone.

Wharton compressed his lips.

"I don't know whether Bunter could have kept it dark," he said. "He's a tattling fool, as you know. But kicking him out of your study won't keep his mouth shut! Half the Remove will know by dorm."

"No sneaks in the Form if they do."

"A word for a prefect to hear would be enough! You must be mad to run such a risk—with a fool like Bunter in the secret."

"I had no choice about that!"

"You had the choice about playing such a rotten trick at all. But if you are mad enough to take such risks that's your own affair. That's not the chief point. You've done a thing that can't be done—no decent fellow ever japes the Head; and this is more than

a jape—it's a rotten deception, and you know as well as I can tell you that no decent fellow would do it."

"What's the good of telling me what I know, then?"

"I'm trying to persuade you to do the decent thing. Wash the whole thing out and stay on till the end of the term like everybody else. Who the dickens are you to have extra leave?" snapped Wharton. "Just wash it out and have done with it—and I know jolly well that later on you'll be glad you did."

"Adviso gratis?" sneered the Bounder.

"Do think a minute, Smithy," urged Bob Cherry. "Bunter's not a sneak and he won't go to Quelch, but he's just the sort of idiot to gabble something where a pro can hear him, to get even with you for booting him as you did."

The Bounder shut his teeth hard. He did not need Bob Cherry to tell him that—it had been weighing on his mind since he had cooled down after booting Bunter.

"I shall have to keep Bunter quiet somehow," he sneered. "I can fix it with the fat fool. He will do anything for a pot of jam!"

"Then you mean to carry on?" asked Harry.

"Don't I generally carry on when I've made up my mind to a thing? You can preach till you're black in the face, but it won't make any difference."

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"It's a rotten trick!" he said.

"Thanks for your opinion."

"You know you ought to chuck it."

"That's the second time you've told me what I know! I hate to point it out, but you're beginnin' to bore me!"

"Well, that's all we've got to say," said Harry. "But if you won't do the decent thing, Vernon-Smith, you're going to be jolly well bumped. We can't give you away, but we can make it clear what we think of a fellow who goes over the limit to that extent. Collar him!"

The Bounder's clenched hands flew up.

"Hands off, you rotters, or—"

He had no time to finish and no chance of hitting. The grasp of the Famous Five swopt him off his feet, and he whirled dizzily in the air.

"Will you chuck it, Smithy? Last time of asking!"

"No!" yelled the Bounder.

"Bump him!"

There was a handsome, expensive carpet in the Bounder's study. It was very nice to walk on. It was not so nice to bump on—as Smithy now discovered. He bumped on it hard!

He bumped and yelled.

"Chucking it now, Smithy?"

"You cheeky rotters—"

Bump!

The Bounder struggled and yelled.

Bump!

"I say, you fellows." Billy Bunter blinked into the study. "I say—He, he, he! Bump the cad!"

Bump!

"He, he, he! I say, hold him while I boot him! Don't let him get loose—that's important! Just hold him while I— Yaroooooh! Wharrer you kicking me for, Bob Cherry, you beast?"

Bunter departed without waiting for an answer to that question. Bob's foot was rising again.

Bump!

"You cadis—rotters— Ow!" yelled the Bounder.

Bump!

"Ooooh!"

Vernon-Smith, panting and gasping, sat on his expensive carpet, and the

Famous Five walked out of the study and left him sitting there, gurgling for breath and in the savagest temper ever.

They could not stop Smithy and they had to let him carry on; but they had at least made it clear to him what they thought of his schemes—painfully clear. And they left it at that.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Comes Round!

"YAH!"

Billy Bunter made that elegant remark after breakfast the following morning.

He addressed it to Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Smithy was walking in the quad, with his hands in his pockets and a deep line of thought on his brow.

When the bell rang the rest of the Remove were going in to Form—not the Bounder. The Bounder was going to pack and catch a morning train.

All his plans were laid, and it only remained to carry them out. But—there was a 'troublesome' 'but.'

A dozen Remove fellows by that time knew all that Bunter could tell; but that did not worry the Bounder. No man in the Remove would give him away to the beaks. But Bunter worried him a whole lot. He had put Bunter's fat back up, and Bunter had to be placated somehow and induced to be discreet. That was easy enough if he would have allowed the fat Owl to hook on for the Devonshire holiday.

Bunter's frowns would have been replaced by expansive grins then. Mauly had, as he expressed it, let him down; Harry Wharton & Co., as Bunter knew, had nothing on for the hols; other fellows, as usual, failed to realise that Bunter was the man to make a holiday a real success. It looked like Bunter Court for Bunter—and a chance of joining the millionaire's party in Devon would have come like a windfall. But Smithy had not the slightest intention of that! He did not want Bunter for the hols; in fact, he objected to him strongly. That was that!

Some other way had to be found. And a sardonic grin that dawned on Smithy's face hinted that he had thought of another way.

Bunter, blinking at him through his big spectacles, noted that grin, and took cognisance of it with the elegant monosyllable "Yah!"

Smithy looked round at him.

The fat Owl backed a little away. He was wary! He was still feeling a few twinges from Smithy's boot, and he did not want any more.

"Yah!" repeated Bunter, watchful and ready to dodge. "Yah! You're jolly well clearing off while we're going in to class! All right!" Billy Bunter curled a fat lip into a fat sneer. "All right! Perhaps you won't get away with it as easy as you think! Perhaps you'll be stopped! Perhaps you'll be fetched back! Yah!"

"I want to speak to you before class, Bunter—"

"You can pack it up!" retorted Bunter. "I don't want to have anything to say to you, Vernon-Smith! You're a bit too unscrupulous for me! I wonder what Quelch would think if he heard—"

"Shut up!" hissed the Bounder.

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter. "I fancy you won't get away with this rotten trick. Some fellows have a conscience. I let you rush me into it yesterday; but I've got a conscience, if you haven't. When a fellow's got something on his conscience, the best thing he can do is to own up!"

The Bounder breathed hard.

"You wouldn't look at it like that. I dare say," said Bunter contemptuously. "But that's how I look at it. I can't keep a thing like this on my conscience. No decent chap could. Making a fool of the headmaster—"

"Quiet!" breathed Smithy. "There's Wingate—"

"I don't care! If Wingate hears anything by accident it's not my fault! Besides, I'm thinking of asking Wingate his advice about what I ought to do. When a fellow has something on his conscience he has a right to ask a prefect's advice."

"About the hols, Bunter—"

"Eh?"

"You—you asked me in the study if—"

Billy Bunter blinked at him and grinned. Billy Bunter had wondered whether the Bounder's uneasy and alarmed frame of mind would make him come round. Apparently it had.

But if the Bounder, after all his tantrums, was prepared to eat humble pie, Bunter was the fellow to give him a hearty meal of it.

"Who asked you?" said Bunter coolly and disdainfully. "I never asked you anything, that I know of."

"You fat idiot—"

"Don't say I asked you anything!" said Bunter. "I offered to come with you for the hols, naturally, thinking that you'd like a decent chap to show off as a friend. You're fond of swanking. Well, I was ready to play up and let you swank about it. And how did you repay my kindness?"

Smithy seemed on the point of choking.

"Not that I'm the fellow to owe a grudge," went on Bunter. "When a chap's pally, I'm ready to be pally. But I'm not sure I could come now, Smithy. My pal D'Arcy, at St. Jim's, has written me a rather urgent letter; he's rather keen to see me at Eastwood House for Easter. They're the real thing there; a bit different from your Bank Holiday lot."

Smithy hardly knew how he refrained from grabbing the fat Owl and banging his head on the nearest elm.

But he had to, and he did.

"Still, if you're keen on it, I'll consider it," went on Bunter. "Mind, no rot about it! Say out plain whether you want me or not. If you don't, I'm not the chap to barge in, I hope. If you do, say so, and I'll see whether I can manage it. I can't say fairer than that."

If Herbert Vernon-Smith had had any scruples about pulling the fat Owl's leg Bunter would have banished them.

"Well, look here, Bunter, I'd be jolly glad if you'd accept my invitation," he said. "I mean that—every word of it."

Bunter condescended to become gracious!

"Well, if you put it like that, old chap, it's a go," he said. "After all, you can't help your manners; you new-rich fellows are all much of a muchness, and a fellow shouldn't expect too much of you in the way of manners."

"It's a go, then?" asked Vernon-Smith, manfully suppressing his feelings.

"I'll see you through, old chap," said Bunter reassuringly, "and, as I said last night, I'm a man of my word, I hope. If you like to pass me off as a relation at hotels and places to make out that you've got some decent connections, I'll play up."

Really Bunter was begging for it!

"It's settled, then," said Vernon-Smith. "Now I'll tell you how it



“But I say—yarooooh!” roared Bunter, as the dictionary whizzed. “Buzz off, bloater!” hooted Harry Wharton. “Oh, all right!” gasped the fat Removite. “If you don’t want your telegram, all right! I’ll take it back to Quelch and say you don’t want it!”

stands. I shan’t be here, of course, on breaking-up day; you’ll have to come down to Devonshire on your own—”

“That’s all right,” agreed Bunter. “But, I say, when I ask a fellow home I generally stand him a car.”

“You fat freak—”

“What?”

“I—I mean, all right!” said Vernon-Smith hastily.

“I could phone home for the pater’s Rolls,” remarked Bunter. “But, you see, there’s rather a run on the cars at Bunter Court with the crowd we have there at Easter. After all, your pater lets you run a bill at Courtfield Garage, and you can order a car if you like. What about it?”

“I’ll fix that all right. And—”

The ring of the school bell interrupted Vernon-Smith.

“That beastly bell!” grunted Bunter.

“I shall have to cut in. I say—”

“I shall see you in break. I’m not leavin’ before twelve.”

“Oh, all right!”

“And mind—not a word!”

Bunter favoured the anxious Bounder with a fat wink.

“Rely on me,” he said. “Not a jolly old syllable. If a chap treats me as a pal, I can treat him as a pal. I’ll see you in break, Smithy, and we’ll fix it up all right; I’ll see you through the hols, old chap, and you can introduce me anywhere you like as your pal at school. After all, we’re not likely to meet anybody I know.”

And with that the fat Owl rolled off to the House to join the rest of the Remove going to the Form-room, only the grim necessity of self-restraint on Smithy’s part saving him from a thudding boot as he went.

In Form that morning Billy Bunter had a cheery, grinning face. At long, long last he was booked for Easter; he

was fixed up for the hols, and all was calm and bright. At least, Bunter had no doubt that it was.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Bright Outlook For Bunter!

“ABOUT Easter, you fellows—”

“Help!”

“I mean to say—”

“Rescue!”

“You silly chumps!” roared Billy Bunter, while the other fellows in the Rag yelled.

After class that day the fat Owl rolled into the Rag and blinked round for Harry Wharton & Co.

He gave them a glare through his big spectacles as the five with one accord called for help and rescue at the mention of Easter.

“I mean to say—” howled Bunter.

“About Easter—”

“Mercy!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” yelled the fellows in the Rag.

“You—you—you silly asses! I was only going to mention that I’m fixed up for Easter!” gasped Bunter. “Can’t you let a chap speak?”

“Oh, poor old Mauly!” sighed Bob Cherry.

“The poorfulness of the esteemed old Mauly is terrific!” grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

“I’m not going with that silly fat-head Mauly—”

“Thanks!” came a gentle drawl from an armchair.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Billy Bunter blinked round at his lordship in the armchair.

“Your own fault, Mauly!” he said, with a sniff.

“Eh?”

“I mean, if you can’t make up your

mind one way or the other you can’t expect to keep a fellow hanging about. I shan’t be seeing you these hols. You’ve only got yourself to thank!”

“Oh gad!” murmured Mauleverer. And his lordship sank back in the armchair, apparently overcome.

Bunter grunted and turned back to the Famous Five.

They smiled at him cheerily. If Bunter was fixed up for Easter, they were willing to give him his head, as it were. It was only in his unfixed state that Bunter was obnoxious.

“Who’s the happy victim, old fat man?” asked Bob amicably.

“Oh, really, Cherry! I’ve decided to accept Smithy’s invitation,” explained Bunter. “He was so jolly pressing that a fellow could hardly get out of it really. I shall be down in Devonshire these hols.”

“Smithy!” repeated Nugent, staring.

As Bunter had fled into Study No. 1 from Smithy’s boot during prep the previous evening this was rather surprising. It seemed that oil had been poured on the troubled waters.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was gone. A car from Courtfield Garage had carried him off to the station while the Remove were in third school that morning. He was gone, so far as his Form-master and headmaster knew, to join his father in Devonshire. Form-master and headmaster did not know what most of the Remove could have told them.

He had not said a word to the Famous Five before he went. They were not included in Smithy’s good-byes. Apparently the Bounder was still feeling sore over that bumping in Study No. 4. If that was the case, he was welcome to feel sore as long as he liked—the Co. did not regret that bumping.

But it seemed that he had said something to Bunter—from what the fat Owl

now stated. Indeed, some fellows had seen them in confabulation during the break, and Bunter had been looking quite bucked ever since.

"I've consented to go!" explained the fat Owl. "Smithy made such a point of it, you know."

"I can see him doing it!" agreed Nugent.

"Jolly good-natured of him to let you stick on for the hols," said Bob. "The old Bounder isn't really a bad old sort. His bark's worse than his bite."

"Well, it will be a bit of a leg-up for him!" said Bunter. "You see, the old Obadiah and the young Obadiah will be running about all over Devonshire and Cornwall in Old Smith's whacking big car—putting up at expensive hotels, and all that. Naturally, Smithy will like to have a decent chap in the party to show off."

"Oh crikey!"

"Makes a good impression on managers and waiters, and all that!" explained Bunter. "Looks as if he's in a good set at school, you see."

"Did you tell Smithy that?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Eh? Yes! I told him I'd play up! I'm going to, too! If he stands the holiday, why shouldn't I let him show off as a fellow who knows fellows like me at school? One good turn deserves another."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's where Smithy comes in!" explained Bunter. "You see, these Smiths have tons of money, but no distinction. That's where a fellow like me comes in useful to people of that sort."

"I'an me!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"It will be a pretty good trip," went on Bunter, while the Famous Five and a dozen other fellows gazed at him. "These Smith people do things in style—according to their lights, you know. Old Smith splashes money about like water. Everything of the best. The grub will be all right."

"And if the grub's all right, everything's all right, what?" asked Bob.

"Exactly! I'm going down by car," continued Bunter. "Smithy's fixed that up with that man Powser, at Courtfield Garage."

"Tremendous long trip in a car!" said Bob. "My hat! There will be some bill for somebody to pay Powser."

"Well, they've got money," said Bunter contemptuously. "They've got nothing else, but they've got money. Smithy's given me a letter to the butler at the castle—"

"The which?"

"The castle! Blackrock Castle!" said Bunter. "That's where we're staying first. Blackrock Castle, on Blackrock Island, off the coast."

"Smithy told us about his pater buying an island," said Bob. "Is that the jolly old island?"

"That's it! Off the coast of Devonshire," said Bunter. "As Smithy and his pater may not be there when I arrive, he's given me a letter to the butler—and, of course, made all the arrangements for the trip. Powser will take me down in the car, when we break up, and get a boat to take me across to the island, at Potkelly—that's the place on the coast opposite the island. But what I was going to say is this—I can take a few friends with me, if I like—I asked Smithy, and he said O.K."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"If all that's official, old fat man, you'll find plenty of friends to join up! Lots!"

"The lotfulness will be terrific."

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"Well, I was thinking of asking you fellows!" said Bunter, blinking at them. "What about it?"

"Oh crumbs!"

The Famous Five just stared at Bunter. Considering how they had greeted every reference to Easter from the fat Owl, this was unexpected. Really, the fat Owl seemed to be heaping coals of fire on their heads!

"I mean to say, Smithy means well, but I can't say I like his company a lot," said Bunter. "A fellow prefers to have his own pals with him on a holiday. All expenses paid, you know—excepting, of course, little things here and there—I mean, we shall want lunch on the way down, and so on—you know how little expenses crop up on a holiday."

"Oh!"

The Famous Five realised that it was not coals of fire, after all. Billy Bunter, it seemed, had somehow hooked on to the Vernon-Smith party for the hols. But he could not hope to turn Smithy into his banker! Somebody else was needed for that!

"Well, what about it?" asked Bunter.

"Nothing about it, old fat bear," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You see, we're booked for the hols. Thanks all the same."

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you fat ass?" asked Harry.

"Oh, nothing! But suppose it fell through?" suggested Bunter.

"It won't, fathhead!" said Bob Cherry. "I should have heard from my pater if anything—"

"He, he, he!"

"What is that fat chump gurgling about?" asked Johnny Bull, staring at the cackling fat Owl. "Nothing's turned up, has it, Bob?"

"Not that I know of."

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, things do fall through sometimes!" gurgled Bunter. "I say, if you get let down at the last minute, what about joining up with me for a trip to Smithy's Devonshire island?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We shan't get let down, fathhead; and if anything did happen, we shouldn't be likely to land ourselves on Smithy! We haven't spoken to him since we were bumping him in his study last night."

"He's given me a free hand to ask fellows!" urged Bunter. "The fact is, I mentioned you chaps specially, and he said all right, if you'd like to come."

"Well, that was jolly decent of Smithy, in the cires!" said Bob. "I thought he'd gone off feeling sore."

"So he did!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Like a bear with a sore head!"

"That doesn't sound like it!" said the cheery Bob. "Smithy ain't a bad chap! More good than bad in old Smithy."

"Well, will you come?" asked Bunter. "I really want you chaps! I'm not thinking of borrowing money of you, on the hols, or anything of that kind, you know! I just want your company."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Yes or no?" hooted Bunter.

"No, thanks!" said the Famous Five together, laughing.

"Yah!" was Bunter's rejoinder.

But the fat Owl was grinning, as he rolled out of the Rag. He rather fancied that the chums of the Remove might take a different view when they learned what was to be learned from the letter that still reposed in his pocket!

were in happy ignorance of the fact that their Easter arrangements had been washed out; and certainly, in any case, they would not have dreamed of joining the Vernon-Smith party on an invitation proceeding solely from William George Bunter—especially considering the terms on which they had parted with Smithy!

Not for a moment did they suppose that they would ever see Blackrock Island, off the Devon coast in the Atlantic surf.

As a novelist would say, they little knew!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Corn In Egypt!

BOB CHERRY tramped into Study No. 1 on the last day before break-up, with a letter clutched in his hand, and unusual wrath in his flushed face.

"You fellows—" he gasped.

Four fellows stared at him.

"What on earth's up?" asked Harry Wharton, startled.

"We're dished."

"What the thump—" asked Frank Nugent.

"Look at that letter!" roared Bob. "I've just picked it up in my study. Somebody must have chucked it there for me—the worm who pinched it and opened it, I suppose! Look at it—dated nearly a week ago! Look!"

In utter amazement, the juniors looked at the letter. It was the letter from Major Cherry, which Smithy had handed down to Billy Bunter one morning in break, and which had failed to reach Bob.

Faces became very grave as they perused it.

Bob Cherry stood glaring, in a state of fury that was almost breathless.

Who had had that letter, he did not know. Somebody, it seemed to him, must have opened it by mistake—and that somebody, instead of handing it over to him and explaining, had kept it in his pocket; its grubby, crumpled state showed that it had been long in a pocket.

"Think of it!" gasped Bob. "The whole thing washed out—and we never knew. I'm awfully sorry, you chaps—you see I can't help it, and the pater can't help it—but he gave us plenty of time to fix up something else, if I'd got the letter—and I ought to have—"

"You've only just seen it?" asked Harry.

"I found it on my study table—put there for me, of course. Haven't the faintest idea who did it."

"Some rotter—" growled Johnny Bull.

"Well, I suppose the utter fool must have opened it by mistake and didn't like to say so!" said Bob, calming a little. "I suppose the silly idiot kept it in his pocket, not knowing what to do with it, the howling ass! I shouldn't have minded if he'd handed it over at once. But—"

"The blithering idiot ought to be kicked!"

"I'd boot him all round Greyfriars, if I knew who he was!" growled Bob. "Not that it would do any good now. I suppose I ought to be glad that he had sense enough to let me have it at the last minute."

"Thank goodness he did, anyhow!" said Harry Wharton, with a whistle. "Pretty set of asses we should have looked—"

"I'm frightfully sorry, old chaps! You see what the pater says—"

"Can't be helped, old bean! It would have been all right if we had heard earlier! But, by gum, this does let us down wallop!"

"The wallopfulness is terrific!"

Bob's face was crimson with anger and discomfort. Right up to that moment the Co. had had no doubts about the Easter trip with Bob's father—they had had no cause for doubt.

And all the time it had been washed out; and Major Cherry, long ago, was at a training camp, busy with recruits, and supposing that they knew all about it, and had arranged something else—as they could easily have done, had they known.

Five fellows were feeling a keen desire to kick the unknown fathead who had opened that letter by mistake and hadn't had sense enough to hand it over to the owner immediately and explain.

Fortunately for Billy Bunter, they took that for granted; it seemed the likeliest explanation of what had happened.

Certainly no suspicion crossed their minds that that letter had been kept back by an astute and unscrupulous fat Owl for astute and unscrupulous reasons of his own.

"Well, we're done!" said Bob dismally. "The whole thing washed out—and we break up here in the morning! Jevver hear of such a sell?"

There was rather a dismal silence in the study.

It was broken by a fat voice squeaking from the passage:

"I say, you fellows——"

"Get out, Bunter!" roared the Famous Five in chorus.

They had, at such a moment, no patience for Bunter! The fat Owl, always superfluous, had never been so superfluous as at that moment of dismay and disaster.

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"Buzz off, before I buzz this dick!" roared Johnny Bull, grabbing up a Latin dictionary from the table.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Roll away, fathead!" snapped Harry Wharton.

"But I say—— Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the dictionary whizzed.

He sat down in the doorway, roaring.

"Ow! Beast! Wow! Ow!"

"Get out!" roared Johnny.

"Beast!" Bunter tottered up, his fat face red with wrath. "Rotter! If that's the way you treat a pal, I can jolly well say—— Yow-ow-ow!"

"Buzz off, bloater!" hooted the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, all right!" gasped Bunter. "If you don't want your telegram, all right! I'll take it back to Quelch and say you don't want it! Like his cheek to tell me to bring it up, anyhow! Ow!"

"A telegram!" exclaimed Harry.

"Yes—— Ow! Beast! Ow! Yah!"

"Oh!" murmured Johnny Bull. He realised that he had been rather hasty with that dictionary.

"Hand it over, fathead!" said Harry.

"Shan't! I'll jolly well take it back to Quelch now, and say—— Leggo my collar, you beast! Here it is, you swab! Ow!"

Billy Bunter rolled away, in a state of wrath and indignation natural in the circumstances, and Harry Wharton opened the telegram.

Certainly, he had not been expecting a telegram, and he was surprised to receive one. He was still more surprised when he looked at it.

"Oh, my only summer hat!" he ejaculated. "This is from Smithy!"

"Smithy!"

"Look!"

The juniors all looked together. It was from the Bounder, and a very surprising message:

"Harry Wharton, Greyfriars School. If you and your friends change your minds, I should be more than glad if you would come along with Bunter."
"VERNON-SMITH."

The Famous Five looked at that telegram. They looked at one another.

Bob Cherry whistled.

"Looks as if Smithy's got over his tantrums!" he said. "I say, that's jolly decent, considering that the last thing we did before he left was to bump him on his study carpet."

"He jolly well deserved it, and more!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, yes, but this is jolly decent, all the same."

"The decentfulness is terrific."

Harry Wharton stood silent. He was more than surprised.

The Bounder had rather a long memory for offences, as a rule. He had been bitterly exasperated and bitterly resentful of the opinion they had expressed of his trickery, and the bumping that had followed. They had last seen him with a scowl on his face, and he had gone without a word to them. If he had, so soon, recovered from that bitterly disgruntled state, it was rather unlike the Bounder. Smithy was a fellow to get his own back, with a little over, before he got to a forgiving mood!

"By gum!" Bob's face brightened. "If Smithy ain't going to nurse a grudge, we're not! And the fact is the old Bounder couldn't have weighed in at a more useful time. This comes like corn in Egypt in the jolly old lean years."

"It does," said Harry slowly.

"But——"

"But what?" asked Bob.

"Oh, nothing!"

Vaguely at the back of Wharton's mind was a doubt. But he could not define it, and he was a little ashamed of it. After all, what could be plainer than that message? It meant—it could only mean—that Smithy had got over his tantrums and wanted to wash out the row and see them in the holidays! What else could it mean?

"We'll jaw it over a bit before we decide!" said Bob. "But it would be a bit ungracious to refuse when Smithy's put his pride in his pocket and made the first advances. He does a lot of things we don't like—but I don't see giving him offence for nothing."

"That's so!" said Frank Nugent, with a nod.

There was rather a long discussion in Study No. 1. With all arrangements for the holidays knocked completely out almost at the last minute, there was no doubt that the Bounder's telegram solved a difficult problem. And all the more because they had parted with Smithy on hostile terms, the Co. were disposed to accept the olive branch held out by the Bounder.

And Harry Wharton, dismissing a lingering, doubtful uneasiness from his mind, agreed with his comrades—and so it was settled.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Off For Easter!

BILLY BUNTER grunted.

Bunter was not pleased. The sunshine of the bright April morning was not reflected in the countenance of William George Bunter.

Certainly, Bunter was glad that the Famous Five were coming on that Devonshire trip!

Whether the egregious fat Owl really fancied that Smithy wanted to show him off as a creditable school pal or not, he did not expect to find the Bounder particularly agreeable company. Neither did he expect Smithy to exude anything in the nature of small loans. He knew Smithy too well to expect either from him.

Bunter was a gregarious animal; he liked company. And he liked company more agreeable than the arrogant Bounder's. But more important and more urgent than that, the fat Owl needed somebody to see him through the incessant and innumerable little expenses that cropped up on a holiday. Pals with a little ready cash in their pockets were a real necessity to Bunter on holiday.

So he was glad that the Famous Five had joined up. But what Bunter wanted was to be in the lofty position of a generous fellow conferring favours. And he did not get what he wanted! Harry Wharton & Co. were going because Smithy had sent a telegram to ask them—irrespective and regardless of Billy Bunter! And they made it plain and clear that Billy Bunter had nothing to do with it!

Which displeased Bunter and caused him that morning to give them many expressive and disgruntled blinks through his big spectacles.

Fortunately, those wrathful and contemptuous blinks did not perturb the equanimity of the Famous Five in the very least.

They were merry and bright that bright morning.

They were glad that the row with the Bounder was over and done with; glad that the problem of the hols had been so unexpectedly and satisfactorily settled, and glad that they were going to explore the glorious and beautiful county of Devon.

If there was a fly in the ointment, it was Bunter; but they were prepared to tolerate Bunter, though they wondered a little how the Bounder would tolerate him. However, that was Smithy's business and Bunter's.

It was a long trip to the West Country, and it was to be made in the car ordered by Vernon-Smith, so an early start was indicated.

That was easy, and the Famous Five and Bunter were the first to get off on breaking-up day.

Perhaps a spot of lingering doubt in Wharton's mind had caused him to telephone to Mr. Powser at Courtfield Garage over-night. There seemed no room for doubt in the matter, yet it seemed singular that Smithy should have incurred a heavy expense on Bunter's account.

True, Smithy was allowed to run up a bill at the garage, which his father always paid without question, and he was utterly extravagant in such matters. Mr. Vernon-Smith certainly never missed the money out of his millions, and he liked his son to spend freely.

Still, it was a little singular, as it could hardly be supposed that Smithy was fearfully keen on Bunter's company in the hols.

But if Wharton had any doubt at the back of his mind it was dispelled by the reply from the garage. All was arranged, and Mr. Powser, in his best car, was at the service of the Greyfriars party as early as they liked.

So that was all right!

Quite a crowd of fellows gathered to
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see the party off. It was a big and handsome car, and it turned up on the tick of time with Powser at the wheel.

Powser was not a man the Famous Five liked much. He had a rather shifty eye and a rather sardonic face. They knew that Smithy, in term time, often hired that car at forbidden hours; they more than suspected that Powser had often waited for him in that car when he had crept out of the Remore dormitory after lights-out. And a man who would play a part in a schoolboy breaking bounds was certainly not to be considered a nice or scrupulous man. The fact that Powser did it in the way of business was very little excuse for him.

Still, that was not a matter on which the juniors were called to sit in judgment. Powser was a good and reliable driver, and they had nothing to do with him except to sit in the car while he drove it.

Powser, as he touched his hat, gave the group of juniors a very keen and scanning glance, and there was a glimmer in his eyes that they did not notice, and would not have understood had they noticed it.

They knew that Vernon-Smith had made all arrangements with Powser to convey Bunter and any fellows who might travel with him to Blackrock Island. That was all they wanted to know.

That anything of a secret and surreptitious nature might have been arranged also between the Bounder and the man he paid naturally never crossed their minds. There was no reason why it should.

Suitcases were packed on the car. Five fellows packed themselves in—the sixth, the fattest, lingering.

"Roll in, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "What are you waiting for?"

"When are we stopping for lunch?" asked Bunter.

"Oh, somewhere about midday!"

"Well, I shall be hungry before then. What about a lunch-basket in the car? Mrs. Mimble will pack one all right."

"Big idea!" agreed Bob Cherry. "Cut off and get one! We'll wait!"

"I should have got one already," said Bunter scornfully, "but I happen to be rather short of tin. One of you fellows cut off and get it."

"Oh, roll in and shut up!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"We'd better have this clear," said Bunter with calm contempt. "I'm taking you fellows on a splendid and expensive holiday—"

"Can it!"

"And I expect you to do the decent thing. If you're too jolly mean to stand a fellow a lunch-basket when he's taking you up and seeing you through an expensive holiday—"

"Cheese it and get in!"

"I'm not going without a lunch-basket! You can get one at the school shop if you're not too jolly mean. I'll wait."

"You fat, fozzling frog—"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter stood firm.

If those beasts chose to make out that they were going because Smithy had asked them, and that they were under no obligations to Bunter, they weren't going to carry it to the length of keeping Bunter short of provender! Not if Bunter could help it! And he could!

"What about starting without him?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Well, that sounds nice!" agreed Harry Wharton. "But we can't, I suppose. We'd better roll him in and sit on him."

"Yah!" Bunter backed out of reach. "All serene!" said Bob Cherry, jumping up. "I'll cut off and get a lunch-basket! You get in and sit down, Bunter."

"Rot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Rubbish!" said Nugent.

"My dear chaps," said Bob. "Bunter wants a lunch-basket—don't you, Bunter?"

"Yes, I jolly well do!"

"Well, if Bunter wants it he'd better have it, I suppose," argued Bob. "Pretty thick if Bunter couldn't have what he wanted!"

"I should jolly well say so!" grunted Bunter. "Anyhow, I ain't starting without it, and you can't start without me, so yah!"

Four fellows in the car grinned as Bob dropped out.

From Bob's latest remark they deduced that that lunch-basket might possibly contain a surprise for Bunter.

The fat Owl, however, grinned with cheery satisfaction as he clambered in, while Bob cut off.

"You fellows had better take that as a tip," he said, blinking at the four.

"I'm doing a lot for you chaps, standing you a splendid holiday and all that. I don't expect gratitude. Still, there's a limit. Mind where you shove that hoof, Bull! Yaroooh! Wharrer you doing, you silly ass?" roared Bunter, as a boot banged on a foot.

"Minding where I shove my hoof," answered Johnny affably.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that's how you're going to begin," roared Bunter, "I shall jolly well leave you out of this Easter trip, Bull. The fact is, I don't want you."

"What a coincidence! I don't want you, either! Now shut up before I dot you on the boko!"

Billy Bunter sat and breathed wrath till Bob came cutting back with the lunch-basket.

He had not been gone long. Bunter's fat face cleared as he lifted it in. Its weight made him grunt. But weight, in the circumstances, was welcome. Judging by the weight, there was enough in that lunch-basket to keep Bunter happy at least till lunch.

"Oh, that's all right," said Bunter graciously.

"So glad you're pleased, Bunter," said Bob cheerily. "Such a pleasure to please such a really nice chap! Now let's get off—what?"

And the Easter party got off at last.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Two Jokers!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Say on, old porpoise."

"Smithy's letter ain't in this pocket."

"What?"

The big car, with Powser at the wheel, was rolling rapidly on its way under the merry April sunshine. Hills and dales, towns and villages rolled past.

Powser was making good speed. He slowed when he had to, but on the open roads he let the car out; and it was a good car and Powser a good driver. So the Easter party were getting over the ground.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at the landscape and chatted cheerily in great spirits. Whenever they mentioned Smithy, as they frequently did, it was in the most cordial manner. Really, they could not regret having made their opinion clear on the subject of the trick on the headmaster, but, at the

same time, they felt that it was very sporting of the Bounder to have washed out all offences in this way.

Billy Bunter had an eye on the lunch-basket. However, for the first hour or so even Bunter did not feel the urge for refreshment, having parked a gargantuan breakfast before starting. Now the fat junior was feeling in his pocket, and seemed to fail to find something there.

Harry Wharton & Co. gave him their attention. Bunter's statement was rather disconcerting.

It was understood that Smithy and his father might not arrive at Blackrock Island before the Greyfriars party did. So Smithy had explained to Bunter—and had given him a letter addressed to the butler at the castle.

Smithy's movements, naturally, depended on his father's, so that was all right. But as the Greyfriars fellows were all strangers at the place they needed some sort of an introduction when they arrived, if Smithy were not there.

So Bunter's statement that Smithy's letter to the butler was not in his pocket was somewhat perturbing.

"Left it behind, you ass?" asked Bob.

"Well, I was sure I put it in my pocket," said Bunter.

"Look again, fathead!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I've looked."

"Well, of all the howling asses!" said Frank Nugent. "Not a soul at the place has seen us, or very likely never heard our names."

"Smithy may have written to the place," said Harry. "I suppose he would if he may not be there when we get in."

"Well, he left that letter with me to see me through," said Bunter. "I don't suppose he's written as well. Why should he?"

"You fat ass, and you've lost it!"

"Oh, no, I haven't lost it!" answered Bunter calmly. "I simply said that it wasn't in this pocket—and it jolly well isn't."

"Left it in your study?"

"I don't think so."

"We've done over fifty miles," said Bob. "But if that fat chump has left the letter behind, we shall have to go back for it."

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you fat Owl?" roared Bob. "Anything funny in losing hours on the journey, when we specially started early?"

"I said it wasn't in this pocket," grunted Bunter. "But I didn't say it wasn't in the other. He, he, he!"

And from the other pocket the grinning fat Owl drew an envelope.

The Famous Five gazed at him, speechless. They realised that this was a joke—Bunter's idea of a joke.

He hadn't left the letter behind, or lost it. He was being funny.

"You," gasped Bob—"you—"

"He, he, he!"

"You terrific blithering Owl!" exclaimed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"He, he, he! Only pulling your leg," grinned Bunter. "He, he, he! You fellows haven't much sense of humour. You can't enjoy a joke. He, he, he! It's all right. Like to look at it?" added Bunter. "Sounds a tip-top place, from what Smithy says in the letter to Walsingham."

The Famous Five were quite interested to see that letter.

They had never seen Blackrock Island, or heard of it till Smithy had mentioned it. And though they expected to see it before the April sun



The door was opened, and a man with a wooden leg, holding a lamp in his hand, looked out and scanned the faces of the schoolboys. "Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Oke, but can you show us the way to the castle?" asked Harry Wharton.

set, they were keen to know about the place to which they were going.

The flap of the envelope was tucked in. Smithy had left it unfastened, so that the bearer could read it if he liked.

Bunter, of course, had done so, to make sure that it was all fair and square. He drew it out, and the famous Five read it together.

It was addressed to Mr. Walsingham, butler at Blackrock Castle, and ran:

"Dear Walsingham,—The bearer of this letter is W. G. Bunter, one of my pals at school. In case I am not at the castle before he arrives, I want you to give him every attention, and make him comfortable in every possible way. Let him have everything he wants, and see that no expense is spared. He is to have the Royal Room, and pick out a good man to act as his valet during his stay. He is to have the touring car whenever he wants it, and a chauffeur at his orders. Keep the motor-boat ready for him whenever he wants to run across to the mainland. He may bring some friends with him, and, if so, look after them till I come.—H. VERNON-SMITH."

"Sounds good—what?" asked Bunter, with a satisfied grin.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him, looked at the letter, and then looked at Bunter again. It did sound good—there was no mistake about that. It really seemed to them to sound rather too good.

Had Billy Bunter been a fellow whom the Bouncer delighted to honour, he could not have done more than this.

And Bunter wasn't. The juniors were rather puzzled by Smithy letting

him hook on at all. There were good-natured fellows who would tolerate the fat Owl—themselves often enough, and Mauly. But Smithy, though he could be generous when the spirit moved him, was not conspicuous for good nature.

Neither did good-natured fellows who tolerated Bunter take all this trouble about him. It was really rather mystifying.

"Blessed if I make it all out!" said Bob.

"Eh? What is there to make out?" asked Bunter, blinking at him.

"Well, what the dickens is Smithy doing it for?" asked Bob.

"That's plain enough. They've got a whopping place on that island—that's clear from this letter—butler, and staff of menservants, and all that. It will do Smithy a bit of good to have a chap there who's accustomed to hordes of menials—"

"You burbling Owl!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Smithy will be sprouting wings next," said Nugent. "He was booting Bunter the evening before he left, and next morning he hands him this. We jolly well bumped him, and he sends us a telegram asking us to join up for a ripping holiday. Smithy's a nicer chap than we ever thought."

"He must be," said Harry Wharton slowly.

He was conscious of that feeling of uneasy doubt creeping back into his mind.

Yet what was there to doubt?

"You can see from that letter," pursued Bunter, "that you're simply coming as friends of mine. Keep that in mind."

"Fathead!" said Bob.

"Look here!" roared Bunter.

"Don't be an ass!" said Harry.

"We shouldn't have come without Smithy asking us, fathead! Blessed if I make it out! It really looks as if Smithy had some idea that our arrangements might fall through."

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, ass?"

"Oh, nothing! I say, I fancy I'll sample that lunch-basket now!" said Bunter. "I'm getting a bit peckish. And I want you fellows to understand that I shall expect another lunch-basket like that to be put in the car this afternoon."

"If you want another lunch-basket like that, old fat man, you've only to say the word," said Bob Cherry.

"Well, that's all right," said Bunter, satisfied.

He proceeded to open the lunch-basket.

Then his satisfaction disappeared. The basket was fairly heavy. Bunter had naturally supposed that it was weighted with provender. What else was a fellow to suppose?

But it wasn't. What the basket actually contained was a pig's head! There was nothing else inside. Merely a pig's head.

Bunter gazed at the pig's head. His eyes almost bulged through his spectacles as he gazed. The famous Five watched him with interest. Wrath held the fat Owl dumb for some moments. Then he found his voice:

"Beast!"

"Like another lunch-basket like that this afternoon?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rotter!" roared Bunter. "Swab! Beast! Oh crikey! Pulling a fellow's leg! Rotten beast!"

"You haven't got much sense of humour! You can't enjoy a joke!" chuckled Bob, in affable parody of
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Bunter's own remarks, and the Co. roared.

"Oh, you beast!" howled Bunter. "I'm hungry! You—you—you—" Words failed Billy Bunter.

Bunter did not eat anything from that lunch-basket. Bunter could eat almost anything; but even Bunter had a limit.

For the next two or three hours William George Bunter sat and glared, and the Co. smiled. And the more Bunter glared, the more they smiled, until at last the car pulled up for lunch, and then Bunter smiled, too.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

In Glorious Devon!

SNORE!

That sound proceeded from Billy Bunter.

It was not musical. Even a modern Russian composer would hardly have considered it really musical. But as a change from Bunter's conversation, it was not unwelcome.

That long and glorious April day was drawing to a close. Countless miles had fled under the rolling wheels. Town after town, county after county had disappeared behind Powser's car. It was a long long drive, and even the Famous Five were getting a little tired. Bunter, tired long ago, had grumbled and grouched as if it was somebody's fault specially that he got tired; then happily he went to sleep.

There had been several halts on that long trip into the West. There had been a halt for lunch, a halt for tea, and a halt for supper. At each halt Billy Bunter had had cause to be glad that he had his pals with him. Bunter had not had to spend any money. That was particularly fortunate, because he had no money to spend.

Indeed, keen as Bunter was on that trip, it was a question how he would have got through it alive without his pals. He had started getting hungry at ten in the morning. So what he

would have felt like at seven in the evening, hardly bore thinking of.

Now, however, he slept and snored, loaded to the Plimsoll line, and a little over. He told the other fellows not to wake him till they got to Potkelly, which they had no desire to do. For once Bunter's wishes were going to be very carefully regarded.

On the open roads Powser had let the car out to dizzy speeds. It was under bright sunshine still that they ran into the glorious county of Devon.

Devonshire, in the green of spring, was worth looking at, and the juniors, tired as they were getting, enjoyed every minute of it, while Bunter snored.

Under the sunset they sighted the sea suddenly—the vast Atlantic rolling wide and blue.

"Thalassa!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, pointing from the window, and all eyes looked out at the blue ocean as the car roared on.

They lost it again, and saw it again, as the car followed a coast road. Here and there they had glimpses of deep green coombes sloping down to the shore. Once or twice Powser called a question to some passer-by for directions to Potkelly.

Potkelly, evidently, was a very remote spot far off main roads.

The car whirled on through deep lanes, crowned by high hedges and woods.

Powser halted at last in a wooded lane at the head of a coombe. He stepped down and opened the door of the car.

"Journey's end?" asked Bob cheerily.

Powser touched his cap, and grinned. Why he grinned was not clear, unless he was glad to get to the end of that long drive, and thus expressed his feelings.

"That's it, sir," he answered. "You'll have to walk the last bit. Can't get the car down to the beach."

"Right-ho!"

Potkelly, it seemed, lay at the foot of the coombe.

Harry Wharton & Co. were more than willing to stretch their legs a

little after sitting so long in the car. Whether Bunter would be willing was another matter; but there was no help for it.

Bob gave the snoring fat Owl a shake.

"Urrrgh! Beast! Lemme alone!"

"Wake up, old fat man!"

"Shan't! Lemme alone!"

"Going back in the car?" roared

Bob.

"Oh!" Bunter sat up, yawned, rubbed his eyes, jammed his spectacles on his fat little nose, and blinked round him in the red of the sunset. "Have we got to Potkelly? Why couldn't you say so? Urrgh!"

The Famous Five jumped out actively. Bunter rolled slowly after them.

There was a keen wind with salt in it, of which the clowns of the Remove drew deep breaths.

Bunter grunted.

"Beastly windy!" he said. He blinked round. "Where's Potkelly? I can't see the place. If you fellows are pulling my leg—"

"We've got to walk down the coombe—"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter.

"No other way, sir!" said Powser.

"No road down for a car."

"You shut up, and don't be cheeky!"

"Oh! Yes, sir! Certainly, sir!"

"Understand this!" said Bunter, with a glare of deep indignation at the Famous Five. "I'm not going to walk! Smithy said the car would take us all the way! He said so distinctly."

"Only a few hundred yards, sir," said Powser.

"I said shut up!"

"Oh! Certainly, sir!"

Powser gave the Owl of the Remove quite a peculiar look. But he shut up, and lifted the suitcases from the car.

"You fat, fozzling freak!" said Johnny Bull. "If you cheek the chauffeur again I'll boot you, if he doesn't!"

"Don't be a fool!" yapped Bunter. Bunter was tired, and when Bunter was tired Bunter was irritable. "I shan't walk a step, I know that!"

"Sure?" asked Bob.

"Yes, you beast!" roared Bunter.

"Right-ho! Good-bye!"

Five fellows picked up their suitcases. They were ready to start.

Billy Bunter gave them a devastating blink. But perhaps it dawned on his powerful intellect that it was necessary to walk, as there was no other means of locomotion.

"I'll talk to that beast Smithy about this!" he grunted. "He said distinctly that we should go all the way by car. Getting a fellow to join him on the hols on false pretences, I call it! Just like Smithy—Smithy all over! Who's going to carry my bag?"

"Echo answers that the whofulness is terrific!" smiled Hurrec Janset Ram Singh.

"Well, the chauffeur can carry it if you fellows are too lazy!" said Bunter scornfully. "Powser, carry my bag!"

Again Powser gave the fat Owl that peculiar look. But he touched his hat respectfully.

"Yes, sir! Certainly, sir!" He picked up Bunter's bag. "I'll get on ahead, gentlemen, and see about the boat," he added.

"Haven't they sent the motor-boat across for us?" yapped Bunter.

"Eh?" Powser seemed startled by that question.

"Deaf?" hooted the irritable fat Owl. "I asked you if they weren't sending the motor-boat across from the island for us."

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"Oh, no! I—I think not, sir!" stammered Powser. "My instructions from Master Vernon-Smith are to hire a boatman at Potkelly to take you across."

"Rotten manners!" growled Bunter. "Smithy all over!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Bunter!" said Bob impatiently. "They don't even know we're arriving to-day—may not even know we're arriving at all, for all we know, till we get there! Shut up, and come on!"

"Beast!"

Bunter did not shut up, but he came on.

Powser went on ahead, down the coombe, carrying Bunter's bag.

The Famous Five followed, similarly laden.

Bunter rolled on, grunting, behind.

"Don't race!" he howled.

"Oh, get a move on!" snapped Johnny Bull.

"Beast! If you think you're going to walk me off my legs you're jolly well mistaken!"

"Oh, slow down!" said Bob. "After all, there's no hurry. It will take Powser some time to get the boat."

"If that cheeky chauffeur keeps me waiting for the boat—"

"Shut up!" roared the Famous Five together.

"Yah!"

The Famous Five accommodated their pace to Bunter's, which was that of an old and tired snail. Powser disappeared ahead.

Down the green coombe they went, with the sea, rolling red in the sunset, before their eyes. But it was not a long walk, though at Bunter's rate of progress it took some time.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob at last. "Here we are!"

They had reached Potkelly. Far out in the Atlantic, a black mass against the sunset, rose an island from the sea, and the Famous Five looked for the first time at Blackrock Island.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Perplexing!

"JOLLY!" said Bob Cherry.

"What-ho!" agreed Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five looked round them; even Billy Bunter cast a blink around, and did not grunt or grumble for a minute or two.

The sun, setting far out in the Atlantic, cast level red rays, lighting up Potkelly. It was a tiny cluster of ancient cottages, not more than seven or eight, backed by the great cliffs that fronted the ocean. They clustered at the foot of the coombe where it widened to the beach, some of them only a very short distance above high-water mark.

Between that spot of a hamlet and the sea lay the beach down to the bay, where there was an ancient stone quay, with three or four boats drawn up.

Two or three figures could be seen on the quay—ancient mariners in sea-boots and jerseys, leaning on the stone wall and gazing seaward, where the dark mass of the distant island blotted the sunset.

"Jolly place, and no mistake!" said Bob.

"The jolliffulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, I'm hungry!"

"We've heard that one!"

"Beast! I mean to say, what about having supper at the hotel before we cross over?"

"We had supper miles back."

"If you fellows think you are going to starve me—"

"Well, lead the way to the hotel, and we'll have another supper!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Just point it out, and lead on!"

"Oh! Do you mean that there isn't one, you beast?"

"Sort of."

"Well, the inn, then?" granted Bunter. "If there isn't an hotel I suppose there's an inn."

"Keep on supposing!"

"Oh crikey!" Bunter realised that there was not even an inn at Potkelly. "Oh lor'! What a place! I say, tell that brute Powser to buck up with the boat! I want to get across! Don't hang about here!"

Powser had landed Bunter's bag on the old stone quay, and was in talk with one of the ancient mariners.

That ancient mariner seemed a man of few words. Powser talked, and the ancient mariner nodded. Finally, he took his pipe from his mouth, and said: "Iss, iss!"

Then Powser came towards the waiting schoolboys, and the mariner went towards a boat on the beach, and, with the help of another mariner, shoved it down to the water, and brought it round under the quay.

"All is ready, gentlemen!" said Powser. "Mr. Tregelly—that's the boatman—will take you across and land you on the island. But—"

He paused.

"But what?" asked Harry.

Powser coughed.

"Oh, nothing, sir! The boat is ready. Please let me put your luggage in."

The suitcases were carried to the boat and handed down to Tregelly.

Tregelly—a powerfully built man, with a weather-beaten face that looked like mahogany—glanced from one to another of the schoolboys.

There was a faint expression of surprise on his bronzed, bearded face. But he said nothing.

"Keep that boat steady while I get in!" granted Bunter. "You hold it, Powser! Hold it steady!"

"It's quite safe, sir—"

"Will you hold it?" yapped Bunter. "If you think I'm going to slip into the water because you're too lazy to hold the boat, you're jolly well mistaken."

Powser gave him that peculiar look again, and went down the step and held the gunwale of the boat, while William George Bunter clambered in.

The fat Owl stumbled, grunted, and sat down.

The Famous Five were about to follow when Powser came up the step again, and as he seemed to have something to say, they paused.

Harry Wharton had a ten-shilling note in his hand for Powser, but the chauffeur declined the tip.

"Thank you, sir, no!" he said. "Master Vernon-Smith is paying me well for this trip—very well indeed, sir. I won't take anything from you, sir."

"Just as you like, Powser!" said Harry, with a smile. "Anything to say before we go?"

It was clear that there was something in Powser's mind, though the juniors could not guess what was troubling him. He was puzzling them a good deal.

Mr. Powser was not a very nice man, and not a very scrupulous man, in some ways. But he seemed rather to like that cheery party, though he did not extend that liking to the most important member, W. G. Bunter.

"Well, nothing, sir!" said Powser

uncomfortably. "Only— I suppose this trip of yours was all fixed up with Master Vernon-Smith, sir?"

"Yes, of course!" said Harry, in wonder. "We shouldn't be here otherwise."

"I mean, sir, when Master Vernon-Smith first spoke to me about it, the day I drove him from the school, he only mentioned Master Bunter, sir. He said that Master Bunter might bring some friends, that was all, sir. I did not think it was going to be you young gentlemen."

The Famous Five grinned. Powser, it seemed, had expected, if Bunter had brought friends with him, that they would be, so to speak, Bunterish. But he did the Famous Five the honour of recognising some difference.

"Well, we haven't come exactly as Bunter's friends, but as Smithy's," said Harry. "What the dickens are you driving at, Powser?"

"Oh, nothing, sir! But—well, I'm going back in the car," said Powser. "If you young gentlemen decided not to go with Master Bunter, and wanted to go back, it would be a pleasure to drive you, sir."

Harry Wharton & Co. simply stared at him. They had never—or hardly ever—been so utterly surprised.

"Blessed if I make you out," said Harry, blankly. "Of course we don't want to go back. We're going to be Smithy's guests at the castle."

Powser started a little.

"At what, sir?"

"The castle on the island."

"Oh! Yes. I—I'm unacquainted with these parts, sir—rather off my beat," said Powser. "I don't know much about that island. You—you're going to stay at the—the castle, sir?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" said Powser. "Did Master Vernon-Smith say so, sir? Excuse my asking, sir! Of course, it's no business of mine—"

"Smithy sent his invitation by telegram, yesterday," answered Harry, more and more puzzled. "But Bunter has a letter to the butler at the castle, and—"

"Oh! The—the butler at—the—the castle!" stammered Powser. "Oh! Yes. I—I—I see. Quite so, sir!"

"Look here, Powser," said Bob Cherry. "What are you driving at? I can see that something's worrying you. What is it?"

"Oh! Nothing, sir! I've had Master Vernon-Smith's instructions, and carried them out. But if you young gentlemen changed your minds about going on with Master Bunter I'd drive you back, and drive you anywhere you liked—"

Harry Wharton laughed, puzzled and perplexed as he was.

"We haven't driven right across England to drive back again," he said. "I can't make you out, Powser. What do you mean—if you mean anything?"

"Oh, nothing, sir! Good-night, sir!"

Powser touched his cap and walked away up the coombe.

The Famous Five stared after him, and stared at one another. Twice they saw Powser look back and hesitate before he finally disappeared. But he was gone from sight at last.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, "does anybody know what all that means?"

"Blessed if I do!" said Nugent.

"The knowfulness is not terrific."

"I say, you fellows, how long are you going to keep me waiting?" yelled Bunter. "I suppose you enjoy keeping me here, hungry, in this beastly wind?"

"Come on!" said Harry.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,625.

That odd, lingering doubt, which had haunted Wharton, more or less, ever since the Bounder's telegram had been received at Greyfriars, was stronger in his mind now. Yet he could still not define it. The Courtfield chauffeur had puzzled all the juniors. He seemed uneasy at having landed them there, why, they could not begin to guess. So far as Bunter was concerned, Powser had not seemed worried at all; but he had seemed somehow worried about the other fellows. It was quite perplexing.

However, it was rather too late to turn back now, if the juniors had thought of doing so, which they certainly did not. They packed themselves in the roomy old boat and Tregelly pushed off and sat to the heavy old oars.

Faintly, down the coombe on the wind, came the sound of a car. Powser was going. The sound died away as the boat pulled out to sea.

And the chums of the Remove, dismissing Powser and his peculiar remarks from their minds, breathed deep in the keen air of the Atlantic and watched Blackrock Island growing larger and larger against the sunset as old Tregelly pulled with a slow and steady stroke.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

On Blackrock Island!

"I SAY, you fellows! Can you see the castle?"

"No."

"Well, where is it, then?" grunted Bunter.

Blackrock Island was close at hand now. Tregelly was pulling to the south side, where there was a break in the huge cliffs that seemed to encircle the little island. There, the juniors could guess, was the landing-place. But there was no sign to be seen of a castle, or any other habitation.

Billy Bunter blinked impatiently and irritably through his big spectacles.

Bunter was tired; he was hungry; he was anxious to get in; and he was peevish. He had expected to see some magnificent building towering to the view; but no such magnificent building greeted his eyes, or his spectacles.

He could see no building at all.

"May be on the other side," said Bob.

The sun was dipping in the far ocean and dusk deepening over the island. Looking back, the juniors could see nothing of the Devon shore, but a dim line of cliffs and one or two twinkling lights, that showed where Potkelly lay.

"Looks like Robinson Crusoe's island, so far!" remarked Johnny Bull. "Topping place for a holiday."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Harry.

"But—"

He broke off, wondering and doubting.

Possibly the bulging cliffs and the thickening dusk concealed what might otherwise have been seen. But the island looked utterly uninhabited and lifeless, save for a few gulls wheeling over the high rocks. It gave an impression, as Johnny had remarked, of a Robinson Crusoe island.

"I say, you fellows, ask that boatman where the castle is!" yapped Bunter. "If it's far to walk, he will have to fetch the car for me."

"The car?" repeated Harry, with a start.

In the letter carried by Bunter it was mentioned that Bunter was to have the touring-car placed at his orders.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,525.

But unless the island was very different from what it looked from the sea, it was difficult to imagine how a car could get about on it.

"I'm not going to walk!" said Bunter positively. "Understand that. I refuse to walk a single step!"

"Blessed if I should have thought there were roads for a car on that island!" said Bob, staring.

"Well, there must be roads, if there's a car!" granted Bunter. "What are you talking about, you ass? I say, boatman!" Bunter yapped to the silent, stolid man at the oars, "is the castle on the other side of that island?"

"Iss, sir!" answered Tregelly.

"Well, I'm not going to walk," said Bunter. "They ought to have seen us by this time, and sent down the car. Anyhow, I can jolly well tell you fellows that I'm not going to walk."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's a light!" exclaimed Bob.

From the thickening shadows of the island, now that the boat came round the cliffs, a twinkling light caught the juniors' eyes.

They could not make out the building where it burned. But the light seemed to be shining from a window. It was a relief to see that sign of an inhabitant, for the solitude and silence of Blackrock were beginning to produce a rather strange effect on their spirits.

"I say, boatman, is that light at the castle?" squeaked Bunter.

Tregelly gave the fat Owl a slow, surprised look.

"No, sir! There ain't lights at the castle!" he answered. "How'd there be lights at the castle?"

"Well, it's getting dark, isn't it?" snapped Bunter. "But if that light isn't at the castle, where is it?"

"That'll be Dave!" said Tregelly.

"Dave! Who's Dave?"

"Dave Oke, sir."

"Well, who's Dave Oke?" hooted Bunter.

"Dave's a fisherman, sir, likewise watchman on the island," answered Tregelly. "That's his shanty where the light's burning."

Bunter grunted. He was not interested in fishermen, or watchmen, or their shanties. He was interested in castles, butlers, valets, and extensive suppers.

"Well, Dave will show us the way to the castle, anyhow!" said Nugent.

"I've told you that I shan't walk a step, Nugent!"

"Shut up, old fat man!"

"Yah!"

Tregelly was pulling the boat into a little cove, shadowed by high cliffs.

There was a stretch of golden sand, backed by a pebble ridge heaped up by the tides. Beyond was thickening dusk, from which that single, solitary light gleamed and twinkled.

The boat pulled in to a little stone jetty. On the jetty lay a net, mended in many places, stretched out to dry; no doubt the property of Dave Oke.

"Well, here we are, anyhow!" said Bob Cherry cheerily, and he jumped ashore as Tregelly held the boat to the jetty.

His comrades followed him.

Bunter stood up and wobbled.

"If you fellows can't lend a hand—"

he roared.

"Take hold of his ears, you fellows!" said Bob.

"Beast!"

Bunter scrambled on the jetty.

Tregelly handed up the suitcases. Then he stood in the boat, looking at the schoolboys.

"You be staying?" he asked.

"Yes, we've come to stay, Mr. Tre-

gelly," answered Harry, smiling at the question.

"You be coom to stay on Blackrock Island?" asked Tregelly slowly, as if puzzled.

"Yes; we're having a holiday here."

"Dave'll be expecting you, mebbe?" asked Tregelly.

"Yes, I expect he's been told visitors are coming."

"Iss!" said Tregelly, rubbing his weatherbeaten nose. "Iss! Mebbe it was in the letter I brought off to Dave three days ago. Iss! Dave'll know! Good-night to you, gentlemen!"

"Good-night, Mr. Tregelly."

The ancient mariner pushed off from the jetty, sat to his oars again, and pulled out into the darkness that now covered the sea like a cloak.

In a few minutes he was lost to sight, pulling back slowly and steadily to Potkelly.

Bunter sat down on his bag.

"I say, you fellows, you go and rouse that man out, and send him to the castle for the car!" he said. "I'll wait here."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked about them in the deepening dusk. What the farther part of the island might be like, they could not tell; but it was obvious that no car could come down to the jetty for them. Not only was there no road, but there was no path that could be seen.

"Waiting there for the car, old fat porpoise!" grinned Bob.

"I jolly well am!" said Bunter with emphasis.

"The waitfulness will be terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I'm not going to walk!" said Bunter. "You can cackle as much as you like, but I shan't take a single step, so yah!"

"And how do you fancy that a car is going to get here over those rocks, and all that sand and seaweed?" inquired Bob.

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter rose and scanned the wild shore through his big spectacles. He gave a grunt of utter disgust. Even Bunter could see that a car was not a practical proposition.

"That beast Smithy said I could have the car!" he snorted. "You saw it in the letter to Walsingham!"

"Blessed if I make it out," said Bob.

"There may be roads on the other side—I suppose there must be, if there's a car here. Anyhow, we'd better go and see jolly old Dave, and get him to guide us to the castle."

"That means that I've got to walk!" said Bunter, with deep feeling.

"We've got to walk, too, old fat man!"

"Oh, don't jaw!" yapped Bunter.

Evidently, only Bunter mattered! Still, even Bunter realised that it was not useful to sit on a bag and wait for a car that could not come. With a frowning and indignant face, he rolled after the Famous Five. They were carrying their bags: Bunter's remained where it had been put down.

"I say, you fellows, you're leaving my bag there!" snapped Bunter.

To which there was no reply.

"Deaf?" hooted Bunter.

Still no reply.

Bunter, breathing indignation, rolled on, and the bag was left on the jetty.

The juniors tramped over soft sand and clattering pebbles in the direction of the light twinkling through the dusk.

They made out a small building—a tiny cottage that seemed to have been built out of old ship's timbers, nestling under the cliff. From a tiny window

partly screened by a tattered old sail-cloth the light of an oil-lamp gleamed. Close by the window was a door, on which Bob Cherry thumped.

There was a stirring within. The door was opened, and a man in a jersey, with a wooden leg, holding the lamp in his hand, looked out, scanning the faces of the schoolboys in the glimmering light of the lamp.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Happy Landing!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stood looking at the man with the lamp in the little cottage doorway.

The man looked at them. He was a still more ancient mariner than Tregelly, with a mane of white hair and beard, and a complexion of old oak. His eyes, like sharp pin-points in a mass of old brown wrinkles, scanned them with a surprised stare.

"Dave Oke?" asked Harry politely.

"Iss!" said the old seaman, in a deep voice. "You be Master Bunter?"

Evidently Dave had heard of Bunter; no doubt the letter Tregelly had rowed across a few days ago to carry to him was from the Bounder.

"No—here's Bunter," said Harry. "Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Oke—but, of course, we're quite strangers here. Can you show us the way to the castle?"

"Iss!" said Dave Oke, staring harder. "Know mun like the back of my hand. But you won't be wanting to see the castle after dark, sir?"

"Well, yes, rather! You see, we're going to stay there!" said Harry, with a smile.

Why that answer surprised Dave Oke the juniors did not know. But clearly it did, for he gave such a jump that he nearly dropped the lamp.

"You be going to stay at castle?" he ejaculated.

"Yes; we're expected there."

"You be expected at castle?" repeated Dave, in a dazed way.

"Yes!" said Harry. "Is Mr. Vernon-Smith there yet?"

"Maister Vernon-Smith! That be t' rich gentleman to London that bought the island!" said Dave Oke. "No, sir! I don't rightly understand! There be nobody to t' castle."

"Nobody at the castle!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The juniors stared blankly at the ancient mariner. Bunter's eyes almost popped through his spectacles at him.

"No, sir! How'd there be anybody at the castle, these three hundred year?" asked Dave. "Seeing it's a ruin, sir, and hardly one stone standing on another!"

"What!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Wha-a-a-t!"

Dave, staring, scratched his white mane in puzzlement.

"Artists and such eoom to paint t' castle, times!" he said. "Nobody live to castle, barring gulls, these three hundred year."

"I say, you fellows, he must be cracked!" yelled Bunter. "I've got Smithy's letter here—ask him about Walsingham—"

Harry Wharton's lips compressed hard. It was not a faint, undefined doubt that was in his mind now! He was beginning to understand.

"Do you know the name of Walsingham, Mr. Oke?" he asked.

"Never heered un, sir."

"Who lives on this island, besides yourself?"



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 Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HATS off to Frank Richards! That's what I say, chums!

The series of powerful stories dealing with the exciting Easter Holiday adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. he is now working on—the first of which is in your hands—are, in my opinion, very fine examples of this popular author's best works. I have read the first three yarns, and I know what I'm talking about! The story this week telling how the fat and fatuous Billy Bunter "wangles" a free holiday will, I feel sure, live long in the memory of thousands of my readers.

"THE MYSTERY OF BLACKROCK ISLAND!"

By Frank Richards,

the yarn which will appear in next week's MAGNET, deals with Harry Wharton & Co.'s thrilling adventures on the desolate island off the Cornish coast, due to Vernon-Smith's malicious trick. Landed, stranded, dished, diddled and done, there's only one thing for the schoolboy Crusoes to do—and that is to make the best of a bad job! That something mysterious is going on, however, is very soon made clear to the Greyfriars juniors, and they determine, there and then, to solve the mystery before they leave the island. But they are up against a very tough proposition! Wait until next week, chums, when you can read all about it.

By the way, aren't you pleased to see the return of Dicky Nugent's "shockers" in the "Herald"? I thought you would be! Anxious inquiries as to this youthful author's progress—since he has been down with writer's cramp—have been coming into the office every day. Next week's brilliant "spasm," starring Dr. Birchmall and the chums of St. Sam's—Jack Jolly & Co.—is funnier than ever. I highly recommend it as a tonic for the "blues." The rest has certainly done Dicky Nugent good, for he's got some real rib-tickling ideas up his sleeve.

"Indect to gootness," I almost forgot—David Morgan, the Welsh junior of the Remove, is next in order to "take over" our opening feature, "My Own Page," and his contributions make most interesting reading.

Thanks again, chums, for the many appreciative letters that have reached me this week! And especially you, Ronald Gower, of Chiswick, for your kind offer to do something for me in return for the many happy hours you have spent reading the jolly old MAGNET. As a matter of fact, Ronald,

it is in your power to repay me by conducting an active campaign to obtain new readers for the MAGNET. My one wish has always been to see the MAGNET read in every home, and with the kind co-operation of reader chums like you, Ronald, there's every possibility of my wish being granted! Now, then, you willing helpers, give a hand by introducing the MAGNET to your non-reader pals to-day. I thank you!

An enthusiastic reader asks me how the studies are furnished in the Remove. I can tell him that the majority of the junior studies are furnished very simply, but such fellows as Vernon-Smith and Lord Mauleverer, who are well provided with cash, spare no expense. Others have to be content with the ordinary businesslike fittings supplied by the school. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh has a Persian rug in his study. And very nice, too!

"THE FLYING SCHOOLBOYS!"

Would you like a grand holiday tour on the Continent in a big air liner? Of course you would! Then join up with Tom Merry & Co., the cheery chums of St. Jim's, to-day—they're just taking off in the "Silver Swallow." Fun and thrills guaranteed! Book your passage by getting the opening yard of Martin Clifford's great new St. Jim's series, on sale now, in the "Gem"—our grand companion paper.

Now for some

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to readers' queries.

JOHN WALTERS (Margate).—There is no knowing how many meals Bunter could "put away" in a day. And what's more, nobody seems anxious to put him to the test.

STAN HOOPER (Plaistow).—Passes out of Gates are given on application to, and at the discretion of, any master or prefect.

REG FARMER (Torquay). Cecil Reginald Temple is captain of the Upper Fourth Form.

JIM BREWSTER (Birmingham).—I suggest you get a copy of the "Gem," our companion paper, in which you will find a coupon enabling you to insert a notice in the pen-pals' corner in that paper.

I think that just about fills the bill for this week, chums. Look out for another cheery chin-wag next Saturday!

Till then, all the very best,

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,626.

"Nobody, sir."

"Nobody!" shrieked Bunter.

"I don't rightly understand this!" said Dave Oke. "Nobody set foot on this island since the rich gentleman from London coom, weeks ago. One day he was here, looking over the island. Talking about building, he was—but bless you, there ain't no building on this island, 'cept my cottage here—and the old castle, which I do hear say was a fine place when Bess was queen, but is all rubble now."

The Famous Five stood stricken silent.

There was a yelp from Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, that old donkey's trying to pull your leg! I've got Smithy's letter to the butler at the castle—"

"Shut up, you fat ass!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "I'm not going to stick here hungry to please you fellows! Make that man guide us to the castle, you dummies!"

The juniors did not heed him. Harry Wharton understood already, and the truth was dawning on the other fellows.

There was a Blackrock Castle certainly; but it was an ancient, uninhabited ruin. Walsingham and the staff of servants and the touring car and the motor-boat had no existence outside the Bounder's unscrupulous brain; they had all been invented to pull the leg of the egregious fat Owl. There was no building at all on the island, save that little one-roomed cottage; there was nobody there at all, save that one-legged old mariner. And the boat was gone, the car was gone, and the Greyfriars fellows were stranded. They could understand now the meaning of Powser's mysterious remarks on the quay at Potkelly. Powser had had no scruples in carrying out the Bounder's sardonic instructions so far as Billy Bunter was concerned, but he had felt a twinge about the others.

"Oh crikey!" said Bob Cherry at last.

They stood in dismay.

"You heard from Vernon-Smith that we were coming, Mr. Oke?" asked Harry Wharton very quietly.

"Master Bunter, sir, he says, was coming," answered Dave. "I was surely surprised to see so many of you. Master Bunter, he says, I can put to sleep anywhere on the floor—"

"Oh, the beast!"

"Anywhere on the floor, he says, will do for Master Bunter, seeing as he's one that coom where he isn't wanted, he says," continued Dave Oke. "Anything, he says in that letter, is good enough for him—and too good, he says. Put him to sleep on the floor, he says; and don't give him too much to eat, he says; and clout him if he's cheeky, he says. That was what was in the letter, sir."

Groan—from Bunter!

It was dawning even on Bunter's fat brain now.

This was his gorgeous trip in Devon! This was his magnificent holiday on Blackrock Island! This!

Smithy, with cool unscrupulousness, had played this trick on him to keep him quiet about the trickery on the telephone till the end of the term.

On the strength of that trickery the fatuous fat Owl had succeeded in sticking Smithy for the hols. And this was what he had got—and, no doubt, what he deserved to get. Anyhow, he had got it.

Bunter groaned.

He groaned dismally.

The Famous Five looked at one another. Their feelings were deep.

"A jape on Bunter," said Bob at last. "I dare say he asked for it—"

Groan!

"But to land us along with that fat chump—" breathed Bob, his eyes gleaming.

"It's pretty clear now," said Harry.

"This is what we get back from Smithy for that bumping in the study."

"The rotter!"

"The terrific toad!"

"I say, you fellows," moaned the fat Owl, "we can't stay here! We've got to get off this putrid island. This man will row us back to Potkelly. I'll pay him anything he likes—you fellows can lend me the money—"

"Could you row us back to Potkelly, Mr. Oke?" asked Harry.

"Ready and willing, sir, if there was a boat on the island," answered Dave. "But there ain't a boat. Once a fortnight, sir, a boat pulls out from Potkelly—"

Groan!

"Oh, my hat!"

"We're stranded, then!" said Johnny Bull. "Landed and stranded!"

"Happy landing!" said Bob, with a faint grin.

"What on earth are we going to do?" asked Frank Nugent blankly.

There was no answer to that question. The juniors looked at one another in grim silence.

Dave Oke, staring at them in the light of the lamp, had no suggestion to offer. They were landed and stranded on an uninhabited island, far off the coast, in the Atlantic brine—and that was that!

Harry Wharton & Co. stood silent.

Bunter, sinking wearily down on a lump of rock, was not silent. He groaned and groaned and groaned. And for a long time no sound was heard on Blackrock Island but the wash of the sea and the deep, deep groaning of Billy Bunter—not, after all, enjoying that Easter trip!

THE END.

(Enjoyed the yarn? Good! Now look forward to: "THE MYSTERY OF BLACKROCK-ISLAND!" the second yarn in this spanking, fine holiday series. It's better than ever!)

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SPRING-CLEANING AT ST. SAM'S!

Another Hair-Raising Yarn of Jack Jolly & Co., of St. Sam's

By DICKY NUGENT

(OTHER'S NOTE.—I have now fully recovered from the attack of writer's kramp that has interrupted my literary activities. So I hoop to be able to write many thrilling and dramattick tales about my famus carrickets, Jack Jolly & Co., and Dr. Alfred Birchmall, of St. Sam's School for the Sons of Gentlemen. Here is the first—and I sincerely trusted you will all like it!—DICKY NUGENT.)

Ting-a-ling-a-ling!
"Hi, hi! Clear the way!"
With a jingling of pedals and a whirring of bells, Jack Jolly & Co., of the Fourth, came racing down to the drive leading to the gates of St. Sam's.

They were riding their bikes, and they fairly whizzed down the gravel drive. In looking forward to their afternoon out, they were not looking forward to anything in the way. So they failed to see a majestick figger in cap and gown standing right in their path.

"Hold on, there!"

It was the deep and awe-inspiring voice of Dr. Birchmall, the headmaster of St. Sam's, that yapped out that stern command. But the order came too late.

Before Jack Jolly & Co. had time to jam on their brakes, they found themselves in a nice old pickle!

Four bikes, trying to dodge the Head, collided with a fearful crash and piled up in a heap—and Dr. Birchmall knocked backwards like a ninepin, finished up underneath it!

Bang! Crash! Wallop! Jingle!

"Yarooooooo!"

"Yoo-whoooooop!"

The Head's deep yells of pane mingled with the Fourth Formers' shriller shrieks of aggerny. There was a proper weeping and a wailing and a nashing of teeth, as that mound of struggling yewmanity sorted itself out!

There was still more weeping, a minnit or so later, when Dr. Birchmall freed himself from his yewman burden, staggered to his feet, and started dusting the juniors' trowsis with a wacking grate birchrod!

But the loudest weeping of all came after he had tucked away the birchrod to eggplain the why and the wherefore of this hold-up.

"You can put your bikes back in the bike-shed again, you yung welps!" he said with a leer. "Nobody is going to be allowed out of gates till further orders!"

Jack Jolly & Co. ceased their frantick wriggling. They stared at the Head agarrst.

"N-n-nobody allowed out of gates, sir?" gasped Jack Jolly. "What's the big idea?"

The Head smiled grimly.

"You may well ask, Jolly. It is not my wish, I assure you. It is, in fakt, a case of dire necessity. The

story is soon told. You remember my recent absence from the school on a hollerday provided by the Government?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" grinned the kaptin of the Fourth. "But I thought you were in Muggleton Jail for non-payment of income-tacks!"

The Head coughed.

"Ahem! Well, during my hollerday," he said, ignoring Jolly's pointed suggestion, "the Governors left fifty pounds in cash with Mr. Lickham to pay for the annual spring-cleaning of the school. That munny has vanished!"



"Vanished?"

"Vanished!" nodded the Head. "Vamoosed! Done the disappearing trick! Not a trace of it can be found. Mr. Lickham swears he left it locked up in my desk. But now that we have unlocked the desk, it is gone!"

"My hat!"

"So you see, boys," went on Dr. Birchmall, "I am faced with the problem of having the school spring-cleaned for nothing! There is but one solution to that problem. It's a case of all hands to the pumps—or rather, the pails! The whole school must rally. We must do the spring-cleaning ourselves; and, with a view to getting things going, I have stopped all leave out of gates. Savvy?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"We savvy, sir!"

"In that case, the sooner you put away those bikes and start work, the better!" said the Head severely.

Jack Jolly & Co. picked up their bikes, and slowly and sadly and silently wheeled them back to the bike-shed.

Jack Jolly's eyes flashed as he put away his bike.

"I'll find a way out of the dilemmer before long, never fear!" he said. "But, for the time being, I don't see that we can do anything, but get on with the washing!"

"And the sweeping and the dusting and the scrubbing, too!" said Fearless, with a rye grin. "But never mind, you fellows! We'll make the best of a bad job."

The cheery chums of the Fourth were never down-hearted for long, and Frank's optimistic remark put a stop to their moaning and groaning. By the time they were back in the School House again, they had almost recovered their usual good spirits.

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 340.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

April 15th, 1939.



HARRY WHARTON CALLING!

Hurrah for the holidays! Such are the sentiments of the vast majority of Greyfriars men now that the Easter vac. is here—and to the best of my knowledge and belief the same goes for schoolboys everywhere!

Parents and guardians, of course, feel differently about it. The common complaint is that school holidays are too long. I have heard my uncle Colonel Wharton, voice that opinion on more than one occasion.

We can hardly be expected to agree with our elders' view of the matter. At the same time, in fairness to the old 'uns, we ought perhaps to recognise that in some cases their opinion is at least understandable.

When a chap like Billy Bunter has time on his hands, for instance, he becomes a dashed nuisance to himself and everybody around him. I can speak from experience and with a good deal of feeling here, for I've had to put up with the fat old Owl on several holidays, and I know just what it means!

A fellow of Skinner's stamp, again, must be a sore trial to his family in the vac. I imagine that he divides his time between japing his friends and relations and getting into trouble with the local police. I find it quite easy to believe that Skinner's people consider our school holidays far too long!

Then there is young Oliver Kipps, who is said to have admitted that he spends most of his vac. in the kitchen, practising balancing tricks and juggling stunts with the crockery. There must be many occasions when Kipps' mater sighs for the first day of a new term again!

Others can be troublesome in their various ways. Bolsover major, I am told, is always fixing up punchballs in the most inconvenient parts of the house. Mauleverer has the annoying habit of spending half the day in bed—though in his case, as he is more or less monarch of all he surveys, I suppose it doesn't matter what he does! Hoskins of the Shell, of course, spends all day and every day, thumping away at his piano.

Oh, yes, one can quite appreciate why some of the old folks at home think we get too many holidays. But to appreciate is not necessarily to agree. I still say, hurrah for the holidays! And I have no doubt you all heartily echo my sentiments!

Dicky Nugent is back in our columns again, you will notice—his writer's cramp completely cured and his literary genius unimpaired! He wanted to write a series of stories of horror and imagination, as a change from the adventures of Jack Jolly & Co.—but I told him I thought there was quite enough horror and imagination already in his stories of St. Sam's! I am sure, anyway, that his return will meet with a warm welcome. There is nobody quite like young Dicky!

All the best till next week, chums!

HARRY WHARTON.

People We'd Like To Know!

The burglar who said that the thing he liked best about Greyfriars was the Big Haul.

The Second Former who thought the Anti-Smoking League should be abolished because it advocated destroying all fags.

The puzzled gormandiser who failed to fathom why it was that every time he saw the Beak he felt so "peckish."

The Head's first efforts at domestick work thus ended father disastrously. Events to follow, however, were soon to show the school that it was by no means the end of spang-cleaning at St. Sam's!

(Dicky Nugent is in fine form next week in the rib-tickling sequel to this story. Note the title: "Jack Jolly's Protest!")

HOBBIES UP TO DATE

By H. SKINNER

2. Bird's-Nesting

Personally, I don't think much of bird's-nesting as a hobby. Chaps who go in for bird's-nesting get too much fresh air, and too much fresh air is bad for you. Fresh air in large quantities may be a good thing for animals and reptiles, but that doesn't concern me,

as I'm neither an animal nor a reptile. (Don't be too sure, old bean!—Ed.)

But if you can stand fresh air, there's no reason why you shouldn't get a bit of fun out of bird's-nesting.

The first thing is to learn to recognise a bird's nest when you see one. Don't assume that every blob of matted straw you see in a hedgerow is a nest. It isn't. I shall never forget the shock I had one day when I put my arm through the hedge and grabbed at what I took to be a bird's nest. I discovered, too late, that it was a beard belonging to a hiker who had sat down to admire the scenery!

Unless you go about the job with great caution, you may experience great difficulty in finding where birds are nesting. It is therefore best to lie doggo for a time, just taking your bearings. So as not to arouse the bird's suspicions, put on a suitable disguise.

If you look like Peter Todd, of course, don't bother about disguising. The birds will take you for a scarecrow, and you'll be all right. If you're not already disguised by nature, however,

you can rig yourself up as a sheep or a haystack or something else easy.

Having found your nest, don't be greedy and take all the eggs. One is quite sufficient; and one won't be missed. Birds are like Bob Cherry—they're no good at arithmetic. If you take one egg out of half-a-dozen, the bird won't be any the wiser.

When you are back in your study with your egg, stick a pin in each end of it (the egg, I mean—not the study) and blow out the inside. If you owe your study-mate a grudge, you can blow it in his face. After this, your egg is ready for depositing in your showcase, and that's that.

I might say a lot more about bird's-nesting if I had the space. As I haven't, I will conclude with a tip. Among bird's-nesters, it is considered very bad form to use collected birds' eggs as ammunition against prefects. Eggs for this purpose should be purchased from the village stores at Friardale. You can easily identify the right brand by the label—"FRESH EGGS. FOREIGN. 20 a Shilling."

FOURTH FORM FAIRGROUND

WHOOPEE IS DIGNIFIED!

Says DICK RAKE

Give credit where credit is due. It's easy to scoff and scorn at Temple & Co. in the Upper Fourth for putting on a show. But we may as well admit that the show of class they show is something a mere remove man can never hope to imitate successfully.

I bumped into the three of them on a fairground this Easter.

"What cheer, laddies?" I called out. "Low's tricks?"

You should have seen the lofty stare they turned for that cheery greeting! Eyebrows went up, nostrils twitched, nostrils twitched, and eyelids abm closed over disdainful eyes.

"Who is this person?" demanded Temple, of nobody in particular. "If he's somebody below us to any of you chaps, I can't congratulate you on your friends."

"Have a dim idea I've seen him before somewhere," said Fry. "May have been in the Zoo the other day—in one of the cages, what?"

"Haw! Oh, rather!" drawled Dabney. I chuckled.

"It's really marvellous

how you put over your stuff when you're on holiday, you chaps," I said. "If I didn't look at you twice sometimes, I'd really mistake you for gentlemen!"

Temple & Co. looked a little less lofty at that.

"Look here, kid, it strikes me you'd better trickle off while you're safe," advised Temple. "It would spoil the holiday atmosphere completely if they found the lifeless body of a cheeky fag strewn round this fairground in little bits."

"Oh, rather!" chimed Dabney and Fry, in that tired, lifeless drawl that is the envy and despair of a aspiring Society climbers at Greyfriars.

"Don't worry, dear men," I grinned. "I'll follow you round at a respectful distance. I don't want to be too near you, anyway—people might think I was with you and I wouldn't have that happen for worlds!"

I duly followed them round at a respectful distance. I found it really intriguing to study the air of dignity and refinement with which those posh Fourth-

Formers made whoopee.

They stuck their noses as high in the air as they would go and just kept them there regardless. At the shooting-gallery, at the hoop-la stall, on the swings and roundabouts and scenic railway, Temple and his pals followed the same order—necks stiff and noses well up!

No mistake about it, lads, nobility of bearing is Temple's long suit. The Fourth Form trio looked truly impressive, as they trotted round that fairground with their superior frowns and

beat them completely. Bumper-cars, of course, are really most unsuitable vehicles to drive while you've got your nose up in the air. Temple & Co. didn't realise that till it was too late.

They each took a car and careered round the track, toying elegantly with the steering-wheel and looking fearfully bored. Then, at the bend, they all collided, with a jolt that shook the track to its foundations.

Temple shot out from his car like a bullet, Dabney sprawled on the floor, and Fry landed on his back on the floor of his car. And what do you think happened to their disdainful, aristocratic dignity then?

It grieves me to say it, but it deserted them entirely. Temple yelled "Ow-ow-ow!" Dabney "Yoo-hooooop!" and Fry "Urroooooh!"

Their eyebrows came down with a rush, their noses followed suit, and their curling lips straightened out to emit cries of pain and distress. Really, I never saw such a swift change in all my life!

Rather a vulgar end to Temple's refined afternoon, wasn't it? He and his pals let down the side rather badly over those bumper-cars. I'm afraid I shan't be able to raise my hat to them after seeing them come such a purler.

But I still can't help admiring the lofty dignity with which these noble Fourth Formers make whoopee!

