

BILLY BUNTER'S REFORMATION!

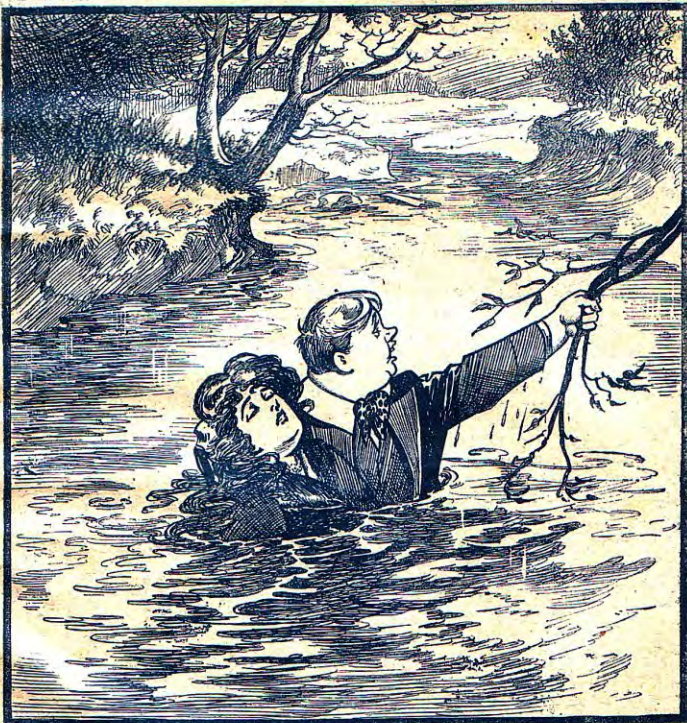
A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



The **Magnet** 1st Library

No. 460. Vol. 16.

DECEMBER 2nd, 1918.



BRAVO, BUNTER!

(An Amazing Scene in the Grand Long Complete Story in this

and, 1918.

MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," id., Every Monday, "THE GEM" LIBRARY, id., Every Wednesday, "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d, COMPLETE LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," id., Every Friday, "CHUCKLES," Price 1d., Every Saturday.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his clubs, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. - Whom to write to: Editor, "The Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

For Next Monday:

OUR MAGNIFICENT
CHRISTMAS NUMBER
Price Twopenny.

No better special number of the "Magnet" than this has ever been issued, and it would be hard to give higher praise than that. The chief feature is a splendid double-length story entitled

"THE HOUSE ON THE HEATH!"

By Frank Richards.

I am not going to tell you too much about this fine yarn, for there is a mystery in it, and when one gets talking about stories one may let out too much. It is in Mr. Richards' best and most dramatic style. The Famous Five come into it very prominently, and so do Frank Courtenay and his chum the Caterpillar; and so does Billy Bunter, whose ventriloquial abilities prove very useful indeed in a critical situation. Besides the complete Greyfriars yarn, there are numerous other attractions, including a budget of "Greyfriars Herald" stories, notes, correspondence, and the like.

"BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS-BOX"

will set you all laughing, I am sure; and those of you who were keen on Peter Todd's Heroic Sholmes stories—as I know most of you were—will be glad to find one of them included, and will chuckle over the wonderful acumen shown by Sholmes in the matter of the Duke of Hookeywalker's pawnticket! Peter also contributes what he calls "A Rag-time Parody," which will be appreciated by those among you who have some slight acquaintance with poetry. But I cannot tell you all that you will find in this great number. You must—er—wait and see! Don't forget, however, to

TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT IT!

NOTICES.

In spite of the warning given some weeks ago, I still receive quite a lot of requests for the insertion of notices concerning back numbers, leagues, and correspondence. These are not being inserted, and readers who have sent them along, regardless of what I have said, must accept this paragraph as a reply to their letters in cases where no other reply has been sent.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. IN THE "PENNY POP."

Are the earlier adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. to be published in the "Penny Popular," or are they not? It is in the power of every reader of the "Magnet" Library to help in answering this question. I have been aware of the fact for some time that every one of you is rallying round the "Magnet" in a splendid manner, and I want to do all I can to please you.

Do you want Harry Wharton & Co.'s earlier adventures to appear in our companion paper, the "Penny Popular"? If so, then I shall lose no time in putting the idea into operation. But how am I to find out whether my suggestion meets with your approval? Well, my chums, there is only one way. You must write and let me know.

Of course, if only a few of you write on the matter, then I shall have to drop the idea. But, as I have said before, if there is a great demand for the stories, I shall lose no time whatever in sending the first story to print.

There is no necessity for you to write me a long letter if you cannot find the time. A postcard will do. Just say in a few words as possible whether you approve of my suggestion or not, and I shall be satisfied.

If you can spare the time to write a letter, then by all means be little and let me know if there is any particular story to republish.

FOOTBALL NOTICES.

Matches Wanted By:

PARK INSTITUTE F.C. (15-16) 5-mile r.—E. Jordan, 42, Somerford Grove, Park Lane, Tottenham, N.

HAREWOOD F.C. (14).—

W. Sharwood, 10, Bridport St., Marylebone, N.W.

HARROGATE ALTON F.C. (16) 5-mile r.—G. Hendle, 8, Clarendon Rd., South Tottenham, N.

BOWTHORN JUNIOR F.C. (14) 4-mile r.—C. Nicholson, Connaught Rd., Lancaster.

SELWYN F.C. (15-16) 4-mile r.—A. Spencer, 27, Osborn Rd., Victoria Park, N.E.

BEACONSFIELD ATHLETIC F.C. (14) 4-mile r.—G. Bell, 8, Hearnfield Avenue, Low Fell, Gateshead-on-Tyne.

TOWER UNITED F.C. (16) 10-mile r.—H. Booth, 26, Dock St., Leman St., E.

STANLEY ATHLETIC F.C.—J. R. Burnsick, 15, Thirlmere Rd., Anfield, Liverpool.

A Fulham Team (14-17) 3-mile r.—A. Collins, 7, Filmer Rd., Fulham, S.W.

HIGHGROVE JUNIORS F.C. (15) 2-mile r.—J. Skipper, 120, Elizabeth St., Hightown, Manchester.

PRITTELL UNITED F.C. (16) 20-mile r.—C. Sack, 18, Clarence St., Southend-on-Sea.

RECHTIDE A.F.C. (14-16) 5-mile r.—J. Glaister, Bemison Drive, Grassendale, Liverpool.

ALFORD HOVE JUNIORS F.C. (15) W. Hearn, 9, Lambeth Walk, S.E.

23RD LIVERPOOL BOYS' BRIGADE (16) H. Galtway, 6, Letchworth St., Anfield, Liverpool.

EAST WALKER JUNIORS F.C. (14) 5-mile r.—J. P. McLachlan, 785, Wolbeck Rd., Walker, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

SOTTREDD UNITED F.C. (16-18) 30-mile r.—D. H. Currock, 92, Victoria Rd., Darlington.

BELMONT INSTITUTE F.C. (14-15) 4-mile r.—J. Scott, 7, Harroway Rd., Battersea, S.W.

NEWPORT F.C. (14-16) 10-mile r.—M. Cohen, 235, Newport Buildings, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.

ALMA VILA F.C. (15-17) 2-mile r.—B. Rooke, 210, Corfield St., Bethnal Green Rd., E.

LADS' OWN F.C. (14-16) 6-mile r.—J. C. Clark, 21, Upper Rd., Plaistow, E.

PARK JUNIORS F.C. (12-13) 3-mile r.—H. Smith, 19, Livingstone Rd., Palmers Green, N.

FOREST GATE JUNIORS F.C. 5-mile r.—R. Marlow, 223, Monaga Rd., Manor Park, E.

1st UNITED F.C. (15-16, week) ground, Hackney Marsh.

—E. Hayman, 37, Ivy Lane, St. John's Rd., Hoxton, N.

A Lowestoft Team (14) 12-mile r.—P. Savage, 14, Norwich Rd., Lowestoft.

A Hove Team (15-17) 2-mile r.; Wednesdays only.—E. A. Wright, 27, Westbourne Gardens, Hove, Sussex.

Other Footer Notices.

J. Hardy, 53, Goldsmith Row, Hackney, N.E. (14), wants to join club.

C. A. Richards, 59, Holdenhurst Rd., Bournemouth, wants to join club.

A. Dove, 55, Lower Kennington Lane, S.E., wants to form a club in his district.

B. Carter, 12, Sharsted St., Kennington, S.E., back or right wing, wants to join a club within a mile.

J. Winters, 55, Sudbury Rd., Bayswater, W., wants a player (15-16) for the club of which he is hon. sec.

E. White, 48, Kingston Rd., Southville, Bristol (16, plays anywhere but in goal), wants to join club.

William Jones, 21, Church St., Seaforth, is starting a club (11-16); would be glad to hear from anyone wishing to join.

Your Editor

A Complete School-
Story Book, attrac-
tive to all readers.

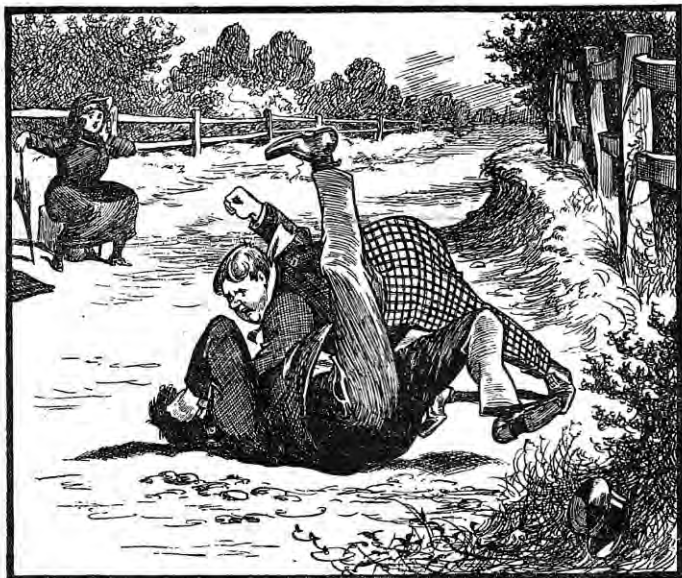


The Editor will be
obliged if you will
hand this book,
when finished with,
to a friend. . . .

BILLY BUNTER'S REFORMATION!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Bunter got in several blows with his heavy weight behind them, which told upon his bulky antagonist, and then they lost their footing and rolled in the dusty road, still punching. (See Chapter 6.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch is Exasperated!

AHEM!" Billy Bunter coughed.
Mr. Quelch glanced round irritably. Billy Bunter had coughed several times during morning lessons.

The Remove fellows looked at Bunter curiously. There was something a little unusual about the fat junior that morning.

Twice or three times he had half risen in his place as if to address the Form-master, but he had sat down again.

Each time he coughed it seemed that he was clearing his throat to speak, yet he did not speak.

And every time the Form-master's eye turned on him Bunter flushed red.

It seemed as if he had something to say to Mr. Quelch—something important—and yet could not make up his mind to speak.

Bob Cherry gave him a dig in the ribs, and he gaped instead of coughing.

"What's the trouble, Fatty?" Bob whispered.

"Grooh!"

"Been overdoing the doughnuts?" asked Harry Wharton sympathetically. "Or is the tefco disagreeing with the tomatoes?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Wharton! Cherry!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"Ahem! Yes, sir?"

"You are talking."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Take twenty lines each, Bunter!"

Bunter started, and blinked at Mr. Quelch through his glasses. The Form-master's voice seemed to startle him greatly. His fat face was a deep crimson.

"Bunter, have you a cold?"

"A e-c-cold!" stammered Bunter. "No, sir."

"Then why are you coughing?"

"Was-a-I coughing, sir?"

"You were!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You have coughed, or, rather, grunted, several times. Please do not make these irritating noises in the Form-room!"

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Bunter.

He sat with a crimson face as the lesson was resumed. The Removites were very attentive to Mr. Quelch after that. The Remove-master was evidently in a jart temper, and on such occasions Mr. Quelch had to be stroked the right way, as Bob Cherry somewhat irreverently expressed it.

But in a few minutes more Billy Bunter seemed uneasy again.

"Ahem!"

Mr. Quelch fairly spun round upon him.

"Bunter!"

"Oh, dear! Yes, sir?"

"What is the matter with you?"

"N-u-nothing, sir!"

"Have you been swallowing something?"

"Nunno!"

"Then keep silent. I will not be troubled by these irritable noises!" snapped the Remove-master.

"Ahem! E-e—I'm in fact—you see, sir—ahem—"

Mr. Quelch stared hard at Billy Bunter. It was not easy to disentangle any intelligible meaning from his remarks.

"What did you say, Bunter?"

"I—I—I—"

"What do you mean, Bunter, by that absurd reiteration of the first personal pronoun?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Some of the Remove chuckled, taking this for a joke. It was, of course, their duty to chuckle when their Form-master condescended to make a joke.

But apparently Mr. Quelch was not joking, for he swept a thunderous glance round the class, and the chuckle died away with startling suddenness. A pin might have been heard to drop in the Remove Form-room the next second.

Billy Bunter broke the silence. He was on his feet now, his fat face looking as if it had been freshly boiled, and the perspiration standing in beads upon his forehead. All eyes were upon Bunter.

"If you pip-pip-pip—" stammered Bunter.

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, petrified.

"If you pip-pip-please, sir," gasped Bunter, "I—I want to—to speak to you, sir—"

"You need not stammer in that ridiculous manner, Bunter! If you have anything to say to me, you may say it."

"Yes, sir. I—I—I—"

"What?"

"You—you—you—"

"Bless my soul, is the boy insane?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch, in amazement.

"What on earth's the matter with him?" murmured Peter Todd, in perplexity.

"The matterfulness seems to be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, under his breath.

"You—you—I—I—that is to say, I—I—I—" stammered Bunter.

"You—you see, sir, it's like this—ahem!—hem!—hem! I—I should like leave from lessons this afternoon, sir, for an hour or so."

"Have you interrupted the lesson, Bunter, in order to make such a preposterous request?" said Mr. Quelch, looking quite dangerous.

Billy Bunter gasped.

"I—I want to go to the station, sir—"

"The station?"

"To—to bring somebody to the school, sir."

"If you have a relation coming to visit you, Bunter, I shall give you leave to go to the station. You should not have asked me during morning lessons, however."

"It—it isn't a relation of—of mine, sir."

"What! Whose relation is it, then?"

"Yours, sir!"

Mr. Quelch fairly jumped.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 460.

"Mine!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Mad as a hatter!" murmured Nugent. And really it looked as if Nugent was right. What Bunter was driving at was a deep mystery the Removites could not solve.

Mr. Quelch's eyes had often been compared to gimlets by his respectful pupils. Never had they seemed so much like gimlets as at the present moment. They seemed almost to bore into the unhappy Bunter. But the Owl of the Remove stuck to his guns.

"I—I happen to know, sir, that—that Miss Quelch is coming—"

"Oh!" murmured the juniors.

"Indeed!" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. And—as I—I was friendly with Miss Cora when she came to the school before, I—I should like to meet her at the station, sir," gasped Bunter, "and—and bring her to Greyfriars, sir, and—and—guide her, sir—"

"My niece does not require guiding to Greyfriars, Bunter, as she knows the way perfectly well."

"And—and protect her, sir," stammered Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, quite overcome. The idea of the fat, unwieldy Owl of the Remove protecting anybody was, as Bob afterwards said, "a corker."

Mr. Quelch did not appear pleased by Bunter's concern for his niece. Perhaps he suspected the Owl of making Miss Cora's arrival an excuse for dodging lessons.

"And what protection do you suppose my niece needs during the short walk from Friardale to Greyfriars, Bunter?" he asked grimly.

"I—I—there might be—be highwaymen, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"What?"

"Or—or Zeppelins!" said Bunter desperately.

There was a gasp of merriment from the Remove. The idea of Zeppelins in broad daylight could only have occurred to Bunter's mighty brain. It was not likely that Zeppelin riders would ever find courage enough to venture out in the daytime. And how Bunter was to protect Miss Cora from Zeppelins, if they did come, was a great mystery.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, frowning angrily. "Bunter's absurdity is not a reason for laughter. Silence! Bunter, you utterly ridiculous boy, sit down at once! I am quite aware, Bunter, that you are seeking an excuse for avoiding your lessons this afternoon, and you cannot deceive me, sir. You will certainly not be excused. On the other hand, you will be detained for an hour after lessons, and will occupy the time writing out Virgil."

"Oh, crumba!" gasped Bunter, in dismay.

"Sit down!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

To the amazement of the juniors Billy Bunter did not sit down. He blinked in almost an agonised manner at the angry Form-master.

"If—if you please, sir—"

"Did you hear me, Bunter?"

"Ye-e-es, sir. But—"

Mr. Quelch caught up the pointer from his desk, and made a stride towards Bunter. Then the Owl of the Remove sat down in a great hurry. And during the remainder of morning lesson he sat with a dismal expression on his face which might have touched the heart of a Hun.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Bargain for Fishy!

THE Remove fellows were grinning as they came out of the Form-room when the morning's lessons were over. Billy Bunter, however, was not grinning. His fat face was dolorous.

"Hard cheese, Fatty!" said Bob Cherry, clapping him on the back in his usual energetic manner.

"Yarook!" roared Bunter.

"Hello, halo, halo! What's the matter?"

"Yow-ow! You've nearly busted my backbone!" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was only sympathising," explained Bob Cherry. "It's hard cheese! It was really a first-rate dodge for getting out of lessons. But you couldn't expect it to work with Quelchey."

"Too jolly keen," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"The keenfulness of the esteemed Quelchey resembles the carefulness of a Sheffield blade," remarked Hurree Singh.

Billy Bunter blinked at them angrily.

"You silly asses! Do you think I was trying to get out of lessons?"

"Why, of course."

"You frabjous clumps—"

"Well, what were you at, then?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Oh, go and eat cake!" growled Bunter. And he rolled away.

The Famous Five grinned at one another. Bob Cherry exploded in a series of exclamations.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! Poor old Bunter! Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" said Wharton. "Perhaps Quelch misjudged Bunter for once. I remember he was awfully taken with Miss Cora when she visited Greyfriars last time. It's a case of calf-love."

"Donkey-love!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you remember he punched Skinner for making jokes about Miss Cora?" chuckled Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites laughed loudly. Miss Cora Quelch, the niece of the Form-master, had stayed some days at the school on a previous occasion. Miss Cora was a plump young lady—exceedingly plump. She was not quite so plump as Billy Bunter—for Bunter, in the matter of circumference, defied competition. But she was plump—there was no doubt about that. Skinner said it would be a good morning's exercise to walk round her. Perhaps it was her plumpness that appealed to Bunter. At all events, Bunter had been greatly taken with the young lady. Though generally considered a fink, Bunter had punched fellows' noses for making jokes about the plump Miss Cora—a proceeding which had caused much astonishment in the Remove.

Miss Cora, who was as kind and good-natured as she was plump, had been very good to Bunter, and Peter Todd, who was Bunter's study-mate, had declared that the Owl of the Remove had shown unexpected and astonishing traits of decency in his character during Miss Cora's visit.

The idea of Bunter in love made the juniors howl. Perhaps the fat Removite was not exactly in love; but certainly he was tremendously fascinated by the charming Miss Cora.

"My hat! We'll have some fun out of this!" chorled Skinner. "Don't they look a picture together—like a pair of barrels!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Harry Wharton curtly. "You're no right to speak of Miss Quelch like that, Skinner. It doesn't matter about Bunter."

"Well, isn't she a giddy tub?" demanded Skinner. "Yards round at least—fathoms, I should say."

"Oh, shut up!"

"Are you mached, too?" chuckled Skinner. "Do you measure beauty by avoirdupois weight, like Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five walked away. They regarded Bunter's fascination by Miss Cora humorously; but they were by no means disposed to join in making fun of a young lady.

Billy Bunter was in the quadrangle, with a morose look on his puffy face. He came up to the Co. as they emerged from the School House.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Go it!" said Bob Cherry.

"I'm expecting a postal-order this evening."

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's from one of my titled relations."

"Bow-wow!"

"I suppose you fellows wouldn't mind letting me have the ten bob?"

"What ten bob?"

"My postal-order will be for ten bob, you know. I'll hand it to you immediately it comes. You'll only have to wait—"

"For three years, or the duration of the war?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Till this evening!" roared Bunter. "It's bound to come. I've been expecting it for some time."

"Whole terms, in fact," remarked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Nothing doing, Fatty! Better send a wire to your titled relation," suggested Johnny Bull.

"The—the fact is, I'm rather short of tin."

"How does it feel to be short of tin for the first time in your life?" asked Bob, with great sympathy.

"And that postal-order's bound to come by the evening post," urged Bunter. "It's as certain as—"

"Christmas!" asked Nugent.

"Look here, I simply must have some tin this afternoon," said Bunter. "You might stand by a fellow for once. I've got to meet a lady at the station!"

"My hat! Quelch's told you you're not to go!"

"No, he hasn't! He simply refused me leave."

"Well, that amounts to the same thing, doesn't it?"

"No fear. I'm going, all the same!"

"Rats!" said Bob. "You wouldn't have the nerve. Quelch would give you three on each paw!"

"I'll not care!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove chorled. That Billy Bunter would deliberately risk three on each fat hand they did not believe for a moment. The Owl of the Remove blinked at them angrily.

"Well, you'll jolly well see!" he snorted.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 450.

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

"Yes, we'll see you in the Form-room," grinned Bob. "By the way, how did you happen to know that Miss Quelch was coming this afternoon?"

"I happened to hear Quelch mention it to Prout."

"Eavesdropping again, you fat boulder!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I happened to stop near his door, as I heard his voice—I mean, I heard him quite by chance—I was trying up my bootlace!"

"Lucky for you Quelch didn't think of asking you how you knew," said Harry Wharton drily. "Come on, you chap! We've got time to punt the ball about a bit before dinner."

"I say, you fellows!"

But the Famous Five were gone.

Billy Bunter cast an angry blink after them. He was feeling very injured. He was in his usual stony state, and his long-expected postal-order had not arrived. And cash was imperatively required that afternoon. Billy Bunter looked forward with almost ecstatic delight to standing treat to Miss Cora, who had a deep and earnest love for him that equalled Bunter's own. But evidently that enjoyment could not be purchased without money. Where the money was to come from was a problem the Owl of the Remove had to solve.

Bunter was not a brilliant scholar, and he was popularly supposed to be every known kind of a duffer. But he had a gift that amounted to genius for raising the wind. He was a borrower of drossed skill; indeed, it was said that he had once succeeded in extracting a loan from Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior. That was a performance that almost approached the miraculous. Orpheus, with his lyre, is said to have drawn iron tears from Pluto's eyes; but that was a mere joke in comparison with drawing money from Fisher T. Fish.

But Bunter's luck was out that afternoon. He tried junior after junior—Squiff and Penfold, Ogilvy and Russell, Bolsover major and Hazeldene, and Tom Brown and Bulstrode, Rake and Willey and Mark Linley—but the result was nil. Billy Bunter and his expected postal-order were too well known. Perhaps the juniors were practising war-time economy; at all events, they did not seem to see any reason for handing Bunter their pocket-money to be expended in the tuckshop. Even Lord Mauleverer shook his head and walked hastily away when Bunter tackled him. And when Bunter pointed out to Vernon-Smith that he had lots of money, the Bouncer admitted that he had, and added that he intended to keep it in his pocket.

And after dinner, when Bunter ran down Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior waved him off with a bony hand.

"Vamoose!" he ejaculated.

"Look here, Fishy—"

"Light out!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Nothing doing! I've heard about you; you've dunned every galoot in the Form! I guess I'm not your antelope."

"I don't want to borrow your money," growled Bunter. "I've got something to sell."

Fisher T. Fish's manner changed at once. The Removite merchant was always open to a trade.

"Show up!" he said tersely.

Billy Bunter fumbled in his pocket, and produced a knife. Fisher T. Fish looked at it over keenly. It was a handsome knife, with three blades and a corkscrew and a tin-opener and several other instruments.

"How much?" said Bunter. "That knife was a birthday present, Fishy. It cost a guinea."

"I dare say it did," agreed Fisher T. Fish. "Things always cost more than you can get for them when you want to sell. Three bob."

"Make it ten, you Shylock!"

"Three!"

"Five, then," urged Bunter.

"I guess I might have to sell it for five. I'll give you three, and you can take it or leave it," said Fish firmly.

"I'll take it, blow you!" growled Bunter. "I shall have to sell you my fountain-pen, too. How much for that fountain-pen?"

"Half-a-crown."

"You blessed Shylock! How much for this penknife? It's got a silver handle—half-marked."

"Three bob."

"Shell out, then! Look here, I want to have those things back when my postal-order comes," said Bunter.

"So you can—at my price," said Fisher T. Fish, pocketing the articles, and handing over eight shillings and sixpence.

"If you want 'em back this week, I'll let you have the lot for a pound."

"A pound!" yelled Bunter.

"Yes, and cheap at the price. That's a ripping knife, and

the fountain-pen's a corker, too," said Fish. "The three would be cheap at a pound."

"You've only given me eight-and-six, you rotter!" "I guess I'm buying. When I'm selling, it's rather a different proposition." And the Yankee junior walked away cheerily with his plunder.

Billy Bunter snorted. "Well, eight-and-six is eight-and-six," he murmured. "I hope Wharton won't miss that penknife before my postal-order comes; and—Dutton will make a fuss about this pocket-knife if he misses it. I suppose, and that rotter Rake will be howling about his fountain-pen of course. How 'em!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

French Leave!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Wherefore this thumpness?" Bob Cherry shaded his eyes with his hand, as if dazzled.

It was close on time for afternoon lessons when William George Bunter came out of the School House, and Bob Cherry greeted him thus humorously.

Many other eyes as well as Bob's turned on Bunter in surprise.

Bunter was resplendent.

As a rule, the Owl was the most slovenly junior in the school, with the possible exception of his minor, Sammy. His hands were seldom quite clean; his collar was never spotless; his hair generally needed brushing; and his clothes always needed it. He had a perfect genius for getting shiny elbows and baggy knees.

But Bunter's slovenliness had vanished now; it was gone from the gaze like an unbecoming dream.

His clothes were well brushed and very neat. He wore a handsome fancy waistcoat, which seemed a little tight, but was very striking. His collar was brilliant, his tie, a very handsome one, neatly tied. His boots were a picture. His silk hat almost lighted up the quadrangle. His trousers were still a little baggy at the knees, but untimely grease and ink spots had been cleaned off them.

"My hat!" ejaculated Wharton. "What's the game, Bunter? Going to see the vicar?"

"Blow the vicar!" said Bunter.

"Going to tea with the Head?"

"Bless the Head!"

"It's for Miss Cora!" chuckled Skinner. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter gave Skinner a furious blink.

The juniors chorled. Skinner had evidently hit on the cause of Bunter's unaccounted finery.

"Where did you dig up that waistcoat?" asked Dick Rake.

"It's Mauly's!" roared Bob Cherry. "I've seen Mauly in it. Did Mauleverer lend it to you, Bunter?"

"Not if he knew it," grinned Squiff.

"I—I've borrowed it," stammered Bunter. "You—you needn't mention it to Mauly. He might be waxy."

"How on earth did you make it meet round you?" exclaimed Wharton. "It isn't made of elastic, is it?"

"I've had to cut it at the back," confessed Bunter.

"My hat! You've taken Mauly's waistcoat without asking him, and cut it at the back!"

"Well, it was no good asking him; he'd only have said 'No!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That isn't your hat," said Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

Harold Skinner tilted the hat off Bunter, and it slid down over his fat little nose and rolled into a puddle. Bunter gave a howl of wrath as it settled in muddy water.

"You rotter, you've ruined that hat!" he shouted.

"Well, I'll bet it isn't yours!" chuckled Skinner. "Pass, Snoop!"

Snoop passed the silk topper, and Skinner caught it with his foot and sent it sailing away into the quadrangle.

"Dash it all, that's a rotten trick!" said Harry Wharton.

"I'd take Skinner's Sunday topper for that, if I were you, Bunter."

"That's Skinner's Sunday topper!" growled Bunter.

"What?"

Skinner, who was about to chase the sailing hat, turned back suddenly, as if he had been electrified.

"What's that?" shrieked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner's face was worth a guinea a box, so to speak. He had suspected Bunter of borrowing the hat, but it had not occurred to him that it had been borrowed out of his own hatbox. It was his own precious Sunday topper that he had used as a football!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 460.

"You can jump on it if you like," said Bunter. "It's yours, you know."

"Mine!" stuttered Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll—I'll smash you, you fat rotter!" yelled the infuriated Skinner.

"No, you jolly well won't," grinned Bob Cherry, jerking Skinner back as he was rushing at Bunter. "Bunty didn't ask you to damage the hat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose one of you fellows will lend me a topper?" said Bunter. "Mine's a bit rusty."

"Lend me got at him!" yelled Skinner. But in Bob Cherry's strong grasp, the woody Skinner raged in vain.

"Keep grgit," urged Bob. "Otherwise, I shall shake you—like that!"

"Yaroooh!"

"And bump you over, like that!"

"Yooap!"

"And touch you up with my boot—like that!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Skinner fled. He did not want any more samples of what Bob would do.

"Can I have your Sunday topper, Wharton?"

"No fear!"

"Why, you've got my best boots!" suddenly yelled Johnny Bull, who had been regarding Bunter's feet for some minutes with fixed attention.

"Ahem! You—you see, mine are rather shabby—"

"Why, you—you got burglar! Take 'em off!" roared Johnny.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"That's one of Smithy's collars," chuckled Bob Cherry; "and I'll swear the necktie is Mauly's! He's got his own trousers on; he couldn't jam himself into any other bags at Grayfriars!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where did he get his purple socks?" howled Snoop.

"They're Temple's, ain't they?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors smiled. It was evident that Bunter had made a regular round in order to put a good appearance in the eyes of Miss Cora. What Temple of the Fourth would say when he learned that Bunter had borrowed his purple silk socks was unimaginable.

Perhaps it was fortunate for Bunter that the school bell went just then, before the juniors made any further discoveries. Otherwise, it might have transpired that his nice white shirt was Wharton's, and his sleeve-links Nugent's, and his tiepin Wibley's, and his watchchain Johnny Bull's.

"There goes the bell," said Wharton. "Come on!"

"He's got my best boots on!" fulminated Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha! Too late to change now!"

"But they're my best boots—"

"You can peel them off when we come out of the Form-room," chuckled Wharton. "He won't hurt 'em indoors. Come on!"

The juniors hurried off to the class-room, but Bunter did not follow. Bunter sped upstairs as fast as his fat little legs would go. Bunter did not generally move quickly; he had a considerable weight to carry. But he moved very quickly now. In less than two minutes he came down, with a gleaming topper in his hand—Harry Wharton's Sunday topper. He jammed it on his head, and scuttled out into the quadrangle.

While the Removites were gathering in their Form-room, Bunter was scudding out of the gates, and down the road to Farnfield.

Mr. Quelch came into the Remove-room.

The Remove were all in their places, excepting Bunter. The Form-master noted his absence at once.

"Bunter? Where is Bunter? Do you know where Bunter is, Wharton?"

"No, sir!" said Harry.

Mr. Quelch frowned, and the first lesson began. There was a cane ready for Billy Bunter when he came in late, but he did not come in late. He did not come in at all. Billy Bunter, heedless of the terrific interview with Mr. Quelch that was certain to follow, had cut lessons for the afternoon.

Write to the Editor of

ANSWERS

if you are not getting your right PENSION

"O H, dear!" Billy Bunter halted, out of breath. He had covered a quarter of a mile at full trot, a very unaccustomed exertion for the Owl of the Remove.

He stopped at the stile in the lane, and plumped upon it, and pumped in breath.

It had been necessary to hurry at first, in case Mr. Quelch should look for him, or send a prefect to do so. It would have been an inglorious end to Bunter's escapade if he had been marched back to Greyfriars by his father. But he was out of danger now, and he stopped for a much-needed rest.

Bunter had done his best to get leave for the afternoon. How he had found the nerve to take French leave he hardly knew. But he had done it. He tried not to think of what would happen afterwards.

He pumped in breath on the stile, and reflected. He did not know by what train Miss Cora was arriving; he had not "happened" to hear that item. It was a fine autumn afternoon, with a keen breath in the air from the sea. It was not long since dinner, but Bunter was beginning to feel hungry. Eight shillings and sixpence jingled in his trousers-pocket—he had manfully resisted the temptation to blow his new supply of cash in Mrs. Mimbles's shop at Greyfriars. He was thinking now that he had better drop in at Uncle Clegg's in the village, on his way to the station. Only—only if he once started, he knew how the cash was likely to run away, and he wanted particularly to be in funds when he met Miss Cora, to have the great delight of treating that young lady to the best that the village tuck-shop could supply.

There was a struggle in Bunter's mind—quite an unaccustomed struggle. Almost for the first time in his life, Billy Bunter was thinking of another person as well as himself. Such was the miracle the fair Cora had performed!

"Hallo, Fat Jack of the bonelouse!" Billy Bunter blinked up as he was hailed in that disrespectful manner. A lanky youth had stopped in the lane to grin at him. It was a cheeky youth named Hanks, who belonged to the village of Pegg. Master Hanks was a gawky youth, who did not take kindly to work, and whose chief occupation seemed to be lounging about the lanes and smoking cheap cigarettes. He did odd jobs at the Anchor Inn, in Pegg, when the spirit moved him to industry, which was not often. Master Hanks did not like Greyfriars fellows, having once been soundly licked by Bob Cherry for rudeness to the Cliff House schoolgirls. If it had been Bob Cherry sitting on the stile, Master Hanks would have given it a wide berth; but as it was Bunter, the cheeky youth saw opportunities for fun.

Bunter blinked at him nervously. Hanks was a fellow of seventeen, and he towered over Bunter. And Hanks evidently meant business.

"E-g-good-afternoon!" murmured Bunter feebly, wishing at that moment that he was safe in the Remove Form-room at Greyfriars.

"What you doin' out of school, hey?" asked Hanks.

"Playing wag, boy?"

"I-I've got leave."

"Didn't expect to meet me, did yer?"

"Nunno."

"Quite a pleasure, ain't it?" grinned Hanks, enjoying the apprehension in the fat face of the Owl of the Remove.

"Ye-o-es; awfully!" stammered Bunter. "H-h-how do you do?"

"Feel up to a race?" asked Hanks, chuckling.

"N-n-no."

"That's a pity," said Hanks, with a shake of the head.

"Eh! Why, it's a pity?"

"Because I'm goin' to race you to the village," explained Hanks. "I'm goin' to give you my boot all the way, unless you beat me in the race—see?"

"I—I say, you know—"

"Get off that stile!"

"I—I say—"

"Are you goin' to get off that stile?" roared Hanks, in a bullying manner that was quite worthy of Bolsover major of Greyfriars.

"Yes, certainly, if—if you like!" gasped Bunter.

He slid off the stile, quaking.

"Now, you start," said Hanks, with great enjoyment. "You start, my pippin! Hevory time I get near you I shall land out with my boot—like that!"

Billy Bunter gave a yell as Hanks' heavy boot clumped THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 460.

EVERY MONDAY.

The "Magnet" LIBRARY.

ONE PENNY.

on him. He started to run. There was nothing else to be done.

Billy Bunter was not a good sprinter. He put on all the speed he could, in the desperate hope of outdistancing the young rascal behind him. But Hanks' long legs easily kept pace, and every now and then he landed out with his boot, and Bunter gave a yell of anguish.

That race to the village was one of the most painful experiences of Bunter's life. It did not even occur to him to turn on his tormentor—in which case the bully would probably have let him alone. The Owl was only thinking of escape.

Gasping and puffing and panting, Bunter tore on, with the choking Hanks behind him.

Friarale came in sight, and Bunter plodded gaspingly on into the village street. There Master Hanks, roaring with laughter, gave up the pursuit.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, erumts! Boast! Yaw-aw-ow-ow!"

He blinked round, in great relief to see that the lanky youth from Pegg was gone. Then he rolled into Uncle Clegg's shop, feeling that he simply must have some refreshment after his arduous labours.

But after one ginger-pop and one doughnut Bunter stopped.

It needed an almost superhuman effort to tear himself away from the tuckshop and its fascinating contents. His money seemed to be burning a hole in his pocket. But Bunter made the effort, with many inward groans. He rolled out of Uncle Clegg's establishment, and, after a nervous blink round to make sure that the obnoxious Hanks was not in sight, started for the station.

He waited on the platform, and blinked at the next train that came in; but Miss Cora was not among the passengers.

As he waited for the next, he was assailed by a fresh temptation in the form of an automatic machine. But after extracting one packet of chocolate and devouring it, he tore himself away.

The half-past three train from Court-field came in at last, and Billy Bunter rolled out of the waiting-room to inspect the passengers.

Among them was a plump young lady with a bright colour and bright eyes, and Billy Bunter recognised his Form-master's niece.

Miss Cora Quelch stepped out of the train with a bag in her hand and a rug over the other arm. She started for the exit from the platform, evidently not expecting to be met. Billy Bunter hurried forward. He planted himself in Miss Cora's path, and raised Harry Wharton's Sunday topper gracefully.

"E-g-good-afternoon, Miss Cora!" he stammered.

The young lady halted.

"You—you remember me?" gasped Bunter, with a crimson face, and in his confusion letting Nugent's best gloves fall on the platform.

"Yes, I think so," said Miss Cora. "Don't you belong to Greyfriars?"

"I'm Bunter!" said the Owl of the Remove reproachfully. Miss Cora nodded.

"Yes, I remember you now," she said, with a charming smile. "How do you do, Bunter?"

She shook hands with the fat junior, with a powerful grip that made Bunter wriggle a little.

"I—I came to meet you, you know," stammered Bunter. "Mum-mum may I e-carry your h-b-bag?"

"Certainly," said Miss Cora, handing it over; "and the rug, too, if you like. And the umbrella."

Billy Bunter took the bag and the rug and the umbrella. Then he fielded Nugent's gloves, Wharton's silk hat falling off as he did so. Miss Cora kindly handed him the hat, and Bunter jammed it on his head again. It was a trifle small for Bunter, and did not feel very secure on his round head. Laden with Miss Cora's impedimenta, Bunter toiled after the plump young lady out of the station.

"What a ripping afternoon for a walk!" said Miss Cora.

"Come on! Do you find the bag heavy, Bunter?"

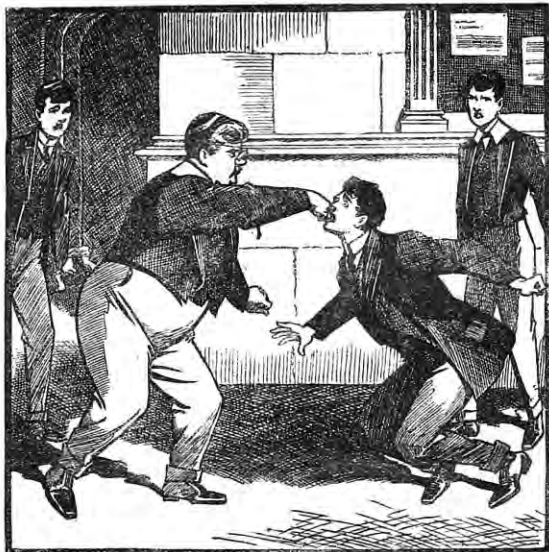
"N-n-not at all," gasped Bunter, who was staggering under it.

"Do you think you can carry it to Greyfriars?"

"I—I—I—"

"You're not very strong, I think."





Bunter gripped Temple's nose between a fat finger and thumb. "Guggggg!" spluttered the captain of the Fourth. (See Chapter 10.)

Not for worlds would Bunter have admitted to Miss Cora that he wasn't strong.

"It's nothing to me," he gasped. "I can c-carry it quite easily."

"Come on, then!" said Miss Cora briskly.

And Bunter came on, suppressing his groans manfully as he toiled along under the bag, the rug, and the umbrella.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Hard Cheese!

"I—I say—"

Billy Bunter called a halt as they reached the end of the village street, outside Uncle Clegg's shop.

"Tired?" asked Miss Cora.

"Nunno. B-but ain't you hungry after your journey?"

"How thoughtful of you!" said Miss Cora. "Now you speak of it, I am. Shall we go in here?"

"That's what I was thinking of," said Bunter, beaming.

Very gladly the fat junior deposited the bag, the rug, and the umbrella in Uncle Clegg's shop. Uncle Clegg came out to serve them, and Bunter and Miss Cora seated themselves on the stools at the counter.

Bunter's fat face was beaming now. This was a moment worth living for.

He gave his orders in quite a royal manner.

He had still nearly eight shillings, and eight shillings would go a long way in refreshments, liquid and solid, even at war prices.

With unusual politeness and consideration; he consulted Miss Cora as to what she would like. But Miss Cora's tastes were very like Bunter's. Billy Bunter had never met so intelligent a girl; he would willingly have given Miss Cora a vote on

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 460.

the spot. Miss Cora had a real appreciation of jam-tarts, doughnuts, cream-puffs, toffee, ginger-beer, and other delectable articles, which Bunter had never discovered in a girl before. And her gift for putting those things out of sight nearly equalled Bunter's.

As she warmed to the work, so to speak, she gave orders herself, and Uncle Clegg, with growing surprise in his face, handed out the goods. Uncle Clegg was used to Bunter, but Miss Cora came as a surprise to him.

Billy Bunter beamed upon his companion, enjoying her enjoyment, as it were—till suddenly a dreadful thought came into his mind.

Eight shillings was a goodly sum, but eight shillings certainly would not pay for the tuck that was going at so great a speed.

Uncle Clegg was keeping an account with a stump of pencil upon a fragment of wrapping-paper. Billy Bunter almost got a crick in the neck in his efforts to get a view of that account.

How much was it?

Certainly more than eight shillings. Bunter's heart almost failed him. At that moment he could have boiled Fisher T. Fish in oil for having driven so hard a bargain. He would have been in ample funds if the Remove

merchant had given anything like their value for Wharton's penknife, Tom Dutton's pocket-knife, and Rake's fountain-pen.

"You're not eating anything!" said Miss Cora suddenly.

"I—I—" stammered Bunter.

"Aren't you hungry?"

"No not very."

Bunter dared not eat anything more. He knew Uncle Clegg's views on the subject of ticks. The dreadful problem was—how was he to pay the bill anyway, without adding to its length himself?

"Nonsense!" said Miss Cora, who seemed a decided young lady. "Try this omelette. It's ripping!"

"I—I—"

"Concentrate! Try it!"

Billy Bunter yielded, and he tried about a pound of omelette. Miss Clegg insisted upon his trying everything she tried, and Bunter could not resist. But the thought of Uncle Clegg's little bill turned him almost cold.

"I think we'd better not have much, or we shan't be ready for tea when we get in," remarked Miss Cora at last, a remark that made Uncle Clegg gasp. (He thought the young lady oughtn't to be ready for another meal for twenty-four hours at least.)

"Just as you like," gasped Bunter.

He rolled off the stool in a worried frame of mind. A scene with Uncle Clegg was coming, and it was simply horrid that it should come in the presence of Miss Cora. Billy Bunter had a strong desire to speak to that young lady as a fellow with unlimited wealth, and a zordid dispute over a snatched moment to contemplate. He blinked in an almost agonised manner at Uncle Clegg. Anybody but a horn Bunter might have been touched by that blink. But Uncle Clegg was totting up his little account, and did not even see it.

"H-h-h-how much?" gasped Bunter.

"Fifteen-and-six," said Mr. Clegg.

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"Ah! Oh!"
Bunter ran his hands desperately through his pockets, and clinked his money, as if by clinking it he could turn eight shillings into fifteen-and-six.

"Fifteen-and-six," said Miss Cora, opening her purse.

"That will be seven-and-ninety each!"

Bunter almost gasped with the relief.

"Oh, I say, you're not going to pay, you know!" he stammered.

"Nonsense!" said Miss Cora.

"But really, you know—" protested Bunter. He felt that he must protest, though he shuddered at the prospect of Miss Cora yielding to his protestations.

Miss Cora laid seven and ninepence on the counter.

"Well, if you insist, Miss Cora," said Bunter.

"Of course! Buck up, or we shall be late for tea!"

"Threepence change, please," said Bunter, with quite a

lordly air, as he laid down his eight shillings.

He was breathing again.

Uncle Clegg handed over the threepence change, which

Bunter slid into his pocket with an air that implied that there were pounds and pence already there.

He picked up the bag, the rug, and the umbrella, and followed Miss Cora from the shop, his fat face beaming again. The bag seemed heavier than before, but Bunter staggered along with it manfully.

"Jolly good of you to come and meet me at the station!"

Miss Cora remarked. "Did my uncle send you?"

"Oh, no!"

"He sent a boy last time I came down," said Miss Cora.

"I did not like him half so much as you, Bunter."

Billy Bunter felt that he could have carried a mountain of heavy bags after that. He wondered what Wharston would have thought if he had heard it. Bunter had long had a firm belief that he was better-looking and more attractive generally than the captain of the Remove. This was the first time anybody else had appeared to share his belief.

"But how did you get away, if my uncle didn't send you?" asked Miss Cora. "It isn't a half holiday at Greyfriars, is it?"

"N-no."

Miss Cora paused, and looked at Bunter severely.

"You don't mean to say that you are playing truant?" she ejaculated.

"I—I—I—"

"You've stayed away from lessons without permission!" exclaimed Miss Quetch.

At that moment she looked remarkably like her uncle.

"I—I felt I ought to come, you know," stammered Bunter.

"My uncle will be very angry."

"Never mind. I

"It was very wrong of you, Bunter."

"But I—I—"

"I am shocked at you!" said Miss Cora.

"You are a bad boy, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Miss Cora!" said Bunter, in dismay.

"I shan't allow you to come with me," said the young lady decidedly.

"I am shocked at you! Give me my bag, and run back to school as fast as you can!"

"Oh, dear!"

Miss Cora relieved Bunter of the bag, the rug, and the umbrella.

Evidently she was angry with her devoted admirer.

"I—I say, Miss Cora—" murmured Bunter foolishly.

"Nonsense!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 460.

NEXT MONDAY—

"THE HOUSE ON THE HEATH!"

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharston & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Miss Cora marched off, leaving the Owl of the Remove blinking after her in deep dismay.

"Oh, cums!" murmured Bunter.

The fat junior had had an idea that Cora would admire his nerve in cutting lessons for her sake. But the form-master's niece seemed to take quite a different view of the matter.

She did not look round once, but walked away quite quickly up the lane towards Greyfriars, carrying the bag much more easily than Bunter had done.

Billy Bunter, deeply disconsolate, followed her up the lane, not daring to rejoin her. His pace was not quite equal to Miss Cora's, and he soon felt behind.

But he puffed on manfully to keep the young lady in sight.

This was not the way he had hoped to return to Greyfriars with Cora, and perhaps the young lady would have relented if she could have seen the pathos in his fat face. But as Miss Cora had no eyes in the back of her head she could not see it, and she strode on regardless.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter to the Rescue!

"M"urder! Was a whisper!

Of course Hanks detached himself from a grassy bank beside the lane, and drove away the stump of an axe. He stored his explanation as Miss Cora went in sight.

Master Hanks was late for mischief that afternoon. Satan, as the proverb has it, finds work for idle hands. Ragging Bunter had cheered Hanks up considerably, and at the sight of Miss Cora and her baggage the merry youth saw a further prospect of fun—not being restrained by any notions of civility.



Billy Bunter was not a good sprinter, but he put on all the speed he could, in the desperate hope of outdistancing the rascal behind him. (See Chapter 4.)

"Cherry yer bag, miss?" he said.

Miss Cora glanced at him.

"No, thanks!" she said curily.

"You better let me carry it," said Hanks. "You got enough to carry."

Miss Cora's eyes gleamed.

Possibly she was a little sensitive on the subject of her plumpness. At all events, Hanks' rude remark made her angry.

She dropped the bag and the rug, took a business-like grip on the umbrella, and brought it down upon the astonished Hanks, who uttered a yell of pain as the umbrella smote him.

"Voo-rooh!" Why, you idiomat' rat!" yelled Hanks furiously. "I've a jolly good mind to slog yer!"

The young rascal was not quite capable of slogging a girl, however, so he took his revenge upon Miss Cora's property. He grabbed up the bag and made off with it.

"Give me my bag!" shrieked Miss Cora.

"Come and fetch it!" retorted Hanks.

"You ruffian!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Hanks.

Miss Cora charged him with the umbrella, but it was easy for Hanks to dodge the plump young lady. She was very quickly quite out of breath, and she stood panting and crimson, with Hanks still out of reach.

"I'm goin' to drop it in the ditch!" grinned Hanks. "If you want it, come and fetch it, Miss Tubby!"

Miss Cora looked round desperately.

Down the road towards the village a fat figure was in sight, plodding on.

"Bunter!" shrieked Miss Cora.

Billy Bunter blinked up.

"Help!"

Bunter stood still.

It was the chance of a lifetime. Here was Miss Cora attacked—at least, her bag was attacked—by a young ruffian. It was Hunker's chance to rush in and cover himself with glory. Even a defeat and a terrible licking would be glorious under the circumstances.

But—but—but—

Billy Bunter's heart failed him. He was nothing like a match for the bulking loafer, and he was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. And there were his glasses, too. Hanks was sad enough to punch him there, and broken glass in his eyes meant awful results. And without his glasses he couldn't see.

Bunter seemed to be rooted to the ground.

"Billy!" shrieked Miss Cora, thinking that he could not hear.

Billy!

Miss Cora had called him Billy!

It was enough! Something that Bunter himself could not understand moved within him.

He had an intense desire to scurry back to Friaridale as fast as his legs could go. Instead of which he found himself rushing towards the scene of action, his eyes gleaming through his glasses, and his fat fists clenched.

"I'm coming!" he gasped.

Hanks did not seem alarmed. He roared with laughter at the sight of the fat, short-sighted junior puffing to the rescue.

Bunter came up breathless; but he did not pause. He rushed right at Hanks. He tore off his glasses, and pitched them recklessly into the grass by the road. Without his glasses on, Hanks loomed up mistily before him; but Bunter rushed on like a paladin of old.

"Put down that bag, you cad!" he panted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hanks almost doubled up with mirth at the idea of Bunter attacking him.

"Clear off!" he gasped. "Buzz away, you fat wasp! Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter did not move away. He rushed on, and Master Hanks had to drop the bag to defend himself.

He drove out his right at Bunter's chest, and the Owl of the Remove went spinning.

He smote the hard road with a heavy smite, and Hanks yelled again.

But he yelled too soon. Bunter was up in a twinkling, and he pounced on the hulking Hanks and closed with him.

"Now, you rotter!" gasped Bunter.

He clung to the lanky youth, pommelling for all he was worth.

Hanks gave blow for blow, and a terrific combat was soon raging.

Miss Cora, not being able to interfere, calmly sat on her bag and watched.

Bunter got in several blows with his heavy weight behind them, which told upon his bulky antagonist, and then they

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 460.

lost their footing and rolled in the dusty road, still punching.

Bunter's little fat nose was streaming red. One of his eyes was closed. Wharton's silk hat was rolling in the dust; Johnny Bull's best boots were scraped and scratched; Vernon Smith's collar was torn out; Mauleverer's necktie was ragged; and Mauleverer's waistcoat had burst all its buttons.

But Billy Bunter did not heed. He was roused to the fighting itch, and, to his own surprise, he was not afraid of his adversary.

He punched and battered Hanks with terrific energy, and Hanks' blows grew much feebler. Like most bullies, Hanks did not like a tough fight, and Bunter was fighting with the ferocity of a wild cat.

"Leggo!" panted Hanks at last. "Yow-wow-wow! My eye! Ow, my nose! Oh, my eye! Lemme go, 'ang yer!"

Thump—thump—thump! Biff—biff!

Hanks dragged himself loose at last, leaving Bunter on the ground. But Bunter jumped up, still raging for gore.

To his amazement, Hanks was going down the road as fast as his lanky legs would carry him.

"Yah! Funk!" yelled Bunter. Bunter was great at that moment. It was the first time he had ever been able to yell "funk" after a fleeing foe. "Yah! Coward! Come back and fight it out!"

Hanks disappeared from sight.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. "Grooh! Oh, dear! Yow-wow-wow!"

"Are you hurt?" asked Miss Cora kindly.

"Oh, crumbs! N-n-not at all!" gasped Bunter.

"Thank you so much for coming and helping me!" said Miss Cora. "It was very brave of you, Bunter!"

"Oh!" stammered Bunter.

"I'm afraid your nose is hurt!"

"N-no! Only—only—bleeding!"

"And your eyes?"

"It—it's all right!"

"Goodness gracious, you look dreadfully untidy!" exclaimed Miss Cora.

"I—I feel rather untidy!" groaned Bunter. "There'll be a row when Mauly sees this waistcoat—ahem—I mean—oh, my eye!"

Miss Cora helped Bunter to repair damages as much as possible. But the fat little nose continued to run red, and the dark shade about the eye was growing darker. The studholes of the collar were torn, and it could not be replaced; the necktie was too far gone to be retied.

When everything possible had been done, the unfortunate junior was still looking a wreck. He was feeling a wreck, too, and even the consciousness of glorious victory did not take the pain out of his injuries.

But he suppressed his groans with great determination. Miss Cora should not think that he was a slacker. He would have liked Miss Cora to think that he had a fight like this on his hands every day.

"There!" said Miss Cora at last. "Here are your glasses, Bunter, and here's your hat! Is there much pain now?"

"Nunno! Nothing to speak of!" stammered Bunter.

"You may carry my bag if you like, Billy," said Miss Cora softly.

That last proof of Miss Cora's forgiveness it is possible Bunter could have dispensed with. However, he shouldered the bag, and trotted on to Greyfriars with Miss Cora.

They reached the school, and parted at the door of the Head's house, and Billy Bunter rolled away towards the School House, feeling extremely used-up, but otherwise quite pleased with his afternoon's adventure.

He had quite forgotten Mr. Quelch, but he was soon reminded of that gentleman.

The Remove were coming out of their Form-room now; afternoon lessons were over. Mr. Quelch spotted Bunter as he came in, and his brow grew thunderous.

"Bunter!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter, with a jump.

Mr. Quelch's eyes dwelt upon him, noting with grim disapproval every detail of his dishevelled appearance.

The Remove fellows looked at him too, with suppressed merriment. Bunter did indeed look a picture at that moment.

"Bunter, you have missed lessons this afternoon without permission!"

"Ye-es, sir. I—I—"

"You have apparently been fighting."

"Ye-es, sir."

"How dare you appear in school in that disgraceful state?" thundered the Remove-master.

Bunter blinked at him helplessly. It really wasn't by choice that he was in that state. He would have preferred to fight Hanks without receiving a scratch, if it came to that.

"Disgraceful! Bunter, you are probably aware that you will be severely punished for staying away from lessons without leave?"

"I—I—I—" "Go and make yourself clean, you disgusting boy, and then come to my study," said Mr. Quelch grimly. The Form-master rustled away. Billy Bunter gave a deep groan as he started for the dormitory. He had called the tutor, and now it was time to pay the piper, and the prospect was not pleasant.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Doubting Thomases!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" "Quite a crowd of the Removés followed Billy Bunter into the dormitory. They were curious to know what had happened to the Owl of the Removés, and some of them were curious to know what had happened to their property.

"Been in the wars, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yow-ow!—Yes!" "Somebody been crawling on your hat?" grinned Squiff, looking at the dusty topper resting on a bed.

"By Jove, it does look a wreck!" said Harry. "I'm sorry, Wharton! It couldn't be helped," said Bunter. Wharton looked surprised.

"Eh? No need to apologise to me for ruining your own hat, is there?"

"It isn't my hat; it's yours!"

"Why, you—you—" stammered Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner. "Your topper matches mine now, Wharton. I'm jolly glad!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" echoed Lord Mauloverer. "That's jolly funny!"

"I don't see anything funny in it!"

hooted Wharton.

"Bogart! It's funny, all the same!"

chuckled his lordship.

"I'm sorry about your waistcoat, Maundy!"

"Eh?"

"And the necktie!"

"The—the necktie!"

"Yes. You can take 'em away if you like, but I'm afraid they're not much good," said Bunter. "Sorry, you know."

Lord Mauloverer suddenly ceased laughing. The humour of the situation was lost upon him now, somehow.

"You fat villain!" he roared.

"Oh, don't make a fuss, Maundy!" said Bunter peevishly. "Sniff's not going to make a fuss about his collar."

"My collar!" shouted the bouncer.

"If you're going to make a fuss, Sniffy, I'll pay for that collar when—when my postal-order comes. And if you're going to grumble about your boots, Bull, I'll buy you a new pair—out of my postal-order."

"I'm not going to grumble!" roared Johnny Bull. "I'm going to wring your neck!"

"Oh, really, Bull—Yaroooh! Keep him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Several of the Removés seized the wrathful Johnny and dragged him back in time.

"Go easy!" exclaimed Wharton, laughing. "Bunter has been through it already. He's got a blue eye, you know."

"I'll give him another to match it!" roared Johnny Bull. "Look at my best boots!"

"Well, they're not best boots now!" grinned Tom Brown.

"I'll pay for them, if you're going to make a fuss!" said Bunter loftily. "As soon as my postal-order comes—"

"The scoundrel will be terrible!" chorried Hurrey Singh.

"You see, Inky's not making any fuss about a chap borrowing his gold studs," said Bunter. "I'm sorry I've lost one of them, Inky—"

The Nabob of Bhanipur looked at Bunter as if he could eat him.

"You have lost my gold studs?" he ejaculated.

"Only one of them," said Bunter. "It must have come out when I was fighting. I had a terrific fight, simply terrific! Your silver links are all right, Nugent—"

"Are they?" gasped Nugent. "Lucky for you they are, you Prussian!"

"And so's your tiepin, Wab—"

"Mum-mum-my tiepin!" stammered Wibley.

"Yes. And I'm glad to say that your watchchain wasn't broken, Bull. I thought it was at first—"

"My Sunday watchchain!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, don't begin grousing about that! I expect I shall get enough grousing from Temple of the Fourth when he sees his socks!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 460.

NEXT MONDAY—

"THE HOUSE ON THE HEATH!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But for the fact that Bunter had been in the wars, and had come home a decided wreck, he would probably have paid dearly for sporting borrowed plumes that afternoon. But even the enraged Johnny admitted that Bunter looked as if he had had enough—and he still had Mr. Quelch to interview.

"The cheeky rotter ought to be lynched!" growled Johnny Bull. "But Quelch will pretty nearly lynch him, I expect."

"The lynchfulness will be—"

"Terrible!" chorried Bob Cherry. "Queich's gone to pick out his bestest cane, Bunter. What did you do it for, you see?"

"It was up to somebody to do the polite thing," said Bunter. "As it happened, Miss Quelch did need protection on the way home."

"And you protected her?" grinned Bob.

"Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to chuckle at! I've had a terrific fight. Of course, I was the best of it. I used my fists—"

"Your legs, you mean!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"When have you been scrapping with?" asked Wharton.

"Not the Higbieffs days; they must have been at classes."

"That rotter Hanks, of Pease. I licked him—"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"I thrashed him—"

"Ho, ha, ha!"

"He was quite knocked out—"

"Warn out with running after you?" asked Rake.

"I tell you I licked him!" roared Bunter. "He took Miss Corn's bag away, and clapped her, and I rushed up like—like a lion—"

"You mean you rushed off like a rabbit?"

"No, I don't, you rotter! I rushed up like a lion, and collared him, and thrashed him like—like anything!"

"There was a roar of laughter in the Removés dormitory. Billy Bunter's reputation as a Prussian was a little too well known, and when he did tell the truth he found no believers. The idea of the fat junior thrashing Hanks tickled the Removés, and they gelled.

"Don't you believe me!" howled Bunter indignantly.

"Of course we don't," said Bob, in surprise. "Did you expect us to?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm telling you the exact facts—"

"Don't be beat the Kaiser!" said Peter Todd. "Kaiser Bill is a fool to Bunter when it comes to real straight lying!"

"Totally, you rotter, I tell you I thrashed him within—within an inch of his life, and he bolted—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter glared furiously at the doubting Thomases. His statement that he had licked the loafer of Pease was taken as the best joke of the term. The juniors howled over it.

"Go a bit easy, Bunter!" urged Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes. "Draw it mild, you know! Don't out-Prussian the Prussians!"

Billy Bunter snorted, and rolled out of the dormitory. He had made himself as tidy as possible, and he left the floor littered with articles belonging to other fellows in a way that was anything but tidy. He left the Removés howling with laughter. Bunter as a warrior, and a victorious warrior, appealed only to the sense of humour of the Removés.

The fat junior was feeling apprehensive when he tapped at Mr. Quelch's door. The Form-master's voice sounded terrifying in his ears as Mr. Quelch bade him come in.

"Ah, it is you, Bunter!" Mr. Quelch picked up a cane. "I shall punish you very severely. A more flagrant breach of discipline I have never heard of. Hold out your hand!"

"If you please, sir—"

"You need say nothing, Bunter. Hold out your hand!"

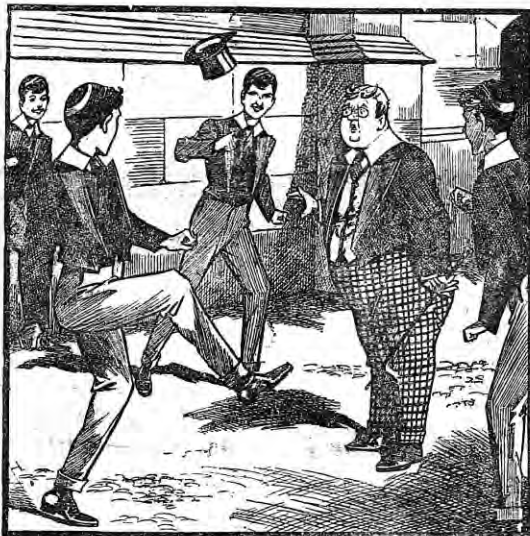
Billy Bunter held out his hand gingerly enough.

"Yaroooh!"

"Don't make those ridiculous noises, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, frowning. "Hold out your other hand!"

"Uncle!"

It was a soft voice at the door. Miss Cora Quelch stepped into the study.



Snoop passed the silk topper, and Skinner caught it with his foot and sent it sailing away into the quadrangle. (See Chapter 3.)

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

No Profit for Fishy!

MR. QUELCH lowered the cane, knitting his brows a little. Miss Cora had dropped in at an inopportune moment.

"Ahem! Cora—"

Billy Bunter blinked at Miss Cora pathetically. He hoped she was taking full note of his sufferings for her sake.

Miss Cora kissed her uncle affectionately.

"You may go, Bunter," said the Remove-master awkwardly. "I will deal with you presently."

"Yes, sir," mumbled Bunter.

"One moment," said Miss Cora calmly. "I want you to thank Bunter, uncle."

"Eh?"

"Bunter was very brave this afternoon," said Cora. "He came to my rescue, uncle. A rough, bad boy took my bag away, and would not give it to me, and Bunter thrashed him."

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"Bunter did!" he ejaculated.

"Yes. He was very brave. The bad boy was ever so much bigger than Bunter," said Miss Cora enthusiastically, "and Bunter didn't stop a moment—he just rushed at him and thrashed him till he ran away."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in great astonishment. "You—you are sure you are not making a mistake, Cora?"

Miss Cora smiled.

"Of course, uncle!"

"It is—extraordinary. I should not have suspected Bunter of showing so much courage," said the amazed Form-master.

"He was as brave as a lion," said Cora.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 460.

Billy Bunter purred like a very fat cat. This was a moment worth living for! Mr. Quelch was staring at him blankly.

"Bunter," he almost gasped, "was it in—defence of my niece that you sustained those injuries?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you not tell me?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I should not have punished you if I had known."

Billy Bunter had not had a chance of telling Mr. Quelch. But he did not say so. He preferred to spread himself.

"Ahem! I—I didn't like to—to seem to be swanking about it, sir!" he murmured.

That was a fresh surprise for Mr. Quelch. But he nodded approval.

"Quite so, Bunter. However, I wish I had known. In the circumstances, Bunter, I shall excuse you for playing truant this afternoon. You may go!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Bunter, in great relief. "Thank you, Miss Cora," he added, as he passed the girl on his way to the door; and Miss Cora nodded and smiled.

Billy Bunter left the study as if he were treading on air. The one cut he had received hardly seemed to smart, so overjoyed did he feel. At the end of the passage some of the Removites were waiting for him, and they stared as Bunter came along quite jauntily.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Haven't you been licked?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at him loftily.

"Certainly not!"

"Not after chucking lessons for this afternoon?" exclaimed Boleover major.

"No. Quelch overlooked it, under the circumstances."

"Under what circumstances?" demanded Hazeldene.

"Owing to my rescuing Miss Cora—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"You didn't have the cheek to spin that yarn to Quelch?" shouted Bob Cherry.

"It's true, you rottee!"

"Did Quelch swallow it?" yelled Rake.

"Yes, he did. It's true."

"Well, it may do for Quelch, but it won't do for us," grinned Bob Cherry. "Tell it to the marines, Bunt."

"I say, you fellows—"

"How-wow!"

The juniors walked away grinning. Nobody in the Remove was likely to believe that William George Bunter was a hero. They knew him too well. Bunter rolled away to his study. His little feud in the village had left him quite ready for tea—if there was any tea going. Bunter had no contribution to make to it, but he was willing to take the lion's share of what there was.

Tom Dutton was looking round the study in a puzzled way when Bunter came in.

"Have you seen my knife, Bunter?" he asked.

Bunter gave a guilty start. He had forgotten Dutton's knife. The deaf junior had missed it now.

"Your—your knife!" he stammered. "Did you say your knife, Dutton?"

"Eh? No, I didn't say my wife!" snapped Dutton.

"How could I have a wife, you fat duffer? I said my knife."

"Have you mislaid it?"

"I left it on the table this morning," said Dutton. "It isn't lost—somebody's borrowed it—some cheeky ass. Was it you?"

"I'll help you look for it," said Bunter.

He helped industriously; but there was not much chance of finding the pocket-knife in No. 7 Study, under the circumstances. Tom Dutton, looking very cross, went not to make inquiries after his knife; he went up and down the Remove passage, making inquiries, generally misunderstanding the answers he received, owing to his affliction—which was unfortunate not for himself alone. He came to No. 14 at last, where Johnny Bull and Squiff and Fisher T. Fish were at tea.

"Anybody here seen my knife?" asked Dutton, looking in at the door.

"What sort of a knife?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Eh! My knife, you know—pocket-knife, with three blades and a corkscrew and tin-opener and things," explained Dutton. "Some ass has borrowed it off my study table without asking permission, and I'm going to slaughter him."

"Why, that sounds like the knife you were trying to sell me, Fishy!" exclaimed Squiff, with a suspicious look at the Yankee junior.

"I guess that was my knife," said Fish. "I bought it of Bunter."

Squiff chuckled.

"I'll bet you it was Dutton's."

Fishy shrugged his shoulders.

"I calculate I can't help that. I bought that knife and paid for it, and I kinder reckon it's mine."

"Show it to Dutton."

"None!"

"Look here, you're not going to keep it if it's Dutton's!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "You know what Bunter is. You should have made sure it was his before you bought it."

"I guess that's my knife now," said Fisher T. Fish obstinately. "I reckon I'm not losing three bob. Tain't my bonney where Bunter gets the things he sells."

"What are you all gabbling about?" asked Tom Dutton crossly. "I can't hear you. You fellows mumble so. Have you seen my knife or not?"

"I think Fishy's got it," said Squiff.

"Eh?"

"Ask Fish!" shouted the Australian junior.

"I'm not talking about a dish—I'm talking about my knife. Have you seen my pocket-knife, or haven't you?"

Squiff pointed to Fisher T. Fish. The Yankee junior was sidling towards the door.

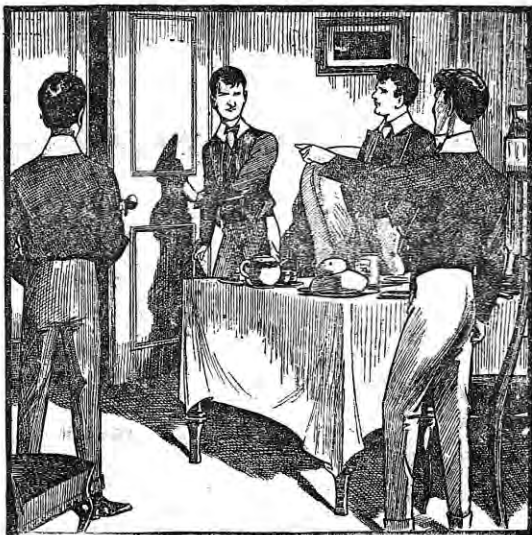
"Has he got it?" demanded Dutton.

Squiff nodded.

"Here, you blessed Yankee—"

"Let up!" yelled Fisher T. Fish indignantly, as Dutton yanked him back into the study. "I guess I don't know anything about your old knife."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 460.



equally pointed to Fisher T. Fish, who was sidling towards the door. "Has he got it?" demanded Dutton. Squiff nodded. (See Chapter 8.)

"Hand it over, you rotter!"

"I haven't got your knife!" shrieked Fish.

"Eh? You've got it? Then hand it over!"

"Nope! I haven't—I've got my own knife!" yelled Fish.

"Not exactly a bone knife—the handle's bone," said Dutton. "Anyway, I'll soon see if it's mine. Show it me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish did not intend to show the knife if he could help it. But he had no choice. Squiff jerked it out of his pocket and held it up. Fisher T. Fish made a furious grab at it.

"You mugwump! That's mine!" he shouted.

"That's it," said Dutton. "Give it to me, Fishy."

"It's not yours—"

"I'll give you paws!" said Dutton wrathfully. "Will you hand over my knife? I suppose you don't want to steal it?"

"I bought that knife of Bunter."

"Eh?"

"You can have it for three bob!" yelled Fish desperately.

"Who's a snob?" roared Dutton.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "I didn't call you a snob. You can have that knife for what I gave for it—three shillings."

"Certainly not! Like your cheek to think I should be willing to let you keep my knife! No, I'm not willing. Hand it over!"

"Do you think I'm going to part with that knife for six?"

"Yes, I'll fix you, if you don't; jolly sharp, too! Look here, will you hand me that knife or not?" roared Dutton. "I suppose you're not a thief, are you, as well as a money-grubbing shark?"

"I tell you, I bought that knife from Bunter!" shrieked Fish. "I'm not parting with it without the money!"

"Funny, eh? Well, I'll show you how funny it is to pinch a chap's pocket-knife!" exclaimed Dutton indignantly, and he snatched at Fisher T. Fish.

The pocket-knife was in Tony Dutton's possession in less than a minute, and Fisher T. Fish was sitting on the study carpet holding his nose.

"Want any more?" demanded Dutton.

"Oh, yes-whoop!"

"Then for my property alone, in the future! I don't mind lending you the knife, but you can't keep it, you greedy bunder! Like your cheek, I think! As for being funny, I think you're the party who looks funny at present!"

And Tony Dutton stalked out of the study, sniffing contemptuously. Johnny Bull and Squiff were howling with merriment, and Fisher T. Fish was howling in quite another way. The Remove merchant had not prospered over his bargain, after all. He staggered to his feet, dabbing at his long, thin nose with his handkerchief.

"You cackling galeots!" gasped. "There's nothing to snigger at! I guess I'll have my three bob back from Bunter, or make potato-scrippings of him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish strode wrathfully down the passage to No. 7. Peter Todd had come in to tea, and Dutton was warmly explaining to him how Fisher T. Fish had had the incredible cheek to collar his pocket-knife. Billy Bunter did not make any remark. He was willing to let it go at that.

Fishy burst into the study like a hurricane.

"Bunter, you mugwump!" he roared. "I want the three bob I gave you for that knife! Hand it over, or I'll make potato-scrippings of you!"

Billy Bunter could not hand over the cash; he was reposing in the tilt of Uncle Clegg, at Finsdale. He rocked round the study table, with the wrathful Yankoo after him.

"I—I say—" he stammered.

"Three bob!" yelled the exasperated Fish. "Hand it over!"

"I—I—"

"You mugwump! You jay! I guess I'll scalp you bald-headed! I'll— Will you hand over my three bob?"

It came suddenly into Billy Bunter's mind that as he had backed Hanks, Fisher T. Fish would not be a very far-handful for him. He stopped dodging the irate Yankoo.

"Get out of my study!" he roared out.

"What-a-ut!"

"I don't want anything to do with you!" said Bunter loftily. "You're not honorable!"

"Eh? What? Which?"

"As for that loan of three bob—"

"It wasn't a loan, you jay!"

"As for that loan, I'll settle that when my postal-order comes. Now clear out! I don't want to talk to you."

Words failed Fisher T. Fish. He made one jump at Bunter. To his amazement, the Owl of the Remove did not dodge. He stood up to Fisher T. Fish, and let out a fat fart, with the weight of his fat body behind it. The Yankoo junior went spinning, and landed on his back on the study carpet.

"Bravo!" yelled Peter Todd. "Well hit, Fatty! Right on the wicked!"

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets!" groaned Fisher T. Fish, passing a bony hand over his face, as if to ascertain whether it was still there. "Oh, holy smoke! Yaw-ow-ow-ow!"

"Come on!" roared Bunter valorously.

Fisher T. Fish didn't come on; he squirmed out of the study and fled, with a speed which, in his own peculiar language, he would have likened unto greased lightning.

His three shillings were gone beyond recovery; and the unfortunate Remove merchant felt as if his nose had gone after them.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Looking!

BILLY BUNTER was reforming, as Bob Cherry expressed it, rather ornamental in the Form-room the next morning. The blue shade round his eye was deepening to a beautiful purple, and his little fat nose was swollen. He seemed to have some difficulty in keeping his glasses straight on it, and he blinked more than ever. But it was observed that Mr. Quelch was very kind to Bunter that morning. He even asked the fat junior how he felt, and whether he had tried a beefsteak for his eye. The juniors were astonished. It really began to look as if there was something in Bunter's yarn of a triumphant battle with the obnoxious Hanks after all.

Bunter was first out of the Form-room after lessons. He did not finger in the passage; neither did he make a bee-line for the bookshop. He rolled away to the Head's garden; and a few minutes later he might have been seen in deep conversation with Miss Gorn among the shrubberies. He came back just in time for dinner; for once in his life, Bunter was almost late for a meal.



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In spite of the adornments to his fat visage, the result of the encounter with Hanks, Bunter looked very cheerful, and Peter Todd declared that he looked much less like a boulder than usual. Miss Cora's influence was marvellous. During that day Bunter was not heard once in question that he was expecting a postal-order, or to ask any fellow to cash it in advance. He made no reference to his titled relations, and at tea-time in No. 7 study—wonder of wonders—he waited for Peter to help him, instead of annexing the lion's share on the spot. Still more marvellous, he made the following remarks:

"I—I say, Peter, if you'd like me to have my tea in Hall, I'll do it."

"Do?" said Peter. "It would be a real pleasure—not for the fellows in Hall of course."

"Oh, really, Toddy."

"But—wherefore this thinness?" asked Peter, in perplexity. "We don't often have a rabbit for tea, and you like rabbit."

"Yes, but—that I can't stand my whack!" stammered Bunter. "I'm stony."

Peter stared at him fixedly.

"You can't stand your whack?" he said, in measured tones. "You never do stand your whack, do you?"

"I—I—I suppose not—only sometimes," stammered Bunter. "I—I never thought about it much. But—but I'm going to in future."

"When your postal-order comes?" grinned Toddy.

Bunter drew a deep breath.

"I—I'm not sure I'm getting a postal-order at all, Toddy."

"Eh?"

"It mayn't come—really."

"My dear ass, I know jolly well it won't come," said Peter. "You have half-a-crown a week pocket-money, and your titled relations never squeeze out an extra brown. But what have you stopped telling whoppers for all of a sudden?"

"I—I never meant to tell whoppers, Toddy," mumbled Bunter. "A chap gets in the way of saying things, you know. But—but I'm going to make a new rule."

"About time you did," agreed Toddy. "If you're going to stop being a Prussian, I'll encourage you. I'll tell you what—every time I hear you fibbing, I'll dot you on the nose as a reminder. Is it a go?"

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know! I—I say, when my half-crown comes this week, I'm going to hand it to you, Toddy."

"What the merry thunder for?"

"My whack," said Bunter firmly. "You can take charge of it. If—if I keep it about me, it's bound to go."

"Well, my hat!" said Toddy, in blank astonishment.

Certainly there was a change in William George Bunter. It had never worried him before that he should be a hopeless sponger and borrower and fibber; but his sins seemed to have come home to him all at once.

After tea Billy Bunter left the study without having finished the cake. Toddy, in his surprise, finished it himself. Billy Bunter looked for Harry Wharton, whom he found talking to Dick Rake in the quadrangle. Rake was explaining to the Remove captain that he—Rake—couldn't possibly be left out of the next Highcliffe match; he was explaining that with considerable emphasis. He growled as Bunter interrupted with:

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, buzz off!" said Rake.

"Oh, don't," said Wharton, laughing. "I understand perfectly, Rake; you've told me the same thing seven times over, and it's quite clear."

"Look here, you ass—"

"I say, you fellows, I want to speak to both of you," said Bunter. "It's rather important. I want to ask your advice."

"Well, my advice to you is, leave my Sunday topper alone," said Harry. "Next time you borrow it there will be a dead porpoise lying about afterwards!"

"Ahem! Look here, the fact is, I'm going to turn over rather a new leaf," said Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Rake.

"I want to confess something, and ask your advice," said Bunter.

"Great Scott! Go ahead! Open confession is good for the soul," said Harry. "What terrific crimes have you committed?"

"The—the fact is, I was hard up yesterday," said Bunter. "I borrowed some things, and sold them to Fishy. I intended to get them back from the beastly Shylock when my postal-order came; but it hasn't come."

"Well, you cheeky rotter!"

"You know, Fishy, swindled me; he gave me next to nothing for them, and he wants a pound to lend them back. I can't redeem them," said Bunter. "It's weighing on my conscience!"

"On your what?" yelled Rake.

"Conscience."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 460.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HOUSE ON THE HEATH!"

"You've got a conscience?" said Rake dazedly. "Oh, my Aunt Sempronias! What next?"

"Oh, really, Rake?—I—I don't mind confessing to you chaps that—that I've done some things I'm sorry for, and—and I'm making some new resolutions," said Bunter.

"What sort of spook is this?" asked Rake.

"It isn't spook, you beast! I'm in earnest! I supposed chaps do turn over new leaves, don't they?"

"Not your sort of chap!" grinned Rake. "Still, if it's true, I'm glad to hear it. It's about time you turned over new pages and pages!"

"Well, what would you advise me to do?" asked Bunter. "I can't get the things back from Fishy, and I'm sorry I sold them to the beast now! It's a rotten position to be in, ain't it?"

"Yes, if the owners of the things get on your track," said Wharton, eyeing the fist of his Remove curiously.

His first impression had been that the fat junior was spoofing, as usual; but there was a really earnest expression in Bunter's face. And, after all, he was not bound to confess what he had done. His usual system was to pile up a mountain of whoppers in order to hide his delinquencies.

"Blessed if I don't half believe him!" said Rake, in wonder.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Well, if you're turning over a new leaf, Bunter, more power to your elbow," said Wharton. "Nobody needed it as much as you did. As for the things you've pinched, you'd better go and confess to the owners, and ask them to overlook it. They can get them back from Fishy!"

"But—but do you think they'd overlook it?" asked Bunter dubiously.

"Yes, if you own up and say you're sorry. Tell 'em what Fishy gave you, and they can give him his money back!"

"He wants a pound—"

"He wouldn't get it if I were the chap concerned," said Rake. "More likely to get a dot in the eye!"

"And—and you'd overlook the matter, Wharton, if you were the chap?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Would you, Rake?"

"Under these extraordinary circumstances, I would!" grinned Rake. "I should be pleased to give you a fair start on the straight and narrow path!"

"Good!" said Bunter, with a breath of relief. "Then I may as well tell you that you are the chap!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"It was your penknife, Wharton—"

"Mum-my penknife!"

"And your fountain-pen, Rake!"

"My fountain-pen!" yelled Rake. "I missed it last night!"

"You've sold my fountain-pen to Fishy! Why, I'll—I'll—"

"Here, keep off!" roared Bunter, in alarm. "You're going to overlook it, you know; you said so!"

"I thought it was somebody else's things you'd been pinching, you fat villain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton. "It's up to us, Rake!"

Rake glared at Billy Bunter as if he would eat him. Even in turning over a new leaf, Billy Bunter was still Billy Bunter!

"Fishy gave me three bob for your penknife, Wharton, and half-a-crown for your fountain-pen, Rake!"

"Why, it cost a guinea!" said Rake.

"Lucky he didn't give Bunter a guinea, if you're going to redeem it!" said Wharton, laughing. "We'd better see Fishy about it!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm going to settle up—"

"When you get your blessed postal-order, I suppose?"

snorted Rake.

"Nunno! I—I—I'm not expecting a postal-order!"

Wharton and Rake simply staggered.

"You're not expecting a postal-order?" gasped Rake.

"Nunno!"

"Well, that beats the band!" exclaimed Wharton. "Some ass said that the age of miracles was past, but here's Bunter telling the truth! We shall hear of the Kaiser telling the truth next!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Keep it up, Bunter," said Rake. "It's hard at first, but it comes easy in time. Now, tell us whether you've really got any titled relations?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled away without replying to that question.

His reform had not reached that point yet.

"What on earth's come over him?" said Rake, puzzled.

Harry Wharton laughed.

Of course, you'll get licked; but if you get in one punch with your weight behind it, Temple will remember it."

"I'm going to lick him," said Bunter fiercely. "Hold my jacket, Toddy—and my glasses. Mind you don't drop them! Now, then, Temple, you cad!"

"Ready?" chuckled Fry. "Here's the gloves!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

It was a roar of encouragement from the Removites. And Billy Bunter pranced up to Cecil Reginald Temple and went it.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bravo, Bunter!

HALF the Lower School had gathered in the gym at the amazing news that Billy Bunter was fighting Temple of the Fourth. Bunter, who generally avoided scraps with great care—who had been chased along the passage by fags of the Third Form—Bunter was fighting Temple! The juniors rubbed their eyes. It was no dream. There he was, squaring up to Temple like an enraged turkey-cock.

Temple was flushed and angry. A fight with the fat, unwieldy junior was miles below the dignity of the great Cecil Reginald. There was no credit in such a victory. The whole affair was ridiculous. He would have preferred to bestow a lofty kicking upon Bunter for pulling his nose. And Temple, who was not a bad fellow, did not want to hurt the chunky Owl of the Remove. But he was in for it now. Billy Bunter was on the war-path, and Cecil Reginald had to fight.

Bunter's knowledge of boxing was not great. And without his glasses he saw things in a mist. And, at any time, Temple was a match for at least three Bunters. So Billy Bunter's prospects were not rosy. But he piled in with terrific energy, and Temple, taken quite by surprise, was driven back, and an unexpected drive on the chin, with any amount of weight behind it, sent him staggering. There was a yell as Temple crashed down on his back.

"Well hit, Bunter!"

"Bravo!"

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Temple's down! Bravo, Bunter!"

"Good old porpoise!"

Temple was up again in a twinkling.

He rushed on, and the Owl of the Remove did not have any more chances. He felt as if he were the centre of a

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

cyclone, and in a few minutes he was gasping on his back, unable to rise.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" he mumbled, making vain efforts to get on his feet.

Temple peeled off the gloves with a contemptuous gesture.

"The fat fool's finished," he said.

"You not finished!" panted Bunter. "I'm going to lick you, you cad!"

Peter Todd helped the fat champion up.

"You're done, old chap," he said. "Never mind. You put up a terrific fight."

"The scrapulous was really terrific," remarked Hurree Singh. "The ostensible Bunter is a great warrior."

"I'm going to lick him!" gasped Bunter. "Lemme alone! Come on, Temple, you rotter, I'm ready for you!"

Temple burst into a laugh.

"I won't come on!" he said. "Lap-dog-like for what I said, Bunter. It was rather rotten, and I admit it. There, that's good enough!"

"Well, if you put it like that!" gasped Bunter.

"Bunter is satisfied," grumbled Bob Cherry. "You can let him off now."

"Ha, ha, ha?"

Billy Bunter panted in breath.

"All right! Now, where's that end, Skinner? I'm going to lick Skinner!"

"My hat! Ain't you satisfied yet?" demanded Peter Todd.

"I'm going to lick Skinner!"

"Look here!"

"I'm going to lick Skinner!" roared Bunter.

"You'd better let Skinner wait," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"I'm not going to let him wait! I'm going to lick him!"

Where is the funky cad?" bellowed Bunter.

"My hat! Isn't he a hog for fighting?" ejaculated Squiff.

"Come on, Skinner; come up, and be slaughtered."

"I'm not going to fight the fat idiot," said Skinner unreasonably.

"You are!" roared Bunter. "I'm ready for you. Come on!"

"Take a rest first," chuckled Peter Todd. "Skinner, my man will be ready for you in ten minutes."

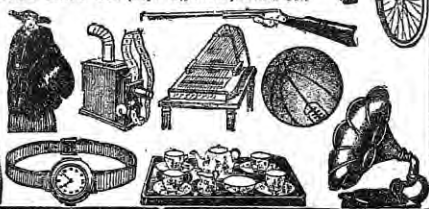
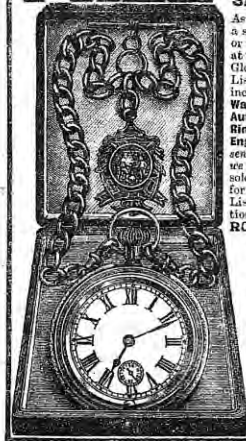
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"Skinner's got an engagement," grinned Rake, as Harold Skinner started for the door.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry took Skinner's arm and led him back. Skinner had no choice in the matter; Bob's grip was like iron.

"Look here, I'm not going to fight the silly idiot!" howled Skinner.

"Your mistake; you are," said Peter Todd. "I shouldn't wonder if he licks you, too. Blessed if I ever thought Buntz was such a fire-eater!"

Skinner growled angrily. Buntz's unexpected form made him uneasy. Skinner did not like hard knocks.

But there was no help for it, and when Buntz was rested Skinner had to toe the line.

Harry Wharton kept time. Skinner was taller than Buntz, and far more active. He ought to have had everything his own way. But Skinner was not a fighting-man, and his principal object was to avoid getting hurt. Buntz's amazing display of spirit dismayed him. In the first round the Owl of the Remove drove him round the ring, panting stertorously after him.

"Stand up to him, Skinner!" shouted Todd. "Buntz's breath will give out soon. Fair play!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time!"

Buntz sank on Todd's knee, gasping.

"Get close to him next time," admonished Peter. "Skinner doesn't like being punched. Don't let him keep you off."

"I won't!" gasped Buntz.

In the next round Skinner was cornered, and then he put his beef into it. The Owl of the Remove was hammered right and left. In spite of the gloves, severe damage was done on both sides. Skinner was fighting with the fury of a cornered funk, and Buntz did not seem to care how much he was hurt.

But just as Wharton was about to call time Buntz drove in a right-hander which fairly doubled Skinner up.

Skinner went down with a crash.

"Bravo, Buntz!"

"Good man!" said Peter Todd, taking his fat study-mate on his knee. "Good man! One more like that and you're the giddy victor!"

"Blessed if I don't believe he did lick Hanks the other day, now!" said Bob Cherry, in wonder.

"I told you I did!" snorted Buntz. "If you can't take my word, Bob Cherry, I'll ask you to stand up to me when I'm done with Skinner!"

"Oh, crumbs! I take your word!" said Bob, with great haste. "Spare me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time!" said Wharton.

But Skinner did not rise. He was done.

Snoop picked him up and led him away. Billy Buntz remained the victor on the hard-fought field.

"Better come and bathe your eye, Buntz," said Todd.

"Looks as if it's going to match the other! And your nose—oh, my hat!"

A cheer followed Billy Buntz as Todd led him from the gym. The fellow discussed the amazing occurrence in almost awed tones. In the Remove dormitory Billy Buntz removed the signs of the conflict as well as he could, with Todd's kind assistance. But he blinked at his face in the glass in dismay when he had finished.

"Oh, dear!" he groaned.

"Cheer!" said Peter. "You licked him, you know."

"But—but I was going out for a walk with Miss Cora before tea," groaned Buntz. "What'll she say to a face like this?"

Peter suppressed a chuckle.

"Ahem! I think I'd cut out the walk," he remarked. "I can't say you're exactly in trim to take a young lady for a walk."

"And—having tea with the Head's wife, too; what'll she think?"

"I think I'd send an excuse," said Peter.

Buntz groaned.

"I can't explain to Cora," he mumbled. "I can't let her know they said caddish things about her. It would hurt her feelings."

Peter was silent. Evidently Billy Buntz did not intend to attract in Miss Cora's eyes over his chivalrous conduct and his great victory. Peter rubbed his nose. Was this the William George Buntz he had always known? Truly, the charms of Miss Cora had worked wonders.

"D-does my nose show much, Teddy?"

"I'm afraid it does, old chap."

"You—you think Cora will notice my eye?"

"Oh, crumbs! I think she will."

"Oh, dear!"

Billy Buntz rolled disconsolately out of the dormitory. He

hovered about the Head's garden till Miss Cora came down to the gate. The young lady stared at him.

"What ever have you been doing with your face?" she exclaimed.

"I—I say, it wasn't my fault, Miss Cora," stammered Buntz.

"You've been fighting?" said Cora severely.

"Ye-o-es."

"You are always fighting, I think!"

"No fear!" exclaimed Buntz, with great truth. "I—I never fight, you know."

"You look as if you never fight!" said Miss Cora sarcastically. "You cannot come to tea with Mrs. Locke in that state. Good-bye!"

"I—I say, aren't you going to the village after all?"

Miss Cora nodded.

"Mayn't I come?" pleaded Buntz.

"With that face?" said Miss Cora.

"Does it show very much?"

"You look like a prizefighter!"

"Oh, dear! I—I say, suppose you meet Hanks again?" said Buntz.

"I shall box his ears!"

"Suppose—suppose you meet a bull—a mad bull?" said Buntz.

"Nonsense!"

"You know, you did meet a bull last time you came down—"

"Good-bye!"

"I—I say—"

Miss Cora walked away.

Billy Buntz blinked after her pathetically through his big glasses—which sat more uncomfortably than ever upon his swollen nose. Then he rolled off in the direction Miss Cora had taken. If he could not have the ecstatic pleasure of escorting the young lady to the village, at least he could gaze upon the object of his adoration from afar.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Buntz, the Hero!

MISS CORA walked on briskly to the village. There was no doubt that the young lady liked Buntz—the Remove fellows had noticed it, and remarked that there was no accounting for tastes. But Buntz's face was indeed a shocking sight at present, and he was hardly fit company for the Form-master's niece with his black eyes and swollen nose. But the Owl of the Remove trotted on after Miss Cora, keeping her in sight. Plump and solid as Miss Cora was, in Buntz's fascinated eyes she was a fairy being whom a breath of air might hurt. Besides, supposing the obnoxious Hanks should be near? In that case, the disdainful young lady would be in need of Buntz's manly protection. Buntz, who would generally have walked a mile to avoid a fight, found himself fervently wishing that Master Hanks would appear on the scene and give him an excuse for rushing to the rescue. But Master Hanks was, unfortunately, far away.

Miss Cora turned into the wood, to take the short cut to the village. She passed Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, who raised their caps politely. The chums of the Remove grinned as Buntz came puffing up.

"Did you come out to meet us, Buntz?" asked Bob.

Buntz shook his head, and walked on without replying.

"I say, Billy, do you want a post-order cashed?" bawled Bob Cherry.

The Owl of the Remove did not even look round.

Bob chuckled.

Buntz's eyes were fixed on the solid form in advance of him, and all his energy was required to keep up with Miss Cora. The girl looked round at last, and Buntz stopped, colouring. But Miss Cora quickly made him a sign to advance.

"You have followed me!" she said severely.

"I—I—"

"You may walk with me through the wood," said Cora graciously.

Buntz beamed.

Miss Cora had reached the stream that flowed through the wood, crossed by a plank at the footpath. She was about to step on the plank when Buntz stopped her.

"Hold on!" said Buntz. "That plank ain't very safe! Better let me try it first!"

"Stuff!" said Miss Cora.

"But—but the water's jolly deep here," urged Buntz.

"Suppose you fell in?"

"Rubbish!"

"But really, you know—"

"Don't be ridiculous, Buntz!" said Miss Cora decidedly. And she stepped on the plank and strode across.

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As a matter of fact, the plank was not very safe. The stream had been swollen by rain, and it ran fast and hard down towards the Sark. The water lapped the plank, and had sapped round the earth it rested on. Miss Cora walked across the plank with a heavy stride, Bunter watching her. The plank certainly was not safe for two at a time.

There was a sudden exclamation of alarm from Miss Cora. The plank had slipped.

The girl made a hurried run to get across before it slid into the water, missed her footing on the wet plank, and fell. Bunter gave a wild gasp.

Splash!
A shriek rang out as Miss Cora fell into the water. Bunter stood frozen.

For an instant the girl disappeared from sight; then she came up, and her white face showed above the racing water. He heard current sweep her down the stream; but her clashing hand caught at a trailing branch of a willow, and she held on.

Bunter gazed at her dumbfounded.
The catastrophe had come so suddenly that he was almost stunned by it. He knew that stream, too—he knew it was yards over his depth, and he was the poorest swimmer possible. To plunge in meant being swept away into the broad Sark, and drowned helplessly.

There was an instant of struggle in Bunter's breast. His fat knees knocked together; his podgy face was as white as a sheet.

But Miss Cora's eyes turned on him in terror from the rushing stream, and Bunter acted with a quickness and courage that would have astounded himself if he had had time to think.

Splash!
Bunter was in the water, struggling clumsily to reach the girl as she clung to the willow.

The long willow branch hung out over the water, trailing in it. Miss Cora was holding to it tightly, but evidently she could not have held on for many minutes.

The water rushed and roared in Bunter's ears as he swept down the rapid current towards her.

His head went under once, but he came up again close to Miss Cora. Then his hand grasped her, and his other hand clung on to the trailing branch.

He did not speak; he could not.
He held Miss Cora, and held the branch, while the fast waters rushed past and over him.

The girl's hold had relaxed.
Her head went under, but Bunter dragged her up. He shifted his grasp carefully (till it was round under her arms, and then he kept her face clear of the water. His left hand held the drooping branch.

The girl was only half conscious now.
"Buck up!" gasped Bunter. "I'll save you!"

He held on, and blinked round wildly for help.
The trailing branch saved him from being swept away with Cora so long as he could hold on. But the girl's weight and the rush of the water told on him, and he felt as if his arm were being dragged from his shoulder.

He could not even attempt to reach the bank. The instant he let go his hold he would be swept away.

And he could not hold on long. He knew that.
He blinked round desperately. But only the dark, thick woods met his sight.

"Help!"
He remembered that Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were in the wood. If they were near enough to hear—

"Help! Help!"
Bunter put all his strength into that despairing yell.

The waters seemed to be sucking him down. His arms were aching with a deadly, grinding ache. Yet he did not think for a moment of relaxing his hold upon the fainting girl. He held on to her as instinctively as he held on to the branch.

"Help! Help!"
There was a crashing in the underwood.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
"My hat! Bunter!"

"Help!" shrieked Bunter.
Wharton and Bob Cherry came breathlessly out of the trees. They had heard the fat junior's desperate shouts.

"Hold on!" shouted Wharton. "We're coming!"
"Hold on, Billy!"

The two juniors dashed recklessly into the water. They were the best swimmers in the Remove. They reached Bunter almost in a twinkling.

"Give her to me!" panted Wharton.
"Hold on to the tree, Billy!"

"Save her!" gasped Bunter.
Wharton and Bob grasped the unconscious girl, and drove their way ashore. Miss Cora was landed in less than a minute, and laid in the grass. Billy Bunter was still clinging to the willow.

But the two juniors plunged in again for him, and reached him in a few moments.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 460.
NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HOUSE ON THE HEATH!"

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Come on, Billy!"

Bunter's senses awoke as he let go the branch. He floated as he was plumped down on the grassy bank.

Billy Bunter opened his eyes and groaned.

He blinked round him wildly.

To his surprise he was in the Remove dormitory. In bed, and Mr. Quetch and the Head and Dr. Pillbury, of Friarale, were by his bedside.

"I—I say, what's the matter?" asked Bunter confusedly.

"I think he will be all right now," said the medical gentleman. "Merely a swoon—due partly to being out of condition."

Bunter remembered.

He sat up in bed hastily.

"Is still my dear boy?" said Mr. Quetch.

Bunter gazed.

"Is she safe?"

"My niece is safe, Bunter," said Mr. Quetch, in a hoarse voice. "Wharton and Cherry have told me what happened. You have saved my niece's life!"

"You have shown very great courage, Bunter," said Dr. Locke. "The school is proud of you, my boy!"

"And—Miss Cora's all right?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes; she has already recovered."

"Oh, good!"

"Do you feel well now, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir; only—only—"

"Only what?"

"Only a bit hungry," said Bunter.

The Head smiled.

Half an hour later Billy Bunter was quite sufficiently recovered for tea. He had tea in bed, and it was a gorgeous one, and a dozen Remove fellows sat round the bed and talked to him.

The story of Bunter's heroic fall had fallen like a bombshell on the Greyfriars Remove. Wharton and Bob Cherry had come tearing up to the school in a trap from the village, with Bunter and Miss Cora in it. And what was how Greyfriars learned what had happened. Miss Cora had recovered much sooner than Bunter. But Billy Bunter was quite himself again now.

"How on earth did you come to do it, Bunter?" asked Peter Todd, in wonder. "Do you know you might have been drowned?"

"Of course I do, fashend!" said Bunter, with his mouth full.

"And you can't swim!" said Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton, you know I'm a jolly good swimmer!" said Bunter.

Wharton smiled, but allowed the statement to pass.
"Miss Cora has asked after you," said Bob. "She wants to see you when you're well enough to go down. Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you up to?"

Billy Bunter was pitching off the bedclothes and rolling out of bed.

"I'm well enough," he said.

"But you haven't finished your tea!" roared Bob.

"Flow the tea!"

Billy Bunter dressed himself rapidly. The juniors stared after him as he stalked briskly out of the dormitory.

"Well, my only Aunt Sempron!" said Peter Todd. "And there are some silly asses who don't believe in miracles!"

Billy Bunter was a person of great distinction for some time after that.

Mr. Quetch was exceedingly kind to him, the undersecretary him with much more respect than of old, and Miss Cora was charming.

Bunter was really hardly recognizable. He was never found near a keyhole, he never slacked in bed after rain-galls, he never mentioned his titled relations, and nothing more was heard of his postal-order.

It lasted a week—while Miss Cora stayed at Greyfriars. When that charming young lady had gone, the juniors wondered whether Bunter's reformation would follow.

They soon discovered.

It was exactly three days before Billy Bunter made his first attempt to raise cash on a postal-order he was expecting—a postal-order from one of his titled relations, as he explained. And the same evening he had occasion to stop and tie his shoelace as he was passing Mr. Quetch's keyhole. So, amazing as it had been while it lasted, there was an unfortunate lack of permanency about Bunter's Reformation.

THE END.

Don't miss "THE HOUSE ON THE HEATH!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co. by FRANK RICHARDS.)

Our Great New School Serial.

THE FOURTH FORM AT FRANKLINGHAM.

By Richard Randolph.

THE PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS TOLD HOW

two new boys appeared at Franklingham School on the same day. One is a senior—CONRAD HARDING CARDENDEN—the cousin and enemy of HARRY GRANVILLE, the popular captain of the school. The other is a junior—JOHNNY GOGGS, who looks soft, but is by no means as soft as he looks. Goggs claims up with three other members of the Fourth—BLOUNT, TRICKETT, and WATERS—and shares their study. Goggs is quite an exceptionally good all-round athlete for a boy of his age, but he does not blow his own trumpet; and though his chums know that he can run and jump, and that he has made a heavy entry for the school sports, it is quite by chance that his ability as a footballer is discovered. He and his chums plan a trick upon one AMINADAB JARKER, a cross-grained old caddy. Meanwhile, Cardenden has had a row with Granville, the result of which is that Cardenden is transferred to another House, and loses all chance of becoming a prefect. The four Fourth-Formers devise a plot to set Jarker and P.-e. BUSWELL, in rivalry for the hand of Jane Green, cook at Grayson's House. Sports Day comes. House rivalry is keen. Grayson's House defeats Harker's by a single point, very largely through the splendid work put in by Goggs, who proves himself an all-round athlete of high class. In the last senior race Cardenden deliberately spikes Granville; but only the captain and Goggs know that the thing was intentional. After the sports are over Goggs receives an unexpected flying visit from his uncle, MR. RODERICK INGLEBY, a very clever private detective, of whom the boy has always talked as his grandmother.

(Now read on.)

A Warning.

"He is really wonderful, that nephew of yours," remarked Mr. Trickett when, tea over, the two men strolled out into the quadrangle together, while the juniors cleared away in the study, and the ladies went across to the Head's House, where there was a big gathering. "Five first prizes fell to him, and one of them in a senior event, while he also took two second prizes. He will get a big reception this evening when he goes up time after time to take them."

"It won't go to his head," answered Mr. Inglesby, smiling. "My boy is singularly level-headed, and in some respects very long-headed. Yet, every now and then, the boyish spirit crops up in him, and you would be surprised at some of the stories I could tell you of his mischievous tricks."

"His powers of endurance struck me strongly. He competed in seven events, including two quarter-mile races, yet until the last of them he showed no sign of fatigue. And even in that he won, because he had a reserve of effort that his rivals could not quite equal."

Cardenden passed them at that moment. Mr. Inglesby gave the Magnet Library.—No. 460.

him a quick glance that took in every detail of face and figure. When the dark senior was out of earshot he said, though not as if the matter was one of importance:

"I suppose you don't chance to know who that is?"

"As it happens, I do," replied Mr. Trickett. "He played a prominent part in several events to-day. A new fellow, I understand. I think my boy said he arrived on the same day as your nephew. Let me see—what's the name? Carr—no; it's longer than that. Carden—oh, I have it—Cardenden."

"Rather unusual for a fellow of that age to figure as a new boy at any school, isn't it?" Mr. Inglesby returned, still indifferently.

"I suppose it is. And not altogether pleasant, I should fancy, in some ways."

They did not continue the subject, but talked of other things. Goggs' uncle knew of the invitation to the Tricketts' for Christmas, and that made him feel friendly towards his companion, while they had a good deal in common.

Mr. Trickett wondered to what calling this tall, lean man belonged. He had travelled all over the world, it seemed. He spoke, as one who knows them well, of Calcutta and Calga, Peking and Petrograd, Buenos Aires and Bucharest, Nagasaki and New Orleans, Montreal and Melbourne. Yet his talk was not that of an idler, a man who travelled merely to kill time, and in mentioning the fact that he was about to start for India he let fall a remark which led his hearer to believe that his business there was not only important, but in some way dangerous.

"I should like to see more of the boy," he said. "I may tell you that he has been in my charge since he was a mere infant, and has known no other home but my diggings, which are seldom for long in one place."

"Then this grandmother story—"

"Oh, you've heard of that, have you? A pure myth! The boy never saw either of his grandmothers. It seems to have been his whim to mystify those he first met on coming here. Some people might be shocked at anything so unchildish. But I have never known him to tell a lie to escape punishment or blame. His fictions are exercises of the imagination purely."

Half an hour later uncle and nephew got the chance of a brief talk together. Big Hall was filling up for the prize presentation and the short concert that accompanied it, but Goggs did not feel any anxiety as to getting a seat.

Curiously enough, it was of Cardenden that they talked. "I have seen a fellow here whom I have met elsewhere, and that in circumstances not to his credit," said Mr. Inglesby. "You must tell me what I say, Jack."

"That's understood, Uncle Rod."

"Cardenden is his name, Mr. Trickett says."

"Oh! I had a notion from the very first that he was a wrong 'un. He came here by the same train that I did."

"What is he here for?"

"I don't know exactly, but I have my suspicions. For no

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good, I'm sure! He was guilty of a mean foul this afternoon—spiked Granville's foot purposely."

"Are you certain of that?"

"Quite! I saw it, and I know that he hates Granville. There is old enmity between them, and there has been a row since Cardenden turned up here."

"Who is Granville, Jack?"

"Our captain. I lag for him, by the way."

"How do you like that?"

"I don't mind at all—as it's Granville."

"He is the right sort?"

"The very best!"

"Then see here, Jack, keep your eye on that fellow Cardenden, for he is a bad enemy, I am certain; and I should not be surprised if it turns out later that it was enmity which brought him here."

In the Moonlight.

Price-giving and concert were over.

Seven times had Johnny Goggs gone up to the platform, and seven times had the old coken rafter of Big Hall rung to the fervent shouts of Grayson's crowd. No less enthusiastic had been Granville's reception, though he had no first prize to take. And the Head's House had cheered Witherington, their new leader, to the echo; and nowise slack had been Hayter's when the names of Allardyce, Tilton, and Cardenden were called.

Cardenden was the only fellow besides Goggs who had two first prizes to take, for four of the five that had fallen to Allardyce were seconds.

But it was noted that Cardenden did not look pleased with himself or with anyone else.

Goggs gave no sign of being pleased with himself, either. But that was due to modesty. Grayson's had learned, and Frankingham was learning, by this time that Goggs never swanked.

The other new fellow—the dark senior—was bitterly disappointed and chagrined. He had thrown the cricket-ball better than Granville, and he had beaten both the captain and his wonderful lag in the senior hundred. But there his triumphs had ended. Third place in the senior quarter-mile was no triumph, no consolation, even, to him.

There was growing in him a violence of hatred against Goggs scarcely less than that which he cherished against Granville. He cared little that Grayson's should have beaten him. What was Hayter's to him? But that Goggs should have thwarted his plans to humble Granville made him rage inwardly and vow vengeance.

He left Big Hall before the concert began, and paced up and down the deserted quadrangle alone in the moonlight.

The evening of Sports Day at Frankingham was always a time when ordinary rules were relaxed. Fellows moved freely from one House to another—a thing taboo after six o'clock at other times for anyone but the Sixth. Bounds were non-existent. Those who had visitors conveyed them to the station, and made no great haste back. There would be call-over at 10.30, and as long as one did not miss that all was well.

By-and-by Cardenden found the quadrangle filling. Doors were open in all the houses, and floods of light streamed out. Wags were being put on, and a stream from the gates began.

Nearly everybody who had to go to the station was walking. There were not many cabs or other vehicles plying for hire at Frankingham, and to-night their numbers were lessened by one at least. For Mr. Jarker, possibly over-excited by the events of the afternoon, appeared to have struck work.

Motor-cars were arriving and departing, with much hoooting. Good-byes were being said. The grey-haired Head stood on the broad steps of his own House, and urged his guests to come back next year.

Cardenden felt no interest in it all. He left the quad and went up to his own den in Hayter's, to sit there, biting his nails moodily, scheming revenge on his enemies.

He was very much alone in the midst of all the friendly bustle. But that was entirely his own fault. Hayter's had given him a decent enough welcome, and, having at yet only won the last side of him, they were ready to count him as one of themselves.

But he was not—he could never be—one of them. There was nothing boyish left in Cardenden. At eighteen he was a man of the world in the worst sense, with secrets in his past that he would not have had his uncle know for any price. That would have meant good-bye to the smallest chance of being Mr. Dyna's heir!

The four chums of No. 11 escorted the Blounts and Tricketts to the station, of course. Wagtail, who had stayed with both families, was an old friend, and Goggs had already made his footing good.

With them went Mr. Ingleby, who was returning to town. He dropped behind with his nephew for a few minutes.

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

"Jack," he said, "I remember now where I have seen that fellow Cardenden."

"Where was it?" asked Goggs, with more eagerness than he usually let himself show about anything.

"You remember that Lascelles Street affair—you were at home with me when it happened? A raid by the police on a gambling-den, and I went with them because I hoped to lay my hands on that rascal Schultzheimer!"

"I remember, uncle."

"I'm not overly surprised," said the boy. "I don't know that anything I heard about Cardenden that was not good would surprise me. I see that he couldn't have been mixed up in the stabbing, or he wouldn't have been let go so easily."

"No. That occurred in another room. But the fellow who is a frequenter of swell gambling-dens at something under eighteen is not altogether a desirable inmate of a public school. That, however, is not our business."

"I see that," Goggs answered. "And perhaps it does not make it any the more likely that he means harm to Granville. But it makes me all the more determined to keep a watch on him."

They rejoined the rest, and for the time being Goggs put Cardenden out of his head.

"Did you see them?" whispered Tricks on the platform.

"Who?"

"Aminalab and cockle. They're making a day of it; I see. Strolling along in the moonlight, ever so sprightly. And I wouldn't be sure his arm wasn't round her waist!"

"Where's Buswell?" asked Goggs.

"There he is, strutting up and down like a turkey-cock, with his mad coat, and treading on everybody's feet, just to show what a sweet temper he's in! Oh, Bussey's seen 'em, you bet!"

Now the train rolled in, and was soon full. It rolled out again, amidst the cheers of those left on the platform. Bags turned to his chums.

"Tint's next time yet," he said; "and if we like to let the feed the Head give everybody that drops in after the train's gone, we've got quite a whack of time to spare. Who says sandwiches and cake and coffee? or who says a lag with Aminalab and the blooming Bussey?"

Nobody voted for sandwiches and cake and coffee, even though the lark was more or less uncertain, since it depended upon finding cook and her cabinian tutor.

"Let's follow Bussey," suggested Bags.

"What for?" asked Wagtail. "I don't suppose he knows any more about where they are than we do."

"P'raps not. But if he don't find them, there isn't much in it. We don't want to spy on cook and Jarker's spoon; we only want to be on the spot if there's a row. And if there's no Bussey, there's no row—Q.R.D."

"That's Enlid," said Wagtail. "I hate the beastly stuff!"

They were in luck. Buswell seemed to have a pretty clear notion as to where his rival and their bone of contention were to be found. Cook could only be called a bone in a very figurative sense, however, for she was distinctly stout.

The constable stalked on ahead, planting his big feet down with stern determination, as though there were beetles beneath, and he had vowed war to the death upon them. The four followed, and with them, not to be shaken off when they had once looked on, went Allardyce and Bliss.

"Give him some Scamp!" whispered Bags in the ear of Goggs.

Next moment a lark that Buswell would have known in a thousand sounded behind him, and he faced round in terror. It was a rearguard attack that Buswell dreaded most where Scamp was concerned.

But all down the white, moonlit road there was no sign of any dog.

"Where did that come from?" asked Allardyce. "Old Buswell's fairly finked, isn't he?"

"No," answered Goggs, raising his voice, so that the constable could hear. "I consider that he is a very brave

10

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

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man indeed. Directly he heard the bark he turned to meet the danger. A coward would have fled."

But Buswell was not to be mollified. He knew that mild voice.

"Oh, you're there, are you, young funny-face?" he growled.

"You are a very rude man!" returned Goggs promptly.

"Now," said Bags, in an aside to Allardyce, "Bussey's fairly asked for it, and you bet he'll get it!"

Rivals in Love!

Allardyce might fail to understand, but Tricks and Wagtail would have tumbled at once. They knew that Goggs' tricks were always played upon people who had been rude to him. Without being particularly sensitive on the subject of his personal appearance, he saw no reason why he should allow impolite comments upon it to go unpunished.

At this moment someone passed whom all recognised. It was the railway-porter—Robins by name—who had incurred Goggs' displeasure on the day of his arrival.

And Goggs had not forgotten.

"Hi, you fat-headed copper!"

The voice sounded exactly like the voice of Robins. Buswell turned wrathfully.

"Oh, you can 'ear, can you? Deaf on the platform, wasn't you? Didn't 'ear me ask you whether the company's servants needed any 'elp from a superannuated bluebottle with a face like a pumpkin painted red?"

Bags danced in sheer delight. This was lovely!

The only person more amazed than Robins was Buswell. Robins would never have dreamed of addressing the local arm of the law in that manner; but Buswell could never have imagined himself being talked to thus by anybody—unless it might be Amiadab Jarler in his wrath—let alone a mere railway-porter!

"What d'ye mean by it?" snorted Buswell.

"Mean by what?" retorted Robins. "I never said a word to you, Mr. Buswell! I heard a voice that sounded like mine, but I'll take my solemn afly-david that—"

"Don't you lie to me! For two pins I'd knock your 'ead off!" roared Buswell.

"Look 'ere, I'm not a-join' to stand that sort of talk, you know—not from a 'og in a 'elmet!"

Part of this speech came from Robins, but part was Goggs' addition. It followed so closely on the breaking off of the porter that even Bags was not certain about it, and the porter stood in absolute bewilderment.

Buswell didn't. He rushed for the porter, who was a small man.

"Really, constable, he is scarcely up to your weight!" said Goggs, in his own voice, and as if in shocked protest.

"That's the talk! You 'it one of your own size, policeman!" sang out Robins.

Buswell had not the chance. There was no one of his own size present.

And he could not hit Robins because the half-dozen juniors were always in the way.

There seemed a positive fatality about it. Robins dodged in and out with no lack of activity; but if his dodging failed, someone always covered his escape—and always as if by accident.

At last the porter broke away, ran ten yards or so, and scrambled on to the top of a gate.

"Thanks, young gentles?" he shouted. "I won't forget this, I promise you! Ow!"

His foot had slipped from the rail, and for a moment he hung over the gate, his head on one side, his legs on the other.

And in that moment Buswell was upon him. He drew his truncheon from inside his tunic, and beat upon the green trousers of the railwayman, tightly stretched because of his attitude, with great vigour.

It only lasted a few seconds. Then Robins collapsed in a heap on the other side of the gate, and Buswell stalked on, snorting.

But it was great value while it lasted!

"I am quite sorry for the porter," said Goggs. "I wonder whether he will be rude to me again?"

Allardyce and Bliss could not understand; but the other three did, and they roared with laughter.

But this little interlude was not to be allowed to spoil the greater wheeze that they anticipated.

So they followed Buswell, explaining things—but not all things—to the juniors from the rival House as they went.

"Oh, that's no end of a lark!" said Allardyce. "Bussey's a pompous old ass, and deserves all he gets; and as for that chap Jarler, I can't bear the sight of him. But I don't quite get the hang of that porter affair. Robins must have been drunk to talk to Bussey like that, I reckon! The whole village is afraid of Bussey, though I'm hanged if I know why!"

They did not explain Goggs' ventriloquial interference. Half the fun of it would be lost if too many were in the secret. And, besides, at some time in the near future the new boy's talent might be used to make Hagier's sit up.

"There they are!" cried Tricks. "And I do believe Bussey's finking it! He won't do any more than walk past, and try to wither them with a glance."

"Oh, I think he will!" answered Goggs meaningly.

The half-dozen quickened their pace. They were only a few yards in the rear when the constable came up with his fickle lady-love and her new swain.

Jarler's arm was not around Jane's waist. Indeed, it is doubtful whether he could have got it more than part of the way round, for Jarler's arms were short, and Jane's waist was nothing in the wasplike way. But they were walking very close together, and were evidently on excellent terms with each other.

"I think that progress has been so rapid that something in the way of a check is required," said Goggs mildly. "It is a mistake to be too precipitate in matrimonial matters, I have heard, and cook will certainly be guilty of a mistake if she allows herself to be rushed into a union with Amiadab."

"Or with Bussey," answered Wagtail. "There isn't a pin to choose between them."

"I am not sure. Neither individual has my complete approval, but I am inclined to think that the constable is, in any other than the avoirdupois sense, the less of two evils."

"Ah! A nice hevemin' for a walk, ain't it, Mrs. Green?"

The voice, toned to a sneering bitterness, seemed the voice of Buswell; and even Bags was not sure about it until he saw the start that the constable gave. He could almost have sworn that Goggs had not finished his promise little speech before that voice, so very different from his, began to speak.

"Very nice, Mr. Buswell," answered cook quite cheerfully.

"Ho! I am not aware that I addressed you, ma'am!" the constable retorted.

(Continued on page 5 of cover.)

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THE FOURTH FORM AT FRANKLINHAM.

(Continued from page 20.)

"It wasn't him. It was a sheep bleatin' from the field over yonder," said—or seemed to say—the valiant Aminadab.

"Call me a sheep, Jarker!" roared Buswell.

This time it really was Buswell.

"No, I didn't! But if you're axin' me whether I consider you as one, speakin' as man to man, I do!"

And this time it really was Jarker.

Their tempers were warming up quite nicely. It seemed that Goggs might shortly retire from business with full confidence that verbal hostilities would be carried on quite satisfactorily—even if nothing else came of it all.

"If you two gentlemen quarrel," said—or seemed to say—the voice of Mrs. Green, cook, "I won't have nothing more to do with neither of you—that's flat!"

"Now, now, now!" spoke the voice of Jarker, in accents of affectionate banter.

"What do you mean with your 'now, now, now'?" snapped Mrs. Green. "I never said anything!"

"No more didn't I!" answered Jarker hotly. "And, what's more, you did!"

"So did you! If there's one thing I do hate, it's a liar!"

"There's witchery in it!" groaned Buswell, wiping his heated brow. "Mrs. Green, ma'am, it is not my intention to cause trouble. There was a time—But we will draw a veil over the 'appy past'."

Buswell looked about him in a frenzied way.

He had said there was witchery in it. He felt that there must be. But then his voice had gone on to tell about drawing a veil over the happy past, and he was as sure as he could be of anything in a world which seemed stark mad that he had never said—or even thought of saying—anything about the happy past!

"That was when the bulldog bit a piece out of your trousers, wasn't it, Buswell?"

"I'll teach you to talk about such things as that afore a lady, Jarker!"

"I never said nothing, Buswell! I've suppose as you're the only one what's witch'd! Oh, laws, if my head aint fairly a-turnin'!"

"If it would turn into something as you could think with, you red-nosed waster, it would be a rare bit of luck for you!"

That was Goggs. Buswell was scarcely apt enough at retorts for so quick a retort.

"I've had enough of this!" said cook, with rising anger. "It is not my desire to be squabbled over by anybody. If you two gentlemen will be good enough to walk home, together or apart, as it best pleases you, I will pursue my way. No, I will not allow neither of you to come with me! I see some young gentlemen from the school close at hand, and if I feel any ways timid I will ask for their escort. But I don't!"

She didn't look it, either, as she marched determinedly off, quivering with indignation.

"Oh, blow 'on duty!" began Buswell.

"Oh, blow your dooty! If you want to 'it me, 'it me, an' we'll see who's the best man! We didn't properly settle it 'other day, 'count of interruptions."

"I really think you had better go home and put your heads in buckets of cold water," said Goggs gravely.

"It's my belief as you're at the bottom of it all, you young villain!" cried Jarker, marching off.

Buswell stood still, and looked at Goggs in the moonlight.

"If ever I finds out as you was," he began solemnly, "I'll—"

"My good ass, how could I be! Go home, do, and soak your head!"

"Was Goggs at the bottom of it all?" asked Allardyce, as the juniors started off, leaving the trio constable standing like a monument in the bright moonlight.

"What do you think?" returned Bags.

"I know!" said Bliss. "The beggar mesmerised them! I'll bet you couldn't memorise me, Goggs!"

"I am sure I could not, Bliss," answered Johnny Goggs meekly.

Cardenden's New Friend!

The draw for the Inter-House Football Cup was out, and the Head's House, Waymark's, and Balford's had drawn the byes made necessary in the first round by the fact of there being five Houses.

That meant Hayter's v. Grayson's! And Hayter's v. Grayson's meant tremendous excitement.

Grayville still limped, and there were fears that he might not be quite fit for the match. If he was not, there would be little chance for his side.

Meanwhile, Frankingham had had a sensation. Cardenden had gone up to Granville in the Sixth classroom, and had apologised openly for spiking him!

He had not realised until afterwards that it was he who had done it, he said; and he really thought that it had spoiled his own chance of getting first place as completely as it had Granville's.

The two statements were scarcely consistent; but not every body noticed that, and some held that Granville's receptivity of the apology was none too generous.

But how could he take it as sincere? He knew that the so-called accident was deliberate and malicious, and he guessed that Cardenden's only motive for apologising was lest his action should have been seen by others besides its victim.

By admitting and apologising for it he had forestalled any disclosure.

Grayson's generally held the apology cheap, and said so. Hayter's considered that Grayson's had no right even to think that any explanation but the one given was possible. The result of this difference of opinion was some high feeling between the two Houses, which made the coming cup-tie all the more likely to be a hot game.

"The list will be up this afternoon," said Bags, three days before the match.

"What list?" asked Goggs.

"What the team for the House match, you old ass! You're sure to be in it, so you've nothing to worry about. But I don't know whether I shall. And there's old Tricks, too. I've been counting up the seniors who are any use, and I can't make more than eight—some of them nothing great, either. That would leave three places for juniors; and it would be a rare feather in our caps if all three were from this side!"

"Ah!" replied Goggs. "I had not thought of that."

As a matter of fact, he knew all about the selection. Not only had he copied out the list in his neat round hand, but he had been consulted by Granville as to which juniors might be worth a place. But he had been told to say nothing in advance, and, of course, that sealed his lips.

Tilson had his list out earlier. Allardyce and Bliss were in high glee, for they had places in the forward line.

They were among the crowd which waited in front of the notice-board in the hall of Grayson's for Granville to come down and sign up the list.

Here he came at last! Still limping a little, they noticed. But Goggs said that the wound in his foot, made troublesome at first by a disposition to fester, was healing nicely now.

He pinned up the list, and went off without a word.

"Hurrah!" yelled Bags. "We're both in, Trick!"

"Congrats!" said Allardyce. "We'll make you sit up, you kids!"

"Never heard of such a thing in my life!" turned a disappointed senior. "Three Fourth Form infants in the forward line!"

It was even so. But it might have puzzled Barnes to say where else they could have been put, seeing that they were all forwards.

Granville himself was down to play at back with Parker. The school captain could take almost any place, but was perhaps at his best in that he had chosen. Pennell at centre-half would be a tower of strength to the side. Goggs was centre-forward, with his two chums in the outside wing places, and two Fifth-Formers at inside left and right.

Barnes—who rather fancied himself as a forward—was right-half, Williams senior, left-half, and Noon in goal.

Cardenden did not turn out in any of the practice games that afternoon. He had gone over to Howlisham, the nearest town of any size, on special leave, to visit a dentist.

Probably that dentist spent his spare time in the billiard-room at the Buck's Head, Howlisham's leading hotel. If so, Cardenden must have known his ways, for after a brief survey of the High Street he turned into the Buck's Head.

He did not come out again until it was close on time for his train back, so that it seemed likely the dentist used the billiard-room as an operating-parlour.

Cardenden was completely fed-up with the routine of Frankingham life. Six months in town, where he had pretended to be studying at an art school, had put a wide gulf between him and his boyhood.

A rakish-looking fellow, with his hat on one side, and a big cigar stuck between his yellow teeth, accompanied him to the station.

Cardenden had made the acquaintance of Mr. Brighton Fortescue, as this gentleman called himself, at the Buck's Head; and Mr. Fortescue, who was fond of young men with money to spend, had no notion of being choked off till he had fixed up a date for a future meeting.

(There will be another grand instalment of this exciting story in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET LIBRARY. Order your copy in advance.)