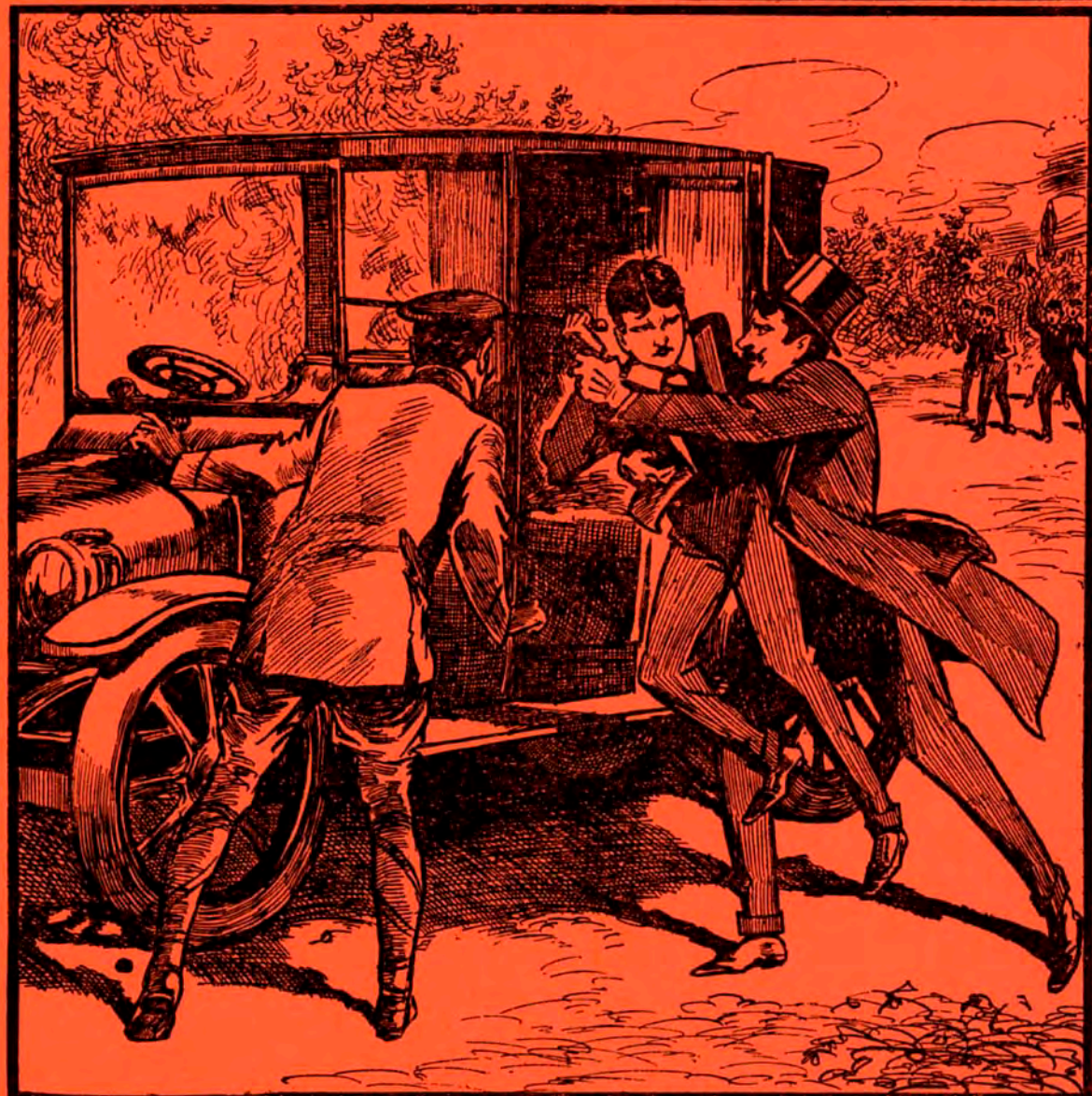


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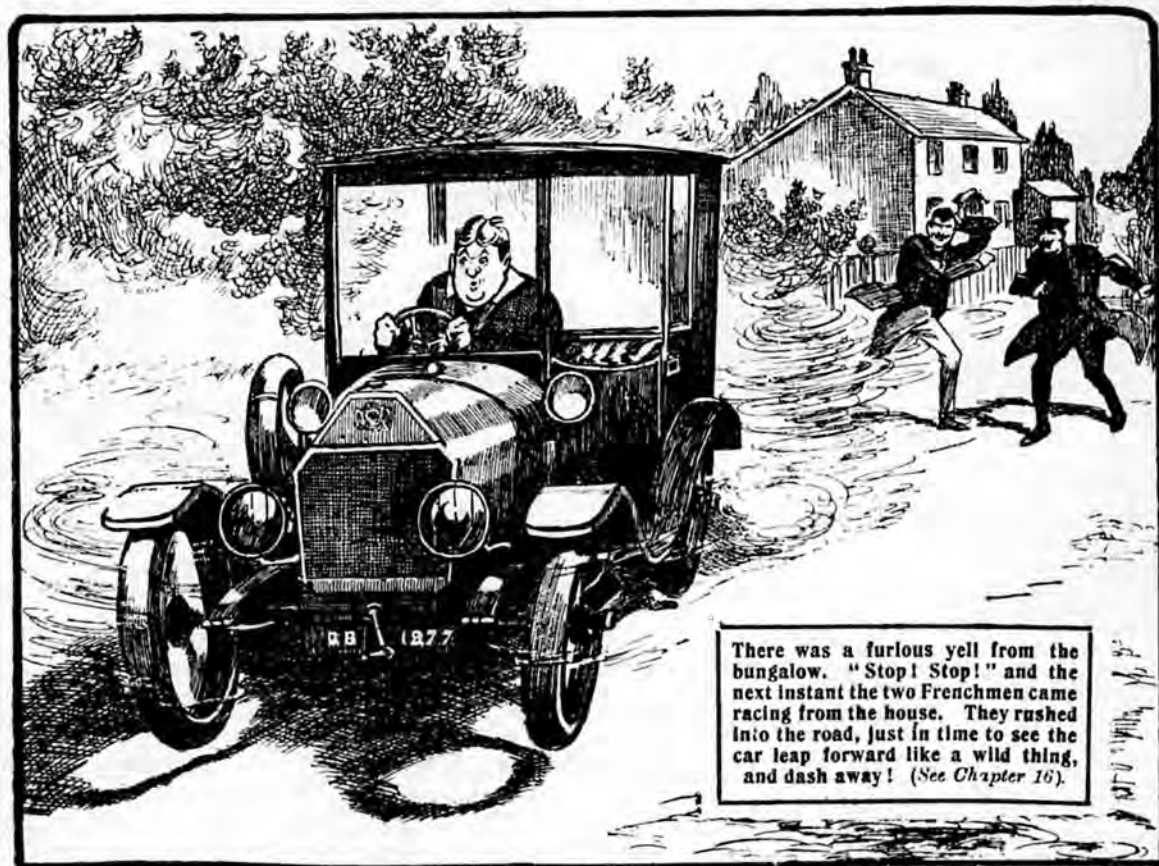


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 friend.

IN BORROWED PLUMES!

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale dealing with the
 Further Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



There was a furious yell from the bungalow. "Stop! Stop!" and the next instant the two Frenchmen came racing from the house. They rushed into the road, just in time to see the car leap forward like a wild thing, and dash away! (See Chapter 16).

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Mauleverer Declines!

"MAULY!"
 "Come out, you bounder!"
 Bang, bang!
 Lord Mauleverer, sitting in his extremely easy
 easy-chair in his study in the Remove passage at Greyfriars,
 grinned serenely.

The study door was locked.
 Outside, the voice of Bob Cherry was resounding, as well
 as loud and heavy kicks from Bob's large-sized boots directed
 upon the door.

Within, the slacker of the Remove yawned in his easy-chair,
 taking it easy.

"Maully!"
 "Come out!"
 "Do you hear?"
 "Are you asleep, you slacker?"

There were other voices besides Bob Cherry's. Harry
 Wharton and Nugent and Johnny Bull and Mark Linley were

there, and they were all calling on the slacker of the Remove
 to show himself. Lord Mauleverer remained calm and serene in
 the comfortable knowledge that the key was turned in the
 lock, and that the lock was too strong to be broken by the
 heaviest bangs on the door.

The juniors in the passage were growing impatient. It was
 a Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday at Greyfriars. It was
 a keen winter's day, and the sun was shining in the old Close
 of Greyfriars and on the wide playing-fields. Harry Wharton
 & Co. were in their football garb, ready to play. And they
 wanted Lord Mauleverer.

Not that Maully was a footballer. Anything but that, Lord
 Mauleverer had a dislike to exertion in any shape or form.
 Sometimes he found energy enough to look on at a football
 match, and on certain occasions he had been known to cheer.
 But such occasions were rare. He was the last fellow Harry
 Wharton would have thought of playing in the Remove team
 on any occasion where the result of the match was not a
 foregone conclusion.

But he was wanted on this special afternoon. There had

been a warm argument on the subject of football between Harry Wharton & Co., and Temple and Dabney of the Upper Fourth. In the heat of the argument Wharton had rashly stated that the Remove could beat the Fourth with Mauly in goal. Temple had promptly taken him at his word, and as it was impossible to "climb down," Wharton had put Mauleverer's name on his list for the match.

Most fellows in the Remove would have jumped at the chance of playing for the Form team. Not so Mauleverer. The moment that he heard that his name was in the Remove list he fled to his study, and locked the door. And behind the locked door he reposed in security, intending to stay there until the match was over.

Bob Cherry, who had a great friendship for the champion slacker of Greyfriars, had hailed the idea of playing him in the Form match. As Bob said, they were certain of beating the Fourth, anyway; and it would be a big thing for Mauly, and perhaps inspire him with a desire to play the grand old game. But Mauly did not look at it in that light. He was quite willing to let the big thing pass him by. Persuasion and expostulation and direful threats through the keyhole failed to produce any effect on Lord Mauleverer. He declined to listen to the voice of the charmer.

Bang, bang, bang!
The door shook as Bob Cherry applied his football boots to it.

"Are you there, Mauly?" he roared through the keyhole.

"Yaas."

"You know we've got you down as goalkeeper in the match this afternoon?"

"Yaas."

"You know it's time for the match to start?"

"Yaas."

"Then come out!"

"Yaas—I mean no."

"You've got to come!" shouted Harry Wharton. "I've undertaken to play you. I told Temple we could beat him with the biggest idiot at Greyfriars in goal. So we want you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lots of fellows have come round to see you play, Mauly!" urged Johnny Bull. "They know it's going to be a sight if you keep goal!"

"Yaas."

"We're waiting for you, Mauly."

"Yaas."

"Will you open the door?"

"No."

"Don't you want to play, you fathead?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Tired."

"Ass! Fathead! What have you been doing to make you tired?" demanded Bob Cherry.

Lord Mauleverer reflected.

"I walked up to the study!" he replied, after a pause.

"You—you burbling jabberwork! Are you thinking of sticking in the study all the afternoon?"

"Yaas."

"Do you want to be a beastly, lazy, rotten slacker?"

"Yaas."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "If I could get through this door I'd yank him out by his giddy ears! We've got to play him."

"Temple will say we've backed out of it if we don't play him," growled Wharton. "We must get him out somehow."

"Yes, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, you buzz off, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry crossly.

"But I say, you fellows, there's a letter for Mauly in the rack downstairs," said Billy Bunter. "I dare say there's a remittance in it. He's always getting remittances. I came

up to speak to him about it. I happen to be short of money, and—"

"Shurrup! Mauly—Mauly, you lazy villain!"

"Yaas."

"There's a letter for you down-stairs."

"Yaas."

"Don't you want it?"

"Yaas."

"Then come and get it."

"Rats!"

"I say, Mauly, there's very likely a cheque in it," Billy Bunter squeaked through the keyhole. "If you like, I'll open it for you—"

Bob Cherry shoved the fat junior away from the keyhole.

"You clear off!" he said.

"Shen't!" roared Bunter. "If you fellows are after Mauly's remittance, I don't see why I shouldn't have my whack. Look here, I'm not going to have you sponging on my pal Mauly."

"You fat toad!" grunted Johnny Bull. "We're after Mauly, not after his money. We want him to play in the match."

Bunter snorted.

"Rot! Mauly can't play! If you're a man short, I don't mind playing myself, if you want a really good man! I'm as good a footballer as I am a ventriloquist."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. I know you're jealous of my form."

"Well, Falstaff might have been jealous of your form," said Bob Cherry, with a disparaging glance at the fat junior's ample figure. "You're more like an apple dumpling than he was. Don't you worry now, Bunter; we're busy—"

"I want to see my pal Mauly. Ow, ow, ow! If you kick me again, Bob Cherry, I'll wipe up the passage with you! Ow, ow! Don't you do that a third time or— Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter beat a rapid retreat. Bob Cherry had done it for a third time, and was preparing to do it for a fourth when Bunter fled. Then Bob kicked at the study door again.

"Mauly, old man, you've got to come!"

"Sorry."

"Will you open this door or not?"

"Not."

"We'll rag you baldheaded afterwards, if you don't!"

"Begad!"

"You're a rotten, lazy, slacking, good-for-nothing, useless worm!"

"Thanks!"

"You—you—you—" Words failed Bob Cherry. "What are we going to do, you fellows? We can't break in the door, and the beast won't come out."

"You fellows ever coming?" shouted Temple of the Fourth, up the staircase. "We can't wait for you all the afternoon. If you're finking you'd better say so."

"Mauly, come out, you rotter!"

"I say, you might make a little less row there," came Lord Mauleverer's plaintive voice. "I'm trying to go to sleep."

"Sleep!" said Bob sulphurously. "I'll sleep you! You—you—you—"

"Oh, come on," said Harry Wharton impatiently. "we can't waste any more time! We shall have to explain to Temple."

"And he'll say we're gassing!" growled Bob Cherry.

"And we could beat him with Mauly in goal, or any other idiot—even Bunter!"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "That's all right—Bunter! Bunter instead of Mauly—he's as big an idiot at footer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And bestowing a final shower of kicks upon the study door, the Remove footballers went their way.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter is Wanted!

TEMPLE, DABNEY & CO., of the Upper Fourth, were on the junior football-ground. The Fourth Form eleven were ready to play, and they were making little jokes about the non-appearance of the Remove team.

As a rule, the Remove, though a lower Form, beat the Fourth hopelessly at the great winter game. Hence Wharton's rash offer to play the Fourth with the slacker of the Remove in goal, which was very nearly the same thing as playing with the "chicken-run" empty.

Temple had closed with that offer with great alacrity, feeling pretty certain of snatching a victory, which would count as a win for the Fourth, and would also punish the Removeites for what Temple regarded as their "swank."

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There was a yell of laughter as Billy Bunter sat up in goal, and groped for his spectacles, which had fallen off. "Ow! I say, you fellows, that doesn't count as a goal, you know!" gasped Billy. "I wasn't looking!"
(See Chapter 3.)

Temple smiled a superior smile as the juniors came down to the ground.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Not quite—our blessed goalkeeper has locked himself in his study, and won't come out," said Wharton.

Temple grinned.

"Well, you couldn't have done it, you know," he remarked. "We shall beat you anyway; but, with Mauleverer in goal, you wouldn't have had an earthly!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"This is where you climb down, and take back your swank!" grinned Fry, of the Fourth.

"Well, we didn't know Mauly would dodge us like that, of course," said Harry.

Temple winked at his friends.

"Of course you didn't," he agreed. "Only, it's very convenient, isn't it? Saves you from being shown up as a set of swankers!"

"But I'll tell you what we'll do," said Wharton. "I suggested Mauly as the biggest idiot at footer, but Bunter runs him pretty close. We'll play you with Bunter in goal!"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"That'll come to the same thing," said Bob Cherry.

"The same thing—only more so!" chuckled Temple. "Mauly might have happened to stop a shot by accident, but Bunter won't."

"Then you agree?"

"Yes, rather; we'll call it the same thing! Find your

porpoise, and put him in goal, and we'll make him hop," said Temple cheerily.

"Right-ho! We won't keep you waiting long."

And Harry Wharton & Co. rushed away to look for Bunter.

Quite a crowd had gathered round the junior ground, to see Lord Mauleverer play football. Football practice was compulsory at Greyfriars, and so Mauly had been seen on the football-field—generally with his hands in his pockets, and his gaze fixed on anything but the ball. But to see him play in a match would be, as Fisher T. Fish expressed it in the American language, a sight for sore eyes. Fisher T. Fish guessed that it would put the lid on, and the other fellows agreed.

Fellows came from far and near to witness that match. Even seniors condescended to give it a look in. Coker and Potter and Greene came out of the House to stroll down to the footer-ground. The three Fifth-Formers looked quite conscious of the honour they were doing the "kids" in looking on at their match.

As Coker & Co. came out of the School House they passed a man who was coming up the steps, and they glanced at him curiously.

He was evidently a foreigner—a dark, sallow man, with a pointed black moustache. He was extremely well-dressed, but he looked, as Coker mentally noted, quite a "bounder."

The stranger paused on the steps.

"Pray excuse me, young gentlemen," he said, and the Fifth-Formers paused. He spoke in perfect English, but

OUR GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER NEXT MONDAY! (See Page 28.)

his accent was foreign. "There is a young gentleman in this school named Lord Mauleverer, I think?"

Coker grinned.

"That's right," he said.

"I desire to see him—I have a message for him—"

"I fancy you can't deliver it now, then," said Coker, still grinning. "But if you want to see him, you'd better follow us to the footer-ground. Mauleverer is keeping goal for the Remove to-day."

"Thank you so much!" said the foreign gentleman. "There is no hurry—I will wait until after the play. Is it allowed for strangers to watch the matches?"

"Certainly; anybody who likes."

"Thank you!"

Coker & Co. walked on, and the foreign gentleman followed them.

"Keeping goal, you said, I think?" he asked.

"Yes; for the Lower Fourth."

"And which side is the Lower Fourth?" asked the Frenchman. "I mean, how are they distinguished?"

"They're the kids in red shirts," explained Coker. "The Upper Fourth are in blue."

"Merci bien!"

And the Frenchman raised his hat politely to Coker & Co. as they left him. Coker looked a little puzzled as he walked on with Potter and Greene.

"I wonder what that foreign Johnnie wants with young Mauleverer," he remarked. "I don't like his looks much—looks like a well-to-do billiard sharper, or something of that kind. Some of those Remove kids were mixed up with a bookmaker the other day, and I felt called upon to interfere. I think I shall keep an eye on young Mauleverer."

Potter and Greene exchanged a wink, unseen by Coker. The great Coker was brimming with good-nature, and he had a wonderful gift for interfering, at the wrong moment, in matters that did not concern him in the least.

The Frenchman posted himself under a tree near the football-ground, to look on, and Coker & Co. soon forgot all about him. The crowd on the ground were beginning to be impatient at the delay in starting the match. It was not yet known that Lord Mauleverer was not to play.

Harry Wharton & Co. had not yet succeeded in finding Bunter. The tuckshop—where Bunter was very frequently to be found—had been drawn blank; but the fat junior was run down at last in the Cloisters. He was dolefully examining a threepenny-piece, which already had been refused at the tuckshop and at most of the shops in the village, being a very evidently bad one. Bunter was blinking at it through his big glasses, as if by sheer force of staring he could change it into a good one.

"Here the fat boulder is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

And the Famous Five rushed upon Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove backed away in alarm.

"I say, you fellows—Don't you be a beast, Bob Cherry—"

"It's not a rag this time, fatty—we want you."

Bunter's eyes glittered behind his glasses.

"Is it a feed?"

"Ha, ha! No; it's a match!"

"A match!" said Bunter. "I don't want any matches! I've got a box of them in my pocket. But I say, you fellows, you might change this threepenny-bit for me. Mrs. Minnie thinks it's a bad one, and she won't take it—"

"She's jolly well right, too!" said Nugent, looking at the coin. "You'd better save it up for a blind man!"

"I'll let you have it for twopence," said Bunter generously. "You can give it to some beggar, you know. I don't believe in encouraging beggars myself. You chaps are always giving something away, and you could give this—"

"We want you, Bunter. Come on and change."

"Change what—the threepenny-bit? I've tried—"

"Your clothes, fathead!"

"My clothes!" said Bunter, in astonishment. "What do you want me to change my clothes for?"

"For the match. We want you to play."

"Oh!" Bunter became important at once. "You've decided that you can't do without me—eh?"

"That's it!" said Harry Wharton solemnly. "We're looking for a real top-notch, gilt-edged, A1 at Lloyd's goal-keeper, and we think we can't do better than you!"

"I can keep goal, of course," said Bunter; "but I'm better as centre-forward. You'd better go into goal yourself, Wharton, and leave me in the front line."

"We're not looking for a centre-forward. We think you will really distinguish yourself in goal, and we want all Greyfriars to see you do it. Come on!"

"Well, I'm glad you've seen it at last," said Bunter, as he rolled away with the Famous Five—"jolly glad! I've told you all along that you really couldn't afford to leave me THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 304.

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out of the team, but you wouldn't take any notice. Of course, I quite understand that you don't like being out-shone by a chap in the team; but you really oughtn't to let personal feelings like that influence you. It's not football."

"I'm turning over a new leaf to-day," said Wharton. "You're going to have a chance to show the fellows what you can do."

"I'll wake things up a bit, I promise you," said Bunter fatuously. "But I thought Mauly was keeping goal for you?"

"Mauly's locked himself up in his study. But you will be as good as Mauly."

Bunter sniffed.

"A jolly good bit better, I hope!" he said.

"The betterfulness of the esteemed Bunter will be terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh solemnly. "Simply terrific!"

And Bunter, with a great deal of satisfaction, changed into his football rig, looking when he had finished as if he were going to burst out of it at all points. The Famous Five marched him down to the ground.

There was a chuckle as Bunter appeared. Lord Mauleverer in goal would have been a joke, but Bunter in goal was a screaming farce, as Coker gleefully remarked. And there was a ripple of laughter as Bunter took his place between the posts.

Wharton had won the toss, and Temple kicked off.

The red shirts of the Remove were soon in the enemy's territory, pressing on for goal; and it looked as if the match would be played out on the Fourth-Form side of the half-way line. At the other end of the field, in solitary grandeur, so to speak, in the Remove goal, Billy Bunter stamped about and flapped his fat arms across his chest to keep himself warm.

Most eyes were turned towards the footballers in the Fourth-Form half, but one pair of eyes turned fixedly upon Bunter in goal. They were the eyes of the Frenchman, who had asked Coker questions.

"So that is he!" the foreign gentleman muttered to himself. "Bien, bien! Now I know him by sight, and there can be no mistake! Tres bien!"

And without waiting to see the match, which possessed no interest whatever for him—the foreign gentleman strolled away.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter in Goal!

"PLAY up, Remove!"
"On the ball!"
"Play up, Fourth!"
"Goal, goal! Hurrah!"

The first goal came from the foot of Harry Wharton, planted fairly in the net. It was first blood for the Remove, after ten minutes' play. The Removeites grinned as they lined up again. The Fourth-Formers had been nowhere near their goal as yet, and Bunter had not been called upon to save. Bunter had performed nothing but gymnastics to keep himself warm in his citadel.

But matters did not go so favourably for the Remove after that. Vernon-Smith, the Boulder of Greyfriars, one of the finest players in the team, showed unmistakable signs of "cracking up."

Smithy was evidently out of condition. He had started well, but now he had "bellows to mend" before the game had gone on for a quarter of an hour. Usually fleet of foot, he seemed to labour now, and the opposing forwards left him standing.

Vernon-Smith was outside-right in the Remove team, and he was opposed by Fry of the Fourth, outside-left, and the best winger Temple had in his eleven. And the Fourth-Formers round the ground raised a cheer when Fry captured the ball Vernon-Smith tried to centre, and escaped with it along the touchline.

"Go it, Fry!"

"On the ball!"

Fry was away like an arrow, and by luck he beat the backs, and raced for goal. Harry Wharton & Co. were after him like lightning, but Fry had time for a kick. Anything like a goalkeeper would have saved that hasty, hurried kick—as Bob Cherry said afterwards, a babe in arms would have stopped it quite easily. Whether a babe in arms could have stopped it or not, Billy Bunter certainly couldn't. The ball smote him on his fat chin, and he was spread-eagled in his goal.

Then there was a roar.

"Bravo, Fry! Goal!"

"Bravo, goalkeeper!" roared Coker. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And there was a yell of laughter as Bunter sat up in the goal and groped for his spectacles, which had fallen off.

"Ow! I—I say, you fellows, that doesn't count as a goal, you know!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't looking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck that ball out, and shut up!" growled Bob Cherry. "And for goodness' sake don't let Fry walk over you again, Smithy! Every shot will be a goal, if they get through!"

The Bouncer scowled.

"You didn't stop Fry, anyway!" he snapped. "Right-half is supposed to defend, especially when he knows outside-right is no good, as you seem to do."

"Easy does it!" said Bob amiably. "You're off colour to-day, Smithy. Why don't you leave smoking alone—on the day before a match, anyway!"

"Mind your own business!"

"Line up!" said Wharton sharply; and the talk was stopped—just in time, for Bob's eyes were glittering with anger.

All the fellows knew what was the matter with Vernon-Smith, and why the Bouncer, who was hard as nails when he was in form, had "bellows to mend" to such a hopeless degree. Harry Wharton knew that he had had a smoking-party in his study the evening before, and he could now see the result of it. For a time Vernon-Smith had seemed to have done with his old bad ways, and he had been a valuable member of the Form team. But he had evidently fallen from grace again, and the results looked like being serious for the Remove.

Wharton, full of confidence in his team, had rashly played Bunter in goal, and it was clear that only the best possible play on the part of the rest could save the match, with Bunter between the sticks. If the Bouncer failed him now the match was lost, and the Removites would justly have the laugh against them. They would have failed to fulfil a reckless undertaking, and they would be convicted of "swank," in addition to losing the match.

Temple & Co. were at the top of their form, too, and they played their hardest. They had discovered the weak spot in the Remove front line, and they gave the Bouncer their special attention. But Bob Cherry, at right-half, was a hard nut to crack, and he made good most of the Bouncer's failings. The rushes of the Fourth were stopped all the time, and they did not succeed in getting near the Remove goal again during the remainder of the first half.

Neither did the Removites succeed in putting the ball through. Now that the Bouncer was failing, Wharton realised very clearly how much he depended on him. The marvellously quick and accurate passes, the brilliant dashes Smithy was famous for—they were wanting now. Wharton might as well have been playing the veriest duffer in the Remove on the right wing.

When the teams knocked off for half-time Wharton's face was clouded. It was a thankless task to find fault with a player, especially with a player who was usually one of the best in the team—and the Bouncer was evidently in a savage temper, and ready for trouble.

On the whole, Wharton decided to say nothing till the match was over, and then to have a plain talk with Vernon-Smith. He would give him the choice of dropping his rotten ways or dropping the Form eleven, that was his idea.

But the rest in the interval seemed to have done the Bouncer good. When the game restarted he played up well, and seemed quite his old self.

Temple & Co. gave him their attention, as usual; but it resulted in giving him the ball, and the Bouncer brought it along the touchline in a fast run, beat the backs hollow, and slammed it into goal before the goalie knew what was happening.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, the Bouncer!"

And Wharton's face brightened up. That unpleasant talk with Vernon-Smith might be put off indefinitely after all.

Temple, Dabney & Co. lined up again, looking very determined. If they could only get near the Remove goal, Bunter could not stop them. And they fought hard for a passage; and at last succeeded in getting through.

Billy Bunter was waving his arms about to keep himself warm, but a yell from the field warned him as Temple made a break for goal, having succeeded in getting through.

"Look out in goal!"

"Wake up!"

"Play up, Porpoise!"

Bunter's eyes glittered behind his spectacles. This time he was going to show the Greyfriars' fellows what goal-keeping was really like. The ball came whizzing in, and Bunter made a spring at it, and missed it by about a foot.

The leather lodged in the net.

Billy Bunter blinked dazedly round the goal in search of it. He had not even seen it pass him, and he wondered where it was.

"I say, you fellows," he stuttered, "where's that ball? I could have sworn I saw it coming!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's in the net, you frabjous ass!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Goal, goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry strode into the goal, picked up the ball, and showed it to Bunter. He showed it to him by the simple process of jamming it against his fat little nose, and Bunter gave a muffled roar. The ball was very muddy.

"Oh, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can you see it now?" demanded Bob.

"Ow! Grooh!"

"Chuck that ball out!" said Wharton, laughing. "Line up!"

The score was level again. The elevens lined up, and Bunter dabbed furiously at his face with his handkerchief.

"Ten minutes more to play," Hazeldene of the Remove remarked to Bolsover major. "I shouldn't wonder if the Fourth pull it off."

The Fourth were doing their best. But the Remove defence could not be penetrated again, and Bunter was not called upon to save any more. And a few minutes before the finish, Vernon-Smith brought the ball right up to goal, centred to Harry Wharton in the nick of time, and Wharton slammed it home.

It was the winning goal.

The juniors cheered as the players streamed off the field. Harry Wharton & Co. had won the match, with Bunter in goal, and the Fourth-Formers had to hide their diminished heads.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Lord Mauleverer Sports His Oak!

BILLY BUNTER rolled off the football-ground with an air of importance that made the fellows chuckle. Bunter evidently did not regard his goalkeeping as being in the nature of a comedy. He had the manner of a fellow who felt that he had deserved well of his country.

"Pretty stiff match, you fellows," puffed Bunter. "I didn't give those bounders much chance, did I?"

"The way the esteemed Bunter kept the honourable goal was terrific," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh solemnly.

"Still, I should have been better in the front line," said Bunter, with a wise shake of the head. "Now I'm a regular member of the Form team, I think I'd better be played at centre-forward."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at. I suppose Wharton isn't thinking of leaving me out of the team again, after this?" said Bunter warmly. "We're playing Redclyffe on Saturday. We shall want to be up to our full strength. My opinion is that I'd better be centre-forward. That will give me plenty of scope."

"The Redclyffe match isn't a screaming farce," Wharton explained gently. "That will be real footer. You can look on, if you like."

"Oh, really, you know—" protested Bunter. "Why, look at the form I'm in! There was Smithy simply gasping like a landed fish all the time! I'm willing to play outside-right, if you'll give me Smithy's place."

"I'll give you a thick ear, if you don't ring off!" growled Vernon-Smith.

"I suppose we're going to have tea after the match?" said Bunter, changing the subject. "After what I've done, I suppose you're going to stand me a tea? There isn't much in No. 7 Study. Peter Todd is so jolly mean—"

"What's that?" exclaimed Peter Todd's voice at Bunter's elbow. The short-sighted junior had not seen him close at hand.

"Ow! Is that you, Toddy? I was going to say that I'd bring my pal Todd to tea with me," said Bunter hastily.

"Well, Bunter ought to be fed after the way he's played up," said Frank Nugent, laughing. "We don't often see such a goalkeeper—never outside a nightmare."

And Bunter was entertained to tea in No. 1 Study, when the juniors had changed. But his kind offer to play in the team against the Redclyffians on Saturday was declined without thanks. After tea, the Co. went to look for Lord Mauleverer. They found the study door still locked.

Bob Cherry hammered on it with his fist.

"Mauly, you ass, are you still there?"

There was the sound of a portentous yawn in the study. Lord Mauleverer had evidently been awakened from a nap by that loud summons at the door.

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!"

"Mauly, you fathead!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

My Lord Bunter!

"UNDER the circumstances, I think I ought to open it." Thus William George Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was hovering round Lord Mauleverer's letter. It was hard lines, Bunter thought indignantly, to have the money waiting for him there and not to be able to touch it because Lord Mauleverer was locked up in his study. His lordship had promised him a whack out of the remittance. The more Bunter thought it over, the more clear it seemed to him that he was entitled to take the matter, and the letter, into his own hands.

"It will be all right," Bunter argued to himself. "I'll take my whack and hand the rest to Mauly when he comes out. There can't possibly be any harm in that. He didn't say how much I was to have; but I'll make it a quid, and hand him the first postal-order I get for the same amount. Ahem! That will be all right."

He hesitated a little longer, and finally made up his mind. He took down the letter, and puffed upstairs with it to Lord Mauleverer's study. But outside the door there were now several juniors, calling emphatically on the schoolboy millionaire to come out and take his bumping. That Lord Mauleverer was to be bumped for declining to play in the Form eleven was a foregone conclusion. Nothing but a ragging would meet the case.

Bunter blinked at the juniors in the passage, and slipped the letter into his pocket. It was evidently impossible to get Lord Mauleverer to open it just then. There was nothing for it but to open it himself.

Peter Todd and Alonzo and Dutton were in the study, however, and Bunter did not venture to show the letter there. He had satisfied himself that he was entitled to open it, but he knew it would not be so easy to satisfy his study-mates. Indeed, he was quite well aware that if Peter Todd discovered that he had Mauleverer's letter in his possession that letter would promptly be taken away by force.

Bunter rolled out of the study again, and made his way to the box-room. There he was safe from interruption.

He lighted the gas, and sat down on an empty trunk to open the letter.

He blinked at the superscription. It was addressed to Lord Mauleverer at Greyfriars; but there was neither seal nor crest upon it, and so it apparently did not come from any of Mauly's noble relations. The envelope, indeed, was cheap and common, and the postmark was the local one of Courtfield.

A chill of doubt entered Bunter's plump breast. Perhaps it wasn't a remittance, after all! The handwriting was unfamiliar to him, too. Not that Bunter ought to have known anything about the handwriting on other fellows' letters; but, as a matter of fact, he did. The hand on the letter was a light and somewhat graceful one, and if Bunter had known anything about the matter he would have known that it was a foreign hand—a Latin style of calligraphy.

"Well, I'd better open it," he murmured, at last. "It may be something important, and then I can tell Mauly. I shall really be doing him a service."

And he proceeded to do Lord Mauleverer that service at once by slitting the envelope with his fat thumb.

The letter inside was written in the same foreign handwriting, but in perfect English. But there was no remittance—not a trace of a cheque, a postal-order, or any other form of remittance. Bunter snorted, and read the letter. He had no scruples on a point like that.

But as he read the letter, his little round eyes grew bigger and rounder behind his spectacles with astonishment, and he gave a low whistle.

"Oh, crumbs!"

The letter was certainly surprising, for it ran:

"Lord Mauleverer,—You are threatened with a danger of which you are not aware. It has come to my knowledge and I wish to warn you, but I dare not come to your school. If you will come to see me, I will tell you. But keep this secret, or I shall be in peril."

"I shall wait for you this evening at seven o'clock outside the gates of the school, and I hope you will come. Believe me, I am your friend, and wish to serve you."

The letter was unsigned.

"Well, that beats the band!" muttered Billy Bunter, in great astonishment. "Mauly in danger—and this chap going to warn him! I wonder what it's all about!"

Bunter's curiosity was aroused at once.

The Paul Pry and Peeping Tom of Greyfriars never could bear to let anything happen without his knowing all about it.

He was intensely eager to know what the unknown stranger had to say to Lord Mauleverer, and he meant to know.

"Yaas."
"You can come out."
"Finished the match?"
"Yes, you slacker!"
"Oh, good! No larks?"
"No; we're only going to bump you," said Bob.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I'm not coming out till you make it pax," said Lord Mauleverer calmly.
"Then you can stay there all night."
"Yaas."
"Your letter's still in the rack downstairs."
"Yaas."
"Don't you want it, you duffer?"
"Yaas."
"Then open the door."
"Rats!"

And the avengers retired baffled. It was not until the pangs of hunger reminded the schoolboy earl that it was past tea-time that he ventured to open the door and peer out cautiously into the passage. Bob Cherry put his head out of his study, and the schoolboy millionaire promptly jumped back and relocked the door.

"Begad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer, in dismay. "A fellow must have tea, you know. I'm getting doocid hungry, begad!"

There was a tap at the door a few minutes later.
"Oh, go away!" called out Lord Mauleverer. "You worry me."

"I say, Mauly, old pal!" It was Billy Bunter's voice.
"I say, you know, there's that letter for you still downstairs. Don't you want it?"

"Oh, blow the letter!"

"But there's most likely a remittance in it, Mauly," urged Bunter, through the keyhole, "and as a matter of fact I want you to make me a little loan. I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"I'll bring the letter up if you'll open the door, Mauly. I suppose you don't mind lending me a few bob till my postal-order comes?"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"Will you lend me a few bob if it's a remittance?"

"Yaas. Clear off!"

"You'd better come out, Mauly. The chaps are going to bump you, but you may as well get it over, you know."

"Rats!"

Bunter drifted disconsolately away. He wanted that letter to be opened. He was pretty certain there was money in it, and he wanted a "whack" in the remittance. Lord Mauleverer was very free with money, and the Owl of the Remove felt himself fully entitled to share in what was going.

But so long as Lord Mauleverer remained locked up in his study there was evidently no "whack" in the remittance for Bunter. The Owl of the Remove turned the matter over in his mind, and blinked into Bob Cherry's study.

Bob Cherry was there, with Hurree Singh and Mark Linley and little Wun Lung. They were roasting chestnuts and eating them—a very pleasant occupation on a winter's day.

"I say, you fellows, I'll have some of those chestnuts," said Bunter, helping himself without waiting for the formality of permission. "Bob, old man—"

"You can have the chestnuts," said Bob, "but if you call me 'Bob old man' again, I'll squeak you!"

"Ahem! I want you to leave my pal Mauly alone. He's anxious to come out of his study and open a letter. He wants to make me a little loan. Shall I tell him you've made it pax?"

"He's going to be bumped!"

"But really, you know—"

"And so are you, if you don't stop shoving those chestnuts into your pockets," said Bob indignantly. "Clear out!"

"But about Mauly, you know—"

Bob Cherry rose to his feet, and Bunter hastily retired from the study. Bob passed along to Lord Mauleverer's door and knocked.

"Mauly, you chump!"

"Yaas."

"Come out and be bumped."

"Rats!"

And Bob bestowed a kick upon the study door and returned to his own quarters and his chestnuts.

ANSWERS

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.



"I am glad you have come, my lord," said the stranger, in a low voice. Billy Bunter puffed out his chest a little. It was evident that the man mistook him for Lord Mauleverer, and the Owl of the Remove was immensely flattered. "Yes, here I am," said Bunter loftily. "Who are you?" (See Chapter 5.)

As he sat with the letter in his hand, seven o'clock struck from the school tower.

Bunter started as he heard it.

"Seven! My hat! Then the man's there!"

He started up.

To take the letter to Lord Mauleverer, and explain through the keyhole, with the other juniors looking on, was evidently impossible. Besides, the unknown writer had said expressly that the matter was to be kept secret.

What was to be done?

There was one way in which the Owl of the Remove could learn the whole of the affair, from beginning to end—and that was by going to the appointment himself. It would be quite easy to say that Lord Mauleverer was unavoidably detained, and that he had come in his place, as his closest pal. Indeed, if the stranger did not know Lord Mauleverer by sight, he might take Bunter for his lordship. Bunter flattered himself that he had a noble air, and could quite easily be mistaken for an earl, or a duke, for that matter.

"I'll go!" Bunter murmured. "I'm jolly well going to know all about this—I mean I'm going to look after Mauly's affairs for him, as his pal. I can't take the letter now—if the fellows knew I'd opened it, they wouldn't understand, of course. They'd call me names, and very likely rag me—the asses! I'm going to see what danger threatens poor old Mauly, and look after him."

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And with that virtuous resolve, Billy Bunter put the letter in his pocket, and left the box-room.

It was quite dark in the Close when he came out of the School House. The gates were locked at dark, and Bunter had no choice but to get over the school wall—in fact, to break bounds, if he wished to keep the appointment with Lord Mauleverer's unknown correspondent.

"Hallo! Where are you off to?" exclaimed Peter Todd, who was standing on the School House steps, and looking out.

Bunter started. He had not seen Todd.

"Oh, just taking a stroll round the Close!" he said. "Exercise, you know."

Todd stared at him.

"First time I've ever heard of you taking exercise," he said. "What's the matter with you?"

"No nothing!"

"You're looking excited about something," said Peter, eyeing him narrowly. "Are you up to some little game? Tell your uncle at once!"

"I—I—I'm only going for a stroll," said Bunter. "Don't you be so jolly inquisitive, Toddy. I don't like inquisitiveness!"

And Bunter rolled away into the shadows. Peter Todd glanced after him with a somewhat puzzled expression. He could see that the Owl of the Remove was in a state of

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unusual excitement—but it might only mean that he had raised a loan, and was hurrying to the tuckshop before Mrs. Mumble closed. And just then Bolsover major called to him, and Todd forgot all about Bunter.

The fat junior scuttled across the Close, and reached the school wall. It was not easy for the fattest junior of Greyfriars to climb it, but he contrived to do so, and dropped breathlessly into the road outside.

He waited a few moments, puffing and panting, to recover his breath, and then toddled along the wall towards the school gates.

There was a light burning over the gateway, and Bunter came out into the road in the light and blinked round for the expected stranger.

A dark form detached itself from the shadows of the trees on the other side of the road, and crossed quickly towards Bunter.

"I am glad you have come, my lord!" he said, in a low voice.

Bunter puffed out his chest a little. It was evident that the man mistook him for Lord Mauleverer, and the Owl of the Remove was immensely flattered. It was clear at once that his noble manner had impressed itself upon this complete stranger.

"Yes, here I am," said Bunter loftily. "Who are you? Are you the chap who wrote that letter?"

"Yes, my lord!"

"What's it all about?"

"Will your lordship walk down the road a few paces with me?" said the man respectfully.

"Certainly!" said Bunter willingly. Where he was, he was in danger of being seen, and he did not want to be discovered out of bounds. It would have meant a caning.

"This way, my lord!"

It was the first time that Billy Bunter had ever been "my-lorded," and he enjoyed it very much. He strutted along beside the dark-faced stranger, feeling several inches taller. Indeed, he almost felt that he was really a lord by this time.

There was a motor-car in the road, about a hundred yards from the school, with the chauffeur in his place. It was throbbed softly in the silence of the evening.

"Will your lordship step into the car for a moment?" said the foreign-looking gentleman, in a smooth and respectful voice. "Your lordship might prefer to be seated?"

Bunter started back a little.

Even to his obtuse mind there was something very singular in this, and he had a vague feeling of alarm.

"N-no!" he muttered. "I—I'd rather not. In fact, I—I think I'd better be getting back—Oh! Leggo! Ah!"

The dark-faced man had made a sudden spring, and Bunter found himself collared and thrown bodily into the car.

"Quick, Louis!"

"Oui, Monsieur Duval!"

Monsieur Duval, if that was his name, sprang into the car after Bunter, and closed the door. In a moment more the automobile was in motion. Bunter sat up dazedly, and tried to shout.

"Help!"

The cry was choked back by a grip on his throat. A shudder of fear ran through his fat limbs as he felt a cold round rim pressed to his forehead.

"Silence!" hissed the Frenchman. "Taisez-vous! Not a sound!"

Bunter gave a gasp—and fainted with sheer terror! The Frenchman bent over him, and uttered a scornful exclamation.

"He has fainted! Sapristi—tant mieux! It is safer!"

The motor-car rushed on through the darknesses.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Where Is Bunter?

"THERE he is!"

"Collar him!"

There was a rush. Lord Mauleverer, driven by hunger, had ventured out of his study at last. He was spotted at once in the Remove passage, and the juniors rushed upon him, and his unfortunate lordship was promptly collared.

"I say, you know," stammered Mauleverer. "Begad, you know! I—"

Bump!

"Oh, dear! By Jove! Stop it, you know!"

Bump!

"Varooh!" yelled his lordship. "Help! Rescue! Ow, begad!"

Bump!

"Now, will you do it again?" demanded Bob Cherry.

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
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Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

"Yaas! Ow!"

Bump!

"Will you slack any more?"

"Yaas—I mean, no!" wailed Lord Mauleverer. "Leggo—you're spoiling my bags! Ow!"

He struggled out of the grasp of the avengers, and jumped up, considerably dishevelled.

Bob Cherry shook a warning finger at him.

"Now, if you're wanted in the Form eleven again, don't you lock yourself up in your study," he said. "Not that you're likely to be wanted, as a matter of fact."

"Ow, ow, ow!" groaned Lord Mauleverer. "If you're quite sure you're finished, I'll go and get some grub. I'm hungry!"

And Lord Mauleverer was soon in the tuckshop, disposing of Mrs. Mumble's good things with an appetite worthy of Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. returned to their preparation, which had been interrupted by the just punishment of the slacker. Peter Todd looked into the study when they had finished.

"Seen anything of Bunter?" he asked.

"Bunter—no! Look in the tuckshop!"

Peter grinned.

"I've looked there," he said, "and everywhere else. The silly ass hasn't done his prep., and it's near bedtime. He'll get into trouble with Quelch in the morning. By the way, do you know what's become of Mauly's letter?"

"Hasn't he had it?" asked Nugent.

"Well, he's inquiring for it, so I suppose he hasn't," said Todd. "It's queer that Mauly's letter and Bunter should disappear at the same time. If that fat boulder has taken it, I'm going to scalp him."

And Peter Todd walked away to search for Bunter. But he did not find him. And when bed-time came, and the Remove prepared to go to their dormitory, the fat junior was still absent.

Wingate of the Sixth came to the Remove dormitory to see lights out, and he noticed Bunter's absence at once.

"Where's Bunter?" he inquired.

"He's not here," said Wharton.

"I can see that. Does anybody know where he is?" said Wingate, frowning. "Doesn't the ass know it's bed-time?"

"Haven't seen him for some time," said Peter Todd. "He went out into the Close about seven o'clock, and he doesn't seem to have been seen since."

Wingate stared.

"I suppose he can't have stayed in the Close for two hours and a half," he said. "Some of you had better go and hunt him up."

The juniors were not at all sorry to have bedtime left a little later. They left the dormitory to look for Bunter, with alacrity. But they came back one by one with the information that they could not find him.

Wingate was extremely annoyed.

"The fat duffer!" he exclaimed. "I can't waste my time here. Do you know if he went out?"

"Well, he couldn't go out after locking up," said Todd.

"You chaps are in his study. Do you know if he had any idea of getting out of bounds?" Wingate asked.

Peter shook his head.

"I fear that I am unable to throw any light on the matter, my dear Wingate," said Alonzo Todd. "But I trust Bunter has not broken bounds. Such an act of delinquency would be very deplorable."

"Pile it on, Alonzo," said Bob Cherry admiringly. "He makes it up out of his head as he goes along, you know. Wonderful, ain't it?"

"My dear Cherry, I trust my meaning is penetrable by any person of average perspicacity," said Alonzo.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Wingate. "Do you know where Bunter is, Dutton?"

Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, who had the honour of sharing Study No. 7 with Bunter and the two Todds, went on unlacing his boots, quite unconscious of the fact that the Greyfriars captain had spoken to him.

Wingate raised his voice.

"Dutton!"

"Hallo!" said Dutton, looking up. "Did you speak to me, Wingate?"

"Yes. Do you know where Bunter is?"

"Eh?"

"Do you know if Bunter has gone out?"

"Oh, I don't know about that!" said Dutton. "He's a bit of an a-s, but I shouldn't call him a lout, Wingate. It's not a nice word."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you seen Bunter this evening?" shouted Wingate. "Do you know where he has gone?"

"Nearly fifteen years ago, I should think."

"What?"
"It depends on his present age, I suppose," said Dutton, in surprise.
"Eh? What? What—what depends on his present age?"
"Did you ask me if I knew when Bunter was born?"
The juniors yelled; and Wingate frowned.
"Do you know where he has gone?" roared Wingate, with a voice that could be heard at the end of the dormitory passage.

"Oh! No, I don't."
"Well, you kids had better turn in," said the prefect. "I'll make it warm for that young duffer when he comes in, wherever he is. Get to bed!"

The Removites turned in, greatly surprised by the absence of Bunter. The general belief was that he had broken bounds, though with what object no one could guess. Peter Todd remembered his suppressed excitement, when he had seen him leaving the house, and that seemed to indicate that he had something "on," but Peter knew no more than that. Most of the juniors were inclined to connect his disappearance with the fact that Lord Mauleverer's letter was missing. Bunter's keen interest in other fellows' correspondence was well known.

"Was there a postal-order in your letter, Mauly?" Bulstrode asked.

"Begad, I don't know!" said Mauleverer. "I haven't seen the letter, you see. The fellows said it was in the rack, but when I went down it wasn't there, and I haven't seen anything of it."

"Even Bunter wouldn't take Mauly's postal-order to cash it," said Peter Todd. "Besides, the post-office has been closed a long time. And Mauly doesn't get postal-orders; he always has whacking big cheques on the bank at Court-field."

"Yaas, that's so."
"Then where on earth is Bunter?" said Bob Cherry.

"Goodness knows!"

It was a long time before the Removites slept—they discussed the remarkable absence of the Owl of the Remove till nearly eleven o'clock. By that time the fat junior had not made his appearance, and the fellows dropped off to sleep.

The amazing absence of Bunter was causing alarm downstairs before that. As he had not returned by half-past ten, Wingate reported his absence to the Head. But the Head could do nothing. The school had already been searched for him, and it was certain that the junior was not within the walls of Greyfriars. At eleven o'clock the Head telephoned to the police-station in Friarale; but he could learn nothing of any accident in the vicinity. Billy Bunter seemed to have disappeared without leaving a trace behind.

It was almost inconceivable that he had run away from school. But if he had not, where was he?

It was a mystery.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. In Borrowed Plumes!

BILLY BUNTER opened his eyes.
He was in darkness, and he had a sensation of rapid motion.

Where was he?
His mind was too confused for the moment to remember what had happened. Round him was darkness, as he sat up and panted.

From the darkness a hand stretched out and grasped him by the shoulder, in a grasp that seemed like the clutch of a vice.

"Keep quiet!"
At the sound of the smooth, silky voice, with the foreign accent, Bunter remembered.

A gasp of terror left his lips.
He was inside a motor-car, with the blinds closely drawn, and beside him on the seat was a man he could not see, but whom he knew to be a Frenchman who had met him outside the school gates, and whom the chauffeur had addressed as Monsieur Duval.

Who was he? Why had he seized the fat junior in this lawless manner, and carried him off in the swiftly-rushing car?

Bunter was dazed by it.
"I—I say," he murmured, "what's the game, you know? Is this a lark?"

"Don't talk!"

"But I—I say, I can't go off like this, you know. I've got to get back to Greyfriars. I shall be late for bed."

There was a chuckle in the darkness.

"You will not see Greyfriars again for some time, my lord," said the silky voice. "You are going to be my guest for some time."

"What?"

"You need not be afraid; you will not be hurt. But you are my prisoner, and if you attempt to cry out, I shall blow your brains out."

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EVERY MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

"Ow!"
"Keep quiet, and you will not be hurt."
"But I—I say, you know, what do you mean? You ain't allowed to take a chap away in this way, you know. It's against the law."

"Vraiment?" said the mocking voice in the darkness.
"Look here, you blessed foreigner, you let me out of this car!" growled Bunter. "I say, where are my glasses? Have you got my spectacles?"

"Probably you have dropped them."

"Look here, I can't see without my glasses," protested Bunter.

"It is not necessary for you to see."

"I've got to get back to Greyfriars. There will be a row if I'm late for bed. What have you shoved me into this rotten car for?"

"Silence!"

"I'm not going to stand it," growled Bunter. "This is a free country, you foreign beast, and you can't take a chap away like this. I'll yell for help if you don't stop the car. Stop it at once! Do you hear?"

"Taisez-vous!"

"I don't understand your rotten foreign lingo. Stop this car at once!"

"Listen to me, Lord Mauleverer. You will not be hurt if you do not give trouble. If you raise your voice, I shall stun you with the butt of my revolver. Take warning."

Lord Mauleverer!

Billy Bunter understood at last.
He had been kidnapped, in mistake for the schoolboy earl. It was Lord Mauleverer whom this rascal had intended to carry off in the motor-car. But Billy Bunter's keen interest in another fellow's affairs had landed him in the scrape instead of the schoolboy millionaire. It was clear to him at last, and he gave a gasp of relief as he realised it. He had only to explain that he was not really Lord Mauleverer, and all would be well; at all events, he flattered himself so.

"You came to kidnap Mauly?" he exclaimed.

"Kidnap! Yes—that is the word!"

"But I am not Lord Mauleverer!" said Bunter eagerly.

"Don't lie to me!" said the Frenchman harshly. "I know who you are!"

"But I swear I'm not: I'm Bunter—William George Bunter, of the Lower Fourth. Mauly's my pal."

"Liar!"

"I tell you it's so!" gasped Bunter. "I—I happened to read the letter, you know, and, as Mauly couldn't come, I came instead."

"That is false!"

"I swear it's so!" said Bunter, in great dismay, as he found that his statement was not believed. "Any fellow at Greyfriars will tell you I'm Bunter."

"Bah! Do you think I am a child to be deceived? How did you come to open the letter unless you are Lord Mauleverer?"

"I—I just opened it, as—as Mauly's pal, you know."

"Nonsense!"

"Mauly couldn't come, so I came, you know—"

"Bah! Listen to me. It is useless to lie, for I know who you are. I was on the school football ground this afternoon when you were playing, and I was told who you were. As I did not know you by sight, I came to Greyfriars under pretence of bringing a message, in order to see you personally. I was told that Lord Mauleverer was keeping goal in the match, and I watched you keeping goal. Now, you will understand that it is useless to deny your identity."

"But—but it isn't so—it was all changed at the last moment, and I kept goal instead of Mauly—"

"Silence!"

The Frenchman evidently did not believe him, and Bunter relapsed into dismayed silence. As a matter of fact, his story sounded very feeble. The Frenchman could know nothing of the events that had taken place at Greyfriars that afternoon. He had been told that the goalkeeper for the Remove was to be Lord Mauleverer, and he had seen Bunter between the posts.

Bunter had met him in reply to the letter sent to Lord Mauleverer, and which in the natural course would only have been opened by the schoolboy earl. And Bunter had accepted the name and title when the Frenchman had met him outside the school gates. Chance, aided by the fat junior's own inquisitiveness and duplicity, had made the evidence too strong for him. He had not the slightest prospect of convincing Monsieur Duval that he was not in reality the schoolboy millionaire.

The car rushed on through the night.

OUR GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER NEXT MONDAY! (See Page 28.)

Where they were going—how far they had gone—the Owl of the Remove had not the faintest idea.

A loud, heavy sound came to his ears above the rushing of the car, and he knew that it was the sound of the surf breaking on the rocky shore.

The car was following the cliff road, the loneliest in the neighbourhood.

Once Bunter heard a market-cart lumber by, but he dared not call out, for the hand gripped him again in the darkness, and that cold, round rim was pressed to his fat face. He sat quivering like a jelly with terror, in the grasp of the kidnapper, till the cart was left far behind.

Then the Frenchman released him.

"I—I say, where are we going?" Bunter stammered at last.

"You will see soon!"

"What are you going to do with me?"

"You will see!"

"This—is this against the law, you know?" Bunter muttered feebly.

"Bah!"

Still the car rushed on.

Bunter sat in utter dismay. The unfortunate daw in the fable, who had reason to repent having dressed himself in peacock's feathers, probably felt something like William George Bunter. Bunter would very gladly have shorn himself of his borrowed plumes, but it was impossible. He had allowed himself to be taken for Lord Mauleverer, and now there was no getting out of it.

What did the Frenchman want? It was a case of the most audacious kidnapping, and it could have only one object. Lord Mauleverer's wealth was well known, and this hardy adventurer intended holding the schoolboy earl to ransom. What would he do when he discovered—as he must discover in the long run—that he had captured the wrong person—that he had shown his hand, betrayed his purpose, without laying hands on the real Lord Mauleverer? It occurred to Bunter that if he succeeded in convincing the rascal that he was not Mauleverer the consequences might be very dangerous to him. If Duval found himself disappointed of his prey he was quite likely to take vengeance upon the fellow whose meddling had been the means of disappointing him.

In either case, with his true identity established or not, Bunter's position was not an enviable one.

The car came to a halt at last. The chauffeur descended, and opened the door, and there was a rapid whisper in French, of which Bunter understood hardly a word.

The Frenchman stepped out of the car.

"Come!" he said.

"I—I say—where are we?"

"Step out—and silence!"

Billy Bunter stepped out of the car. The stars were gleaming in a cold, clear sky. In the distance Bunter caught a glimpse of the sea, and he could hear the murmur of the surf on the shore.

Close at hand was a house, built back against a cliff. It was a bungalow—one of the single-storied buildings occupied by summer visitors—shut up and deserted in the winter.

The windows were covered with shutters, the garden was bleak and dusty with drifting sand, and there was not a glimmer of light to be seen. The Frenchman grasped his arm, and led him towards the door.

The chauffeur remounted to his seat, and the car buzzed away down the road, and disappeared into the shadows.

The bungalow lay well back from the road. So far as the Owl of the Remove could see, there was not another house in sight. On the gate was the name of the house—Locarno—one of those gorgeous names that builders love to bestow upon their shoddy edifices.

Locarno!

Billy Bunter knew where he was now. He had passed that bungalow on his bicycle in the summer—he remembered some joke of Bob Cherry's about the name. The bungalow was about a mile out of the village of Pegg—the journey of the motor-car, therefore, had not been a very long one. In the summer the coast was alive with visitors—in the winter it was bare and deserted—and Bunter realised that the kidnapper had chosen a very safe hiding-place. But it was a comfort to know that he was not at a great distance from Greyfriars.

Monsieur Duval unlocked the door and pushed Bunter into the dark damp hall. He closed the door after them, and relocked it. Then he lighted a lamp.

"Come!" he said.

Bunter followed him meekly into a room. The shutters on the window were closed and secured. The room was barely furnished.

Duval pointed to a bed.

"You may go to bed," he said. "I shall see you in the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 304.

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"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

morning. You will have time to think over your situation, and you will be reasonable, I hope. Do you know my name?"

"I—I seem to have heard it before!" stammered Bunter.

"Have you read of the motor-car bandits in Paris?"

"Yee-es!"

"I was one of them," said Duval, his brows knitting in a threatening frown. "Now you know that, you know that I am not to be trifled with. Unless your liberty is well paid for, you will never leave this house alive. Think of that!"

And he turned towards the door.

"But, I say!" shrieked Bunter. "I—I ain't Lord Mauleverer!"

"Cease your lies! I know who you are!"

"I—I'm hungry!" said Bunter. "I can't go to sleep when I'm hungry!"

"You must do the best you can. To-morrow morning you shall eat. At present I have nothing for you!"

The Frenchman quitted the room and locked the door on the outside.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Bunter.

He had been left in the dark. He felt his way to the bed, and laid down in his clothes, and pulled the bedclothes over him. It was very cold in the deserted bungalow; and that was the easiest way to keep warm. For a long time his terrified thoughts kept the fat junior awake—but he slept at last—and, mingling with the distant murmur of the sea for the remainder of the night, there sounded the deep, bass snore of the Owl of the Remove.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

"WHERE'S Bunter?"

That was the question all Greyfriars was asking the next morning.

Harry Wharton & Co. had awakened at the clang of the rising-bell, to find that Billy Bunter's bed in the Remove dormitory was empty, and had not been slept in.

Bunter had not returned.

"Something's happened!" said Bob Cherry sapiently.

It was only too certain that something had happened. Billy Bunter could not possibly have remained out all night of his own accord. Something had happened to the fat junior outside the walls of Greyfriars—but what?

"What on earth's become of him?" Peter Todd exclaimed.

"He can't have run away from school to become a professional ventriloquist. He said once he was going to."

"I have heard of schoolboys running away to become pirates," said Alonzo. "I trust Bunter has done nothing so rash!"

"No; I don't think he's done that!" said Bob Cherry sarcastically. "I can't quite imagine Bunter with a rakish schooner flying the skull and cross-bones!"

The Removites grinned at the idea. But one thing was certain—Billy Bunter was not to be found!

The juniors made anxious inquiries when they came down. But nothing was known.

Mr. Quelch had already gone down to the police-station about the matter; and the Head had been busy at the telephone.

But nothing had been discovered.

Bunter seemed to have vanished into thin air.

Peter Todd, as the last person who had seen Bunter the previous night, was sent for by the Head, and questioned. But he could tell little. He had seen the fat junior go out into the Close, and Bunter seemed unusually excited about something—that was all.

Todd joined the Famous Five when he came back from the Head's study. They were discussing the matter in the Close. There was a thoughtful shade upon Peter Todd's brow.

"Mauly hasn't heard anything of his letter yet, you chaps," he remarked.

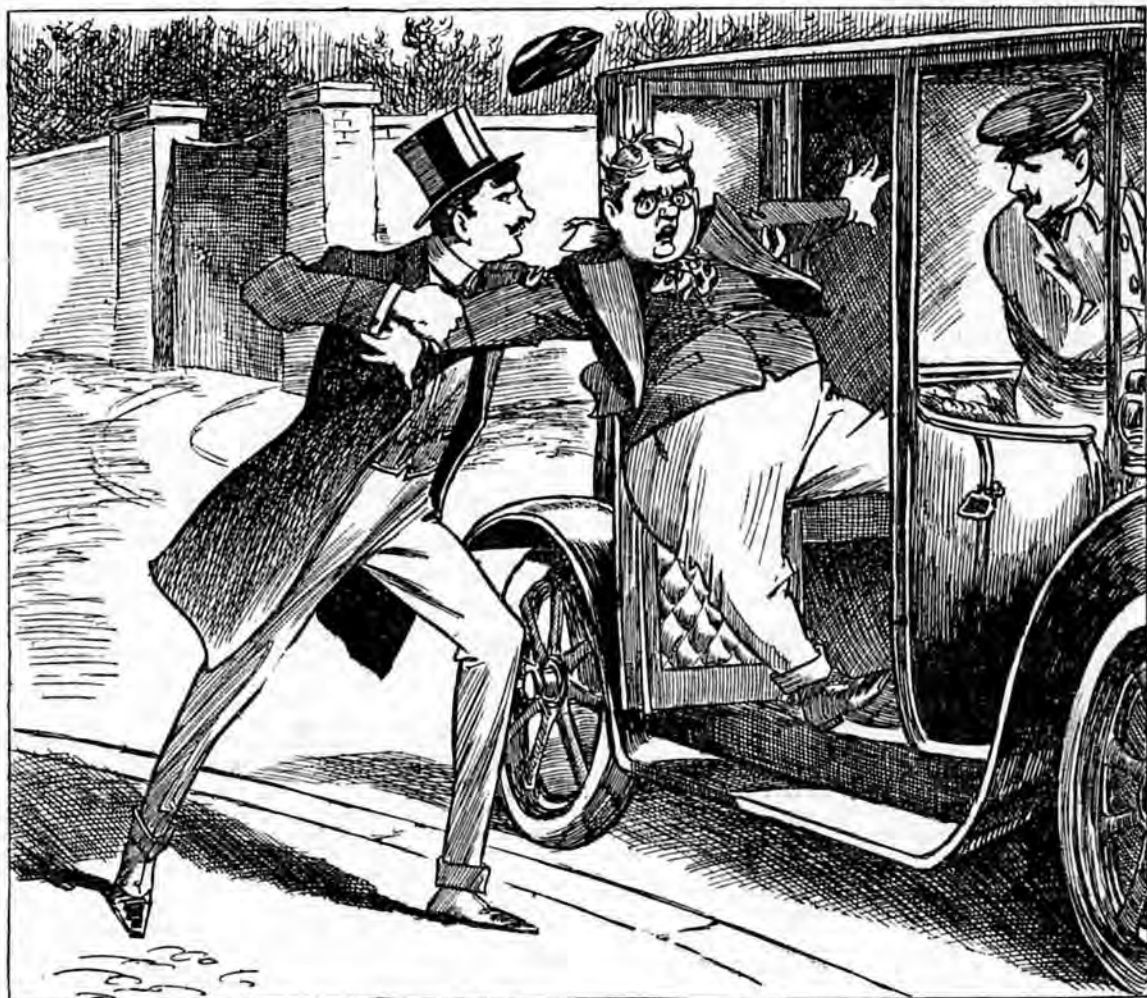
"Oh, blow Mauly's letter!" said Bob Cherry. "We're thinking about poor old Bunter. Something's happened to him."

"It's queer that Mauly's letter and Billy should disappear at the same time," said Todd quietly. "I can't help thinking that Bunter collared it. Though I don't see why it should have made him leave Greyfriars. Still, it looks to me as if there were some connection there. If Mauly could tell us what was in the letter—"

"A cheque, most likely."

"Phew!" said Johnny Bull, with a whistle. "Mauly got a cheque once for a big sum, when he was going to buy a motor-bike. Is it possible Bunter's sloped with the cash—if it were a big cheque?"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Wharton. "Even Bunter wouldn't do that. Still, we'll ask Mauly about the letter. It



"Will your lordship step into the car for a moment?" said the foreign gentleman, in a smooth and respectful voice. "Your lordship might prefer to be seated?" And then he suddenly sprang forward, and Billy Bunter found himself collared and thrown bodily into the waiting motor. (See Chapter 5.)

may let in some light on the matter. We know Bunter waan't too particular about opening other people's letters."

They looked for Lord Mauleverer, and found him warming his toes before the fire in the dining-room.

"We want to know about that letter, Mauly," said Wharton. "We think Bunter may have taken it. What was in it?"

Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"Begad, I don't know! I haven't seen it."

"Might there have been a big remittance in it?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Did you tell Bunter he could open it?"

"No. I told him he could have a whack in the remittance, if there was one in it."

"That would be enough to make Bunter open it, as you were locked up in your study. But why should it make him clear out?"

"I don't know."

Skinner of the Remove came into the dining-room, with an excited look on his face, and a letter in his hand.

"I hear you've lost a letter, Mauleverer!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas."

"Is this it?"

Lord Mauleverer yawned, and took the letter from Skinner and looked at it. An expression of astonishment came over his face.

"This must be a giddy jape," he said. "Where did you get it, Skinner?"

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"Picked it up close to the wall," said Skinner. "I was looking for traces of Bunter to see if he had got over the wall last night. He couldn't have gone out by the gates-- they were locked, you know. I found the letter there. Looks as if it had been dropped there by someone getting over the wall."

"Is it yours, Mauly?" asked Wharton.

"Well, my name's on it," said Lord Mauleverer in perplexity. "But I don't see why anybody should write such piffle to me. Read it!"

The juniors looked at the letter. It was the letter Billy Bunter had perused with such keen curiosity in the box-room the previous evening. The Owl of the Remove had evidently dropped it in getting over the school wall.

"My hat," said Wharton, with a deep breath, "that explains it!"

"How does it, my dear chap?"

"Bunter read this letter. The writer asks you to meet him outside the school gates at seven o'clock. It was at seven o'clock Todd saw Bunter going out, looking excited about something. He was going to see the man who wrote this letter."

"Right on the nail," said Peter Todd, with conviction; "that's it. Bunter opened the letter to see if there was a remittance in it, and found this, and went to see the man, and find out all about it. That's just like him. He never could mind his own business."

OUR GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER NEXT MONDAY! (See Page 28.)

"And then something happened to him," said Wharton. "If you'd had this letter, Mauly, would you have gone?"

"Yaas, I suppose so."

"It's a trick of some sort," said Todd. "The man, whoever he is, wanted Mauly outside the school. Bunter went instead, and Bunter's got what was intended for Mauly. It looks to me like a case of kidnapping. Bunter couldn't disappear into thin air. He met the chap who wrote this letter, and the chap has collared him, for some reason."

It seemed pretty clear.

The finding of the letter had let in a flood of light on the subject.

Coker of the Fifth came in while the juniors were excitedly discussing the new discovery, and he joined them at once. Coker was very much interested in the matter.

"You kids found something out?" he asked.

Lord Mauleverer showed him the letter.

"Phew!" said Coker, examining it. "So you're in danger, are you?"

"Not that I know of," yawned his lordship. "I suppose it's a jape of some sort. Chap wanted to get me outside the gates to make a fool of me, I suppose."

"Just had this letter?" asked Coker.

Skinner explained how he had found it. Skinner was considerably elated at having been the means of letting in light on the mystery. Coker examined the letter with renewed attention.

"That isn't English writing," he said. "It's what they call a Latin list. It was written by a foreigner."

"Yes, we'd spotted that already," said Wharton.

"I wonder if it was that foreign chap who was asking for Mauleverer yesterday?" said Coker. "Your French friend, Mauleverer."

"Haven't any French friends, dear boy."

"But the man who came to see you yesterday afternoon."

"I didn't see any man."

"Who was it, Coker?" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"A French chap," said Coker. "I was just going down to the footer-match when he asked me if Lord Mauleverer was here. He was a dark-faced chap—a Frenchman, though he spoke jolly good English. He said he had a message for Mauleverer. I told him Mauleverer was keeping goal for you."

"By Jove, and we put Bunter in goal at the last moment!" Wharton exclaimed. "Is it possible he has taken Bunter for Mauleverer?"

"Oh, draw it mild, you know!" protested Lord Mauleverer, not at all flattered by the suggestion.

"But if he didn't know you by sight," said Wharton. "You say you don't know the man, so the chances are he doesn't know you. Mauly, old man, my belief is that you've had a narrow escape. There's some scheme to get hold of you, and Bunter has walked into the trap instead of you."

"Begad, I must say I'm much obliged to Bunter!"

"We ought to tell the Head about this," said Wharton. "It may help the police if they know what's happened."

And that being agreed to, Lord Mauleverer and Skinner and Coker proceeded to the Head's study to explain what had been discovered. Dr. Locke listened with great interest; and when he dismissed them, he telephoned immediately to the police-station in Courtfield. And during morning lessons, Inspector Grimes arrived from Courtfield, and Lord Mauleverer and Coker were closely questioned; and the inspector departed with a complete description of the unknown Frenchman, as Coker and Potter and Greene remembered him.

There was little doubt now that it was a case of kidnapping, and that Billy Bunter had fallen a victim to it instead of the schoolboy millionaire.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. Bunter Tries Ventriloquism!

BILLY BUNTER awoke and yawned.

There was a glimmer of light through the closed shutters of the room, showing him that another day had dawned.

The fat junior sat up in bed, and blinked round him.

"Oh, crumbs!" he murmured, as he surveyed his unaccustomed surroundings, and remembered what had happened the previous night. "Oh, crumbs! I'm in for it!"

He had lost his spectacles in the car, but he had a second pair in his pocket, and he promptly donned them, and blinked round his prison. He rolled out of bed and shivered. It was very cold. There was no sign of the Frenchman, and no sound in the deserted bungalow, save the far-off booming of the sea. Bunter examined the shutters on the window, but they were thick and strong, and fastened outside with a padlock. There was no escape that way. He tried the door, but the door was locked on the outside.

Bunter's chief feeling just then was hunger. He would THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 304.

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have been glad to see the kidnapper, if the kidnapper had brought him some breakfast. He thumped on the door, and a few minutes later it opened and the Frenchman stepped into the room.

"So you are awake," he said.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I'm jolly hungry!" he exclaimed. "I suppose you're not going to starve me to death here, are you?"

The Frenchman laid a loaf upon the table. Bunter turned his big spectacles upon it, and snorted.

"I can't eat dry bread!" he exclaimed indignantly.

"I fear you will get nothing else while you are here," said Duval, with a grin, "and if you have thirst, there is water—cold water."

Bunter shivered.

"Look here, you can't treat a chap like that, you know!" he muttered.

"You will get nothing better here. Listen to me, Lord Mauleverer. If you have any sense, you must know you are here. You are a millionaire. You are very well known to me—by name, I mean. You can afford to pay for your liberty. Your guardian, Sir Reginald Brooke, will hand over the price of your liberty. Do you understand?"

Bunter groaned.

"Don't I keep on telling you that I ain't Lord Mauleverer?" he demanded peevishly. "I'm Billy Bunter."

"Don't waste time!" said Duval, frowning. "You are to write to your guardian, and tell him that you are a prisoner in the hands of a man who will shoot you through the head unless five thousand pounds are paid for your liberty!"

"Five thousand pounds!" gasped Bunter.

"Exactly!"

"I don't suppose my pater could raise five thousand quid to save the whole family!" groaned Bunter.

"It is a small sum to a millionaire."

"But I ain't a millionaire!"

"Here are pen and ink," said Duval. "Sit down and write!"

"But Mauly's uncle will only laugh if he gets a letter from me!" said Bunter. "Why should he pay five thousand quid for a chap he doesn't know?"

"If you refuse to write the letter you will be kept twenty-four hours without food," said the Frenchman calmly.

"Oh, Great Scott!"

"Sit down and write!"

Billy Bunter collapsed into a chair and took up the pen. He would have written whole reams of letters to anybody after that threat.

"Write as I dictate!" said Duval.

"Ye-es."

"My dear uncle—"

"He ain't my uncle, you know!" said Bunter feebly.

"Silence! My dear uncle, I have been kidnapped by a man, who threatens my life unless he is paid five thousand pounds. It must be paid. I am quite at his mercy. Put the word 'Willing' in the personal column of the 'Daily Mail' on Saturday, and then the man will communicate with you.—MAULEVERER."

Bunter wrote it in his sprawling hand.

"Good!" said Duval, scanning the letter. "Now address the envelope."

"I—I don't know the address of Mauly's uncle!" murmured Bunter.

"Silence! Do you think I believe your falsehoods? Write, 'Sir Reginald Brooke, Brooke Lodge, Grosvenor Square, London.'"

Billy Bunter wrote it.

"He will know your writing," said Duval, with considerable satisfaction, "and you had better hope that he will answer through the newspaper. Otherwise, your grave is already dug in the cellar beneath this house, Lord Mauleverer."

"I ain't—"

"This letter will be posted to-day," said Duval. "Sir Reginald will receive it in time to insert the reply in the 'Daily Mail,' if he so chooses. Unless he does so he will receive your ear by post as a reminder that I am in earnest."

"Oh, erikay!"

"I leave you to your breakfast," said Duval, with a mocking grin; and he took the letter and the addressed envelope and quitted the room.

Bunter felt desperate.

That the man would carry out his blood-curdling threats he did not really believe, but there was a possibility of it.

Now that the daylight had come, too, he did not feel quite believe that the Frenchman was really a member of the famous—or infamous—gang of motor-car bandits of Paris. It had seemed probable enough in the darkness and terror of the night, but the daylight made a difference. The man was extremely well-dressed, with a neatness and care that

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seemed to smack of the "gentleman's gentleman." Bunter was a duffer in some things, but not in all, and upon a close examination he would have taken Monsieur Duval for a French valet, or perhaps a waiter. And at that thought he did not feel nearly so much afraid of the man.

"I—I wonder if I could diddle him into opening the door, and then make a bolt for it," Bunter muttered. "He doesn't know that I'm a ventriloquist."

Bunter's ventriloquism had earned him more bumpings than anything else at Greyfriars, but it was quite possible that it would be more useful now. At all events, there was no harm in trying.

The Frenchman had closed the door and locked it on the outside, and Bunter understood that he was to be left alone for the day. Probably the man would go to a distance in the motor-car to post the letter, in order that the postmark should not give a hint of his real whereabouts.

The thought of being shut up in that lonely place for a whole day, with nothing but a loaf of bread and a jug of cold water, made Bunter desperate. He was almost prepared for a struggle for liberty, though not quite.

He tiptoed to the door and listened. He could hear the Frenchman moving about in the little hall of the bungalow, apparently putting his coat on. Outside, Bunter heard the sound of the car. Louis had returned. Duval intended to depart in the car, and leave the fat junior locked up, a helpless prisoner in the bungalow. The building was too far back from the road for Bunter's cries to be heard, even if anyone had passed that lonely way to hear them. There were deserted and locked-up bungalows dotted along the coast for miles outside Pegg, and no likelihood of any of them being visited.

"Here, you open this door!" Bunter suddenly rapped out, assuming a deep, heavy voice, utterly unlike his own.

He heard a sharp exclamation in the hall.

"Mon Dieu!"

In a moment the door of the room was unlocked again, and Duval strode in, his eyes glittering.

"Who is here?" he exclaimed.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I am," he replied, "and—"

"There is someone else! I heard a voice!" exclaimed the Frenchman, glaring angrily about the room. "Mon Dieu! Is it possible—"

He broke off suddenly.

From under the bed there seemed to come the sound of a gasp, as of a man squeezing himself out of sight in the narrow space.

Duval gritted his teeth and sprang towards the bed. He tore a revolver from his pocket. Whether he was a motor-bandit or a "sacked" valet, there was no doubt that the man was a desperate character. As he plunged towards the bed Bunter slipped out of the room. He ran towards the house-door. It was half open; the Frenchman had been about to go out.

Bunter simply bolted through the doorway and rolled into the garden. Another second, and he would have been speeding towards the road. But it was not to be. Louis, the chauffeur, was waiting beside his car, and he caught sight of the junior, and sprang to intercept him. His grasp closed on Bunter's collar, and swung him back.

"Stop!" he exclaimed.

Bunter struggled.

"Leggo—leggo! Ow!"

Duval came panting out of the house.

"You have him? Bien! Drag the brute in!"

And the unfortunate Bunter was hustled into the house between the two men, and the door was slammed.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Bid for Liberty!

"THERE is someone in the house, Louis!"

The chauffeur looked incredulous.

Duval panted out the words.

"I heard his voice. He was in the room with this

boy, but I cannot find him!" the Frenchman exclaimed.

"Guard this boy while I search for him!"

"But it is impossible!"

"I tell you there is someone!"

Louis shrugged his shoulders, but he stood with his grip on Bunter's shoulders while Duval began to search the bungalow for the supposed stranger.

There were only four rooms in the little building, and Duval was soon finished with them. He came back into the hall with his eyes glittering restlessly.

"Have you found anyone?" said Louis, with a sarcastic grin.

"Non! Yet there is someone!" The Frenchman turned fiercely to Bunter. "Garçon, who was in the room with you? How did he get out? Answer me!"

"I—I—I—"

"There must be some secret door in the place!" Duval muttered hurriedly. "I know nothing of the house. I

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simply took it as being the loneliest on the coast. The house-agent told me nothing of such a thing. But there is something of the sort. There was a man in the room, and he is gone! How?"

"Make the brat explain!"

Duval pressed the muzzle of the revolver to Bunter's forehead.

"Tell me who it was, you young hound!" he said between his teeth. "Tell me, or you die this moment!"

Bunter shrank back. The ferocity in Duval's face startled him, though he was not frightened enough to believe that Duval would carry out his threat. The man had not taken the trouble to kidnap him merely for the purpose of putting his neck into a noose. But it suited the cunning Owl of the Remove to affect to be overcome with terror. Obtuse as Bunter was, he had a great gift of cunning, as dunces often have. And the Frenchman's own words had given him a hint.

"D—d—don't!" stuttered Bunter. "I—I'll tell you—I'll tell you everything! Only take that pistol away."

Duval lowered the weapon.

"Tell me, then! Who was it?"

"It—it was Inspector Grimes!" faltered Bunter.

"What! Who is he?"

"He belongs to the police-station in Courtfield."

"He is lying!" said Louis. "How could a police-inspector be here?"

"But there was someone," muttered Duval, "and it was a deep voice, like that of a police-inspector, perhaps. How did this inspector get out, Lord Mauleverer?"

"There's a door in the wall," stammered Bunter.

"I thought so. I guessed it. Come, you shall show it to us!"

Bunter was dragged into the room again.

"Now, where is the door?" demanded Duval.

Bunter pointed to the wall which separated the room from the next. Duval examined it quickly with glittering eyes.

"There is no door here!" he exclaimed.

"It opened with a spring," Bunter explained, drawing upon his imagination. "He just vanished, you know."

Louis examined the wall in his turn, and shook his head. There was certainly no trace of a secret door in the wooden partition, for that was all it was. If there was a secret door, it was a very secret one indeed.

The two rascals muttered together quickly in their own language. They were still muttering when a deep threatening voice came from the hall.

"We've got them!"

"That is he!" exclaimed Duval, and Louis started violently. The two men rushed into the hall. But there was no one to be seen, and the door was closed and fast.

The two Frenchmen looked at one another in bewilderment.

"Is the house haunted?" exclaimed Duval.

"Sapristi! I heard him myself!" exclaimed the chauffeur.

"But where is he?"

"Open, in the name of the law!"

It was the deep voice again, this time outside the house-door. The kidnappers looked at one another in terror.

"Trapped!" muttered Louis.

"Caught! Mon Dieu!"

"Are you going to open this door? Open, in the name of the law!"

Duval sprang towards the window of the hall, and looked out through a chink in the shutter. There was no one in sight. The car stood in the road, outside the gate; but there was no human being to be seen. The little garden in front of the bungalow was deserted.

"There is no one!" shrieked Duval.

"Mon Dieu!"

"What can it mean? Where is he? Wait here, Louis, and I will search about the house," said Duval hurriedly. "He may be hidden in one of the sheds."

Duval rushed out of the house at the back.

A minute later there was a loud yell in Duval's tones.

"A moi! Louis, a moi!"

It was a call for help in French in Duval's voice. Louis let go Bunter at once, and dashed out of the back of the house.

Bunter's chance had come; his ventriloquism had served him well. Louis, under the impression that Duval had discovered the inspector, and was struggling with him, had dashed to his aid. Bunter had a minute at least.

He ran to the house-door, unlocked it, and dashed into the garden. A moment more, and he was in the road. The long white road ran along the top of the cliffs; there was no human being, no habitation in sight. Bunter's heart sank. If he ran, he knew that the two rascals would soon be after

him, and the fat junior was no sprinter. His capture would be a matter only of minutes.

But there was the car!

It was standing ready, throbbing—the chauffeur had been prepared to start. Bunter knew very little about motor-cars, but he knew how to start one, and he had a vague idea that by holding the steering-wheel he could drive it. Without stopping to think, the excited junior leaped into the chauffeur's seat.

There was a furious yell from the bungalow.

"Stop!"

"He has the car!"

The two Frenchmen came racing round the house. They rushed into the road, just in time to see the car leap forward like a wild thing and dash away.

Duval smote his forehead.

"Thousand curses! He is gone!"

"Shoot!" yelled Louis.

Crack, crack!

Two bullets from Duval's revolver knocked up the dust on the road. Bunter gave a gasp of terror, and let go the steering-wheel. To his terrified imagination, the bullets were whistling past his fat ears, though, as a matter of fact, Duval had taken care that they should miss him by a dozen feet or

more. The motor-car plunged madly into the mass of rocks beside the road, and there was a terrific crash as it turned over. Bunter flew through the air, and landed in the road, with all the breath knocked out of him.

Duval dashed forward, and his grasp closed upon the terrified junior as he sprawled in the dust.

"I have him!" he shouted.

"Ow!" panted Bunter. "Yow—d-d-don't you shoot me—you'll be hung—ow!"

"Come, come, you young hound!"

Duval ran the fat junior back to the bungalow with an iron grip on his collar. Bunter was thrown into the prison chamber and locked in there, and then the Frenchman joined his confederate in the road. The chauffeur was looking in dismay at the smashed car. Duval ground his teeth with rage.

"It is a wreck!" he exclaimed.

Louis nodded dismally.

"And I cannot repair it!" he said, between his teeth. "It cannot be used to-day, Duval. Look. The wheel is twisted, the brake is smashed. We shall have to get help to get it removed for repair."

Duval ground his teeth.

"You must do that, Louis. Represent yourself as a



GOOD TURNS.—No. 21.



A Magnetite unselfishly devoting an hour in the nursery so that he can give his kiddie sisters a jolly time by joining in with their games. He thus performs a real good turn!



"Have you read of the motor-car bandits in Paris?" "Ye—e—es!" stuttered Bunter. "I was one of them," continued Duval, his brows knitting in a threatening frown. "Now you know that, you know that I am not to be trifled with. Unless your liberty is well paid for, you will never leave this house alive! Think of that!"
(See Chapter 10.)

traveller—there will be no suspicion—and lose no time. Say nothing, of course, about the bungalow. I will remain there to guard the boy. After what has happened, he cannot be left alone. When the car is repaired we will remove him to a safer place."

And Duval, in a furious temper, returned to the bungalow, still puzzled and mystified by the mysterious voice that had alarmed him.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mauly's Uncle!

BEGAD, it's nunky!"

The buzz of a big automobile in the quadrangle drew many eyes towards the handsome old gentleman who stepped down in front of the School House.

It was Friday afternoon, and the Greyfriars fellows were
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about to go into the Form-rooms for lessons, when the car arrived.

"Mauly's uncle!" said Bob Cherry. The chums of the Remove knew the baronet well by sight.

"Yaas, it's nunky," said Mauleverer. "I wonder what's the row? He looks excited."

"Mauleverer!" exclaimed the old gentleman, as the school-boy came towards him, raising his hat gracefully. "You are here!"

"Yaas, nunky."

"You are quite safe?"

"Yaas, I believe so."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Sir Reginald Brooke. "I was certain that the letter was a hoax, as it was not in your handwriting; but I came down instantly to make sure that you were safe."

"Did you really, nunky? That was jolly kind of you," said Mauleverer. "But what is it all about?"

"Have you seen that letter before?"

Sir Reginald held out a letter, and Lord Mauleverer blinked at it.

"Never, nunks. But I know the writing."

"Indeed! Then it is probably a foolish joke of one of the boys in the school!" the baronet exclaimed.

"It's Bunter's list."

"Who is Bunter?"

"Chap in my Form—that fat chap. You saw him when you were down here about the Cottage Hospital, nunky."

"Ah, yes, I remember! Then he has written this foolish letter. Where is he? I shall speak to him very severely!"

"I'm afraid that's impos., nunks."

"Why impossible?"

"Because Bunter disappeared on Wednesday evening, and hasn't been heard of since."

"Bless my soul!"

Lord Mauleverer held out the letter to his chums. They read it with keen interest. They knew Billy Bunter's sprawling hand at once. It was the letter Bunter had written at the kidnapper's dictation in the lonely bungalow.

"Poor old Bunter," said Harry Wharton; "that settles it! The kidnapper thinks that he's Mauly, and Bunter seems to be keeping it up."

"Pray explain what you mean?" exclaimed the bewildered baronet.

Wharton quickly explained.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Sir Reginald. "You have had a narrow escape, my boy. This rascal who has kidnapped Bunter evidently intended to kidnap you, but by a providential chance he captured Bunter instead."

"Very providential for Bunter," murmured Bob Cherry.

"And Bunter must be letting him think that he is Lord Mauleverer, or, perhaps, he will not believe Bunter's denials," said Sir Reginald. "Now, you have mentioned that a Frenchman was here inquiring for Lord Mauleverer that day. Can you give me his description?"

"Coker's given it to the police," said Wharton. "It's published in the papers now. The police want to find him, in case he had anything to do with the kidnapping. It looks as if he is the party."

"I have a very strong suspicion that that is so. I have my reasons. Give me the description as near as you remember it."

"A Frenchman, speaks good English but with a slight accent, about thirty-five, medium size, sallow complexion, black hair, pointed black moustache, black eyes," said Harry Wharton, quoting from the published description of the Frenchman.

Sir Reginald uttered an exclamation.

"It is he!"

"You know him, sir?" exclaimed the juniors.

"Yes, yes. I am sure that he is no other than a certain Gaston Duval, a French valet, who entered my employ a few weeks ago. He was discharged for dishonesty, along with a chauffeur named Louis Blanc. Duval—if that is his real name, which I doubt now—proved to have forged his recommendation to me, and the police want him now, but he has disappeared. As soon as you mentioned a Frenchman in connection with the case, I thought of him at once. And nothing has been heard of Bunter since he disappeared?"

"Nothing, sir. The police have discovered that a closed motor-car was seen on the cliff road on Wednesday night—it passed a market cart coming into Pegg, and the carman noticed it. But it isn't known whether it has any connection with the kidnapping."

"Probably! They would naturally use a car, Louis Blanc being a chauffeur. And it is supposed that they are together? Thank you, my boy! Mauleverer, you must keep within gates until that rascal is captured by the police. I have no doubt whatever that he learned about you while he was in my house, and then laid the plan for kidnapping you and obtaining money for your release. As soon as he discovers his mistake about Bunter, he may make another attempt. You must be very careful."

"Yaas, nunky."

"We'll look after him, sir," said Bob Cherry.

The baronet looked very anxious.

"Do not go out, Mauleverer; and keep your friends with you as much as you can. Until that man is arrested you are not safe."

"Right-ho, nunky!"

"Now, I must go in and see the Head."

Sir Reginald hurried to the Head's study. There was little doubt that the Frenchman who had questioned Coker of the Fifth was in fact Gaston Duval, the ex-valet, and that was an additional item of information for the police. The Head telephoned at once to Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield, who had official charge of the case of Bunter's disappearance.

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"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

As the police would want the letter that had been sent by the kidnapper, Sir Reginald motored to Courtfield when he left Greyfriars.

Bunter's Form-fellows were left in a state of great excitement.

There was no possible doubt now that Billy Bunter had been kidnapped in mistake for Lord Mauleverer, and that the kidnapper was still under the delusion that he held the school-boy earl in his hands.

"Bunter will get a swelled head at being taken for a giddy, belted earl," grinned Bob Cherry. "He will want a larger size in hats when he comes home."

"I don't suppose he's enjoying it," said Nugent.

"Well, he has only himself to thank for it," grunted Johnny Bull. "If he hadn't taken Mauly's letter, he wouldn't have walked into the trap instead of Mauly. The way of the giddy transgressor is hard."

"I wish we could do something to find him," said Wharton thoughtfully. "It's rotten to think of the fat duffer being held a prisoner by a rascally kidnapper. But he may be miles and miles away from here. If they really had a motor-car, they may have taken him into the next county."

"That letter had the London postmark, my dear fellows," Lord Mauleverer remarked.

"Well, couldn't we go to London?"

"If the letter had the London postmark, it's pretty certain that Bunter isn't in London," said Mark Linley thoughtfully. "The kidnapper would go pretty far afield to post the letter, I should think."

"Yes, rather! He might be anywhere."

Most of the Remove fellows felt the desire to do something or other towards effecting Billy Bunter's rescue. But there was evidently nothing they could do. There was no trace by which the fat junior and his kidnappers could be followed.

The police were doing all that could be done, and the Greyfriars fellows could only wait and hope for news.

"But there's one thing," Bob Cherry remarked that evening, when the juniors were discussing the matter again. "The rotter must find out his mistake about Bunter sooner or later, and then may come here and try for the real Mauly."

"Begad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"And when he comes, we'll be ready for him," said Bob. "We'll keep our giddy peepers open, and if a Frenchman comes nosing round Greyfriars, we'll drop on him at once."

"Good egg!" said Harry Wharton heartily. "Duval is not likely to come here again, as he's most likely seen his description published in the papers. And his name will be published along with it to-morrow, if Sir Reginald Brooke is right. But the other rotter—Louis Blanc—he may come."

"We'll keep an eye on Mauly!"

"Like the apple of our eye," said Bob Cherry. "Mauly's not going to be kidnapped, you can bet your hat."

"Thanks," yawned Lord Mauleverer.

"Just keep your eyes open for that beastly Frenchman, that's all, you fellows!" exclaimed Bob.

"Vat! Sherry, vat do you say?"

Monsieur Charpentier, the French master of Greyfriars, looked in at the open door of the common-room, with a face like a turkey-cock. He had been passing the door just in time to hear Bob Cherry's remark.

"You vicked boy, Sherry! How dare you allude you to your master like zat?" exclaimed the French master, indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

"Vy for you laugh? I take you to ze Head——"

"Excuse me, sir—Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sherry, you vicked boy——"

"Sorry, sir!" gasped Bob. "I wasn't alluding to you, sir. I was speaking of the French bouncer who's kidnapped Bunter, sir."

"Oh, is zat so?" Mossoo's face cleared. "Zat is different. Zen it is all right, and I have been too hasty viz myself."

And Monsieur Charpentier walked away satisfied, leaving the juniors chuckling.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Makes a Capture!

BOB CHERRY'S idea was carried out.

Lord Mauleverer being evidently in danger from the kidnapper, as soon as he should discover his mistake, the juniors resolved to keep an eye upon him, and to watch warily for any suspicious Frenchmen who might be seen lurking about Greyfriars.

Duval, the ex-valet, might come in some disguise; or the other man, Blanc, might come to spy out the ground, being unknown personally to the Greyfriars fellows. If they came, they would find plenty of fellows ready to spot them.

Lord Mauleverer did not seem impressed by the idea of his danger. He was an extremely easy-going fellow, and given

to taking things very easily, and letting matters slide. The danger of being kidnapped did not disturb the smooth tenor of his way. But the other fellows took care of him.

They constituted themselves his body-guard, and vetoed the idea of his going outside the gates of Greyfriars at all. One or two walked with him if he walked in the Close. When he was in his study, one or two of his friends kept him company. Lord Mauleverer had a study to himself at Greyfriars, but he did not have it to himself any more. In the evening, Harry Wharton & Co. did their preparation there. When the Remove went up to bed that night, Lord Mauleverer's friends were still taking care of him, and his lordship was getting a little bored with their solicitude.

"What about keeping watch to-night?" Bob Cherry asked, as he sat on the side of his bed to unlace his boots.

"Oh, rats!" said Vernon-Smith promptly. "What rot!"

"Well, that kidnapper chap might come for Mauly, you know."

"I know I'm going to sleep," said the Bounder, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Yaas, and so am I."

"Cherry can keep watch, if he likes," chuckled Skinner.

"You can sit with your feet in a basin of cold water to keep you awake, Cherry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem! On second thoughts, I don't know that it's a good idea to keep watch," said Bob. "I should be sleepy over my lessons in the morning, and that would cause trouble with old Quelch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bob turned in with the rest.

But he resolved to sleep with one ear open, so to speak; and though he was generally a sound sleeper, continual thinking about the danger to his noble chum caused him to sleep more lightly that night. He dreamed of kidnappers, and in the midst of a terrific nightmare, in which Lord Mauleverer was being carried off in a motor-car, shrieking for help, Bob Cherry awoke in a cold perspiration.

"Groo! It was only a blessed dream!" murmured Bob.

"Groo!"

It was very dark in the dormitory.

As he lay in bed awake, settling down to sleep again, he heard twelve strike from the clock tower. Following the last stroke of midnight, there was a sound in the dormitory. It was the sound of someone moving.

Bob Cherry heard it clearly enough, and in an instant all his senses were on the alert. Someone was moving in the darkness of the dormitory.

Who was it?

The kidnapper?

Bob Cherry sat up in bed, straining his eyes through the dense darkness.

There was a faint glimmer of starlight from the high windows, but it was not sufficient to dispel the gloom in the long, lofty room.

But as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, the junior caught sight of a moving shadow.

Was it one of the Removites out of bed?

It was not likely. Dimly as Bob could see the dark figure, he could see that it was stealing along in a stealthy manner, evidently for the purpose of making no sound that could alarm the sleeping juniors.

Bob's heart beat like a hammer.

There was no doubt in his mind that it was the kidnapper. Who else could be stealing across the Remove dormitory in that stealthy manner, in the dead, silent hour of midnight? The dark figure had entered at the door, and was stealing towards the beds.

Bob Cherry set his teeth.

The rascal had ventured into the dormitory, and Bob did not mean him to get away again. His plan was laid at once—to spring upon the scoundrel, and yell for help, and hold him fast till the other fellows could turn out, and help secure him.

Bob silently pushed back the bedclothes, and stepped out of bed.

The dark figure had passed the foot of his bed, and was swallowed up in the gloom; but Bob knew just where he must be.

The junior made a sudden spring.

His outstretched hands came in contact with an unseen form, and in an instant he grasped it, and brought it with a crash to the floor.

There was a sudden startled exclamation, and hands closed on Bob Cherry, and his found himself struggling with a furious antagonist.

"Help!" gasped Bob. "I've got him!"

The bump of the struggling pair on the floor, and Bob's panting shout, roused the Removites at once. Fellows sat up in bed on all sides, and voices demanded to know what was the matter.

"Help!" panted Bob.

"Great Scott!"

"What is it?"

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"Burglars!"

"Begad!"

Harry Wharton was out of bed in a twinkling. He rushed in the direction of the sounds of the struggle, and stumbled over the two wildly-struggling forms that were sprawled on the floor. He knocked his head against the leg of a bed, and gave a wild yell.

"Ow—ow!"

"Get a light, somebody!" cried Nugent.

Scratch!

A match flared out, and Johnny Bull lighted a candle-end. The juniors, swarming out of bed, surrounded the struggling combatants, and the flickering light glimmered down upon them.

"I've got him!" panted Bob. "Lend a hand."

"Grooh!"

"Pile in, you chaps!"

"Yowowowowow!" came in muffled tones from the crushed figure struggling under Bob Cherry's weight. "Ow—ow! Gerroff!"

Harry Wharton gave a shout.

"Smithy!"

"What!" yelled Bob Cherry stupefied.

"Smithy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's the Bounder!"

"You've collared Vernon-Smith, you ass!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

He released his victim, and jumped up. Vernon-Smith, fully dressed, but very much dishevelled, sprawled breathless and gasping on the floor.

Bob Cherry gazed down at him, too amazed for words.

"Smithy!" he stuttered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith sat up. His face was convulsed with rage.

"You—you idiot!"

"Smithy, I didn't know—"

"You imbecile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what were you sneaking about in the dark for—dressed, too?" demanded Bob Cherry. "I took you for the kidnapper, of course. You rotter, you've been out of bounds!"

Vernon-Smith staggered to his feet. With his teeth gritting, he sprang at Bob Cherry, evidently feeling nothing at that moment but a strong desire for vengeance upon the junior who had handled him so roughly.

Harry Wharton grasped him by the shoulder, and swung him savagely back.

"Stop that!" he said sharply. "Where have you been, Smithy?"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

In Broad Daylight!

VERNON-SMITH turned upon Wharton with clenched hands, and blazing eyes.

For a moment it looked as if he would spring upon the captain of the Remove. But he controlled himself just in time.

"Where have you been?" repeated Wharton sternly. "You're dressed, and you've been out. You've been breaking bounds."

"What if I have?" snarled the Bounder.

"Then I'm jolly well not sorry that I handled you," said Bob Cherry. "You've been out of bounds, and you've come in past midnight, and you're playing in a footer-match to-morrow. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"I suppose you've been to the Cross Keys, Smithy?" said Harry Wharton, his eyes glittering.

"Suppose I have!" snarled the Bounder. "I suppose they haven't made you a prefect by any chance. What business is it of yours?"

"It's my business as captain of the footer team. You've been in rotten bad form for footer lately, and now I know the reason. Do you think you'll be fit to play Redclyffe to-morrow, after a night like this?"

"Hang Redclyffe!"

The Bounder's face was flushed, his eyes glittering unnaturally. Wharton looked at him closely. That the Bounder had been smoking and playing cards he knew; but now he could see that he had been drinking as well. It was no time, and Vernon-Smith was in no condition, for argument then. Wharton pointed to his bed.

"You'd better turn in," he said curtly. "I'll talk to you about this in the morning."

"You can go and eat coke," said the Bounder sullenly.

And he began to undress, with unsteady hands.

Johnny Bull blew out the candle, and the Removites

returned to their beds. Bob Cherry's watchfulness had had the effect of exposing Vernon-Smith; but that was all.

The kidnapper evidently was not there.

When the rising-bell clanged out in the morning, Vernon-Smith opened dull and heavy eyes.

His head was aching, he had a dry, parched tongue, and his sight was dizzy.

He had had a "night out" with a vengeance.

For some time it had seemed that the Bounder had said good-bye to his old blackguardly ways; but he had broken out again, and seemed to have broken out worse than ever, as if the evil spirit within him urged him on to make up for lost time.

His pale, wretched, scowling face warned the other fellows that he was in an ugly temper, as he dressed himself, and the fellows who had intended to chip him about his night out decided to reserve their little jokes for another occasion. The Bounder was in a mood of trouble.

Harry Wharton glanced at him, but did not speak.

The Bounder was in no state to play football that day, unless he picked up wonderfully during the morning. Yet to exclude him from the team that was to meet Redclyffe was a serious matter, and all the more difficult, because of the bad terms Wharton was usually on with him. The captain of the Remove naturally shrank from appearing to pick up the first opportunity of being down upon his old rival, and he shrank, too, from appearing in the role of a virtuous youth lecturing his schoolfellow. There was nothing of the good little Georgie about Wharton, and disgusted as he was with the Bounder's conduct, he did not feel called upon to preach to him.

Wharton thought it over during the morning, and after morning lessons he consulted the football committee on the subject.

The Bounder was such a brilliant player that, even out of condition, he was useful in a team, unless he was very far gone indeed.

The idea of dropping one of their best players on the eve of the toughest match of the season, seemed risky enough to the juniors.

"Give him a chance!" was Bulstrode's verdict. "After all, Smithy's as hard as nails, you know. He was out of sorts last Wednesday, but he played up rippingly at the finish."

"And suppose he cracks up, and lets the side down, and Redclyffe walk all over us," said Wharton.

"I don't think it will be so bad as that!"

"He looks awfully green and yellow to-day," Bob Cherry remarked. "But—"

"I'll leave it to the committee," said Wharton shortly.

"I think he ought to be left out, but you fellows know I never liked him. I'll leave it to you."

"Give him a chance!" was the verdict.

"Very well."

And after dinner Harry Wharton spoke to the Bounder on the subject. Vernon-Smith was looking much better than when he rose in the morning, but he was still pale and sickly-looking, and there were dark rings under his eyes.

"Do you feel fit for the match this afternoon, Smithy?" Wharton asked, abruptly.

"Quite fit," said Vernon-Smith.

"You're sure?"

"Quite sure. If you're looking for an excuse to drop me—" began the Bounder, with a sneer.

"I'm not. If you assure me that you're fit to play, I'll play you."

"I'm quite fit."

"Then it's settled."

Harry Wharton had agreed to abide by the decision of the committee, but he had many misgivings on the subject.

But there was nothing to do now but to hope for the best.

In the interest of the football match, however, the juniors did not forget their intention of looking after Lord Maul-every. Bob Cherry impressed upon him that he was to be on the ground to watch the match.

"But it will be cold standing there, my dear fellow," the dismayed schoolboy millionaire protested.

"You can do some gymnastics to keep yourself warm," said Bob.

"But there's a fire in my study."

"You're not going to slack over a fire in your study. How do we know that that blessed Frenchman won't sneak in while we're playing and kidnap you?" demanded Bob.

"My dear chap—"

"Do you want to go and join Bunter, wherever he is?" said Frank Nugent severely. "Poor old Bunter's getting it in the neck now. Do you want the same?"

"Begad, no! But—"

"If you hadn't been slacking in your study last Wednesday Bunter would never have been kidnapped," said Johnny Bull sternly.

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Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

"Yaas, but if I hadn't been slacking I should have been kidnapped myself, you know, and that would have been worse, wouldn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you're not going to slack to-day," said Bob decidedly. "If I miss you from the ground I'll come after you. I've chucked away the key of your study, so you can't lock yourself in again."

"Oh, begad!"

"You chaps!" exclaimed Peter Todd, dashing up breathlessly. "Come on!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter?"

"I've spotted him."

"Eh! Whom?"

"The Frenchman!" yelled Peter excitedly. "The kidnapper! He's come!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Where is he?"

"Walked in at the gates, as bold as brass—" gasped Todd. "Come on! He's speaking to Gosling now. We'll collar him before he knows where he is."

And Peter rushed off towards the gates, with the excited juniors at his heels. Even the coming football match was forgotten in the excitement.

"There he is!"

A little fat gentleman, evidently a Frenchman, was standing by the porter's lodge, speaking to Gosling. He was speaking in French, apparently having no knowledge of English, and Gosling was looking naturally scornful of a person who could not even understand plain English.

"Ere, will you young gentlemen speak to 'im?" said Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere. 'Ow them blessed furriners can go on speaking their silly lingo, when they might be speakin' Henglish, beats me! Fools, I calls 'em!"

The Frenchman turned to the juniors, gesticulating. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances, and drew round him in a circle. They did not intend to give the villain a chance to escape. The fact that he was a Frenchman pointed indubitably to his guilt. Frenchmen never came to Greyfriars. What could one want there? Evidently he was the kidnapper, or one of the kidnapping gang, pretending that he could not speak English for the purpose of throwing dust in their eyes.

It was quite clear; at all events, it was quite clear to the juniors.

"Bonjour, monsieur!" said Bob Cherry. "Vous shairsbay kelkun."

That was Lower Fourth French for "Vous cherchez quel-qu'un."

"Oui, oui!" exclaimed the foreign gentleman eagerly, evidently delighted at finding someone who spoke his language, even with a Remove accent. "C'est ca—je cherche quelqu'un ici—"

"Looking for somebody here!" murmured Nugent. "The awful cheek, to admit it. He's simply asking for trouble."

"And he's going to get it," said Wharton grimly. "Collar him!"

There was a rush, and the Frenchman was struggling the next moment in the clutches of a dozen pairs of hands.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not the Right Frenchman!

"DOWN with him!"

"Hold him!"

"We've got him!"

"Mind he doesn't get away!"

"The scoundrel!"

"The kidnapping villain!"

There wasn't much danger of the Frenchman getting away. He was sprawling on his back on the ground, and the juniors were simply heaped over him. The Frenchman was screaming like a frightened fowl, and struggling violently. His silk hat had rolled off, his coat came up over his ears, and his collar was torn out. But he was secured.

"A moi!" shrieked the Frenchman. "A moi! Mon Dieu! Qu'est, que c'est, ca? Je suis tue—je suis tue. A moi! A moi!"

"Bring him in to the Head!" exclaimed Wharton jubilantly.

"We've got him!"

"Take his arms and legs!"

"March!"

"Hurrah!"

Clutched up in the grasp of the triumphant Removites, the Frenchman was rushed across the Close towards the house.

Crowds of fellows gathered from far and near at the sight, and there was a roar of excited voices as the news spread that the kidnapper had been captured.

Dr. Locke, as he saw the terrific disturbance from his window, hurried out into the Close to see what was the matter.

The crowd stopped in front of the alarmed Head, with the Frenchman kicking and struggling and shrieking in the midst of them.

"Bless my soul!" the Head exclaimed. "What does this mean? Wharton, Cherry, tell me at once, what—what—"

"We've got him, sir."

"The Frenchman, sir."

"The rotten kidnapper!"

"We'll make him confess what he's done with Bunter, sir."

"He came here for Mauly, sir, and actually admitted it."

"Dear me!" said the Head. "This is most extraordinary."

I hope that a mistake has not been made."

"Oh, no, sir! He admitted it."

"Is it possible? Then there can be no doubt. However, you may allow him to rise. Keep hold of him so that he cannot escape."

"Yes, sir."

"Get up, you rascal!"

"Get up, you terrific and ludicrous scoundrel!" exclaimed Hurree Singh, yanking the unfortunate Frenchman to his feet.

The French gentleman certainly looked a most disreputable character, as he stood up, panting in the midst of the juniors. He might have been a kidnapper or a pirate or a scarecrow. Seldom had so tattered a figure been seen in the old Close of Greyfriars.

He began stuttering rapid French, but Dr. Locke held up his hand sternly.

"Explain yourself!" he said sternly. "Who are you, and why are you here?"

"Mon Dieu! Je suis tue! Sacre Dieu!"

"Who are you?"

"Je suis Monsieur Charpentier!" gasped the Frenchman.

There was a yell of derision from the juniors.

"My hat! What awful cheek!"

"Does the silly ass think he can pass himself off on us as our own French master?" chuckled Bob Cherry. "He must be potty!"

"Je cherche mon frere ici—"

"What?"

"Je suis ici pour faire une visite—"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, in consternation. "You foolish, foolish boys, you have made a dreadful mistake. The gentleman says that he is Monsieur Charpentier's brother, and has come to pay him a visit."

"Oh, erikay!"

There was a sudden exclamation of horror from Monsieur Charpentier as he rushed upon the scene. The uproar had drawn him out of the house.

"Mon frere! Mon pauvre frere!"

"Alas! my poor brother!" murmured Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed the Head. "Monsieur Charpentier, is this your brother?"

"Oui, oui, oui!" exclaimed the French master, rushing upon the tattered gentleman and embracing him with Gallic effusion. "Mon pauvre frere. It is zat he come to pay me one visit zis afternoon. Ah! Brigands, villains, scoundrels zat have use my poor buzzer like zis!"

"Oh, carry me away, somebody!" murmured Johnny Bull. "We've put our giddy feet into it this time."

The Removites looked quite sickly.

It was only too clear that they had put their foot in it. Certainly they had jumped to conclusions rather quickly. The only evidence against the stranger was the fact that he was a Frenchman, and the other fact that he had come to Greyfriars looking for somebody. And both facts were easily explained by the circumstance that he was Monsieur Charpentier's brother.

Dr. Locke looked at the culprits sternly, as they hung their diminished heads.

"Boys, you have been guilty of an unparalleled outrage in assaulting this gentleman. What made you suppose that he was the kidnapper?"

"Well, he's—he's a Frenchman, sir," stammered Peter Todd. "The kidnapper is a Frenchman, sir, so we put two and two together—"

"And made five of it!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"But he said he had come here looking for somebody!" stammered Nugent.

"Naturally, if he came here to see his brother."

"Well, he didn't explain that he wasn't the kidnapper!" murmured Tom Brown.

"How could he explain, you foolish boy, when he has probably never even heard of the kidnapping occurrence?" explained the Head.

"Ahem! Well, sir—"

"You will all be punished severely," said Dr. Locke, frowning. "This is most outrageous. First of all you will explain to Monsieur Charpentier and apologise to him!"

The juniors were only too willing to do that. They were really sorry for their mistake. Monsieur Charpentier led his much-injured "buzzer" into the House, and the too-zealous juniors followed the Head into his study; and from that apart—

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ment loud sounds of anguish might have been heard proceeding directly afterwards.

Harry Wharton & Co. came out of the Head's study rubbing their hands dolefully. Bob Cherry shook his fist at Lord Mauleverer as he met him in the Close.

"You ass!" he roared.

"Begad! What's the matter, my dear fellow?" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer, in surprise.

"You clump!"

"Begad, you know—"

"This is what we get for looking after you!" roared Bob. "This is the last time I collar any kidnappers. You can be kidnapped twice a day in future, for all I care, and I sha'n't interfere! Br-r-r-r!"

And Bob marched off, rubbing his hands. The Remove fellows were still tenderly rubbing their hands when the Redcliffe footballers arrived.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. The Last Chance!

"MON Dieu! Thousand thunders!"

The angry voice of the Frenchman penetrated into the room where Billy Bunter was confined.

It was Saturday, and Billy Bunter was still a prisoner in the lonely bungalow on the shore. The fat junior was looking thinner in the face, and very pale and worried. He had been kept for three days now on the shortest of short commons, and he was storing up a hunger that would take a great deal of satisfying when he returned to Greyfriars. Bread and cheese and water formed his diet, and even of those there was not enough for Bunter.

As a matter of fact, the spare diet was doing him good. In spite of the confinement in the bungalow, he was in better health than when he was captured, owing to the cessation of unlimited feeding on pastry and cakes. But Bunter was not willing to purchase physical fitness at the price of denying his gargantuan appetite. He sighed for the fleshpots of Egypt as bitterly as the Israelites of old.

Mysterious voices had been heard in the bungalow several times but Bunter had not found an opportunity of getting out of the building again. Both Duval and Louis Blanc were puzzled and troubled by the phenomenon—and they did not suspect Bunter of ventriloquism. The fat junior looked so stupid, and so scared, that it was impossible to suspect him of playing tricks on them—even if ventriloquism had crossed their minds as a solution of the mystery, which it did not.

But for the fact that Bunter had wrecked the motor-car in his attempt to escape, the kidnappers would have removed him to a more secure spot—though, is he had known it—the mysterious voices would certainly have followed them, so long as the Greyfriars ventriloquist had the use of his tongue.

Duval and his comrade were greatly troubled in mind, and very uneasy. One of them now remained continually about the place. Duval had made the journey to London on Wednesday to post the letter, and Louis had remained—and since then Duval had taken up the watch, while Louis was attending to the smashed car. The Frenchmen kept themselves supplied with papers, and they knew how much had been discovered by the police—that it was Sir Reginald Brooke's ex-valet and ex-chauffeur who were being looked for—that they were suspected of having a motor-car in their possession—and their uneasiness was growing.

They did not venture to have the smashed car taken to Courtfield, and Louis laboured upon it in the garage attached to the bungalow, but it was a long task to repair the damage the collision with the rocks had caused.

It was not till Saturday that the car was in condition again for use, Duval having made several journeys to a distant town for parts, while Louis was at work on it.

And on Saturday Duval's voice rang through the little building in angry tones, and Bunter heard it, and quaked. He heard Louis Blanc inquiring in French what was the matter.

"Name of a pig!" yelled Duval. "We have been cheated!"

"Qu'est—que c'est?"

"We have the wrong pig by the ear, after all!"

"What! It is not the young milord?"

"Look at the paper!"

Billy Bunter heard it all, and he shivered. The tones of the infuriated Frenchman boded him no good. In their disappointment and rage, what were they likely to do.

True, Bunter had told them all along that he was not Lord Mauleverer, but they had not believed him.

But they could not doubt it now. Sir Reginald Brooke, acting on the advice of the police,

had inserted the demanded advertisement in the personal column of the "Daily Mail," in order to get into communication with the kidnappers.

It was not intended to allow them to discover that the wrong boy had been captured if it could be avoided.

But some enterprising journalist had found out the facts—the case of the kidnapping having crept into the newspapers by this time.

And in the paper in Duval's hand that Saturday afternoon was the information that Lord Mauleverer was safe at Greyfriars, and that another boy named William G. Bunter had been kidnapped by mistake in his place.

The two Frenchmen looked at one another in dismay.

"It is infernal luck!" said Louis.

Duval passed his hand over his brow.

"I cannot understand it," he said. "The boy was pointed out to me at the school itself as Lord Mauleverer—did I not risk a personal visit there in order to see him? Then he received the letter I wrote to Mauleverer, and came to keep the appointment? How can it be that he is after all another boy, and not Mauleverer at all?"

"I do not know how it can be, but it is so—unless the paper is lying!" said Louis. "You have made a bungle."

"And the brat declared that he was not Lord Mauleverer!" Duval muttered, clenching his hands. "I did not believe him, of course."

"And now?"

"Now," Duval snarled, "we have wasted our time, and our money for the car, and we have risked our liberty, to capture a fat fool who probably has not a franc to his name. We shall go to prison like a pair of fools, mon ami—unless—"

"Perhaps it is not too late!"

"That is what I am thinking. Listen! This hiding-place is not safe. Someone has been playing us tricks here—I am uneasy every moment. We intended to leave as soon as the car was repaired—it is repaired now. We will make another attempt, and seize upon the real Mauleverer and fly at top speed to a distant part of the country. I had thought that this place was the safest I could find—but it is not so. We must get out!"

"And this garcon—this unspeakable Bunter?"

"I have a mind to fling him into the sea, but—but—"

"But you have only one neck, and you do not want to have it stretched!" grinned the ex-chauffeur.

"We can take him with us. He can lie bound and gagged in the bottom of the car," said Duval. "There will be no danger. Besides, we do not know the real Lord Mauleverer by sight, apres tout. Perhaps this brat may be useful in helping us to get hold of him. It is a half-holiday to-day at the school, as always on Saturday—many of the boys will be out of gates—it is possible that we may find some opportunity—"

"It is fearfully risky!" said Louis, with a shake of the head.

"Thousand thunders! Are we going to throw it up, then? We have already done enough to earn penal servitude, and we have gained nothing!"

"But if we should find the boy—to seize him in broad daylight—"

"And trust to the speed of the car!" said Duval. "Yes, yes, I know that it is desperate, but we are in a desperate position. It is all or nothing. I will assume some disguise, as I have been seen at the school; you also can wear a beard, and the car can be halted near the school on pretence of a puncture. Then, if we get a chance—"

"As you like!"

Duval unlocked Bunter's door and strode in. The Owl of the Remove shrank away from his fierce, scowling look.

"You are not Lord Mauleverer, you fat rascal!" the Frenchman exclaimed furiously.

"Well, I—I told you I wasn't, you know!" stammered Bunter. "Mauls is my best pal, you know—but I ain't Mauls! I told you so, didn't I?"

"You fool! You are coming away now—a prisoner! You will be hurt if you give me trouble—take care!"

"I—I say, you needn't tie me!" stammered Bunter. "I'll give you my word—"

"Bah! Taisez-vous!"

Bunter was bound hand and foot, and gagged carefully, and then carried out into the car. He cast a wild glance round him—at the lonely road and the sounding sea. But there was no one in sight; the kidnappers had taken care of that before they brought him out of the house.

Duval locked up the bungalow, and threw away the key. He was finished there. The house agent who had let him the place had supposed that he was a foreign visitor with a taste for the bleak beauties of the seashore in winter—little dreaming of the real use to which the bungalow was to be put. A quarter's rent in advance had made the matter quite easy.

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for Duval; but by the time the next quarter was due the agent was likely to have a long task before him in finding his tenant.

The car moved away.

Louis, in motor-goggles, with a black beard fastened upon his clean-shaven chin, was quite unrecognisable; and Duval had also donned a false beard. The two desperate men were resolved to set everything upon that last throw of the dice. They knew that their enterprise was desperate, but it was all that remained to be done after the mistake that had delivered Bunter into their hands instead of Lord Mauleverer. Either that, or the abandonment of the wild scheme. If fortune favoured them, success might yet be theirs; and if not, the speed of the car would save them, and Bunter could be tossed into some field as they fled. The fat junior, palpitating with terror, lay in the bottom of the car, hidden by a rug, as the two rascals started. More than ever the Owl of the Remove repented him that he had ever appeared in borrowed plumes; and if he had been in fact a belted earl, he would have given up his earldom cheerfully to get out of his present terrible predicament.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER. All Smithy's Fault!

"O N the ball!"

"Play up, Remove!"

On the junior football-ground at Greyfriars the struggle was keen and hardly contested.

Harry Wharton & Co. were fighting hard.

It was the hardest match of the season for the Remove, and they were finding it very hard indeed.

Redclyffe were in great form.

Harry Wharton's eleven, too, were in great form—with one exception.

That exception was the Bounder.

His excesses of the previous night were telling terribly upon Vernon-Smith. The Bounder of Greyfriars had a constitution of iron, and he could afford to be reckless. After experiences that would have knocked up any other junior, he always seemed to pull round, somehow. But this time he could not. Want of sleep, drinking, and smoking, had put him into such a thoroughly "rotten" state that he was not himself, and with all his efforts he could not play.

On previous occasions, although out of condition, the Bounder had played up with marked success by sheer force of will, quickness of eye and foot, and mastery of the game.

But now he was all at sea.

His head was aching, his eyes were dizzy, his breath was short and painful.

The keen struggle on the football field was almost anguished to him. To his credit be it said he did his best. He played up as well as he could. But he was useless—worse than useless. He failed in speed, he fumbled with the ball when it came his way, he passed blindly and erratically, he blundered into the way of the other forwards and the halves. The crowd of fellows watching the match were soon quite aware that Smithy was a passenger, and they let him know it.

"Bellows to mend! Bellows to mend!" yelled the fags, as Smithy came panting along the ropes; and the Bounder scowled furiously.

The struggle was hard, but in a quarter of an hour Redclyffe had scored their first goal.

As the teams walked back to the centre of the field Harry Wharton touched the Bounder on the shoulder.

"You can clear off, if you like," he said.

Vernon-Smith gave him a fierce look. His temper was suffering, as well as his body. He was in a dangerous mood.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"I mean that you are no good, and you might as well be off the field as on it. You had better go and take a rest."

"I'm quite fit!"

"Rot!" said Wharton tersely. "You haven't a run left in you! You have been passing like a clumsy fag!"

"Are you thinking of playing a team like Redclyffe a man short?" the Bounder demanded, with a sneer.

"We're playing them a man short already! You're no good."

Vernon-Smith ground his teeth.

"I admit I'm feeling a bit rotten, but it will pass off," he said.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"That's all rot! You'll be seedy all day, and all to-morrow, too, by the look of you. You are simply a passenger in the team, and you know it!"

"Do you mean to say that I'm ordered off, then?" said the Bounder between his teeth.

"No; you can stay on if you like, only don't get into the way, that's all."



THE COCKNEY SCHOOLBOY TO THE RESCUE. (This picture which will appear on the cover of this Wednesday's issue of our companion paper, *THE "GEM" LIBRARY*, illustrates an exciting incident in *"THE COCKNEY SCHOOLBOY,"* the long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by Martin Clifford. Order your *"GEM" LIBRARY* to-day. Price One Penny.)

Vernon-Smith's face was pale with fury as the teams lined up, and he took his place on the right wing.

He knew that was quite true—he was only a passenger, utterly useless to his side. In the match that the Remove had specially set their hearts upon winning he was failing them, owing to his own folly and wickedness.

But he resolved that he would do better. He would show the Remove—and Wharton above all—that he was not on his last legs.

And when the game restarted Vernon-Smith made really heroic efforts to play up, and for some minutes he seemed quite his old self.

The Greyfriars forwards brought the ball up the field, and

Nugent, tackled by the enemy, passed out to Vernon-Smith, and Smith executed a brilliant run along the touch-line with the ball at his feet. Wharton was keeping well up, and as the back tackled the Bounder there was a good chance for one of Smith's brilliant centres, and Harry Wharton was all ready to slam it home.

But the Bounder's bolt was shot. He mis-kicked, and the next moment the left-back had cleared right away to mid-field.

Wharton gritted his teeth.

It had been a splendid chance of equalising, and the Bounder had failed—failed in what would, under ordinary circumstances, have been quite easy to him.

OUR GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER NEXT MONDAY! (See Page 28.)

The game surged away in the Remove half, and there was a fierce attack upon goal; and Bulstrode, between the posts, was called upon to do his best. He did well, very well, but the leather found its way into the net at last, and Redelyffe were two up.

The first half ended with the visiting team two to the good.

While they rested in the interval there was a grim silence among the Remove footballers.

The two teams were so equally matched that a feather-weight might have turned the scale on either side, and the Bounder's unfitness was the straw that gave the camel the hump, as Bob Cherry expressed it.

If the Bounder had been in form the balance would have inclined in favour of the Remove; but Wharton was practically playing ten men against eleven, and the chances of a victory were reduced to zero.

All the team knew that they were going to be defeated, and all of them knew that it was Vernon-Smith's fault, and the looks they gave him were not pleasant.

The Bounder knew it, too, and too late he repented of his folly. But repentance came too late, as it generally does. He had a keen desire to distinguish himself in that match, a keener desire to silence his critics by brilliant play—as he had done often enough before—but he was not capable of it now. And he had a more generous desire to play well for his Form, and help the Remove to a coveted victory, but it was an impossibility.

With a lowering brow and a sullen heart the Bounder observed the dark looks of his comrades and heard their muttered remarks.

Wharton said nothing.

He had resolved that the Bounder, after this exhibition, should not play for the Remove again; but he did not want to rub it in. A word to him after the match was over would be enough. And there was still a possibility that Vernon-Smith might show a glimpse of his old form. He had wonderful powers of recuperation. But Smithy himself knew by this time that it was not to be. His heart was thumping and throbbing irregularly, and it was only by sheer will-power that he kept himself going at all.

But he would not retire from the game. At any cost he would stick it out to the finish, and hope for the best.

The whistle went, and the second half started.

Redelyffe were flushed with success, and they pressed their opponents hard. But though there was a weak spot in the line, a flaw in the armour, the Remove gave them a good fight. The crowd cheered loudly as a goal came at last to the Remove from the foot of Harry Wharton.

But it was the last flicker of the candle before extinction, so to speak.

The Remove did not have a second chance, Redelyffe pressed them too hard. And Wharton was driven to packing his goal, with no better prospect than keeping down the score, and no chance even of equalising. And even that was not to be granted, for just before time the Redelyffians broke through and slammed the leather into the net, and when the whistle went the score stood at three to one for Redelyffe.

The Remove footballers looked glum enough as they came off. They did not mind a defeat in the natural order of things. They were good sportsmen. But to be beaten by the reckless folly of one of their own men was too bitter.

And when they changed, and were discussing the match with gloomy brows, after the departure of the Redelyffe team, Wharton looked for Vernon-Smith, and found him, and spoke straight to the point.

"I suppose you know you've lost us the match!" he said bluntly.

"I suppose you will say so, at all events," said the Bounder.

"All the fellows say so, too."

"Hang them!"

"Well, hang them or not, you won't play for the Remove any more, so long as I'm captain! That's all I've got to say."

"You've been wanting to get an excuse for this for a long time!" said Smith bitterly.

"That isn't true, Vernon-Smith. I wanted you in the team. But after what you've done to-day the Remove eleven is finished with you, and you've only got yourself to thank."

And Wharton walked away without waiting for the Bounder to reply.

Bob Cherry came up to him excitedly in the Close. Bob was looking worried.

"Have you seen Mauly?" he asked.

Wharton shook his head.

"Wasn't he watching the match?" he asked.

"I told him to," growled Bob. "I gave him strict in-

structions that he wasn't to leave the field till it was over. You heard me, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Harry, with a smile. "But I didn't really think that Mauly would stand there for an hour and a half."

Bob granted angrily.

"Well, he didn't," he agreed. "He's wandered off somewhere, the silly ass! Looking for a chance to be kidnapped, I suppose. He's not in his study, and I shouldn't wonder if he's gone out. We'd better look for him."

"If he's gone out, we'll give him a jolly good bumping when we find him," said Harry.

"Yes, rather."

And the Co. started immediately to look for Lord Mauleverer. But he was not to be found within the school walls. Bob Cherry's threat of "yanking" him out if he went to his study to slack during the match had evidently impressed itself upon the mind of the schoolboy earl, and he had gone off to slack somewhere else.

Coker of the Fifth was outside the gates of Greyfriars with his motor-bike. He was persuading it to get in order to start. The juniors questioned him.

"Have you seen Mauly go out?"

Coker nodded.

"Yes, he came out some time back—half an hour, I should think."

"Oh, the ass! Which way did he go?"

"Down towards the village."

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton.

And the juniors strode away towards Friardale.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER. A Hot Chase!

"GET up, you fat fool!"

Gaston Duval addressed Billy Bunter in that disrespectful manner. The prisoner of the kidnappers was no longer "my lord." His lordship had vanished.

Duval dragged him to his feet in the car. The car was halted by the roadside, under a group of leafless trees. Louis was making an elaborate pretence of examining the gear, as if the car had stopped on account of some defect, but, as a matter of fact, it was quite in order to start at once if necessary. Inside the car Bunter was dragged up, the grip of the Frenchman on his shoulder.

There were a good many of the Greyfriars juniors to be seen on the road. Duval had considered that upon a half-holiday many of them would be out of the gates, and he was right. Juniors who had been down to the village, and who had been for cross-country walks, came along the road in ones and twos and threes, glancing carelessly at the halted motor-car as they passed.

Was Lord Mauleverer among them?

Duval knew well enough that he was playing his last stake on a bare chance: that only if Fortune favoured him could he hope to score. But he would not give up the game till the last chance had been tried. There was always a possibility of success.

"Listen to me, Bunter, if that is your name!" said the Frenchman, in a fierce whisper. "Look at these boys as they pass! When you see Lord Mauleverer, tell me!"

Bunter mumbled with his gag.

"Close your eye as a sign if you see him," said Duval.

"Mind, if we do not find him, you will be taken back to the bungalow, and kept without food. You are useless to me, you fat fool, and it will not concern me if you starve to death. I shall leave you locked up in the bungalow, and escape to France. Do you understand?"

Bunter shuddered. The Frenchman, in his savage disappointment at missing his prize, was quite capable of carrying out his threat. At least, Bunter thought so. And the fat junior fervently hoped that Lord Mauleverer would be among the Greyfriars fellows who passed down the road. It was probable enough. Mauleverer was not in the football team, and he regarded it as a gag to watch matches, and it was more than likely that he gone out for a stroll on that keen invigorating afternoon.

If he was outside the school, the car was near enough to the school gates for Bunter to see him, from whatever direction he came.

Bunter kept his eyes fixed upon the window.

Duval had pulled a large cap well down over the junior's face, and muffled his chin in a scarf, so that only the tip of his nose and his big spectacles were visible, and it was impossible for any passer-by to recognise him.

Bunter longed to yell for help as he watched fellows he knew passing by, and at moments caught the sound of familiar voices.

But the gag in his mouth prevented that.

Suddenly Bunter gave a start. The keen eyes of the French-

man noted it at once, and he gave a quick, interrogating look at the fat junior. Bunter closed one eye.

Duval looked out quickly into the road.

A slim junior was sauntering along by himself, lazily swinging a gold-headed cane. He paused in the road for a moment to glance at the chauffeur bending beside the car.

"Is it he?" whispered Duval.

Bunter nodded. It did not even occur to Bunter that he was acting rottenly in thus betraying Lord Mauleverer into the hands of the kidnappers. Billy Bunter was thinking at that moment only of one person, and that one person was William George Bunter.

"Good!" muttered Duval.

He thrust Bunter into the bottom of the car again, and threw the rug over him, completely concealing him from sight.

"Not a sound—not a movement!" he said, in a fierce whisper. "On your life!"

Bunter lay as still as a mouse when a cat is near.

Duval opened the door of the car, and stepped out. Lord Mauleverer was passing on, when the Frenchman spoke to him suavely.

"Pray, excuse me, young gentleman, can you tell me if that school yonder is Greyfriars?"

"Yas, certainly," said Lord Mauleverer politely.

"You belong to the school, perhaps?"

"Yas." Then Lord Mauleverer uttered a sudden yell.

"Begad, what's the game? Hands off! Oh, my hat!"

The Frenchman was upon him with the spring of a tiger.

Lord Mauleverer, before he knew what was happening, was collared, and flung bodily into the car. Duval leaped in after him.

The chauffeur sprang to his place.

There was a shout down the road. Half a dozen Greyfriars fellows had seen the action of the desperate rascal.

Bolover major and Skinner came running up.

"Help!" roared Bolover. "Mauly's been kidnapped!"

My hat! Help!"

"Quick, Louis!"

The motor-car leaped forward.

The astounded juniors in the road dashed after it, wildly excited. The sight of Lord Mauleverer seized and bundled into the car in broad daylight simply took their breath away. The car rushed on past the gates of Greyfriars. Bolover yelled to Harry Wharton & Co. as he caught sight of them in the road.

"Look out! Mauly's in that car!"

"What!"

"They've got him!"

"Mauly! Got Mauly!"

"Yes; in that car!" yelled Bolover major.

"Stop them!" roared Bob Cherry.

But the car had rushed past, and was speeding on in the direction of Courtfield. The juniors broke into a desperate run after it, but it was hopeless. The zug-zug-zug of Coker's motor-bike struck Wharton's car, and he ran towards the Fifth-Former. Coker's "stink-bike" was going at last, and the Fifth-Former was hopping along after it, preparing to mount.

"Coker!" yelled Wharton.

"Hullo!"

"Mauly's in that car. They've kidnapped him! Lend me your bike."

"Rats!" said Coker. "I'll go after them. It'll all right." Zug-zug-zug-zug!

Coker was in the saddle, and the motor-bike rushed on.

Away went the car, and away went Coker of the Fifth in hot pursuit. Harry Wharton stood in the road, and clenched his hands.

"Oh, for a bike now!" he said savagely.

"My kingdom for a horse!" murmured Nugent.

Fortunately, just then a party of Remove cyclists were coming home. They had dismounted at the school gates to wheel their machines in, when Harry Wharton & Co. rushed upon them. The Co. did not stop to explain. There was no time. They simply borrowed the bikes without saying a word.

"Here, what are you doing with my bike?" howled Russell.

"Bring my jigger back, Cherry, you beast!" roared Ogilvy.

But the juniors did not heed.

There were four bikes, and in a twinkling Wharton, Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Bob Cherry were mounted upon them, and pedalling away after Coker as if their lives depended upon it.

The motor-car was almost out of sight now. Coker could be seen zug-zugging away gallantly in pursuit. Coker was able to keep pace with the car, unless Louis should put on a desperate speed. The cyclists behind were at a disadvantage, but they were good riders, and they were making a desperate sport, and the wheels fairly flew. Strung out in a line, heads down over the handle-bars, they scowled up the long white road as they had never scowled on the cycle-track.

In the motor-car Lord Mauleverer sat in amazement, but without any trace of fear in his calm, cheerful face. The

Frenchman had a revolver in his hand, but it did not seem to disturb the schoolboy's nerves at all.

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "You've got me, Mossoo Frog-eater! I remember now my nunky told me not to go outside the gates. I forgot all about it, begad! I say, you're exceeding the speed limit, you know. If you meet Tozer, he will be down on you, begad!"

The Frenchman did not speak.

He looked out behind the car, and a haggard look came over his face as he saw the motor-cyclist in hot pursuit.

He signalled to Louis to put on full speed.

The car leaped forward, and the wheels seemed scarcely to touch the ground as they flew.

But suddenly there was a jarring of brakes, and the car rocked and jumped as it was dragged to a halt.

Duval uttered a yell.

"Madman, what are you stopping for?"

"Voyez!" muttered the chauffeur. "Look!"

The Frenchman looked, and his face went ghastly. Across the road ahead stretched the gates of the level-crossing—locked! In the distance a train was steaming towards the level-crossing, and until it had passed the gates would not be opened.

Duval raved with rage.

Two minutes at least to wait, and no turning at hand into which the car could dodge. To reach a turn it was necessary to return upon their tracks for a quarter of a mile, and then to plunge into a country lane leading he did not know where. And the zug-zug-zug of the stink-bike was audible in the distance already.

"Begad," murmured Lord Mauleverer, with perfect calmness, "looks to me as if you're caught, my dear fellow! It was a dreadfully risky bismal, you know. Good old Coker! Here he comes on his smell-tank."

Zug-zug-zug!

"What is to be done?" muttered Duval. "Oh, thousand thunders! Name of a dog, what shall we do?"

"You'd better hop it," suggested Lord Mauleverer cheerfully. "This is where you get it in the neck. I warn you that Coker hits like a giddy steam-hammer."

Duval turned a murderous look upon him, and gripped the revolver. Lord Mauleverer yawned. In spite of his easy ways, he was made of sterner stuff than Billy Bunter, and the kidnapper's ferocious looks and threatening weapon did not frighten him.

"That's no good," he remarked. "You don't want to be hung instead of being sent to prison, surely. Take it calmly. Hop it while you've got time."

Louis the chauffeur had already settled the matter for himself. He looked back, and saw the motor-cyclist pelting on, and now in the distance the four juniors on push-bikes could be seen pedalling away frantically. And a couple of carters who had stopped at the level-crossing gates were looking curiously at the car, and would certainly lend a hand as soon as Coker arrived and called on them for help. And the signalman had come out of his box. The kidnappers had staked all on a chance, and the chance had failed them, or, rather, another chance had intervened. The chauffeur leaped down from the car, ran through a gap in the hedge, and disappeared across the fields.

"One gone!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "Begad, that's a good example to follow, Monsieur Froggy! You haven't much time, either."

"Name of a dog!" hissed the Frenchman. "Nom du chien! Name of a name!" The French expletives sounded utterly absurd to Lord Mauleverer, and he burst into a laugh. The Frenchman, with a last furious look at the victim who had escaped him, leaped out of the car, and took to the woods just as Coker raced up.

Coker of the Fifth leaped off his bike, and let it go whirling into the hedge, and made a terrific spring after Duval.

The Frenchman stumbled in the hedge, and Coker almost fell over him, coming after him with that sudden leap, and they rolled down a slope into the field together. Coker promptly collared the kidnapper.

"Help!" he roared.

The Frenchman had dropped his revolver in the fall. Perhaps that was just as well for Coker, though it is doubtful whether the ex-valet would have ventured to use the weapon. He fought savagely with Coker, but the well-groomed "gentleman's gentleman" was nothing like a match for the burly, powerful Fifth-Former of Greyfriars. Coker rolled him into the damp grass, and planted himself upon his panting chest.

"Lend a hand here!" roared Coker, as he heard the bikes ringing in the road.

Harry Wharton & Co. rushed on the scene, and the Frenchman, in spite of his savage struggles, was promptly secured.

His wrists were fastened with pump-straps from the bikes, and he was yanked out into the road.

"Mauly!" shouted Bob.

Lord Mauleverer looked out of the car.

"Here I am," he said cheerfully. "Begad, it was jolly decent of you fellows to come after me like that! Rather a run, wasn't it?"

"Oh, you ass!" said Bob Cherry.

"There's something alive under this rug," went on Mauleverer, pushing it with his foot. "I wonder what it is?"

"Grooooooh!"

Lord Mauleverer dragged the rug aside. Billy Bunter, bound hand and foot and gagged, lay underneath it.

"Begad, it's Bunter!"

"Bunter! What luck!"

The juniors seized Bunter, and dragged him out of the car. Bunter groped for his spectacles, and set them straight on his fat little nose, and gasped.

"Oh, crumbs! I say, you fellows—ow! I'm hungry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can drive this car," said Coker. "We'll take this scoundrel to Greyfriars in his own car, and the bobbies can come for him."

"Good egg!"

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you haven't got a sandwich about you?" groaned Billy Bunter. "I've had an awful time. They starved me to death, you know—I mean, nearly to death—all because I let them take me instead of Mauly. I felt I was bound to take Mauly's place and save him from—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I'm the only pal

Mauly's got who would have allowed himself to be kidnapped instead of Mauly, out of pure friendship."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bob Cherry. "We know how you came to be kidnapped—through sneaking Mauly's letter and reading it. We'd bump you for it, only—"

"Yaas, you are a rotten cad, Bunter, dear boy!" said Lord Mauleverer. "But I'll stand you a feed when we get back to Greyfriars, all the same."

"Just like my old pal Mauly!" said Bunter affectionately. To which his old pal Mauly replied cheerfully:

"Rats!"

There was amazement at Greyfriars when the car arrived, with Horace Coker looking very important in charge of it.

Duval was promptly handed over to the police, in whose kindly charge he was likely to remain for some years to come.

The next day the chauffeur was caught, and he joined his confederate in a place where, in the intervals of stone-breaking and turning the crank, he had plenty of time to wish that he had not entered into the scheme of kidnapping Lord Mauleverer.

Billy Bunter made a most heroic and determined attempt to make the fellows believe that he had deliberately allowed himself to be kidnapped to save Lord Mauleverer from the danger of falling into Duval's hands. But his explanations were only met with roars of laughter, and at last he gave it up. But the fact that he had palmed himself off for a short time as a noble lord was not forgotten, and for many days afterwards the Owl of the Remove was addressed as Lord Bunter.

THE END.

YARNS TO TELL.

THE BUSINESS INSTINCT.

Mr. Isaacs had had a busy day, what with lending money at ninety per cent. and discounting bills at fifty, and he was annoyed on returning home to find the apple of his eye howling the house down.

That child would not be quiet—not even when his fond papa took him in his arms. Then the parent tried walking up and down the room, singing songs; but after having sung every song from "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep" to "Hey Diddle Diddle," he thought of giving it up.

However, he tried one more song. It was "Sing a Song of Sixpence." Hardly had he started, when there was an instant hush, and a tiny voice cried out:

"Make it two shillings, fader; I'll be athleep in thirty seconds!"

Bride: "Here is a telegram from papa."

Bridegroom (eagerly): "What does he say?"

Bride (reads): "'Do not return, and all will be forgiven.'"

PRACTICAL MATHEMATICS.

"Now, children," said the school-teacher, as she glanced in a despairing manner around the young hopefuls in her charge, "I want you to think very carefully before you answer my next question."

The young hopefuls stopped pinching each other, and awaited her question open-eyed and full of interest.

"Which would you rather have—three bags with two apples in each, or two bags with three apples in each bag?" asked the teacher.

The children thought, and at last one bright specimen put up his hand.

"Yes, Tommy? What's the answer?"

"Three bags, miss, with two apples in them, 'cos there'd be one more bag to bust!"

"What are you going to name the baby?"

"We thought of calling her 'Scandal'."

"But why?"

"We can't hush her up!"

MOTHER'S LITTLE PET.

The house was in an uproar; everybody and everything was upside-down. The police had been sent for, and the fire-alarm rung. Little Willie, the apple of his mother's eye, was missing—lost, stolen, or strayed.

But, joy—oh, joy!—he is seen coming down the road, and his mother rushes out, and clasps him to her bosom.

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

"Where have you been, my pet—my little lamb?" demanded his mother.

"Oh, I've been playing postman!" replied her "pet." "I gave a letter to all the houses in our road—and they were real letters, too!"

His mother heaved a sigh of relief; she feared her darling had been getting into mischief.

"Where did you get them, my love?" she asked, in amusement.

"I found them in your wardrobe drawer, tied up with ribbon," replied the dear boy, in innocent tones.

Little Willie still finds it more comfortable to stand up, for they were mother's and father's old love-letters!

WHAT'S IN AN AIM?

She was a Suffragette—a gentle, sad-eyed lady, as a rule, but now bristling with battle, for she had been deputed by the committee to do a doughty deed.

The local post-office, being a Government stronghold, was the scene of hostilities. Its windows were the target, and in a bag the lady carried the ammunition—nice hard stones.

"So now for fame and women's rights!" cried she, selecting a hefty brickbat.

She threw the first stone.

And the second stone.

And the third stone.

But nothing happened. Six other stones were vengefully hurled through the air without result. Still the window remained whole.

Just then a passing postman laughed, and the lady, in her anger, threw the tenth stone at him.

It missed the man, but it broke the window. Another victory for freedom!

Professor: "What bone is this?"

Pupil: "Er—um—the bone of something dead."

CHANGE OF TACTICS.

His name was Frederick. His hair was red, and wanted cutting. His coat and vest would have shamed their maker, and the less said about his boots and trousers the better. His Sunday collar was in the wash, its substitute a sorry rag.

By profession he was a tramp, and he called at a farmhouse, ostensibly in search of meat and drink.

The woman who opened the door was sweet and comely, and Frederick thought he had conquered at last.

"Madam," said he, brushing the snuff from his coat, "you'd best give me a drink of milk—"

"Yes?" she queried.

"Or else—"

He was interrupted again. Farmer John, lag and burly, came forward just at that moment, riding-crop in hand, dog at heel.

"Or else water," continued Frederick, "if you please, sir."

Our Grand Serial Story!

MYSTERIA



By SIDNEY DREW, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Roonney, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters, which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, and the adventurers at last catch sight of "Mysteria." The mysterious island—bare and ghostly-looking—appears to be floating in the sky. It is a mirage, but, as Ferrers Lord points out, there can never be a mirage without a substance. The millionaire determines to start in pursuit of the floating island at once, but a terrific volcanic eruption occurs, in the course of which a blazing fireball falls on the Lord of the Deep, passing through her from deck to keel. The millionaire runs the submarine aground in the bay of the nearest island, and sends Ching-Lung and Thurston with a party of men in the launch to cut some logs. On landing the party are confronted by a curious figure in a red lam-o'-shanter, who warns them that the island belongs to Germany. They ignore the warning, and Redcap—by name Julius Faber—returns with a party of ragged-looking ruffians, and forces them to leave the island by swimming, under cover of the fog. Subsequently, Ferrers Lord leads a night expedition on to the island, and succeeds in recapturing the launch. By dint of his unparalleled ingenuity and hard work, Hal Honour, the engineer, succeeds in repairing the Lord of the Deep sufficiently to allow her to leave her dangerous situation in the island harbour. As they are steaming along one day the bank of fog ahead suddenly parts, and there, not a league away, appears Mysteria—the weird island. A continuous booming, caused by the cracking of shrivelled weeds, comes from the floating island, which also gives forth a disagreeable odour. Before sunrise the next morning, a move is made to explore Mysteria. The landing-party find the island to be an evil-smelling swamp, with little sign of life. They catch a glimpse of a terrifying monster which inhabits a black lake, and then Barry creates a diversion by falling down a deep tunnel, and injuring his head. Ching-Lung and the millionaire, after extricating Barry, explore the tunnel, while the rest wait outside. Suddenly the two explorers come scuttling out of the tunnel like frightened rabbits. "What was it? What did you see?"

(Now go on with the story.)

Told in the G'key—Gan-Waga on the Warpa'h.

"I can only give you a hazy idea," said Ferrers Lord. "We first of all found the tracks of a monster that is a mystery to me in every way. Ching, with a somewhat unusual display of wisdom and caution—"

"Oh, go easy there!" interrupted Ching-Lung. "Not so unusual, please!"

"Advised a retreat. A few hundred yards further in I sighted a series of what I took for natural columns, supporting the roof. Believe me, or believe me not, those pillars were alive the moment the light touched them. Then we heard a roar and—well, we departed hurriedly."

"As per official programme, which you witnessed," added Ching-Lung. "And we're not going back."

"To-day at least," said Ferrers Lord. "But we shall go back. We have had enough adventures for one day."

The pool still lay black and silent as they passed it. It was easy enough to find the path, for it was marked out by their axes. The sea, flashing in the sunlight, came into view.

"Hello!" said Prout. "Where's the Lord of the Deep, by hooky? I don't make her out nowhere!"

Presently they saw her coming along from the north, and Benjamin Maddock waved his hat from the deck. The launch danced into the creek and the boards were pushed ashore.

"The silly old island turned clean round, and now she's droppin' back, souse me!" said the jovial buxom. "Come steady, Barry. That bank don't look very sound. Ain't the smell delicious?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 304.

They were soon safe and sound aboard the submarine, astonished to find that they had been nearly seven hours away. Barry had his head patched up, and was snugly ensconced, with a glass of grog and a pipe, in a snug corner of the galley. The crew were highly curious to know what had occurred, and crowded in. We may also be sure that Barry O'Roonney did not forget to use his magnificent imagination, though it is safe to say that even Barry's imagination did not greatly exceed the facts. But when Barry began to describe the monster of the black pool, Maddock kicked.

"Ow many eyes did you say it had, souse me?" he asked.

"None, yez spalpeen! Why don't yez listen? Four on aich soide of uts blissed head and wan big oie in the middle."

"I thought you said six just now, souse me!"

At the yells of "Shut up!" "Turn him out!" and "Go ahead, Barry, old boy!" Maddock sighed and relapsed into a weary silence of unbelief.

Gan-Waga, his eyes dilated and his cheeks puffed out, drank in every word.

"And what's yo' does, Barry, when him opens hims moufe and spits fires, hunk?" he gasped, carried away by Barry's story.

"Phwat did Oi do, is ut?" said Barry. "Havin' wance, in my beautiful youth, narrowly escaped a terrible death by foire through puttin' a kig of doynamite in the kitchen oven in mistake for a barrel of oysters, Oi have since that day always carried a hand-grenade about wid me."

"What sand-grenades, hunk? Not knows him, Barrys?"

"Oi didn't ixpict yez wud know, so Oi'll explain. A hand-

OUR GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER NEXT MONDAY! (See Page 28.)

grenade is a bottle covered wid woire, as a rule, and filled wid sartin chemicals that extinguish flames. Av yez carry wan in your hip-pocket, and happen to stand near the grate, Gan, and get your coat-tails alight, all yez have to do is to sit down hard, and your precious life is saved.

"Will, the moment the terrible apparition shoved his dial—which is Rooshian for mug—out of the wather, he opened his jaws and let out enough foire to cook a herd of bullocks. 'Bedad, O'm baked!' yells Misther Rupert. 'O'm done brown on both sides!' squeals his Highness. 'And, by hokey, O'm cooked ridy to sarve up!' hollers Tommy, who's there yonder to till whether Oi spake truth or not, though ut isn't wan of his wakenesses to do it often hisself.

"To make a shortt story a thrille less in soize, Oi sized my diamond-loined, carred-case, wid the gold spout, opened ut, and took out the hand-grenade. Bedad, and didn't Oi whizz ut a bit! Ut shot clane between the flaming jaws of the terrible monsther! He uttered wan awful groan of agony, turned as pale as sliced cucumber, and sank to the bottom wid a full-soized attack of indigestion. And that's how Barry O'Rooney, the dauntless, won the battle of Bunker's Hill!"

A roar of laughter rang through the gallery, and that burst of mirth told Gan-Waga that once again he had been made a fool of. He looked round at the grinning faces, and listened to the laughing cries of "Go on, Barry! Keep it up, old man!" Even Mr. Schwartz was convulsed with merriment. Gan got up. On the shelf above the electric cooking-stove stood a large pepper-caster. Gan snatched it and whirled it round his head, filling the galley with fiery dust. As he fled to the door, he yelled:

"Putts date outs wid sand-grenades! Ho, ho, ho, hoo-o-o-o!"

Coughing, snorting, sneezing sailors reeled out of the little inferno of pepper with burning palates and watering eyes.

"By hokey, I'll at-choo-shoo-sha-na-shoo!—I'll ate—a-a-a-a-a-atchoo!—the—a-a-a-a-a-atchoo!—the—the—the—ati-na-atchoo-shoo-sha-na-shoo!" spluttered Prout. "I'll—a-a-a-a-a-achoo-choo-o-o-o!"

"Cha-o-o! Ah-cha-o-o! Cha-cha-cho-o-o!" remarked Joe, the carpenter, musically.

And a chorus from the noses of a dozen squirming, coughing seamen replied:

"A-a-a-a-choo! A-a-a-a-choo! Chew-chew-ah! A-a-ati-a-ati-atchoo!"

Secure behind the locked door of the billiard-room, Gan lay on the carpet and writhed gleefully to the rhythm of the dulcet melody. Gan was happy, for he had avenged the plot upon his innocence and avenged it nobly.

"Deys not laughs at me now," he gurgled. "Sand-grenades nots puts date out so quick! Ha, ha, ho, hoo, hoo-o-o!"

"Hast thou a pain, dear child? If so, when, why, how, who, which, what, wherefore, whereaway, where-tofore, whither, whence, and whysome?" asked a familiar voice.

"Dey bluffs me about sands-grenades, and I peppers dems, Chingy!" gurgled the Eskimo rapturously. "Oh, harks!"

"A-a-a-achoo! A-a-a-a-achoo! Chew-a-chew-ah! A-a-a-ati-a-a-atchoo!"

Ching-Lung was sitting cross-legged on the top of the book-case, his eyes fixed learnedly on a massive volume.

"What yo' readings, Chingy?" tittered the delighted Eskimo.

"A treatise on pepper, child," said his Highness. "A most magnificent tome."

"Yo' better comes down 'fores yo' falls off, hunk!"

"I cannot fall off," said Ching-Lung. "You must not speak about me as if I were an over-ripe tomato. I resent

such language strongly. How the peppered ones pipe. Where was I? Ah, just here! I will now read to you what the idiot who wrote his book says on the subject of pepper: 'Pepper is found in a pod in the shape of corns.'

"Nots bunions, hunk, Chingy?" giggled the son of the North. "Sure huns corns?"

"The pods are of a red colour," went on Ching-Lung, "sometimes amounting to a most brilliant scarlet hue."

"Cha-a-ha-cha-o-o-a-a-atchoo!" sneezed the victims.

"So deir noses, Chingy," gurgled the joyful Eskimo.

"Most brilliant scarlets, Chingy. Harks at de butterfuls sneezes, Chingy! Oh, I laughs my ribs tired! Ha, ha, hoo-o-o-o! Ha, ha, haa-a-ah! He-he-hee-hee!"

"If you smile so loudly, Eskimoses," said Ching-Lung with severity, "I shall read to you no longer."

"Den reads some shorters 'bout peppers, Chingy. Go and reads to de pepper-smellers, Chingy. Dey wants to know 'bout 'nough 'bout peppers. Oh-o-o! I laugh! It was too funny-fuls! I calls dem de sneeze brigades. Dat's a jokes! Ho-o-o-o-o!"

Gan-Waga's wild laughter betrayed him. A thunderstorm—if such a thing were possible—taking place in a boiler factory when all hands were at work would not have drowned that gentle chuckle. A salvo of guns, had Gan been muzzled at the time, might have muffled it slightly; but Gan-Waga's laugh, like himself, was something unique.

Several people have stated that this is a great blessing conferred on humanity, but these are only rude, jealous people like Prout and Maddock.

The peppered ones made a raid on the fresh-water tap. Gan-Waga had not used the condiment so sparingly as he might have done. The pepper-caster held half a pound when full, and the wasteful and extravagant Eskimo had not left quite half an ounce in it.

Ching-Lung closed the book with a snap, and descended from his elevated perch. Gan, in an ecstasy of enjoyment, was hopping about on one leg, and waving his corpulent arms. He was supremely happy.

"Oo-ooh! I peppers dem, Chings. I pep-pep-pep-peppers dems! Oh-ooh! I pep-pep-peppers dems butterfuls, Chingy!" he carolled.

"Why didn't you salt 'em while you were about it, you hopping plantigrade from Sloopingham?"

Gan-Waga checked his dance indignantly. He did not like the sound of the word "plantigrade," though it was quite harmless.

"Yo' nots call me no names, Chingy," he said. "I nots like rudenesses!"

"Oh, you needn't get so pep-pep-pep-peppery," grinned the prince. "I apologise for my— Now, what the—the— Here, what's up?"

Whatever was up, it was not Gan-Waga, for Gan was down. A mop—a wet, wet mop—carefully guided, carefully timed, and with the full force of a wrathful seaman's arm behind it, shot through the open port-hole. It patted Gan on the back of his fat neck, and Gan went down with a thump to study the pattern of the carpet.

"I've pep-pep-pep-peppered it, souse me!" crowed the tender voice of the bo'sun—"pep-peppered it!"

"What's it doing, by hokey?" growled the thundrous voice of Prout.

"Digging holes in the carpet wid its face, the reptile. I got it in the neck!"

"And downed it?"

"Flat as a steam-rollered plum-duff, souse me!" said Maddock.

There were eight portholes to light the billiard-room, and in a moment each of them was darkened by an inverted face, the owners of these eight grinning faces being held by the heels by their comrades above in this perilous position.

Eight shrill and lusty "Ha, ha, ha's!" roused Gan from ignominious position.

"Pep-pep-pep-pep-pepper!" cried the eight sightseers.

Gan uttered a savage yell, and went for the one he recognised in its upside-down position—Joe. The Eskimo was seconds too late. The carpenter was jerked out of danger; and, as Gan leaned out of the open port, trying frantically to get one parting blow home, the full flood from a hose-pipe struck him on the same spot as the mop had done, and brought his lower jaw in such violent contact with the hand steel rim of the porthole that Gan-Waga thought he had lost half his teeth. He yelled out "Aah-ouch!" and staggered back into the prince's arms.

The Eskimo nursed his lower jaw tearfully. He was no longer mirthful, and his peppery joke had lost its halo of genius. Taking a little round looking-glass, Gan carefully counted his splendid set of molars. They were all there, but they were very sore.

"I hope this will be a lesson to you," said Ching-Lung

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sternly. "You are aware that I have always set my face against practical joking."

"I wishes yo' sets yo' faces againsts de bottom ob dat bad nough potholes steads of me," moaned Gan-Waga.

Shortly after, hearing a whirring noise emanating from the swimming-bath as he passed it on his way to the store-room, Herr Schwartz, of the curly locks, felt curious, and stepped in.

Gan was furiously working the treadle of a grindstone with his foot, and his two thumbs pressed the edge of a huge walrus spear, the spinning stone making sparks fly from the steel. And, as the grindstone buzzed and whirled, with fire in his eyes, Gan-Waga hissed forth a blood-curdling song:

"Dey breakes my teefs, hunk?—a-r-r-r-r!
I carves dems to mince-meats—oo-r-r-r-r!
I chopses dems to chipses—ow-ur-r-r-r!
I teares dems to ragses—I-wow-er-r-r!"

It was plain to the chef that if Gan succeeded in executing any of the statements expressed in his song, there would be cheerful and exciting times for somebody. Gan's foot happened to slip off the treadle, and his warlike orbs rested on the chef. He did not wait to sharpen the other edge of the spear, but came like a tiger. Herr Schwartz discharged a yell of terror, and raced for the galley, expecting every instant to be spitted from behind.

A hand shot round the door of Hal Honour's cabin. It was a shapely, delicate-looking hand, and it held a pin. As the horrified chef flew wildly past, the hand flew down, and Herr Schwartz felt the prick, and imagined himself mortally wounded. With another shriek of dread and agony, he rolled into the galley, and collapsed across the table with a thud that sent several cups and saucers flying into space, to be shattered to atoms against the steel-covered floor.

The astonished Mr. Barry O'Rourke almost swallowed his pipe at a gulp.

"By the ghost of McGinty," he said, "plawat's got yez at all, at all?"

Herr Schwartz, lying across the table, his forehead pillowed in a roll of butter, kicked spasmodically.

"Ach, I was sdabbed, is ut?" he wailed. I was murder py dot Esgimo! Dunder, I was deadt! I was sdab mit ein greadt shear drough der pack of me! I tie at vonce—yes!

EVERY MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

Oh, ja, ja, ja! Id was all over! I pleet to death! Der vicket Esgimo he haf murder poor Fritz!"

Ching-Lung and Maddock entered, and gazed in bewilderment from the babbling chef to the astonished Irishman.

"What's all this fuss about? Has the poor fellow drunk poison in mistake?" Ching-Lung asked, in pretended alarm.

"Faith, Oi don't know, sor! Just this blissid minute in he comes loike a brick through a skoylight and stharrts howlin' that he's stabbed through the hearrt, and bleedin' to dith."

"He must have suddenly gone crazy. The heat, perhaps."

"Nein, nein! I was sdab py der Esgimo!" whimpered the chef. "Dot vicket Esgimo he haf murder der prave Fritz."

Ach, I tie—I pleet to teath! Der gowardt do sdah me ven I nod look. Oo-oo! I was all over soon, andt ut?"

"I should reckon it was lager beer, souse me!" grinned the bo'sun.

"Oi can't see no thrace of a wound or a single dhrop of blood, sor," said Barry, shaking with suppressed mirth. "Oi think he'd better be put in a padded cell, beslad, and chained up toight."

"Get up, souse me!" roared Maddock. "You're a holler frod. Get up, I says!"

He seized the cook by the collar, twisted him round, and left him in a sitting posture on the galley table, with the butter melting on his fevered brow and running down his cheeks. They left him wondering who he was, where he was, when he was, why he was, and how he did it. Once outside, Ching-Lung winked again.

"It is marvellous," he said, "what a long way a small thing like a pin, and a smaller thing like the cook's imagination, will go, wasn't it?"

Barry and Maddock made no definite reply. They shrieked. A figure armed with a gleaming spear whizzed round the corner, and the bo'sun and the Irishman left the district post-haste, with Gan-Waga and a razor-edged spear behind them.

(Another splendid, long instalment of this grand Serial next Monday. Please order early.)

GRAND NEW FEATURE. No. 7.

OUR WINTER EVENING PROBLEM CORNER.

The Problem set this week will form another excellent test of skill for my ingenious chums. Below you will find a list of twelve jumbled names. What my chums have to do is to re-arrange the letters so as to form the name of a well-known character at Greyfriars School from each jumble (see Example). The correct solutions of the jumbled names will appear on this page next week. Meantime see how many you can get correct.

Example: RODEL

LODER

1. GORGE TINWAGE

2. OBB HERCRY

3. ROBLOVES

4. ILLBY RUNBET

5. ROTCOD COKLE

6. NUW UNCL

7. YARRH WONHART

8. RM CHQUEL

9. NFKRA TENCUN

10. ROLD LEVERRAMUE

11. NOYNJH LULB

12. LENDZEHA

My dear Mark Luley,

Just a few lines to tell you that we intend to celebrate Harry Whinton's birthday on Wednesday next and we shall be jolly glad if you can turn up to it. We have subbed together and we have raised enough tin to give a slap up feed (Maudy dished out a fowl!) The arrangements are that we all meet in the wood-shed at five o'clock sharp. Six Third Form kids will wait on us and they have promised to wash their necks for the occasion! Try to turn up.

Yours ever,

Bob Cherry

This is how last week's puzzle-letter should appear when the missing words have been correctly filled in.

No. 8 PROBLEM NEXT MONDAY.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 304.

OUR GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER NEXT MONDAY! (See Page 28.)



My Readers' Page

WHOM TO WRITE TO:
EDITOR,
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY.
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

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AND
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

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 pleased to
 hear from
 his Chums,
 at home or
 abroad.

Next Monday will be marked by the issue of the
GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,

which will this year be better than ever! The cover will consist of a

SPLENDID COLOURED PLATE

in the most beautiful tints, depicting the Greyfriars' boys, amid a scene of cheery bustle, going off for the Christmas holidays. Our great "star" author, Frank Richards, has scored a bullseye with

"THE FOUR HEROES!"

a wonderful 50,000-word long school story, dealing, of course, with our favourites, Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars School.

"THE FOUR HEROES!"

is an exceptionally fine yarn, which will be thoroughly appreciated by all.

The next item is a splendid Greyfriars' School Play, entitled:

"THE SPECTRE OF No. 1 STUDY!"

This cleverly-written playlet introduces seven of the most prominent characters in the Greyfriars Remove, and, being written in rhyming verse, lends itself admirably to the purpose of amateur actors for home theatricals, besides being very entertaining reading.

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are founded upon his own adventures. Interest, incident, and excitement are the keynotes of this grand story, which never flag a moment from start to finish.

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"MYSTERIA!"

our grand Ferrers Lord serial, complete this Great Christmas Number, which will be easily distinguishable on every bookstall and in every newsagent's shop by its bright and attractive coloured cover. The price will be twopence, and the value better than ever!

THAT PLEASANT SURPRISE!

"Voting Postcards" from readers in every quarter of the globe, dealing with the suggestion made recently by "Londoner" in these columns, continue to figure largely in my weekly postbag, and the preparation of that pleasant surprise I promised my chums in last week's Chat is occupying my attention more and more. With the voice of the great body of my readers—expressed through the "postcard vote"—urging me on, I find the task, heavy as it is, a more than congenial one. It is my aim to make this "grand surprise" one that will appeal to every individual one of my chums, and to that end I have carefully analysed the very small percentage of dissentient postcards I have received, so as to find out exactly what these chums find to object to

in "Londoner's" suggested idea of publishing a separate Companion Paper to "The Magnet" Library, embodying a Comic Supplement, among other popular features. The result of my investigation reveals that in practically every case it is not the idea itself that these outspoken readers disagree with, but it is the thought of paying another penny a week, which does not appeal to them. There's the rub—it's a question of money. Well, with many people this is naturally a very serious question too, and it is one that I cannot possibly get over altogether. But this much I can do, and I mean to do it: I can meet my chums half-way by making the

Price One Halfpenny Only,

instead of the penny suggested by "Londoner." I shall have more to say about this extremely important matter next week.

HOW TO SAVE MONEY.—No. 1.

(Special Article.)

A very successful friend of mine is very fond of quoting the old maxim: "Any fool can make money; it takes a wise man to save it." It has the merit and demerit of most maxims, in that it has some truth in it, but it is not entirely true. I am well aware that men who, mostly through sheer luck, have acquired thousands, are in the habit of telling their less fortunate fellows that "merit will tell." In such a matter one can only speak from personal experience, and I can testify to the fact that I know many men who are not commercially successful, and yet have any amount of "merit." For the purposes of this article, however, I will take it for granted that my readers are boys and girls who are in the habit of having money passing through their hands; they earn money, and would much like to know how to keep some of it.

Yearly Expenses.

Now, there are various kinds of men and women who want to save. I knew a man once who went to a considerable amount of trouble in order to save enough money to pay his way. This may seem absurd, but the statement is quite true, and a little consideration will show you that the man was not so foolish as you may think. He was in the habit of receiving payment for his work at all times. His money came to him in lumps. The consequence was that he was always in difficulties. When any demand for a big sum—rent, taxes, and so on—came to him he could not meet it without borrowing. This method of living went on for some years, until one day he went to the trouble of finding a few old tobacco tins and labelling each one. One was marked "rent," another "rates," another "insurance," and so on.

Having done this he said, in effect, to himself: "Rent box is empty; this won't do." When he received his next payment he went to the "rent" box and paid in the next quarter's rent, or as much of it as he could afford. He adopted the same plan with his other boxes, and I may say that his previous methods of arranging his money matters had been so bad that it took him some little time even to complete the number of boxes he required for his new plan. He would suddenly find himself confronted with a demand for a payment, the existence of which he had entirely forgotten—life insurance premium, or club subscription, or something of the kind.

It will be seen, therefore, that for a long time this plan of putting his money away in little boxes was not successful, because not having any capital to start with he occasionally had to borrow from one box to make up a deficiency in another. In time, however, he succeeded in getting the right number of boxes in his cupboard and in filling them all up, so that one day he found himself in the happy position of having provided for all future payments that could be demanded from him in the ensuing three months.

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