

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!

The Magnet Library

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BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS PORTRAIT.

(An Amusing Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Grayfriars.)

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A WORD IN SEASON.

You might guess what it is! No, it isn't anything to do with William George Bunter—not for the moment, anyway—nor does it refer to the "Holiday Annual." You are not trying!

It was merely to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. This has been said before. I know that. But it is just one of the things that never gets dull, stale, hackneyed, futile—come, you see the point!

What a precious poor sort of a world it would be if the wish were not sent flying everywhere to everybody this good old Christmas-time! I know there is a very serious side to Christmas as well as a bright and sparkling one, though there is so much happiness in the serious side, and the world knows all that so well as it listens to the silver tidings of the bells out of the blue, that one need not speak of it here.

How does everybody else spend Christmas? Bunter, for example! Well, we may get tidings of his doings. Anyway, I shall not go into that. Bunter's Christmas dinner would be certain to meet the needs of the case. He would see to that.

It is attractive, though, at a time like the present, to think of a host of other things which are special to Christmas. The season brings its ideas, and those ideas are special to it, and do not pass current at any other season of the year.

Had I my way, I should send a message to all my readers this time, and thank them for the generous manner in which they have rallied round the MAGNET and the other Companion Papers these last few years of war. During the bad time there was no stinted or grudging support I can tell you. But the thing is not possible. I am compelled to deliver one message, and I hope my chums will take it as it is meant.

May this Christmas bring them no end of happiness, and may the New Year have just the things they are looking for in its luggage!

It would not do, of course, to hope for a Christmas which brought in an entirely fresh order of things. Human nature would not stand it. If the friendly fairies brought everybody just what he or she wanted this Christmas, if the old saint with his sack of good things who takes the chimney route—or who is said to do so—turned up with a bigger supply than ever, folks would be wanting something else the next day.

But the fact is, Christmas does a lot of things for everybody, and some of the miracles it works are not rightly seen till long after. You remember about Scrooge. There are always Scrooges in the world, and they cannot

escape Christmas, which is a very fortunate circumstance when you come to think of it.

I have a crowd of letters on my desk, and in one of them a chum of mine who has passed several years of his life in the Army tells me about Passchendaele Ridge, and of his long months in France; of how he tramped kilometres to the nearest French town to get the Companion Papers, for they cheered him up.

Perhaps some of you have not walked a French kilometre on one of those flat and slimy Gallic roads. It wants doing, I can tell you. But this brave fellow is just one of the army of my friends to whom I send greetings this Christmas-time.

I hope he is back home and eating the best this land can afford under a cluster of red-gemmed holly. He had the laurel wreath before.

What one likes about Christmas—and there isn't anything which is not liked; I mean, appreciates so very specially—is the chance the season gives for wiping out old wrongs, and starting anew.

Of course, there are people who declare that Christmas is nothing to them. That is sheer nonsense. It is only the outer husk of themselves of which they speak. Somewhere in their hearts it is the real old feeling of gratitude for the gladness of Christmas-time and for all it means, and has ever meant to everyone of us, with its radiant message of Peace and Good Will.

One can smile at the individuals who turn a cold shoulder to the season, who are not moved by the happiness of others. There are sights and scenes at this period which stir the heart—I mean the spectacle of families out in the marketing centres laying in stores for the dinner, preparing for the relatives and friends who will join the circle and renew old sympathies.

It is impossible to escape such a feeling. Up and down the country, in cottage and palace, it is the same. Folks are thinking of the same thing. They are mentally resolving to do better during the twelve months which separate them from the next Christmas.

Ugly feelings have a very poor time in the Christmas air. Disappointments even assume their real proportion. I do hope all my friends will have the best time possible wherever they are, whether they are sitting down to roast beef and plum-pudding in camp, or at sea, in a shack in the far wilderness, or under the roof-tree of home.

For the old folks Christmas means a troop of memories, happy ones, for the old folks see clearer than others, and to them the vision is bright; while to the youngsters Christmas will bring such cheery hours as will live in their remembrance all through life.

So let's keep Christmas as it was intended to be kept. A Christmas tree, if you like, cracker-caps all round to break the formality and give us a notion of the new fashions, a glorious dish of snap-dragon with blue and red imps darting out of the flames, and hands all round at the end in friendship—good friendship, which sums up all that is worth having, after all.

ARE WE DOWNHEARTED?

The answer is in the negative. The season of rain, fog, slush, and frost is here, and the only thing to do is to make the best of it.

It is the fashion, of course, to growl at the winter. A great many people treat each winter as if it had been specially brought along to annoy them. But the best way is to take it all smiling, though the mud flies up in your face from the traffic, and there is a bitter nip in the air.

It is curious, too, how naturally it comes to some folks to predict an extra bad winter on each occasion. They do not know anything about it, as we perfectly realise, but it seems to amuse them. As prophecies usually go by contraries, I shall expect spring to begin on January 1st.

FROM "JO!"

That's what Johannesburg gets called by some familiar folks who know the place well. Just listen to a note that blew in to me the other day from the great South African city:

"I really wanted to write to you before, but could not pluck up courage, not that I thought you were a lion, or any other vicious animal, but I have never written to a real editor before, so please don't laugh."

There was so much sympathy and sincerity in my friend's letter that the very last thing I thought of doing was to laugh. My correspondent is a girl of seventeen, and she has matriculated, and her friends sometimes smile because she reads the Companion Papers, and thinks no end of Cardew—I am sure she does that!—but as her parents approve all is well.

I should just say it was. I can only tell her I am deeply sensible for the generous way she puts matters, and I should like to congratulate her on being blessed with parents who take a large, wide view of the world.

Your Editor



Bunter's Christmas Portrait!

A Magnificent Long, Complete
School Story of Harry Wharton
: & Co. at Greyfriars School. :

... BY ...

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter is Very Peculiar!

BILLY BUNTER wore a worried look.

He wore it during morning lessons in the Remove Form at Greyfriars School. He was not worrying about his lessons, for several random answers he made Mr. Quelch showed that he was thinking of something else. He wore it when he strolled out into the quadrangle after morning school, and he was still wearing it when he came into the Remove Form class-room for afternoon lessons.

Mr. Quelch was a little late in arriving, and, in consequence, there was a regular hubbub going on amongst the juniors.

"What's the matter with Bunter?" murmured Bob Cherry. "Hungry, porpoise?"

Billy Bunter shook his head absently.

"No; I've only just had dinner, dummy!"

"What are you looking worried about, then?"

"Was I looking worried?"

"Well, you're looking as if you had the toothache," said Bob Cherry.

"You've been looking like it all the morning. What's the trouble?"

"Nothing!"

Billy Bunter was seated between Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull. In spite of his assurance that nothing was the matter he was very absent-minded, for he turned over the leaves of his French book over and over again, although the book was turned upside-down.

Then the fat junior put his pencil into the inkwell instead of his pen, and he did not appear to notice the mistake when he jotted down a word or two on a page in his exercise-book.

Bob Cherry waited for a few moments, and then he glanced at Billy Bunter again.

"Look here, Bunter——"

"Yes, Cherry?"

"Your mind's about ten thousand miles away."

"Really? I'll try and buck up."

"What have you got on your mind?"

Dreaming about Christmas, and all the puddings and turkeys and mince-pies you're going to eat in the baronial hall of the Bunter de Bunters?"

"No, no!"

Bob Cherry was baffled. Mr. Quelch was due to arrive at any moment, and when the master of the Remove did arrive Billy Bunter would most certainly have to "buck up."

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, was seated immediately behind Billy Bunter, and he had been listening very seriously to the conversation between Bob Cherry and the fat junior of Greyfriars.

The captain of the Remove never worried his head much about Billy Bunter, but ever since rising that morning Harry Wharton had seen that there was something wrong with the Owl. What that something was Harry Wharton did not know. He had not pestered Bunter with questions; but as the day wore on, and Billy Bunter's gloom had not dispersed, he was beginning to get rather "fed up" with it, and he was delighted to hear Bob Cherry tackling the pessimistic-looking Bunter on the subject.

However, Harry Wharton could see that Bob Cherry's well-meant efforts were failing pitilessly, and so he rose in his seat and leant forward and touched Billy Bunter on the arm.

"Come along, Bunter, you fat dummy!" said Harry Wharton. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing!"

"What are you bothering about, then?"

"Nothing that need worry you or any of the other fellows, if it comes to that!"

"But it does worry us if we see you going about like a fat gargoyle!"

"I refuse to admit for a moment that I have gone about looking anything at all like a fat gargoyle!" said Bunter with great dignity.

"What have you got on your mind?"

"Nothing!"

"There's something in your head."

"Nothing at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter blinked furiously through his pair of enormous spectacles.

"Really, Bull, what's the matter with you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly fathead! I suppose you're laughing because my remark implied I had no brains in my head?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Many a true word spoken by accident, porpoise!"

"Now, look here, Bunter, you can't deny that your bothering over something or other," said Harry Wharton. "Ever since brekker this morning you've been going about with a face a yard long, and we want to know what's up."

"It's nothing!"

"But we want to help you. Christmas is almost here, and it's the time of peace and good will, you know!"

"Really, Wharton, I don't think you can do anything."

"Why can't you explain the reason for these worried looks? You haven't been murdering anybody, have you?"

"Oh, shut up!"

"If you can't answer better than that, you fat dummy, we'll bump you. There's no sign of old Quelch, so there's plenty of time for us to yank you out and give you a good bumping!"

"Rather!" cried Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry.

"You had better not touch me, you rotters!"

"Well, we'll bump you and see whether that does you any good!"

Harry Wharton made a sign to Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, and in a moment the despondent fat junior was seized by three pairs of hands and whisked over on the class-room floor in a twinkling.

"Ow! Leggo!"

Billy Bunter was stretched full length upon the floor, and Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull proceeded to sit on him.

Harry Wharton sat upon his chest, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull sat upon his legs. Mauleverer, the schoolboy earl, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur, and Frank Nugent

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joined in the fray, and readily took up positions on each of Billy Bunter's fat arms, who wriggled and gasped under the weight of the attack.

"Ow! - Leggo, you rotters! Gerroff!"
"It's all right. Don't worry yourself about us. We're quite sure you've got enough to worry about as it is!"

"Get up, you rotters, and I'll—I'll explain!"

"Good!"
And Harry Wharton & Co. arose, and Billy Bunter picked himself up, very red, and dusty and wrathful.

"You—you rotters!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You silly chumps!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You fatheaded jabberwocks, why can't you leave a fellow alone?"

"Oh, dry up, Bunter, and go ahead with the explaining. What's the trouble sitting on your fat chest?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Here's Mr. Quelch!"

"I'm fed up being pestered by you chaps to-day!" said Billy Bunter. And Mr. Quelch, who had just stalked majestically into the Form-room, fixed a gimlet-like eye upon the fat junior.

Billy Bunter was much too much pre-occupied in his mind about something or the other, and he took no notice whatever about Bob Cherry's remark; neither did he seem to be affected in any way with Mr. Quelch's steely look.

"You're an interfering cad!" said Billy Bunter wrathfully.

The Form-room had suddenly become very quiet, and that sudden exclamation, though not very loud in itself, rang through the quiet room with the startling suddenness of a thunderbolt.

Mr. Quelch gave a start.

"You're an interfering idiot!"

Mr. Quelch simply jumped.

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry to Mark Linley, who was sitting on his right. "There's something very wrong with Bunter to-day! Fancy talking like that when old Quelch has arrived! He'll jolly well—"

"You are speaking, Cherry!"

"Oh!"

"Take fifty lines!"

"Oh!"

"Bunter!"

"Y-yes, sir?"

"Were you addressing me just now?"

"Ye-e-es, sir," replied Billy Bunter very absent-mindedly, and the Remove Form gave a gasp of astonishment.

Mr. Quelch's eyes—popularly supposed in the Remove Form at Greyfriars to resemble gimlets in their piercing power—almost fell out of their sockets.

"Did you hear my question aright, Bunter?"

"Y-yes, sir!"

"Then—then—then you think I'm—I'm what you remarked?"

"Yes, sir."

"What?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"That is my answer to your question, sir," stammered Billy Bunter hurriedly.

"Then you think that I'm an interfering idiot, Bunter?"

"I—I—I—"

"A parrot-like repetition of the first person singular is no answer to my question, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"N-n-n-n-no, sir!"

"Will you answer me?"

"Y-y-y-yes, sir!"

"Then answer me!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Well?"

"I—I was thinking of something when you spoke, sir. And I—I was not addressing you, sir. You see, sir, I was thinking!"

"Indeed? I grant that is quite an un-

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accustomed exercise for you!" said Mr. Quelch, very sarcastically. "But why should this proceeding on your part cause you to be insolent to your Form-master?"

Some of the Remove giggled, either because they thought Mr. Quelch's remark humorous, or because they wanted to put him in a good temper for the afternoon's class by appearing to think so.

The giggle propitiated Mr. Quelch a little. His frown relaxed, but his glance was still bent severely upon Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter seemed to be at a loss for words.

"I must suppose, Bunter," continued Mr. Quelch, "that you have been eating too much dinner, and that you have been making absurd remarks from mere vacancy of mind!"

"Not exactly, sir. I—"

"Or else that you deliberately intended to show disrespect to your Form-master!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"O-oh, no, sir!"

"In any case, you were not showing the proper attention expected from a boy paraded in class, even though I was a little late in arriving."

"I—I—I am sorry, sir!"

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"Stand out before the class, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter slowly rolled out of his place.

Under the eyes of the whole Remove he was feeling very red and uncomfortable. The master of the Remove Form pointed to a corner of the Form-room.

"Bunter, you will stand in that corner!"

"Y-yes, sir!"

"You will remain there till the end of the lesson, sir, as an example to the rest of the class."

"Oh, sir!"

"Stand there at once!"

"If you please, sir—"

"Another word, and I shall cane you severely!"

Billy Bunter slowly turned and walked to the corner. He would not have minded having a few raps from the pointer; but to be made to stand in a corner of the class-room like a naughty fag in the Second Form was too humiliating—even for Bunter!

Billy Bunter was wrathful; but there was no help for it. He stood in the corner, and blinked at the grinning Remove through his enormous spectacles.

Harry Wharton, as captain of the Remove, felt sorry for the fat junior, but he could not help grinning at Bunter's expression.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Bombshell!

"N OW then, you fat dummy! Tell your uncle the dreaded family secret!"

The Remove Form had been dismissed for the day, and Mr. Quelch had allowed Billy Bunter to leave the class-room with the rest of the juniors without let or hindrance.

Harry Wharton & Co. buttonholed the fat junior as he rolled along the Remove passage, and Billy Bunter stood blinking through his spectacles, surrounded by a curious cluster of Removites.

"I've got nothing whatever to say to you, Wharton!" replied Bunter.

"Yes you have. You're in trouble, and your uncles are going to make you get it off your little chest. There's only a few more days before Christmas, and we can't see even you go away with a face like that!"

"Really, Wharton!"

"Now, what is it?"

"You can all mind your own business!" grunted Bunter. "You got me into trouble with old Quelch in class, and you rotters ought to be satisfied with that."

"Are you hungry, porpoise?" laughed Bob Cherry.

"N-no—I mean y-ycs—er—I mean—"

"What about a visit to Mrs. Mimble's? We're all in funds. Perhaps you want feeding up. A little nourishment, you know?"

Billy Bunter's eyes rolled.

"I—I—I—"

"Some doughnuts might help you to tell us what's up?"

"B-b-but—"

"And some cream-puffs!" said Wharton.

"Or some of Mrs. Mimble's famous mince-pies!"

The fat junior's curious expression was visibly thawing; but he said nothing. He gave a deep sigh, and Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"I saw some gorgeous chocolate-cake on the counter this morning!" continued Bob Cherry. "And—and I thought of you at once, Bunter. You know the sort of cake it is. Covered with chocolate, and all squashy inside."

"Rather!" said Bunter at last, and with some of his old enthusiasm. "I know the thing, Cherry. I always tell Mrs. Mimble that she ought to make more of that, and reduce the price. She's a blessed profiteer, you know!"

"Is she?"

"I should think she is! S-shall we go along and see her? I find I have a few minutes to spare!"

"Only a few minutes?"

"Yes; I want to go down to Courtfield before it's dark. Something very important, you know."

"Oh?"

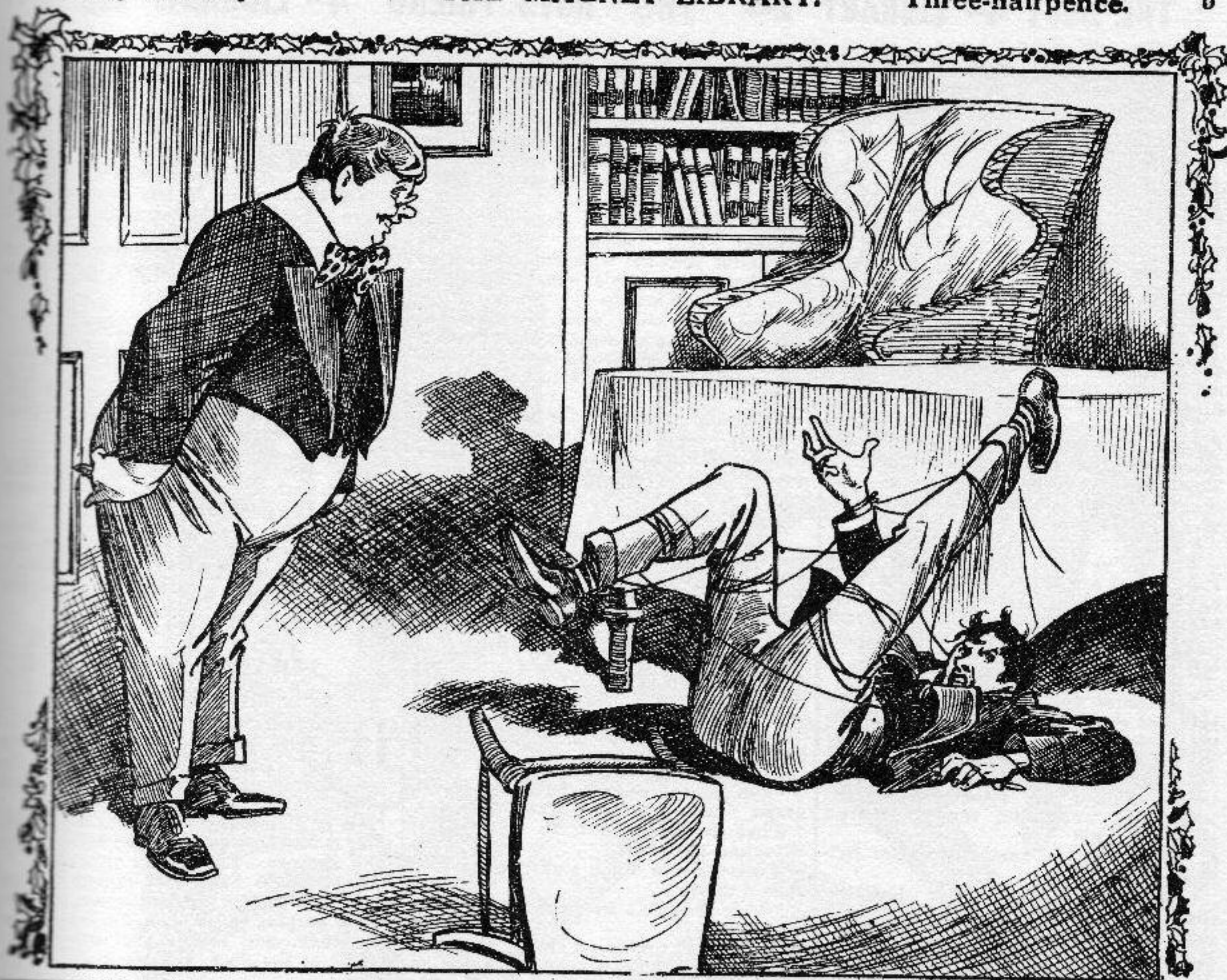
The chums of the Remove exchanged glances again. Billy Bunter's fat face had become very serious once more, and he breathed another deep sigh.

"We'll get his blessed secret in a few minutes!" murmured Harry Wharton to Frank Nugent. "Let's roll the fat boulder along to Mrs. Mimble's. That will do the trick if nothing else does."

Harry Wharton took Bunter's arm, and Frank Nugent took the other, and then the party marched down to Mrs. Mimble's famous tuckshop.

Mrs. Mimble was being well patronised. Most of the juniors were in funds—in fact, as Bob Cherry had genially remarked:

"All the blessed uncles and aunts in the country seemed to have played the game like Christians!"



Billy Bunter closed the study door, and his fat face wrinkled up into a broad grin as he stood and regarded the hapless Snoop. "Get a knife and help me out!" cried Snoop. "Don't stand grinning like a Cheshire cat!" (See Chapter 3.)

Postal-orders had arrived in a steady stream to most of the boys. They were Christmas-presents in advance, so to speak, and all the more welcome for that. As a consequence, Mrs. Mimble's little shop was packed to overflowing; but this did not prevent Harry Wharton & Co. from squeezing their way in somehow, and Billy Bunter was rolled up to the little counter.

"There's an account of yours still unsettled, Master Bunter," said Mrs. Mimble somewhat tersely. "I hope you've come along to pay. I like to get all debts in before the New Year, you know."

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly.

"Really, Mrs. Mimble," he said, "I hope I'm not the sort of chap to owe any money to anybody!"

"Hear, hear!" cried Bob Cherry. "I'll trouble you for that three bob I lent you on sports day the year before the war broke out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind that now!" laughed Harry Wharton. "Bunter's down in the dumps, and we're going to buck him up, Mrs. Mimble."

"Very well, then, Master Wharton; but you must understand that I am a poor woman, and I am not going to allow Master Bunter to have any more unless it is paid for on the spot!"

The captain of the Remove placed a ten-shilling currency note upon the counter.

"Here you are, Mrs. Mimble! We'll start on cream-puffs!"

Plates and dishes were placed down on

the counter with a clatter, and the Removites set to in real earnest.

"Jolly good, Bunter—eh?"

"M-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m—"

The Owl of the Remove munched away merrily, and gradually his serious countenance unwrinkled, and between mouthfuls he replied to the juniors' questions in monotonous monosyllables.

"Getting excited about Christmas, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton diplomatically.

"Fairly!"

"Ripping time of the year! Turkeys and puddings and presents, and all that sort of thing!"

"Rather!"

"Had any remittances yet?"

Billy Bunter made a gulp, and a huge morsel of chocolate-cake made a magic disappearance.

"Nothing turned up yet, Wharton," he replied. "But I'm expecting some jolly big postal-orders from some of my titled relations, you know."

There was a titter from the Removites standing round the fat junior. They had heard about Bunter's titled relations before now, and also about the postal-orders that never seemed to turn up. But Harry Wharton winked at the juniors knowingly, and the grins were hidden behind jam-puffs and chocolate-cake and mince-pies.

"Feeling nervous about the Head's report on the term's progress, Bunter?"

"No jolly fear! I've done well this term, I think. I know my general knowledge causes a lot of jealousy in the Form; but I bet the Head's up to all that sort of thing."

"Rather, Bunter!" exclaimed Frank Nugent, with deep sarcasm.

"The esteemed and honourable Bunter ought to be a ludicrous prefect sahib the term nextfully!" said Hurree Singh, in his weird and wonderful English.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Had any bad news from home, Bunter?" said Harry Wharton, after a pause. "Here you are! Have one of these! They're ripping!"

"Thanks!"

"Perhaps someone's ill, old man?" suggested the persevering captain of the Remove. "Rotten time of the year for invalids!"

"M-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-yes!"

"Mater seedy?"

"No."

"Poor old Mr. Bunter, I suppose?"

"No. My pater's all right."

"Got any relations down with the flu?"

"No. Pass that other chocolate-cake over, Cherry, old man!"

"That'll be another three shillings, Master Wharton!" said Mrs. Mimble.

"Don't let the fat bounder have any more until he tells us what's up," suggested Bob Cherry, turning to Harry Wharton. "There's not much fun to be got out of stuffing this fat gormandiser!"

Billy Bunter glared at Bob Cherry.

"It's nothing to do with you, Cherry!" he growled. "This is my chum Wharton's picnic! Pass that blessed cake over, and don't gas so much!"

"I don't mind standing treat if you tell me what's up," said Harry Wharton.

"You've been going about all day with a face as long as a fiddle, and you're a silly fat duffer not to tell us what the matter is. We might be able to help you, you dummy!"

Billy Bunter gave another deep sigh, and blinked at the captain of the Remove with a very vacant sort of expression.

"Are you mashing Mary, the housemaid?" demanded Bob Cherry.

The Owl of the Remove blushed, but tried to conceal his embarrassment by giving the irrepressible Bob a withering look.

"No, it's the girl in the butcher's shop in Courtfield," said Johnny Bull. "I've seen Bunter making sheep's eyes over a heap of chops and steaks, and—"

"I suppose you rotters think you're funny!" said Billy Bunter, adjusting his spectacles, and surveying the grinning Removites. "All I can say is your remarks are in jolly bad taste to a chap who is in—in love!"

"What?"

"I've—I've fallen in love at last. I—I knew a girl would get me some day, and now it's a reality. All my old life is left behind me like—like a shadow. From now onwards I've turned over a new leaf!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, you chaps don't understand yet; but she's the most beautiful girl in the whole world!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I spoke to her yesterday for the first time, and—she actually asked me whether I would get my photograph taken for her."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"I can understand your jealousy, Cherry. I suppose you feel exactly the same about it as that rotter Coker of the Fifth!"

"What's Coker got to do with it, porpoise?"

"Coker and I are deadly rivals for the lady's hand. I dare say it will mean a duel before the matter is ended and done with!"

"Eh?"

"Coker is trying to cut me out, like the rotter he is! I suppose he thinks just because he's in the Fifth Form I shan't get a look in. That's where he makes his mistake. I'm just the sort of fellow girls go crazy over! They like to be seen about with somebody who looks im-

portant—a chap with plenty of dignity and bearing, and all that sort of thing."

"You fat chump!"

"Of course, it means I shall have to drop you fellows. All my time will be taken up with walks now, I suppose."

"That might get your fat down a bit!" suggested Frank Nugent.

Billy Bunter gave a deep sigh, and relapsed into silence, whilst the Removites shrieked with laughter.

"What's the lady's name, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I—I don't know what her Christian name is, but her surname is Miss Petuka. She's a niece of the photographer who has just opened a studio in Courtfield."

"Oh!"

"Keeps her eyes open for business, too, it seems," said Bob Cherry. "Pretty knowing of her to ask you for your photograph! Has she asked Coker for one as well?"

Billy Bunter snorted.

"Don't be a fathead, Cherry!" he growled. "Coker doesn't stand an earthly, I tell you! And before I go down to Courtfield this afternoon I'm just going to have an understanding with that rotter!"

"Handle him gently!" laughed Johnny Bull. "Where will you conceal the body after the deed? Greyfriars will be a strange place without our beloved Coker! Poor Coker! I feel sorry for him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going down to have my photograph taken to-day," said Bunter. "What do photos run to these days, Wharton, old man?"

"All depends what sort you have, I should think."

"They shouldn't be more than a quid, should they?"

"My hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Do you mean to say you're going to chuck away a quid on your rotten photograph?"

"N-not exactly; but I'm prepared to go to that. I should think if you loaned me fifteen bob that would see me through. I shall get my Christmas remittances by to-night's post. Certain to turn up then, old chap!"

Billy Bunter extended a fat and outstretched palm, and held it under Wharton's chin.

"Bunter wants you to tell him his fortune in love," laughed Bob Cherry.

"Come on, Wharton, old pal!" said Bunter. "Don't take any notice of that cad Cherry! Fifteen bob now, and I'll pay you back to-night when my postal-orders turn up."

"Nothing doing!" laughed Harry Wharton. "Ask Miss Petuka!"

"I'll trouble you to pay your account before buying photographs, Master Bunter," said Mrs. Mimble. "It's been outstanding since the commencement of the term, you know, and it's quite time you settled it."

"Eh?"

"Go on, porpoise, brass up!"

"Well, if you cads can't help a chap, I've no further use for you. I'll just go and see Coker, and then get my photograph taken. I'll explain to Miss Petuka. She'll understand, I bet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled off the tall chair he was sitting on, and pushed his way through the gathering.

"Silly fat chump!" snorted Bob Cherry. "Fancy as ass like that thinking anybody is in love with him! That's what the Christmas season does for a fat bouncer!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Borrowed Plumes

BANG!

Billy Bunter kicked his heavy feet against Horace Coker's study door in the Fifth Form passage, and waited.

"H'm!" muttered the fat Removite, after a few moments. "The rotter's not in, I suppose. I'll try him once more."

A volley of kicks was rained on the door, and Bunter listened again. There was a gasping noise from the interior of the study, and so the Owl turned the handle of the door and blinked into the room.

"Goodness me!" he gasped in astonishment. "What on earth are you up to, Snoop?"

"Brrrrr!"

Sidney Snoop, one of the sneaks of the Remove Form, was struggling violently on the floor of Coker's study. Yards and yards of cord surrounded his limbs, and as Bunter rolled into the room Snoop made violent efforts to disentangle himself.

"What's the game, Snoop?"

"Help me, you silly dummy!" howled Snoop. "Can't you see that I've been tied up with these beastly cords? Get a knife and help me out!"

Billy Bunter closed the study door, and his fat face wrinkled up into a broad grin as he stood and regarded the hapless Removite.

"Who did you up like that?"

"Will you dry up, you fat rotter, and stop asking silly questions? Get a knife, or a pair of scissors!"

"Ahem!"

"Go on, you fat porpoise. Don't stand grinning there like a beastly Cheshire cat! That cad Coker tied me up, and I'll—I'll make him pay for this! I've been here ever since classes!"

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter held a fat hand up to his face as Snoop toppled over on to his back, and his legs went whirling away nineteen to the dozen in a renewed effort to extricate themselves from their bonds.

"Help me, Bunter!" roared the angry Removite. "Why in the dickens don't you get a knife or something?"

"Ho, he, he!"

"I'll—I'll spifficate you for this, you fat fiend!" snapped Snoop. "Undo these blessed knots!"

"It's nothing to do with me," replied Billy Bunter. "You shouldn't let an ass like Coker tie you up like that for one

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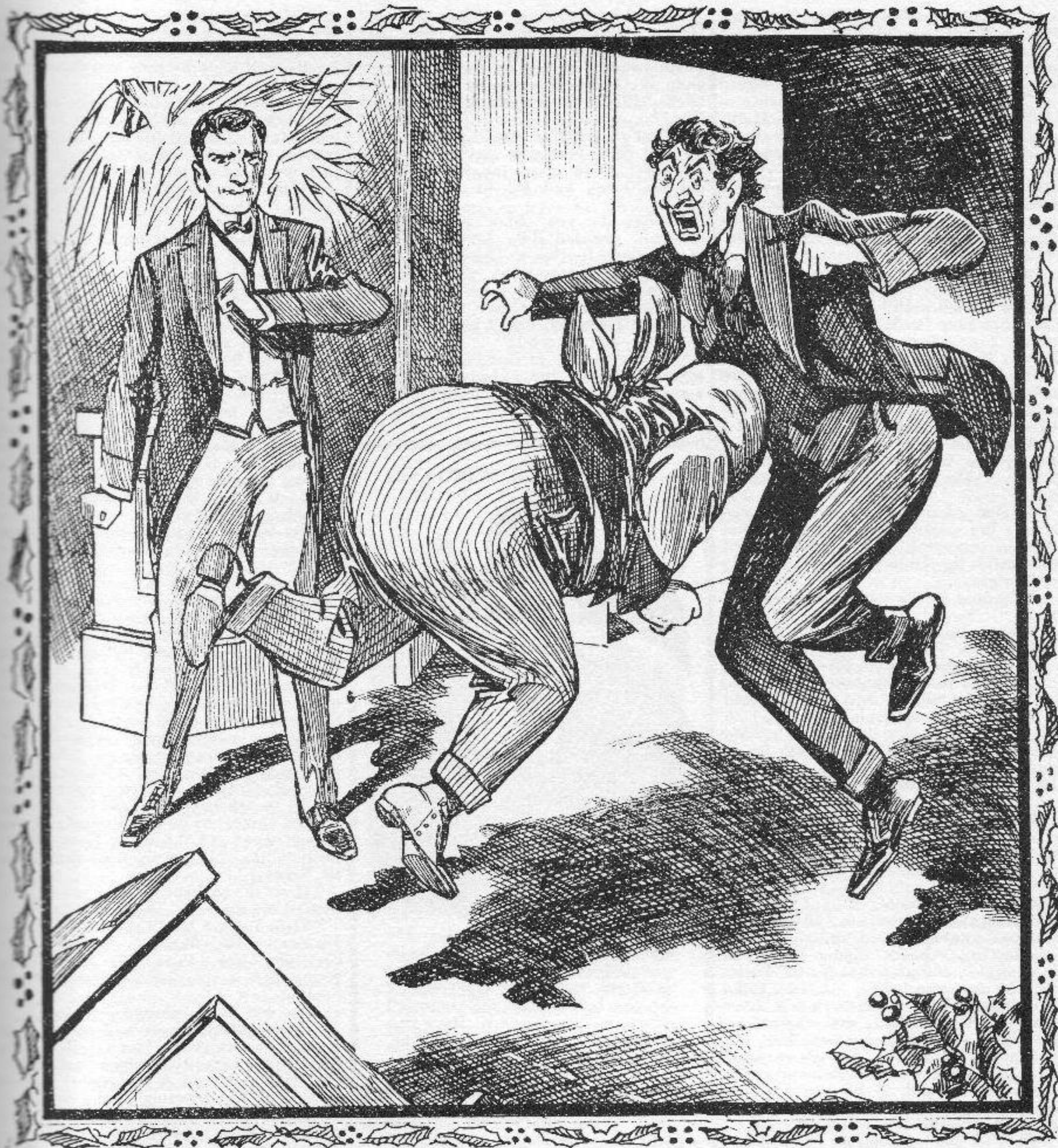
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Billy Bunter, with his enveloped head lowered like a charging bull, butted into the waistcoat of Mr. Carlo Petuka, as the proprietor turned the corner. "Oh!" cried Billy Bunter. "Yaroo!" shrieked Mr. Petuka. (See Chapter 6.)

thing. Why didn't you jolly well go for him?"

"Help me, Bunter, old man!"

"Coker's getting too high and mighty, and you ought not to let him score against the Remove like this. I've never heard of such a thing!"

"Dry up!" spluttered the enraged Snoop. "And get me out of this!"

"It makes it rotten for the Remove!" continued Bunter severely. "Besides that, Coker wants his rotten conceit knocked out of him. How did he get you here?"

"I came here myself, you idiot!"

"Eh?"

"Coker's had a big parcel for Christmas!"

Billy Bunter's eyes rolled with anticipa-

tion as he blinked round the Fifth-Former's study.

"How do you know that, Snoop?"

"Cut me loose, and I will tell you! I saw Gosling bring it up. It was a big, brown-paper parcel. And I came up to ask Coker to stand treat as it's Christmas-time."

"Wouldn't he?"

"The rotter wasn't here, so I was just having a peep into the parcel when he came in. He didn't give me a chance. He fairly flew at me. He was in a dickens of a rage, and I was on my back before I knew what had happened."

"Great Scott!"

"And then the rotter tied me up with this beastly cord! I've got 'em loose now; but I can't get free. Get a knife, Bunter, there's a good chap!"

"Ahem!"

"Go on!" shrieked the unhappy Snoop. "Don't stand there doing nothing! Besides that, Coker might come in again any moment now, and then you'll be for it! I can tell you there's something wrong with Coker just lately. He's like a lion with a sore head!"

"It's jealousy, that's all it is!"

"I don't care a hang what it is so long as you get me undone! Come along, Bunter, old man! Lend a hand to a chap!"

"Where's Coker's parcel?"

Snoop tried to strain his head round in the direction of the corner by the window.

"It's over there! You can jolly well

leave it there until you've got me clear of these beastly cords!"

Billy Bunter rolled across the study, and picked up a large, brown-paper parcel.

"This the one, Snoopy?"

"Y-yes, you—you— Here, leave it alone, Bunter, old man, and get me clear! I'll—I'll stand you a ripping feed if you'll do that!"

But nothing in the bribe line seemed to interest Bunter for the moment. He ignored the unhappy Snoop, and he placed the parcel on to the study table.

"You shouldn't let an ass like Coker fix you up in that way if you don't like it!" he growled. "I haven't got a knife, and I'm blessed if I'm going to spend my time trying to undo about a hundred knots! I'm going down to Courtfield. Hallo! This isn't grub, you idiot!"

Billy Bunter had pulled the string from the parcel, and the brown paper fell away, revealing a large, white box, and an oblong cardboard box.

"The rotter's been buying a new topper, by the look of things," continued Bunter. "My hat! This is something like!"

The Owl of the Remove had placed Coker's brand-new hat on his head, and he stood surveying himself with evident appreciation in the mirror over the study mantelpiece.

"Take that rotten topper off!" howled Snoop.

"It's a jolly good one, and fits me like a glove!"

"Cut me loose, you fat toad!"

"This will just do for me," murmured Bunter to himself. "Just what I want for a decent photograph. Hallo! A pair of patent-leather boots, too! My hat! I suppose that's the way Coker thinks he's going to cut me out. Just like him! He thinks money can win in love, does he?"

"Brrr!" went Snoop, from the study carpet. "What are you mumbling about love for, you fat porpoise? I'll—I'll bump you until you are black and blue for this!"

"Oh, shut up, Snoop!"

Billy Bunter sat down in Coker's most luxurious armchair, and commenced to undo his heavy boots. Snoop paused in his struggles, and glared at his fat Form-fellow in suppressed rage. If looks could have killed, Billy Bunter would have rolled off the armchair and expired on the carpet without a murmur; but, unfortunately for Snoop, his glares were quite lost upon the fat Removeite, for that worthy kicked off his boots with a grunt, and forced on Coker's wonderful new patent-leather ones in exchange.

"They're the real goods, they are!" growled Bunter, after he had buttoned them up. "What do you think of them, Snoopy?"

"Coker will about kill you for this, and I'll kill you afterwards!" spluttered Snoop.

"Ah, that's a new walking-stick, too, I suppose!" continued Bunter, ignoring the dreadful threats from Snoop. "Just my size! It'll suit me down to the ground!"

"You fat cad! I only hope that Coker turns up! If he finds you with those things I pity you, that's all!"

"Poch! I'm not likely to worry my head about Coker. This will teach him to think that he can cut me out!"

"What—what do you mean?"

"I think I will have a decent tie on whilst I am about it," continued Bunter. "I wonder where the bounder keeps his neckties!"

The fat Removeite rolled across to Coker's cupboard, and pulled out drawer after drawer.

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"Ah, here they are! This will do! Hallo! Coker smokes fags, does he? Keeps a silver cigarette-case! What awful swank! I may as well borrow it, and, if Coker gets up to any of his tricks, I'll have something up against him!"

"That's a good wheeze!" piped Snoop. "I will do anything to pay out the cad for this! Give it to me, Bunter, and cut me loose, and I'll fix the cad for you!"

"What do you think you can do, Snoop?" grunted Billy Bunter, putting the finishing touches to Coker's gorgeous tie. "Don't you think you ought to keep a back seat now? After all, you must give that ass Coker some credit. He did tie you up, didn't he?"

"You—you fat toad!"

"That's enough of that!" said Bunter severely, giving the unfortunate Snoop a sharp rap across the back with Coker's walking-stick.

No. 17.—GEORGE WINGATE



George Bernard Wingate.—The captain of Greyfriars. A tall, burly, athletic fellow, with a rugged but by no means bad-looking face; one of the very best, trusted and respected alike by masters and boys. Has a true and staunch charm in Patrick Gwynne. (Sixth Form.)

"Owl! Stop that!" roared Snoop, wriggling violently in his bonds.

"Some of you chaps have got to change your tone a bit now. I'm a new man, I can tell you. I've turned over a new leaf from to-day onwards."

Snoop stared at Billy Bunter in amazement.

"What on earth are you gassing about?" he exclaimed. "Hanged if Coker didn't talk like that as well! But do you think a blessed silk topper makes all that difference to you?"

"Topper! Don't be an ass, Snoop! It's something bigger than that, I can tell you! I feel completely changed. I feel I could—could stand up to anybody in Greyfriars who—"

"Listen!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

"It sounds like Coker's footsteps," said Snoop. "He makes as much noise as any half a dozen Fifth-Formers!"

"Coker!" gasped Billy Bunter, his fat face shaking all over.

"Yes, you fat idiot! If you had only released me we could easily have am-

bushed him together when he came in. We could have tied him up with his own blessed cords. It's too late now, and I jolly well hope he puts you through it properly."

Billy Bunter shook like a jelly, and the next instant the study door was flung open, and Horace Coker, the burly owner, entered. He gave a start of surprise as he caught sight of Bunter.

"What the dickens do you want, you fat fag?" shouted Coker.

"I—I—I—"

Coker's face went red and wrathful.

"Come to show your rotten new clothes, have you? Well, take it from me, that topper looks like a 'busman's tile!"

"I—I—I—"

Snoop, in spite of his bonds, gave a snigger as he sat looking up at Coker of the Fifth and the quaking fat junior of the Remove.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Coker. "You're still tied up, are you, you blessed pilferer! Hanged if I know what's coming over Greyfriars! The whole blessed Remove seems a nest-egg of rotters! It's time they took the captaincy away from Wharton!"

Billy Bunter edged quietly to the door as Coker came into the centre of the study.

"Just you wait a minute, young Bunter! I want to know what you've been up to in my study. Like your cheek coming in without my permission! And whilst you're here, let me tell you this: If I find you talking to Miss Petcka again you'll be booked for a thick ear! You fags in the Remove are too presumptuous for words!"

"I—I've got to go!" replied Billy Bunter, opening the door. "Sorry I can't stop just now, Coker, old man!"

"Hallo! Who on earth has had the cheek to open my parcel?" shouted Horace Coker, as he caught sight of the brown paper and the string lying on his study table. "Have you done that, after all, Snoop?"

"How the dickens could I, when you trussed me up like a blessed chicken?"

"Then Bunter has!" roared the Fifth-Former. "Hi, Bunter! Bunter, come here, you blessed thief! My aunt! The young cad is wearing my hat and my boots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" spluttered Snoop.

Coker streaked across to the door; but Bunter had started. The fat Removeite jammed his borrowed topper fairly down over his head, and flew down the stone passage in the direction of the staircase.

"Hi! Stop him!" roared Coker wildly. "Stop thief!"

Pursued and pursued down the passage, thirty yards between them. Fortunately, there were few people about. The course was clear, and while rage gave Coker wings, fear gave Billy Bunter the speed of an express train.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Stern Chase.

"STOP!"

Horace Coker, the burly Fifth-Former, roared out the command at the top of his voice; but so far as Billy Bunter was concerned the order fell on deaf ears. The fat Removeite was not likely to stop. He feared the consequences of such a stop, and he tore along the corridor as quickly as his fat legs would carry him.

He reached the top of the staircase at last, and flew down the stone steps three at a time. He had gained the next landing when Coker turned the corner above him, and together they careered down the flights, Billy Bunter already

pudding and blowing like a grampus, the great Coker bellowing at the top of his voice.

Bunter was the first to gain the ground floor; but Coker had gained on him in the dash down the stairs, and only a few yards separated the two by the time Billy Bunter gained the door at the end of the passage leading out on to the quadrangle.

"Stop!" roared Coker, as he drew up level with his quarry.

The Fifth-Former grasped Bunter with both hands. A desperate grip was laid upon him in return.

"Let go, you cad!" hissed Billy Bunter.

"What are you wearing my things for?" panted Horace Coker.

"Find out!"

"I mean to!"

"Let go! Let go!" squeaked Bunter.

"Not me!"

Horace Coker tightened his grip. Billy Bunter did the same, and they struggled savagely in the porch of the door.

Horace Coker uttered a cry as he felt a kick upon his leg from his own precious patent-leather boots, and he stumbled, and was thrown heavily to the ground.

The Owl of the Remove sprawled over him. Horace Coker's teeth gritted hard together.

"You—you fat rotter!" he muttered.

"Kick me, would you?"

"Leggo, then!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "Mind your own business, you beastly bully! Let me go!"

"Not me!"

They struggled on the ground. By some miracle Billy Bunter was on top.

Two juniors were coming along the passage now, and when Billy Bunter realised this he fought like a tiger. It seemed that the fat junior of the Remove was blessed with super-strength in his struggle with Coker.

Bunter was determined to get to Courtfield, and he was determined, too, to leave his mark on his rival in love.

"Let me go!" he roared.

"You—you cheeky fat rotter!"

"Then take that, you beastly cad!"

Horace Coker's own stick came down on the back of his head with a whack. The burly Fifth-Former gave a gasp, and released his grip on the fat Removeite.

Billy Bunter sprang to his feet just as Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry came on the scene.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob Cherry. "What's the matter with you, Coker?"

"I—I've had a crack on the head!" gasped the great Horace Coker dazedly. "That fat villain hit me with the handle of my own stick! It's made my head sing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young rotters in the Remove behave like a pack of hooligans!" hooted Coker, staggering up. "I'll deal with you later on, Cherry; but I'll catch that fat rotter if I die for it!"

Horace Coker pulled himself together, and dashed off in pursuit of Billy Bunter once more.

Billy Bunter had a good start now, and he fairly flew across the quadrangle in the direction of the gates.

"Stop him! Stop, thief!" roared the burly Fifth-Former.

Billy Bunter held on to his damaged topper like grim death, and went bowling along. He reached the big iron gates with Coker forty yards behind, and he went scurrying down the frosty road in the direction of Courtfield.

Coker pulled up at the porter's lodge, and Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry dashed up a minute later to see the result of the chase.

"Hallo, hallo! Given it up, Coker, old man?" laughed Bob Cherry.

"I—I was dazed by that blow on the head!"

"You don't mean to say that you give Bunter best?" laughed Harry Wharton.

"You'll catch him easily before he gets to the photographer's."

"Eh? What's that?"

"The photographer's in Courtfield," repeated the captain of the Remove.

"Bunter's gone to have his photograph taken!"

"My hat! The cheeky young rotter!"

"He'll cut you out, Coker, old man, if you aren't careful. He's a regular masher, you know, when he's out on the war-path!"

"If I catch him with Miss Petuka, he'll be for it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do you cheeky kids know that he's gone down to Courtfield to be photographed?"

he was compelled to draw up and take a breather. Perspiration was rolling down his fat cheeks, and down his neck in a steady stream, and Bunter was kept busy mopping himself with his handkerchief in spite of the cold snap in the air.

As soon as he recovered his second wind and pressed out his battered topper and brushed himself down he set off briskly in the direction of Courtfield, and in less than twenty minutes he found himself in the outskirts of the little country town.

Billy Bunter made up his mind to give the High Street a wide berth. If Coker was going to keep up the pursuit he was almost certain to look for Bunter there, so the fat Removeite decided to keep to the side streets and gain Mr. Carlo Petuka's studio that way.

However, Billy Bunter had not been in Courtfield more than two minutes when his portly form was spotted by Skinner and Stott.

Skinner was the worst cad in the Remove, and Stott and Snoop his staunchest cronies.

"My hat!" gasped Skinner. "Just look at that fat bounder! He's dressed up to the nines. What's he up to?"

"I wonder!" said Stott.

"Keeping to the side streets, too. My aunt! Look at the swagger of the fat dummy! He's up to something!"

"There's something mysterious about Bunter these days," said Stott. "Wharton and his crowd went for him in class this afternoon, and then old Quelch jumped on him for cheek when they had finished with him."

"Rather!"

"Let's waylay the bounder. We can get him by cutting down the next street. There must be something on, and we may as well find out before we get back. Doesn't matter if we are late. It's almost the end of the term."

"Right-ho!" assented Skinner. "Come on!"

The two sneaks of the Remove set off at a trot, and took up a position to intercept the unsuspecting Bunter.

"He'll have to come this way now!" muttered Skinner. "We'll wait against this wall and jump on the bounder."

"Hallo! That sounds like his fairy footsteps! Keep quiet!"

Billy Bunter, unconscious of the presence of the two sneaks, swaggered along the street. He paused to read a large printed hoarding advertising Mr. Carlo Petuka's new studios which was displayed prominently on a brick wall.

"Only five bob a dozen!" murmured Billy Bunter. "That's cheap photography. I should think they'll give me tick for that amount."

Skinner and Stott suppressed a snigger as they heard the Owl of the Remove's muttered remarks.

"Wait for him!" muttered Skinner excitedly.

"I've done Coker in, anyway," continued Bunter aloud, as he stepped out again. "I'll get my— Oh!"

Billy Bunter gave a violent start of surprise as he turned the corner of the road, and Skinner and Stott leapt forward and intercepted him.

"Stand and deliver, you fat bounder!" cried Skinner.

"Whither goest thou, varlet?" laughed Stott.

"You silly fatheads!" hooted Billy Bunter. "You gave me quite a fright!"

"Ha, ha! I see you're all dressed up and nowhere to go!" laughed Skinner.

"What's the game, Bunter?"

"You—you mind your own business, Skinner, and don't you try to play any tricks with me. Coker tried it on just now, and I've taught him a lesson, I can tell you!"

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No. 18.—TOM BROWN.



A good sort in every way, and capable, too. One of the most valued members of the Form cricket and footer teams. Cherry, full of humour, can tell a story by word of mouth or on paper well; likes a jape, and plays the game. Comes from Taranaki, New Zealand. (Study No. 2.)

"Shall I let you into the secret?" asked Bob Cherry.

"How do you know, I say?"

"It's tellings, you know. Would you really like me to tell you?"

"Of course!"

"Well, Billy Bunter told us so," said Bob Cherry exasperatingly, "and it looks to me as though you'll jolly well have to buck up if you want to catch him!"

"I'll get there, don't you worry!" snapped Coker. "I'll have to fetch my cap, but I'll catch that fat toad up all right. I shall bicycle in!"

"Better buck up!" laughed Harry Wharton. "It looks as though it's going to snow before long."

Horace Coker of the Fifth dashed away in the direction of the school building, and five minutes later Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry saw him wheel his bicycle out and pedal away in pursuit of Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove did not expect the great Coker to give up the chase when he did, and he scurried away along the frozen road for nearly a mile before

"Eh?"

"Unless you want me to lay this stick across you, you had better stand aside. I'm not taking any bunkum from anyone now!"

Skinner and Stott gazed at the Owl of the Remove in amazement. This sort of talk was something new for Bunter, and his tone somewhat silenced them.

"You—you—"

"That's enough!" granted Bunter, raising Coker's walking-stick over his shoulder. "I don't want any rot from you rotters!"

"We'll—we'll jolly well wipe up the road with you!" snapped Skinner. "Do you think that stick is going to frighten me?"

"Stand clear!"

"You silly, fatheaded boulder!" roared Skinner, advancing on Billy Bunter. "We're not going to stand that sort of rot from you, you know. Come on, Stott, let's—Ow!"

Billy Bunter brought the stick down on Skinner's shoulder with a swish, and the cad of the Remove gave a yelp of surprise and pain.

"Rats to you!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "And rats to you, Stott. Take that!"

Stott jumped clear of the ground as Bunter's stick caught him across the back with a thud.

"Oh-h! Ow!"

"That'll show you that you can't play your rotten, bullying tricks on me any longer!" cried Billy Bunter. "Things are going to change in the Remove when I come back next term, I can tell you. Get out of the way, now!"

Almost dazed with astonishment by Billy Bunter's command, the two cads leaned against the wall, and the fat junior continued his way, swaggering along the street as though he had never heard of Skinner and Stott.

"Are—are you going to stand that, you idiot?" gasped Stott, turning angrily on Skinner.

"I—I—"

"That beastly stick hurt me!"

"Serves you jolly well right!" snapped Skinner wrathfully. "You should have jumped on the boulder when he hit out at me first of all."

"What's up with him?"

"How do I know, idiot? I know he'll jolly well get it in the neck when we get back to the school. The fat boulder's got a stick now, and we haven't. We shouldn't stand an earthly against him!"

"B-but it's only Bunter!"

"I know that, idiot! But can't you see that he's gone mad, or something?"

Stott did not reply, but he rubbed his back as he watched the Owl of the Remove swaggering along the street.

"There he goes, the rotter! He's turned into the High Street, now!"

"Hang him!" gasped Skinner. "Let's get back! Hallo! Here's that idiot Coker—pedalling like mad on his bike, too. Wonder where's he's off to?"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Coker Compromises.

BILLY BUNTER arrived outside Mr. Carlo Petuka's studios at last. He gazed into the shop-window, which displayed a large array of photographs of all sorts. A handsome mirror had been artfully placed there so that clients could be helped to decide that they were quite handsome enough to face the camera's lens inside.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at his reflection, and gave a few finishing touches to Coker's tie, and then he

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peeped into the shop to see whether Miss Petuka was there.

Billy Bunter caught a glimpse of a slim young lady seated behind the counter, and the glance made the fat junior's heart beat so fast that he could hardly gather sufficient will-power to raise his fat hand to turn the handle of the door.

To actually face Miss Petuka once more was a decided strain on his courage. To face the clear glance of those wonderful blue eyes! Billy Bunter felt his heart sink and sink, till it seemed to find a resting-place somewhere in the soles of Horace Coker's patent-leather boots. He felt strongly inclined to turn and bolt. But there was Miss Petuka behind the counter. She was no doubt waiting for him—the beautiful niece of the new photographer actually waiting for him—William George Bunter!

Bunter opened the door at last. There was a clang from a bell fixed over the top of the door, and Miss Petuka looked up as Billy Bunter rolled in. The Owl of the Remove coughed nervously, and mopped his brow with his handkerchief. He mopped again, and drew a deep breath. Then, taking his courage in both hands, as it were, he raised Coker's shiny new topper.

THE PENNY POPULAR OUT ON FRIDAY —CONTAINS— SPLENDID CHRISTMAS STORIES OF GREY- FRIARS, ROOKWOOD, AND ST. JIM'S.

"Oh, good-afternoon! So you have come!"

That sweet voice—it went through Billy Bunter like an icicle! He dared not even raise his eyes from the floor. His fat hand went mechanically to his hat again, and he raised it once more, and bowed his best bow; but his eyes simply could not rise to Miss Petuka's face. His fat face went white and red.

"What sort of photos are you going to have?"

Billy Bunter stammered something unintelligible. He settled his hat on his head again, and tried to raise his eyes. But it was of no use; they were glued to the floor.

A smile glided over Miss Petuka's face. In his dismay and confusion Bunter looked a ludicrous spectacle. And the pretty shop-assistant could not quite understand Billy Bunter's behaviour, although quite a number of Carlo Petuka's customers seemed to behave curiously when they came to have their photographs taken.

"Would you like to go straight up to the studio? My uncle is disengaged. I think he is in the dark-room developing plates; but, anyway, he won't keep you waiting more than a few minutes."

Billy Bunter found his voice at last. He sat down limply on one of the chairs placed in front of the counter, and stole a glance at Miss Petuka.

"Th-th-thank you, Miss Petuka!"

he stammered. "Y-yes—yes, I will—er—I mean—I won't!"

Poor Bunter!

He had had wild ideas of what he was going to say to Miss Petuka when he next saw her. He was going to unburden himself of something wonderfully romantic—but now that he was in her presence he could no more have made that speech than he could have flown. He murmured something unintelligible, and then his lips closed again.

"Haven't you come to have your photo taken, then?" asked Miss Petuka.

"Y-yes—er—I mean—no—yes, of course!" stammered Billy Bunter. "You—you said you would like one, didn't you?"

"I asked you to come and get taken here, if that is what you mean, you silly boy!"

Billy Bunter nearly fell off his chair. That word "silly" came like a blow from a dagger to the unfortunate Owl of the Remove Form. Bunter seemed to swallow something. That was not exactly what he wanted Miss Petuka to say to him.

"Of course I've come to be taken here!" replied Bunter feebly.

"That's right; and is your friend coming, too?"

"My—my friend?"

"Yes; he's at your school—isn't he? He said his name was Coker—Horace Coker."

Billy Bunter coughed violently.

"Oh, yes, of course! Old Horace and I are great chums. We—we are sort of top boys, you know!"

The Owl of the Remove was beginning to recover his nerves and his imagination at the same time.

"But Mr. Coker is ever so much older than you—isn't he?"

"Y-yes, Miss Petuka. I think he can give me a month or two."

"He's such a nice boy, and so interesting. He told me how good he is at football and cricket."

Bunter blinked violently through his big spectacles.

"D-did he really?"

"Yes, I do hope he won't forget his promise. Uncle is awfully anxious to get all the customers he can."

Billy Bunter's heart sank deeper and deeper. The fact was gradually dawning upon him that Miss Petuka was not so anxious to come by his photo, but that her Uncle Carlo should get his name on to the firm's books.

"I think my pal Coker will turn up all right," said Billy Bunter, after a pause.

"Look here, Miss Petuka, may I, please, explain something to you?"

"Of course! Are you going to ask me to get the photos done quickly, so that you can have them for Christmas presents? That's what nearly everyone asks me."

"N-no, not exactly! It's about my old pal Horace—Coker, you know!"

"Oh!"

"Just before I came along here we—we had a slight difference. Just a little misunderstanding, you know. Nothing in it; but that ass—er—I mean, old Horace got rather upset."

"I'm sure he's not a bad-tempered boy!" said Miss Petuka pertly.

"My hat, isn't he—er—I mean, of course he isn't, is he—what?"

"I don't understand you! What on earth do you mean?"

"Well, it's like this," continued Billy Bunter. "Coker was rather upset, you see, and when I left him he was raving!"

"What!"

"Raving! He seemed to suddenly go funny in his head, and goodness knows what he wasn't going to do. Mad people

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Billy Bunter, unconscious of the presence of the two sneaks, paused to read a large printed hoarding advertising Mr. Petuka's studios, displayed prominently on a brick wall. "Wait for him!" muttered Skinner excitedly. (See Chapter 4.)

often turn against their greatest pals, you know!"

"But do you mean to say that Mr. Coker is mad?"

Billy Bunter nodded his head and winked knowingly.

"Just a bit. Runs in the Coker family, you know!"

"How awfully sad!"

"Yes; I always feel sorry for him when he gets these attacks. He was going to murder me, I think!"

"Oh!"

"Of course, it will be quite all right. He soon forgets these attacks; and I know that people can influence him quite easily. You could, for instance, I bet!"

"Could I?" said Miss Petuka, looking rather frightened. "But I don't think that I like mad people. If I see Mr. Coker I shall certainly run away!"

Billy Bunter gave a giggle. He was quickly recovering his nerves now.

"It's no good doing that, you know," he said, with a simper. "Not a bit of good! Especially if he comes here; and I know that he's going to turn up. Now, this is what I want you to do. Directly Coker comes in here, you tackle him right away. Don't give him a chance to get in the first word; but tell him at once that he is to make it up with me directly. Tell him that he is not to touch me, and he'll—he'll promise you all right, I bet. Couldn't do anything else!"

"But I shall be so frightened!"

"Nothing to be afraid of, really, Miss Petuka!" said Billy Bunter reassuringly. "All you have to do is to be quite firm with him, and tell him that he is to be kind to his friend Bunter. Make him promise that, or that you'll have nothing more to do with him. He'll give in to you like a shot!"

"But supposing he doesn't? It would ruin uncle's business if we had a murder in here. Just at Christmas-time, too!"

Billy Bunter frowned.

"I'm—I'm awfully sorry for you, Miss Petuka!" he said. "You needn't feel a bit upset about it! I— Oh, my hat! Here he is! Speak up, Miss Petuka! Don't wait for him to start!"

Miss Petuka jumped up in her seat as the shop door was pushed open.

The bell gave a loud ring, and Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, looking very red from his bicycle ride, entered.

The burly Fifth-Former raised his cap and bowed.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Petuka!" he said. "I've—"

"Yes, yes, yes! Don't say any more, Mr. Coker!" interrupted Miss Petuka. "It's quite all right. You've got to be friends with Mr. Bunter at once!"

Coker stared in astonishment.

"Ah, there you are, you cheeky young

swab!" he roared. "I'm jolly well going to—"

"No, no, no!" cried Miss Petuka, stamping her foot loudly on the floor of the shop.

Horace Coker looked surprised, and gazed from Miss Petuka to Billy Bunter.

"You're not to touch him!" cried Miss Petuka. "You're to make it up at once. Do you understand?"

"W-what?"

"If you don't, I shall not have anything more to do with you, Mr. Coker! Fancy thinking that you can murder anybody like that, and your best friend, too, just because you had a little quarrel!"

"Murder? My best friend?"

"Yes. But now I don't want you to say a single word about it, but shake hands at once."

Coker stared at Miss Petuka in amazement.

"Shake hands with that fat thief?" he asked.

"Yes, go on! Shake hands at once!"

"B-but—"

Miss Petuka stamped her foot on the linoleum again, and pouted her pretty lips in a very fascinating manner.

"Very well, then," she said. "If you can't oblige a lady, you may leave the studio at once. I shall certainly tell uncle not to take your photograph!"

"Come on, Horace, old man!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, holding out a fat

hand to the Fifth-Former. "Let's shake. You're only upsetting Miss Petuka. It's jolly caddish of you!"

"You—you—you—" "There, now!" cried Miss Petuka. "Surely you can't refuse that! Mr. Bunter wants to shake hands and make it up!"

Coker's face went crimson with rage. "Shake, old man!" said Billy Bunter. "Come on!"

The Fifth-Former held out his right hand as though in a dream, and Billy Bunter shook it up and down like a pump-handle.

"That's all right, old chap!" he cried. "I knew you'd be a good old sport! You always are!"

Coker spluttered with rage. "Cheer up!" continued Billy Bunter. "I'm jolly glad you've taken the trouble to come all this way to make it up. I like to be on good terms with everybody—especially at Christmas-time."

"Now, why don't you let uncle take your photographs together?" suggested Miss Petuka, smiling sweetly. "It won't cost you very much more."

"Together?" gasped Coker. "Me taken with—with—Bunter?"

"Yes; our groups are always awfully good, you know. Try one arm-in-arm. It would look so interesting!"

Billy Bunter gave a smirk.

"Good idea, Miss Petuka!" he said. "Go on, Horace, old chap, pay for one like that. Of course, it's a pity you're only wearing a rotten cap! Really want a topper for a decent photograph."

Coker went scarlet with rage.

"Why, you confounded young rotter! You—you—"

"Oh!" cried Miss Petuka. "Oh, what dreadful language!"

"I—I—I beg your pardon, Miss Petuka!" stammered the dismayed Coker. "I'm awfully sorry, you know! I quite forgot myself! But do you know that that cheeky young swab of—"

"That's all right, Coker, old bean!" interrupted Billy Bunter. "Of course, we quite understand that it was a slip of the tongue. Now, what about fixing that photograph, Miss Petuka? You can let Coker know the prices, can't you? Rather a good wheeze to be taken together."

Horace Coker seemed to choke.

"Now, are you two going to be friends?" asked Miss Petuka.

"I am!" replied Billy Bunter.

"And you, Mr. Coker?"

"Y-yes!" gasped the burly Fifth-Former. "All right, then! Now, where's the studio?"

"That's right!" said Miss Petuka, in evident relief. "I knew you were a gentleman, Mr. Coker. You'll have to go upstairs for the studio. If you'll go now I'll tell my uncle that you're waiting. He won't keep you very long, I know."

"All right," replied Coker. "I'll find the way. May—may I speak to you for a few moments afterwards? I want to speak to you alone. I don't want that fat toad—er—I mean, Bunter."

Miss Petuka smiled sweetly.

"Very well, Mr. Coker!" she murmured. "I'll be down here when you have done in the studio."

"Thanks so much!" exclaimed Coker, and he led the way upstairs, and Billy Bunter rolled along behind him, as Miss Petuka put her lips to a speaking-tube in the wall and spoke to her uncle, who was at the other end of the tube swilling plates about in a bath of developing mixture.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Christmas Portrait!

"NOW, then, you fat toad!" Horace Coker faced Billy Bunter angrily as the two entered the studio.

"That's all right, old man," said the fat junior. "Just as well to forget all about these little misunderstandings. Jolly decent of Miss Petuka to act as peacemaker, wasn't it?"

Coker spluttered with rage. "You cheeky young rotter!" he roared. "What sort of lies have you been telling her? I'm going to jolly well take it out of you now!"

"Really, Coker, you can't!" "Can't!" yelled Coker, rolling back his sleeves. "You just see!"

"But you've promised!" piped Billy Bunter. "After all, you can't go back on my girl like that!"

"Your—your girl?"

No. 19.—PERCY BOLSOVER.



Percy Bolsover—Bolsover major—has a brother in the Third. The oldest and biggest fellow in the Remove. Something of a bully, something of a dunce, and something of a gay dog; yet by no means wholly bad. Though quite self-opinionated enough, can be easily led by the crafty. (Study No. 10.)

"Yes; Miss Petuka. Isn't she a dream? A regular top-hole girl, I call her!"

Coker's face was a study. "You can keep off the ice!" he said witheringly. "If I catch you bothering Miss Petuka again, I'll not be responsible!"

Billy Bunter blinked hard at the fuming Fifth-Former.

"That's quite enough of that rot, Coker, old man. Anybody with half an eye can see who Miss Petuka favours. There's something about me that carries weight."

"Pshaw! You carry plenty of weight, you fat toad; but do you think Miss Petuka wants to be pestered by a beastly steam-roller like you?"

"You're jealous, old chap!"

"Well, how are you going to have it?" snapped Coker. "Are you going to take your licking here, or wait until we get outside?"

"Eh?"

"Come on!" roared Coker. "You're going to get it in the neck, you cheeky

young fag! I'm fed up with you beastly Removites!"

"B-but, Miss Petuka—"

"Blow Miss Petuka!"

"What? You jolly well promised her, Coker! You'll look an awful cad if she comes in while I'm putting you through the mill. Besides, she might think that I had started the scrap again. I can't understand you, Coker. I always thought you were a gentleman, although you are rather an ass."

"H'm!"

"I wonder where that rotten photographer is? I suppose this is the camera. How does it work, Coker?"

A large camera stood in the centre of the studio, and Billy Bunter raised the black cloth which hung over it, and blinked at the machine.

"Leave it alone, you young boulder!" snapped Coker. "You'll jolly well break it if you start messing about! I've got one like that at home. My Aunt Judy gave me one last Christmas."

"Oh!"

"I know how it works all right," said Coker, anxious to air his knowledge.

It was a little failing of Coker's. His chums, Potter and Greene, of the Fifth, know how to handle their burly study-mate. A little flattery when Coker was fuming subsided his anger like magic, and, in spite of everything to justify his rage, he seemed quite ready to thaw now.

"Stand over there, you fat boulder!" he ordered. "I'll see what sort of lens this thing has got. Bet it's not half as good as mine!"

Billy Bunter took up a position in front of the camera, and blinked into the lens as Horace Coker covered his head with the black cloth.

"See anything?" asked the fat Removite.

"Yes! I can see a flabby porpoise upside-down!" came the muffled tones from Coker. "Stand still, you ass!"

"Right-ho!" replied Bunter. "Hallo, here's the plates by the look of it!"

"Where?"

Coker's head poked up behind the camera.

"These are plates, I should think," replied Billy Bunter, holding up a large mahogany plate-holder. "Not a bad wheeze to take my photo!"

"I will. Hand the blessed thing over to me! We can't wait all night for that chap to come down from his blessed dark-room!"

Billy Bunter took out the cigarette-case he had borrowed from Coker's study, and he extracted a cigarette and struck a match. Fortunately for Bunter, Coker did not catch sight of the case. The Fifth-Former had suddenly thrown the black cloth over his head again.

"Now then, you fat porpoise, hold yourself up properly! My hat! Have you had the cheek to light a fag?"

Billy Bunter puffed merrily away, and held up Coker's stick in his right hand, whilst his left hand rested on his fat waist.

"This is a good posish!" he said. "Take me like this, Coker, old man!"

"Well, stand still, you ass!"

"Buck up! Someone's coming!"

Hurried footsteps sounded along the passage outside; but Coker carried on. He held up his right hand.

"Hold your head up, Bunter, and look natural. Don't put that idiotic expression on! You'll break the camera!"

"Really, Coker! Look out! Here he is!"

A face suddenly appeared round the curtain hung at the entrance of the studio. It was Mr. Carlo Petuka.

"Ah! I've kept you young gentlemen waiting. I'm very sorry. You play with the camera? Be careful. I return

in a minute. A gentleman wants to see me in the shop."

And Mr. Petuka dashed away again. "My hat! That's decent of him!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "I thought he was going to lose his hair!"

"Has he gone?" said Coker, poking his head up again. "Was that the boss of the show?"

"Rather! I thought you were for it!"

Coker jammed in the plate-holder at the back of the camera, and drew out the slide, after putting the leather cap over the lens.

"Don't move, you ass!" he cried. "Stand just as you are, and hold your breath!"

Billy Bunter took a deep breath, and gazed into the camera.

"Stand up," cried Coker, "and raise your right hand a bit!"

The Owl of the Remove complied, and his face went redder and redder as the strain of holding his breath began to tell on him.

"Now, are you ready? Don't puff the cigarette, man! Now smile!"

The cap came off the camera's lens, and Bunter stood like a rock as Coker slowly counted out the seconds.

"One, two, three, four, five, six! Good!"

Bunter was on the point of exploding as Coker snapped on the cap at last, and he leaned against a pedestal, puffing and blowing like a grampus.

"That'll be all right!" exclaimed Coker. "There's another plate, but we'll leave that!"

"Let me have a look at you, old chap!" said Billy Bunter. "Stand here for a second before the boss returns!"

Billy Bunter threw the cloth over his head, and slammed Coker's top-hat down on to a chair.

"Here, look out with that topper!" cried Coker angrily. "Like your blessed cheek to chuck it down like that!"

"Oh, dry up, old man!" growled Billy Bunter from under the cloth. "Give your blessed tile a rest for a bit!"

"What?"

"Give it a rest, old man! We've heard enough about that rotten hat for to-day!"

"Oh, have you, you fat rotter!" roared Coker. "Then take that!"

Coker's "that" was a sharp rap on the top of the black cloth, and there was a howl from the unfortunate Bunter.

"Ow! You rotten cad!" he roared. "Here, what are you doin'?"

Coker had suddenly opened up an attack on Billy Bunter, who was at a distinct disadvantage, since his fat head was completely covered by Mr. Petuka's black cloth.

"Ow! Leggo! Oh-h, you rotter!"

"You cheeky young swab!" cried Coker, of the Fifth. "I've had enough of your blessed cheek, and now you are going to pay for it!"

"Help! Leggo!"

Coker caught the unhappy Bunter's head in chancery, and pommelled merrily away. The fat Removite's cries were muffled, but the studio rang with them.

"Shut up that blessed row!" roared Coker. "I'll tie your beastly head up whilst I'm about it!"

The cloth was stretched violently over Billy Bunter's head, and the burly Fifth-Farrer had the four corners tied in strong knots in no time.

The Owl of the Remove was released at last, and he went rolling across the study, groping out his fat hands helplessly. He crashed up against a stand with a large pot containing a palm-fern in it. The stand and the pot went over with a crash, and Billy Bunter gave a roar.

"I'm off!" cried Coker, snatching up the topper and walking-stick which Bunter had purloined from his study. "Old Petuka will kick up the very dickens of a row over this!"

"Take this cloth off!" roared Bunter. "Rats! I'm off!"

"Help!" cried Billy Bunter, dashing wildly round the studio, and sending two chairs and another pedestal over with a crash. Horace Coker looked wildly round him, and then flew into the passage and down the stairs.

"Where are you, you rotter!" roared Billy Bunter, as he caught the sound of hurried footsteps running along the passage. "I'll jolly well pay you out for this!"

The fat junior dashed across the studio in the direction of the curtained door. The next moment there was a roar of anguish. Billy Bunter, with his enveloped head lowered like a charging bull, butted into the waistcoat of Mr.

No. 20. WUN LUNG.



Wun Lung—the Chinese of the Remove. Crafty; has no regard for the truth; flatters to deceive; does extraordinary things in the cooking and other lines, but with it all is a very likeable little chap. Never forgets a kindness—or an injury, if intentional. Would do anything for Wharton, Mark Linley, or Bob Cherry. Has a younger brother in the Second. (Study No. 13.)

Carlo Petuka as the proprietor of the studio turned the corner.

"Oh!" cried Billy Bunter.

"Oh-h!" roared Mr. Petuka, and he collapsed to the floor, bellowing with pain. Billy Bunter suddenly found himself in a strong grip, and he roared and struggled like a madman.

"Leggo!" he roared. "Leggo, Coker, you rotten cad, and take this blessed cloth off! I'll jolly well tell Miss Petuka!"

"Good gracious, it's Bunter!"

Billy Bunter suddenly ceased his struggles at the sound of his voice.

"Is—is—is—is that M-M-Mr. Quelch?"

"Yes, it is! Stand still!"

Billy Bunter stood as still as he could. He was shakin' like a jelly; but Mr. Quelch had him in his grasp, and in a few moments the black cloth was untied, and the fat Removite stood revealed, blinking hard through his big spectacles at Mr. Quelch and Mr. Petuka, who slowly picked himself up from the floor, puffing and grunting like a bull.

"Bunter, what does this mean?"

"I—I—I—"

"Answer me, boy!" thundered Mr. Quelch, piercing Billy Bunter through and through with his gimlet-like eyes.

"It—it was an accident, sir. I didn't see him, sir. I—I thought it was Coker, sir."

"Coker?"

"Yes, sir. Coker and I came to have our photographs taken, and, after Coker had taken mine, he—he tied me up like that, sir. Bit of a joke of Coker's, I suppose."

"A joke, indeed!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "I came by mere chance to be photographed in this studio, and I—I find a member of my Form charging about the place like a bull in a china shop!"

"Look at my studio!" raved Mr. Petuka. "It's a regular shambles! My ferns, my tables, my chairs—all are broken!"

"I'm indeed sorry this has happened," said Mr. Quelch. "But pray calm yourself, my dear sir. The tables and chairs are not damaged."

"You'll be able to stick the flower-pots, too," said Billy Bunter. "That'll be an easy matter."

"Silence, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"My camera!" cried Mr. Carlo Petuka. "My plates! Those wretched boys may have done any amount of damage! And just in the Christmas week rush! Oh dear!"

"The camera's all right," said Billy Bunter. "Coker only took one plate."

"Exposed a plate?" shrieked Mr. Petuka.

"Yes; only one."

"What did he expose a plate for?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "It's a pity any boy belonging to Greyfriars cannot be trusted to behave himself honestly when he is away from the precincts of the school."

"I—I had my photo taken," explained Billy Bunter. "I—I dare say Coker has gone to the shop, sir. Shall I go and see?"

"You will stay here, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Now, Mr. Petuka, will you be satisfied to leave the matter in my hands? I will pay for the damage to the ferns, and this foolish boy will have the amount placed in his parents' school accounts."

"Of course, if the damage is paid for I—I shall be satisfied," replied Mr. Carlo Petuka.

"Very well, then," said Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, you will apologise to Mr. Petuka, and then you'll return immediately to the school. I will send for you when I return."

"Oh, sir!"

"You are utterly foolish, Bunter. You will apologise at once."

"Of course, I'm very sorry it has happened, sir. It was all the fault of that silly ass Coker, sir. I—"

"Silence, Bunter! How dare you express yourself like that in the presence of your Form-master!"

Billy Bunter shook.

"I—I—I—"

"That is quite sufficient! Now, Mr. Petuka, if you'll allow me, I'll send this insolent boy back to the school at once. He will be dealt with on my return there, I can assure you."

"Very well," replied Mr. Petuka, bowing graciously to Mr. Quelch. "I am perfectly satisfied."

"Thank you. Now, Bunter, you may go. And you can thank Mr. Petuka for the very kind manner in which he is treating the matter. Go!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 620.

Billy Bunter rolled out of the studio, after looking in vain for Coker's top-hat and walking-stick. He went through the shop, but Miss Petuka was not there—nor was Coker of the Fifth.

"Boasts!" muttered the Owl of the Remove to himself.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bad for Coker!

"SO you've got back, have you, you fat toad?"

Coker of the Fifth asked the question with a broad grin on his face.

Billy Bunter was standing in the passage, with his hands in his pockets and a wrinkled expression upon his fat face. He started as Coker of the Fifth spoke, and he blinked through his big spectacles. Billy Bunter had not yet recovered from the scene in Mr. Carlo Petuka's studio, and the shock he had received from his unexpected encounter with Mr. Quelch had left him quite shaky.

"Oh, you shut up, Coker, you cad!" growled Bunter.

Horace Coker chuckled.

"I suppose you met old Quelch after I had left you?" he remarked.

"You must have been in a blue funk to clear off like that!" retorted Billy Bunter. "Just shows you what a rotten coward you are!"

There was a laugh from the Removites in the passage. Coker of the Fifth always afforded the juniors a certain amount of fun. The great Fifth-Former flushed red.

"I'll give you a jolly good hiding, you cheeky young fag!" he exclaimed.

"Rats!" said Billy Bunter. "You were in too much of a funk to stay, and you know it!"

"You cheeky young swab!"

"Oh, dry up, Coker!"

Smack!

Billy Bunter staggered back against the wall as Coker's open hand caught him across his fat face. The next moment he was rushing upon Coker, and the burly Fifth-Former met him with right and left, and Billy Bunter went down in a heap, roaring like a bull.

"Hold on, you Fifth-Form bouncer!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Let our prize porpoise alone! Bunter's no match for you, and you know it! Hands off!"

Horace Coker gave Bob Cherry a dignified glare.

"Quite right, Bob, old man!" said a quiet voice, as Harry Wharton came down the passage. "If you are spoiling for a fight, Coker, you can come into the gym with me!"

Horace Coker sniffed contemptuously. "I don't want a row with you!" he said pompously.

"I dare say you don't!" said Harry Wharton, with a grin. "You only want a row with a fat bouncer like Bunter. But you're going to have it, whether you want it or not. Come into the gym!"

"I won't!"

Billy Bunter staggered up from the floor. There was a red smear on his nose, and his spectacles had been knocked off in the struggle.

"Leave him to me, Wharton," he growled. "I—"

Harry Wharton pushed him back.

"That's all right, porpoise!" he said. "I'm looking after Coker. Are you coming into the gym, Coker?"

"No," said Coker, with a scowl, "I'm not!"

"Then I'll help you along! Lend a hand, Bob!"

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 620.

Horace Coker tried to back away; but the clumsy of the Remove had hold of his arms in a moment, and he walked towards the gym. A crowd of juniors followed. A fight with Harry Wharton in it was always worth seeing, and there were few of them who would not have been glad to see the great Coker get a licking.

With a crowd of juniors round him, Coker was walked into the gym, and the Removites formed a circle. The burly Fifth-Former looked rather sullen. He had so often bragged of his prowess with the gloves, and so seldom been seen with them on, the idea of tackling Harry Wharton was beginning to perturb him somewhat. But Coker had no choice left now. To back out of a contest at this juncture would be lowering the prestige of the Fifth Form.

"Will you have the gloves on, Coker dear?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes, you cheeky young fag!"

"Chuck them out, Bob, old son!"

"Here you are!"

"I shall be very pleased to be referee, my dear fellows, if you like," drawled Lord Mauleverer, taking out his big gold watch. "Two-minute rounds and one-minute rests, I suppose?"

"Perhaps Coker would prefer one-minute rounds and two-minute rests!" suggested Bob Cherry, with great gravity.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Horace Coker scowled as he put on the gloves. But he was fairly in for it now, and he meant to put up the best fight he could. He was much bigger than Harry Wharton, and he certainly had some knowledge of boxing. But it remained to be seen whether he was equal to the captain of the Remove Form.

"Time!" drawled Mauleverer. "Time, my dear fellows!"

"Walk up, gent!" said Johnny Bull.

"Go it!"

And the adversaries faced one another. Horace Coker started with a fierce and slogging attack. His size and weight drove Harry Wharton round the ring, and round again, and Mauleverer was looking at his watch, when the captain of the Remove suddenly seemed to wake up, as it were, to new life.

He stood his ground, and as Coker came in he drove the burly Fifth-Former's guard up and brought in his left with a sounding thump upon his chest.

"Ow!"

Coker gave a gasp like steam escaping, and dropped in a sitting posture on the floor of the gym.

"Time!"

"Hurrah!"

Frank Nugent came forward and picked Horace Coker up.

Hurree Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur, made a knee for him, and Coker sank upon it, gasping.

Harry Wharton did not trouble to rest. He stood in the ring waiting for the great Fifth-Former to come on again.

"Time, my dear fellows!" cried Lord Mauleverer.

Coker stepped up again. His face was flushed and angry now. He felt that the prestige of the Fifth Form hung in the balance. But he was more cautious in his attack now, and Harry Wharton received some of the punishment.

"Biff, biff, biff!"

The thick padded gloves crashed upon face and chest, and both combatants looked hard hit and breathless when the schoolboy earl called time again.

"By gad, my dear fellows!" ejaculated

Lord Mauleverer. "I'm sure I never thought that ass Coker had so much stuffing in him. He's a good sport!"

"Order!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"What, my dear fellow?" drawled Mauleverer.

"Referees and timekeepers are not allowed to make remarks upon the fight," said the worthy Bob Cherry with great severity. "I'm surprised at you, Mauly. A blessed earl, and goodness knows what!"

"Really——"

"Order!"

"Time!" said Mark Linley.

"Really, Linley——"

"It's time, you dummy! Why don't you call time?" shouted Bulstrode major.

"Really, Bulstrode——"

"Time, you fathead!"

"Time, you duffer! Why don't you call time? We shall have Christmas here before we know where we are!"

"How can I call time when you fellows are interrupting me?" demanded Lord Mauleverer indignantly. "You fellows will kindly keep quiet!"

"Time!"

"Really——"

"Time! Time!"

"I shall refuse to allow the fight to proceed until I have called time! Really——"

"Well, call it then, Mauly, you ass!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I don't want you to refer to me as an ass!"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh. Coker was gasping on Hurree Singh's knee, and apparently not at all averse to having an extra rest.

Mauly gave the grinning Removites a withering look.

"I must refuse to allow the fight to proceed under riotous conditions," he drawled. "Are you ready, my dear Wharton?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"And you, Coker?"

"Yes!" growled Coker of the Fifth.

"Time, then!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the third round commenced.

Coker rushed in, attacking hard; but Harry Wharton did not give ground. He met the slogging attack with a perfect defence, and Coker exhausted himself in vain in striving to get through his guard.

Then suddenly Harry Wharton's right came out, and it caught Coker on the point of the chin, and his left followed it as Coker's hands flew wildly up.

Crash!

The great Coker dropped upon his back, and lay gasping and dazed.

"Time!"

The minute ticked away. Lord Mauleverer looked at his watch again, and then turned his glance upon Coker of the Fifth.

"Time!"

Coker did not move.

"He's done!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Poor old Coker!"

"Clean as a whistle!" said Johnny Bull.

"Time!" repeated Mauleverer.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Redwing.

"How many times are you going to say 'Time,' Mauly?"

"Really, my dear fellow, I——"

"Chuck it, Mauly!"

"I wish to give Coker every chance. You must remember that the referee has power to modify the rules if he considers it judicious. I consider it judicious now. Time!"

"I'm done!" growled Coker.

"Are you sure you wouldn't like to go on, Coker, my dear fellow?"

"No, ass!"

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

"I must remind you, Coker, that is not the way to address a referee!" drawled Mauleverer. "Perhaps that's peculiar to the Fifth Form!"

"Oh, go and eat coke, you cheeky young fag!"

Coker staggered to his feet, and peeled the gloves off, and then flung them into a corner. Harry Wharton removed the gloves in his turn.

The burly Fifth-Former strode away, and the juniors raised a cheer for the victor.

"Hurrah!"

"Jolly good!" said Billy Bunter, pushing his way through the crowd. "I consider you put up quite a decent fight, Wharton. It's a jolly good thing you didn't leave it to me. That ass Coker wouldn't have come off as lightly as that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should have given him something to—"

But the rest of Billy Bunter's remarks were lost as the laughing Removites trooped away.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Mauly's Christmas Fiver!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. walked out of the gym. The captain of the Remove was looking a little flushed, and there was a slight swelling on his nose, but otherwise he looked none the worse for his encounter with Coker of the Fifth.

The rest of the Removites were very cheerful. They had seen a good fight, and the victory thoroughly pleased them. It was one up for the Remove, and at the end of the term, too. This put them in a very good humour.

Gosling, the old porter, met them in the Remove passage with a letter in his hand.

"For me, of course?" said Bob Cherry pleasantly.

Gosling gave a sour sort of grin.

"For his lordship, Master Cherry," he said.

"His what ship?"

"His lordship!" growled Gosling. "Lord Mauleverer."

"Hand it over, Gosling," drawled Mauleverer.

Mauly took the letter out of Gosling's horny hand.

"Sure it's not for me, Mauly?" said Bob Cherry. "Our names are very much alike, you know, and it's time I had a fiver. You had one only the other day. Battered rich I call it!"

"Really, Cherry, my dear fellow, I am—"

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Bob generously. "I'll toss you whether you or I have it, Mauly."

"Don't be an ass, my dear fellow. This letter is from my governor, and I hope there's a fiver in it. The governor's been getting rather close lately. Says the taxes are getting too stiff, but I should think that he would come out strong at Christmas time."

"Oh, open it!" laughed Harry Wharton. "Buck up!"

"Really, Wharton—"

"Buck up!" roared Harry Wharton.

"What's the hurry—"

"Of course there's a hurry!" said Harry Wharton. "If there's a fiver in the letter we're coming to tea with you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Very well, my dear fellow!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Under those circumstances I will open the letter at once if someone will lend me a penknife. I left mine in the pocket of one of my waistcoats."

"I'll lend you my thumb," suggested Bob Cherry.

"But, my dear fellow, I—"

"Open it with your paws, Mauly, you ass!"

"Really, I must remind you that my fingers are not paws, Cherry, my dear fellow, and, anyway, I don't like opening my letters in that way. If you'll lend me a penknife, I'll—"

"Here you are, fathead!"

"Really, Bull—"

"Open the letter!" roared all the juniors in chorus.

"Oh, very well!"

Lord Mauleverer slit open the envelope. He opened the letter, and a crisp, rustling fiver came into view.

"Good egg! The governor is playing up all right, you see!" drawled Mauleverer.

"Excellent!" said Bob Cherry. "I'd give you a couple of uncles and an aunt for your pater, Mauly, if you ever feel inclined to swop."

"Really, Cherry—"

"Buzz off to Mrs. Mible's!" advised Harry Wharton. "I'm as hungry as a hunter after that scrap with Coker, and I want my tea. Buck up, Mauly, there's a good chap!"

"I don't mind helping you with the shopping, you chaps!" piped Billy Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo! Here's our pet porpoise on the scene!" cried Bob Cherry. "Run away and play marbles, Bunter. You're not wanted here!"

Billy Bunter grinned a fat grin.

"Christmas time, you know, Cherry!" he exclaimed.

"That's all very well—"

"Yes, of course it is!" assented Billy Bunter, with an amiable smile. "I believe in Christmas, you know. The time of peace and good will, and all that sort of thing."

"When Mauly has a fiver?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No!" exclaimed the fat Removite indignantly. "There's nothing like that about me, I can tell you. But Christmas only comes once a year, and I don't mind making it up with you chaps. These things have to be thought of in these times."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—"

"It's all right, Bunter, you fat dummy!" drawled Lord Mauleverer. "Come with me over to Mrs. Mible's, and we'll change the fiver, and you can get tea in the study."

"Good egg!" said Billy Bunter.

The fat Removite walked across to the tuckshop with the schoolboy earl. The dusk was falling in the old quad thickly, and with the approach of night the snow was beginning to fall. The weather had been bitterly cold for several days now, and at last the thin, feathery flakes were beginning to come down. They fell around the juniors as they crossed to Mrs. Mible's tuckshop, and floated on the keen, wintry wind.

"By gad!" drawled Lord Mauleverer. "We're going to have a real old-fashioned Christmas by the look of it! I think I had better go and get an umbrella, Bunter."

"Oh, rats!" said Billy Bunter.

"Really, Bunter—"

"You can buzz in!" said Bunter. "I'll change the fiver for you, and do all the shopping, if you like. You can depend upon me to get a really ripping feed!"

"Oh-h!"

"Hand over the fiver, then! Buck up! I'm getting frost-bite!"

Lord Mauleverer hesitated for a moment, and then politely handed over the fiver. There was no doubt about the correctness of Billy Bunter's statement.

When he had unlimited supplies of cash he could certainly be depended upon to lay in a really ripping feed. But whether he could be depended upon to leave much change out of the fiver was another matter. Courtesy, however, was Mauly's strong point, and he relinquished his fiver into Billy Bunter's hands, and hurried back to the shelter of the school building.

The Owl of the Remove rolled across to Mrs. Mible's, and entered the little tuckshop. As he had a great deal of shopping to do, and as he was pretty certain to have a few little "snacks" en passant, he was likely to be there for some time.

Lord Mauleverer reached the doorway leading into the old quad as the snow began to fall more thickly. Temple, Dabney, and Fry, of the Upper Fourth, met him in the doorway. All of the Remove fellows had gone upstairs, and Mauleverer had no desire to stop and talk to the nuts of the Upper Fourth. But Temple stopped him with a polite grin.

"I hear you're getting big remittances, Mauly," he remarked.

"I've just had a remittance," he replied. "It was not a big one—only a fiver."

"My hat! You're standing a feed, of course?"

"Yes."

"Going to ask all your friends, I suppose?"

"Yes!" said Mauleverer grimly.

"Good! We'll come. We don't mind coming in with you kids of the Remove as it's Christmas, and we shall be breaking up in a few days."

"You won't come, my dear fellows!" drawled Lord Mauleverer. "I'm afraid I don't exactly regard you bounders in the Upper Fourth as my friends."

"Oh, come now, Mauly—"

"I'm sure nobody could regard Mauly with more admiration than I do," said Dabney.

"Rats!"

"We'll come and help you do the shopping," Fry suggested.

"Bunter is doing the shopping already, and I do not want your assistance," said the schoolboy earl; "and, as a matter of fact, I should be very bucked if you will go and eat coke!"

And Lord Mauleverer walked on, and rushed upstairs to Study No. 12 in the Remove Form passage. Dabney and Fry scowled angrily; but Temple was grinning, and there was a peculiar gleam in his eyes.

"Blessed if I can see anything to grin at!" growled Dabney.

"Didn't you hear what that Remove kid said?" demanded Temple.

"Yes; we're out of the feed, and we're out of funds, too!"

"I didn't mean that. He said that Billy Bunter was doing the shopping." Temple waved his hand towards the quad. "It's dark already."

"Well?"

"Well, Bunter will come straight across the quad with the grub when he's got it," said Temple. "What price our laying for him under the elms in the Close, and collaring the fat bounder as he comes by?"

"My giddy aunt! Splendid!"

"Billy Bunter will roar the place down, and those Remove kids will come swarming out in a second," said Fry uneasily.

"Pooh! We'll soon be able to silence that fat toad Bunter! And if we can get some more fellows, we'll let them think it's a raid on the Remove."

"Good egg!" said Dabney.

"Rather!" added Fry.

Temple lost no time in carrying out his idea. It was easy enough to get the

recruits for a raid of the Upper Fourth against the Remove, especially when a convoy of provisions was to be captured. Phipps and McDougall and Murphy and Scott and Angel and several other fellows joined the two at once, and quite a little party tramped out in the darkness and the falling snow to lay in wait for Billy Bunter under the elms.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Fooling the Upper Fourth!

"UGH! It's cold!"
"Gross!"
"He can't be long now!"
"Confound the fat boulder! Why doesn't he buck up?"
"Doesn't he buck up?"
"Hush!"
"Oh, rats!"
"I think I hear him coming."

The Upper Fourth fellows were silent. Temple and his band of raiders were ensconced in the deep shadows of the old elms in the quadrangle of Greyfriars. Early as the evening was, it was pitch dark in the quad, save where the lights from the distant windows gleamed out upon the falling snow. The wind was blowing very keenly, and the raiders, waiting under the gaunt trees, shivered as it whistled round their ears and legs.

In the distance gleamed the little, diamond-paned window of Mrs. Mumble's tuckshop. There was Billy Bunter sorting out and selecting supplies, and, doubtless, taking a good many snacks in the process. Probably he was not in a hurry, but the raiders under the leafless trees were growing keenly impatient.

"Are you sure he's coming this way?" growled Phipps.

"Yes," muttered Temple.
"Faith, and why should he? He might go any way!" said Murphy.

"Look here, I know he is, and that's enough!"

"Faith, and I—"

"Hush!"
"Sure, and what for should I hush, then?" said Murphy peevishly.

"I think I heard something."

"It wasn't Bunter!" growled Scott.

"His steps are loud enough to be heard, with all his blessed avoirdupois over them!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The snow is getting quite thick," said Dabney. "That will deaden the sound. I wish I could see. I think I heard something, too!"

"Faith, it might be a ghost!" grinned Murphy.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Be jabbers!" said Murphy, looking round a little uneasily. "I never thought of it before, you fellows, but this is just about the time the old Greyfriars ghost is supposed to come on the scene! Look here, I'm not going to wait much longer for Bunter!"

"I'm not, either!" said Fry, with chattering teeth. "What do you want to begin talking about ghost stories now for, you fathead, Murphy? Ugh!"

"Well, you know Greyfriars is supposed to be full of ghosts!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I—I heard something!" muttered McDougall.

"It was the wind."

"I—I—I saw something move just then!" murmured Aubrey Angel.

"Rats!" said Temple uneasily.

"I—I— Oh, look!"

Dabney grasped Temple's arm so hard in his agitation that the leader of the Upper Fourth uttered an exclamation of pain.

"You ass!"

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"Look!" shrieked Dabney.

"Good heavens!"

A simultaneous shriek of horror burst from the Upper Fourth fellows.

From the darkness came a strange figure. Very tall and completely white.

It was one of the Greyfriars ghosts!

The ghostly form loomed up in the darkness, advancing towards the nuts of the Upper Fourth, and with one accord they turned and ran for their lives.

Helter-skelter through the falling snow they dashed towards the school buildings.

The figure stopped.

But what became of it the terrified fellows of the Upper Fourth didn't pause to see. They dashed into the school building at top speed, panting with terror, out of breath, flecked all over with flakes of snow.

"Good heavens!" gasped Temple, sinking upon an oaken seat in the hall.

"Good heavens! Then there is a ghost in this place!"

"Oh!"

"Great Scott!"

"Faith, and it's a spectre entirely!"

muttered Murphy, between his chattering teeth.

Phipps set his pale lips.

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

"Ye-es," muttered Scott. "Somebody's playing ghosts at the end of the term!"

"Of course!" said Kenney.

"Then go out and see who it is," said Murphy.

But that Kenney evidently had no intention of doing.

"What's the matter with you fellows?" exclaimed Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, coming along the passage.

"We've seen a ghost!"

"A real one!"

George Wingate smiled.

"Same old Christmas story!" he exclaimed. "We get it here every year. Who has seen it this time?"

"All of us!" said Dabney.

"It must be a trick, of course!" said Temple, who had now recovered his nerve, and as leader of the Upper Fourth, he thought it was time he displayed a little coolness. "Some ass is playing a practical joke on us!"

Wingate frowned.

Without replying, he strode out into the quadrangle and towards the distant gloomy elms. The Upper Fourth fellows gathered in the doorway to watch him. The sturdy figure of the captain of Greyfriars disappeared into the darkness and the whirling flakes.

"Jolly plucky!" muttered Dicky Nugent, one of the many fags who had come on the scene.

"Silly young ass!" muttered Temple loftily. "It's only a trick, of course!"

"Why don't you follow him, then?"

The great Temple did not deign to reply. Trick or no trick, he had no inclination to investigate the ghostly apparition.

The crowd waited anxiously for Wingate to return. He was not alone when he came back. Billy Bunter, carrying an extremely large and well-laden basket, was with him, and behind him came Harry Wharton & Co. carrying a large white linen sheet, and their faces had broad grins on them.

"Ever been had, Temple?" cried Harry Wharton, holding up the sheet over his head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The expressions on the faces of the nuts of the Upper Fourth was a study.

"Hear us smile!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Removites.

"I thought you wanted a little too much information about my fiver, my

dear fellows!" drawled Lord Mauleverer.

"You—you rotters!" gasped Temple.

"Ever get left, Temple dear?" cried Bob Cherry.

"Now then!" laughed Wingate.

"That's enough! But before I go I should like to know what you were doing out there, Temple? It was very queer for you to be out in the snow there, without even your coats on. Were you playing some trick yourselves?"

Murphy coughed.

"Sure, we were looking for Billy Bunter!" he said. "We—we were going to help him carry the grub in, you know. Save him a lot of—ahem!—trouble about eating it."

Wingate laughed.

"Well, it was a good job that Wharton got on to the raid, in my opinion, and it served you right to get a scare!" And Wingate went back to his study.

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at the Upper Fourth fellows.

"So that was your little game, was it?" he granted.

"Hang you!" snapped Temple.

Billy Bunter carried his cargo up to Study No. 1 in the Remove Form passage. This was Harry Wharton's study—the biggest one in the Remove passage—and he shared it with Frank Nugent. As there was plenty of room in this one, it had been decided to have Mauleverer's spread here.

The Removites were in excellent spirits. They had scored heavily against Temple, Dabney, & Co., and there was a regular hubbub in the study as they trooped in.

The end study had been gaily decorated for Christmas, and it was a very bright scene as Billy Bunter unpacked the basket, and set the things out on the table.

There were sausages to be cooked and eggs to be boiled, and tins of potted meat and fruit to be opened, and the Removites set to with a will. Bunter was an expert at cooking sausages, and he knelt down in front of the study fire, and there was soon a cloud of smoke pervading the crowded study.

Everything was ready at last. Billy Bunter appeared to have forgotten all about his little affair of the heart, and the chums of the Remove did not refer to it.

Mauly's little celebration—which proved to be rather a big celebration—was ready at last. The Removites packed themselves round the study table, and the feast commenced.

"Jolly good idea of your pater, Mauly!" cried Bob Cherry, across the table.

"What's that, my dear fellow?"

"Why, that fiver of his, you dummy!"

And all the fellows said:

"What-ho!"

Toasts were drunk galore. The most enthusiastic one was to a merry Christmas to themselves and to everybody else; and Frank Nugent had just risen to propose another one, when there was a knock on the door, and Gosling's face poked itself into the study.

"Master Bunter 'ere?" he growled.

"Yes, here he is."

"Mr. Quelch wants 'im in 'is study at once!"

"Hang Quelch!" muttered Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind not to go!"

"Don't be a fathead, porpoise!"

laughed Bob Cherry. "Go at once, and come back quickly! We'll save you plenty!"

Billy Bunter tapped nervously on the door of Mr. Quelch's study, and he turned

(Continued on page 20.)



How to Clog-Dance

The conclusion of a splendid article which will teach you the clever and amusing art of Clog-dancing.

Variation No. 4.—Make one tap with the left toe, shuffle with right foot, tap the right toe, shuffle left foot, tap with right heel, and finish with the left toe behind the right foot, as in Variation No. 3. This should be learned and repeated in the reverse way to the former

will be a continuous rattle, which can be kept up indefinitely, the repetitions and reversals following one another without break or pause of any kind.

VARIATIONS OF DOUBLE SHUFFLE.

These variations require no detailed description. Wherever in the above-mentioned changes the single shuffle is mentioned a double shuffle may be introduced. For example, in Variation No. 1, for the double shuffle the instructions should read: Stand upon the toes of both feet; give one tap with the left toe, and a double shuffle with the right foot; then one tap with the right, and a double shuffle with the left.

By treating the other variations in a similar manner, it will be seen that ten variations of the single and double shuffles can be obtained.

introduction of more complicated movements

It is possible to dance in clogs to any time, or even against time. Acquire the steps accurately and readily, and the measure will take care of itself. To practise the shuffles and their variations, the easiest plan is to have sixteen bars



Fig. 4.—The Fourth Variation.

step, and the two should be similarly combined to make one continuous action, which is really elegant to watch.

Variation No. 5.—Make one tap with the left toe, a shuffle with the right foot, another tap with the right toe, then a shuffle with the left foot, a hop on the

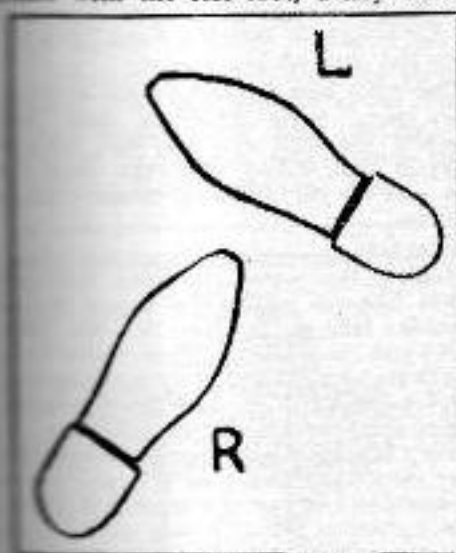


Fig. 5.—The Fifth Variation.

left toe, finishing with a tap with the left toe either behind the right foot, as in Fig. 4, or in front of it, as in Fig. 5. Learn to do this with the feet reversed as before.

If this step be done properly, the result

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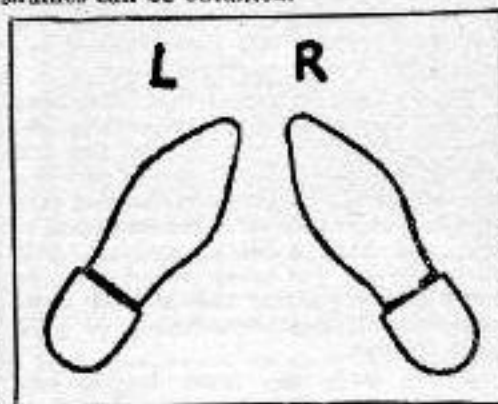


Fig. 6.—The Slide (first position).

They should all be learned and practised until there is not the least difficulty in performing any one or all of them.

THE SLIDE.

There now remains but the Slide to be learned, and as this is one of the prettiest of all the clog steps, it is well worth taking pains properly to acquire.

Stand as in Fig. 6, throwing your weight on the left heel and right toe, which are to be kept stationary. Now move the left toe and the right heel in the directions shown by the dotted lines. Your feet will then be in the position shown in Fig. 7. Keep the left toe and the right heel stationary, and move the left heel and right toe in the direction indicated by the dotted lines in Fig. 8.

By continuing this movement you have a steady, gliding action from left to right, and, reversing the steps, you can, of course, move back from right to left.

This is really a hornpipe movement, but for clog-dancing it is very suitable for the introduction of taps with heels and toes at every change of position. It is also probably more effective and quite difficult enough to learn without the in-

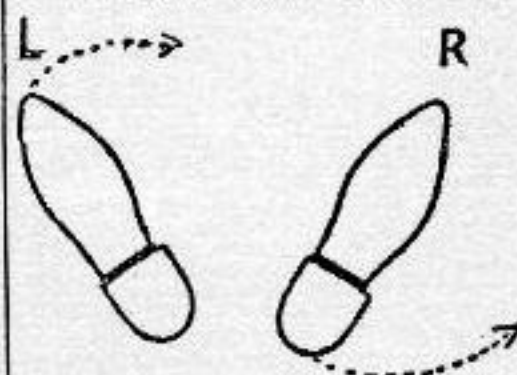


Fig. 7.—The Slide (second position).

of music of two-four time, or even a verse of any song set to that time. As the feet become nimble and the actions familiar, you will be adept at dancing to any time or measure, whilst with shuffle and tap your feet will twinkle in the most orthodox and poetic manner.

Practice in the steps described will also enable you to invent movements for yourself, such as jumping in the air, striking the clogs together once or twice, rattling the clogs together on the ground, and numberless other side tricks and fancies. The regular steps are generally considered the best, however, and should always be executed when possible, as they form the essence and genius of the whole art.

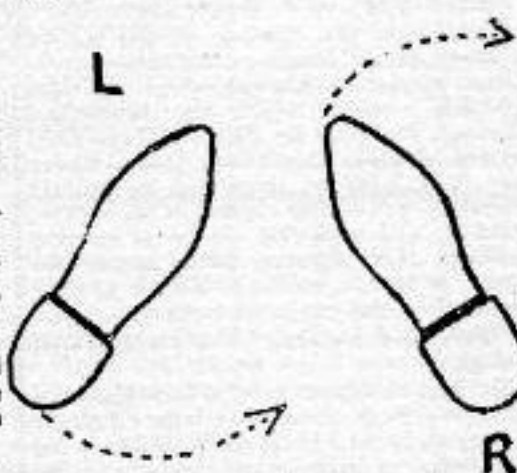


Fig. 8.—The Slide (third position).

Clog-dancing is tiring, and it is advisable not to make the dance the central piece of an evening's entertainment. It makes a good accompaniment or "gag," but it is not suitable for a piece de resistance. Adroitly performed it will win approval; and what more can the home entertainer desire?



A Stirring New Tale of the Ring.
By **PERCY LONGHURST.**

SYNOPSIS.

Harry Rhodes, a miner and amateur boxer, of Lexborough, a mining village, meets Joshua Martin, the manager and principal hucker of Anthony Hanna—"Cast-Iron Tony"—a wonderful Scottish light-weight boxer, who has come to Lexborough to train. Harry lives with an uncle, James Rhodes, who has trained him, and who had himself been a boxer years before. He had left the ring through some tragedy of which Joshua Martin knows the facts, much to James Rhodes' alarm.

Hanna, who is a thorough scoundrel, becomes Harry's sworn enemy.

A strike at the pit where Harry works is settled by means of a boxing contest between Harry and Bob Durham, the mine-owner's son. Bertram Godfrey, a friend of Mr. Durham's, interests himself in Harry Rhodes.

Hanna returns to Lexborough, and makes an unsuccessful attempt on Harry's life.

Harry learns that James Rhodes is his father, and that he was responsible for the death of a boxer some years previously.

Harry, his father, and Bertram Godfrey go to London, where Godfrey fixes a private contest between Harry and Jules Meunier, Parisian light-weight champion. In the ninth round the Frenchman is knocked out. The contest has been witnessed by a Royal prince.

(Now read on.)

A Daring Rescue!

DOWN the steps ran the young prince. As he gained the pavement a big, dark-painted, closed motor glided noiselessly from the other side of the street, where it had been waiting, and came to a standstill behind the car in which Harry was seated.

"Here I am, sir!" said a low voice.

Harry saw the passing of the prince in front of his window, and then something attracted his attention to the opposite window, which was drawn up. Through the glass he observed four dark figures detach themselves from where they had hitherto remained in perfect obscurity within the depths of doorways. Quickly, and with the silence of passing shadows, these figures darted across the street, to be lost to Harry's view as they approached the car in the rear.

"Private detectives," was Harry's first thought.

He had tumbled to the fact that the young prince's visit to the private boxing-show had been made without the knowledge of those in authority, and the idea of the youthful escapade had appealed to him not a little. And, with his limited knowledge of the habits of royal personages, it occurred to him as quite reasonable that the prince should have arranged for the attendance of a

few men as a safeguard, although he could not see that there was anything to fear. The hall was in a quiet street, so little frequented that he had noticed no one was in sight when he passed out of the club, and none had come along.

Curiosity prompted him to bring his head to the open window, and endeavour if possible to see the prince's departure. And he heard a sudden though slight, confused scraping of several feet, and, immediately after, the sharp stamp of a metal boot-heel. Then came an exclamation in a low but rasping voice:

"Hang your infernal clumsiness! Do you want to rouse everybody and give the show away?"

So vicious was the voice, so menacing the low, grating accent, that Harry was startled. He put out the whole of his head.

The car behind was farther back than he had believed. It lay outside the range of the hall-lamp, and for the first time he had noticed that it was carrying no sidelights, thereby increasing the obscurity of the street. He was able to make out that a black, shifting blur beside the car was composed of three or four separate figures, and in their arms another that they were trying to push inside the car.

Like a flash the truth leaped into Harry's mind. This was an attempt at the kidnapping of the young prince.

With one movement Harry flung open the door and leaped upon the pavement. Turning, he made for the big, dark car. He shouted no call for help. There was no help at hand to give. The hall door-keeper was not to be seen; the man who had wished the prince "Good-night!" had retired within. If anything were to be done to rescue the prince from his daring assailants it must be done by himself. Harry did not hesitate.

But it seemed as though his assistance had come too late. As he started to run he heard the soft thud of the closed door, and saw a man moving swiftly from the door to climb beside the driver, who had already switched on the electric starting-power.

As he came abreast of the bonnet the big car was already on the move.

In a flash Harry realised two facts—that the car had neither time nor space to turn in the street, and that, consequently, it must pass his own car, the chauffeur of which seemed wholly unaware that anything at all out of the ordinary was happening within twenty yards of him, and that the footboard of

the car might be gained by a quick jump.

Whether the jumper could retain his foothold if he landed aright depended upon his quickness in securing some sort of handgrip to steady himself.

Checking himself, with an automatic measuring of the distance between the kerb and the footboard as the car came towards him, he jumped for it.

Royal Gratitude.

AS his right foot landed, Harry's arm shot out instinctively, and his fingers, coming into contact with the lamp-bracket, clipped about it, and gave him the chance to steady himself.

From the driver came an oath of mingled amazement and anger, and for a second his eyes, burning with fury, rested upon Harry's face. But he was a driver of nerve—a man quick to see and act upon a chance. With a touch he brought his car a trifle over to the right, trusting that as he passed the stationary car Harry would be caught by it and dragged from his perch.

This was a danger Harry had not foreseen, but no sooner did he realise it than the moment had passed. He heard a ripping sound as some projection caught in his coat, tearing a great gap in the stout cloth of the garment as the car passed on. Then, shifting his foothold a little forward, he took a grip with his free hand, released his right, and, with the fist clenched, struck a fierce blow full upon the face of the driver.

The man had no chance to avoid it. The bare, hard knuckles took him squarely between eye and ear, and he dropped and rolled sideways from his seat like an ox under a stroke from a poleaxe.

"Caraj!"

Missing the word, the man who had seated himself beside the driver leaned towards Harry, murder in his face. There was the flash of a long-bladed knife or stiletto; but the point missed its aim, burying itself deep in the woodwork. Before the fellow could withdraw it, Harry's fingers closed upon his arm like steel claws, and he was dragged across the huddled body of the insensible driver. Like lightning the grip was shifted from arm to collar, and by main force the fellow was dragged clean over the side of the car and slung into the roadway. His head came into collision with the kerbstone, and he lay still, the uncontrolled car gliding onwards.

Fortunately, the car had not been able to gather any great pace, so that when, a moment after, it jolted upon the kerb and climbed up on the pavement, the shock was too slight to dislodge Harry from his precarious perch. Continuing, it fetched up against the front wall of a house, but before it had come to a standstill Harry was already on the pavement.

His hand was on the door-handle, but this was turned roughly from within, and three men crowded out. Without a word, they fell upon Harry, one with a knife, drawn from under his coat, the two others with short, loaded sticks.

For half a minute there was a merry scuffle in the semi-darkness. Stepping in to meet the man with the knife, Harry caught the descending arm at the wrist, and at the same moment whipped in a wicked upper-cut. Not even when in the ring had he ever administered a more effective blow. It fairly lifted the recipient off his feet, and hurled him on the pavement on the back of his head. But briefly as Harry had been engaged, time was afforded for one of the other assailants to strike, and the loaded stick fell with numbing effect upon the point of his shoulder.

The pain enraged him. Springing in from both feet, he shot out his left fist, it took one of the men in the mouth, and Harry felt something give way beneath his knuckles. The third man passed irresolutely.

Aware that someone was shouting loudly, that clattering footsteps were coming towards him, Harry turned upon the third man; but he, satisfied that discretion was the better part of valour, turned swiftly in his tracks, and made off down the street at a hot pace.

"What's the matter? What is it?"

It was the chauffeur of his car, awake at last, coming to Harry's assistance. Hearing him, the man whom Harry had struck in the mouth, and who had been standing choking, a hand covering his lips, made a sudden dash to escape. But in a second the arms of the chauffeur were around him, and he sullenly submitted, his captor continuing to shout loudly.

Then Harry made for the doorway of the car. Reclining limply in a corner was a form enveloped in a wide cloak. With his left hand—for the awful pain following an attempt to use his right proved that for the moment, anyway, that limb was out of action—Harry attempted to drag him towards the doorway.

"What is it, Harry? Let me give you a hand, lad," said a voice at his elbow.

And Harry drew back through the doorway, to find his father beside him.

"The prince!" returned Harry. "I

fear he's hurt. He can't speak or move. Get him out. My right arm's useless!"

James Rhodes emerged with the enwrapped body of the prince in his arms, the head hanging limply over Rhodes' shoulder.

"Back to the hall—quick, father!" the lad whispered.

No more than two or three minutes had passed since James Rhodes had left Harry to find the missing rug, but in that brief space of time much had occurred, though how serious the happenings as yet was not known.

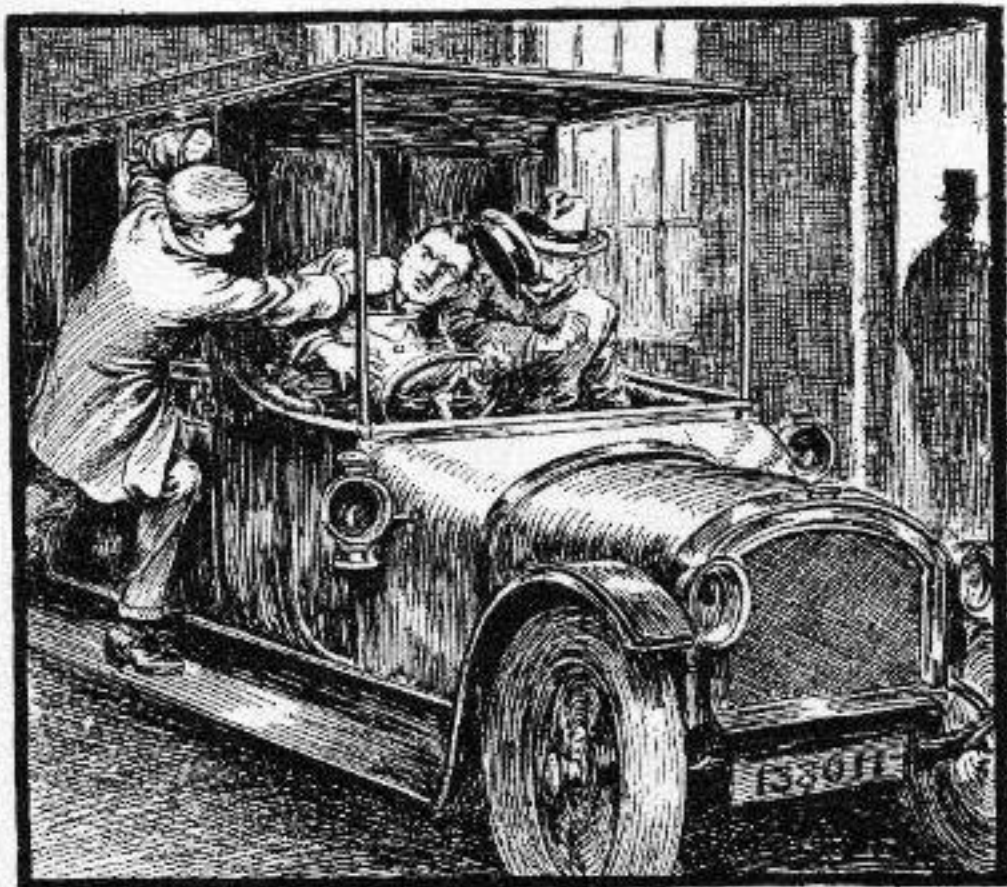
At the door of the hall stood three or four men in evening attire, staring

men gathered there as they recognised the identity of his burden. Bertram Godfrey was the first to recover his self-control.

"What is it?" he cried.

"That my boy's prevented the carrying off of—you know who," replied Rhodes. "He'll tell you all about it. But th' young gentleman's been hurt, I'm afraid."

Willing hands hastened to relieve him of his burden, which was carried into one of the dressing-rooms to be examined by a surgeon, who luckily happened to be numbered among Lord Shortbill's guests, and who promptly cleared the



Harry made a bound for the car. Holding on with his left hand, he dealt a fierce blow full upon the face of the driver. (See Page 17.)

curiously up and down the street, to which they had been attracted by the chauffeur's shouting.

"What is it, Bowles?" called one of them to the doorkeeper, who was on the pavement.

"Don't know, sir. I heard a bit o' shouting, and— Help us! What's all this mean?"

Up the steps went James Rhodes, and a cry of consternation broke from the

room of everybody but Lord Shortbill himself, who remained to lend him such assistance as he required.

While this was going on Harry, the centre of an eager and excited crowd, was describing what had taken place in the street.

(There will be another splendid instalment of this grand boxing story in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET. Order your copy in advance.)



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BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS PORTRAIT.

(Continued from page 16.)

the handle as he heard his Form-master's voice commanding him to enter.

The fat junior rolled in, and Mr. Quelch, who was working at his type-writer, looked up.

"Bunter?"

"Yes, sir? I—I—"

"That's enough, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "You will listen to what I have to say!"

"Yes, sir."

"When you left Mr. Petuka's studio this afternoon I paid him for the damage done by you. His bill came to one pound nineteen shillings and elevenpence. Have you that amount on your person?"

"N-no, sir!"

"Then the account will be sent to your parents!"

"Oh!"

"But that is not all. I thought when I paid Mr. Petuka that amount the scandal was finished with; but I was wrong, Bunter—wrong, do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have just had sent in to me," thundered Mr. Quelch, "a letter from a Miss Connie Petuka. I will read it to you."

Billy Bunter shook all over.

"Dear Sir,—We find we must make an extra claim against your pupil, who caused so much damage in our studio this afternoon. After you had left we find that one large plate had been exposed. We must make an additional charge of half-a-crown for this."

"You may be interested to hear that we developed the plate in question, and we enclose a rough print of the negative herewith. We think the fact that the boy in the picture is smoking may con-

cern you. We most certainly consider the boy should be punished."

"We remain, dear sir, faithfully yours."

"CONNIE PETUKA (Miss)."

"For Petuka's Studios, Ltd."

Billy Bunter nearly collapsed.

To think that Miss Petuka should write like that! It was almost too much for him. It was too rotten for words. The fat junior stood and blinked at Mr. Quelch as his Form-master folded up the letter, and then looked at the print of the photograph enclosed.

"Bunter!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Do you see this wretched photograph?" thundered Mr. Quelch, holding up the tell-tale print. "Do you see that it shows you with a lighted cigarette in your mouth?"

"It—it was only a photograph, sir."

Mr. Quelch fixed Billy Bunter with a pair of eyes which so much resembled gimlets.

"Bunter," he roared, "you are the most stupid boy we have ever had at Greyfriars! The whole of this term you have behaved in a most reprehensible manner. You have failed hopelessly in your lessons! You have been slack in your dress and in your manners! You have proved yourself greedy and selfish! You have failed to speak the truth when such was expected from you, and now—and now," thundered Mr. Quelch, "you end up your term's failings by presenting yourself at a photographer's as a dandy! You have the audacity to smoke before the camera! You run amok like a bull in a china shop! I—I—I—"

Mr. Quelch seemed to have exhausted his flow of speech.

"I hardly know what to say to you, Bunter! You will be going home for your Christmas holidays in a very few days now, and this is a time when a master likes to feel he is a friend to his boys—not a martinet! You give me

more trouble than all the rest of the Remove put together!"

"Oh, sir!"

Mr. Quelch looked at his watch.

"I have undertaken to punish you, Bunter, and, as it is almost the end of the term, and Christmas is so near, I shall let you off lightly for the last time! You will bring me one hundred lines to-morrow morning! Go, boy!"

"I thank you, sir!" faltered Billy Bunter. "I—I shall turn over a new leaf next term, sir, and—and I hope you have a happy Christmas!"

Mr. Quelch had difficulty in concealing a smile.

"Very good, Bunter!" he said. "Mind you carry out your resolve! Good night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

And Billy Bunter rolled out of Mr. Quelch's study. He breathed a sigh of relief when he got outside.

"Thank goodness, that rotten photograph where is done with!" he grunted. "I'm blowed if I shall ever go near a beastly photograph shop again!"

And the Owl of the Remove scurried back to Study No. 1.

THE END.

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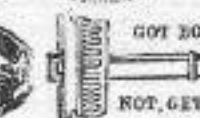
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