

GORGEOUS FREE ART PLATE INSIDE!

No. 877. Vol. XXVI.

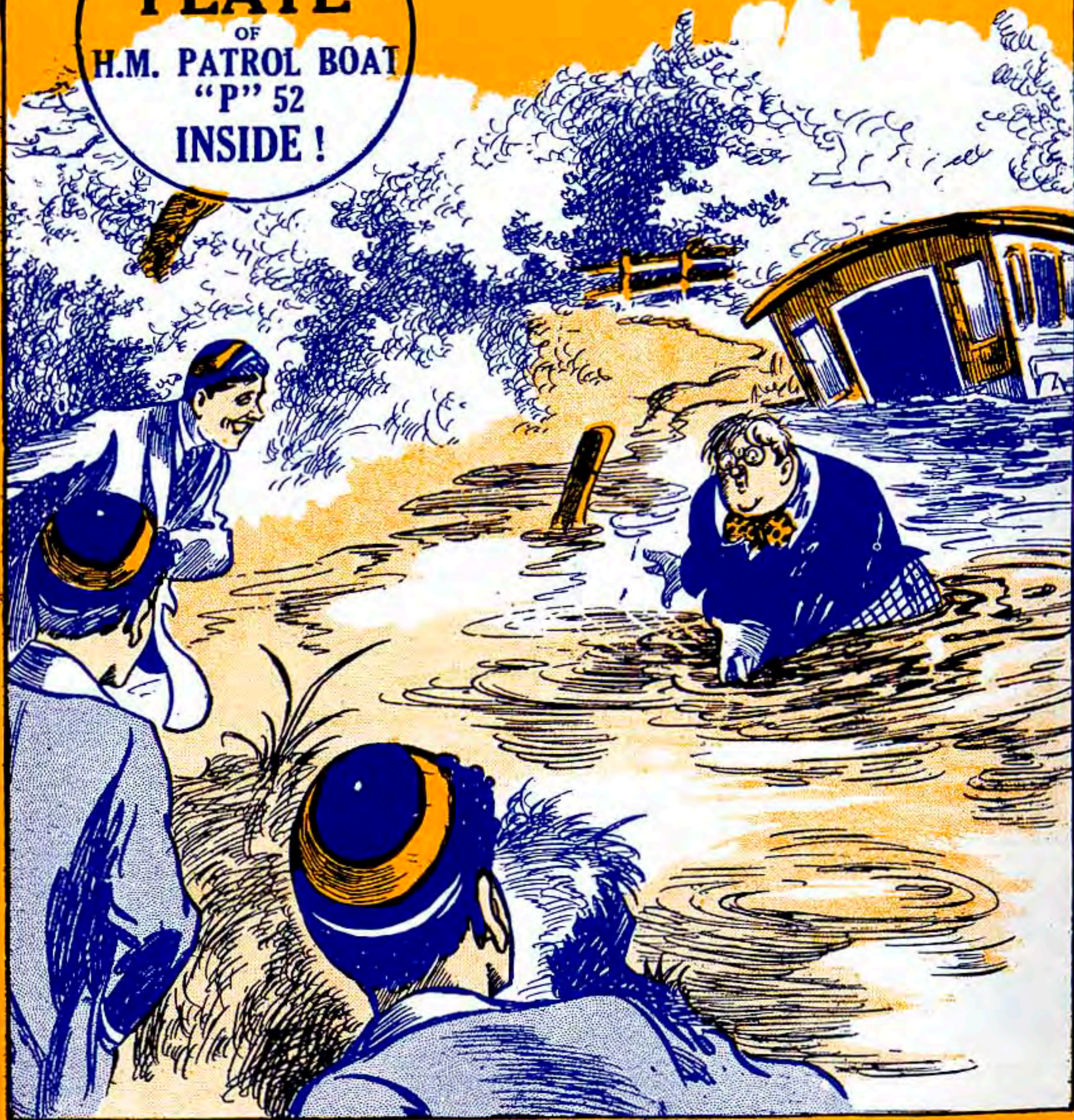
Week Ending November 29th, 1924.

The Magnet ^{2d} Library

EVERY MONDAY.

Complete School Stories.

**FREE
PLATE**
OF
**H.M. PATROL BOAT
"P" 52
INSIDE!**



BILLY BUNTER IN DEEP WATER!

BUNTER EVACUATES HIS CARAVAN IN A HURRY!

(A dramatic scene from this week's extra-long story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars—inside.)

Published by Howard Baker Press Ltd, 27a Arterberry Road, Wimbledon, London, S. W. 20.





Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply. Letters should be addressed "The Editor," THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS.

NEXT Monday's Free Art Plate depicts the absolute latest type of aircraft carrier—H.M.S. *Hermes*—a complete aerodrome that can be moved across the ocean at any time. This type of warship is a veritable triumph of shipbuilding art. Such a ship would have been laughed at ten years ago; but to-day, despite its freakish appearance, it calls forth all the admiration and awe of which mankind, looking at something vast and mighty, is capable. As the subject of our next Free Art Plate, the *Hermes* certainly hits the eye. Without detriment to the previous art plates, I have no hesitation in saying that the *Hermes* easily outpoints them all from the pictorial point of view. This is not idle talk, believe me, boys. In any case, next week will show. But let me advise you all to make certain of obtaining this wonderful picture by ordering your MAGNET early. I have the sales figures before me, and although their magnitude sends a pleasant thrill down my spine—pardonable in the circumstances—I feel uneasy for those of my free-and-easy chums who, although staunch readers of the MAGNET, don't take the precaution

of ordering their favourite paper regularly. Now you'll be frightfully disappointed if you miss

H.M.S. HERMES,

as some of you undoubtedly will, unless you trot round to your newsagent while this advice is "hot," as it were. 'Nuff said!

"THE SCHOOLBOY FINANCIER!"

Now for a few remarks about next Monday's extra long story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. As some of you will guess from the title, Fisher T. Fish, the cute Transatlantic junior, is well to the fore. He is. Fishy is ever on the make. Thus, when he learns that the juniors at Greyfriars have fallen on bad times—in other words, they are stony broke—he hits on a wonderful scheme to supply their urgent needs, at the same time to rope in some of the ducks himself. All goes well up to a point, like most of Fishy's schemes. Then comes the crash. How things pan out I will leave you to discover for yourselves. On no account miss this coming story, boys, or you will regret it.

"THE TRIALS OF STORRYDENE VILLA!"

There is another powerful, long complete footer story, dealing with the famous Villa club next Monday, in which young Peter Voyce comes in for more than his share of the limelight. Sir Aubrey Ailen is a cleverer scoundrel than Peter has given him credit for being. He's clever enough to land the centre-forward in the "stone jug" for a bit, anyway. You'll enjoy every line of

"THE TRAITOR!"

from the moment you start to read it. Mr. Walter Edwards has shown us already that he can handle a footer yarn in a businesslike manner. His reputation will soar even to greater heights when his next story reaches my thousands of MAGNET chums.

"EXCURSIONS!"

That's the subject the "Herald" staff has chosen for their next supplement, and, without hesitation, I give it "full marks." How Harry Wharton & Co. manage to extract sufficient matter from such peculiar subjects beats me entirely. I was vastly amused at their "Excursions" number, as I feel certain you will be. Look out for it!

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

Magnetites who have determined to secure a copy of the greatest "Annual" in the world will have to look slippy. The "H.A.'s" selling faster than any other "Annual" on the bookstall. Take my tip, boys, and step in while the going is good. It would be a rare pity to miss such a treat as the 1925 edition of this world-famous book.

YOUR EDITOR.

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FIRM AS A ROCK! Billy Bunter is determined to make things as uncomfortable as he can for everybody at Greyfriars until the Head rescinds the sentence of expulsion he has passed upon him. It's an unprecedented situation for Dr. Locke to tackle; never before has he met a junior who absolutely refuses to be expelled. He might well tear his hair, and almost foam at the mouth! But Bunter has come to stay!



Billy Bunter's Campaign!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.
By Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. More Bunter!

BUZZZZ!

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Greyfriars Remove, compressed his lips.

It was Wednesday afternoon—a half-holiday at the old school. The Greyfriars fellows rejoiced in being clear of the masters; and the masters, on their side, rejoiced in being clear of the Greyfriars fellows.

But a schoolmaster's half-holiday is seldom so merry and bright as a school-boy's.

Mr. Quelch had had a number of Form papers to go through and mark. When that was finished he had had to receive lines handed in by Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove. The lines handed in, the Famous Five had gone down cheerily to football practice; and Mr. Quelch had pulled out his typewriter and prepared to click off another page or two of that "History of Greyfriars" that had been his companion and solace for many years. And then Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, had dropped in for a chat.

Mr. Prout stayed for fifteen minutes, doing all the chatting himself; he was a verbose gentleman. After a quarter of an hour, however, the Fifth Form master seemed to become conscious of a sort of chill in the atmosphere, and strolled away for another chat with Mr. Hacker of the Shell.

Then the keys of the typewriter began to click, and Mr. Quelch plunged into the throes of composition. And then the telephone bell rang.

Buzzzz!

Really, it was irritating.

Mr. Quelch had already been much irritated that day. For that day Bunter of the Remove, who had been expelled from Greyfriars, had had the astounding audacity to return to the school, just as if his expulsion was a trifle—light as air—which he could afford to disregard. Bunter had irritated Mr.

Quelch deeply. Mr. Quelch had walked him to Courtfield, paid for his railway-ticket, and put him in the express, glad to be clear of him at any price. It was exceedingly doubtful whether Mr. Quelch would ever be reimbursed by Bunter's father for the cost of that railway-ticket; and Mr. Quelch was very careful with his money. Altogether, the episode of Bunter had been very disconcerting.

Having dismissed Bunter from his mind, having disposed of the Form papers, having got rid of Mr. Prout, the Remove master had hoped to enjoy a quiet hour at literary composition. But Fate was against him. With a loud, raucous, insistent buzz the telephone bell rang. It was not every master at Greyfriars who had a telephone in his study; Mr. Quelch was fortunate in that respect—or unfortunate. Just now he wished the instrument at the bottom of the deep sea, and would not have been displeased if its inventor had accompanied it there.

Buzzzz!

Mr. Quelch rose from his chair, crossed to the telephone and took up the receiver.

"Hallo!"

"Is that Courtfield 242?"

"Yes!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"You are through to a call-office."

"Oh!"

Mr. Quelch waited. Mentally he consigned the call-office and the occupant thereof to the bottom of the deep sea, along with the telephone and its inventor.

"Hallo!"

The voice that came through at last seemed familiar to Mr. Quelch's ears, though for the moment he did not recognise it.

"Are you there?"

"I am here!" snapped the Remove master. "Who is speaking?"

"Bunter!"

"What?"

"Bunter!"

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Quelch stared at the telephone for a moment or two. Then he slammed the receiver on the hooks.

He had supposed that he was done with William George Bunter, formerly of the Greyfriars Remove. Apparently he wasn't done with him.

The audacity of Bunter in ringing him up like this almost took Mr. Quelch's breath away. It quite took away all the patience he had left.

Cutting Bunter off ruthlessly, he returned to his chair and sat down to the typewriter again.

Buzzzz!

Mr. Quelch looked round at the telephone with a look that a Prussian Hun in his most Hunnish mood might have envied.

Buzzzz!

He crossed to the telephone again, and picked up the receiver.

"Is that you, Mr. Quelch?"

"Yes!" gasped the Remove master.

"We seem to have been cut off, sir," went on Billy Bunter cheerfully. "All serene now."

"Bunter! How dare you?"

"Eh?"

"How dare you ring me up?" shouted Mr. Quelch. "You have been expelled from Greyfriars, Bunter; you no longer belong to this school, and any communication whatsoever from you is undesirable. It is the height of impertinence for you to telephone here. Were you within my reach I should chastise you with severity. I am shocked and astonished at this unparalleled pertinacity!"

"I didn't catch that, sir——"

"What?"

"Would you mind saying that over again?"

"Bless my soul!"

"The fact is, sir, I want to speak to Wharton——"

"You will be allowed to hold no communication whatever with any Greyfriars boy, Bunter."

"It's rather important, sir."

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"Nonsense!"

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind telling Wharton to come to the phone, sir."

"I should mind very much!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "I forbid you to telephone here, Bunter! Do not venture to do so again."

Slam!

The telephone rocked as Mr. Quelch replaced the receiver.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured, as he reseated himself. "The impertinence in an expelled boy—the astounding audacity! Bless my soul!"

Mr. Quelch's fingers wandered idly over the typewriter keys. He found some little difficulty in restarting after the interval, so to speak. But he concentrated his thoughts, and the keys began to click again; and just as they did so the telephone bell buzzed once more with a raucous, insistent buzz.

Mr. Quelch fairly sprang at the instrument like a tiger. He grabbed off the receiver and shouted into the transmitter:

"How dare you?"

"Eh?"

"If you dare to ring me up again, I shall take severe measures, you—you—impertinent rascal!"

"Upon my word!" came a wheezy, surprised voice. "This language, Mr. Quelch—what ever is the matter?"

It was the fat, comfortable voice of Mr. Lambe, the vicar of Friardale. Mr. Quelch almost fell down.

He realised that it was not Bunter this time, though quite naturally he had supposed so.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Mr. Lambe—I—I—"

"Pray excuse me, Mr. Quelch." The vicar's tones were stiff. "I was about to speak to you concerning our little bazaar, in which you have been—ah—kind enough to take an interest. But I fear that I am disturbing you. Good-bye!"

"Mr. Lambe—I—I—"

But the vicar had rung off.

No doubt he was considerably surprised and offended by Mr. Quelch's extraordinary greeting. Certainly it was an unaccustomed mode of address for the plump ears of the Vicar of Friardale.

"Dear me!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

He replaced the receiver and limped back to his table. It was fortunate for Billy Bunter that he was not within reach of the Remove master just then. Had he been at hand, Mr. Quelch certainly would have forgotten that Bunter was no longer in his Form, and would have administered the biggest licking that Bunter had ever experienced in all his fat career.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Help Wanted!

"WHARTON!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were at games practice when Wingate of the Sixth came down to Little Side and called. Wharton hurried off the field at once.

"Yes, Wingate."

There was rather a serious expression on the face of the captain of the school, and Wharton wondered what had happened.

"Were you expecting to hear from Bunter?" asked Wingate.

"Bunter? No."

"He's just rung up on the telephone in the prefects' room, and asked to be allowed to speak to you," said Wingate. "As he's sacked from the school, I don't know whether I ought to allow it; but I

suppose there can't be any great harm in it, and he says it's very important. He may have left something behind him in his study here, or something. You can take the call, if you like."

"Thanks!" said Harry.

As a matter of fact, the captain of the Remove was not specially keen on taking the call. Billy Bunter's extraordinary proceedings, since his expulsion from Greyfriars, had caused plenty of trouble to the Famous Five, and especially to Wharton. They had all bagged lines for befriending the "bunked" junior who had so amazingly turned up again at his old school, and further dealings with Bunter were likely to call down Mr. Quelch's wrath on their devoted heads.

And Billy Bunter really was not the fellow one was keen on making sacrifices for. He had been rather entertained than anything else by the punishments the chums of the Remove had captured on his account. It really was a "cheek" for the fat junior to ask for Wharton on the telephone, knowing very well how wrathful Mr. Quelch would be if any of the Remove fellows befriended him again.

But William George Bunter, at Greyfriars, had never been accustomed to considering anybody but one most important personage—W. G. Bunter. And evidently he had not changed since leaving.

Harry Wharton threw on a coat, and left the football-ground. He did not want to take the call, but he went to take it, all the same. Wingate had taken the trouble to come and give him permission, which was very kind and gracious on the part of a great man of the Sixth Form, so it would have been ungracious to decline the permission. And Wharton had some little concern for the hapless Bunter, who had so cheerily accepted the sack from the school in lieu of a flogging, and who had so soon and so thoroughly repented him of his choice.

Wharton lost no time in getting to the prefects' room. The receiver was off the telephone there, and Wharton was glad to see that the room was empty. Wingate did not know it, but Wharton knew very well that Mr. Quelch would be in a "royal wax" if he should hear of the matter. By the Remove master's strict orders, Bunter was "taboo" at Greyfriars now.

Wharton picked up the receiver.

"Hallo! Are you there, Bunter?"

"I say, you've been a jolly long time. Wharton! Keeping me hanging on like this!" growled Bunter, at the other end of the wire.

"What do you want?" asked Harry.

"I want my old friends to rally round me, old chap. I'm in an awful scrape!"

"Oh dear! What's the trouble?"

"Seven-and-six!"

"Eh?"

"They're making out that I'm a bilk!" said Bunter, in a deeply-injured tone.

"A—bilk!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes; because I didn't pay my fare, you know," said Bunter.

"You fat rascal!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Where are you speaking from?" demanded Wharton.

"Courtfield."

"My hat! Didn't Quelch send you home this morning?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "I thought you were gone for good."

"Of course, I'm not really leaving Greyfriars at all," said Bunter.

"You're expelled!" hooted Wharton.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Well, what's the matter now?" asked Harry impatiently. "We shall get cut off soon. Why didn't you go home?"

"My pater isn't anxious to see me

home. His idea is that I've gone on a visit to my Uncle George."

"Well, go to your Uncle George."

"I'm not keen on going to Uncle George. I never get enough to eat there."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Besides, I'm not going to leave Greyfriars—"

"You've left!" yelled Wharton.

"I wish you wouldn't keep on repeating yourself, Wharton. You're wasting time, and me in this awful fix! You're all jaw, you know, like a sheep's head! Look here, old Quelch put me in the train, and I had to change at Sevenoaks. Well, I got out at Sevenoaks, and took the next express back to Courtfield, and now I'm only three miles away from you, old chap."

"I'd rather it were three hundred!"

"Beast!"

"Is that all?" asked Harry.

"No!" hooted Bunter. "You see, I hadn't any money, so I had to travel without a ticket—"

"You fat bilk!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! It was rather clever, I thought. You see, I dodged on the platform behind a porter with a lot of luggage, and got under a seat in a first-class carriage. Luckily, they never asked to see my ticket till I got to Courtfield. Of course, I couldn't keep under the seat all the time, and, anyhow, I had to get out at Courtfield. And a low, suspicious cad of a ticket-collector wouldn't believe that I'd lost my ticket, but said quite plain that I was trying to swindle the railway company."

"So you were!"

"I hope you're not going to repeat the low, vulgar remarks of a common ticket-collector, Wharton."

"You fat idiot!"

"I didn't ring you up to be called names. The question is, what's going to be done?"

"The railway's going to be done, I suppose," said Harry. "I hope you will get three months!"

"Beast!" came in a howl along the wires.

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Hold on!" hooted Bunter. "I say, they won't let me go unless I pay my fare from Sevenoaks—seven shillings and sixpence first-class. I haven't a brown. I say, they're going to give me in charge!"

"What the thump did you expect?"

"I expected my old friends to stand by me, after all I've done for them," said Bunter indignantly. "I told them here I was a Greyfriars chap, and asked them whether they thought a public school fellow would try to bilk the railway company. But they're a low, suspicious lot; they simply took no notice."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"I told them my friends would come up from the school and pay this paltry sum," said Bunter.

"Oh, did you!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes, old chap. But what do you think? The stationmaster wouldn't even trust me to go out and telephone."

"I should jolly well think not!"

"He's actually sent a porter with me, and the beast is standing outside this telephone-box now, actually watching me," said Bunter. "I've got simply no chance to bolt, owing to their low-down suspicious spying and prying on a fellow's movements."

"Oh dear!"

"The man's just told me he won't wait much longer. I tried to get you on Quelch's telephone—"

"Great Scott!"

"As far as I could make out, Quelch was annoyed about something. I don't

know what. Anyhow, he was very crusty, and cut off. So I've tried the prefects' room, and got you at last. I say, how long will it take you to get to Courtfield with the money, Wharton?"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton. "That low stationmaster says I'm to be given into custody if the money isn't paid. He seems to think he's acting generously in giving me this chance to telephone to my friends. He says it's on account of my youth. Jevver hear of such cheek?"

"Do you think I'm scooting off to Courtfield to pay your railway fare from Sevenoaks?" howled Wharton. "If you bilk the railway company, you can take the consequences, and be blowed to you!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

Harry Wharton made a movement to put up the receiver. But he paused and hesitated. Certainly, he would have had no sympathy with any other "bilk." But the Remove fellows had long been accustomed to making allowances for Bunter. Really, the Owl of the Remove was not to be taken quite seriously, and it was doubtful whether his obtuse brain ever realised the dividing line between right and wrong.

"I say, Harry, old chap——"

"You cheeky rotter!" exclaimed Wharton. "You know jolly well that we shall get into a row with Mr. Quelch if he hears that we've seen you again. And I've not got seven-and-six. I——"

"Shall I tell the man you're coming?"

"Bother you!"

"I shall have to wait in the stationmaster's room till you come, so buck up, old chap."

"I've a jolly good mind——"

"Get on your bike and get a move on!" said Bunter. "For goodness' sake don't think of walking it! I'm practically a prisoner. Don't be a slacker now, Wharton!"

"You fat rotter, I'll come and manage it somehow!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "And I'll jolly well kick you into the bargain for bilking the railway, you podgy villain!"

"Yah!"

With that grateful rejoinder Billy Bunter rang off, and Harry Wharton left the prefects' room, considerably worried and annoyed, a frame of mind not uncommon for anyone who had dealings with William George Bunter.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bailing Out Bunter!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's the row?"

"Anything up, old chap?"

Harry Wharton had returned to Little Side to speak to his chums on the subject of Bunter. Bunter had impressed upon him not to waste a moment. But Wharton was not in so great a hurry as Bunter. He did not see any reason at all why the fat junior should not suffer a little inconvenience at least in return for his attempt at "bilking." It was necessary to see his chums, too, for Harry did not happen to be in possession of the required sum of seven-and-sixpence. That little sum Bunter spoke of in the most airy fashion as a mere trifle, but it was a more serious matter to the fellow who had to "shell out."

"It's that fat villain Bunter again," explained the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "Bunter!"

"The Bunterfulness is perpetual!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"There is no end to the esteemed and execrable Bunter."

"But he hasn't come back?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"He's burred on the telephone," said Harry. "he's bilked the railway company for seven-and-six, and they're detaining him at the station, and talking about giving him in charge."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Let 'em!" said Johnny Bull. "Bilks ought to be given in charge."

"Ye-e-es; but——"

"Hem!" murmured Bob.

"It is good to temper the justfulness with the mercifulness," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, I've said I'll go and bail him out," said Harry Wharton ruefully. "I've got half-a-crown. I want five bob from you chaps."

"Play up all round," said Bob Cherry. "After all, it's the last time we shall have to shell out for Bunter."

"Is it?" grunted Johnny Bull. "Looks to me as if the fat bounder is going to



"For the last time, Bunter," rapped Mr. Quelch, "will you go?" "Go and eat coke!" replied Bunter. Thwack! "Yaroooooh!" The roar that came from Bunter as the cane whacked across his fat shoulders rang across the quadrangle. Thwack! Thwack! Mr. Quelch was going strong. "Yooooop! Yaroooooh! Ow!" roared Bunter, rolling off the camp stool. (See Chapter 6.)

haunt Greyfriars for the rest of his life."

But Johnny Bull shelled out simultaneously with his growl. Johnny's bark was always more formidable than his bite.

"You chaps can keep on with the footer," said Harry. "I can manage Bunter on my own."

"Oh, I'll come!" said Frank Nugent. "Right-ho!"

Bob and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh rejoined the footballers. Wharton and Nugent walked away to change, and then went for their bicycles. They wheeled out their machines, and were glad when they were outside the precincts of Greyfriars. Only too well they knew that the vials of wrath would be poured upon their heads should Mr. Quelch get an inkling of their mission.

The two juniors pedalled swiftly along the road to Courtfield. They reached the country town, and headed at once for the railway-station.

Leaving their machines, they entered the station, and were admitted to the stationmaster's room.

"You've been a jolly long time!" he grunted.

"Better late than never," said Nugent.

"That's all very well, but I'm practically a prisoner here!" growled Bunter. "I think you might have hurried up a bit. But you fellows always were selfish."

The stationmaster looked very curiously at Bunter. Perhaps he wondered why anybody had taken the trouble to fish the fat junior out of his scrape.

"Pay the money!" went on Bunter loftily. "Settle this paltry claim, you fellows. It's seven-and-six. And perhaps this man will believe now that his blessed company isn't going to be bilked."

"You young gentlemen are prepared

to pay for this young rascal's ticket?" asked the stationmaster.

"Yes," said Harry. "Thank you very much for waiting like this, and giving him a chance. He isn't really a rogue, only a born fool!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

The money was paid over, and Billy Bunter was free to depart. He rolled out of the station with the two Removees.

He was still annoyed and injured, but he brightened very considerably on finding himself at liberty again.

"I say, you fellows, you've got your bikes, I see," he remarked. "Which of you is giving me a lift to Greyfriars?"

"To Greyfriars!" ejaculated Nugent.

"Yes. I'll stand behind, Wharton, unless you'd like to walk and lend me your bike. Perhaps that would be best. Put the saddle down as far as it will go, will you?"

"You fat chump!" howled Wharton. "Do you think you're coming to Greyfriars?"

"Certainly! That's why I've come back."

"What do you think Quelch would say if we walked you into the school with us, you duffer?"

"Blow Quelch!"

"You can blow him as much as you like, as you don't belong to Greyfriars now!" chuckled Nugent. "But we can't blow him while we're in his Form. Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Hold on!" roared Bunter, as the two juniors prepared to mount their machines.

"Well, what is it now?"

"I say, you fellows, you're not going to leave me stranded here, I suppose. I know you're selfish; but really there's a limit. What am I going to do?" demanded Bunter warmly.

"Go home, ass."

"I'm jolly well not going home."

"Go to your Uncle George, then."

"I tell you I'm not going to Uncle George."

"Go to Jericho, then!" said Nugent impatiently. "Come on, Harry."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Good-bye!"

"I say, I'm hungry!" roared Bunter. "Look here, lend me a quid or so to see me through to-day."

"Where do you think we're digging up quids?" demanded Harry Wharton. "You've cleared me out of my last half-crown now."

"There's your watch—"

"My watch?"

"Yes—old Lazarus would lend something on that," said Bunter. "I'll pop it for you—"

"Pop it!" gasped Wharton.

"Yes; I'll take all the trouble. I'm not asking you to do it—a selfish chap like you. Give me the ticker and I'll get round to Lazarus' with it."

Bunter held out a fat hand.

The captain of the Remove stared at it. Apparently Bunter expected the watch to be placed in that fat paw. It was an expectation that was not destined to be realised.

"Buck up!" he added.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Wharton. "You cheeky fat snail—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"What about your own watch?" demanded Nugent.

"Don't be an ass, Nugent! How can I tell the time if I pop my watch?" said Bunter peevishly. "Talk sense!"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent gazed at the Owl of the Remove, speechlessly, for a moment. Then, as if moved by the same spring, they collared

William George Bunter and sat him down on the pavement, hard.

There was a roar from Bunter.

"Yaroooooh!"

He was still roaring when the two juniors mounted their bikes and rode away. And Wharton and Nugent cheerfully left him to roar.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Bunter Looks In!

"DEAR me!" said Dr. Locke.

It was the following day, and the Head of Greyfriars had just returned to his study after morning class with the Sixth. And Trotter, the page, had brought in a card.

The card bore the name of Mr. W. S. Bunter.

The Head gazed at it, and said "Dear me!" and, after a pause, he added, more emphatically: "Good gracious!"

Mr. William Samuel Bunter, the father of William George Bunter, of the Remove, had evidently arrived at Greyfriars.

There was no gentleman in the wide world whom the Head was more reluctant to see than Mr. W. S. Bunter.

An interview with the parent of a fellow who had been expelled from the school was naturally unpleasant. The parent could never be expected to see eye to eye with the schoolmaster in such a matter.

And this interview was all the more unpleasant, owing to Billy Bunter's amazing antics since his expulsion from Greyfriars.

Any other fellow, "bunked" from his school, would certainly never have dreamed of turning up again there. Bunter had turned up like a bad penny. The sentence of expulsion was stern and drastic; awfully serious from the Head's point of view. And he could not possibly be pleased by Bunter's view that it was a sort of bad joke.

But Mr. Bunter had arrived; and so Mr. Bunter had to be seen. Dr. Locke reluctantly gave Trotter instructions to show the City gentleman into the study.

Mr. W. S. Bunter rolled in.

He was a portly gentleman, very like his hopeful sons—William George and Sammy.

His plump and highly-coloured countenance was serious now, not to say solemn, and his manner was sharp and scarcely pleasant. But, in the circumstances, the headmaster could not expect him to be very pleasant. Having a son sent home from school was not agreeable to a parent—especially such a son as Billy Bunter.

The Head greeted William Samuel Bunter politely, and affected not to observe the exceedingly curt manner of the portly stockbroker.

"Pray be seated, Mr. Bunter—"

Mr. Bunter seated himself. He was a little out of breath, having a good deal of weight to carry.

"I need not detain you long, Dr. Locke," said Mr. Bunter stiffly. "I was requested yesterday, by telephone, to call and take my son away."

"Er—quite so."

"According to Mr. Quelch's statement on the telephone, my son William has returned to this school."

"Quite so—but—"

"On the question of his expulsion, sir, we need not argue," said Mr. Bunter. "Doubtless you are satisfied with your decision."

"Otherwise I should scarcely have reached it, Mr. Bunter," said the Head, with a touch of tartness.

"No doubt, no doubt! I need not, therefore, mention that your reasons for expelling my son from Greyfriars appear to me frivolous."

"Mr. Bunter!"

"What has my boy done?" demanded Mr. Bunter, his fat voice rising a little.

"I explained the matter fully in my letter to you, sir," said the Head. "Your son was sentenced to a flogging, for more than adequate reasons. He had the astounding impudence to absent himself, so that his punishment could not be administered. It was supposed that he had run away from school, and a search was undertaken, at considerable trouble and some expense. The police were even called upon for aid. And it subsequently transpired that the boy was hidden in the school all the time—actually in hiding in the disused attic—"

Mr. Bunter made a gesture; but the Head went on warmly:

"Such defiance of authority could not possibly be passed over. Yet I was prepared to deal with Bunter as leniently as possible. Even after his flagrant disobedience and defiance of authority, I was prepared to administer only a flogging, and allow him to remain in the school. But he actually stated that he preferred to be expelled!"

"Absurd!" said Mr. Bunter. "Such a statement was not worthy of notice."

"No doubt—but he spoke with unexampled insolence to his Form-master—and sent impudent messages to me." The Head's voice trembled: "He alluded to me, sir, as 'old Locke!'"

"Indeed!"

"Indeed, sir!" said the Head. "He spoke to Mr. Quelch, to his face, as 'old Quelch!'"

"Oh!" said Mr. Bunter.

"If such disrespect and defiance were allowed to pass, sir, there would be an end of all government in the school," said the Head; "I had no choice but to take Bunter at his word, and expel him."

Mr. Bunter grunted.

"The boy seems to have anticipated that a prolonged holiday would follow his leaving Greyfriars," he said. "As soon as he found that I had decided to send him into my office he was very desirous to return to school."

"No doubt!" said the Head dryly.

"However, that is neither here nor there," said Mr. Bunter. "William has left home—to go and stay with his Uncle George, as I understood. But it seems that he was encouraged to return here—"

"Not at all, sir!" exclaimed the Head. "He returned here in flagrant disregard—"

"At all events, he returned, and more than once, it seems," said Mr. Bunter, ruthlessly interrupting the indignant Headmaster. "In the circumstances it seems to me unfeeling to allow him to enter the school again; if there was no intention of allowing him to remain."

"He was not allowed—"

"We need not dispute, sir, since you have made up your mind to keep my son away from Greyfriars," said the City gentleman tartly. "Yesterday Mr. Quelch informed me by telephone that he was here. He requested me to come and take him away. I could not come yesterday—"

"That was unfortunate, because—"

"Mr. Quelch is doubtless unaware that a City stockbroker is a busy man," said Mr. Bunter sarcastically. "He telephoned to my office, doubtless being ignorant of the fact that I could not possibly leave my office. However, I made arrangements at once, and have

come here this morning at great inconvenience to myself. Let my son be brought here, and I will take him away at once." Mr. Bunter glanced at a big gold watch. "My train goes in twenty-five minutes from Courtfield. I have no time to lose; and the taxicab now waiting for me is still registering. Where is my son?"

"I do not know, Mr. Bunter."

"What?"

"I was under the impression that he was already at home."

"He is not at home, sir. I understood from Mr. Quelch that he was locked in a room here till called for."

"Quite so; but on your refusal to call for him, Mr. Quelch himself took him to the station, paid his fare home, and placed him in the train."

"He did not arrive home, sir."

"Dear me! I shall be truly sorry if there has been an accident!" said the Head, with a look of distress.

"Pooh! There has been no accident," said Mr. Bunter. "I came here this morning, sir, expecting to take my son away with me. Are you sure that he is not here?"

"Really, Mr. Bunter—"

"Well, well, what is to be done?" exclaimed Mr. Bunter impatiently. "My son was in your charge, sir! I am asked to come here, at great inconvenience to myself, to remove him. He is not here to be removed. Really, Dr. Locke, this is trifling!"

"Sir!"

"Trifling!" said Mr. Bunter firmly. "I repeat, sir, trifling! Where is my son? I demand him at your hands!"

"I will speak to Mr. Quelch—he may be able to make some suggestion. I am really puzzled!"

The Head touched a bell, and Trotter was sent for Mr. Quelch. Mr. Bunter,

during the few minutes that he waited, looked incessantly and aggressively at his watch. He did not mean to leave the Head in any doubt that his valuable time was being wasted.

Mr. Quelch entered the study. He bowed formally to Mr. Bunter and looked inquiringly at the Head.

"My dear Quelch, Mr. Bunter has arrived to take away his son," said the Head. "I have told him that his son is not here. It appears that Bunter did not arrive home yesterday."

"I know nothing further of him, sir, save that he had the audacity to telephone to me yesterday afternoon," said Mr. Quelch. "He requested to be allowed to speak to a boy in my Form. I refused, and rang off. Since then I know nothing."

Mr. Bunter rose to his feet.

"I can delay no longer," he said. "I have barely time to catch my train. Is my son here to be taken away?"

"Obviously not!" said the Head testily.

"Then the responsibility is yours, sir," said Mr. Bunter. "I wash my hands of it!"

"Sir, I—"

"I have called here, sir, as requested, to take my son away. You fail to produce my son. The responsibility is yours, and I repeat it. Good-morning, sir!"

"Mr. Bunter—"

"I repeat, sir—good-morning!"

Mr. Bunter rolled out of the study, without waiting for Trotter to show him out.

The Head and Mr. Quelch gazed at one another.

On the drive the whir of a taxicab was heard. Mr. Bunter was on his way back to Courtfield Station.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"This is very unfortunate," remarked Mr. Quelch.

"Very unfortunate indeed, Quelch. What can have happened to the boy? His father does not seem to fear any accident."

Mr. Quelch knitted his brows.

"There has been no accident, sir. I can only conclude that Bunter is still haunting the precincts of Greyfriars, in the ridiculous hope of being re-admitted to the school."

"Bless my soul!"

Dr. Locke looked out of the study window. The taxi had disappeared, bearing away Mr. Bunter to his train, and to his important engagements among the bulls and bears in the City.

Mr. Bunter was gone.

It was to be hoped that Billy Bunter was gone, too.

But on that point both the headmaster and the Form master had troublesome doubts. Both of them felt that they had not yet finished with William George Bunter.

And both of them were right!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Enemy at the Gates!

MR. QUELCH glanced from the big doorway of the House, soon after leaving the Head, and frowned.

Something was going on.

Lower fellows were gathering by the gates in a swarming crowd. Harry Wharton & Co. and a dozen more Removites were there. Tubb & Co. of the Third were there; Sammy Bunter and a crowd of the Second Form; Hobson and his friends of the Shell. Seniors

"I shall cane you, Bunter, if you do not immediately depart with this—this—this caravan." "Rats!" said Bunter. Mr. Quelch took a businesslike grip on the cane and placed his foot on the step of the caravan. Slam! The door closed almost on the Form-master's sharp nose. "Bunter!" he gasped. "Yah!" was Bunter's elegant reply. (See Chapter 10.)



were there, too; Coker's broad shoulders towered over the juniors; Potter and Greene and Hilton of the Fifth could be seen; Loder and Walker, and some of the Sixth! Indeed, it seemed that nearly all Greyfriars had gathered, or was gathering, at the school gates, where they looked out on the public road.

Therefore, Mr. Quelch frowned.

Something of an exciting nature was going on, and Mr. Quelch disliked such things. Even from the distance he could hear the murmur of voices and the echo of laughter.

Such a demonstration was not in keeping with the orderly, scholastic traditions of Greyfriars—at least, in the opinion of Mr. Quelch. It was really scandalous, too, to see several Sixth Form prefects in this mob, making no effort whatever to disperse the crowd or to clear off whatever it was that had drawn them to the gates.

For which reason Mr. Quelch stepped out of the House and advanced upon the mob himself, with a knitted brow.

And as he came near the old stone gateway where the gates stood open, he jumped, spotting the cause of the commotion.

Billy Bunter was there!

He had not come in. By this time, apparently, Bunter had realised that he couldn't come into the school unpermitted. He was in the road, just outside the verge of Greyfriars territory. There any member of the public had the right to walk or stroll or saunter, or to stand and gaze if he liked. Bunter, as a member of the public, was exercising this right.

Not that he was standing to gaze. William George Bunter was never likely to stand if he could sit.

He was seated on a camp-stool.

Obviously, he had brought the camp-stool with him, to rest upon, at the gates of his old school from which he was now excluded; and there he was sitting, like Peri at the gates of Paradise—a very fat and podgy Peri.

Mr. Quelch shoved a way through the grinning crowd. He was so angry that he forgot his dignity to the extent of actually shoving!

The fellows made way for him, as soon as they saw who it was. They smiled at one another as they noted the thunderclouds in Mr. Quelch's face. They wondered how he would deal with this situation. Everybody seemed to be in a hilarious mood. Bunter had often been a trial to many fellows, while he was at Greyfriars. Since he had left, however, it could not be denied that he was adding to the gaiety of existence.

"Loder!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I am surprised at this! You, a prefect of the Sixth, allowing this ridiculous scene—"

Loder flushed.

"I don't see what I'm to do, sir."

"You are well aware that Bunter is expelled from Greyfriars; and not allowed to return here," rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"But, sir—"

"He's not inside, sir," said Walker. "We've got no authority over a fellow who doesn't belong to the school, and is outside the gates."

Mr. Quelch bit his lip.

Walker's statement was perfectly correct; it was rather difficult to see how the prefects could have interfered with Bunter without infringing the legal rights of a member of the public. It was not uncommon for some artistic gentleman to set up his stool and easel by the roadside to sketch the old tower of Greyfriars or the grey old school

buildings. Nobody ever thought of interfering with such an artistic gentleman. Bunter was equally immune from interference. The Sixth Form prefects had no right whatever to touch him. Any weary wayfarer had a right to put a camp-stool by the roadside and sit on it.

"Of course, sir, if you direct us to shift Bunter we'll kick him all the way to Friardale, if you like," said Loder, with veiled impertinence. "In that case, sir, no doubt you will take the responsibility."

"That is enough, Loder!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

Mr. Quelch sailed on to the gateway, leaving Loder grinning. As a matter of fact, Loder and Walker were enjoying the scene, and the problem it presented to Mr. Quelch, whom they did not like a little bit. They were quite pleased to see the Remove master haunted like this by an expelled member of the Remove. And there was no doubt that the other fellows, especially the fags, enjoyed the incident; to them it seemed a great lark—no end of a lark, in fact. Mr. Quelch, being a serious gentleman of middle-age, had no use for "larks."

He came to a halt before Bunter. Bunter did not rise to his feet. He sat tight on his camp-stool and blinked at the Remove master through his big spectacles.

"Bunter!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"Hallo!" said the Owl of the Remove.

"Boy, how dare you address me in that manner!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "How dare you come here!"

"Why shouldn't I?" asked Bunter.

"You are expelled from this school, Bunter!"

"I know that," answered Bunter coolly. "You've told me so a lot of times, Quelch. You're repeating yourself."

"What?"

"Put on a new record!" suggested Bunter.

Mr. Quelch gazed at him, dumb-founded. There was a loud sound of chortling from the Greyfriars crowd.

"Isn't he a card?" murmured Peter Todd. "Isn't he a treasure? Isn't he a pippin?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After all, why shouldn't he cheek Quelch?" grinned Bolsover major.

"Quelch's not his Form master now."

"Looks as if he wishes he was!" murmured Temple of the Fourth. "I fancy he would make Bunter hop."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch glanced round.

"Silence!" he thundered. "This is not a laughing matter!"

Mr. Quelch was alone in that opinion. But the laughter ceased under the glare of his gimlet-eyes.

He turned those gimlet-eyes on Billy Bunter again with a glare that ought to have withered the fat junior. But William George Bunter was not in the least withered.

"Bunter, go away at once!"

"I'm all right here, Quelch."

"Your father has lately been to the school to fetch you. He has had to leave without you."

"I saw him go in the taxi," assented Bunter. "I kept out of sight till he was gone."

"You young rascal!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bunter.

"What—what?"

"Draw it mild! You keep on telling me that I don't belong to Greyfriars now. Well, if I don't belong to Greyfriars, what the thump are you calling me names for? Keep your slanging for the Remove!"

"My—my what?"

"Slanging!" said Bunter. "You can't come out here and slang a member

of the public. It's bad manners, for one thing; and a thundering cheek, for another."

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I'm prepared to return to Greyfriars," said Bunter. "When I'm in your Form again you can slang me as much as you like. So long as I don't belong to Greyfriars you can cheese it!"

"I can—can—can what?"

"Cheese it! Chuck it!" said Bunter. "Don't be cheeky!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, almost overcome. When a junior school-boy told Henry Quelch not to be cheeky it really was time for the skies to fall.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard and deep.

"Bunter, will you go away at once?"

"No!"

"Wretched boy—"

"Wretched man!" retorted Bunter independently.

"Boy!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Go! Go, before I forget myself!"

"I think you're jolly well forgetting yourself already!" said Bunter. "What the thump do you mean by bawling in like this? I've a right to be here, haven't I?"

"Certainly not!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "You are here, Bunter, simply to cause annoyance."

"Rats!"

"Wha-a-at did you say?"

"Rats!"

"Bunter, you will not be allowed to remain here. Will you take your departure instantly, or will you be removed by force?"

"No, I jolly well won't!" said Bunter. "And you jolly well can't remove me, Quelch! Lay a finger on me, and I'll give you in charge for assault!"

"Gug-gug-give me in charge!" repeated Mr. Quelch dazedly.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter, with emphasis. "You jolly well mind your p's and q's, Quelch! I'm not standing any nonsense. This is the public road, and I've as much right here as anybody else. I'll jolly well sit here as long as I like!"

"You will be allowed to do nothing of the kind, Bunter!"

"Who's to stop me?" inquired Bunter.

"As you are here for purposes of annoyance, Bunter, I shall take it upon myself to remove you, although you are not actually within the precincts of Greyfriars. Go!"

"Rats!"

Mr. Quelch controlled his feelings—with difficulty—and glanced round.

"Skinner!"

"Yes, sir?" said Skinner.

"Kindly fetch the cane from my study!"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Skinner cut off towards the House.

The Greyfriars fellows looked on breathlessly. They were not surprised at Mr. Quelch's towering wrath. But it was certain that he had no right whatever to cane Bunter—unless he first conceded the fat junior's claim and allowed him to resume his old place in the Lower Fourth. And that was further than ever from Mr. Quelch's thoughts.

"I warn you, Bunter," said the Remove master in a choking voice, "to depart before Skinner returns with the cane!"

"Rot!" said Bunter.

"You impertinent young scamp—"

"You impertinent old scamp!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch faintly.

"I'm sticking here!" said Bunter.

"Lay a finger on me, old bean, and I'll have you up for assault and battery!"

"Silence, wretched boy!"

"Rats!"

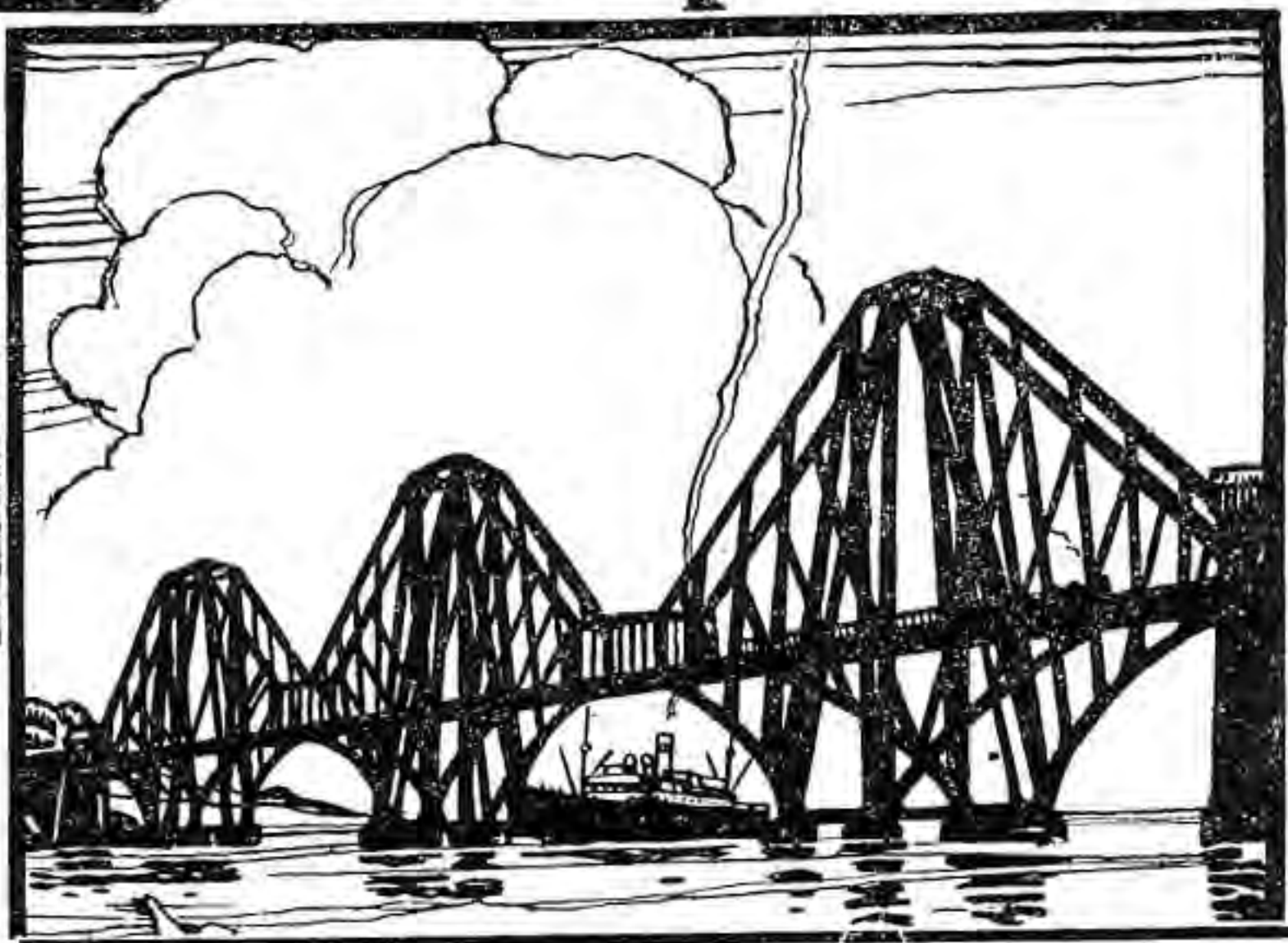
(Continued on page 10.)

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(Continued from page 8.)

Mr. Quelch stepped back from Bunter. In the circumstances he had to get the worst of the dialogue. Bunter grinned, and bestowed a fat wink upon the almost convulsed Greyfriars fellows.

"The old scout's in a tantrum," he said. "Look out for him in class this afternoon, you chaps! He will make you sit up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fancy his cheek, in thinking he can make me move on, as if he were a bobby!" said Bunter. "Awful neck—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Skinner came back with the cane and handed it to the Remove master. Mr. Quelch took a businesslike grip on it.

"Now, Bunter, will you go?"

Bunter blinked warily at the cane.

"No, I won't!" he retorted.

"For the last time, Bunter!"

"Cheese it, Quelch!"

"I shall chastise you, Bunter!"

"Go and eat coke!"

Thwack!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Rough on the Remove!

"YAROOOOOH!"

The roar that came from Billy Bunter, as the cane whacked across his fat shoulders, rang across the quadrangle of Greyfriars. It was a roar that would have done credit to the celebrated Bull of Bashan.

Thwack, thwack!

Mr. Quelch had intended to administer one sounding thwack, as a warning to Bunter to stand not upon the order of his going, but to go at once. But, finding solace in it, he thwacked and thwacked again. Really, he seemed like a tiger who had tasted blood. The cane fairly rang across the shoulders of the Owl of the Remove.

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

"Yaroo! Yooop! Oh crumbs! Ow!"

Billy Bunter rolled off the camp-stool. It collapsed as he rolled, and Bunter sprawled on the earth.

The cane came down on him as he sprawled and roared.

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

"Oh, my hat! Stop it! Oh! Ow! Yow-ow-ow-ow!" yelled Bunter.

"Now will you depart?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Whoooooop!"

"Wretched boy!"

"Yaroo!"

Thwack!

"Oh crumbs! Ow!"

Bunter departed.

He departed at a great speed. He went down the road as if he fancied himself on the cinder-path.

A roar of laughter from the Greyfriars crowd followed him. Bunter's defiance had petered out; the bubble had burst, as it were. He had stood—or, rather, sat—on his rights as a member of the public on the public road. But

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there was no arguing with a cane in the hand of an angry Form master.

Legally, Bunter's position had been unassailable. Practically, it had been assailable—with a cane! And the cane had the last word in the argument!

Mr. Quelch stood, cane in hand, breathing hard, gazing after the disappearing Bunter. Bunter's little fat legs fairly twinkled as he ran. Obviously, he had had enough of the cane.

He vanished from sight.

Mr. Quelch tucked the cane under his arm, and strode back into the gateway.

"Gosling!" he called out.

"Yessir?"

"Close the gates!"

"Yessir."

"Boys, disperse at once! Do not gather in a crowd at the gates again. Loder—Walker—Gwynne, see that this unseemly crowd disperses!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Gwynne.

Mr. Quelch walked back with a frowning brow to the House. Not till he was gone did the Greyfriars fellows venture to chuckle again.

"Well, Bunter does take the jolly old cake, and no mistake!" chuckled Bob Cherry, as the Remove chums strolled away. "He's going to haunt the giddy school, if they won't let him in!"

"A jolly fat and substantial ghost!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's a stickler, and no mistake!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But Quelch convinced him that he had better go."

"Bunter wasn't bound to go, though," remarked Peter Todd. Peter, as the son of a solicitor, had a mind for legal questions. "He wasn't inside Greyfriars, and Quelch had no right to touch him. He could really have Quelch up for assault."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

"Fancy P.c. Tozer taking Quelch into custody, and the Head going along to bail him out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled at the idea.

"Quelch will be in a tantrum this afternoon," remarked Peter, as the juniors went into the House. "We'd better keep our weather eye open for him."

"Todd!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Peter spun round in utter dismay at the sound of his Form master's voice. Mr. Quelch was standing by the hall window, in talk with Wingate of the Sixth, and every word of the hapless Peter's had fallen upon his ears.

"Todd! What did you say?"

"Oh dear!"

"What do you mean, Todd, by a tantrum? I think that that was the expression you used."

"I—I meant—I never meant—"

"Explain yourself, Todd!" said Mr. Quelch, his gimlet eyes seeming almost to bore holes in the hapless Peter.

"I—I—"

It was obvious that Mr. Quelch was in a "tantrum" already. His eyes glittered under his knitted brows. The incident at the gates had irritated him intensely; and the fact that the Greyfriars fellows took it hilariously annoyed Mr. Quelch very much. Although the Remove master was not exactly conscious of it his wrath needed a victim, and Peter Todd had fairly offered himself.

But Mr. Quelch was calm, with a deadly calmness. He adopted quite a judicial air.

"What, precisely, do you mean by the word tantrum, Todd?" he asked.

"It—it means—" stammered the hapless Peter

"It means what?"

"Temper, sir—sort of bad temper!" groaned Peter.

"Then your remark to your Form-fellows, Todd, implied that I, your Form master, would be in a bad temper this afternoon, and that it would be necessary for my pupils to be on their guard against injustice and uncalled-for punishment?"

"Oh dear!" groaned Peter. Doubtless he had meant something of the kind, though certainly he would not have put it like that.

"You seem to have a very poor opinion of your Form master, Todd."

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir."

The cane was still under Mr. Quelch's arm. He let it slip down into his hand. "Hold out your hand, Todd!"

Swish!

"The other hand!"

Swish!

Mr. Quelch tucked the cane under his arm again.

"You must learn, Todd, to speak of your Form master in a more respectful manner. I trust that this slight chastisement will help to impress that fact on your mind."

"Ow! Yes, sir! Wow!"

"You may go, Todd."

Peter was glad enough to go. He tucked his suffering hands under his arms, and wriggled away in deep anguish.

"Hard cheese, old chap!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "My hat! Quelch is in a royal wax, and no mistake. I suppose Bunter is enough to put any man out of temper."

"Ow! Wow!" groaned Peter.

"Never mind, old chap; perhaps he'll let us all off more lightly this afternoon, now he's taken it out of you," said Bob comfortingly.

Peter did not seem much comforted.

"You silly owl!" he said. "Ow, ow!"

And for quite a long time Peter Todd's remarks consisted chiefly of "Ow!" "Wow!" and "Yow!" He was still looking a little troubled when he came into the Remove room for afternoon class, with the rest of the Lower Fourth.

Indignant as Mr. Quelch had justly been at Todd's suggestion that it was necessary to be wary because he was in a "tantrum," there was no doubt that it behaved the Remove fellows, that afternoon, to be very careful. They remembered Mr. Quelch's tantrums during the period of Billy Bunter's hiding away, which had preceded his expulsion from Greyfriars—and Mr. Quelch seemed now to have his "tantrums" more severely even than at that trying time.

Undoubtedly, Bunter was having a wearying effect on the Remove master.

Once Bunter was gone, Mr. Quelch had naturally expected to have done with him. He seemed, however, to be less done with him than ever.

Moreover, Mr. Quelch was just a little worried at having taken the law into his own hands so drastically in dealing with the expelled junior.

He had caned a fellow who no longer belonged to Greyfriars. He had "moved on" a person who had as much right to sit by the roadside as any other person in Great Britain. Indubitably the Remove master had exceeded his authority. That was not at all a pleasant reflection for Mr. Quelch. It was difficult to see what else he could have done in the circumstances. But what he had done was not satisfactory.

His feelings towards Bunter, who had placed him in this false position, were positively Hottish. Had Bunter been still in his class the Owl of the Remove would have had the time of his life that

afternoon. Bunter was not there; but the rest of the Remove, unfortunately for themselves, were there—and most unfortunate of all was Peter Todd, upon whom the gimlet-eye of the irritated Form master was specially directed.

Todd's hapless remark was not forgotten. During class that afternoon Mr. Quelch gave him special attention.

By the time the Remove were dismissed the whole class were tired, and Peter especially was in a state of perspiration. Once the cane had visited Peter—five or six times—the sarcastic tongue of Mr. Quelch had lashed him, even more sharply than the cane.

Peter was breathing hard and deep when he came out of the Form-room with his comrades.

"It's too thick!" he told Harry Wharton & Co.—"altogether too jolly thick! We're having it taken out of us for Bunter, just as I said it would be."

"Better not let Quelch hear you say so again, old bean," grinned Bob Cherry. "He will be after your scalp."

"He's going to hear me say something, all the same."

"Can it, old man," said Harry Wharton. "Quelch's too jolly dangerous now—give him a wide miss."

"You'll see!" said Peter. "I'm not a solicitor's son for nothing. You fellows like to come for a walk?"

"Any old thing," said Harry.

Peter was so exasperated that the Famous Five were quite pleased to walk him out of gates. Mr. Quelch, in his present temper, was no subject for japing, and they could see that that was what Peter had in his mind.

Peter's face was grim as the juniors walked down to Friardale. He stopped at the post-office.

"Going in here?" asked Bob.

"Yes—trot in; it will amuse you."

"What will?" asked Nugent.

"My talk to Quelch!"

"Look here, Toddy—"

"Oh, come on!"

Peter Todd went into the post-office and claimed the telephone-box. And Harry Wharton & Co. stood round, in considerable uneasiness, as Peter rang up Mr. Quelch's number at Greyfriars.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Legal!

MR. QUELCH was in a worried and irritable mood, and the buzz of the telephone bell in his study did not improve his temper. The thought occurred to him at once that probably it was Bunter again—some more impertinence from the expelled junior. His face was set and grim as he lifted the receiver from the hook—prepared to jam it back again if he heard the fat tones of the Owl of the Remove.

"Hallo!"

"Kindly put me on to Mr. Quelch!" came a deep voice which the Remove master did not recognise. Evidently it was not Bunter speaking.

"I am Mr. Quelch! What is wanted?"

"You are Mr. Quelch, master of the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Very good. My instructions are to speak to you—"

"Your instructions!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Precisely. Doubtless you are acquainted with Messrs. Link & Lynx, solicitors, of Courtfield."

"I have never even heard the name," said Mr. Quelch. "Are you sure you have the right number?"

"Quite. My business is with you, sir, in connection with a complaint of our client, Master Bunter—"

"Your what?"

"Client."

"What—what name did you say?"

"Bunter—Master William George Bunter, formerly, I understand, a member of your Form at Greyfriars, Mr. Quelch."

"Bless my soul!"

"Master Bunter has placed the matter in our hands, with a view to legal remedy for the treatment to which he has been subjected," went on the deep voice. "We are taking up the matter and—"

"What matter?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"The assault and battery committed upon our client upon the King's highway—"

"Upon my word!"

"It is, perhaps, a little unprofessional to communicate with you by telephone, Mr. Quelch. But our hope is that the matter may be accommodated. Perhaps you would prefer to call at our office in Courtfield—or will you make an



"Let my van alone!" yelled Bunter. "Leave go, you cheeky rotters!" "Get a move on, you fellows," said Coker firmly. The Fifth Formers gripped the shafts of the caravan and pulled. The van bumped and jolted off the grass, out into the highway. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker & Co. (See Chapter 12.)

appointment for us to see you at Greyfriars?"

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"Sir—I did not catch your name——"

"Link & Lynx, solicitors."

"Sir, do you seriously tell me that you have listened to a foolish story told by a foolish and irresponsible schoolboy?"

"I do, Mr. Quelch. Master Bunter's statement is that while resting on a camp-stool by the King's highway he was attacked——"

"Attacked?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Attacked, assaulted, and battered by a person——"

"A—a—a person?"

"A person who was formerly, we are given to understand, his Form master at Greyfriars. He was considerably injured, and his camp-stool appears to have been lost. There is no suggestion that you have purloined this camp-stool——"

"P-p-purloined it!"

"That is not suggested, sir; but the article is undoubtedly lost, and will have to be paid for. No doubt, sir, the matter can be settled by quiet discussion without coming before the courts at all."

"The—the courts!"

"Exactly. Our aim is to accommodate if possible; that is always our aim, sir. We have settled many cases out of court, and hope to settle this one in the same amicable manner, if possible."

Mr. Quelch glared at the telephone.

He thought he understood.

"Sir! Mr. Link—or Lynx—or whatever your name is," he snorted into the transmitter, "I will not call at your office!"

"You prefer us to see you at Greyfriars?"

"No, sir! If you call at the school, I will have you ejected, sir—turned from the gates, sir, like a dog, sir!"

"Mr. Quelch—this language——"

"I am quite aware of your character, sir!" hooted the Remove master. "I have never heard of you before, but I have heard of such firms, sir—penniless, pettifogging solicitors, sir, who take up the most flagrantly frivolous and unjust cases, sir, in the hope of extorting money, sir. I am well aware, sir, that such unscrupulous rascality is practised by a low class of attorney, sir; but I am not the kind of man, sir, to submit to anything of the sort, as you will find."

"This language is actionable, Mr. Quelch. If you will venture to repeat your words in writing, in black and white, sir, you will hear from us very promptly."

"I have no doubt of it, sir—none at all. But you will not trick me into writing you a letter upon which you may unscrupulously found an action at law, sir. I am not so easily caught."

"You will hear from us, Mr. Quelch."

"Pooh!"

"What did you say, Mr. Quelch?"

"I said pooh, sir, and I repeat, pooh!" snorted Mr. Quelch. "I regard you with contempt, sir!"

"You will be held to account for this language, Mr. Quelch!"

"You are a rogue, sir!"

"Eh?"

"A pettifogging rogue!"

"Sir!"

"Pooh!"

Mr. Quelch slammed the receiver back on the hooks. He was finished with

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Messrs. Link & Lynx, solicitors, of Court-field.

Peter Todd came out of the telephone-box at Friardale post-office with a grin on his face. Harry Wharton & Co. blinked at him. They had heard only Peter's half of the conversation, though a hoot or two from Mr. Quelch had reached them.

"Well, you ass," gasped Bob Cherry, "if Quelch finds out——"

"Lucky he won't," said Peter. "He hadn't the faintest idea that he'd met Messrs. Link & Lynx before."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you fathead!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "If it came out——"

"Let's get out," said Nugent, laughing.

"Hold on," said Peter. "I want another call. Messrs. Link & Lynx are going to speak to the Head."

"They're jolly well not!" roared Bob Cherry. "Come on!"

"Look here——"

"Yank him away!"

And Peter Todd was fairly dragged away from the telephone-box in the grasp of the Famous Five. They came out of the village post-office rather breathless, and as they emerged into the old High Street of Friardale a fat voice greeted them:

"I say, you fellows!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Rally Round!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter nodded and grinned to the chums of the Remove. The fat junior was evidently pleased by the meeting. The pleasure was all on his side, as a matter of fact.

"So, you're still here," said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, old chap. So glad to see you!" said Bunter. "Did you come down to Friardale to look for me?"

"No, ass!"

"I thought you might have guessed that I wanted to see you," said Bunter. "You see, I'm rather up against it."

"Disappointed about a postal-order?" asked Johnny Bull, with deep sarcasm.

"Exactly, old chap! I'm hard up," said Bunter, blinking pathetically at the Removes. "Of course, I know my old school chums will stand by me. You needn't tell me that—I know it! I rely upon you."

"The best thing you can do is to go home," said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Franky!" Bunter gave Nugent a reproachful blink. "I say, you fellows, I know you're going to stand by a chap. I'm jolly well not going home! The pater isn't at all anxious to have me at home."

"I wonder why?" said Johnny Bull, still sarcastic.

"And Uncle George isn't really keen on having me," went on Bunter. "I dare say it surprises you, but he isn't."

"The surprisingness is not terrific, my esteemed fatheaded Bunter!" remarked Harree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky!"

"But what the thump are you going to do, Bunter?" exclaimed Harry

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Wharton. "Can't you get it into your wooden head that you don't belong to Greyfriars any longer?"

"I'm coming back, you know!" explained Bunter.

"Ass!"

"They'll come round, sooner or later, you know, if I worry 'em enough," said the Owl of the Remove, bestowing a fat wink on the juniors.

"Oh, my hat! Is that your game?" exclaimed Bob.

"That's it, old chap! I'm sticking on," said Bunter cheerfully. "Anyhow, I'd rather go on like this than be shoved into the pater's office. Of course, I thought I was going to have a jolly long holiday when I left Greyfriars. Then I thought the pater would send me to Eton or Harrow. I've been disappointed. He actually said that as I couldn't get on at Greyfriars he wasn't going to send me to school at all again. And as for a holiday, he arranged for me to begin taking lessons in book-keeping."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! The fact is, I've got out of the frying-pan into the fire!" said Bunter dismally.

"It won't be easy to get back into the frying-pan, old fat bean!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"You see, getting back to Greyfriars is the only way, as the johnny says in the play," explained Bunter. "Otherwise I shall have to work."

"Awful!"

"Yes, isn't it? You see, I've got to get back somehow."

The Famous Five chuckled. The alternative to getting back to Greyfriars, for Bunter, was work; and that, from Bunter's point of view, was a sheer impossibility—a thing too awful to be contemplated.

"The trouble is," went on Bunter, "that the pater, for some reason, wouldn't hand out any tin. Now, a chap has to pay his way. I dare say you fellows aren't quite so particular as I am about things like that."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm honourable, you know," said Bunter. "You fellows can please yourselves, but I want to pay my way. I can't swindle Uncle Clegg out of his rent——"

"His rent?"

"I've got a room at Uncle Clegg's," said Bunter. "A chap has to put up somewhere. Furnished room, you know, and grub. But Uncle Clegg is rather a mean beast. I'm prepared to be an excellent customer in his shop—one of his best customers—but he declines to let me run up a bill. He says I can have anything I like for cash," Bunter grunted. "What's the good of that, when I haven't any cash?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He even wanted me to pay for my room in advance," continued Bunter. "Distrustful, you know. I put him off till to-day. Now, five pounds would see me through for a bit. I'm relying on my old pals. Don't all speak at once."

The chums of the Remove did not all speak at once. They did not speak at all.

Bunter blinked at them.

"I could manage for a few days on two or three pounds," he said.

"Not less than that?" asked Peter.

"Well, hardly, you know. A fellow has expenses to meet. Make it three pounds, and whack it out among you as you like."

"You silly owl!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Bob——"

The chums of the Remove looked at one another. Billy Bunter watched them anxiously.

"Don't be selfish," he said encouragingly. "Think how ripping it will be to get me back in the Remove."

"Oh crumbs!"

"I suppose Greyfriars doesn't really seem the same place without me, does it?" asked Bunter.

"No; it's ever so jolly now."

"Oh, really Bull!"

Harry Wharton put his hand into his pocket. The rest of the juniors followed his example. There was a general fumbling for loose cash. Cash was low except on rare occasions; this was not one of the rare occasions. The total sum that came to light, after six juniors had rummaged their pockets, was ten shillings.

"There you are, Bunter! Make the best of it," said Harry.

Bunter took the collection of coins in his fat palm, and blinked at them disparagingly through his big spectacles.

"What do you call this?" he asked.

"Ten bob."

"How the thump do you think I can rub along on ten bob?" inquired Bunter indignantly.

"Is that a riddle?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"Isn't that any good to you, Bunter?" asked Peter Todd.

"Certainly not; no good at all."

Peter held out his hand.

"Well, it's some good to us," he said.

"And it over!"

The ten shillings disappeared like magic into Bunter's pocket. Whether that small sum was "any good" or not, evidently the Owl of the Remove did not mean to part with it.

"Well, I call this rotten," said Bunter peevishly. "This isn't the way I expected old pals to stand by me, after all I've done for you, too. But you fellows always were selfish!"

"Good-bye, Bunter!" said Bob.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Having thus gracefully expressed his thanks, Billy Bunter rolled away and disappeared into Uncle Clegg's little tuckshop. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another and grinned.

"Isn't he nice?" said Bob. "And wouldn't it be nice to have him back at Greyfriars?"

"I don't think," said Johnny Bull; and Hurree Singh added that the don't-thinkfulness was terrific.

The chums of the Remove walked back to Greyfriars. As they passed the doorway of Mr. Clegg's little shop, they had a glimpse of Billy Bunter sitting on a high stool at the counter, busily engaged in demolishing jam-tarts, washed down by ginger-beer. The ten shillings were already taking unto themselves wings.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Called to Account!

"MR. QUELCH!"

It was several days later when the Head stopped Mr. Quelch on his way to the Remove Form room, with a very serious expression on his face. It was Saturday morning, and the Remove were going into their Form-room for third lesson—the last on a Saturday.

On this particular occasion they were destined to wait a few minutes for their usually punctual Form master.

"I have just walked from Friardale, Mr. Quelch," said the Head.

"Indeed, sir. I trust you had a pleasant walk," said the Remove master, inwardly considering that this piece of information was not a sufficient cause for stopping him on his way to his class.

"A very unpleasant incident occurred, Mr. Quelch."

"Indeed, sir."

"Bunter—"

"Bunter!" repeated the Remove master.

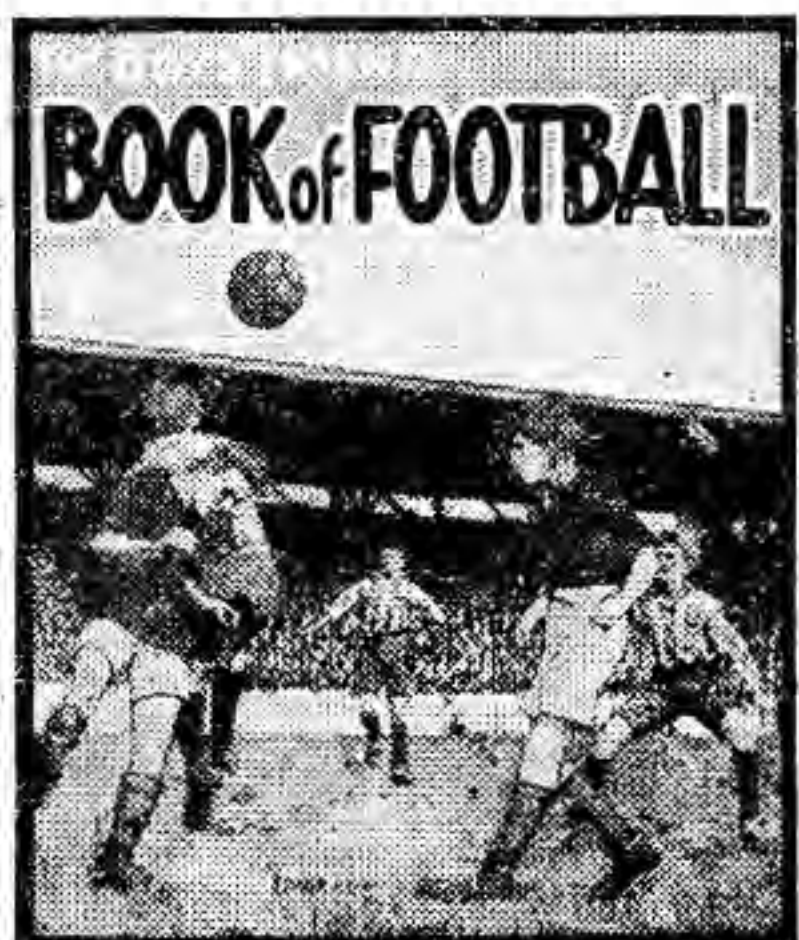
"Yes, Bunter! It seems that that wretched boy, Mr. Quelch, has not gone home—he is staying in Friardale all this time."

"I was aware of it, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "He has been seen several times prowling in the vicinity of the school."

"I came upon him in the High Street," went on the Head. "He raised his hat, quite respectfully I must admit. But when I told him that he should go home immediately he made a very impertinent reply."

"I have no doubt of it, sir. It is positively scandalous that his father

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should allow him to proceed in this manner."

"It is indeed," said the Head. "According to Mr. Bunter's statement to me, he has washed his hands of the matter, and regards the responsibility as ours, Mr. Quelch."

"Which is absurd, sir."

"Quite absurd."

"The boy must go," said the Remove master. "His continued presence in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars is most disconcerting—most irregular—in fact, very improper indeed. But the boy seems to have no sense whatever of propriety."

"None at all," said the Head. "Now, Mr. Quelch, the boy cannot be living at Friardale without money. It is improbable that his father is supplying him with money for the mere purpose of annoying and flouting his former headmaster. Do you consider it possible that he is obtaining pecuniary aid from his former friends here?"

Mr. Quelch started.

He had not thought of it; but now that it was suggested he realised in a flash that it was not only possible but

very probable indeed. It was, in fact, the only way of accounting for Billy Bunter's continued residence in the neighbouring village.

"It is quite possible, sir!" he exclaimed. "I will inquire into the matter immediately."

"Do so, Mr. Quelch," said the Head. "If anything of the kind is taking place you will, of course, take measures to put a stop to it at once."

"Undoubtedly, sir."

The Head passed on, and Mr. Quelch proceeded to his Form-room with a grim brow. The Remove fellows had already been warned, solemnly and seriously, to have nothing to do with the expelled junior. Mr. Quelch had not been at all sure that his commands had been scrupulously regarded. Now he was fairly sure that they had not been regarded.

Some of the Removites exchanged glances as the Form master came in. His look showed that there was trouble in the air.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eye roamed over his silent class.

"Boys, it has come to my knowledge—hem—that Bunter, who was expelled from this school, is living in Friardale. You have already been commanded most strictly not to speak to him if you should meet him by chance. I require now to know whether any of you have furnished Bunter with financial assistance."

"Oh gad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"Bunter is obviously obtaining money from somewhere, or he could not be staying on in the village," said Mr. Quelch. "I am fairly certain that he is receiving no supply from his home. Any boy here who has given Bunter money is required to confess at once."

"Hem!"

"I shall, on this occasion, inflict no punishment," went on the Remove master unexpectedly. "But that is on condition that immediate and frank confession is made."

"That's a good offer!" murmured Bob Cherry.

A dozen Removites stood up, among them the Famous Five, Peter Todd, Lord Mauleverer, and Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Quelch knitted his brows.

"You have disobeyed my orders," he said.

Silence!

"I shall pass over the matter now, as I have said. Any repetition of such disobedient conduct will be reported to the Head, and the delinquent will be flogged."

"Oh!"

"Now kindly acquaint me with the amounts you have given Bunter," added the Remove master sternly.

"Quid, sir!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Do you mean a pound, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly speak English when you speak to me in the Form room, Vernon-Smith."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said the Bounder.

"You will take fifty lines for using slang, Vernon-Smith, in addressing your Form master."

"Oh! Thank you, sir!"

Mr. Quelch's eyes glinted, but he turned from Smithy with that. Harry Wharton & Co. and Peter Todd owned up to ten shillings. Evidently the Remove master desired to be able to calculate what resources the fat junior had annexed, and how long they were likely to last him. When Bunter's financial resources came to an end it was to be hoped that Bunter would come to an end also.

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 877.



Supplement No. 201.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON

Week Ending November 29th, 1924.



Bunter on Burglary!

An Amusing Article by
the Remove's Plump
Porpoise.

BERGLARS are beastly fellows! That's my candied opinion of them, and if they don't like it they can do the other thing!

I regret to say that one of my ancestors was a berglar. He was a blot on the family escutcheon. I blush with shame when I recall his dark deeds of dastardly daring. He lived in the rain of Good Queen Bess, and he bergled everything he could lay his hands on. He once had the ordassity to brake into the Queen's pallis and steal her jools. But when he tried to repeat the performance a couple of detectives of the Tudor period were lying in wait for him behind secret pannels. They jumped out and collared him, and, after spending several months of solitary confinement in the old Fleet Prizzon, he was eggsecuted on Tower Hill. Bad seran to him, as Micky Desmond would say!

I'm not going to point to that ancestor with pride. He was a rogue and a rank outsider, and he got it "in the neck" at the finish. Serve him jolly well right!

My study-mate, Alonzo Todd, is looking over my sholder while I write.

"Eggscuse me, my dear Bunter," he has just said, "I notiss you are writing an artikle on berglary. I have a notty problem to present to you. When you raid another fellow's study and perloin his tuck, is it berglary or not?"

Well, of all the stewpid, silly, senseless queschuns—I can't see where the "notty problem" comes in.

Of corse it isn't berglary to raid another fellow's tuck!

This afternoon I popped into Coker's study and acquired—not bergled, mark you!—a plum-cake. I was quite entitled to that cake. Look at the numerous occasions when I've treeted old Coker to cake and jinger-pop at the tuckshop! Look at the times I've invited him to tea! He's always helped himself liberally to the good things on my table. Besides, Coker's an old pal of mine. He said to me the other day, tapping me on the sholder in his affeckshunate way:

"Bunty, old boy, you can drop into my study whenever you like. It's Liberty Hall. And if I'm not there, and you happen to be feeling peckish, go to the cubberd and help yourself!"

This is eggscactly what I did this afternoon. Would you call it an act of berglary? Of corse you wouldn't! Berglary konsists of taking munny and jools and preshus stoans. Helping yourself to a pal's tuck is a totally different matter.

Talking about berglary, I am proud to say that I have been the means of laying many berglars by the heels. Only a few nights ago I woke up suddenly at midnight. I could hear nothing, but I had a strange

sort of feeling that there were berglars in the bilding. I didn't wake Harry Wharton and his pals—they are far too funky to tackle berglars. I just slipped into my togs and stole quietly downstares. I caught a gang of berglars red-handed. They were clustered round the Games Fund box in the hall, and one of them was forcing it open with an iron chisel. I rushed straight at the gang, hitting out right and left, and they were down like 9 pins. Having overpowered them, I obtained some rope, and trust them up like fowls. Then I tellyfoned for the perlice, and the roppers were taken into custerdy.

Some of you may suppose that I imagined all this; but I can assure you it is fact, and not fikshun. I'm not the sort of fellow to invent cock-and-bool stories. I always stick to facts.

I could tell you of duzzens of berglaries which have been nipped in the bud owing to my curridge and resauce. But I'm a moddest chap, and I don't belceve in blowing my own trumpitt.

When I grow up I shall never become a berglar. It's a beestly bizness, braking into plaices in the middle of the night and picking locks and cracking cribbs.

I shall probably become the berglar's worst enemy—a detective. Already I have had vast eggperience of detective work. I can steal along corridors as silently as a cat, and I delight in peeping through keyholes. Believe me, dear readers, there will be short shrift for berglars when Detective Bunter is on the trail!

IF—?

By Dick Penfold.

If, on some dark and moonless night,
A burglar came before my sight,
I'd send up such a mighty shout that—
It would wake the school, no doubt.
The Head, the prefects, every master,
Immediately would scent disaster.
They'd all come rushing on the scene,
And grapple with the burglar bean.
And I should grapple with the rest,
And squat upon the scoundrel's chest;
Till P.-e. Tozer, stout and strong,
Arrived and thundered: "Come along!"
That's how I'd deal with Burglar Bill.
But it's a plan that calls for skill!

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

FOR once in a way this "Herald" supplement deals with no special subject, but I hardly think it will be less welcome on that account.

For instance, Bunter's breezy article on Burglary is a scream from beginning to end, while Frank Nugent's short story is certainly bang in the target.

We are told that variety is the spice of life. If there's any truth in the old saying, then MAGNET readers should be as happy as the day is long, for, with all due modesty, I think the Heraldites never err on that score. Variety is in the very air they breathe. It literally oozes out of fellows like Dicky Nugent, Billy Bunter & Co.

If we can make you laugh occasionally we have done well of our country, and that is our honest endeavour every week. I won't tell you how long Penfold sits gnawing his pen for a word to rhyme with gargantuan, or how many tarts Bunter consumes to spur his imaginative powers, or, again, how long yours truly sits staring into the fire for a brain-wave. These things are editorial secrets. Some day, perhaps, I will compile a book on how amateur journalists entice their inspirations, and, believe me, it will make interesting reading.

If any of you have ideas for future supplements drop me a line and I'll do my best to fall in with your wishes. But I would remind you that suggestions for "Butterfly Catching" supplements, "Kiss in the Ring," etc., are strictly taboo. One enthusiast sent me a request to publish a special "Kissing" supplement. As you can see for yourselves, such a request was right off the rails. We are prepared to meet our enthusiastic chum half-way, however, and have accordingly altered Kissing to Kicking. As Johnny Bull facetiously remarked, they both begin with the letter "K." Isn't that "Klever" of him? All the same for that, I think I'd much prefer to be kissed than kicked.

And now, to next week's supplement. Somebody mentioned that it would be a good wheeze to write up an Excursions Number. The idea had no sooner been propounded than umpteen pens were busy travelling over paper. If all the efforts submitted were used they would fill a dozen supplements. Space being limited, your humble has discreetly to "turn down" this and that without, so far as it lies in his power, ruffling the feathers of these budding journalists. Heigh-ho! The life of an editor is not all beer and skittles, but it has its compensations.

HARRY WHARTON.
[Supplement i.]



A False Alarm!

A NUTSHELL NARRATIVE
OF GREYFRIARS
By Frank Nugent.

"HELP! Burglars!"

A wild yell rang through the Remove dormitory, rudely disturbing the silence of the night.

"Help!"

The yell was so piercing, so altogether terrifying, that most of the fellows woke instantly.

Harry Wharton sat up in bed.

"That you, Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes! Help! Rescue! There's a burglar!"

"Where, you fat duffer?"

"Under my bed!"

"What rot! You've got nightmare, through stuffing yourself with pie before you came to bed."

"I tell you there's a burglar under my bed!" howled Bunter.

"Poke him out, then," granted Johnny Bull drowsily.

"Oh, really, Bull! I dare say the rotter's got arms—"

"Grab hold of them, then, and tug!"

"I mean firearms! If I try to grab hold of him he'll shoot!"

By this time there was quite a commotion in the Remove dormitory. Wharton lighted a candle, and got out of bed to investigate. He dropped on his knees, and peered beneath Billy Bunter's bed. But he discovered nothing more harmful than a piece of fluff.

"You fat spoofer!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove angrily. "There's nobody here."

"Let's give the silly owl a jolly good

bumping for waking us up for nothing!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Hold on, you fellows!" It was Tom Brown speaking now. "I believe Bunter's right about a burglar. There isn't one under his bed, of course; but I was awake just before he yelled, and I distinctly saw a shadowy form bending over his bed."

"My hat!"

"Must have been the Greyfriars Ghost," said Squiff.

"Well, whoever he was, he must have left the dorm on tiptoe, because I didn't hear him go out. Better look under all the beds."

The dormitory was scoured from end to end, but there was no sign of an intruder.

"There was a burglar here, sure enough," said Billy Bunter. "He must have sneaked out while we've been jawing; and gone downstairs."

Several juniors jumped out of bed and slipped on dressing-gowns over their pyjamas.

"Follow me!" said Wharton. "We'll soon see if there's any midnight prowler about."

The party of juniors hurried downstairs. They had donned rubber-soled shoes, and made very little noise. At the foot of the stairs they paused. Footsteps could be heard coming along the corridor.

The juniors crouched in the darkness at the foot of the staircase and waited.

Their hearts were beating faster than usual. Wharton gave a whispered command that as soon as the unknown marauder came into view they were to spring upon him.

"Stand by, you chaps!"

Straining their eyes through the gloom, the watchers presently distinguished a tall form. And with one accord they sprang.

"Yaroooh!"

There was a startled gasp from the victim as he was borne to the ground, with a number of juniors sprawling on top of him. Then came a choking cry.

"Help! I am being savagely attacked!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"Oh, lor'!" muttered Nugent.

"Q-Queelch!" said Bob Cherry, in a horror-stricken voice.

"Boys!" roared the Remove Form master, recovering from his first surprise. "How dare you! How—groough—dare you!"

The Removites let go of their victim as if he had been red-hot. For the voice was the voice of Mr. Quelch!

A dreadful pause followed. Then came explanations.

It was Mr. Quelch who Tom Brown and Billy Bunter had seen in the Remove dormitory. He had been making a tour of inspection, to satisfy himself that all the juniors were in their beds. Not wishing to disturb anybody, he had tiptoed round the dormitory, peering at each bed. Then he had gone downstairs to see that the doors were bolted. It was on his return that the juniors had attacked him. Originally, Mr. Quelch had carried a candle, but it had been extinguished by the draught in the corridor, and the Remove master had no more matches.

Harry Wharton pointed out, of course, that the juniors had acted under a misapprehension. But Mr. Quelch, in his wrath, gave them five hundred lines apiece. Next morning, however, his anger had abated, and he cancelled the impositions. For which the juniors were truly thankful!

SHOULD GEOGRAPHY BE ABOLISHED?



BOB CHERRY:

Should geography be abolished? Well, it all depends what you are going to put in its place. If we can have an hour's footer, or leap-frogging over the Form-room desks, or friendly boxing bouts, in lieu of the geography lesson, all well and good. But if the abolition of geography means an extra dose of Latin or Greek, or some equally hateful subject, let's stick to geography!

MARK LINLEY:

Abolish geography? Certainly not! This subject is of vital importance later in life. *Supplement ii.*

Supposing a fellow is going to be an explorer or a mountaineer? He will look pretty sick if he knows nothing of geography. I can't understand why the majority of fellows hate geography like poison. Personally, I find it jolly interesting. I'm always eager for more knowledge concerning the world we live in.

ALONZO TODD:

I fail to see why geography should be abolished. It is a thrilling, fascinating, and absorbing study. I can recite the names of all the counties in England, and the capitals of those counties, and the chief exports, population, and size thereof. I am quite a glutton for geography. I took to it as a duck takes to water, and I have been passionately fond of it ever since. One of these days I hope to become a F.R.G.S. That means Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society—not, as Billy Bunter once informed Mr. Quelch, "Fine Repasts Give Satisfaction!"

WILLIAM GOSLING:

Whether they abolish this 'ere joggraphy or not, it won't make no difference to me.

But, still, if joggraphy keeps young warmints out of mischief, give it to 'em mornin', noon, an' night—that's wot I says! Anythin' to keep 'em from worritin' a poor old porter, with their larks an' leg-pullin'!"

DICK PENFOLD:

Geography I simply hate. I get into a fearful state! I answer all the questions wrongly, and then old Quelch canes me strongly. Rivers and mountains, lakes and seas—what do I want to know of these? I've got no use for towns and cities; I'd rather sit composing ditties. I think geography is awful, and teaching it should be unlawful!

BILLY BUNTER:

Should joggraphy be washed out? Of course it should. I hate it like poyson. It's such a wicked waist of time. Everyone knows that a blessed island is a peace of water surrounded by land and that a cape is a thing we wear when it rains. Old Quelch doesn't know his joggraphy for toffee. He asked me the other day what was the capital of Russia, and when I told him New York he flew into an awful temper. Then he asked me what the Sandwich Islands were noted for, and I answered: "Sandwiches." My superior knowledge roused him to a fury. He picked up his cane and fairly made me leap over the top of the desk—the beast! I hate joggraphy, history, maths, Latin, French—(Go easy, old scout; this isn't a general grouse article.—Ed.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"You, Russell—"
 "Sixpence, sir."
 "You, Ogilvy?"
 "Half-a-crown, sir."
 "You, Field?"
 "Seven-and-six, sir," said Squiff.
 "And you, Mauleverer?"
 "I don't know, sir."
 "What? You do not know how much money you have given Bunter, Mauleverer?" exclaimed the Form master.
 Lord Mauleverer shook his head.
 "Sorry, sir! Haven't an idea!"
 "Is that intended for impertinence, Mauleverer?" asked Mr. Quelch grimly.
 "Oh gad! No, sir! Nothin' of the kind!" exclaimed his lordship in alarm.
 "I'd tell you at once if I knew, sir. But I don't."
 "Have you met him more than once, Mauleverer?"
 "Twice, sir."
 "Did you give him money on each occasion?"
 "Yaas, sir," said Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully. "The first time I gave him some currency notes, sir. I believe three or four. But I'm not sure whether they were all pound notes, sir. I think very likely some of them were ten-bobbers, sir."

There was a grin among the ranks of the Remove. Lord Mauleverer, the schoolboy millionaire, was the only fellow at Greyfriars in the happy position of being able to hand out currency notes without counting them.

"And what did you give him the second time, Mauleverer?"

"A fiver, sir."

"Do you mean a five-pound note, Mauleverer?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Take fifty lines for speaking slang in the Form-room!"

"Oh, gad! I mean, yaas, sir!"

"You may sit down!" snapped the Remove master.

Third lesson proceeded, not in a happy atmosphere. Mr. Quelch had ascertained that Billy Bunter had annexed from his former schoolfellows at least ten pounds, and such a sum was enough to last him quite a long time. Certainly it was not likely to last Bunter so long as another fellow, with his Gargantuan appetite taken into consideration. With his quarters at the village tuckshop, Bunter was very likely to make the money fly—in the direction in which his financial resources always went. Still, ten pounds was a large sum, and the expelled Owl was not likely to "shift" very soon for want of money.

It was extremely annoying to Mr. Quelch, and he rather regretted that he had promised immunity to Bunter's supporters. Still, he knew who they were now, and he determined to keep a very keen eye on them after that. Bunter, at least, would receive no further pecuniary contributions from the Remove.

And since the occasion when Mr. Quelch's cane had been brought into the discussion Bunter had not approached very close to the school. He had been

seen "prowling," as Mr. Quelch described it, but he had not ventured near at hand. The Remove master hoped that he would have sufficient discretion to continue to keep his distance—until his money ran out and he had to go.

That hope was ill-founded; as Mr. Quelch was shortly to discover. The Owl of the Remove was not beaten yet.

And his next move was to be a surprising one.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter, the Caravanner!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Caravanners!" said Bob Cherry.

"Gipsies!" said Nugent.

"Cheek, pitching so near the school gates!" grunted Johnny Bull.
 "They jolly well ought to be moved on!"

It was after dinner that Saturday, and the Famous Five had come down to the gates, intending to walk over to Cliff House. The sight of a gipsy caravan pitched by the roadside arrested their attention.

Across the road, opposite the gates of Greyfriars, were the palings of a park. Between the road and the palings was a stretch of grass. It was a wide road, and the stretch of grass was wide. The park palings were at a good distance. On the grass a caravan was halted—not one of the handsome, well-appointed caravans in which expensive holiday-makers sometimes go on the open road, but a cheap, gaudily-painted gipsy caravan of the commonest construction.

No horse was to be seen; the caravan was halted there as if for a stay of some time. Smoke was arising from the little chimney in the roof, and some more smoke was oozing from the little, cracked window in the side of the vehicle.

"The cheekfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"The esteemed Head will be infuriated!"

"Waxy, anyhow!" grinned Bob Cherry. "That's not public land, I believe. Anyhow, if it is, no gipsies have ever camped there before."

"Oh, live and let live!" said Harry Wharton cheerily. "I dare say they won't do any harm. Only a few old tins and odds and ends to clear up when they're gone."

Coker of the Fifth came out of the gates. He stopped and stared at the caravan.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Coker.

Horace Coker seemed scarcely able to believe his eyes.

"Neck!" he exclaimed. "Gipsies camped here—just opposite the gates! My only hat! I'll jolly soon shift 'em!"

Coker strode across to the van. He gave a thundering rap on the door, which was shut.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on, with interest. An encounter between Coker of the Fifth and a hefty gipsy caravanner was likely, in their opinion, to be entertaining.

The caravan door opened.

A fat face, adorned by a pair of large spectacles, blinked out. There was a roar of astonishment from the chums of the Remove.

"BUNTER!"

Coker of the Fifth jumped.

"Bunter!" he ejaculated.

The fat junior grinned.

"I say, you fellows! Surprised you—what? How do you do, Coker?"

"Bunter!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"You fat boulder—"

"What's this game?"

Billy Bunter grinned.

Coker of the Fifth gazed at him open-mouthed. Then he burst into a roar of laughter.

"Bunter! Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my hat! Ha, ha!" And Coker, explosively chuckling, tramped back into the gates of Greyfriars to spread the amazing news.

Harry Wharton & Co. came across the grass to the steps of the van, and stood staring at Bunter. The Owl of the Remove grinned at them cheerfully.

"I say, you fellows—"

"What are you doing here?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Caravanning!"

"Oh, my hat! Where's your horse, then?"

Bunter chuckled.

"You see, being hard up, I can't afford to keep a horse," he explained. "I've hired this show for a week, and I hired a horse to pull me here this morning. I'm not going on any farther."

"You're camping here?" exclaimed Wharton.

"He, he! Yes! Think the Head will like it?"

"But you—you can't—" exclaimed Nugent.

"Can't I?" grinned Bunter. "I jolly well can! Any caravanner has a right to camp by the roadside so long as he doesn't interfere with traffic. I've caravanned before; I know all about it. I can jolly well stay here as long as I like!"

"And how long is that going to be?"

"Until the Head lets me come back to Greyfriars!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Come in, old fellows!" said Bunter hospitably. "I've had my dinner, but I'm just going to have tea—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got some tuck!" said Bunter. "Jump in! I'm standing it this time!"

The Famous Five shook their heads. They were not prepared to let Mr. Quelch catch them in Bunter's caravan. The results would have been altogether too painful.

Coker of the Fifth came out of gates again, with Potter and Greene. The three Fifth-Formers were laughing. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth came after them. The news was spreading.

Gosling came down to the gates, blinked across at the caravan and Bunter, and went back to his lodge, shaking his head.

More and more Greyfriars fellows came out across the road till a crowd of them had gathered round Bunter's caravan.

The fat junior grinned down at them serenely, evidently elated by the sensation he had caused. A continuous ripple of laughter ran through the crowd.

But there was a hush as Mr. Quelch was seen to emerge from the gateway, his face pale with anger.

He strode across to the caravan and stood gazing up at Bunter, who nodded to him coolly from the van doorway.

"Bunter!"

"Hallo, Quelch!" said the Owl of the Remove. "Have you come to tea?"

"What? What?"

"Jump into the van, old bean! I can stand you some tea, and I've got a really good cake!" said Bunter. "Nothing mean about me, Quelch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter, how dare you! What does this mean? What are you doing here?" gasped the Remove master.

"Caravanning, sir."

"I command you, Bunter, to remove your caravan immediately from the precincts of this school!"

"Blow your old school!" said Bunter.
 "Eh?"
 "You keep on telling me that I don't belong to the school now. Well, then, blow the school! And blow you, too, if you come to that, Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch trembled with wrath.
 "Bunter, you remember how I dealt with you on the last occasion that you ventured here?"

"I remember," said Bunter, with a nod. "I've a jolly good mind to have you up for assault and battery, Quelch!"

"I shall chastise you in the same manner, Bunter, if you do not immediately depart with this—this—this caravan!"

"Rats!"
 Mr. Quelch had a cane under his arm. Thoughtfully he had brought it with him on hearing that William George Bunter was in the offing once more. He took a businesslike grip on the cane and placed his foot on the step of the caravan.

Slam!
 The door closed almost on Mr. Quelch's sharp nose. A key was heard to turn in the lock.

"Bunter!" gasped Mr. Quelch.
 "Yah!"
 "Open this door at once, Bunter!"
 "Rats!"

"I command you—"
 "Go and eat coke!"

There was a breathless pause. A hundred Greyfriars fellows stared on, wondering what Mr. Quelch would do.

As a matter of fact, he could do nothing. His cane, though very efficacious for dealing with Bunter, was of no use against a locked door. For a full minute he stood on the caravan step, crimson with wrath. Then he turned and descended and went back into the gates.

There was a gasp from the crowd as the Remove master vanished.

"First round to Bunter!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 From the little window of the caravan Billy Bunter grinned at the crowd of Greyfriars fellows. And, with many chuckles and chortles, they waited for the "next round."

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Go!

"DR. LOCKE!"
 "Mr. Quelch!"
 The two Greyfriars masters looked at one another. The Remove master had acquainted the Head with Bunter's "latest."

The next move was up to the Head. Mr. Quelch, by informing him of the state of affairs, had placed the matter in his hands. Mr. Quelch, in point of fact, was puzzled and perplexed and felt baffled. He was well aware that he had exceeded his powers in chasing Bunter away from the school gates a few days ago with the aid of the cane. Sternly and grimly as he had answered "Messrs. Link & Lynx" on the telephone, he was feeling secretly uneasy about it. And to take the responsibility of moving on the caravan was a still more serious step. Mr. Quelch, on reflection, preferred to leave it to the Head.

"This is—is—is outrageous!" said Dr. Locke.

"It is beyond all bounds!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Mr. Bunter is very much to blame for allowing his son this—this freedom by—"

"Extremely to blame, sir."

"Is it possible that—that Bunter is planning to camp—actually to camp—"

within sight of the school gates, Mr. Quelch?"

"Apparently so, sir."
 "This cannot be permitted, Mr. Quelch."

"Impossible, sir!"
 "Such conduct will be subversive of all discipline."

"Quite so."
 "Bunter must be ordered to depart instantly."

"I have ordered him to do so, sir; and I regret to say that he openly defies my orders."

"Incredible!" gasped the Head.
 Mr. Quelch gave a slight shrug of the shoulders. Nothing that the extraordinary Owl of the Remove might do seemed to him incredible. He was past being surprised by William George Bunter.

"But he must go, Mr. Quelch!"
 "Undoubtedly, sir!"

"The village policeman, perhaps—"
 Mr. Quelch coughed.

"That is the difficulty, sir. I doubt whether the police have the power to move on the caravan from a stretch of public land by the roadside. Of course, in the event of a disturbance, or of a fair being held, or anything of that kind, or of a very prolonged stay— But in the present circumstances, as Bunter would claim to be a holiday caravanner and—"

"Bless my soul!"
 Dr. Locke stroked his chin.

"Mr. Quelch, although Bunter no longer belongs to Greyfriars, a little personal chastisement would, I think be—"

"He has locked himself in the caravan, sir."

"Dear me!"
 Dr. Locke thought it out, the Remove master waiting. The Head decided at last to visit Bunter in person. The

sight of the august headmaster should surely bring the expelled junior to reason. Surely he would never dare, against the august commands of the Head himself, to continue this persecution—for it amounted to persecution.

Dr. Locke walked, slow and stately, down to the gates, and Mr. Quelch did not accompany him. The Remove master was quite glad to pass the matter on to the Head. He was feeling that William George Bunter was too much for him—much too much.

"The Head!"
 "Phew!"

"Now for the giddy circus!"
 The word passed round among the crowd of Greyfriars fellows gathered on the grass round Bunter's caravan.

Slow and stately, Dr. Locke passed through the crowd and reached the van. He halted facing the little window, at which Billy Bunter stood grinning.

"Ah! You are here, Bunter!" said the Head severely.

"Yes, sir!" said Bunter.

"What are you doing here, Bunter?"
 "Caravanning, sir."

"You cannot remain here in that—that vehicle, Bunter!"

"I'm ready to come back to school at once, sir," said Bunter. "I'm bound to obey your orders as my headmaster."

"I am no longer your headmaster, Bunter, and you cannot, as you should know very well, come back to the school."

"Very well, sir," said Bunter. "If you're no longer my headmaster, sir, may I inquire respectfully why you're giving me orders? And what right you have to give me any?"

There was a murmur among the Greyfriars fellows, and they smiled at one another. The Head was silent, and he seemed nonplussed. Really Billy Bunter was not, apparently, such a fool as he

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undoubtedly looked and had always been considered.

"You tell me I can't remain here, sir, in this van," pursued Bunter victoriously. "If you're my headmaster, sir, of course, I'm bound to do as you tell me. If you're not, sir, I'm bound to look on you simply as an interfering old gentleman!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Interfering old gentleman?"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head faintly.

"You've no right to interfere with me, sir, any more than any of those chaps, or anybody else," said Bunter. "Not unless you're my headmaster, sir. See?"

"You—you are impertinent, Bunter."

"So are you, sir," said Bunter cheerfully.

"What?"

"You're cheeking me, sir," said Bunter. "If I'm not a Greyfriars chap now, you've no right to call me names."

Dr. Locke gazed at Bunter speechlessly. Bunter was right; there was no doubt about that. If he was not a Greyfriars fellow he was quite outside the Head's jurisdiction. He had a right to talk to the Head as one independent citizen to another, and he was exercising that right. At that moment the Head undoubtedly wished that Bunter was still a Greyfriars fellow, so that he might have been given an exemplary flogging as a reward for exercising his rights of independent citizenship.

"Bunter," said the Head at last, "you do not appear to be aware of the—the unheard audacity and impudence of your present proceedings. You are expelled from Greyfriars, and a proper sense of the fitness of things should keep you from approaching the school again."

"I don't see it, sir."

"You will not be allowed to proceed like this, Bunter. If you do not depart you will be removed."

"Bosh!"

"What?"

"Bosh!"

"Bless my soul!" articulated the Head. "Did—did—did you say b-b-bosh, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir—bosh—utter bosh!" said the Owl of the Remove cheerily.

Dr. Locke gazed at him. Then, without a word more, he turned away. He made a commanding gesture to the breathless crowd of Greyfriars fellows.

"Go into gates at once! No Greyfriars boy is allowed to speak to Bunter. Go immediately!"

The crowd went in.

Dr. Locke followed them.

Billy Bunter, victorious—for the present, at least—was left alone in his glory.

He chuckled, and turned back from the caravan window to the little oil-stove in the van. A scent of frying sausages permeated the van and floated from the open window. While all Greyfriars discussed the amazing state of affairs, with many chuckles, and the Head and his staff puzzled over it, Billy Bunter sat down contentedly in his caravan to a high tea of sausages and chips, and was happy.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Up to Coker!

COKER of the Fifth was wrathful. Coker was indignant.

Cheeking a headmaster was, according to Coker, the limit. Of headmasters, as headmasters, Coker did not think very much as a rule. But Dr. Locke was Coker's headmaster, and of course that enhanced his importance considerably. Coker declared to Potter

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and Greene, in his study, that it was the limit, and that Greyfriars chaps oughtn't to allow their headmaster to be cheeked by a fag who had been kicked out of the school.

Bunter's caravan was still camped within full view of the school gates at tea-time. That looked as if Bunter was a fixture there.

The Head and the masters, apparently, did not know how to deal with him. Coker admitted that the legal aspect of the matter was obscure. But for law and legal aspects Horace Coker had an unbounded contempt.

Dr. Locke, being Coker's headmaster, was entitled to respect and obedience. If Bunter refused to toe the line, Bunter had to be made to toe the line, and blow the legal aspect of the matter! That was Coker's opinion.

Potter and Greene agreed, and so did several other seniors to whom Coker confided his views. Coker explained these views at full length, and with emphasis, over tea in the study.

Coker was standing the tea, which was ample. The other fellows were standing Coker's conversation, which was also ample.

But for once Coker was admitted to be right, and five or six of the Fifth agreed to back him up. The Head was apparently hampered by considerations of the legal aspect of the case; Bunter's Form master seemed powerless; the Sixth Form prefect could not act without official instructions, and official instructions from the Head were not forthcoming.

The Fifth Form chaps, not being prefects, did not need any official instructions. They could act on their own. No law enabled anybody to move on Bunter's caravan. But no law forbade a party of Fifth-Formers to "lark" with a caravanner's caravan.

After tea, therefore—all the good things in Coker's study having been disposed of—Coker & Co. sallied forward. Potter and Green, Hilton and Fitzgerald and Tomlinson, were in a merry mood; only Coker was serious. Coker was serious; he always took himself seriously, for what reason his friends had never been able to discover.

Coker led his little flock across the road, and across the grass, and halted at the caravan. The window was open, and Coker put his head in at it. Bunter was sitting in the van, slowly and methodically consuming the contents of a bag of jam-tarts. It was his second or third tea that afternoon, if not his fourth.

He grinned at Coker.

"Hallo, old man! Where did you get that face?" he asked.

"Face?" repeated Coker.

"Is it a face?" continued Bunter.

Horace Coker breathed hard.

"You've got to get out of this, Bunter."

"Rats!"

"You're not going to be allowed to hang on here and cheek my headmaster. I don't approve of it."

"Fathead!"

"What?"

"Fathead!" repeated Bunter. "You can't shift me. I've a right to camp here. If the Head tries to move me on, I'm going to ask the policeman to interfere. I'm within my rights."

"You haven't got a horse here," said Coker.

"I don't need one," grinned Bunter. "I'm camping here for a long time, you know. He, he, he!"

"You won't go?"

"No fear!"

"That does it!"

Horace Coker stepped back from the window.

"Take hold, you chaps," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The shafts of the van rested in the grass. Half a dozen sturdy Fifth-Formers picked them up and took a grip on them. They were quite easily able to pull the van along. There was, in fact, much more "beef" in half a dozen of the Greyfriars Fifth than in the old horse that had been hired to tow the caravan to its present resting-place. Billy Bunter gave a howl as his van jerked and shifted.

"I say, you fellows!" he roared.

"Get a move on!" said Coker.

The van jolted again. There was a crash inside as two or three articles pitched out of their places. The ground was uneven, and the caravan jolted and bumped wildly as the grinning Fifth-Formers tugged at it.

Bunter's fat face was framed in the little window. His eyes fairly glared behind his big spectacles.

"Let my van alone!" he bawled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky rotters!"

"Go it!" said Coker.

The van bumped and jolted off the grass out into the highway. There was a shout from the school gates.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Anybody seen a moving job?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter's going."

"I say, you fellows," yelled Bunter from the caravan window, "make those beasts leave my van alone! I say, Wharton, old chap, make that rotter Coker let go! I say, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate of the Sixth came down to the gates. He grinned at the sight of Bunter's van in tow with half a dozen Fifth-Formers tugging at it.

"Keep clear, you fellows!" he called out to the crowd of juniors swarming at the gates. "You're not to chip in, any of you."

"I say, Wingate, Coker's no right to move that van!" said Bob Cherry.

"That's Coker's business," said Wingate.

"Ye-e-es; but—"

"Keep clear! Get inside, too!"

Wingate interposed between the Remove fellows and the van. If the Removites had felt disposed to rust to the rescue, they had no chance now, with the captain of the school in the way.

The van jolted on down the road.

Wingate of the Sixth waved back any of the juniors who would have followed.

Billy Bunter's crimson face was framed in the van window, and he yelled to the Removites, but his voice died away down the road. Coker & Co. were going strong now, and the van had quite a speed on it.

"Exit Bunter!" grinned Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's jolly cheeky of Coker!" said Peter Todd. "He's no right to chip in. I think he'll hear from Messrs. Link & Lynx over this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Going—going," said Skinner, looking after the van—"going—going—gone!"

The caravan was gone!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Does It!

BILLY BUNTER blinked from the window of the caravan as it rolled along the road, in helpless wrath.

The Fifth-Formers grinned and chuckled as they rolled it along—excepting Coker, who was very serious. To

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caravan turned from the high-road into a lane, where there was a large pond at the corner. There Coker gave the signal to halt.

"Now, Bunter——"

"Beast!"

"Look here, you fat frog——"

"Yah!"

"You're clearing off," said Coker. "See?"

"Let my van alone!" howled Bunter. "What's it got to do with you, you cheeky, interfering rotter?"

"Lots!" said Coker. "I'm not allowing you to hang round my school—see? You've been bunked, and it's time for you to go. I've decided not to allow you to play the goat about here any longer."

"You've decided!" spluttered Bunter. "You meddling ass——"

"That's enough!" said Coker. "Now, are you going?"

"No!" yelled Bunter.

"Open the door of that van, and clear!" said Coker calmly. "I'm giving you the chance."

"Sha'n't!"

"Back it into the pond, you fellows!" said Coker.

"Eh! What?" exclaimed Potter.

"Back that van into the pond."

"But, I say——"

"You needn't say anything, Potter. Just do as I tell you!"

"But——" exclaimed Greene.

"Dry up, Greene, old man! You talk too much!" said Coker. "Here, I'll lend you a hand. Back away!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Tomlinson of the Fifth.

Coker lent a hand—a powerful hand. The caravan backed from the road, and the rear wheels went into the mud that bordered the pond.

There was a wild howl of alarm from Bunter.

"Stop it! You silly asses, chuck it!"

"Shove!" said Coker. "All together! Shove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The caravan went in deeper. The pond was over the wheels now, and the muddy waters washed the sides of the caravan. Coker & Co. pushed it out to the full length of the shafts, and then let the shafts drop into the water.

Billy Bunter blinked speechless from the window. The caravan rose like an island in the middle of the pond. Several horses, at least, would be needed to drag its wheels from the thick mud at the bottom of the pond. The vehicle began to settle down deeper, and the water washed just below the little window, and

began to creep in at the various cracks and interstices of the van, and to trickle round Bunter's feet.

"How do you like that?" asked Coker. "I gave you your chance, you know, and you wouldn't go."

"Beast!" howled Bunter.

"Hadn't you better clear?" asked Coker calmly. "My idea is that that van will soon be full of water, and you'll be washed out. Better get out while we're here to give you a hand."

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter.

The van gave a lurch in the mud, and the water washed in at the little window. Bunter gave a howl.

"Ow! I'm wet!"

"Better get moving!" suggested Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter realised that he had better get moving. The van was by no means watertight, and it was rapidly filling. The water washed round Bunter's fat knees, and it was rising fast to the level of the pond. When it reached that level it would be washing round Bunter's armpits. The Owl of the Remove realised that it was time to go.

Coker—the great Coker—had done it; the problem that had baffled the Head of Greyfriars and the Remove master, had been solved by Coker of the Fifth, in his usual masterly manner.

Bunter was now not only prepared to go, but he was in a great hurry to go. He made an effort to squeeze out of the caravan window.

But caravan windows were not planned for caravanners with a circumference like William George Bunter's.

The fat junior got out as far as his watchchain. He could not get any further.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Try the door!" grinned Potter.

"Wow!"

Bunter jerked himself back from the window, gasping. He sat down in the caravan, and the water washed round him. With a howl he scrambled up again, and plunged at the door.

He tore the door open, and the water of the pond fairly rushed in. The caravan was flooded from end to end, almost as high as Bunter's shoulders.

"Ow, ow! Grooogh!"

"I say," exclaimed Potter, in alarm. "You'd better not let him drown in there, Coker! There'll be a row if he's drowned."

"Oh, he won't drown!" said Coker cheerfully.

Bunter was taking care of that!

The fat junior came plunging out of the caravan, and he rolled in the pond, and came plunging and splashing ashore, through the clinging mud. He landed at the feet of the grinning Fifth-Formers.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Wow, wow! Ow! Grooogh!"

Coker smiled.

"Better run for it!" he said. "You'll catch a cold if you sit there, Bunter! Good-bye!"

"Ow! Beast!"

Bunter sat and gasped.

"Get a move on!" grinned Potter. "Do you want to catch a cold, you fat duffer?"

"Grooogh!"

"You'd better run a bit," said Coker.

"You'll really catch a cold if you sit still, wet like that. I'll start you!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as Coker of the Fifth caught him by a muddy collar and swung him to his feet.

"Are you going, Bunter?"

"Ow! No! Grooogh!"

"There's my boot——"

"Yaroooh!"

"And there——"

"Whooooop!"

Bunter started. He started at quite a good speed—there were great persuasive powers in Coker's boot.

"Ow, ow! Beast! Wow! Stop it! I'm going, ain't I?" yelled Bunter, as Coker dribbled him along the lane towards Friardale.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter put on speed. His fat little legs fairly twinkled as he fled.

Coker turned back as Bunter vanished on the horizon. He was smiling placidly.

"I've done it!" he remarked. "The Head won't thank me for this, but he'll be jolly pleased, all the same! Just a little hoss-sense—that was all that was wanted! I've done it!"

There was no doubt that Coker had done it. Greyfriars saw nothing more of Billy Bunter that day. Later in the day the owner of the hired caravan came along with a team of horses to pull it out of the pond. But Billy Bunter was not seen that day—or the next. Coker had done it, and the Greyfriars fellows were assured at last that they had seen the final exit of William George Bunter.

The Head undoubtedly heard of the drastic measures Coker had used. Mr. Quelch heard of them. Neither made any remark to Coker on the subject.

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Perhaps they were pleased—or, at least, relieved. They had been in a decidedly difficult position, and Coker had cut the Gordian knot. Bunter, at least, was gone.

Coker had done it, and he was pleased at having done it. He felt that he was the right fellow in the right place, and he wondered, as he had often wondered before, how Greyfriars would possibly have got on at all without him.

He had done it, and it did not occur to him at present that perhaps he had overdone it. That was a discovery he had yet to make.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Back Again!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. did not hear of Billy Bunter again till Monday.

Then they heard!

Some of the fellows had seen Mr. Clegg, of Friardale, at Greyfriars that Monday morning, and wondered what the village tuckshop keeper was visiting the school for. Skinner learned that he had been in to see the Head, and told the Removites, and they surmised and wondered what it meant. All Greyfriars knew that Bunter was staying at Uncle Clegg's in the village.

Mr. Clegg's visit had something to do with Bunter—the juniors could guess that.

But what its purport was they did not know until later. It was just before afternoon class that a closed taxicab rolled up the drive, and from innumerable wrappings inside it a fat face peered, and the word went round like wild fire that it was Bunter.

"Bunter—here!"

"Bunter—back again!"

The taxi stopped at the door of the school sanatorium.

Bunter was borne into that building.

He vanished from the curious eyes of the Greyfriars fellows.

In class that afternoon Mr. Quelch was so exceedingly tart that no one of his pupils ventured to ask him a question concerning Bunter's return, much as they desired information on the point.

But after class it leaked out, and all the school knew what had happened and the cause of Mr. Clegg's visit.

"It's just his cheek!" Coker of the Fifth told Potter and Greene. "Just his neck—just like a cheeky 'fag! He's caught this cold just to wedge into the school, you know! Just that!"

At which Potter and Greene chuckled. They did not suppose that Bunter's severe cold was a matter of choice with him.

The Head had been placed in quite a difficult position when Mr. Clegg had brought him the news that Bunter was laid up with a severe cold. Mr. Clegg had explained that Bunter couldn't be laid up in the room over his shop. There was no one to look after him, and the question of the necessary doctor's fees was not a question which Mr. Clegg was in the least inclined to deal with. Bunter was not in a state to travel on a long railway journey home. If the Head declined responsibility in the matter, Mr. Clegg suggested that at least he should pay for the hire of a cab to remove Bunter to the workhouse infirmary.

There really was no choice for Dr. Locke in the matter now, and he gave instructions for Bunter to be brought to the school sanatorium at once.

Mr. Clegg was undoubtedly glad to be clear of him. Bunter was not in a state to be glad about anything, his whole attention at present being occupied by sneezing, gasping, grunting, sniffing, snorting, and snuffling.

The next few days were not enjoyable ones to Billy Bunter.

The school doctor visited him, and earned Bunter's undying hatred and scorn by ordering a thin diet for him. Bunter's view was that he would recover rapidly on a diet chiefly of doughnuts and jam-tarts. The medical gentleman differed, and the medical gentleman had his way—perhaps fortunately for Bunter.

During those days the Remove fellows wondered what would be the outcome. Skinner averred that Bunter wouldn't recover at all until the Head consented to let him come back to Greyfriars. According to Skinner, it was all a dodge.

Undoubtedly, as Bunter began to get the better of that severe cold and his diet began to get a little less thin, he was in no hurry to get well. He asked plaintively to be allowed to see some of his old friends in the Remove—a request

which Mr. Quelch probably would have refused, but which the kind old Head granted at once. So Harry Wharton & Co. were admitted to see Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, I'm awfully bad!" said Bunter in a feeble, failing voice, as they stood round his bed.

But when the nurse moved out of hearing, his voice grew stronger, and he rather surprised the Famous Five by bestowing a fat wink on them.

"That old cat can't hear me, can she?"

"You fat bounder—"

"Of course I'm ill!" said Bunter. "A fellow couldn't get well on the grub they give me! Have you brought in anything?"

"No, ass!"

Bunter sniffed.

"You might have brought in a few jam-tarts! I thought you'd have sense enough to know why I asked to see you!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I suppose you've got some toffee, at least?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled.

"But there's another matter," went on Bunter. "Now I'm here I'm staying! I'm jolly well not going to get well and be bunked again! Is Quelch very ratty with me?"

"Yes, rather!"

"He's a beast, of course! Do you fellows think it would do any good if you all got together and requested him, as a special favour, to ask the Head to let me come back? Make it clear to him that the whole Form want me back very bad."

"But they don't!" said Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"The wantfulness is not terrific, my esteemed Bunter!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yah!"

"Look here, Bunter," said Harry Wharton seriously. "You jolly well deserved to be bunked, and you know it. You cheeked the Head till he really hadn't any choice in the matter. But we all know that you're more a born fool than anything else—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"And I dare say the Head knows it," said Harry. "If you really feel sorry for playing the goat and giving the Head and Quelch such a lot of trouble, tell them so and apologise decently, and I think it's quite likely that the Head may go easy with you—now you're here."

"You see, I wasn't going to be flogged," said Bunter, blinking up at the Famous Five. "And I'm jolly well not going to take a flogging! I'd rather be bunked—or almost rather!"

"Fathead!"

"But, after all, they couldn't lick a chap who's just been ill, could they?" said Bunter thoughtfully. "As for apologising, I'll apologise to the Head and Quelch and Gosling, the porter, if they want me to. Words don't cost anything, do they?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'll think that over!" said Bunter brightly. "That silly idiot Coker may have done me a good turn, after all! Sure you haven't got any toffee about you?"

"Quite sure!" grinned Nugent.

"Not even a bullseye?"

"Nunno."

"Then you can buzz off," said Bunter. And the chums of the Remove grinned and buzzed off, being quite as fed up with the interesting invalid as he could possibly be with them.

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The next day it was learned that the Head had visited Bunter in the sanatorium, doubtless at the Owl's request.

Dr. Locke was looking very thoughtful as he came away, and Skinner, who observed him, told the Remove fellows that, in his opinion, the Owl of the Remove had been pulling the old scout's leg.

Dr. Locke proceeded to Mr. Quelch's study. Bunter was the subject he came to discuss.

"I have seen Bunter, Mr. Quelch," he began.

"I trust he is now close upon recovery, sir?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, I—I think so. He has offered me a most profound apology for his disobedient and disrespectful conduct," said the Head. "He professes to be thoroughly ashamed of what he has done."

"Indeed, sir," said Mr. Quelch dryly.

"He has begged me to convey his apologies to you, Mr. Quelch, and to ask your pardon for him."

"Hem!"

Mr. Quelch coughed and the Head coughed.

"Bunter has certainly been most troublesome, Mr. Quelch. But we must remember that it was for no actual misdeed. It was for disobedience and impertinence that he was sent away from the school. These offences he is now sorry for. I have been thinking——"

Mr. Quelch was well aware in advance of what the Head had been thinking. His face was rather grim.

"I have been thinking, Mr. Quelch, that Bunter might be given another chance here. I am bound to consult you, as his Form master. But I trust you will concur in my view."

That way of putting it really left Mr. Quelch no choice.

He concurred.

The news soon spread through Greyfriars that Billy Bunter had come back to stay. Seniors and juniors alike marvelled at the result of the Owl's persistency. Evidently Bunter was not such a fool as he looked.

Coker of the Fifth felt the matter keenly. The great Horace imagined that he had been the direct cause of Bunter's removal from the gates of Greyfriars. In that, although against the law of the land, Coker of the Fifth had reckoned he had performed his duty.

And the very means employed to "shift" Bunter from his stronghold had resulted in his return to Greyfriars.

"It's rotten, you fellows!" confided Horace Coker suddenly.

"Is it?" asked Potter. "I thought the rabbit-pie extremely good."

"Idiot!" growled Coker. "I wasn't referring to the blessed pie."

"Oh!"

"I mean that fat rascal Bunter!" exclaimed Coker. "I'm not so certain that I ought to allow old Locke to let him come back to the school. Think of the bad impression it will make on the minds of those cheeky fags of the Remove."

"Hum!" said Potter, munching away at a generous portion of cake.

"Ha!" muttered Greene, devoting more attention to the rabbit-pie than to Coker's learned discourse.

"The Head ought to keep his end up and sack Bunter," growled Coker. "In fact, he ought to sack the whole blessed tribe of fags in the Remove!"

To that, with easy consciences, Potter and Greene felt constrained to add a fervent:

"Hear, hear!"

"I've a good mind to go and see Dr.

Locke and explain matters to him," said Coker thoughtfully. "What do you chaps think?"

"Ahem! I shouldn't if I were you, old man," advised Potter. "The Head—ahem—would be no doubt grateful for your advice, but—but——"



It was just before afternoon classes that a closed taxicab rolled up the drive and, from innumerable wrappings inside it, a fat face peered. Bunter was back! Looking a picture of woe, the fat junior was helped into the sanatorium. (See Chapter 14.)

"You see," said Greene vaguely, "I shouldn't, old man!"

"Dummies!" snapped Coker, rising to his feet. "I see a pair of fatheads! I'm going to Dr. Locke, anyway!"

"Go to Jericho if you like!" said Potter, but he was cautious enough to make the remark when Coker's broad back had disappeared on the other side of the study door.

Potter and Greene continued their tea.

Ten minutes later a doubled-up form crawled into the study.

It was Horace Coker!

Both his hands were tucked underneath his armpits, a look of anguish contorted his face, and peculiar sounds of woe escaped his lips.

"Ow—yow—grooough!"

That was a peculiar method of speech for Coker to adopt. And yet Potter and Greene understood. Evidently the Head had turned down Horace Coker's great suggestion. Equally evident he had looked upon that suggestion as savouring of gross impertinence and had rewarded Coker accordingly. The great man of the Fifth sank wearily into a chair and groaned.

"Yaroooooh! The silly old buffer! Yowp! Blow Bunter! Blow the dignity of the school! Yowp! I'm finished!"

The mighty Horace had washed his hands of the whole affair. Bunter's return would find no opposition in the shape of the burly Fifth-Formier. And Potter and Greene, although full of outward sympathy for their stricken study-mate, looked at each other—when Horace Coker had repaired to the dorm some time later—and murmured:

"Serve the silly ass right!"

Billy Bunter reappeared in the Remove Form room a few days later.

Harry Wharton & Co. and all the Remove fellows grinned when they saw him roll in.

Bunter was back again.

The "bunking" of Bunter was a thing of the past. The Owl of the Remove was a Greyfriars fellow once more, and it was to be hoped that his late experiences would be a lesson to him. One thing, at least, was fairly certain. Whatever might be Bunter's sins of commission and omission, he was never likely to risk being "bunked" from Greyfriars again.

THE END.

(There is another splendid story of Harry Wharton & Co. next Monday, boys, entitled "The Schoolboy Financier"; It features Fisher T. Fish—the cute American junior—deep in another of his wonderful money-making schemes. Don't miss it!)

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ELEVEN LITTLE FOOTER BOYS wanted at the ground, management all hot and bothered say they can't be found! Multitude of spectators, faces dark of hue, loudly demand the game to start, what does the management do?



The Trials of Storrydene Villa!

By WALTER EDWARDS.

No. 5.

HELD TO RANSOM!

The Decision!

IT was in moments of great mental stress and perturbation that Sir Aubrey Allen jammed his gold-rimmed monocle into position, and the receipt of an amazing document signed by the "Starlight Boys" was an occasion that called for the single eyeglass.

Distorting his fleshy features into a grimace, the portly, over-dressed baronet screwed his monocle into place and glared down at the offending missive, at the same time striving valiantly to articulate.

Speech, however, was beyond him.

It was the day on which Storrydene Villa was to play Benstone United in a local Derby, yet everything pointed to the fact that the great game would have to be postponed.

Setting out by charabanc, "Hefty" Hebble and his men had left the Villa clubhouse at about nine o'clock; yet at two o'clock—half an hour before the time for the kick-off—nothing had been seen or heard of them. Eleven stalwart footballers had vanished as though into thin air.

News had come through to the effect that the charabanc had been found out at Brampton, miles beyond Benstone, but of the missing players there was no sign.

A letter addressed to Sir Aubrey Allen, the "big noise" of the Storrydene Club, had been delivered at the Benstone United ground at a quarter-past two, and it was this letter that had robbed the baronet of speech.

"Of—of all the nerve!" he gasped at length. "Read that, Dixon! Read it, I say! Of all the nerve!"

Spudge Dixon, the Villa's trainer, took the letter and read it aloud:

"Your men are safe for the time being, but something unpleasant will happen to them unless you carry out our instructions to the letter! We are holding your eleven to ransom, and on your promise to pay one thousand pounds they will be released in time to play against Benstone this afternoon. But don't give that promise lightly, Sir Aubrey Allen, for we do not take kindly to treachery. To play us false is to sign your own death-warrant! Show yourself upon the balcony of the clubhouse, and if you are holding a white handkerchief in your hand we shall know that you promise to pay. Fail to put in an appearance, and Hebble and his men are doomed. Arrangements for the payment of one thousand pounds will be made during the next twenty-four hours. THE STARLIGHT BOYS."

Spudge's deep voice died away, and the amazed expression upon his lean features was almost comical to behold. Tall, lean-limbed, and completely bald, he looked like a human interrogation-mark as he stared down at the sheet of paper.

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"I know this sort of thing happens in books," he declared, but—

"This thing is happening in everyday life—our life!" put in Sir Aubrey testily. "We don't want a long disquisition, Dixon! What's to be done? That's the question. We should be on the field in eleven minutes!"

"That's so," nodded Ralph Peglar, the Benstone manager, his face pale and worried. "Something's got to be done, and done quickly! The ground is packed and the gates are closed!"

A muffled roar of thousands of voices floated in through the open window.

"Up, the Villa!"

"Come along, the boys!"

"Now, then, Benstone!"

"The whole thing can be put in a nutshell," said Spudge, turning to Sir Aubrey. "You are either going to cough up a thousand of the best, or you aren't! Personally, I'd see the Starlight Boys to blazes before I'd part with a counterfeit rouble!" And then his cadaverous features became very grave. "I suppose our lads aren't in any real danger? That bit about Hebble and the other lads being doomed is all bluff, of course."

Ralph Peglar stroked his lean chin reflectively.

"Perhaps—and perhaps not," he said. "There are some pretty ugly yarns about the Starlight Boys. They've fairly set the place alight. No one is safe from them—not if they have a roll of notes, anyway. Yes; they're 'boys' all right—a damned pest to the neighbourhood!"

"You think this is their work?" asked Sir Aubrey.

"I wouldn't be surprised," returned the Benstone manager. "But time's getting on, sir! What are we going to do?"

Allen remained in deep thought for some seconds, his fingers twisting his waxed moustache. And then he came to a decision.

"Let the scoundrels do their worst!" he snapped. "Who are they that they should dictate to me—a baronet? The police will soon find Hebble and the others!"

"But what about the game?" asked Peglar anxiously, the impatient voice of the crowd coming plainly to his ears.

"The match must be postponed," said Sir Aubrey. "Send a few groundsmen round with notice-boards. You will have to return the gate-money!"

This seemed to be the simple way out of the difficulty, but Ralph Peglar had a long experience of crowds and of mob psychology. The greater part of the "fans" would take their disappointment like sportsmen, but there would still be the hoodigan element to contend with—that handful of roughs who always snatch at the chance of creating a scene.

Spudge also saw the rocks ahead, and he decided that a scratch match would be better than no match at all.

He acted with characteristic promptitude.

"There's a bare chance of saving the situation," he said, turning to the Benstone manager. "Have you got a megaphone?"

Peglar nodded, bewilderment stamped upon his troubled features.

"Of course!" he said.

"Then trot along and tell the crowd that something unforeseen has happened. Appeal to 'em as sportsmen—you know the kind of thing—and ask 'em to wait until three o'clock for the kick-off!"

"But—"

"Do as I tell you!" grunted Spudge. "And now I'm going to use your phone!"

Followed by two pairs of amazed eyes, the elongated trauffer took three giant strides across the carpet and sat down at the desk.

"Hallo!" he shouted, almost deafening the telephone-operator. "What's that? Don't bawl into the mouthpiece? What do you expect me to do? Use the deaf-and-dumb alphabet or speak in shorthand? I want Central 39! Yes!"

Central 39 was the telephone number of Storrydene Villa F.C.

The "Has-Beens!"

IT was on the stroke of three o'clock when the Benstone eleven filed across the broad cinder track and trotted on to the field, and the wild roar that greeted the red-and-white jerseys suggested that the fans were in the best of spirits.

The thirty minutes' wait had passed pleasantly enough, the Benstone Silver Band having enlivened the proceedings by playing popular airs; and the fact that a bleak wind was sweeping round the ground, and that banks of black clouds were drifting up from the south, did nothing to damp the prevailing enthusiasm.

Ralph Peglar was popular with the Benstone folk, and he had made his appeal in a manner that had met with an immediate and whole-hearted response.

The chilly air quivered with a riot of sound as Noble, the home team's skipper, dropped the ball and punted it towards a vacant goal.

"Here they are!"

"Up, the United!"

"Better late than never, lads!"

That greeting was deafening; tumultuous, a thunderous outburst that must have been heard for miles round, yet it was little more than a whisper compared with the vocal explosion that rocked the packed ground when the visitors showed themselves.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!"

"Look at 'em!"

The mighty roar of laughter threatened to split the skies, for Spudge Dixon and his merry men presented a spectacle that would have brought a smile to the countenance of a dyspeptic Sphinx.

Spudge was no Adonis at any time, but,

clad in a roomy black jersey and a pair of skimpy shorts, he looked like something that had stepped straight out of a comic paper. His legs were long and thin and as shapely as pipstems, but what they lacked in beauty they made up in usefulness, for they reached just to the ground. His arms, also long and thin, dangled limply by his sides, as though he had no control over them; and his swan-like neck, with its prominent Adam's apple, supported an egg-shaped head that was innocent of hair.

Spudge carried himself with dignity, however, and he turned a gentle, reproving eye upon the "fans," who were roaring with laughter.

"This mirth is unseemly, Richard," he said, turning to the individual by his side, a squat, bald-headed gentleman who sported a red beard.

Following on the trainer's heels was a fat, clean-shaven man who must have weighed at least seventeen stone, and the players who trailed away in the rear are also worthy of mention.

They must be taken collectively, however. There were short men, tall men, excessively thin men, and excessively fat men, but there was not one who might have been mistaken for a professional footballer.

Yet they had all turned out for Storrydene Villa in the dim and distant long ago.

Spudge and his warriors were "has-beens," players who had passed their prime and stayed on with the old club, either as clerks or groundsman; and each season they were solemnly signed on as playing members, the harmless custom having been inaugurated by the eccentric Francis Gordon, a former chairman.

The reserves being away at Derrington, Spudge Dixon had done the only thing possible—he had phoned through to Richard Bell, the cashier, and told him to get a team of "has-beens" together. Having recovered from his initial amazement, Bell had collected the old pro's, hustled them into a couple of cars and rushed them off to Benstone. It had wanted five minutes to the hour when the queer collection of humanity had hurried into the dressing-room and commenced to change.

The air was still filled with laughter as Spudge took a drop-kick and sent the ball winging away towards a vacant goal; and a cry of amazement broke from thousands of throats as the leather bounced on the goal-line and found the net.

"Goal!"

"Well done, Spudge!"

The crowd was quite in the dark as to why the farcical changes had been made in the regular team, yet it soon settled down to the new order of things as Spudge and his men spread out and started to test "Tiny" Hone.

Hone had been a great "keeper" in his day, and he was still remarkably nimble for a man of his bulk. The easy manner in which he dealt with the bombardment of rasping shots made the Storrydene "fans" roar their admiration. The thousands of spectators remembered the Tiny of old, when the burly custodian had been the hero of every junior team in the country; and it pleased them to think that those great hands were still safe.

The referee knew the true state of affairs, and he was wearing a broad smile as he strolled on to the field with his linesmen.

The visiting players certainly presented an amusing spectacle, yet none of them seemed to have lost their cunning in the matter of trapping and shooting. The pace would tell, however, and it seemed reasonably certain that the visitors would be run off their legs by the youthful Benstone side.

The light footer rig, the adulation of the "fans," and the old familiar boomph! of bouncing leather seemed to rejuvenate the "has-beens," and many were the famous touches—a trick of shooting, a subtle pass—that showed themselves from time to time.

Meeting in the centre of the field, Spudge Dixon, Noble, and the referee exchanged hearty grips and wide grins, and the crowd shouted with laughter at the striking contrast, for Spudge, very lean and very tall, towered above the Benstone skipper, a stocky little fellow of five feet six.

The din died down somewhat as the coin was flicked into the air, and Mr. Dixon did a neat step-dance when the luck of the toss went to him.

A chilly breeze was blowing straight down the ground, so Spudge made the home side face it; and pandemonium reigned once more as the teams lined up for the kick-off.

Wild shouts broke from all sides of the enclosure.

"You've only got ten men!"

"You've gorn and lost a player, Spudge!"

"Where's your eleventh man?"

A picture of comical bewilderment, the elongated trainer made a thorough search through his pockets, and he shook his head dolefully as he failed to unearth the missing player.

He turned to the grinning referee.

"I've lost a footballer," he explained, "so if you see one lying about you'll know it belongs to me!"

The other players broke into a shout of laughter, and it was at this moment that all eyes turned to a trim figure that was bounding across the turf.

"It's Voyce!"

"Good old Peter!"

Voyce, a first eleven player, recently placed on the "sick list," had turned out—but against doctor's orders!

First Blood!

THE brown-eyed youngster looked anything but an invalid as he trotted lightly over the turf, and his name was upon every lip as he took up his position in the forward line. Spudge Dixon was on his left, and Brown, the man with the red beard and hairless dome, was on his right. Hone was between the sticks, and the two backs were Brayne and Simpson; the halves were Guttridge, Mellon, and Gilly. Corby was on the right wing, whilst Bucknell operated on the extreme left.

Benstone pinned their faith in the following:

Cantral, goal; Boot and Greig, backs; Lavington, Street, Parkinson, halves; Betts, Noble, Crane, Goyden, and Debby, forwards.

The riot of unharmonious sound died away to a murmur as the referee studied his watch and placed the whistle to his lips.

Pheep!

The game was set in motion.

There were "fans" in that vast crowd who imagined that there would be but one side in it from the very outset, so these inspired prophets received something like a shock when Peter Voyce took the ball off Noble's toe, dodged Lavington's wild rush, and set Corby going with a perfect pass. The winger was a tall, melancholy individual with a wealth of fair hair, and he quickly proved that his sedentary occupation of the past year or so had done nothing to impair the turn of speed for which in the past he had been famous. His long legs carried him over the ground in smooth, effortless fashion, and he seemed to have not the slightest difficulty in evading a bull-like rush by Booth. Unlike Greig, his partner, Boot believed in a policy of force, and it went ill with any unfortunate forward who received the full power of one of those devastating charges.

To be charged by Boot was like trying conclusions with a baby tank.

"Look out, Corby!"

It was a sudden spurt that saved Corby from probable annihilation, and the crowd roared lustily as the tall fellow shot away towards the Benstone goal, his long, fair hair flying like a mane.

Boot, meanwhile, had blundered forward and sprawled upon his hands and knees, his face skimming the surface of a muddy patch; and the yell of laughter that greeted his downfall struck him as being uncalled for and out of place. Personally, he could see nothing even faintly humorous in the incident.

He was scowling as he scrambled to his feet and wiped the mud from his face, but the crowd had no eyes for him.

Corby was the man of the moment.

"In with it, lad!"

"Shoot!"

"Bang it in!"

Greig was already upon the winger, and Corby sent the Storrydene folk into a state of mild hysteria when he tricked the back, avoided a rush by Street, and took a smashing shot at goal.

Cantral—dark-eyed, dark-haired, and alert—was on the spot, and he was a graceful figure as he leapt across the goalmouth and gathered the ball in his safe hands. But he was not prepared for what happened a moment later.

He was about to clear when Peter Voyce appeared as mysteriously as a genie and pretended to rush him, and Cantral, losing his head, fumbled with the ball. This was Peter's opportunity. Darting forward, he

hooked the leather out of the fumbling fingers, and then dodged nimbly aside as the goalie flung himself through the air. The vast ground rocked with cheers as Peter, in leisurely fashion, walked over the goal-line and opened the scoring for his side.

"Goal!"

"Well done, lad!"

Spudge Dixon and the other players were just as excited as the fans, and it was not until Peter squared up and threatened them with violence that the brown-eyed youngster was allowed to make his way up the field.

The possibility of winning the game against the redoubtable United had not even occurred to Spudge, but now his eyes were shining as he placed a lean arm round Peter's shoulders and grinned down at the youthful professional.

"Well done, young sir!" he said. "Will you permit one so unworthy as myself to shake hands with a future international?"

Peter was slightly flushed as he shook hands with the eccentric fellow; for what boy had not dreamed of playing for his country?

A glance at the set faces of Noble and his men suggested that they no longer regarded the game against the Storrydene has-beens as a capital "rag," and no sooner was play resumed than little Goyden pushed the ball past Spudge Dixon, and sent Debby off along the line.

Taking the pass in his stride, Debby out-distanced Gilly and made for the corner-flag, and Simpson, burly and ponderous, was able to do nothing against the nimble-footed winger. Debby positively danced round the big fellow, and it soon became obvious that he was "playing to the gallery."

And the local fans had something to say about it.

"Get rid of it, Debby!"

"Don't mess about, Debby!"

The winger, however, did mess about, and he was smiling in his superior fashion as Spudge rushed to Simpson's aid. Getting to close quarters, the elongated trainer gave Debby a gentle charge. An excited yell broke from the crowd as the amazed winger went staggering across the grass and collapsed into the arms of a Press photographer who was kneeling near the corner-flag.

Swinging round, Spudge prepared to clear, but little Goyden, the inside-right, was altogether too quick for him. Taking the ball off Spudge's toe, Goyden darted away towards the Storrydene goal, and the only person who did not display a trace of excitement was Tiny Hone, the goalkeeper.

Watching with polite interest, he yawned as Goyden pushed the ball through Brayne's bow legs, but he crouched ever so slightly as the winger swung his right foot and let drive.

Boomph!

Flying with the speed of a projectile, the ball flashed towards the top right-hand corner of the net, and a wild yell broke from the crowd as Tiny shot out a tremendous hand and held the ball in a vice-like grip. He was given no time in which to clear, however, for little Goyden was on top of him. Tight-lipped and bright-eyed, the diminutive forward hurled himself against that seventeen stone of sinew. Tiny was still wearing his famous smile as he caught the winger in mid-air, grasped the front of his jersey, and held him out at arm's-length.

A thunderous roar of laughter reverberated round the enclosure, of course, for there was something decidedly funny about Tiny holding Goyden in one hand and a ball in the other. It looked as though complications might set in as Crane and Noble rushed at the grinning giant.

Calm and unhurried, Tiny dealt with the situation in leisurely fashion, for he raised his mighty arms above his head, and coolly tipped both Goyden and the ball over the crossbar!

The Warning!

GEORGE GOYDEN was a very surprised young man as he hung to the goal-net and peered down at the grinning Tiny.

"I suppose you think that's funny?" he demanded truculently.

The goalkeeper made no reply to the trenchant question, but the thunder of laughter that echoed round the ground made it quite clear that the crowd, at any rate, saw something humorous in the situation.

"Come along, old man!" smiled Tiny

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Hone. "Let me give you a hand. There's no harm done."

Goyden glowered.

"No harm done, you—you big idiot!" shouted the little fellow. "I might have broken my blessed neck!"

"Never mind," smiled Tiny. "A broken neck is a sure cure for toothache!"

Goyden was muttering as he allowed Tiny to assist him to the ground, and it was obvious that he still felt very sore about the whole business. He had all a little man's dislike of ridicule.

"I'd knock you down if you weren't an old man!" he blazed fiercely, glaring up at the giant.

"Pray forgive the lad, George!" begged Spudge Dixon. "You can see he's delicate!"

Anybody less delicate than Tiny Hone it would have been difficult to imagine, so the trainer's remark brought another shout of laughter from the players.

"Come on, you fellows!" put in the referee. "We've already wasted too much time!" He turned to Goyden, a look of mock severity upon his fine face. "And no more of those monkey tricks, my lad!"

This was the last straw, of course, and Goyden swallowed hard; but he was compelled to bottle up his righteous indignation as the whistle shrilled and Debby took the corner-kick. Describing a perfect arc, the ball dropped into the midst of the seething knot of players in the goal-mouth, and it was the ungloved fist of Tiny that thudded against the leather and sent it winging away towards the centre-line.

The Benstone eleven settled down after this, pressing with a determination and vigour that kept the play in the visitors' half; yet half-time arrived, and they had not managed to equalise. This state of affairs was largely due to the efforts of Peter Voyce and Tiny Hone, for the latter—even in his prime—had never put up a finer performance. Cool, unruffled, and smiling, he was unbeatable, for time after time he was called upon to deal with shots that appeared to be unstoppable.

The whole team came in for an ovation as they moved across the field towards the dressing-room, but it was Tiny and Peter who were singled out for individual praise.

The gruelling game had taxed the "has-beens," for they were breathing hard as they filed along the corridor and entered their dressing-room. They forgot their distress, however, when they found Sir Aubrey Ailen waiting for them. The portly baronet beamed with great good humour as he jammed his monocle into position and ran his little eyes over the scratch eleven.

"You fellows have done well, remarkably well," he declared, his manner slightly pompous.

"And what about Hebble and the others?" put in Peter Voyce. "Is there any news of them?"

"Not a word," returned the baronet. "I've not mentioned the matter to the police, for the whole thing may be a stupid hoax, and to be the victim of a hoax is—er—most undignified for a man in my position! As to that infamous letter I received from the Starlight Boys, I shall treat that with the contempt that it deserves! That, also, may be part of the hoax! Anyway, hoax or no—"

The baronet's voice ceased abruptly, for at that moment a brick crashed against the window and smashed it into dozens of pieces, and the missile missing Sir Aubrey's head by less than an inch, thudded against the wall and dropped at Peter Voyce's feet. Stooping, the youngster picked up the brick and found that a note was attached to it, and the envelope was addressed to Sir Aubrey Ailen.

"The letter is for you, Sir Aubrey," said Peter, snapping the thin twine that held the missive in place. "It came by special messenger!"

The "special messenger" slipped from his fingers as he spoke, the heavy brick just missing the baronet's toe as it thudded to the floor.

"Be careful, you young idiot!" shouted Sir Aubrey, skipping backwards and barging into Spudge Dixon. "Here, give it to me, confound you!"

Stooping quickly, Peter placed the brick in the baronet's podgy hand.

"Not that, you idiot!" shouted the infuriated man, hurling the brick across the dressing-room. "The letter!"

"Sorry," murmured Peter. And Sir Aubrey snatched at the envelope.

"There are occasions," declared the great man acidly, "when you forget yourself, Voyce! You are not dealing with one of your fellow professionals, you know. I am chairman of Storrydene Villa, whilst you are merely a young and obscure member of the First Eleven! Pray do not lose sight of that fact!"

"The 'bird,' lad!" grinned Spudge.

The "young and obscure" youngster flushed slightly as Sir Aubrey, with a black scowl, ripped open the envelope and extracted a neatly-written note.

Then came the explosion.

"The scoundrels! The impudent, brass-faced, threatening scoundrels!" roared Sir Aubrey, rolling the sheet of paper into a ball and grinding it beneath the heel of his patent-leather shoe. "They shall pay dearly for this business!"

"What is it, Sir Aubrey?" asked Spudge Dixon.

"That is my business!" snapped the baronet. "Meanwhile, it is time you people took the field again. And mind you keep your one goal lead!"

The referee appeared at this moment.

"You chaps ready?" he asked.

The short interval had been wasted, of course, but the scratch eleven nodded good-humouredly, and no word was said as they filed past Sir Aubrey and left the dressing-room.

"As I have remarked before," rumbled Spudge Dixon, "Sir Strawberry is a nice little thing to have about the house! He's as free of gratitude as a frog is of feathers, and he's so thick-skinned that he makes the hide of a rhinoceros look like wet blotting-paper! I have spoken!"

Scarcely had the door closed than the baronet picked up the offending note and re-read it, his fleshy features purple, his hands shaking.

"Final warning!" ran the missive. "You have thought fit to defy us, Sir Aubrey Ailen, so beware! You will hear from us within the next twelve hours."

"THE STARLIGHT BOYS."

The Intruder!

"TAKE that muck away, girl!" snapped Sir Aubrey Ailen, skating a plate of soup across the fine damask tablecloth. "And tell Mrs. Potts that she can clear out unless she can prepare food that is fit for human consumption! The lukewarm liquid that is masquerading as clear soup is fit only for the swill-tub! Go on, girl! Tell her, with my compliments! Don't stand there gaping like a codfish with adenoids!"

Sir Aubrey was a gentleman who believed in doing himself well, yet he seemed to have lost his appetite on the evening that followed the scratch game against Benstone United.

The United had been leading by three goals to one when a thick brown fog descended like a curtain, blotting out everything and bringing the game to an abrupt conclusion; yet this circumstance should not have put the baronet off his food. He was a gourmand rather than a gourmet, it being his custom to help himself liberally to everything that was set before him; yet on this Saturday evening he had refused hors d'œuvre and had libelled his cook's excellent soup.

There was obviously something wrong with Sir Aubrey Ailen.

Sitting quite still in his roomy chair, a pudgy hand resting upon his napkin, he stared fixedly into space, his mind running upon the amazing events of the past few

(Continued on next page.)



OUR FIGHTING FLEET!

A chatty article about the subject of this week's splendid Free Plate,
H.M. PATROL BOAT "P" 52.

By **"JACKSTAFF"**

(The well-known Naval writer).

"P" boats, as the patrol boats are more commonly termed, do not fill a very big place in the Navy now. War needs brought them into existence, and when these ceased the boats were relegated to a secondary position. As you will see from this week's Fine Art Plate they have a peculiar shape, which makes them at a distance appear like a submarine at the surface. This resemblance was given them designedly. "P" boats were constructed as submarine chasers, and in that capacity took a considerable part in the anti U-boat campaign. Their bow is of specially hardened steel, so that they can

destroy a submarine by ramming it. When "on the hunt" they would watch for an enemy submarine to come to the surface and then go full tilt at her. If the blow got home that finished the submarine.

As the P boat is of shallow draught torpedoes would pass under her, and she could go into waters near shore that would not be deep enough for larger vessels. Having but little "top hamper" she could not be seen clearly at any great distance, and that made her an exceedingly difficult target to hit. Against the guns of a submarine she would be practically immune, as these have not sufficient elevation to "pick her up."

Unless a warship's guns are high above the water, or can be elevated to a high angle, they will not carry far. Having a broad, cut-away stern, something like the tail of a beaver, the P boat is remarkably nimble. She can turn quickly. Owing to her low free board the sea washes over her to such an extent, if the weather be at all rough, that the boat herself is almost invisible. One might think that this would make her an uncomfortable craft in a sea way. As a matter of fact, these boats can face almost any sort of weather. Many of them were included in the famous Dover Patrol, and used to tramp up and down the Straits searching for enemy submarines, day and night, in storm and calm, with the regularity of a policeman on his beat. Some of them were "built up" in such a fashion that they looked like merchant-vessels.

These camouflaged P's used to be sent with trading convoys to act as protectors to them. As a result of high upper works being piled on a light draught this particular kind of P boat rolled worse than any other sort of ship on the seas. An enemy submarine seeing one of them wallowing about in apparent helplessness would come up to attack her, whereupon the P boat would promptly bare her teeth, and the submarine had to "dip" quickly or there was an end of her. P boats displace only 613 tons, and are 230 feet long. They can throw depth charges to destroy submarines and also lay mines. As speed goes they are not quick movers, being capable of travelling at only about 20 miles an hour.

But they are very handy for auxiliary purposes, such as fetching and carrying, and are generally employed on that work. Several of them are "on the staff" of the Anti-Submarine School at Portland, an establishment that teaches our sailors the most scientific methods of dealing with hostile under water craft.

Tiny was still wearing his famous smile as he caught the winger in mid-air, grasped the front of his jersey, and held him out at arm's length. A thunderous roar of laughter reverberated round the packed enclosure. "Good old Tiny!" (See page 23.)



hours. Slowly, by scarcely perceptible degrees, his heavy jaw hardened into a mould of obstinacy.

"Let the hounds do their worst," he muttered. "I'm ready for 'em!"

He was very disturbed, nevertheless, for he had dismissed his first theory—that the notes from the Starlight Boys were all part of a colossal hoax. There was a deeper significance in the mysterious disappearance of Hefty Hebble and the other players, yet it seemed incredible—ludicrous—that eleven sturdy young men could have been kidnapped in broad daylight. Such a thing would have seemed far-fetched even in fiction.

Sir Aubrey had not troubled to inform the police until after the match had been abandoned, and a wave of angry blood mantled his cheeks as he recalled the brusque and imperious manner in which Detective-Inspector Dorland had dealt with him. He—Sir Aubrey Allen—might have been an ordinary citizen from the way in which he had been questioned! Dorland, the impertinent jack-in-office, seemed to forget that he was talking to a magistrate and a baronet! And he had gone so far as to say that Sir Aubrey had been guilty of grave negligence in not having reported the affair at once, instead of waiting until the evening.

"Things are coming to a pretty pass when an officious policeman is allowed to throw his weight about," mused Sir Aubrey, vowing to get his own back on Dorland. "I'll have the hound reduced!" he muttered.

His next course arrived at this moment, the maid placing a grilled sole before her master.

"What's this?" snapped the baronet, prod-ding viciously at the inoffensive fish.

"Sole, sir."

"Boot or shoe?" barked Sir Aubrey amiably, flicking the silver dish across the table. "Take it away! And, listen, girl! I don't wish to be disturbed. Understand? I'm not at home to anybody! And, girl!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Should Detective-Inspector Dorland call, tell him that I'm too busy to see him!"

Nodding dumbly, the pale-faced maid left the room and closed the door, and Sir Aubrey, a temperate man in the ordinary way, poured himself a generous measure of neat spirit from the decanter.

"I'm ready for 'em," he declared, having consumed his drink; and then he started violently and turned his head. He was seated with his back to the bay-window, and it was a slight movement behind the heavy easement curtains that had attracted his attention.

"It must be the wind," he muttered, half rising from his chair; and a gasp of fear escaped him as a slim hand appeared between the curtains and he found himself staring down the bluish barrel of an American automatic.

"Stay where you are, Sir Aubrey Allen!" came the warning, in a grating, nasal voice. "It is my custom to shoot first and make apologies afterwards; but an apology isn't

much good to a dead man. I advise you—if one may be excused for advising a person of your importance—to do nothing that will send a bullet crashing into your brain!"

The baronet could not see the speaker, but the voice and that steady, slim hand warned him against doing anything rash.

"Wh—what's the meaning of this outrage?" he demanded, and he scarcely recognised his own voice.

"We mentioned that you would hear from us within twelve hours," said the man behind the curtains.

Again the baronet gasped, and the blood drained out of his face until he looked ghastly. His brain was whirling, yet instinctively he played for time.

"Then—then your notes were not part of a hoax?" he asked. "I thought the whole thing was a joke."

"Hebble and the others don't think so," put in the nasal voice. "But we are wasting time, Sir Aubrey Allen!"

The barrel of the automatic moved ever so slightly as the portly baronet moved uneasily in his chair.

"Don't try it!" came the warning. "I shall shoot to kill!"

"But—but that would be murder!"

"Exactly!" said the man with the gun. "I wish to have a few words with you, so there is no reason why I shouldn't sit down! As for you, make one suspicious movement, and I shall let daylight into you!"

Slowly, very slowly, the heavy curtains parted, and Sir Aubrey's uninvited guest came into the circle of light thrown by the shaded lamp on the table. He was a man a little above medium height, but the baronet could not hazard a guess as to his age. Dressed in a black caped cloak that reached almost to his ankles, he seemed to glide across the thick carpet, and his broad-brimmed hat threw a deep shadow over his features. Leaning forward, the baronet peered beneath the wide brim, and he started when he found that a black mask reached down to the stranger's mouth.

Perfectly at ease, the gunman seated himself opposite his goggle-eyed host, and Sir Aubrey was conscious of dark, reptilian eyes that gleamed through the slits of the mask.

The whole business was like a scene out of a melodrama, yet that aspect did not occur to Allen as he sat statuesque in his chair. He was very alive to his peril, and that the man with the gun had thought fit to array himself in the manner of a mediæval conspirator did not lessen that peril.

"You have come to suggest terms?" ventured Sir Aubrey.

"I have come to dictate terms!" amended his visitor.

"You still hold the players to ransom?"

"We do," returned the sinister figure in black.

"And you demand a thousand pounds for their release?"

"We demand two thousand pounds," came the quiet answer. "Our price has gone up—and it will continue to do so!"

Sir Aubrey was sick with fear, but the mere thought of losing two thousand pounds brought a stubborn set to his heavy jaw.

"And what if I refuse to be bled?" he demanded, with a return of his usual truculent manner. "What if I refuse?"

The man with the gun shrugged.

"The direct outcome of such suicidal idiocy will be a neat obituary notice!" came the grating reply. "Sir Aubrey Allen, the well-known sportsman and philanthropist, will be found dead in his dining-room, and everything will point to suicide! I shall arrange the necessary details, Sir Aubrey!"

There was something strangely callous in the statement, and the baronet shuddered. He knew that the gunman was making a plain statement of fact.

"Then tell me exactly what happened," he said. "I am at your mercy, so there is no harm in my knowing."

"That's so," agreed the stranger, placing the automatic upon the table—and within easy reach. "Don't do anything rash, by the way!" he cautioned, the reptilian eyes behind the mask gleaming. "It was one of the Starlight Boys who drove your charabanc this morning, and it was arranged that he should turn down Tumbly Hill instead of going on to Benstone. The Boys were wait-

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ing for your men, and quiet persuasion, in the shape of half a dozen guns, convinced Hebble and the others that something unpleasant would happen if they put up a fight. Well, we took the players into Beech Coppice and tied them up to trees; then, having gagged them, we left two of the Boys in charge and drove the charabanc out as far as Brompton, some miles the other side of Benstone. Here we left the car, and I've no doubt that the intelligent police are searching that part of the country at this very moment. They've got a rotten night for it, haven't they? You can't see a hand before your nose!"

"And the players are still in Beech Coppice?" asked Sir Aubrey, leaning forward eagerly, his shaking hand upon his table-napkin.

His guest nodded.

"That's so," he drawled.

And then he shot his hands above his head, for peeping through the folds of his napkin was the muzzle of a revolver.

"The tables are turned, I think!" smiled Sir Aubrey, his expression cruel and gloating. "Keep your hands where they are, my friend, or I shall take a leaf out of your book and let daylight into you! And now we'll have a look at you!"

Rising without haste, he walked round the table and snatched at the black mask, and the next moment the revolver dropped from his nerveless fingers and he staggered backwards.

"Nugent!" he breathed in a husky whisper. "My own son!"

War to the Knife!

NUGENT BEASLEY AILEN looked quite at ease as he leaned back in his chair and smiled across at his father. He was unusually pale, perhaps, but the fact that he had been unmasked did not seem to trouble him in the least.

Sir Aubrey was shaking and pallid, and it was obvious that he could not believe that this amazing thing had really happened. It was too much like a hideous nightmare.

Yet Nugent, his only son, was a would-be murderer—a would-be paricide!

"You!" was all the baronet could breathe.

"Yes, it's me all right, guv'nor!" grinned Nugent, feeling for his cigarettes. "What are you going to do about it—phone for the police?"

Sir Aubrey ignored the question; perhaps he did not hear it.

"But—but I thought you were in America!" he stammered. "It isn't safe for you to be near Storrydene after what happened in the game against Ironville!"

Sir Aubrey referred to the occasion on which his offspring had attempted the life of Peter Voyce, the new centre-forward. Peter and Nugent were old enemies. Nugent's chance of taking a complete vengeance came in the game against Ironville United. The game was in progress, when a dense brown fog descended with dramatic suddenness and enveloped everything, and it was at this moment that the report of a revolver had split the air.

The fog lifted as suddenly as it had appeared, revealing the still form of Peter Voyce, a trickle of blood flowing from his temple. It was only a slight wound—little more than a graze—but that did not alter the fact that someone had made a cold-blooded attempt upon the youngster's life. The police were called in, of course, and they came to the conclusion that the shot had been fired by either a fool or a madman.

Peter Voyce, Hefty Hebble, and two or three others had their suspicions, however, and late that night they waylaid Nugent Ailen and forced a confession from him; and it was on their advice that Nugent disappeared from Storrydene, Sir Aubrey giving it out that his offspring had gone to the States on business.

No wonder, then, that the baronet was surprised when he found that the masked gunman who had threatened him was his own son, whom he fondly imagined to be in New York.

Nugent, as a matter of fact, had become the head of a notorious gang of racecourse pests who called themselves the Starlight Boys, and the daring scheme for kidnapping the Villa eleven had come from the new leader.

"Well," repeated Nugent, watching a smoke-ring in its lazy ascent to the ceiling. "what are you going to do about it, guv'nor?"

Sir Aubrey did not reply at once. He had been doing a lot of hard thinking, and his look of amazement had vanished, leaving an enigmatical smile in its place, and in the depths of his dark eyes there dawned the light of cunning. The transformation was extraordinary—startling—yet it was typical of the man.

"What am I going to do about what, my dear boy?" he asked, fingering the broad ribbon of his monocle.

The colour had ebbed back into his cheeks, and his voice was suave.

"About the big bluff I tried to put over on you," returned Nugent, nodding towards the automatic. "Of course, it was a big bluff!" he insisted.

The baronet gave a short laugh.

"Oh, I'd forgotten all about that," he said easily; and even at that moment he was not at all sure that his son was not a murderer at heart. "I was thinking about your—er—choice of profession."

Nugent grinned.

"There's money in it!" he declared. "All the boys want is a bit of capital and a leader with brains and imagination, and then they could lift the Crown Jewels if they wanted 'em!"

"They have the leader with brains and imagination!" put in Sir Aubrey.

"Sure," agreed Nugent.

"And I have the capital," smiled the baronet; cupidly stamped upon his fleshy features. He twisted his little waxed moustache as he came to a decision. "I shall take no part in the actual working of the various coups, of course, but I am willing to provide the money—up to a point. It will be business with me, a speculation, and I shall expect to get at least a hundred per cent out of the deal. And you will see that my name is not disclosed."

Admiration glowed in Nugent Ailen's dark eyes.

"You're a sport, guv'nor," he declared. "You're still willing to turn your hand to anything so long as there's money in it!"

"That is so," agreed the baronet. "It was my being able to turn my hand to anything that founded our fortune—and I have not got out of the habit. To finance the Starlight Boys is no less honest than floating a bogus company, and the man with scruples, my dear boy, is the man who remains poor. No fortune was ever made honestly; honesty and high ideals come with success."

It was a warped philosophy, of course, but one that seemed to have served the baronet well.

"And now tell me more about the Boys," he said.

Helping himself to a cigar, Nugent lit up, and commenced to talk; and Sir Aubrey sat fascinated as he listened to his son's stories of the lawless exploits that had made the Starlight Boy feared up and down the country.

"There's big money waiting to be picked up," declared the baronet, "but we must keep in the background, my dear boy! We are the brains of the concern, and—"

"It's all right, missy. He won't mind seeing me. I'll go right in!"

It was the deep voice of Detective-Inspector Dorland that came to the ears of father and son, and scarcely had Nugent Ailen darted behind the casement curtains than the burly police official opened the door and walked into the dining-room, his clear grey eyes missing nothing.

He had not even troubled to tap at the door, and Sir Aubrey flushed as he jammed his gold-rimmed monocle into position.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion, constable?" he demanded angrily; and he had the satisfaction of seeing a wave of colour mount to the detective's broad forehead.

"I have some good news for you, Sir Aubrey," said Dorland, his eyes upon the swaying curtains.

The baronet started ever so slightly, but he played his part with consummate skill.

"You mean that you've found our players?" he asked, an eager note in his voice.

"That's so," nodded the detective. "They were found less than an hour ago."

"Where? Where, man?" asked the baronet. "Out at Brompton?"

"No," answered the detective. "They were tied up to some trees in Beech Coppice. You know the place, possibly?"

"I've heard of it," confessed Sir Aubrey, shooting a furtive glance towards the bay-window; and the light of fear flashed into his eyes as he saw that the toes of Nugent's boots were protruding from beneath the curtains. "As you say, this is good news! I trust the boys are no worse for their unpleasant experience? Have they any idea as to who are the scoundrels—"

"Oh, yes," said Dorland, a grim little smile flitting across his hard-bitten features. "They are willing to swear that your son was the leader of the gang!"

The baronet started violently—and he was not acting on this occasion.

"My—my son!" he gasped. "He's in America, you blundering fool!"

The detective nodded.

"I thought he might have called upon you this evening," he said; "filial duty and affection, you know! I take it that he has not been here?"

"Of course he hasn't!" snapped the baronet. "And now I suggest that you clear out, Dorland! You seem to forget that you are talking to a magistrate!"

The detective had an irritating habit of being deaf to some remarks.

"Then nobody has called upon you this evening?" he pressed.

"I've told you once—no!" cried Sir Aubrey, his heavy features going purple.

"Curious habit!" remarked Dorland inconsequently.

"Eh? What?" snapped Ailen.

"You are already smoking a cigar," remarked the detective, "yet there is another one alight on this plate!"

"There was something the matter with it," returned the baronet quickly. "The leaf was broken. But I fail to see what that has to do with you?"

"Two guns, too!" mused Dorland, reaching for Nugent's automatic.

"Put that down!" shouted Sir Aubrey, giving way to panic. "It's loaded!"

"I'm glad to hear that," remarked the detective, pointing the gun straight at the swaying casement curtains. "I suggest that you show yourself, whoever you are!"

His voice was sharp and metallic; the suggestion was a command.

"Don't be an idiot!" protested the baronet, his eyes upon the tell-tale boots. "There's nobody there!"

"Perhaps not," grunted Dorland; "but we'll make sure!"

Striding across the room, he thrust the curtains apart, and he was the most surprised man in the world when he found that the alcove was empty.

Nugent's boots were there right enough, but Nugent himself had made his escape through the open window.

"There you are!" cried Sir Aubrey, his little eyes shining. "What did I tell you! Take my tip, Dorland, and give detective work a miss! You should turn your peculiar talents to carrying sandwich-boards! Furthermore, I shall report you for forcing your way into my house! I've got a pull, Dorland, and you know it, and I'll see that you get it hot over this affair!"

The detective was deaf to the remarks, for he realised only too well how he had been tricked, and his strong jaw was set in an inflexible line as he turned abruptly and strode across the carpet.

"We're not overheard, Ailen," he said, "so I can tell you exactly what I think. You and your bright son have been a bit too clever for me this time, but I warn you that I sha'n't rest until I've got to the bottom of this business. I've got to be careful in dealing with you, but that pull you boast about won't help you if my suspicions prove correct. It's going to be war to the knife, Ailen! Good-night!"

"Good-night, constable!" laughed the baronet. "Thank you for an amusing ten minutes!"

The words were light enough, but they amounted to a challenge.

As Dorland had said, it was going to be war to the knife!

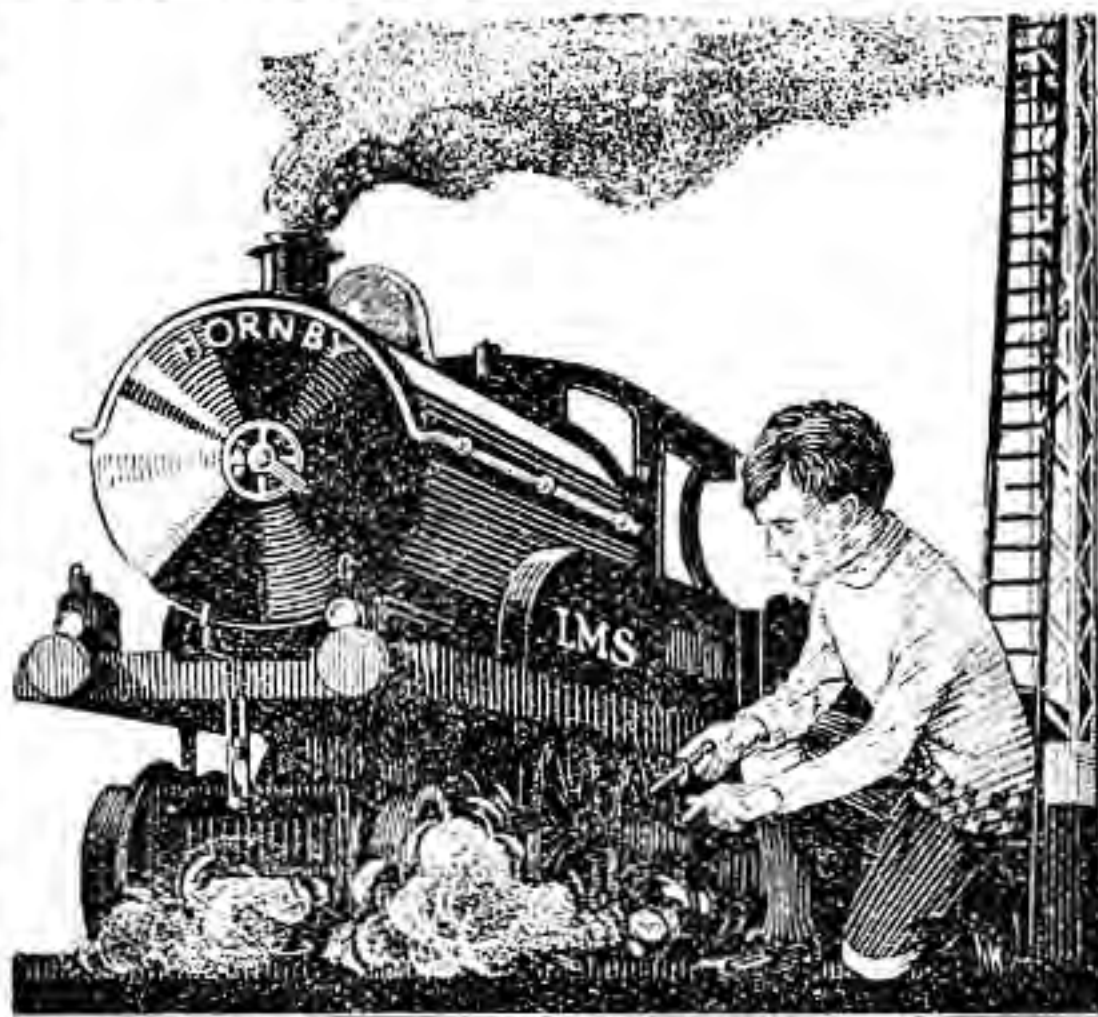
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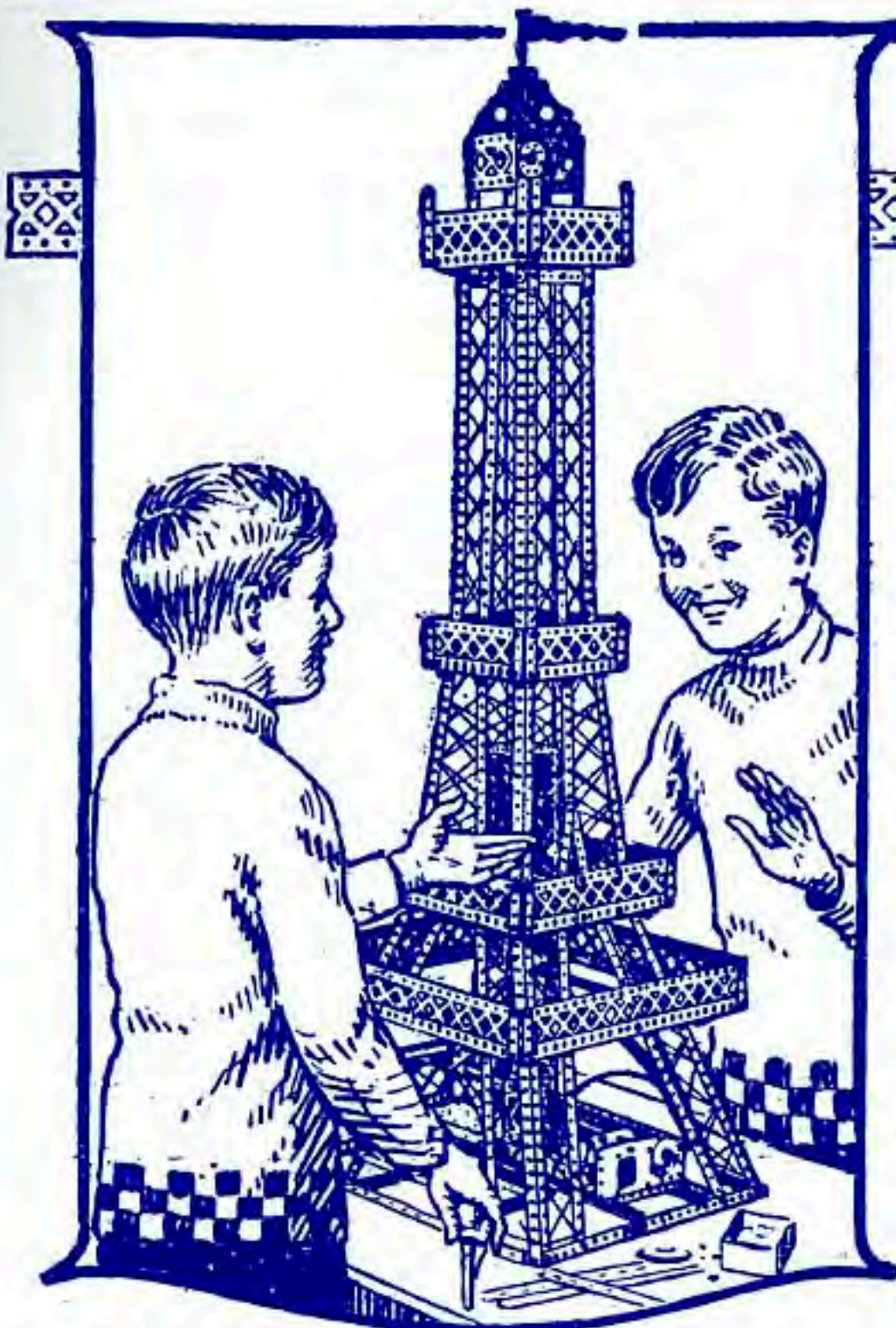
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