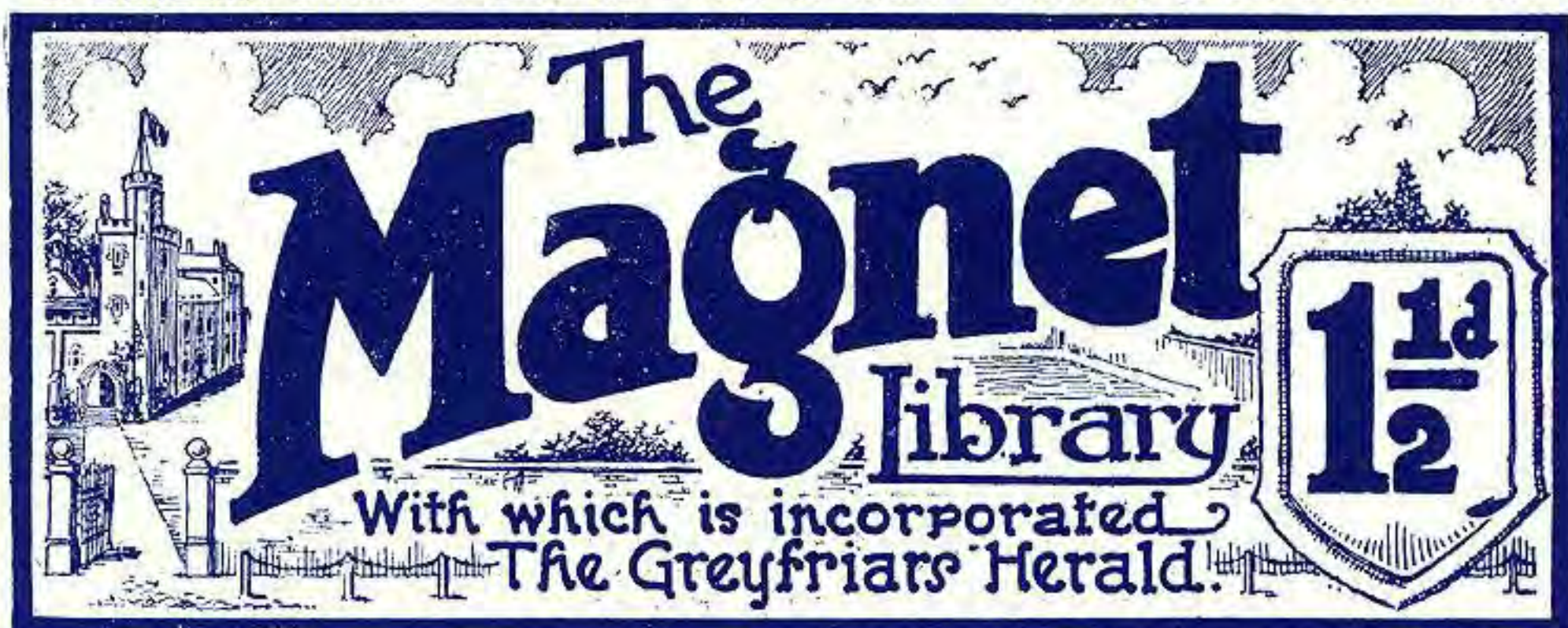


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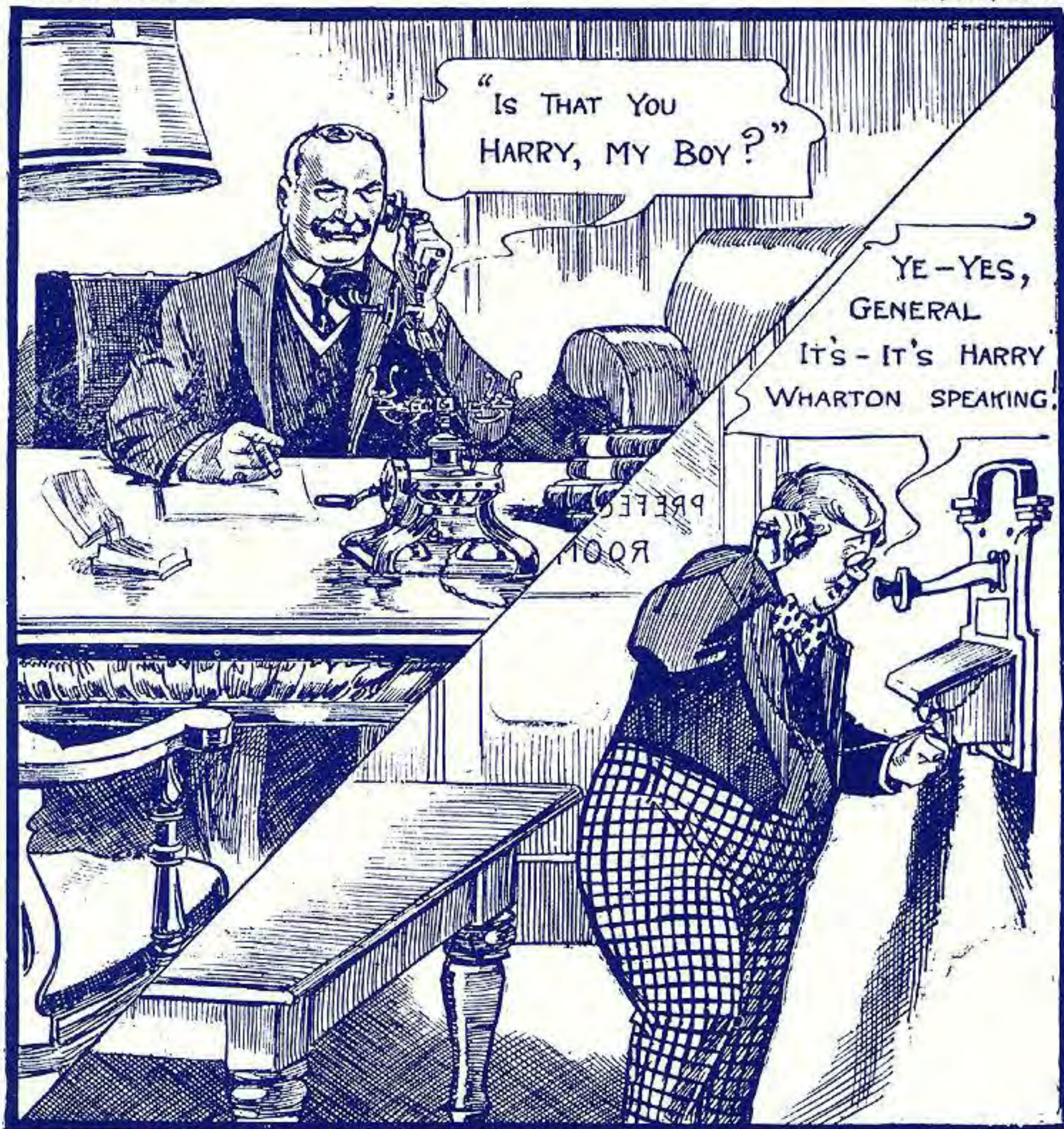
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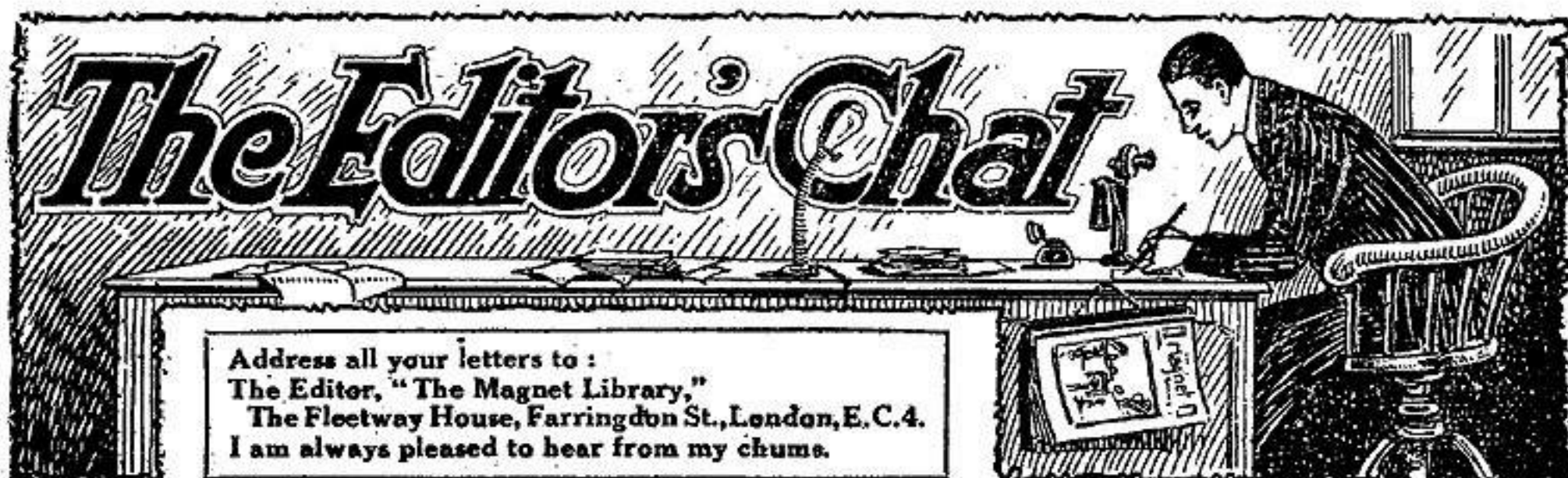
No. 693. Vol. XVIII.

May 21st, 1921.



THE LIE THAT LED TO TROUBLE FOR BILLY BUNTER!

(An episode from the long complete tale inside.)



Address all your letters to:
The Editor, "The Magnet Library,"
The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.
I am always pleased to hear from my chums.

FOR NEXT MONDAY.

"THE VENGEANCE OF WOO FING!"

By Frank Richards.

That is the title of next Monday's grand long complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Greyfriars. The title gives an idea that the story is full of excitement—and there is certainly plenty of that in next week's story.

Harry Wharton, acting as only a sportsman and a plucky fellow could do, foils Woo Fing, a Chinaman, in an attempt to wrest a lady's handbag from her. For this Woo Fing vows vengeance.

How he would have succeeded in this, but for the timely intervention of Wun Lung will be told in

"THE VENGEANCE OF WOO FING!"

which will appear next Monday morning. As this is undoubtedly one of Mr. Richards' most dramatic and interesting stories, I strongly advise all my chums to order their copy of the MAGNET LIBRARY in advance.

THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD" SUPPLEMENT.

There will be another splendid four-page supplement in next week's MAGNET LIBRARY. It will be a

SPECIAL CAMPING NUMBER,

so all my chums will readily understand that it is going to be extra fine. Dick Penfold contributes another of his parodies on a well-known song—and again all my chums will enjoy a hearty laugh. There will be a report of a cricket match between St. Jim's and Greyfriars, and a host of other interesting articles and stories.

This issue of the MAGNET LIBRARY will be one of the finest ever turned out—so do get your order placed now, my chums!

THE "POPULAR."

I cannot close my Chat without reminding you that our famous companion paper, "The Popular," is on sale every Friday morning. There are two grand long complete school stories, you know, of which one is about Greyfriars, and the other of Rookwood.

Billy Bunter places before you his now famous "Weekly," in a four-page supplement, whilst I offer ten prizes of five shillings each in a simple competition, for which only a postcard has to be sent.

No boy or girl can afford to miss this budget of reading for the week-end. Ask for the "Popular" on Friday morning—or, better, order a copy when you order next week's MAGNET LIBRARY.

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Miscellaneous.

Geo. F. Snook, 23, Vicarage Road, Stratford, E.15, would like to hear from readers interested in amateur magazines, and who could contribute to his paper—"Scrappings." All letters answered.

K. Devall, 5, Carlyle Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, will be pleased to hear from readers, any age, who are interested in amateur journalism.

A. Heald, 16, Mitchell Street, Ancoats, Manchester, wishes to hear from the editor of a good amateur magazine who wants a good short story or serial.

The All Blues C.C. have a few open dates for the coming season. Reserved pitch at Hackney Marshes. Average age 16. Hon. Sec., E. Thomas, 34, Zetland Street, Poplar, E.14. Pleased to hear from secretaries with club grounds able to offer return matches.

W. Cope, 13, Iremonger Street, Old Street, St. Luke's, E.C.1, would like to fix up football matches with teams within five miles of Finsbury for season 1921-2. Average age 17. Park Athletic F.C.

H. Hammond, 3, Blantyre Street, Chelsea, S.W.10, is President of the Boys' International Exchange, and will send particulars for stamp.

K. Gooding, 96, Mansfield Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs, wants readers for his amateur magazine, duplicated in various colours. Grand stories and prizes.

H. Fulcher, 87, Carron Road, Thorpe, Norwich, wants to hear from readers who will contribute to his "Amateur Nugget Monthly."

Members wanted for amateur concert-party.—Write, T. B., 225, Bravington Road, Maida Hill, W.9.

Private ground wanted for next season by Archel United F.C. Would not object to sharing it with another club. State terms to W. Walton, 57, Archel Road, West Kensington, W.14.

Members wanted to form a cycling club, ages 16-17. Apply Jack Pettitt, 4, Staples Rents, Paradise Street, Rotherhithe, S.E.16.

V. Regan, 150, Clover Road, Welling, Kent, would like to hear from readers interested in his amateur magazine, the "Boys' Own."

A club devoted to the fostering of sport, running, football, cycling, cricket, etc., is being formed in Leicester. Will those interested communicate with Gordon N. McDonald, 29, Draper Street, Leicester?

All interested in the formation of a society of students of foreign languages should write for particulars to M. S. Grice, Oakwood, Cwrt-y-irl Road, Penarth, Glam., South Wales.

Join Islington All-Sports Club at once. Particulars of Hon. President, 170, Ball's Pond Road, Islington, N.1.

All interested in amateur journalism are invited to communicate with A. V. Downs, 78, Dover Street, Folkestone, Kent, whose amateur newspaper, the "Recorder," gives the latest news from the world of amateur journalism.

W. T. Jagers, 105, High Street, Battersea, S.W.11, wants contributions for his magazine, especially from China.

Correspondence.

George M'Allan, 24, Joel Terrace, East Perth, Western Australia, would like to correspond with readers, 16-18, in South Africa, Canada, and the United States.

Frank Porter, 30, Boreham Street, Cottesloe, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with a reader in England, about 14.

Ernest Holmwood, 10, Kimberly Terrace, Old Shoreham Road, Southwick, Sussex, wishes to correspond with a reader interested in cinematography.

Wilfred Read, 103, Nicander Road, Sefton Park, Liverpool, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, 12-15.

Alf. G. Taylor, 47, Dulwich Road, Herne Hill, S.E.24, wishes to correspond with readers outside London anywhere, interested in stamps, newspapers, and postcards. He also wishes to draw attention to a club in South Africa for exchange of articles of interest.

G. Dudman, 98, Rupert Street, Reading, Berks., wishes to hear from readers, 15-18, with view to a correspondence club.

Your Editor.



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Bunter's Picnic!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., and Billy Bunter, the Owl of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Very Important!

"I SAY, Wharton——"
"Bother!"
"There's a letter for you——"
"Don't worry!"
"In the rack——"
"Leave it there!"
"But I say——" roared Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton, with his bat under his arm, was striding towards the cricket-ground, with Billy Bunter puffing and blowing at his heels. The captain of the Remove had no time to waste on Bunter just then. His chums were waiting for him on Little Side, where the Remove and the Fourth were gathered for a match.

Harry Wharton, quite contrary to his wont, was a few minutes late. Mr. Quelch, his Form-master, had stopped him, to make a few remarks. The remarks of a Form-master had to be listened to with polite and respectful patience, even when a cricket-match was due to begin.

Wharton had listened to Mr. Quelch's remarks with great fortitude, and with one eye on the cricket-pitch. The Form-master's observations having come to an end at last—everything comes to an end—Wharton was hurrying down to the cricket-ground when Billy Bunter fastened on him.

Like Mr. Quelch, Billy Bunter had some remarks to make. But his remarks were more important, at least, from Bunter's point of view. So he puffed and blew in pursuit of the captain of the Remove, determined not to be shaken off.

"Hold on a minute, old chap!" panted Bunter. "I say, it's a letter; it's just come, and——"

Wharton broke into a run.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry from the pavilion. "We're waiting for you, Wharton."

"The waitfulness is terrific!" yelled Horree Janset Ram Singh.

"I'm coming!"

Billy Bunter put on a spurt, and caught the captain of the Remove by the arm.

"I say, old chap——"

"Let go!" shouted Wharton, as he was brought to anchor by the fat junior's weight.

"Just a minute! There's a letter——"

"Sheer off!"

"I heard you telling Nugent you were expecting a remittance from your uncle," gasped Bunter. "This may be the very thing. Now—— Yaroooh!"

Even a remittance from his uncle could not interest Wharton at that moment. The letter could wait in the letter-rack; but the cricket-match on Little Side couldn't wait.

So Harry introduced his bat into the discussion.

The business end of the bat jammed upon Billy Bunter's well-filled waistcoat, which was as tight as a drum.

Thud!

Billy Bunter sat down suddenly in the grass, with a howl.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the crowd of cricketers gathered before the pavilion.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Harry Wharton hurried on. Billy Bunter sat in the grass, and addressed his further remarks to the desert air.

The captain of the Remove joined the cricketers rather breathlessly.

"Waitin' for you, dear boy," remarked Temple of the Fourth loftily. "We shan't lick you before dark at this rate."

"You won't lick us before the Greek Kalends!" granted Johnny Bull.

"Well, here I am," said Harry Wharton. "If you're ready——"

"Been ready for ten minutes!" yawned Temple.

"Let's get going, then."

The cricketers were soon "going." Billy Bunter picked himself up and blinked at them with morose eyes through his big spectacles. Bunter wasn't keen on cricket; but he was remarkably keen on the letter addressed to Harry Wharton, now reposing in the letter-rack indoors.

The possibility that there was a remittance in that letter accounted for Bunter's keenness.

True, the remittance, if any, was Wharton's, not Bunter's. But that was only a detail. Somehow or other

William George Bunter intended to have a finger in the pie.

"Beasts!" he remarked, addressing the whole cricket-field generally.

"Bravo, Wharton!" roared the Remove crowd.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were opening the innings for the Remove, and Harry Wharton had started well. Thrice the batsmen crossed the pitch, while Temple, Dabney & Co. were hunting the leather.

But Bunter did not join in the cheering. He wasn't interested in that good hit.

He gave a sniff, and turned away from the cricket.

His fat mind was concentrated on the letter in the rack, and upon the important question whether it contained, or didn't contain, a remittance.

Bunter drifted back to the School House disconsolately.

He found Skinner and Snoop looking over the rack when he went in. Both of them looked disappointed.

"Nothing for us!" grunted Skinner. "It's about time something came from somebody. I've wasted a bob in top-penny stamps writing to my relations! Nothing doing!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Expecting a postal-order by this post, Bunter?" asked Skinner, with a grin. "Another awful disappointment! It hasn't come."

Snoop sniggered.

"The fact is, I'm expecting a postal-order by the next post," said Bunter, blinking at Skinner and Snoop. "If you've got a bob you don't want——"

"Bow-wow!"

"I'll let you have it back out of my postal-order——"

"Good-bye!" said Skinner.

"I say, Snoop——"

"Rats!" said Snoop cheerfully.

"Beasts!" said Bunter, as the two slackers of the Remove loafed away.

But he was glad to see them go. There was no letter for Bunter in the rack, but there was one for Wharton; and Bunter had his eye on that one. As soon as Skinner and Snoop were gone, he jerked it down.

"Wharton's a silly ass to leave this

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here!" he murmured. "If there's money in it, it ain't safe. There might be inquisitive chaps about, nosing into a fellow's letters! Oh, dear, it's not from Wharton's blessed uncle, after all!"

Bunter knew Colonel Wharton's handwriting; he had looked over Wharton's letters often enough to know it well. And the "fist" on the envelope certainly was not the colonel's—now that Bunter observed it closely. Evidently the letter did not contain a remittance from Wharton's kind uncle.

Bunter sniffed in disgust.

"Never seen this fist before," he murmured. "I know the fists of everybody that writes to Wharton—I've happened to notice them. I've never seen this before. Looks like an old Johnny's writing—crabbed like anything. I—I wonder what's inside?"

The Owl of the Remove blinked inquisitively at the envelope. He turned it over in his fat fingers, perhaps in the hope of finding the flap loose; but it was firmly fastened.

Inquisitiveness amounted almost to a disease with W. G. Bunter. He wanted to know what was in that letter, apparently from a stranger, and he wanted to know very much. But opening another fellow's letter was rather a serious matter, and even Bunter hesitated at that.

He fumbled with the letter, covering the envelope with the marks of his fat and not over-washed fingers. There was a cackle of thick paper inside; and Bunter wondered whether the thick, folded notepaper contained a currency note.

There was a footstep behind him, and he gave a start. Tom Redwing of the Remove came along.

Bunter thrust the letter hastily into his pocket. But Redwing's eye had already fallen on the address.

"Hallo, what are you doing with Wharton's letter, Bunter?" asked Redwing suspiciously.

"I—I'm just taking it to Wharton!" stammered the Owl of the Remove.

"Isn't Wharton playing cricket?"

"Yes, he asked me to take it out to him."

And Bunter rolled away, leaving Tom Redwing looking after him, still rather suspiciously.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Quite by Accident!

"WELL hit, Wharton!"

"Bravo!"

"Good man!"

The shouts were ringing over the junior cricket-field when Billy Bunter came along again with Wharton's letter in his pocket.

Harry Wharton was still batting in great style, though Nugent was gone from the other end, and Bob Cherry had taken his place. Bunter blinked on discontentedly. If Wharton had been "out," Bunter had the letter ready to hand to him, but the captain of the Remove showed no sign of getting out. The Fourth Form bowling could not touch his wicket.

As Wharton stopped on the crease after a run Billy Bunter bawled to him:

"I say, Wharton! Here's your letter!"

Wharton did not heed.

Fry of the Fourth was preparing to bowl to him again, and Wharton was not likely to give Bunter any attention at such a moment.

"I say, Harry!" bawled Bunter.

"You fat duffer!" said Johnny Bull,

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at his elbow. "What are you yelling to Wharton for? Shut up!"

"I've got a letter for him——"

"Dry up, you fat ass!" said Squiff.

"Don't interrupt the cricket!"

"But I say, you know——"

"Shurrup!"

"Wharton!" roared Bunter.

Wharton was hitting away the ball. The batsmen ran—quite oblivious of the existence of William George Bunter.

Johnny Bull took Bunter by the back of his collar.

"Kim on!" he said tersely.

"Yow-ow! Leggo!"

"This is where you get!" explained Johnny Bull.

And Bunter "got," with Johnny's iron grip on his collar. Johnny marched him away and plumped him down in the grass and left him. Bunter sat and gasped for breath.

"Beast! I—I say, Smithy, give a chap a hand up!"

The Bounder stooped and took Bunter's fat little nose between his finger and thumb.

"Up with you!" he said.

"Guggggggg!" spluttered Bunter.

"Come on!" said the Bounder, pulling.

Bunter scrambled frantically to his feet. His spectacles almost cracked under the ferocious glare he gave the Bounder.

"Grooogh! Yoooooch! Beast!"

"There you are!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Right on your pins!"

"Yah! Beast!"

Vernon-Smith walked on, grinning, and Bunter stood rubbing his nose, which was crimson and felt a size too large.

He rolled away at last.

He did not feel inclined to make any further attempt to draw Wharton's attention to the letter; evidently the other Remove fellows attached more importance to a game of cricket than Bunter did.

But the address in an unknown hand, and the possibility of a currency note inside, haunted Bunter's thoughts. He sat down on one of the oaken benches under the old elms in the quad and blinked at the letter. It had a sort of fascination for him—as other people's affairs often had for the Peeping Tom of Greyfriars.

"Tain't safe to leave it about when there may be money in it," muttered Bunter. "And—and it may be important! Wharton oughtn't to neglect his correspondence in this way. It's really up to a friend of his—an old pal—to see whether it's important, and—and if——"

The temptation was too strong—for Billy Bunter.

Almost unconsciously his fat thumb ripped open the envelope.

"Oh dear!" murmured Bunter.

"Fancy the beastly thing coming open by accident like that! People ought really to seal their letters if they don't want them to come open by accident! I—I suppose I ought to look at it now, and see whether it's important."

Whether Bunter supposed that he "ought" to look at the letter or not, he certainly did look at it.

He jerked out the thick, folded sheet, opened it out, and ran his eye over it.

There was no currency note in the letter. That was a disappointment. Billy Bunter's hopes of raising a little loan that afternoon faded away to zero.

But the letter itself was interesting enough. It was short, but to the point. Bunter read it through with keen interest.

"Hawkscliff House,
"Hawkscliff."

"My Dear Harry,—Probably you do not remember me, as you have not seen me since you were a baby in arms, but your uncle must have mentioned his old friend General Skeppleton. I have taken this place for the summer, and, finding myself near your school, I should be glad to renew your acquaintance.

"I believe Hawkscliff is within easy cycling distance of Greyfriars. Will you run over on Saturday afternoon, and bring your friends—as many as you like? The more the merrier, in fact. We'll picnic on the cliffs, and I'll try to make you enjoy your visit.

"I really hope you'll be able to come, my boy. Let me know by telephone whether to expect you. Telephone, Lantham 100.

"Your affectionate old friend,
"FREDERICK SKEPPLETON."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

He blinked at that interesting letter.

There was no doubt that Harry Wharton & Co. would accept that kind invitation. A handsome "spread" as the guests of the old military gentleman would be very welcome to the Famous Five, and a ramble over the cliffs would attract them; and doubtless Wharton would like to see his uncle's old friend, though he probably did not remember him personally.

Bunter felt a sense of strong disgust.

He had taken the trouble and risk of opening the letter, and there was nothing better in it than this; and Bunter hadn't even much hope that he would be asked to join the picnic-party for Hawkscliff House.

True, he would ask himself; but it was quite probable that on such an occasion the party would drop him unceremoniously, perhaps with the aid of a boot to convince him that he was superfluous. William George Bunter had had such experiences.

"Rotten!" growled Bunter.

"Hallo! What's rotten, fatty?" It was Bolsover major's voice, and the burly Remove, who was lounging under the elms, stopped to look at Bunter. Bolsover major, much to his indignation, was left out of the Remove eleven that afternoon, and he was loafing about, with his hands in his pockets, idly unoccupied.

Bunter hastily shoved the letter out of sight.

"N-n-nothing!" he stammered.

"Letter from home?" yawned Bolsover.

"Yes—exactly."

"And they've left out the postal-order you were expecting?" grinned Bolsover major.

"Ye-es!" stammered Bunter.

"Hallo! Did your letter come in an envelope addressed to Wharton?" asked Bolsover suddenly.

Bunter had put the letter out of sight, but the envelope had dropped to the ground. Bolsover major picked it up. He had caught Wharton's name on it.

"I—I say, gimme my envelope!" gasped Bunter, stretching out an anxious, fat hand.

"But it's not your envelope—it's Wharton's," said Bolsover major coolly. "Was that letter Wharton's, too?"

"Numno!"

"Well, I'll keep this till I see Wharton," said Bolsover, putting the envelope into his pocket.

Bunter watched it disappear, with terrified eyes. Without the envelope, there was no hope of repairing the

ANSWERS
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opened letter, and making out somehow that it hadn't been opened at all.

"I—I say, Bolsover, that's mine!" stammered Bunter feebly.

"Your name Wharton?" grinned Bolsover.

"It—it was addressed to—to Wharton by mistake——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bolsover major.

"I—I mean, Wharton gave me that old envelope to—to keep pen-nibs in, you know."

"I'll give you another old envelope to keep pen-nibs in, if you want one," chuckled Bolsover major.

"I—I say——"

"Besides, this envelope isn't so jolly old," remarked Bolsover major, taking it out of his pocket and looking at it.

"It's postmarked 'Hawkscliff,' and the date's yesterday—time, yesterday afternoon. This couldn't have come before the afternoon delivery to-day. I'll bet that Wharton hasn't seen it yet."

"I hope you don't think I'd open another fellow's letter, Bolsover?" said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

Bolsover roared.

"That's just what I do think, my fat pippin," he answered. "I'll keep this for Wharton, anyhow."

"I say, old chap——"

"Rats!"

Bolsover major walked away with the envelope. Bunter blinked after him mournfully through his big spectacles. He was left in a rather unenviable situation. To hand the letter over to Harry Wharton without the envelope, was to confess that he had opened and read it. A good kicking was the least he could expect in return for that.

Bunter did not want that. He had earned a good many kicks in the course of his fat career, but he did not want any more. With regard to kickings, it was not a case of the more the merrier.

"I—I shall have to lose it!" mumbled Bunter. "That's the only way, as the johnny says in the play. Then—then Wharton won't be able to 'phone old Skeppleton, and he won't be able to go, and—and I—I wonder if he'd take me along? It looks like being a good spread. But he won't, of course, the beast! Yah! After all I've done for him, too—looking after his letters, and all that! I—I wonder what I'd better do? Oh dear!"

It had fallen to Bunter's lot, many a time and oft, to realise that the way of the transgressor is hard. Now he realised it once more, dismally. But, after long cogitation, the Owl of the Remove made up his mind. He would discover, by diplomatic pumping, whether there was a chance of his joining the party for the spread at Hawkscliff House. If there was, the letter should be delivered to the owner. If not—in that case, it was highly probable that the captain of the Remove would never see the epistle from General Frederick Skeppleton, of Hawkscliff House.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Has a Brain-wave!

"HURRAH for us!"

That was Bob Cherry's remark, as the Famous Five came in to tea in the summer dusk. The Form match was over, and the Fourth Form had been beaten by the comfortable margin of forty runs. Which caused the Famous Five of Greyfriars, and their comrades, to feel exceedingly well pleased with their noble selves.

Harry Wharton & Co. crowded into Study No. 1 to tea, and with them came Vernon-Smith, as an honoured guest.

The six juniors were soon at tea, in a merry and rather noisy party round the study table, when a fat face and a pair of large spectacles dawned on them in the doorway.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Roll that barrel out, somebody!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"No room for porpoises, old top!" said Frank Nugent. "Roll along the passage. Toddy has kippers for tea. Cut in before you're too late!"

"Hold on," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "I think Bunter has a letter for me. Weren't you tootling something about a letter on Little Side, Bunter?"

"Oh, that letter," said Bunter. "I was going to bring it to you, Wharton, but as you were so ungrateful, I won't!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I dare say I can fetch it out of

"Get on the other side of it first, you fat duffer!"

"Suppose——"

"The supposefulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Suppose——"

"Is he wound up?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Can't you put on a new record, Bunter?"

"Suppose," roared Bunter—"suppose you were asked to a big spread——"

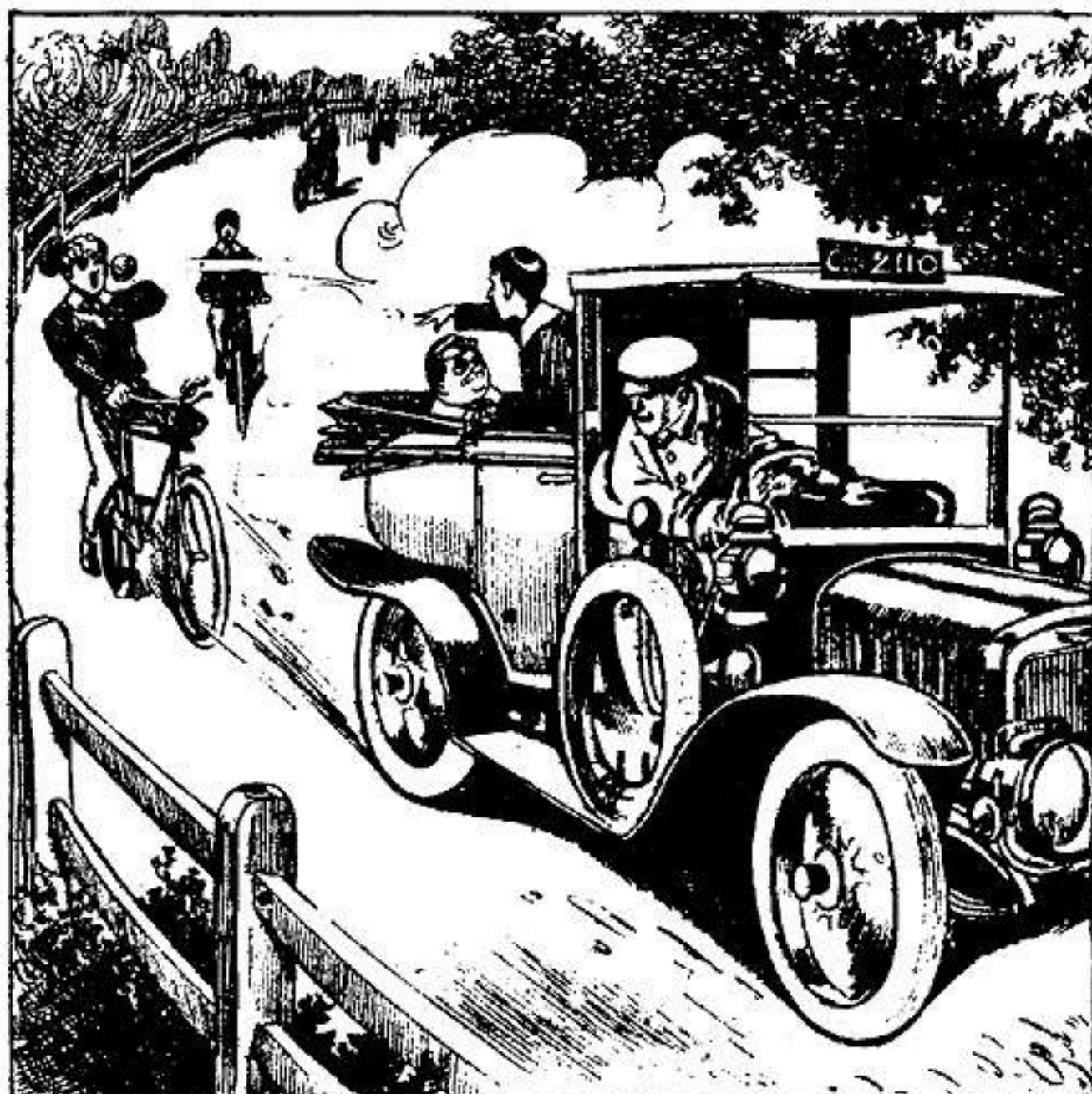
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Are you going to entertain us at Bunter Court?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Suppose you, frinstance, Wharton, got an invitation from an old friend of your uncle's——"

"What?"

"Some old military johnny, say?" said Bunter.



"Are you going to sheer off and stop following us?" shouted Skinner over the top of the taxi. "Rats!" replied Bob Cherry. Whizz! The next moment an orange smote the cyclist full on the nose, and his bike doubled up under him. "Ha! ha! ha!" roared the cads. (See Chapter 8.)

the rack after tea," he remarked. "Roll away and stop spoiling the landscape. Bunter."

"I was going to ask you——"

"Stony!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you think I was going to borrow money of you, you silly ass?" howled Bunter, exasperated.

"No; I think you were going to try to. Nothing doing!"

"Suppose——" began Bunter.

"No good supposing that you're expecting a postal-order, and still less good supposing that this study is going to cash it in advance. My dear chap, we were brought up on that postal-order, and we know all about it."

"I mean, suppose——"

"Shut the door after you, Bunter," suggested Johnny Bull.

Bunter shut the door.

"Eh?"

"Suppose he asked you to a picnic at his place, and to bring your friends with you—would you go?"

Wharton stared at the fat junior.

"I suppose I should," he answered.

"But what's the good of supposing anything of the kind?"

"Well, and if you went," pursued Bunter diplomatically, "I suppose you'd take me, as an old pal?"

Wharton shook his head.

"Not if I was going to a respectable place," he answered. "Couldn't, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter.

"Have you done supposing?" asked Wharton. "If you have, may I hint that the present company is tired of your conversation, Bunter?"

"The tiredfulness is terrific."

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"Good-bye, Bunter!"

But Billy Bunter did not move. He had not done supposing yet, apparently.

"Suppose——" he recommenced.

"Chuck it!" suggested Vernon-Smith.

"Suppose I offered to come, of course you'd be glad of my company," said Bunter. "You'd like your uncle's old friend to know that you had at least one decent pal, wouldn't you?"

"Why, you cheeky ass——"

"Is it a go?" said Bunter. "If you get the invitation, am I going to be one of the party?"

"Blessed if I know what you're driving at, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, puzzled. "I don't see why you should think I'm going to get invited to take a crowd to a picnic. I've heard nothing of it."

"But suppose——"

"Oh, rot!"

"Suppose you do get asked—am I coming?" roared Bunter.

"No fear! I wouldn't spring you on another fellow's picnic. There wouldn't be enough to go round, even if they brought the tuck in a motor-lorry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You mean that?" snorted Bunter.

"Honest Injun!"

"Then you can go and eat coke!" said Billy Bunter, and he rolled to the door—with General Skeppleton's letter still in his pocket. That letter was not likely to be delivered now.

"Shut the door after you, tubby!" called out the captain of the Remove, quite undisturbed by William George's wrath.

Slam! Billy Bunter closed the door after him with unnecessary force. He rolled along to his own study, No. 7 in the Remove. Peter Todd and Tom Dutton had finished tea, and gone down, and Bunter had the study to himself. He turned up the light, and took the letter from his pocket.

He was thinking of applying a match to it, but he hesitated. He knew that that would be a serious thing to do, though he was too obtuse to realise quite how serious it was. He sat down in the armchair to think it out, and read the letter over again.

The thoughtful frown on his fat brow cleared as he read, and a fat grin stole over his face. His little round eyes glittered behind his big glasses.

"Great pip!" he ejaculated.

Evidently a new idea—a stunning idea—had come into Bunter's fat brain!

He read the letter through once more.

"Not since he was a baby in arms!" he muttered. "He's been abroad, I dare say; anyhow, he's not seen Wharton since he was a little nipper. And if he hasn't seen him since then, he couldn't know him by sight! If—if—if another chap went in Wharton's place, and——"

Bunter caught his breath.

Visions of a gorgeous picnic, with ginger-pop and tuck galore, floated before his mind!

He had only to walk into Hawkscliff House and give his name as Harry Wharton, and not a soul would be the wiser.

Certainly, General Skeppleton was not likely to guess that his letter had fallen into the wrong hands, and as he could not possibly know Harry Wharton by sight, there was absolutely no danger of detection.

Possibly he might be surprised to find that the colonel's nephew had grown into such a fine, manly, handsome fellow. Bunter thought that possible. But that wouldn't give any grounds for suspicion. It would be a pleasure to the old gentleman to see such a creditable chap come

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along as his old friend's nephew; and Bunter was willing to give the old gentleman pleasure if he could—quite willing.

It was really a brain-wave. There was simply nothing to be said against the scheme; nothing at all. There was the certainty of a handsome spread, and the possibility of a handsome tip, for General Skeppleton was certain to be delighted with the handsome presence and polished manners of his guest.

"It's all Wharton's fault," Bunter reflected. "I'd take him, if he'd play up decently! He won't! So I'll leave him out, and he can thank himself; it all comes from his ingratitude! I—I wonder if I'd better take some friends along with me?"

Bunter considered that.

He was already looking upon it as "his" picnic. He was thinking now of issuing some lofty invitations to fellows in the Remove. His fat little nose rose with a sense of importance. It wasn't every fellow at Greyfriars who could invite chaps to a picnic in the grounds of Hawkscliff House!

The study door opened, and Peter Todd came in. He glanced at Bunter, who hurriedly slipped the letter out of sight.

"Hallo, fatty, what's the matter with you?" asked Peter, as he noted that Bunter was looking him up and down in a rather disparaging way.

"I'm afraid it couldn't be done," remarked Bunter.

"What can't be done?"

"I'd have taken you, if you'd acted a bit more decently at tea-time," said Bunter. "But if you allowance a fellow to three sardines at tea, you can't expect him to take you to an expensive picnic!"

Peter stared at him.

"Wandering in your mind?" he asked pleasantly.

"Besides, you're scarcely the class of chap I should care to take," said Bunter, blinking at him thoughtfully.

"Eh?"

"Of course, I don't mind speaking to you, in a friendly way, at school. But taking a poor solicitor's son to such a high-class place as Hawkscliff House—I'm afraid that couldn't be done."

Peter's stare became grimmer.

"Sorry!" said Bunter, with a wave of his fat hand. "The fact is, Peter, an old friend of my uncle's has asked me to take some of my friends to visit him at a very high-class place. I'm just thinking of how to make up the party. I'd really like to take you, but I've decided to take only fellows that will do me some credit. You don't mind my being candid, do you?"

"Not at all," said Peter Todd politely. "And you don't mind my kicking you out of the study, do you, Bunter?"

"Yaroooh! Leggo, you beast!"

Apparently Bunter did mind.

But whether he minded or not made no difference to Peter Todd. One swing of Peter's powerful arm landed Bunter in the doorway; and then one drive of his heavy boot landed Bunter in the passage, on his hands and knees. There was a terrific roar from Bunter. Peter Todd cheerfully slammed the door on him, and left him roaring.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Lost—A Letter!

"WHERE'S my letter?"

"Doesn't seem to be here!" remarked Nugent.

After tea, Harry Wharton and Nugent had come downstairs, and Harry stopped at the rack for his letter.

He had not seen it yet, but now he had time to attend to it. But no letter addressed to him was to be seen.

Wharton frowned.

"I suppose that ass Bunter took it away, after all," he said. "He was howling something to me about a letter while we were playing cricket. Now, where's Bunter?"

The chums of the Remove repaired to Study No. 7 to look for Bunter.

He was not there; but he was found in the Common-room a few minutes later, sitting rather uncomfortably in an armchair. Probably he was still feeling the effects of Peter Todd's boot. He had an injured expression on his fat face.

"Where's my letter, Bunter?" asked Harry.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Letter?" he repeated vaguely.

"Yes! Where is it?"

"What letter?"

"Don't be an ass!" said Harry.

"There was a letter for me, and you bagged it from the rack. Hand it over!"

Bunter shook his head.

"Blessed if I know anything about it," he answered calmly. "You can't expect me to look after your letters for you, Wharton. I'm far too busy——"

"You took the letter, you fat duffer!" roared the captain of the Remove. "You are always meddling with something!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Hand it over, I tell you."

"I remember now," said Bunter, with a nod. "I brought you your letter, but as you didn't want it, I put it back in the rack."

"It's not there now."

"That's very odd, isn't it?" said Bunter. "It certainly ought to be in the rack, Wharton. Perhaps some other fellow has taken it by mistake."

"Don't be an ass, if you can help it," said Harry impatiently. "How could a fellow take a letter by mistake, if it was addressed to me?"

"Well, you say it isn't there," answered Bunter argumentatively. "If it isn't there, somebody must have taken it by mistake, I should think. Of course, that's only a suggestion. It's nothing to do with me. I say, you fellows, will one of you lend me a bike on Saturday? I've got to keep a rather important appointment——"

"Will you hand me my letter, you chump?" demanded the captain of the Remove, breathing hard.

"Oh, really, you know——"

"The fat duffer must have it," said Nugent. "It can't have flown away. Why don't you shell out that letter, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

Harry Wharton was growing exasperated. He had no idea from whom the letter had come, so far; and naturally he wanted to know.

"I give you one minute to shell out that letter, Bunter," he said. "Then I'm going to rub your head in the coal-bucket——"

"I—I say——"

Bolover major came into the Common-room, looking round. He came across to the chums of the Remove at once.

"I fancy this belongs to you, Wharton," he remarked, and he held out an envelope.

Harry Wharton took it. Billy Bunter blinked on, with alarm growing in his fat visage. He felt that he was getting into rather a tight corner.

"Where on earth did you get this, Bolover?" asked Harry.

"Bunter had it. I fancy he had the letter, too," answered Bolover major.



The four juniors, all feeling very sheepish, entered the large hall. "General S-Skeppleton?" stammered Billy Bunter to the manservant. "I'm Wharton. You know, Harry Wharton of—of Greyfriars. The—the General is expecting us!" "Yes, sir!" replied the man. "Will you wait here?" (See Chapter 9.)

Wharton turned an angry stare on the palpitating Owl of the Remove.

"You've opened my letter, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You fat rascal—"

"If you'd think I'd open another fellow's letter, Wharton—"

"I know you've done so before now. Besides, here's the envelope."

"I dare say that's an old envelope," said Bunter. "Bolsover must have picked it up somewhere, perhaps out of the dustbin—"

"The postmark's yesterday."

"Is it really, old chap?" asked Bunter feebly.

"Hawkscliff," said Harry, glancing at the postmark. "Who the thump can have written to me from Hawkscliff? I don't know anybody there, that I remember." He was puzzled. "Where's the letter that came in this, Bunter?"

"How should I know?" said Bunter desperately.

"You opened it!" roared Wharton.

"I regard that suggestion as an insult, Wharton. As Bolsover had the envelope, you'd better ask him for the letter."

"What?" howled Bolsover major.

"Well, I don't know anything about it," said Bunter. "How should I know? I think it's rather rotten of Bolsover to bag your letter, and try to put it on to me."

Bolsover major's face was a study.

"Why, you—you—you—" he gasped.

Wharton and Nugent looked at Bolsover. Wharton was not on good terms with the bully of the Remove, and Bolsover was not a particular fellow, in many ways. But he was hardly capable of opening another fellow's letter, while exploits of that kind were quite in Bunter's line.

Bolsover turned crimson.

"If you think, Wharton—" he began hotly.

"I don't," said Harry. "I'm much obliged to you for bringing me this. You got it from Bunter?"

"I picked it up where he dropped it," said Bolsover major. "He'd been reading a letter in the quad, and I fancy it was your letter. Now I'm going to smash him for suggesting that I bagged your letter!"

Billy Bunter leaped out of the armchair with a howl of alarm.

"I didn't!" he roared. "I wasn't! I never—Yaroooo! Keep off! Keep him off, Wharton, old chap!"

"You said I'd bagged the letter," shouted Bolsover major, chasing the fat junior round the chair, and gripping him by the collar.

"Leggo! I—I meant to say that you hadn't bagged the letter!" squeaked Bunter. "That's what I really meant to say, old chap. You—you—Ow! You misunderstood, you know!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter was seated on the floor, with a heavy concussion. Then Bolsover stalked angrily away.

Bunter sat and spluttered.

"Oh dear! Ow! Yow-ow! You're captain of the Remove, Wharton, and you ought to put a stop to this beastly bullying! Wow!"

"Where's my letter?" demanded Harry.

"Ask Bolsover—"

"What?"

"I—I mean—" Bunter blinked round anxiously. "I—I mean, don't ask Bolsover. I thought the brute was gone. I—I mean—"

"Will you give me my letter?" exclaimed Harry.

"I—I can't!"

"Where is it?"

"I—I've lost it!" exclaimed Bunter desperately.

"You've lost my letter, after opening it?" exclaimed Wharton.

"It—it came open by accident," mumbled Bunter. "I—I never read it, of course. I'd scorn to do anything of the kind. Besides, it—it was only an—an—an advertisement."

"An advertisement?" repeated Harry.

"That's it!" said Bunter, brightening up. "Just an advertisement of—of second-hand bikes!"

Wharton looked at the envelope again. The handwriting was quite unfamiliar to him, and certainly, so far as he remembered, he did not know anyone at Hawkscliff. Bunter's explanation was plausible.

"If that is all—" he began doubtfully.

"That's all," said Bunter. "I—I hope you can take my word, Wharton. I'm not accustomed to having my word doubted."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I think this discussion had better cease," said Bunter, with dignity. "You've practically insulted me, Wharton, with your suggestion that I might have opened your letter—"

"You did open it!" shrieked Wharton.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"If it was only an advertisement it doesn't matter much," said Harry. "But that doesn't alter the fact that you bagged my letter and opened it. You prying rascal—"

"If you're going to call me names, Wharton—"

"I'm going to do more than that!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "I'm going to give you a round dozen, hard, for opening my letter—"

Bunter jumped away.

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"I—I'll yell for a prefect!" he spluttered.

"I'll take you to a prefect, if you like, then," said Harry. "You can explain to Wingate that the letter came open by accident."

"I—I say, old fellow, I—I wouldn't think of bothering a prefect over this trifling matter."

"Give me the shovel, Nugent!"

"Here you are!" grinned Nugent.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Bend over that chair, Bunter!"

"I—I won't!"

"Then you'll come to Wingate!"

"I—I—"

Wharton took a businesslike grip on the fire-shovel.

"Take your choice!" he rapped out.

"Now, then—"

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter chose the lesser of two evils. He felt that he had a milder punishment to expect from Wharton than from a prefect of the Sixth. He bent over the chair, shuddering in anticipation.

Whack!

"Yoooooop!" roared Bunter.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Ow, ow! Wow! Yow! Help! Fire! Murder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent.

Wharton burst into a laugh, and tossed the fire-shovel back into the fender, without giving Bunter the full dozen. Billy Bunter blinked round at him apprehensively.

"I say, Harry, old chap—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Wharton. And the chains of the Remove walked out of the Common-room. Billy Bunter wriggled back into the armchair rather painfully.

But as the pain passed off, he grinned.

The lost letter was satisfactorily accounted for now. Wharton seemed to believe that it had been only an advertisement sent by post. It was natural that he should believe so, as he did not know the handwriting on the envelope, and he could imagine no reason why Bunter should want to retain the letter. Billy Bunter grinned, and winked into space.

He was quite safe now, and free to call at Hawkscliff House on Saturday, and enjoy the picnic intended for Wharton. He only had to give Wharton's name, and the trick was done. And a little trifle like that did not weigh on Bunter's conscience. Bunter had a conscience, but it was a very accommodating one, and it seldom gave William George Bunter any trouble.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Kind Invitation Accepted!

BILLY BUNTER wore a thoughtful expression in class the following morning.

He was thoughtful, but he was not giving any extra thought to his lessons, as was apparent when Mr. Quelch called on him to construe.

Much more important matters than lessons occupied Bunter's mind.

So far as he could see, it was "all clear" for the picnic at Hawkscliff House on Saturday. He had only to telephone to General Skeppleton, and that was simple enough. Bunter was glad when lessons were over, and he rolled away at once to the prefects' room, where there was a telephone. He hoped to find the room empty, but Wingate of the Sixth was there. So Bunter had to ask permission to use the instrument.

He explained to the captain of Grey
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friars that he had to speak to an old friend of his father's, who had asked him to 'phone, and Wingate good-naturedly gave him permission. Bunter rang up Lantham 100, and was much relieved when Wingate walked out of the room. He did not want anyone to overhear his talk with General Skeppleton.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo! Is that Hawkscliff House?"

"Yes."

"Bunter—I mean, Wharton speaking, from Greyfriars—"

"Eh?"

"Wharton—Harry Wharton speaking—Greyfriars—"

"Oh, very good, sir! Hold on, and I will call the general."

"Right-ho!" said Bunter.

He waited, with the receiver at his fat ear.

Bunter felt a slight inward trepidation. Taking Wharton's name for his own use did not seem to him a very important matter; yet he felt somehow uneasy. But before he could think further on the subject, a deep voice came through on the wires.

"Is that you, Harry?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"You got my letter yesterday?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Good, my boy! I expected you to ring me up before this."

"I—I—"

"What?"

"I'm coming on Saturday, sir."

"Right you are!" came the deep voice.

"I'll expect you, then, and your friends."

"Oh! My—my friends—"

"Yes. Bring 'em all along. I'll be glad to see them," said the deep voice.

"Your uncle has mentioned some of them to me—Nugent and Cherry—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"And Bull and Hurree Singh—"

"Oh dear!"

"What did you say, Harry?"

"I—I said, I—I was saying I—I—"

"I don't seem to make you out, Harry. Speak plainer"

"I—I'll come, and—and bring my friends," gasped Bunter. "Oh, certainly."

"The whole crowd, sir!"

"Good! Coming by bike, I suppose?"

"If I can borrow a bike—"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean, certainly, sir! Bike, of course. We—I—we—I—I'll—we'll drop in early in the afternoon—"

"As early as you like, my boy. I shall be very glad to see you."

"You'll hardly know me by sight, sir, as you haven't seen me since I was a—"

"baby in arms, as you—you put it in your letter—"

"Oh, I shall know you right enough!" chuckled the general. "No doubt about that. You won't know me, I expect."

Well, good-bye, Harry! I'll expect you early on Saturday afternoon."

"Good-bye, sir!"

Bunter put up the receiver.

He grinned as he turned away from the telephone.

"Awful old ass!" he murmured. "He thinks he will know a chap he hasn't seen since he was a baby. As if he could!"

It's as safe as houses; only I shall have to be careful to keep up that I'm Wharton. That's easy enough, to a cute chap like me. I—I wonder who I'd better take with me. He'll expect to see half a dozen of us."

Bunter thought that out as he rolled out of the prefects' room.

It was a knotty problem.

Certainly, he couldn't take any member of the Famous Five, and he couldn't take any of their friends; he could only take fellows who would be willing to help him keep up the imposture.

That reduced his circle of selection very considerably.

Fellows who would help him in spoofing the old general were rather limited in number, and they were not favourable specimens of the Greyfriars' Remove, either.

His minor, Sammy of the Second, would have helped him in that, or in anything else, for the sake of a free feed, but Bunter sagely decided to leave Sammy out. The general probably knew that Wharton had no brother, and the resemblance between the two Bunters would have betrayed them.

Bunter turned over in his mind the possible candidates for the picnic. Skinner and Snoop and Stott and Fishy—they would make four, and they would be willing and eager to bag a picnic that was intended for the Famous Five. But the Owl of the Remove really could not think of any other fellows who could be relied upon to back him up.

Bolover major, perhaps—but Bolover was a beast, and he would want to take the whole affair into his hands in his overbearing way. Bunter dismissed Bolover from his mind. He rolled out into the quadrangle in search of Skinner & Co.

Harry Wharton and Vernon-Smith were standing near the steps of the School House, chatting, and as Bunter passed them, he caught the words uttered by Smithy:

"Saturday afternoon, then, at Hawkscliff."

Bunter stopped dead.

He turned his big spectacles on the two juniors, with a stare of affright. So startled was his look, that Wharton and the Bounder could not help observing it, and they glanced at him in surprise.

"Well, what's the matter with you, fatty?" asked the Bounder.

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows, what's that about—about Hawkscliff—"

"What the thump does it matter to you?" asked the Bounder uncere-

moniously.

"You're going to Hawkscliff on Saturday afternoon?" persisted Bunter.

"Yes, if you want to know."

"You—you're going, Wharton?" gasped Bunter.

"Why not?" asked Harry in surprise.

"Oh dear! But—but you haven't had the—the—"

"What?"

"I—I mean—nothing!" gasped Bunter.

"You can't go to Hawkscliff House without being invited—"

Wharton stared.

"Hawkscliff House!" he repeated.

"Who's going to Hawkscliff House?"

"Oh, I—I thought—"

"I've never heard of the place, that I remember," said Wharton, in wonder.

"What on earth are you driving at, Bunter? Are you wandering off your silly rocker?"

"I—I—"

"Hawkscliff House!" repeated Vernon-Smith. "That's the old house near Tom Redwing's old cabin at Hawkscliff, with grounds going down to the sea. Redwing told me about it. He said it's been taken recently by some old military Johnny."

Wharton nodded.

"I remember now," he said. "We've passed it going by the cliff-road. There's a right of way through the grounds over the cliffs. It was empty for a long time, I think."

"Oh! You—you're not thinking of going to Hawkscliff House, then?" stuttered Bunter.

"Hardly, as we don't know anybody there," answered Wharton.

(Continued on page 9.)

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SUPPLEMENT No. 21.

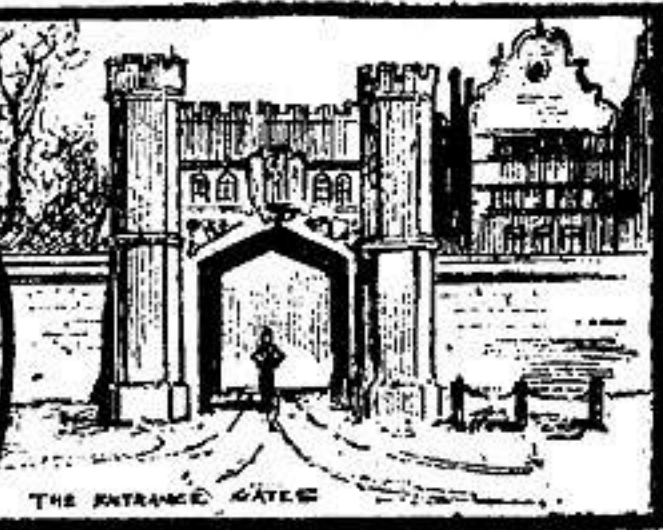
Week Ending May 21st, 1921.



THE SCHOOL HOUSE



Harry Wharton
Editor



THE ENTRANCE GATE

Assisted by BOB CHERRY (Fighting Editor),
VERNON-SMITH (Sports Editor), MARK
LINLEY, TOM BROWN, and FRANK NUGENT.

Address all letters to HARRY WHARTON,
c/o The Magnet Library, The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

EDITORIAL.

By Harry Wharton.

I will kick off this week with a conundrum.
"Why does Billy Hunter resemble my
fountain-pen?"

You give it up?

"Because he's a 'self-filler'!"

I've known some greedy fellows in my time, but you'd have to go a long way to find a bigger glutton than Billy. He always seems to be stuffing, from the rising up of the sun to the going down thereof. He keeps a bag of toffee under his pillow, and he munches it—the toffee, not the pillow—during lessons. Sometimes his mouth is so full of toffee that he's speechless—and so is Quelch!

When the word of dismissal comes, Billy Hunter makes a bee-line for the tuckshop. It really ought to be called the "tickshop," in his case, because he never pays cash down for what he consumes.

At meal-times Billy is never satisfied with less than half a dozen portions, and Bob Cherry declares that sooner or later the porridge will burst like a toy balloon!

Bunter's appetite is as boundless as the ocean; but I wish he'd appease it in the dining-hall, and leave my study cupboard alone!

I've missed a plum-cake and a rather ancient tin of preserved fruit since yesterday. When I questioned Bunter on the subject, he said: "I haven't seen any of your old fruit, old fruit!"

"You've been to my cupboard!" I said sternly.

"Nunno! Nothing of the sort, Wharton, I assure you! I merely went to your desk—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I haven't been within a mile of your study at all!"

"What's that sticking out of your breast-pocket?" I demanded.

"Oh, crumbs!"

Billy Bunter tried to scuttle away, but I was too quick for him. I made a grab at the contents of his pocket, and found that the young pirate had "lifted" a number of valuable manuscripts from my desk—articles and stories intended for the "Greyfriars Herald." He had evidently intended to smuggle them into his priceless "Weekly."

"I—I say, Harry old chap, are you angry?" asked Bunter feebly.

"Oh, dear, no! Just slightly annoyed!" I replied, with crushing sarcasm.

And then, although the footer season is over, I dribbled the plump pirate along the passage, and his yell fairly awakened the echoes.

AN OPEN LETTER TO GERALD LODER.

Bully, Beast, and Braggart!

SAVAGE BRUTE.—I think it only right that I should give publicity to your latest act of hooliganism.

In last week's issue of the "Greyfriars Herald" there appeared a poem by our brainy bard, Dick Penfold. It was a parody of the well-known song, "Asleep in the Deep," and it showed you up in your true colours, as a midnight prowler and a person who frequents undesirable resorts.

On reading the verses in question, you behaved like the old lady whose knitting was suddenly taken away from her by a dog. In other words, you lost your wool.

According to the evidence of your lag, who was in your study at the time, you foamed at the mouth, tore your hair, gnashed your teeth, and snarled like a beast of prey.

Vowing vengeance on Dick Penfold, you picked up an ashplant, and went in search of him. He could not be found, whereupon, in your blind fury, you visited the editorial sanctum—of the "Greyfriars Herald," and attacked the members of the staff in a most savage manner, lashing out indiscriminately with your ashplant.

A MASTER'S DISASTERS!

Being Extracts from the Doleful Diary
of Mr. Bernard Morrison Tugg, B.A.,
Master of the Second.

MONDAY.

Started the day by sitting on an inverted tinctack, which Nugent minor had placed on my chair in the Form-room. Needless to state, Nugent minor was "sat on" shortly afterwards! On opening my desk, I was startled to find it inhabited by a number of frogs. I sprang back so suddenly that I bowled the blackboard and easel over, causing Gatty to remark, "Pop goes the easel!" I then called upon Nugent and Myers to eject the slimy creatures placed in my desk, and they took all the morning over it.

TUESDAY.

Had to leave the breakfast-table in a hurry, owing to the fact that some young rascal had emptied the contents of the salt-cellar into my coffee. Tried to find out who the culprit was, but without success. More frogs in my desk this morning, together with a prickly hedgehog.

The fact that you are a prefect prevented us from giving you the thrashing you deserved; but if this letter happens to catch the eye of our worthy skipper, Wingate, I have no doubt he will invite you to spend five minutes in the gym, with him.

Know all men by these presents—as the legal Johnnies say—that you are a beastly Bolshy, an untamed tyrant, and a disgrace to the school whose colours you wear.

Although we endured your brutality without resistance on that occasion, we wish you clearly to understand that if you make any further attacks upon us, we will show our fangs, and give you a taste of your own medicine. Even your position as a prefect will not save you.

I will now leave you to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the contents of this letter ere you proceed to the Cross Keys to play snooker with the landlord.

And don't forget Dick Penfold's warning: "Cads of your race have been sacked in disgrace."

So beware! Beware!"

Yours contemptuously,

HARRY WHARTON.

(At the time of going to press we learn that George Wingate has taken this matter up, and that he intends to teach the unpopular prefect a lesson. A bed is being prepared for Loder in the sunny!—Ed.)

WEDNESDAY.

Awarded no less than 23,500 lines this morning to my erring pupils, who proved a bigger handful than ever.

THURSDAY.

Ran into a booby-trap which had been fixed up on my study door. Spent the best part of the morning removing traces of soot, treacle, ink, and glue! Really, the situation is fearfully glue-me! Once again I failed to locate the culprit.

FRIDAY.

I was conducting a lecture in the lecture-hall, when a number of my pupils suddenly doused the lights, and proceeded to pelt me with bad eggs, nutshells, stale fruit, and other missiles. I withstood the bombardment for a few minutes, and was then compelled to flee. Oh, dear! I'm sure I shall be driven insane before long!

SATURDAY.

Acted as umpire in a fags' cricket match. Some of my decisions were not agreed with, and the ball was repeatedly hurled in my direction—more by design than accident! I was bruised in various parts of my anatomy, and badly needed a bath-chair before the game was over.

Thank goodness to-morrow is a day of rest!
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TERRORS SHOCKE AT GREYFRIARS. By PETER TODD.

An Entirely New Series of Stories, featuring Terrors Shocke, the Amazing Detective, and his assistant, Shaker.

THE CASE OF THE MISSING CANDIDATE!

"It is high time, Shaker," said Terrors Shocke, reclining in the weather-beaten arm-chair, with his heels firmly wedged into the mantelpiece. "that some new sensation occurred at Greyfriars. Things are strangely quiet in that usually noisy school. I wish some misguided youth would create a stir by strangling his Form-master or by hitting Goshing, the porter, over the head with some blunt instrument—an Army razor, for instance!"

"Shocke!"

"Yes, it would be rather a shock," admitted my friend. "Still, shocks are the spice of life, Shaker. If there were no calamities, there would be no need for great detectives. I should lose my occupation, and be compelled to draw the weekly dole which a generous Government distributes to the unemployed. Seven pounds a week would be preferable to starvation."

"Seven pounds a week!" I ejaculated. "Surely the Government dole is not so much as that?"

"It's gone up again," said Shocke lightly. "The Government has just increased it for the fifteenth time. But hark! I hear the tinkle of the telephone-bell!"

"Tinkle, tinkle, little bell,
Nothing can your clamour quell.
When you ring, I say, 'Hoch, hoch!
Another case for Herr von Shocke!'"

So saying, my amazing friend—who has twice declined the post of Poet Laureate in order that he might pursue his investigations—stepped to the instrument, and lifted the receiver to his large and sensitive ear.

"Hallo!" he said. "Is that Dr. Locke? Yes, I'm Terrors Shocke! Excuse my bursting into rhyme, but I feel quite poetical this morning. Eh? What's that? One of the candidates for to-morrow's examination has disappeared? How thoughtless of him? When did he do the vanishing trick? Two hours ago? That's not very long. Are you quite sure he is absent? What's that? You've ransacked the whole school for him in vain? Very well. I'll come down at once!"

Terrors Shocke rang off, and turned to me with a smile.

"Rouse yourself, Shaker!" he said. "There is work to be done!"

"What is the trouble, Shocke?"

"A frail and delicate child named Alonzo Todd, who was looked upon as a dead certainty for the Founders' Prize—the examination for which takes place to-morrow—has disappeared!"

"Good gracious! Have you any theories, Shocke?"

My friend laughed scornfully.

"Theories, Shaker? Leave theories to Scotland Yard! I deal only in facts. But come! We have just time to get to Charing Cross and smuggle ourselves in the goods-van!"

An hour later, dusty and dishevelled after stowing ourselves away amongst some sacks of sawdust, we arrived at Greyfriars.

Dr. Locke greeted us with a worried frown. "I am sorry to disappoint you, Mr. Shocke," he said, "but I fear there is nothing for you to do."

"The boy Todd has Todd-led back?" said Shocke, permitting himself a pun.

"No. But I think I know what has happened. The unhappy lad has been kidnapped by one of the rival candidates!"

Terrors Shocke did not look at all convinced.

"I have detained Bolsover major on suspicion," said the Head. "He has been con-

fined to the punishment-room. He refuses to give me any information about Todd."

"For the simple reason that he is as ignorant of Todd's whereabouts as you are!" said Shocke.

"Do you not believe Bolsover major to be guilty?"

"I believe no man to be guilty until Scotland Yard has proved him innocent!" answered Shocke. "I will see this boy Bolsover, and place him under hypnotic influence. Then, if he knows anything of this affair, he will make a clean breast of it."

Terrors Shocke led the way to the punishment-room, Dr. Locke and I bringing up the rear.

A burly youth was seated on the barren bed. The detective immediately focussed his keen eyes upon him, and made a few deft passes with his hands. In a few seconds Bolsover major was under the 'fluence.

"Where is Alonzo Todd?" demanded Terrors Shocke.

"Dashed if I know!" was the reply.

"Have you kidnapped him, and hidden him in the coal-cellar?"

"Certainly not!"

Terrors Shocke turned to the Head.

"This boy is as innocent as a babe unborn!" he said. "If he is lucky enough to come out of this trance, I should advise you to liberate him!"

Dr. Locke nodded.

"Meanwhile, I will go and search for the missing boy," said Shocke. "It is a pity I didn't bring my bloodhound with me. Still, I think I shall manage it all right. So long, Shaker! Keep Dr. Locke amused in my absence!"

To our amazement and delight, the great detective was back within the hour, leading a slim and learned-looking youth by the hand.

"Herewith the missing Todd!" said Shocke, with a smile.

The Head gave a gasp.

"Mr. Shocke! Your prowess is truly amazing! Where did you find this lad?"

"Out at sea," was the reply. "His disappearance was purely accidental, and there is no question of kidnapping. A few hours ago he went for a stroll, taking a volume of 'Thucydides' with him, in order to sit on the rocks and swot. So engrossed was he in his studies that he failed to notice that the tide was coming in, with the result that he was marooned."

"Bless my soul!"

"I found him perched on the top of a rock, waiting for the tide to go out again!"

"Then it was a pure accident?"

Alonzo Todd opened his mouth for the first time.

"Not at all, sir!" he said. "Bolsover major rowed me out to the rocks, and left me stranded—Yarooooh!"

Alonzo broke off with a yell of anguish as Terrors Shocke trod heavily on his toe.

"Dry up, you young ass," muttered the detective, "or you'll spoil everything!"

Fortunately, Alonzo Todd had spoken in such a faint tone that the Head had not heard his explanation.

Which was an extremely fortunate thing for my friend Shocke!

For once in a way, the great detective had made a mistake.

The disappearance of Alonzo Todd had not been an accident at all. It had been a deliberate plot on the part of Bolsover major. But Shocke's hypnotism had failed to elicit a confession from the bully of the Remove.

Which leads me to believe that my friend and master is a far better detective than he is a hypnotist!

THE END.

OUR THEATRICAL COLUMN.

By TOM BROWN (Our Dramatic Critic).

On Saturday evening, the Remove Dramatic Society gave a performance of "Hamlet" in the Rag. A charge of fourpence was made for admission, and the proceeds were devoted to the S.S.G.P.W.I.M. (Society for Supplying Goshing the Porter with an Infusion of Monkey-gland.)

The entrance was rushed at the outset, and at least a score of fellows got in without paying. (But I expect they had to pay for it afterwards!)

There was a long delay before the curtain went up, while Wharton and Smithy settled a little argument as to who should take the title-role. Wharton got his own way in the long run, but the black eye and swollen nose which Smithy had given him did not add to the dignity of his appearance.

When the play began, it was impossible to tell whether it was supposed to be a tragedy or a screaming farce.

"Hamlet" was extremely nervous—probably because he had caught sight of a couple of bad eggs which were clutched in Bolsover major's hand! His lines were gabbled in an incoherent manner; and when the ghost came on, and he ought to have sat up and taken notice, he still kept one eye on Bolsover major!

Peter Todd rushed across the stage at a very unghostlike pace, and tripped over the ramparts.

"Ow!" he gasped. "I—I am the ghost of thy murdered—yow!—father!"

"Yaroooooh!" answered Hamlet, as one of Bolsover's eggs smote him with great violence under the chin.

At this juncture, Horatio (Frank Nugent) turned towards the audience.

"I prithee, keep yonder saucy knave in order!" he cried, levelling his finger at Bolsover.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How dost suppose we can get on with the washing, when we are being pelted, foresooth?"

Bolsover major was speedily subdued. Billy Bunter sat on him, and he was unable to breathe for the rest of the evening!

Hamlet was obliged to retire for some time, in order to get a wash and brush-up in the dressing-room; and Hurree Singh deputised for him in his absence.

The audience greatly enjoyed Inky's soliloquy:

"To be or not to be, that is the esteemed question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mindfulness to suffer

The slingful arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take armfulness against a sea of troubles—"

And so the merry game went on, and we all agreed that even George Robey could not have made a more amusing Hamlet.

Wharton returned in time for his duel with Laertes (Jack Drake); but before they had contrived to slay each other the platform collapsed—and so did the actors!

There was a perfect pandemonium at the finish.

From my remarks, the reader will have judged that "Hamlet" was a failure—a complete wash-out.

And why?

Because I wasn't selected to play the title-role, of course!

THE FAMISHED FIVE!

By Frank Nugent.

TOPPING afternoon for a picnic!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"A dip in the river, followed by a first-rate feed on the bank, will be top-hole!" said Wharton.

Johnny Bull made a wry face.

"No funds!" he said laconically.

"Say not so, my worthy chum," said Inky, with a smile. "I have the good fortune to be rolling in the esteemed quidfulness."

"Oh, good!"

"We will proceedfully adjourn to the tuck-shop, and get the worthy dame to pack a hamper."

Whilst Inky was speaking, Bob Cherry moved swiftly and silently towards the door of Study No. 1, and threw it open.

There was a startled gasp from without, followed by the sound of scuffling feet.

"Thought so!" said Bob Cherry, turning back into the study. "Bunter's bootlace happened to come undone just outside the door, and he's overheard all our arrangements!"

Wharton groaned.

"In that case, the fat worm will stick to us like a leech for the rest of the afternoon," he said. "We sha'n't be able to get rid of him."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I think I know how to deal with Bunter," he said. "Lend me your ears!"

And then Bob propounded a little scheme which brought broad grins to our faces.

Ten minutes later we emerged from the school tuckshop, carrying between us a tuck-hamper of prodigious size. It was so immense that it would have accommodated sufficient rations for fifty fellows.

We panted and grunted as we staggered through the Close, as if our burden was almost greater than we could bear.

As a matter of fact, the tuck-hamper was empty!

The panting, grunting, and other vocal exercises were for the benefit of Billy Bunter, who was following our progress with hungry eyes.

We pretended not to see Bunter, but we felt instinctively that he was on our trail as soon as we had borne the hamper through the gateway.

"Put the pace on kids!" muttered Bob Cherry.

And we fairly streaked along the road, with the hamper bobbing about in the midst of us.

Presently a voice hailed us from the rear.

"I say, you fellows, don't walk so fast! I want to give you a hand with that hamper!"

We went ahead with swinging strides, and paid no heed to Bunter.

The fat junior was obliged to break into a trot, and eventually into a gallop.

The unaccustomed exercise caused the perspiration to course down Bunter's sabby cheeks, and he became more breathless at every second. But he kept on keeping on, lured by the prospect of a share in the feed. The sight of the tuck-hamper produced the same effect as a carrot dangled under a donkey's nose.

Patter, patter, patter!

Billy Bunter's fat little legs were working at top speed. Gradually he gained on us; but when he was almost within touching distance of the hamper we quickened our pace, and the Owl of the Remove fell behind, uttering shrill lamentations.

"Don't leave me behind, you beasts! It's jolly silly of you to hurry, with a weight like that! You'll be getting heart disease, or something! Owl! I—I'm done!"

Chuckling softly to ourselves, we struck across the fields until we came to a shady retreat on the bank of the river. Here we halted.

We dumped the huge hamper on to the grass, and then sank down, apparently in a state of utter collapse.

Billy Bunter bore down upon us, puffing and blowing like a grampus. He was bathed in perspiration, and presented a most pitiful spectacle. But he consoled himself with the reflection that a magnificent feed would now crown his efforts.

"Oh dear!" he panted. "I've never had

to run so fast in my life! Still, I'm fresher than you fellows. I'll open the hamper for you, if you like."

"Go ahead!" said Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter bounded forward with glistening eyes. In a trice, he whipped up the lid of the hamper, and peered within.

Then he gave a gasp—a gasp of utter bewilderment and dismay.

The hamper was empty!

"M-m-m-my hat!" gasped the fat junior. "Oh, you beasts! Oh, you spoofers! It's empty!"

"But it won't be empty long!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Lend a hand, you fellows!"

We sprang suddenly to our feet, and advanced upon Billy Bunter. He was swung clean off his feet, and deposited into the yawning depths of the tuck-hamper.

"Yaroooooh! Hands off, you rotters! What's the little game?"

Snap!

Down went the lid, and Inky deftly fastened it.

Billy Bunter was a prisoner in the tuck-hamper!

The hamper was well-ventilated, so that its inmate had no difficulty in breathing. At the same time, Billy Bunter was in a very cramped and far from comfortable position.

Muffled groans proceeded from the interior of the hamper.



Nearer and nearer came the big tuck-hamper. Alonzo gave vent to a wild cry of terror, and fled for his life.

"Ow-ow-ow! Lemme out of this! I'm suffocating by inches! It's worse than the Black Hole of Calcutta!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This will teach you not to listen at study keyholes!" said Wharton grimly. "Come on, you fellows! We'll go and see about our feed, and let the porpoise loose later on."

Billy Bunter struggled frantically to prize open the lid of the hamper, but it would not budge. His groans of anguish followed us until we were out of earshot.

Struggling desperately, Bunter caused the enormous hamper to roll over and over on the grassy bank. It was extremely fortunate for its occupant that it didn't roll towards the river!

A few moments after we had taken our departure, Alonzo Todd came strolling along the towing-path.

Alonzo was engrossed in a book, but presently he chanced to look up, and to his unspeakable horror he saw a huge tuck-hamper come bounding towards him.

For a moment the Duffer of the Remove stood as if turned to stone. He had seen a cake walk, he had seen a sausage roll; but he had never seen a tuck-hamper perform acrobatic feats before!

Nearer and nearer came the big hamper, and the perspiration broke out on Alonzo's brow. Then, with a wild yell of terror he turned and fled.

Alonzo is no great shakes as a runner, but on this occasion he streaked along like a champion of the cinder-path.

There was another interval of a few moments, and then four fat and famished juniors appeared on the scene. They were Fatty Wynn, Baggy Trimble, Tubby Muffin, and Sammy Bunter—Billy's four fat sub-editors.

Wynn, Trimble, and Muffin had come over to Greyfriars to see Billy Bunter on a matter of business.

Sammy had informed them that his major was not at home.

"Some of the Remove fellows are having a picnic by the river," he explained, "and I believe Billy's gone after them."

"In that case, I vote we do ditto," said Tubby Muffin. "I haven't tasted bite or sup for at least an hour, and I'm as hungry as a Bunter—I mean, a hunter!"

"Same here!" said Fatty Wynn. "Let's stroll down to the river, and see if there's anything doing."

The four fat "subs" were in almost as famished a condition as Billy Bunter himself. And they followed on the trail of the tuck-hamper like bloodhounds.

By the time they reached the towing-path, Billy Bunter had stopped performing revolutions. He found it very painful to keep rolling over and over, and the tuck-hamper was now in an upright position.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Baggy Trimble. "The feed's here, but there's no sign of the giddy feasters!"

"All the better for us!" chortled Sammy Bunter.

And, uttering whoops of delight, the quartette bore down upon the tuck-hamper.

Fatty Wynn's mouth was watering in anticipation as he unfastened the lid. He raised it expectantly, and then a startling thing happened.

Billy Bunter hopped up like a jack-in-the-box—red and flustered and breathless.

"I—I say, you fellows!" he panted.

"Great jumping crackers!" gasped Fatty Wynn, in bewilderment and dismay. "What on earth are you doing here, Billy?"

"Yow! Wharton and the other rotters shoved me inside the hamper. I should have been suffocated if you fellows hadn't turned up!"

"But—but where's the grub?" faltered Sammy.

"There wasn't any! The rotters were having me on toast!"

"My hat!"

Billy Bunter crawled out of the tuck-hamper, looking more dead than alive. And the famished five exchanged doleful glances.

"Then there isn't to be a picnic, after all?" said Tubby Muffin. "We've had all this exertion for nothing!"

"Looks like it!" groaned Baggy Trimble. "I'm simply ravenous, too! I shall go down on my hands and knees and start grazing in a jiffy!"

At this juncture we came on the scene with another hamper—a well-laden one this time—and the expressions on the faces of the famished five were so pathetic that we took compassion on them, and invited them to join in the spread.

We had brought sufficient provisions to relieve a starving garrison; but by the time Billy Bunter and his four fat subs had appeased their appetites, not a crumb remained to tell the tale.

Take Billy Bunter's appetite, and multiply it by five, and it will give you some idea of the rapidity with which the grub disappeared. I've seen some eating exhibitions in my time, but none came up to this.

When we left Billy Bunter and his tribe of porpoises, they were reclining on their backs on the grassy bank, with their hands folded in the region of their lower waistcoat buttons. And there was an expression of serene contentment on the face of each.

I am still trying to puzzle out how Billy and Sammy managed to get back to Greyfriars. And it is an even greater enigma how Fatty Wynn and Baggy Trimble got back to St. Jim's, and Tubby Muffin to Rookwood.

I can only conclude that some kind person must have rolled them to their respective destinations!

A DARING SCHEME!

By Monty Newland.

"A WHOLE day's holiday, and we're free to go where we like and do what we like!" said Bolsover major. "That's the stuff to give the troops! The question is, what are we going to do with ourselves?"

Neither Skinner, Snoop, nor Stott had a ready reply to that question, and it fell to Bolsover himself to suggest something.

"I vote we run down to Folkestone," he said. "It isn't a far cry from Greyfriars; and there's a train in half an hour."

"But what is there to do at Folkestone?" grumbled Stott.

"Oh, we can sit on the sands and build castles, and gather winkles on the foreshore!" chuckled Skinner. "Seriously, though, we can eat, drink, and be merry, and smoke the fragrant weed without danger of being spotted by the beaks. Yea, brother, we can have a high old time at Folkestone!"

The attractions of the Kentish seaside resort did not appeal very much to Snoop and Stott. Still, a visit to Folkestone would be better than mouching around at Greyfriars; and after further discussion the quartette made their way to the railway-station.

There was a stream of fellows passing through the school gates. Some were going to spend the day on the river; the Remove Second Eleven was travelling to St. Jim's to play cricket, and Jack Drake and Rodney were carrying a huge luncheon-basket between them. They had evidently planned a picnic.

Several fellows asked Skinner & Co. where they were going, and they received grunts and snorts in reply. Skinner and his set lacked the politeness of princes.

"I say, you chaps," said Snoop, "I don't like coming on this jaunt, really. You see, I happen to be broke."

"Set your mind at rest, Snoopey," said Skinner. "This is my funeral. One of my maiden aunts, whose existence I'd forgotten long ago, turned up trumps with a fiver this morning. And dear Percy is in funds, too—ain't you, Percy?"

Bolsover major nodded.

"We shall be able to paint Folkestone red if we feel that way inclined!" he said.

"Yes, rather!"

A few moments later, Skinner & Co. were reclining at ease in a first-class carriage. It wasn't a "smoker," but cigarettes dangled from the lips of Skinner, Stott, and Bolsover. Snoop, for once, had had the courage to say "No."

Long before they reached their destination the complexions of the three smokers were a sickly yellow. And they were glad to step out into the fresh air.

"The first item on the programme, gents," said Skinner, after he had handed in the tickets at the Central Station, "is a jolly good feed. Then we'll stagger down to the sea-front, and see what's doing."

Skinner & Co. enjoyed a sumptuous repast at a swell restaurant. Then they sallied forth arm-in-arm, with their school caps perched on the back of their heads. They hummed a merry tune as they went, and felt on the best of terms with themselves and with life in general.

The town was crowded. The season had started in great style, and every hotel and boarding-house was taxed to its utmost capacity.

It was on the esplanade that the crowd was thickest. The beach was swarming with holiday-makers.

"Just look at 'em!" exclaimed Skinner. "Like flies round a giddy honey-pot! What pleasure do they get from squatting on the sands? I wonder?"

"Give it up," grunted Bolsover.

Skinner was silent for some moments. He seemed to be deep in thought.

"Penny for 'em!" said Stott.

"I was just thinking," said Skinner, "that we ought to give these people a bit of excitement. They've been squatting on the sands, day after day, for weeks, some of them. And they must find it deadly dull. It's up to us to relieve the monotony."

"How?" asked Bolsover, looking interested.

"Your Uncle Harold has got hold of a very brainy stunt," said Skinner. "You and I, Percy, will be the principal actors in the drama. You will hire some fishing-tackle, and take up your position at the end of the pier."

"Eh?"

"After a time, you will pretend to get a bite, and in your eagerness you will overbalance and tumble into the sea."

"My hat!"

"You will raise a shrill cry for help, and pretend to be drowning. Meanwhile, I shall whip off my coat, remove my clodhoppers, and dive gallantly to the rescue!"

Skinner's cronies stared at him in blank amazement.

"After a terrible struggle," Skinner went on, "I shall succeed in getting you to the shore. Then I shall collapse, while you are sobbing out your gratitude. If that doesn't send a thrill through the multitude, then I'm a Dutchman! I shall be dubbed a giddy hero, and I expect there will be a collection for me on the beach."

"You—you can't be serious, Skinner?" gasped Bolsover breathlessly.

"I was never more serious in my life," answered Skinner. "I tell you, Comrade Percy, this is the greatest stunt ever! We shall simply electrify the crowd! But mind you play your part properly, and pretend to be in difficulties as soon as you land in the water."

For a long time Bolsover declined to take part in what he described as a hare-brained wheeze. But Skinner's powers of persuasion eventually proved too much for him, and he consented—though not without misgivings. There was something mean and caddish about the deception which Skinner had planned. And Bolsover, though in many respects a black sheep, was not an out-and-out cad.



Bolsover, in trying to reach out to his rod, overbalanced. The next moment he had toppled off the end of the pier.

But even Bolsover had to admit that there was something distinctly humorous in the idea of pulling the crowd's leg; so to speak. He pictured to himself the "gallant rescue," and the reports which would appear next day in the Press.

"I'm game!" he said, at length.

"Good!" said Skinner. "Let's come and get the fishing-tackle."

"You silly duffers!" said Snoop. "You'll ruin your fogs, both of you!"

"That's a mere detail," said Skinner. "Think of the fun we shall have at the crowd's expense!"

Five minutes later, the burly figure of Bolsover major could be espied at the end of the pier. He had baited his line, and he appeared to be very keen on making a good haul.

Meanwhile, he nerved himself for the part he had to play.

It was rather a long drop into the sea, and Bolsover didn't altogether relish the prospect of whizzing through space. Still, he was a strong swimmer, even when handicapped by his clothes, and he did not suppose there would be any real danger.

Presently he went down on all fours, and squirmed his way beneath the ralls.

"Look out!" warned a man who was fishing a few yards away. "You'll be over the edge in a minute!"

Before the words were out of the man's mouth, Bolsover had contrived to overreach himself. He toppled head-foremost into the sea, whilst his schoolfellows looked on with fast-beating hearts.

Splash!

Bolsover disappeared beneath the surface.

When he came up, with matted hair and

streaming face, he heard a great murmur of excitement and alarm from the crowd on the beach. Then, in accordance with programme, he proceeded to bellow for help.

And then a startling thing happened.

Bolsover was suddenly attacked with cramp. It was the worst form of cramp—in the stomach; and, try as he would, the junior could not shake it off. He kicked out fiercely with his legs, but it was of no avail. He was being overpowered—he was in imminent danger of drowning!

"Help! Help!"

Bolsover was not play-acting now. He was in sober earnest. He felt himself going under, and his strength was failing him.

As for Skinner, he failed to keep his part of the compact. When it came to the point, he found that he had not enough courage to dive off the pier. He had divested himself of his jacket and boots, but, in spite of the urgings of Snoop and Stott, he felt incapable of taking the plunge.

Not for one moment did Skinner imagine that Bolsover was in danger.

The shouts for help were very realistic, but Skinner supposed that it was clever acting on Bolsover's part.

To do the cad of the Remove justice, had he known that Bolsover was in peril, he would have taken the leap.

As it was, Skinner stood motionless on the pier.

"I—I can't do it!" he muttered. "I—I didn't know it was such a distance! I can swim all right, but I never was much good at high diving."

"Why doesn't Bolsover start to swim ashore?" exclaimed Stott.

Snoop, who had been watching Bolsover intently, gave a gasp of alarm. He went white to the lips.

"I—I say!" he faltered, clutching Skinner by the arm. "Bolsover's really in danger!"

"Rats!"

"I tell you he is! Look at him! He's been under once, and now he's going under again! He—he's drowning!"

And Snoop averted his eyes. He was utterly unnerved.

Even Skinner began to realise that there was something wrong. He screwed his courage to the sticking-point, and prepared to dive.

But there was no need. For at that moment a boat came speeding across the placid waters—an ordinary rowing-boat, manned by a couple of fellows who wore the Greyfriars colours.

"Cherry and Linley!" exclaimed Stott. "Oh, good! But—but will they get there in time?"

The three juniors on the pier gazed down at the boat which was flashing to Bolsover's rescue.

It was extremely fortunate for the bully of the Remove that Bob Cherry and Mark Linley had taken it into their heads to cycle down to Folkestone for the day.

The two chums had been strolling along the front when Bolsover took his sensational "header," and they had seen at a glance that he was in difficulties. Without hesitation, they had commandeered a boat, and they were rowing as they had never rowed before.

Bolsover's fate hung in the balance. He was utterly exhausted now, and completely in the grip of that deadly foe to swimmers—cramp. But for the prompt arrival of the boat he must surely have been drowned.

As it was, Bob Cherry and Mark Linley hauled the junior into the boat in the nick of time, and proceeded to row him ashore, to the accompaniment of a rousing cheer from the crowd on the beach.

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Skinner. And he drew a deep, sobbing breath of relief. The danger was past, and Bolsover major, after receiving attention, was able to walk to the nearest hotel, where his garments were dried.

Bob Cherry and Mark Linley were amazed when they heard of Skinner's amazing "stunt," and they determined to teach the cad of the Remove a sharp lesson. But when they saw Skinner they realised that he had suffered agonies of mind, and they took no action.

Skinner & Co. were very subdued when they travelled back to Greyfriars that evening.

And if Skinner should ever repeat his suggestion that Bolsover major throws himself off a pier, I have no doubt that Bolsover's reply will take the form of a "straight left!"

"BUNTER'S PICNIC!"

(Continued from page 8.)

Bunter felt a little reassured.

"But what are you going over to Hawkscliff on Saturday for, then?" he asked.

"I don't see that it matters to you, Bunter, but we're going over with Redwing," answered Wharton. "You know he used to live there, and he's going to show us around the cliffs."

Bunter knitted his fat brows.

"I'll tell you what, Wharton," he said. "You'd better not waste an afternoon rambling about cliffs and things over there. Much better be playing cricket."

"There's no match on Saturday, ass!"

"But what about practice?" said Bunter persuasively. "You fellows ought to keep yourselves in form, for the Rookwood match, you know."

"My hat!" Wharton looked at the fat junior in astonishment. "I suppose we can manage about that without your advice, Bunter, as you know as much about cricket as you do about astronomy or conchology."

"Then there's cycling," pursued Bunter. "Why not have a jolly good spin on Saturday afternoon—Canterbury way, for instance?"

"We're going to Hawkscliff, ass!"

"Or you could have a car out," said Bunter eagerly. "Why not club together and have a car out for Saturday, and have a jolly good spin? You could go as far as Folkestone—"

"Is he potty?" asked the Bounder in wonder.

"Must be, I think," said Harry. "If you're not wandering in your mind, Bunter, will you explain what you are drivelling about?"

"What about Cliff House?" said Bunter, unheeding. "Marjorie & Co. will be expecting to see you on Saturday, most likely—"

"Why don't you want us to go to Hawkscliff on Saturday, Bunter?" demanded the Bounder suddenly, fixing the Owl of the Remove with a very keen look.

Bunter jumped.

"Of—of course, I—I don't care whether you go to Hawkscliff or not!" he stammered. "Not at all, you know! Don't think that for a moment! I—I was only thinking of you fellows, you know—"

"Rate!"

"Look here, Bunter—" began Wharton.

But Billy Bunter felt that he had said too much already. That fact was dawning even upon his obtuse intellect. He rolled hastily away, leaving the two juniors much astonished.

Wharton and Vernon-Smith looked at one another.

"What's the matter with him?" said the captain of the Remove.

"He doesn't want us to go to Hawkscliff on Saturday afternoon, for some reason," said Vernon-Smith.

"But why shouldn't he?"

"Blest if I know! Anyhow, we're going."

"Yes, rather!"

And that was settled.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Skinner is "On!"

HAROLD SKINNER picked up a toasting-fork, and pointed to the door with it. He did not trouble to speak. That gesture was enough to indicate Skinner's meaning.

It was tea-time in Study No. 11. Skinner, Stott, and Snoop were, at tea, and they betrayed no enthusiasm whatever when the door opened and admitted the rotund form of William George Bunter.

Snoop and Stott did not even look at him, and Skinner only pointed to the door with the toasting-fork.

Apparently Bunter wasn't welcome.

He seldom was, anywhere, at tea-time. Fellows who stood themselves tea in their studies naturally wanted a "look-in" for themselves. With Billy Bunter as a guest, there was likely to be a shortage of supplies all round.

Bunter blinked at the toasting-fork, and blinked at Skinner. Then he shut the door.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Where will you have it?" asked Skinner.

"What, the cake?"

"No, the toasting-fork."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"No; let him look on while we scoff the cake," suggested Snoop. "Tortures of Tantalus, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Stott.

Skinner grinned.

"Good idea!" he said. "We'll put him to the torture. Keep a yard away from the table, Bunter, or you'll get the toasting-fork. You can watch us eat the cake."

And Skinner & Co. resumed operations on the cake, with Bunter's hungry eyes on them.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't wag your chin!" commanded Skinner. "Your conversation ain't interesting, Bunter. Just watch!"

"I'll sample that cake, if you like!"

"Try it!" said Skinner, poised the toasting-fork. "I'll pin your paw to the table if it goes anywhere near the cake!"

Bunter's fat hand, which was reaching out, jerked suddenly back.

"I've got something to tell you fellows—"

"Chuck it! We know you're expecting a postal-order," interrupted Skinner, "and we don't want to know whether it's from your uncle, the duke, or your second-cousin, the marquis."

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter.

"Look here, how'd you fellows like to come to a top-hole, spiffing picnic on Saturday?"

"At Bunter Court?" grinned Skinner. "Waited on by the Bunter butler? We'd like it no end. I suppose you'll roll us over in the Bunter Rolls-Royce, won't you? Do!"

"Oh, do!" chuckled Snoop and Stott.

"I say, you fellows, you might give a chap a bit of that cake—"

"We're torturing you," explained Skinner blandly. "That is how merry old Tantalus went through it. It would spoil the effect if we gave you any cake. Besides, we're not going to give you any."

"No jolly fear!" said Snoop, with his mouth full.

"I've a jolly good mind not to take you to my picnic, if you're going to be so jolly mean!" snorted Bunter.

"Dear me!" said Skinner scornfully.

"Not the spiffing picnic at Bunter Court? You fellows got anything for me to weep into? We're losing the chance of a lifetime. We might have seen Bunter Court and the Bunter butler, never before beheld by mortal eye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not at Bunter Court!" howled the fat junior. "But it's a real picnic—a topping spread, stood by an old friend of Wharton's uncle—I mean, my uncle, the colonel."

"Your uncle, the colonel?" said Skinner, with interest. "Which uncle

is that? I've heard all about your uncle the duke, your uncle the earl, your uncle the viscount, and your uncle the field-marshal. I shouldn't have thought you'd have anything so common as a colonel among your avuncular relatives. Why not make him a general?"

"You ass, how can I make him a general?"

"Just as easy as making him a colonel, I should say," answered Skinner. "When you're telling a whopper, you may as well make it whop."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harold Skinner was evidently in a humorous mood. Snoop and Stott chuckled over the cake they were devouring under Bunter's famished eyes. Bunter, as he watched the cake rapidly disappearing, comprehended how the hapless Tantalus must have felt during his sojourn in Tartarus.

"Look here, I'm going to tell you fellows a secret," said Bunter desperately. "It isn't exactly my picnic; it's another chap's picnic, and I'm bagging it because—because he's treated me with black ingratitude."

Skinner eyed him.

"If it's another chap's picnic there may be something in it," he remarked.

"Who's the chap?"

"You'll keep it dark?"

"Of course!"

"Wharton. You're up against Wharton, you know," said Bunter anxiously.

Skinner nodded and grinned.

"I fear that I cannot be included among the admirers of his Magnificence," he remarked. "So you're bagging Wharton's picnic?"

"That's it!"

"Count us in, if there's anything going," said Stott.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Snoop. "I don't see how you're going to bag a picnic from Wharton, though. Bit too hefty for you."

"He doesn't know—"

"Suppose you explain," suggested Skinner. "Keep your paws away from that cake, or look out for the toasting-fork!"

"Oh, really, Skinner, if I'm going to stand you a top-hole picnic you can stand me a chunk of cake, I suppose?"

"We want to know something about that picnic first," chuckled Skinner. "You may only be dreaming about it, my dear porpoise. We don't want our cake to be gone when you wake up."

"I give you my word—"

"I wouldn't give you a single currant out of the cake for that, old bean. Not worth it!"

Billy Bunter glared at Skinner. He wanted to convince that sceptical youth that the picnic was a real picnic before all the cake was gone. But Harold Skinner seemed keener on listening to himself than on listening to Bunter.

"The fact is, you fellows—"

"Hearken!" said Skinner dramatically. "Bunter's going to tell us some facts. Positively Bunter's first appearance in a new role!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is," howled Bunter, "Wharton doesn't know the general has invited him. I've bagged the invitation by—by mistake!"

A light broke on Skinner.

"You've bagged a letter of Wharton's, I heard about that yesterday," he ejaculated. "So there was an invitation to a picnic in it?"

"Ye-es."

"Well, ass, you can't go. You can't say you're Wharton, I suppose?"

"That's just what I'm going to do," said Bunter, lowering his voice cautiously. "That's my brilliant plan!"

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Skinner stared at him.

"Your brilliant rats!" he snapped. "Do you think anybody who'd seen Wharton could take you for him—a fat barrel—"

"Oh, really, Skinner!"

"A rolling tub," continued Skinner.

"An animated cask! Rats!"

"He hasn't seen Wharton."

"Eh?"

"Not since he was a baby, anyhow. Look here, just you look at the letter, and you'll understand. You're rather dense!"

Bunter tossed General Skeppleton's letter upon the table. Three heads were bent over it at once. Skinner & Co. were not much more scrupulous than Bunter in these matters.

Skinner gave a prolonged whistle when he had perused the letter.

"Phew! And Wharton hasn't seen this?"

"No."

"He doesn't know you've got it?"

"No fear!"

"I fancy he would skin Bunter if he knew!" grinned Snoop. "What a sell for his Lofty Highness!"

"You catch on?" asked Bunter eagerly. "I'm going to the picnic as Wharton. Old Skeppleton can't guess. If he hasn't seen Wharton since he was a baby, how could he know?"

"That's right enough," said Skinner, nodding assent.

"He'll simply think that Wharton has turned out a fine, good-looking chap," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner.

Snoop and Stott almost choked over their cake.

"He—he—he'll think what?" gurgled Snoop.

Bunter glared at them. He could see nothing to laugh at in his remark.

"Look here, you rotters—"

"Oh dear!" gasped Skinner. "Don't do it, Bunter—don't be so funny, old chap! Not when a fellow's got his mouth full of cake, anyhow! You might make a chap choke with these funny things!"

"I wasn't being funny, you born idiot—"

"Your mistake—you were," said Skinner. "But, after all, old Skeppleton can't know Wharton, and the blessed baby in arms may have grown into a fat barrel, for all he knows—"

"Look here, you insulting beast—"

"But you'd never have the nerve to march into Hawkscliff House and call yourself Wharton," said Skinner.

Bunter sniffed.

"I've got nerve enough for anything when there's a feed on— I—I mean, I've got an iron nerve. I suppose you know what the Bunters did in the war?"

"Yes, rather!" agreed Skinner.

"Bunked, I suppose!"

"You silly ass, I—"

"If you've got nerve enough, it might work," said Skinner thoughtfully. "The old military fossil is expecting an answer by telephone—"

"I've done that, and accepted the invitation," said Bunter loftily.

Skinner whistled.

"In Wharton's name?"

"Of course."

"Great Scott! If his Majesty knew, there would be fireworks!"

"How's he going to know?" sniffed Bunter. "He doesn't know anything about old Skeppleton. If he finds out afterwards that the general asked him and somebody else went, he won't know it was us."

"That's so," agreed Skinner.

"The old scout wants me to take some friends," said Bunter. "I'm going to take you chaps if you treat me decently."

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You can call yourselves Cherry, Nugent, and Bull. I'll spin a yarn about Hurreo Singh being ill, or something, or dead and buried. Four of us will be enough. He knows the names, though he doesn't know the fellows. He mentioned them on the 'phone. Old Wharton—Wharton's uncle—has jawed to him about them."

"I say, I suppose Wharton's uncle won't be there, will he?" exclaimed Snoop, in alarm.

"Of course not! The old fossil would mention it in his letter if Wharton was to see his uncle there."

"Yes, that's so."

"Well, are you fellows coming?" asked Bunter. "There's no risk that I can see, and it will be a topping spread. I'm willing to take you if you like to treat me decently. I'll have some of that cake—"

"What cake?"

Bunter blinked round at the cake—or, rather, at the plate upon which it had stood. The plate was like the cupboard that belonged to the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard. It was bare.

Snoop was cheerily finishing the last slice of it.

"Well, of all the mean rotters—"

said Bunter, breathless with indignation. "I jolly well won't take you now! At least, if I do, I shall expect you to cash a postal-order for me. I shall want some money in my pocket, and I've been disappointed lately about a remittance from one of my titled relations."

"Where's the postal-order?" smiled Skinner.

"I'm expecting it next Monday—"

"Ask us again on Monday, then, old top! But you can rely on us for the picnic on Saturday."

"Yes, rather!" said Snoop and Stott together.

Billy Bunter put the letter back into his pocket, and fixed a determined glare upon Skinner & Co.

"Ten bob!" he said.

"Ten rats!" answered Skinner.

"It will be a topping picnic. You can see he's going to do the thing in style. Look here, two bob each, and it's a go."

"It's a go anyhow, old fat bean!"

"It's not!" yelled Bunter.

Skinner rose from the table.

"I think I'll just trot along and see Wharton," he remarked casually.

Billy Bunter's jaw dropped.

"Wha-a-at are you going to see Wharton for?" he stammered.

"Just to ask him if he's lost a letter."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Snoop and Stott, greatly tickled by the expression that came over Billy Bunter's face.

"You—you beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Stop!"

"Are we coming to the picnic on Saturday?" asked Skinner pleasantly.

"Yah! Ye-e-e-es!"

"Good man! Sorry I can't cash a postal-order for you, my fat tulip!" said Skinner, as Bunter rolled in great disgust to the door. "Don't fail to bring it along when it comes, and I'll do my best!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" was Bunter's emphatic if inelegant reply, and he rolled out of the study, leaving Skinner & Co. chortling.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Transport Problem!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had made their plans for the Saturday afternoon holiday in blissful ignorance of Bunter's little scheme. But, as it happened, their steps were to lead them in the same direction. But that was not wholly by chance, for they had been thinking of a visit to Hawkscliff for some time. Tom Red-

wing, who belonged to the little village on the cliffs, often went over on a half-holiday, and sometimes he took the Bounder with him, the Bounder being his chum. Once or twice the Famous Five had gone with them, and now they were going again—that was all. But certainly it was rather awkward for Bunter, for the old cabin where Tom Redwing had spent his early days was within sight of the red roofs of Hawkscliff House. Billy Bunter could only hope that the two parties would not come into contact during the excursion. It would be awkward—exceedingly awkward—if Harry Wharton & Co. happened upon the picnickers while they were enjoying the old general's hospitality.

Bunter tried a little farther diplomacy on the subject. On two or three occasions he pointed out to Wharton that there were many ever so much nicer places than Hawkscliff. He urged him to go on a cycling spin to Canterbury or Ashford; he advised him to get a car out for a run down the coast; he even suggested catching the London express for an hour or two in town; he suggested, in fact, everything he could think of to keep the Famous Five away from Hawkscliff.

As the chums of the Remove could not even guess his motive, Bunter's diplomatic efforts filled them with a great and increasing astonishment.

Bunter's interest in their Saturday excursion was amazing.

He did not succeed in persuading them from their intention; but he did succeed in making them realise that he had some strong, though unknown, motive for wishing to keep them away from Hawkscliff on that particular afternoon.

What his motive might be, they could not guess. Wharton did not think of connecting it, in his mind, with the lost letter. He was satisfied with Bunter's explanation with regard to that. And, indeed, the incident had almost slipped from his mind.

"What on earth can be on at Hawkscliff on Saturday that Bunter's interested in?" Bob Cherry asked, after the fat junior had been diplomatising once more, and had rolled away unsuccessful. "Why doesn't the fat duffer want us to go there?"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Must be some game on," he said. "But I can't imagine what it is."

"Bunter may be going there himself," said Nugent. "But I don't see why he should mind us. He's been trying to borrow a bike for Saturday up and down the school. I think he hasn't had any luck so far, though."

"If he wanted to hang on to us, I could understand it," said Harry. "But why he should want to keep us away, I can't imagine. Perhaps it's fatty degeneration of the brain, and he's off his rocker?"

The chums of the Remove had to give up the problem. But as a matter of fact, they weren't deeply interested in Bunter or his motives, so the unsolved mystery did not worry them at all.

Billy Bunter was indeed seeking the loan of a bike, up and down the Remove, and he had no luck at all.

Bunter's treatment of borrowed bikes was a little too well known.

Skinner & Co. had bikes, and Bunter proposed, at last, that Skinner should give him a lift to Hawkscliff on Saturday. Skinner smiled sweetly when that proposition was made.

"Jolly glad to, old top!" he said affably. "Only, you see, my bike wasn't built on the lines of a motor-lorry. It's not warranted to carry a ton!"



"Here's the letter, sir," said Skinner. General Skeppleton glanced at the note. "That is my letter, certainly," he said. "You have doubtless stolen it from Wharton. But no doubt you will confess the whole of the facts when you are in the hands of the police!" (See Chapter 10.)

"I can stand on behind—"
 "You can't row an anchored boat," said Skinner, shaking his head. "I'm not going to try."
 "Look here, I've got to get to Hawkscliff somehow, I suppose!" howled Bunter.
 Skinner considered.
 "It's really not necessary," he answered.
 "Not necessary?"
 "Not that I see. We'll go to the picnic, and there'll be all the more for us if you're not there."
 "Why, you—you—" spluttered Bunter.
 "There won't be much for anybody else, if Bunter's there," agreed Snoop.
 "Much better if Bunter stays behind."
 "Hear, hear!" said Stott heartily.
 Billy Bunter glared at his three dear friends in almost speechless rage.
 "Why, you—you—you rotters!" he stammered. "It's my picnic! You can't go without me at all!"
 "Oh, we'll try! I can call myself Wharton as well as you can, I suppose?" yawned Skinner. "But come if you like," he added generously. "We won't bar you out."
 "B-b-bar me out!" gasped Bunter.
 "Come if you can," said Skinner cheerily. "But don't ask me to propel you on a bike. I'm not an internal combustion engine."
 "How am I to go, then?" shrieked Bunter. "There isn't a beast here who will lend me a bike."
 "Try your own!" suggested Stott.
 "It wants mending."
 "Mend it, then."
 "It's a long job."
 "Well, stick to it till you've done it."
 "Oh, talk sense, Stott!" snorted Bunter. "I'm talking about picnics,

not about mending bikes. If you fellows like to lend me a couple of pounds, I'll send it down to Courtfield to be thoroughly overhauled."
 "Go hon!"
 "Well, how am I going to Hawkscliff, then?"
 "Telephone to Bunter Court!" suggested Skinner brightly. "Ask your pater to lend you the Rolls-Royce for the afternoon."
 "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Snoop and Stott.
 "Beast!"
 "Well, that's a friendly suggestion," said Skinner. "I can't think of any better way. Still, you might lie down in the road, and roll over and over like a barrel, you know. That's an easy way of getting along—for a barrel!"
 Billy Bunter gave an indignant and wrathful snort, and quitted his kind friends. None of Skinner's friendly suggestions seemed to please him. It was Friday now, and the question of transport had to be settled, however. Bunter had to get to Hawkscliff, and he couldn't walk ten miles there and ten miles back. Biking it was exertion enough, if it came to that; and even a biko was not available.
 Bunter did not think of telephoning home for the Rolls-Royce. That Rolls-Royce figured largely in his conversation, but no eye but Bunter's had ever beheld it; and even Bunter had only beheld it with his mind's eye!
 Bunter's fat brain was given a great deal of exercise on this important subject. The thought of being left out of his own picnic was extremely exasperating. Somehow he had to be transported to Hawkscliff on Saturday afternoon—and the Minister of Transport himself never had a more difficult problem to tackle, apparently.

On Saturday morning the problem was still unsolved. Bunter was thinking about it during morning lessons, with the result that Mr. Quolch noticed his preoccupation, and interrupted it with the pointer. Then Bunter, as he sucked his fat knuckles, postponed further consideration of the problem till after lessons.
 Skinner gave him a cheery grin as they came in to dinner that day.
 "Don't be late, Fatty," he remarked.
 "We're starting just after dinner."
 Billy Bunter gave him a Hunnish look. From Skinner's manners, anybody might have supposed that it was Skinner who was purloining the picnic, and not Bunter at all!
 "You can't go without me, you beast!" hissed Bunter.
 Skinner smiled serenely.
 "We'll try!" he said.
 "If you do, I'll jolly well tell Wharton about the letter!" hissed the Owl of the Remove.
 "And what will he give you for keeping it all the week?" inquired Skinner blandly.
 "Beast!"
 And Skinner went into the dining-room chuckling. He was well aware that Bunter dared not confess to the captain of the Remove.
 Bunter ate his dinner that day with a very troubled and thoughtful brow. The question of transport was uppermost in his mind, and it worried him. It did not impair his appetite, however. He had three helpings of everything, and was refused a fourth, and left the dinner-table feeling that he was an underfed and hardly-used youth.
 Skinner and Stott and Snoop strolled out into the quadrangle cheerily. They were quite looking forward to the after-

front at Hawkscliff House—all the more because they were going to "dish" the Famous Five by pinching their picnic.

Harry Wharton & Co. also came out in cheery spirits. The Famous Five, and the Bounder and Tom Redwing, all wheeled out their machines for the ride to Hawkscliff, and Skinner watched them go, with a smiling face.

"Let them clear before we start," he said to his comrades. "We sha'n't overtake them on the road, I fancy."

"Not likely!" grinned Snoop. It was not, indeed, likely. Harry Wharton & Co., being fairly off the scene, Skinner & Co. decided to wheel out their bicycles. Billy Bunter joined them in the quad, and his fat brow was clear. He had found a way out of the difficulty.

"You fellows biking it?" he asked casually.

"Of course. Can't walk ten miles," said Stott.

"A bit of a fag biking that distance," said Bunter. "I don't care for it myself. You can come in my taxi if you like."

"Taxi! Your taxi?" howled the three.

Bunter nodded calmly.

"Yes; thinking it over, I've decided to have a taxi," he said carelessly. "Why not? I can afford it."

Skinner put his tongue in his cheek.

"If you're thinking of sticking us for a taxi fare to Hawkscliff, you can go back and think it out again!" he observed.

"Why, it's twenty miles there and back!" exclaimed Snoop. "The man would stick us for about thirty bob."

"I can manage it!" said Bunter loftily.

"Had a whole crowd of postal-orders all of a sudden?" inquired Skinner satirically.

"Leave it to me," said Bunter. "I—I—The fact is—I might forget to take my purse—"

"Wouldn't be much use remembering to take it, that I can see."

"And the general—old Skeppleton, you know—"

"Oh!" said Skinner, beginning to comprehend.

"Old friend of my uncle's, and all that," said Bunter, with a grin. "We arrive in a taxi, and I mention to the general that I've forgotten my purse. He can't do less than pay the taxi-man."

"Good egg!" said Stott heartily. Skinner reflected.

"It might work, if he takes you for Wharton," he said. "But I wouldn't build on it. Besides, as the taxi will have to bring us back to Greysfriars, he may think you can pay the man this end."

"Leave it to me," urged Bunter. "It's all right. I can manage it. I'll put it that I've lost my purse, that will be better. And—and we had to have a taxi, because one of you chaps hurt his ankle with a cricket-ball, and couldn't bike it. Rather than disappoint the general, we came in a taxi. See?"

Skinner regarded the Owl of the Remove admiringly.

"You'll be the biggest rogue in England when you grow up, old chap," he said. "That is, if you don't burst in the meantime. Come on; let's go and gather in the merry old taxi. Jolly glad to get out of the bike ride, anyhow."

And the four young rascals walked cheerily down to Courtfield, where a taxi was duly gathered, and they started for Hawkscliff in great spirits.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Hot Chase!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" Seven cyclists drew to the side of the steep cliff road, as a taxi came buzzing by on the way to Hawkscliff.

And Bob Cherry uttered that ejaculation as, glancing at the passing vehicle, he recognised Billy Bunter, Harold Skinner, Frederick Stott, and Sidney James Snoop.

"So Bunter's going to Hawkscliff, after all!" said Harry Wharton.

"With Skinner & Co.!" said the Bounder. "I wonder who's going to stand the taxi? If it's Bunter, I know a taximan who is going to be bilked."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The cyclists rode on in the cloud of dust left behind by the taxi.

"Blessed if I can see why Bunter wanted to keep us away!" remarked Johnny Bull. "There's room for us at Hawkscliff, I suppose, as well as that crowd."

"They're up to something," said Bob Cherry sagely.

"The upfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But I don't see what they can be up to," remarked Tom Redwing. "There's nothing doing at Hawkscliff, excepting bathing and swimming and rambling on the cliffs. If it was one of Skinner's smoking parties, he wouldn't be going as far as that."

"It's a giddy mystery!" said Bob Cherry. "I'll tell you what! Let's chase 'em, and let 'em think we're going to follow them up. We can easily beat that creaking old taxi on a road like this."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Good egg!" he said. "Come on!"

Bob Cherry led the way, his pedals going round like lightning. The rest of the cyclists, strung out in line, pedalled after him at a great rate.

The taxi had buzzed on ahead; but it was not going at any record-breaking speed. The cliff road was full of steep gradients, which made the rather ancient Courtfield taxicab groan and shudder.

So the cyclists kept pace without the slightest difficulty, and Skinner, who was seated with his back to the driver, in the open vehicle, found that Bob Cherry's ruddy and perspiring face was looking at him from behind the taxi, and showed no sign of fading away in the distance.

Skinner scowled at Bob, who smiled.

Billy Bunter glanced round over his shoulder.

His fat-jaw dropped at the sight of the Famous Five, and Vernon-Smith and Redwing strung out along the road behind.

"The beasts are following us!" he ejaculated.

"We knew they were going to Hawkscliff," said Stott. "We were bound to pass them in the taxi. They seem to have bucked up since we passed them, though."

"The rotters!" growled Skinner. "They suspect something. Have you left that letter lying about, Bunter, you fat idiot?"

"I've got it in my pocket now."

"Well, you've let out something; they're following us now, as plain as anything," grunted Skinner. "At this rate, we shall have an escort as far as Hawkscliff House."

Bunter looked very much alarmed.

True, he depended on the fact that General Skeppleton did not know Wharton by sight. But evidently it would not do for the general to see the chums of the Remove that afternoon. The mere mention of a name in his hearing would cause trouble.

"Make the driver buck up," suggested Stott. "We can shake them off if he lets the engine rip a bit."

"Chance it!" said Skinner, with a rather uneasy glance, however, to the steeply sloping green cliff by the roadside.

"Let her go, driver!" called out Stott. "Yessir!"

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"Hold on!" roared Bunter. "Stop it! Go slow, driver!"

"Look here, Bunter——"

"This is my taxi, ain't it?" roared Bunter. "I'm not going to roll down five hundred feet into the sea, I can tell you! Go slower, driver, or I won't pay your fare!"

"Jest as you like, sir."

The chauffeur slowed down again.

The Famous Five had momentarily fallen behind, but they picked up again now.

Seven grinning faces looked at the enraged four from behind.

Skinner half rose.

"Look here, what do you want?" he shouted. "What the thump are you following us for?"

"Only to gaze on your fascinating features, old top!" answered Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sheer off, you cad!"

"Have you bought the road?" grinned the Bounder. "Can't we ride to Hawkscliff if we like?"

"We'll slow down and let you pass, if you like," said Snoop.

"Thanks; we don't want to."

Skinner groped in his pocket. He had an orange there. That orange had been intended for refreshment on his journey. Now he put it to another use. He gripped it and raised his hand.

"Sheer off!" he shouted.

"Rats!"

Whiz!

The orange smote Bob Cherry full on the nose. He started back, and the next moment he was sitting in the road, with his bike curling over his legs. His comrades jammed on their brakes just in time.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner.

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

The taxi swept on.

Bob Cherry scrambled to his feet. His face was crimson with wrath. He had six or seven distinct aches and pains in various parts of him, and his temper seemed to have suffered, too.

"I—I—I'll skin Skinner!" he spluttered. "Might have broken my neck! I—I—I'll——"

Words failed the enraged Bob. He dragged up his machine to renew the pursuit; this time with the intention of overtaking Skinner & Co., and causing some drastic alterations in Harold Skinner's features.

But there was a twisted pedal to be reckoned with.

"My hat! It won't go——" gasped Bob.

"Pedal's twisted," said Nugent. "You're done!"

"I—I—I'll spifficate him!"

There was a delay of ten minutes while Bob Cherry dealt with his pedal. Long before those minutes had elapsed, the taxi was far out of sight on the winding road.

But when his bike was a going concern again, Bob Cherry shot forward as if he were on the racing-track. His wrath had not abated, and he was yearning for a heart-to-heart talk with Harold Skinner.

His comrades followed him fast, and the remaining miles to Hawkscliff were fairly eaten up.

But Bunter's party had a good start, and it was not till they were close on the scattered cottages of the coast village that the chums of Greyfriars sighted the taxi again.

It did not stop in the village. It ran on towards the white road that passed the gates of Hawkscliff House.

"Hold on, Bob!" called out Harry

Wharton. "We're stopping at Redwing's cottage, you know."

"I'm not!" retorted Bob Cherry.

"But——"

"I'm going to dot Skinner in the eye!"

"Oh, all right!"

Bob Cherry was evidently in a determined mood. His comrades rode on after him, and they came out of the cliff road, quite close to the gates of the big, old-fashioned, rambling house where the retired general had his quarters. To their surprise, those gates were open now, and Bunter's taxi had turned in.

Clang!

The gates came shut, as the bunch of cyclists rode up. They jumped off their machines.

"Foiled, diddled, dished, and done!" grinned the Bounder. "You can't follow Skinner into private grounds, Bob."

Bob Cherry gave a snort.

"I've a jolly good mind to," he said. "I say, this is Hawkscliff House, isn't it?"

"That's it," said Redwing.

"What the thump can Bunter and his crowd be doing there?" said Bob.

"That's what they've come for, plainly," said Harry Wharton. "Paying somebody a visit, I suppose. Come on, Bob; we can't go in."

Bob Cherry nodded, reluctantly, and the Greyfriars juniors turned away.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Reception!

"HERE we are!" said Skinner.

"No mistake about that!" murmured Snoop.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Well, ass?"

"Back me up, you know," mumbled Bunter nervously.

The Owl of the Remove was feeling some trepidation now that the psychological moment had arrived.

The taxi had halted before the old stone porch of Hawkscliff House, and the massive, green-painted door had opened, and a manservant appeared.

All four of the young rascals felt their hearts beating a little faster.

It had been easy enough to plan "pinching a picnic" in the study at Greyfriars; but now they felt a sense of uneasiness. Suppose the trick should not be successful; suppose the general suspected something; suppose—— In fact, endless suppositions occurred to the minds of Bunter's little party just then.

But it was too late for supposing.

They had reached their destination, the manservant was approaching to open the door of the taxi, and they were fairly committed to the imposture.

"It's all right!" muttered Skinner. "Don't lose your nerve now, you fat duffer!"

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

"You're Wharton," said Skinner, in a fierce whisper. "I'm Bob Cherry; Stott's Bull; and Snoop's Nugent. Remember that!"

"I—I'm Bull——" muttered Snoop.

"You're Nugent, idiot!"

"Oh, all right—Nugent; and you're Wharton——"

"I'm Cherry, you dummy!"

"I—I'll try to remember——"

"I—I say, you fellows, suppose——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But suppose——"

"The man'll hear you!" hissed Skinner.

Billy Bunter was dumb, but his heart was thumping. At that moment he regretted his brilliant scheme of bagging Wharton's picnic.

But there was no time for regrets, any more than for supposing. The manservant opened the door of the taxi.

"G-G-General Skeppleton——" stammered Bunter.

"We've called to see General Skeppleton," said Skinner calmly. "I suppose he's at home?"

"Yes, sir. Are you the young gentlemen the general is expecting?"

"That's it."

"I'm Wharton!" gasped Bunter. "You know, Harry Wharton of—of—of Greyfriars, you know——"

"Yes, sir. The general has given orders, sir. Please step in. Will your chauffeur wait, sir?"

"Oh, yes, tell him to wait!" gasped Bunter. "We've got to get back to Greyfriars after the feed—I—I mean, after——"

"Come on, Bunter!" snapped Skinner.

Bunter rolled out of the taxi. The four juniors, all of them feeling very sheepish, entered the hall—a wide apartment with wide windows and oaken settees, and with two battered machine-guns standing apparently by way of ornament.

The manservant retired to acquaint his master with their arrival, and the sheepish four looked at one another stealthily.

They were recovering confidence now; the unsuspecting way in which they had been received so far "bucked" them a good deal.

"I—I say, you fellows, it—it's going to be all right!" muttered Bunter, licking his dry lips. "You—you rely on me! I've got lots of nerve."

"Better leave most of the talking to me," said Skinner. "You're bound to put your silly foot in it somehow."

"Oh, really, you know——"

"Looks a decent sort of show," remarked Snoop, glancing round. "I should say the old sport has money."

"Tip-top!" said Stott. "I hope it'll be a good spread, anyhow. It's going to be all serene, I think."

"I hope that beast Wharton isn't anywhere round!" mumbled Bunter. "If he——"

"Shut up!" hissed Skinner.

"Look here——"

"He's coming!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

The four juniors, cap in hand, glanced rather nervously at an old gentleman who came from a door farther up the long hall.

He was a little portly gentleman, with a red face, tanned by many hot suns, and little sharp twinkling eyes, and a stiff white moustache. He carried himself very erectly, and his glance was very keen and penetrating, and his jaw was very firm and square. He did not look exactly the kind of old gentleman upon whom a careful fellow would have chosen to play a prank. There was something in the steady gaze of his grey eyes that made the impostors feel uncomfortable.

They noted, with rather unreasonable alarm, that he carried a heavy malacca cane under his arm. The old military gentleman did not look as if he had a calm and equable temper. But really he did not look as if he would use his malacca cane upon visitors. Still, Billy Bunter & Co. didn't like that malacca all the same.

They expected his stern, wrinkled face to unbend into a smile of welcome as he came up, and they grinned feebly in anticipation. But the stern face did not unbend.

It remained fixed in a hard grimace, and the keen eyes kept up their penetrating stare.

If this was General Skeppleton's usual way of receiving visitors, it was probable

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that there was no rush among his neighbours to partake of his hospitality.

He halted, standing as stiff as a ramrod, and his penetrating glance seemed to pierce the unhappy juniors like a gimlet.

They felt that they were bound to say something, and Skinner started.

"Good-afternoon, sir!"

"Good-afternoon!" said the general, with a sharp enunciation that was like the loosing-off of a rifle.

"G-G-General Skeppleton, I—I think?"

"Exactly!"

"S-s-so glad to see you, sir!" said Bunter feebly.

"My man informed me that Harry Wharton had arrived," said General Skeppleton. "My old friend Colonel Wharton's nephew."

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—" He stammered and broke off under the gimlet-like eye of the general.

Skinner came to the rescue.

"You don't recognise Wharton, sir?" he asked.

The general turned the gimlet on Skinner.

"I do not!" he snapped.

"You—you haven't seen him since he was a—a kid—I mean, a baby——"

"That is correct."

"This is Wharton, sir!"

Skinner indicated Bunter.

"Yes, sir, I—I—I'm Wharton!" stammered Bunter.

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed, sir!"

"You are Harry Wharton, the nephew of Colonel Wharton?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I dare say he's changed a lot since you saw him as a—a baby, sir," ventured Skinner, feeling that something was wrong, though he could not guess what it was.

"Harry Wharton was less than a year old when I saw him, and naturally I expect him to have changed, as I believe that he is now fifteen," said General Skeppleton.

"He—he's grown a bit fat," stammered Snoop, with a hazy idea of helping things on somehow.

Stott was already backing towards the door. But the door was closed now, and the general's man stood there.

"So you are Wharton?" said the general at last. "And who are your friends?"

"Skinner's Bob Cherry, sir——"

"What?"

"I—I mean, this—this chap is Bob Cherry, and—and Snoop—I mean, this is Nugent, and the—the other's Bull, sir. Hurree Singh couldn't come, as he's broken his neck——"

"Hey?"

"I—I mean, his leg, sir——"

Skinner, smiling feebly with the side of his face that was turned towards the general, tried to give Bunter a warning glare with the other side. The effect of his effort was really startling.

"Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, and Bull," said the general. "Those are your names?"

"That's right, sir!"

"Very good! Please step into this room."

"Certainly!"

The general threw open the door of a small room leading off the hall. He stood aside for his visitors to enter. They filed in, feeling not unlike flies filing into the parlour of the spider. There was trouble in the air, as they felt.

The general filled the doorway with his portly form when they were all in

the room. His tanned face was grimmer than ever.

"You will remain here," he said. "If any one of you attempts to quit this room, I shall use force."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"How——"

"Johnson!" rapped out the general.

"Yes, sir?" The manservant came across the hall.

"Ring up the police-station at Lantham, and ask them to send an officer here as soon as convenient."

"Yes, sir."

Four hapless youths collapsed over four chairs in the room in which, evidently, they were prisoners. The legs of Bunter & Co. refused to support them any longer.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Simply Awful!

GENERAL SKEPPLETON eyed his prisoners with a cold, menacing eye.

They eyed each other with sickly looks of apprehension.

The general knew.

They realised that now; though how he knew was a mystery. He had stated himself that he had never seen Harry Wharton since that youth was a baby in arms, and it was certain that he had never seen Wharton's chums at all. Yet evidently he had not been deceived for a moment.

The poet tells us that the best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley. Only too plainly Bunter's little scheme had "ganged agley."

Skinner was the first to pull himself together. The picnic was off, that was clear, and Skinner was only anxious to get out of the house before the policeman could arrive from Lantham. If he could only have been seated in a taxi, whizzing back to Greyfriars, he would have been willing to pay the whole fare himself twice over.

"Look here!" he began. "Wha-a-at does this mean? We—we—we came here as—as guests——"

"Indeed!" said General Skeppleton drily. "It appears to me that you came here more probably as thieves!"

"Thieves!" gasped Skinner.

"Precisely! When unknown persons assume names that do not belong to them, to obtain entrance into a house, the obvious conclusion is that they have motives of dishonesty."

"We—we—we——" gasped Stott helplessly.

"We belong to Greyfriars!" stammered Snoop.

The general smiled ironically.

"In that case you headmaster will be called upon to identify you, in due course, at the police-station," he answered.

"The—the police-station!" moaned Bunter.

"I am going to give you in charge as suspicious persons," explained the general.

"I—I—I'm Wharton!" babbled the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh, slow that!" growled Skinner.

"Can't you see that he knows you're not Wharton, somehow?"

"Oh, really, Skinner, if you're going to give the whole show away——"

"The show is given away already, you young rascal," said the general. "I did not suppose for a moment that you were Wharton."

"How the thump did you know?" de-

manded Skinner savagely. "You've never seen the brute!"

The general smiled.

"If you were depending upon the fact that I have not seen Wharton since he was a child, you were leaning upon a very rotten reed in this imposture," he said. "I have a photograph of Wharton and his four friends, taken in a group, and sent to me by Colonel Wharton."

"Oh!" gasped Skinner.

Bunter gave a dismal groan.

He had never thought of that, or of anything of the kind. Bunter often failed to think of the most obvious things when he was laying his little schemes.

It was the most natural thing in the world that Colonel Wharton should have sent his old friend a copy of the photograph of the Famous Five. But it had never entered Bunter's fat mind that anything of the sort might have happened.

"Oh, you fat idiot!" groaned Stott.

"You precious chump!" hissed Snoop. Bunter could only groan.

"We may as well make a clean breast of it," said Skinner desperately. "Look here, sir, this was only a lark——"

"Indeed!"

"Just a jape, sir!" said Snoop.

"I am sorry I cannot take your word for that," said General Skeppleton grimly. "I have many articles of value in this house, and there has been one attempted burglary already. I fancy that this is another."

"Oh, no! We—I——"

"However, you can explain yourself to the police."

"Oh dear!"

"It was only a lark!" gasped Skinner. "Bunter—that fat idiot Bunter—he got hold of your letter to Wharton. He's always sneaking chaps' letters and reading them——"

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

"And he thought of spoofing you over the picnic, and bagging it from Wharton, and he landed us in it, too!" gasped Skinner. "That's all, sir, on my word!"

"I am afraid your word is worth very little," remarked the general grimly. "It happens that Master Wharton telephoned from Greyfriars in answer to my letter."

"That was Bunter!"

"It wasn't!" howled Bunter.

"You fat idiot!" shrieked Skinner. "Can't you see that you've got to own up now? Do you want to go to the police-station?"

"Yaroooh!"

"It was Bunter telephoned——"

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter. "I never opened Wharton's letter, and—and I don't know how to use a telephone."

"You crass idiot!" hissed Snoop.

"Oh, really, Snoop——"

"He's got Wharton's letter about him now," pursued Skinner breathlessly. "That will prove it, sir. We belong to Greyfriars School——"

"Nonsense!"

"We do, sir!" gasped Stott. "Honour bright, sir!"

"Nonsense, I say!"

"Shell out the letter, Bunter! That'll prove it."

"I haven't got it——"

"Shell it out, you fat fool!" hissed Skinner.

"I won't! I haven't got it! Never seen it, in fact, and it's not in my trousers-pocket at the present moment," spluttered Bunter. "I—I assure you, sir, I—— Yow-ow-ow! Leggo!"

Skinner seized the Owl of the Remove, and dragged the letter from his pocket.

"There it is, sir!"
 "You beast, Skinner!"
 General Skeppleton glanced at the letter.
 "That is my letter, certainly," he said. "You have doubtless stolen it from Wharton. But no doubt you will confess the whole of the facts when you are in the hands of the police."
 "Yow-ow!"

It was then that Skinner had a brain-wave. It was evident that General Skeppleton did not believe a word that the impostors had uttered. But Skinner, with deep relief and thankfulness, remembered that Harry Wharton & Co. were at Hawkscliff that afternoon, not a quarter of a mile away. His face lighted up as he thought of it.

"Wharton!" he gasped. "Wharton's here! Send for Wharton, sir, and he will tell you we are Greyfriars chaps."

"Yes, rather!" stammered Snoop, catching on. "Wharton's at Redwing's cottage this very minute, sir. Send for him."

"And stop that man telephoning for the police, sir!" groaned Stott. "It—it was only a lark, sir, and—and you don't want to get us into trouble with our headmaster, for a lark, sir. We—we never meant any harm."

"Only a joke, sir!" groaned Snoop. "We're awfully sorry."

"Send for Wharton, sir!"

"Oh, do, sir!"

The four delinquents spoke in supplicating tones. It was Wharton, the fellow whose picnic they had come out to "pinch," who could save them—he, and he alone! Never had Skinner & Co. been so anxious to see the captain of the Remove.

The general hesitated.

There was a ring of truth in the supplicating voices, and his disbelief was shaken.

"If Harry Wharton is in Hawkscliff—" he began.

"At Redwing's cottage this blessed minute, sir, with his friends, sir! On my word, sir!"

"He'll tell you we're Greyfriars chaps, sir—"

"And above-board, sir."

"Oh dear!"

"Very well," said General Skeppleton at last. "I will tell Johnson to telephone again, and stop the policeman coming, while I inquire into this. A man shall be sent to Redwing's cottage. But if you have deceived me, I shall give you into custody. You may wait now."

General Skeppleton stepped back into the hall and closed the door. There was the click of a key.

Skinner mopped his perspiring brow.

"What an afternoon!" mumbled Snoop.

"Oh dear!" groaned Stott. "What a bally afternoon!"

"All Skinner's fault," said Bunter.

"If he'd backed me up—"

"You fat villain!" yelled Skinner.

"It's all your fault, and you've nearly landed us in choky as suspected thieves!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"And—and if Wharton's left Redwing's place—"

"Oh dear!"

"Serves us right for coming with that fat idiot!" hissed Skinner. "We might have known it would turn out something like this."

"It's all your fault; you gave me away!" howled Bunter. "I'd have managed it all right, if you hadn't butted in. You made me show up the letter."

Skinner did not argue further. He rushed upon Billy Bunter, and smote him hip and thigh. He found some solace in it. But Bunter didn't! Bunter's frantic yells rang through Hawkscliff House from end to end, till the door was unlocked, and Johnson rushed in to separate the infuriated impostors.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

All Clear!

"WHAT a lark!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was nearly an hour later, and Skinner & Co., under the eye of Johnson, were still waiting dimly in their prison-room. The sound of merry voices and laughter in the adjoining hall reached their ears, and they brightened up.

The door was opened.

General Skeppleton appeared, and with him appeared Harry Wharton & Co. and Smithy and Redwing. Fortunately, the whole party had been found at Redwing's cottage.

The general's iron face was relaxed now. He looked highly good-humoured, and seemed already on the best of terms with Harry Wharton & Co.

The juniors looked in on the hapless prisoners, and there was a roar of laughter.

"Bunter—"

"And Skinner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harold Skinner scowled fiercely.

"When you've done chortling!" he hissed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"We haven't done yet! Ha, ha, ha!"

General Skeppleton's brown hand dropped affectionately on Harry Wharton's shoulder.

"You recognise these boys, Harry?" he asked.

Wharton smiled.

"Yes, sir. They belong to my form at Greyfriars," he said. "They're all right. It was a silly jape, I suppose, as they told you—a sort of practical joke."

The general frowned.

"I don't understand practical jokes that lead to telling lies and using other people's names," he said. "However, if you say that they belong to Greyfriars, I will let them go. I have no doubt whatever that they are young rascals."

"Oh, really, sir—" mumbled Bunter.

"So that letter you bagged was from General Skeppleton. Bunter, you fat rogue!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I wish I hadn't!" groaned Bunter.

"And you had the cheek to come here in my name?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

"How was I to know that he had a photograph of you?" groaned Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I suppose we can go now?"

mumbled Snoop.

"Johnson!"

"Yes, sir?"

"See those young scoundrels safely off the premises."

"Yes, sir."

"Keep an eye on the umbrella-stand till they are gone, Johnson."

"Yes, sir."

Skinner & Co. were shepherded out by the grinning Johnson.

At Greyfriars, later in the afternoon, there was a heated argument between four juniors and a taxi-driver.

The taxi-man wanted thirty shillings. Skinner & Co. didn't want to pay him anything. They argued that Bunter had taken the taxi; an argument to which Bunter replied by turning out his pockets, and disclosing the sum of two-pence-halfpenny in cash. The taxi-driver's argument was that the four of them, or some of them, or any of them, somehow, had to pay up thirty shillings; and he offered to wipe up the road with all of them, in turn or together, if they didn't square. Long and painful arguments reduced the sum to twenty-five shillings at last, and this sum the hapless impostors were just able to meet. The taxi-man drove away growling, and Bunter & Co. drifted into the quadrangle in the lowest possible spirits. And Skinner & Co. found only a slight comfort in chasing Bunter up and down the Remove passage afterwards, and bumping him every time they caught him. They found slight comfort in it, and Bunter found none at all.

But, to compensate for the dissatisfaction of Skinner & Co., there was high satisfaction at Hawkscliff House that afternoon.

Skinner & Co. didn't think much of General Skeppleton as a host, but Harry Wharton & Co. were delighted with him. Naturally, their points of view were rather different.

The chums of the Remove quite liked the old general. They enjoyed rambling over Hawkscliff House and the cliffs, and they certainly enjoyed the picnic, which was a real record in picnics.

And when they mounted their machines in the summer dusk, to ride home to Greyfriars, they were in a very contented mood.

"Topping afternoon!" said Bob Cherry, as they pedalled homeward.

"And we jolly nearly missed it!"

"Never mind; Skinner & Co. quite missed it," said Wharton, laughing.

And Hurree Janset Ram Singh remarked that the misfulness was terrific.

THE END.

(Now turn to my Chat. Ed.)

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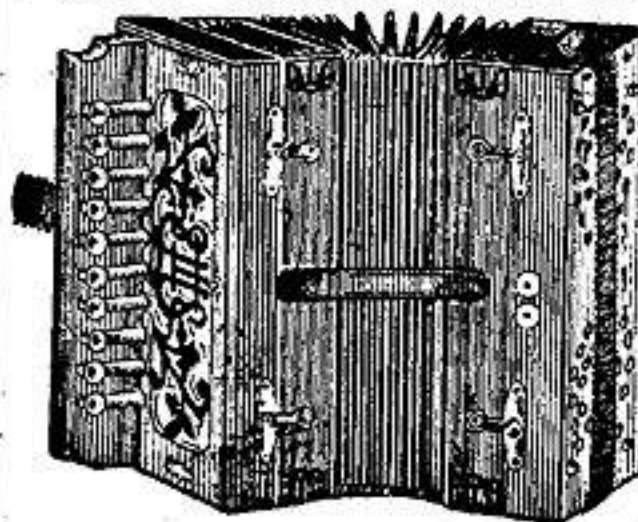
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