

ALL ABOUT OUR FREE GIFTS—See page 17!

No. 911. Vol. XXVIII.

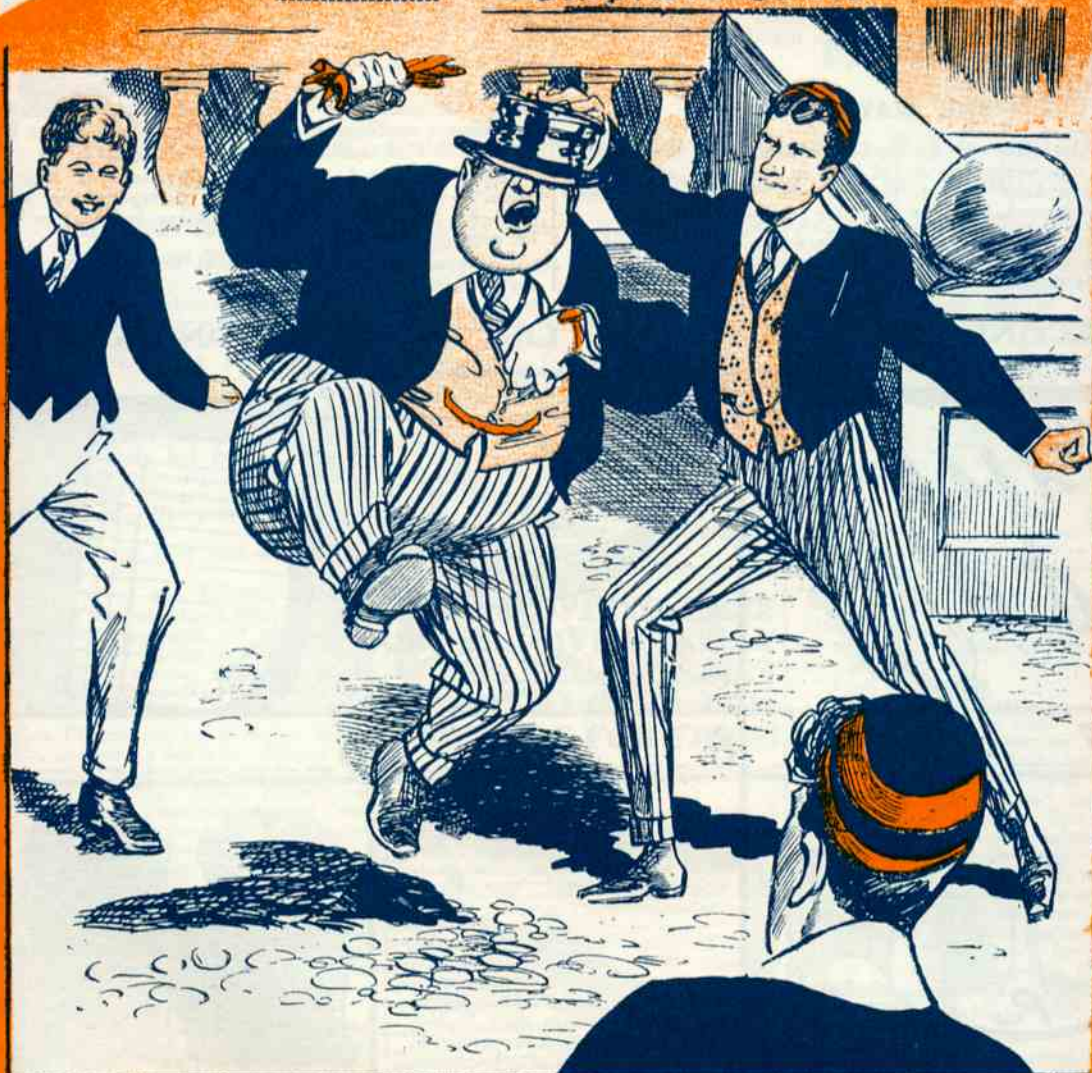
Week Ending July 25th, 1925.

The Magnet 2nd

Library

Complete School Stories.

EVERY
MONDAY.



SMITHY REFUSES AN INVITATION TO BUNTER COURT!

(A "striking" incident from the long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars—inside.)

DON'T MISS THIS WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY, CHUMS!

10/- a week for a year **FAMOUS CRICKETERS COMPETITION** **5/- a week for a year**
AND 40 SPECIAL PRIZES &c

SEE THE LIST OF PRIZES ON PAGE 9.

THE good old MAGNET has had many interesting and popular competitions in the past, but this new contest, the second part of which we are giving you this week, bids fair to outshine all its predecessors. Everybody is invited to join in—and there is no entrance fee.

Here we give you the Second Set of puzzle-pictures, each of which represents the name of a famous cricketer. So that the contest shall be equal for everyone, you will find on Page 26 a list of names, and each "cricketer" represented by a puzzle-picture will be found in this list.

THE WAY TO WIN.

As you make out the answer to each of the six pictures given this week write it **IN INK** in the space underneath, and then keep the set, together with the previous puzzles, until next week, when we shall give you the Third Set.

The contest will continue for six weeks, and with the final set we shall give you a coupon and full directions for the sending in of your entries.

The Closing Date will be Thursday, August 27th, 1925.

You must adhere strictly to these Rules.

The first prize will be awarded to the reader who sends a correct, or most nearly correct, solution of the six sets of puzzle-pictures. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit.

You may send as many attempts as you like, but every attempt must be a complete solution of the whole series of puzzles. It must be quite distinct and separate from any other attempt, and all solutions must be written **IN INK**.

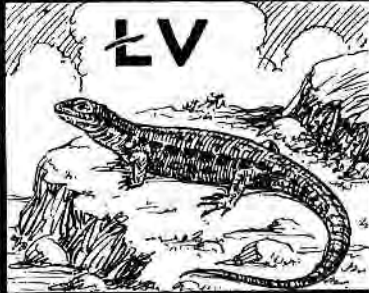
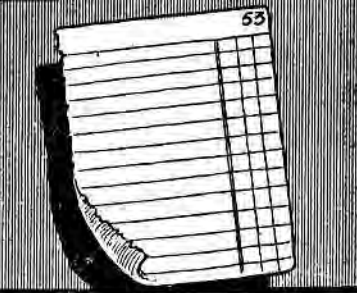
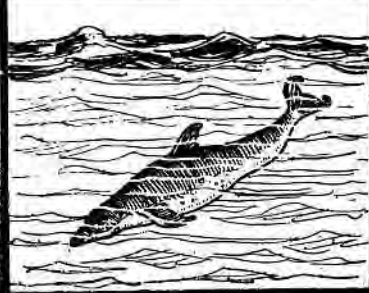
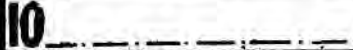
The Editor reserves full right to divide the prizes or their value. No competitor will receive more than one prize. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor be taken as final and binding.

Entries mutilated or bearing alterations or alternative names will be disqualified. No correspondence will be allowed. No responsibility can be taken for delay or loss in the post or otherwise.

Employees of the proprietors of the MAGNET may not compete.

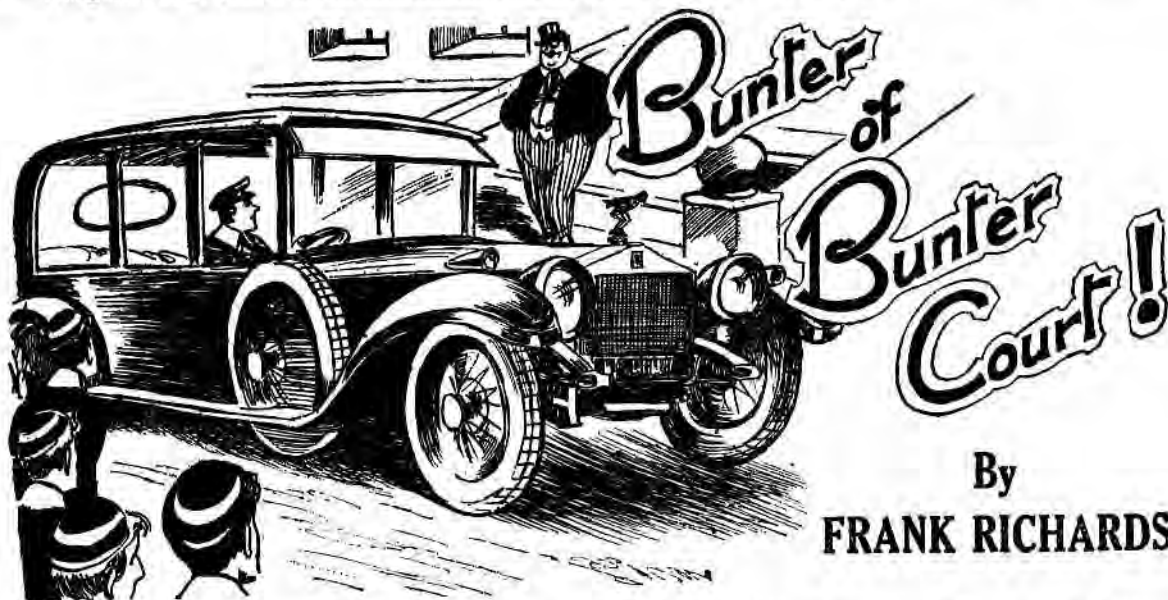
SECOND SET.

LIST OF NAMES ON PAGE 26.

"FAMOUS CRICKETERS" N ^o 2.		
		
4	5	6
		
7	8	9
		
10	11	12

KEEP YOUR EFFORTS UNTIL THE FINAL SET IS GIVEN.

THE AGE OF MIRACLES! When Harry Wharton & Co. learn that Bunter can tell the truth, and that Bunter Court really does exist outside his fat imagination, they are prepared for the slices to fall in!



By
FRANK RICHARDS

A Rollicking Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. and Billy Bunter—the fattest and funniest schoolboy in the world.

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.
An Awkward Situation!**

"IT'S awkward!"
"Jolly awkward!"
"The awkwardfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; and he shook his dusky head dubiously.

Billy Bunter grinned.
Bunter was seated in a big armchair in the Rag, and the high back of the chair completely hid Bunter from the view of anyone coming into the room.

Except for Bunter, the Rag was deserted, until Harry Wharton & Co. came in.

The Famous Five did not observe Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove made no sound, so they could not hear him; and, naturally, they could not see through the high back of the armchair. They remained in blissful ignorance of the fact that William George Bunter was there at all.

Bob Cherry sat on a corner of the table, and swung his legs. Johnny Bull sat astride of a chair, and leaned his arms on the back. Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh tucked themselves into the corners of the window-seat. Harry Wharton stood with his hands in his pockets and a thoughtful frown on his face.

Apparently it was a consultation—a sort of a council of war. And Billy Bunter, hidden from sight by the high back of his chair, listened with both his fat ears. Billy Bunter had no scruples on little matters like that.

"In fact, it's frightfully awkward!" went on Harry Wharton. "We're right on the break-up now!"

"We are!" agreed Bob Cherry. "We've got to make arrangements for the hols."

"We have!"

"And Bunter—"

"Blow Bunter!" said Nugent.

"Bother Bunter!" agreed Bob, with a chuckle.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"But there it is!" he said. "Bunter's asked us all to go with him to Bunter Court for the holidays. We agreed to pull his silly leg, thinking there wasn't any such place in the wide world."

"There isn't!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"We put it all down to Bunter's silly swank—"

"So it was!"

"And we meant to start with Bunter and make the fat boulder own up that he had been gassing, and then clear off to my place for the vac," went on the captain of the Remove. "It seemed a

people have bought Combermere Lodge, and changed the name to Bunter Court. And we know he got through to the right number on the telephone."

"He's told us lots of times that Bunter Court has been in the family for giddy generations," grunted Johnny Bull. "Ever since the first Bunter de Bunter came over with the Normans."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That was one of his exaggerations," grinned Bob Cherry. "Bunter couldn't keep very near the facts, of course."

Wharton wrinkled his brow thoughtfully.

"The fact is, it's awkward," he said. "If the thing's genuine, we're bound to go with Bunter. We've promised him."

"That's so!"

"And, besides, if it's genuine, it's rather decent of him to ask us home for the holidays, and we want to treat him decently."

"True, O king!"

"But—" said Wharton.

"But—" chuckled Bob.

"The buffalness is terrific!"

"If the thing's spoof—as we supposed at first—it means that we're let down at the very last minute," said Harry.

"We all know Bunter. The bragging ass is quite capable of keeping it up till the last minute before leaving Greyfriars, and then spinning us some yarn about the car breaking down on the way here, or a fire at Bunter Court, or something. That wouldn't matter, if we'd made our arrangements for the hols. But if we count on going home with Bunter it will be jolly serious."

"No doubt about that!" agreed Frank.

"If we knew it was spoof, all right. But we can't take the chance," said Wharton, rubbing his nose thoughtfully.

"If we're going to my place, I've got to let my people know in time, of course."

"Of course."

**FOUR TOPPING FREE
GIFTS GIVEN AWAY
WITH THE MAGNET
DATED AUGUST 15th.
LOOK OUT FOR THEM!**

jolly good jape on Bunter. But now it looks as if there really is a Bunter Court. I'm blessed if I understand it, but it does. It's a bit hard to believe that Bunter has been telling the truth—"

"More than a bit!"

"Even Bunter might tell the truth by accident—speaking without thinking, you know!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"The accident would be terrific!"

"Well, look at it!" urged Wharton.

"He telephoned to Bunter Court in our presence—we heard the butler answer, and it's fixed for a big car to come and take us all away."

"Spoof!" said Johnny Bull, unconvinced.

"I must say it looks genuine," said Bob Cherry. "According to Bunter, his

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"But if I let them know we're coming we shall have to go; and then if Bunter's car does turn up to take us to Bunter Court, what are we going to do? We couldn't let even Bunter down like that."

"It's a giddy problem!" said Bob. "All Bunter's fault if he's let down!" growled Johnny Bull. "He shouldn't be such a spoofer."

"Yes; but if he isn't spoofing this time—"

"He is!" Johnny Bull was adamant on that point. As a matter of fact, Johnny had a strong personal objection to admitting that he might have been in the wrong. And if Bunter Court, the magnificent residence of the Bunter tribe, had any existence outside Billy Bunter's fervid imagination, undoubtedly Johnny had been very much in the wrong; for he had scouted the idea with the utmost scorn.

"That's all very well, Johnny," said Wharton, a little impatiently. "But the point is, that it looks now as if Bunter hasn't been spoofing for once!"

Johnny Bull gave a grunt.

"We want to know for certain," said Harry. "If we fix up with my people, we can't let them down; but if Bunter's invitation is genuine, we can't let him down, after accepting it. I jolly well wish we'd never thought of pulling Bunter's leg on the subject; but it's rather too late to wish that now."

Hidden by the armchair, Billy Bunter grinned, and winked into the fireplace. The difficulties that beset the Famous Five seemed rather to entertain William George Bunter.

"My esteemed chums—" began Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Got any idea on the subject, Inky?"

"If I may make a suggestive remark about—"

"Fathead!" roared Bob Cherry. "You can make a suggestion, or a remark, or both, if you like."

"My esteemed ludicrous Cherry—"

"Go it, Inky!" said Harry Wharton.

"You have bright ideas sometimes. If you can see any way out—"

"The esteemed and spoofing Bunter has a minor in the Second Form," said Hurree Singh. "If there really is a magnificent Bunter Court, Sammy Bunter will know all about it. Let us seekfully search for the fat and disgusting Sammy and ask him about it."

"Eureka!" ejaculated Bob.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Wharton.

"That's all right! We can get at the facts from Sammy Bunter."

"Bunter may have stuffed him already with a yarn for us!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, he may, or he may not," said Harry. "But I think we can twist the truth out of Bunter minor—anyhow, it's a chance. Let's go and look for the fat little boulder!"

"Let's!" agreed Nugent.

And the Famous Five walked out of the Rag, in quest of Sammy of the Second.

Billy Bunter sat bolt upright in his chair.

He blinked over the back of the chair, at the backs of the Famous Five as they disappeared out of the Rag.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bunter.

He was dismayed.

Johnny Bull had suggested that Bunter might have "stuffed" his minor with a yarn ready for inquiry. Certainly that would have been a judicious move on his part. But as a matter of fact, Bunter had not even thought of it. He was not on the best of terms

with his minor; they were too much alike for any love to be lost between them. Generally, all the members of the Bunter tribe liked one another better at a distance, and the less they saw of one another, the more they were pleased. So Bunter of the Remove seldom came into contact with Bunter minor of the Second Form.

He was alarmed now.

With really wonderful cunning, combined with luck, Billy Bunter had planned the biggest spoof of his spoofing career for the summer vacation. But a word from his minor would be enough to tumble over the great edifice of spoof. As Sammy Bunter had never even heard of Combermere Lodge, he was not likely to bear out his major's statement that that magnificent mansion had been purchased by Mr. Bunter and rechristened Bunter Court.

Bunter detached himself from the armchair.

He waited only till Harry Wharton & Co. were out of sight along the passage, and then he, too, rolled out of the Rag, also in quest of Sammy of the Second.

Sammy Bunter was not, as a rule, a much-sought-after youth. But on this especial afternoon he was very much sought after indeed.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Scrap with the Second!

"**H**OOK it!" George Gatty, of the Second Form at Greyfriars, uttered that command, backing it up with an admonitory and rather grubby forefinger.

Gatty of the Second pointed to the door of the Form-room.

"Hook it, you fat rooster!" he repeated.

And five or six Second Form fags joined in like a chorus.

"Hook it, fatty!"

"Blow away, Sammy!"

Sammy Bunter did not hook it. He stood inside the Second Form-room, and blinked at the fags through his big spectacles, which gave him so queer a resemblance to his major, Bunter of the Remove.

Instead of hooking it, as commanded by his Form-fellows, Bunter minor banged the Form-room door shut.

Evidently Sammy was going to stand up for his rights to roll into his own Form-room if he liked.

Indeed, it was rather high-handed on the part of Gatty & Co. to command him to "hook" it.

Classes were over for the day; and Mr. Twigg, the master of the Second, as glad to have done with his Form as they were to have done with him, had retired to his study. Until evening prep, the Form-room was the undisputed hunting-ground of the Second Form, and they used it as a Common-room; indeed, sometimes as a cricket or football field, and not infrequently as a prize-ring. When Mr. Twigg was safely distant, the Second did what they liked in their own quarters; and Sammy Bunter, as a member of the Second, shared the privileges of the rest.

But Sammy was in trouble now. As he banged the door, instead of hooking it, as directed, Gatty reached out for an inkpot. Myers reached for another, and Nugent minor picked up a bulky volume. Sammy Bunter blinked watchfully through his big spectacles and prepared to dodge.

"Look here, this is jolly well my Form-room, isn't it?" he demanded.

"Can't a fellow come into his own Form-room?"

"We're fed-up with you," said Gatty scornfully. "Fed right up to the chin. You're a toad, Sammy Bunter!"

"A bigger toad than your major in the Remove," said Dicky Nugent. "That is, a smaller toad, of course; but a worse toad."

"I say—"

"You shut up, Bunter minor," said Gatty autocratically. "Don't I keep on telling you we're fed-up!"

"But—"

"Before we let you come into this Form-room and associate with us," said Gatty with dignity, "you've got to show up that cake! You've had seven different and distinct feeds with us, all on the strength of that cake your mater was going to send you. We haven't seen anything of the cake."

"And never shall!" said Myers.

"There isn't any cake, and never will be any cake," said Nugent minor. "We let that fat toad pull our legs. Now he's got the cheek to butt into the Form-room while we're having our tea."

"It's my Form-room, too, isn't it?" bawled Sammy.

"Shut up!"

"Hook it while you're safe!"

"Take aim," said Gatty. "When I chuck this inkpot, you fellows all chuck something together."

"Good egg!"

"I say, hold on!" shouted Sammy Bunter. "Look here, it's all right about the cake. I—"

"Rats!"

"I've got it!"

"What?"

Hands that held books and inkpots were lowered at once. Bunter minor was in disgrace with his Form, on account of the cake which had been so long promised, and had never materialised; resembling in that the celebrated postal-order of his major, Billy. But if the cake had come to hand, that put quite a different complexion on the matter.

A cake covered a multitude of sins. Sammy's sins undoubtedly were multitudinous, but Gatty & Co. were prepared to let a cake cover them all—if there really was a cake.

Tea in the Second Form-room was somewhat thin. A cake was exactly the thing required to help it out.

Quite an ample and wholesome tea was provided for the fags in Hall; but they preferred their own provender when they could get it. A half-cooked and half-burnt herring of their own providing was more palatable than better fare at the Form-table in Hall, under the eyes of masters, prefects, and all sorts of big fellows who glared at them if they made themselves heard or seen. There was a dearth of crockery and cutlery in the Form-room, but there were fingers in plenty, and Gatty had remarked that fingers were made before forks; this precedence in the order of creation appearing to Gatty a good reason for handling herrings with his fingers.

Two herrings, a tin of sardines, a loaf, and a chunk of butter comprised the feed that was now delighting Gatty & Co.; and in which they suspected Bunter minor of desiring to bag an undeserved share. It was quite a nice tea, from the Second Form point of view. Still, they could not deny that it was of the fish fishy. A cake—such a cake as Bunter minor had often described as on its way to him from home—would have rounded off that fishy feast beautifully.

Hence the suddenly amicable looks of Gatty & Co., as Bunter minor drew



"Whooooop!" "Go for 'em!" "Kick them out!" The fags of the Second piled on the Famous Five like a swarm of bees. Hefty fighting men as Harry Wharton & Co. were, they were almost overwhelmed by Dicky Nugent & Co. And in the midst of the tumult Sammy Bunter dodged out of the Form-room. (See Chapter 2.)

forth his right hand, which had been behind him, and held up a parcel to view.

Sammy grinned genially.

As a matter of fact, Sammy was not much given to whacking out his good things with other fellows. But he was tired of the hostility of Gatty & Co., which often took the form of hacking his fat shins and squirting ink over his neck. Moreover, Sammy Bunter had a particular reason for bringing that particular cake to the Form-room, into the midst of the Second Form.

"What price that?" asked Sammy cheerily.

"Oh, good!"

"Let's see it!"

"It's really come, then?"

"Came by this afternoon's post," said Bunter, minor.

"Gammon!" said Dicky Nugent.

"There was nothing for you by the afternoon post, as I know jolly well!"

"You've pinched that cake?" exclaimed Gatty.

"Well, I haven't pinched it from you chaps, anyhow!" retorted Sammy Bunter. "We get a lot of cheek from the Remove merchants. Why shouldn't we get a cake from them, if we can?"

"Echo answers why?" grinned Myers.

"That's all very well," said Dicky Nugent. "But if you've pinched it from my major's study—"

"I haven't!" said Sammy hurriedly.

"That's all right!"

"Well, whose was it?" asked Gatty. He used the past tense advisedly. To whomsoever the cake had belonged, it was the property of the Greyfriars Second now.

"Bull's," confessed Sammy Bunter. "Bull's rather a beast, you know!"

"He kicked me once," said Myers—"kicked me because I told him his face was like a bulldog's, you know! Serve him right!"

"He's a cheeky rotter!" agreed Gatty. "All the Remove are cheeky rotters, if you come to that!"

"My major isn't a cheeky rotter!" said Dicky Nugent.

"Oh, blow your major! Don't talk

about your major, young Nugent! We don't like fellows' majors in this Form-room."

"Look here, Gatty—"

"It's rather against a fellow to have a major in a higher form," said Myers solemnly. "Don't talk about it, Dicky."

"Oh rats! I—"

"Dry up!" said Gatty. "Trot out that cake, Bunter. We're confiscating Johnny Bull's cake because he kicked Myers. Myers was quite right in saying that his face was like a bulldog's: no need for Myers to tell him if he'd take the trouble to look in a glass. Shove that cake this way, young Bunter, and you can help yourself to the sardines."

"Suppose Bull misses the cake and comes after him?" asked Nugent, minor.

"I suppose we're not going to let the Remove bully us in our own Form-room, young Nugent! If Bull comes here, we'll kick him out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, this is a whacking good cake!" said Gatty, as the wrapping-paper was unrolled. "Lots here for a lot of fellows. I say, you chaps, all of you line up here and sample this cake!"

"What-ho!"

"Good man!"

There was quite a swarming of Second Form fags round the desk where Gatty & Co. were at tea. Bunter minor blinked at the swarm rather uneasily.

"I say, that's my cake!" he exclaimed. "Don't chuck it round like that, Gatty! Leave a fellow enough of his own cake."

"It isn't your cake," answered George Gatty coolly. "You shut up! It was Bull's cake, and now it's ours. Besides, if it was your cake, you owe it to us, after promising it to us every time we've had a spread for weeks. And even if it's your own cake, you ought to want to whack it out in the Form, as you never do stand a spread. So shut up, young Bunter!"

"Look here—"

"Kick him, Nugent! You're nearest."

"Yaroooo!"

"Kick him again if he talks any more. Now I'll slice up this cake—it will go round the form," said Gatty generously.

George Gatty commenced operations on the cake, which really was a very large and handsome one—rich and fruity. Hungry fags eyed it eagerly on all sides as Gatty sliced. With a sudden bang the Form-room door flew open, and five Remove fellows appeared.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter minor here?" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Keep them out!"

"Outside, you cads!"

"Keep 'em off!" gasped Sammy Bunter. "They're after the cake! I say, you'll lose the cake if you let them in."

Harry Wharton & Co., little dreaming of the hornet's nest they were entering, stepped into the Form-room.

Gatty & Co. jumped up, in warlike array. The cake had been Johnny Bull's, and they jumped to the conclusion at once that Johnny and his comrades had tracked the cake-lifter to his lair, and had come there for Johnny's property.

"Turn them out!" shouted Gatty.

"Down with the Remove!"

"Kick 'em out!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "It's all right; we've come here for Sammy Bunter—"

"Sorry to interrupt the feast!" grinned Bob. "But we only want Sammy—"

"Keep 'em off!" howled Bunter minor, dodging round the desks.

"Look here—"

"Rush them!"

"You silly young asses!" roared Johnny Bull. "I tell you we only want Bunter minor. Keep clear, or we'll jolly well mop up the whole Form!"

"The mopfulness will be terrific!"

"Rush them!"

"Kick them out!"

Gatty & Co., individually, were not of much use in a scrap with the heroes of the Remove. But they were strong in numbers.

Two or three dozen fags were in the Form-room, and they all backed up George Gatty's valiant lead valorously: all of them were prepared to put up a

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scrap for that large and fruity cake, upon which they had only feasted their eyes so far. Only over the dead bodies of the Second, so to speak, would Johnny Bull recapture the cake.

It was an unfortunate misunderstanding, for in point of fact Johnny Bull had not yet missed his cake, and had no idea whatever that it was in the Second Form room; and the Famous Five had only come to the Form-room to speak to Sammy Bunter about Bunter Court.

Gatty & Co. had jumped to a natural conclusion, in the circumstances; nevertheless, it was a wrong conclusion.

But there was no opportunity for explanation.

The cake lay on the desk, and Gatty & Co. were prepared to defend it with their lives, not to mention their grammars, dictionaries, and inkpots.

"Rush them!" roared Myers.

"Buzz something at them!"

"Kick them out!"

Grammars flew, and inkpots. There was a formidable roar from Johnny Bull as he caught an inkpot with his chin.

The missile came whizzing back a second later, and it cracked on Gatty's ear.

"Whoocoo!"

"Go for 'em!"

"Ow! Wow! Kick them out!" roared Gatty.

There was a terrible rush.

Why the Second had piled on them in that warlike way the Famous Five could hardly guess; though it was not uncommon for a shindy to result if fellows butted into Form-rooms that did not belong to them.

But, explicable or inexplicable, there was no doubt that the Second were in a warlike mood, and they gave the heroes of the Remove plenty to do. In the midst of the Form-room raged a wild and whirling combat; and hefty fighting-men as Harry Wharton & Co. were, they were almost overwhelmed by the crowd of fags that swarmed upon them.

In the midst of the tumult Sammy Bunter dodged out of the Form-room and fled. He was not yearning to distinguish himself as a warrior—that was not in his line.

He did not stay to strike a blow for his Form; he stayed only to grab up a large chunk of cake, and then he vanished; and sprinted away down the corridor, leaving the Famous Five and the swarm of fags mixed up in a terrific combat.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Putting Sammy Wise!

BILLY BUNTER grunted discontentedly, as he rolled into Study No. 7 in the Remove passage.

He was annoyed.

He was still more annoyed to find that Peter Todd, his study-mate, was not in Study No. 7, and that there was no sign of tea. Apparently Toddy was "teasing" out; in which case teatime was likely to be a thin time for Bunter.

But it was not wholly of tea that Bunter was thinking now. He had not found his fat minor, and so had not had an opportunity of "putting him wise" on the subject of Bunter Court. He had rolled along to the Second Form room to look for Sammy; and had found a riot going on there—Harry Wharton & Co. engaged in a wild and whirling tussle with a swarm of fags. The fact that the Famous Five were getting hustled and hustled and thumped and bumped, was a solace to Bunter, and he blinked at the scene with considerable

enjoyment for a few minutes—till an inkpot, whizzing out of the door of the Second Form room caught him in the neck, whereupon Bunter howled, and retired hastily.

But he had seen that Sammy was not in the Form-room with the other fags, and he did not know where to look for his minor, important as it was to see that podgy youth. Still, the Famous Five seemed rather too busily engaged just then to be thinking of Sammy. So Bunter adjourned to Study No. 7 to tea, intending to snatch a hasty tea before Toddy had finished; only to discover that Toddy was not there, and that there was no tea.

He grunted.

"Beast!"

Toddy being absent, the question arose, which member of the Remove was Bunter to "stick" for a tea. There was no time to waste, either; he had to see Sammy before the Famous Five found him. Bunter, blinking discontentedly round the study, was thinking the matter out, when he was startled by a fat voice, very like his own:

"Oh, it's only you!"

The fat, grinning face of Sammy Bunter emerged from under the study table.

Billy Bunter stared at him.

There was Sammy, as large as life, hiding under the study table in Study No. 7. He crawled out, grinning at his major.

"What the thump are you doing here?" demanded Bunter.

"Lying doggo," said Sammy cheerily. "I nipped under the table when I heard you coming. I thought it might be those rotters."

"What rotters?"

"Those blighters who came to the Form-room after me."

Bunter started.

"Shut the door," said Sammy. "They may come up here! Mind, you keep it dark that I'm here, Billy, if they come along. I suppose a fellow can ask his own brother to stand by him."

"But what—Hullo! You've got a cake?"

Sammy chuckled.

"It's Bull's cake—or was," he explained. "I'd just got it to the Second Form-room, when those rotters came in after me. As I was whacking it out with my friends, they stood by me."

"He, he, he!"

"I hope they'll jolly well lick that gang," said Sammy. "Blessed if I know how they guessed I had the cake. I know I wasn't seen anywhere near Bull's study. But they seemed to have known at once."

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Bunter minor.

"They weren't after the cake," grinned Bunter. "They were looking for you, to speak to you."

"Rot! What would they want to speak to me for?" said Sammy. "I don't know them, and don't want to. What are you holding out that paw for?"

"Halves!"

Sammy Bunter blinked at his major, and silently passed over a portion of the chunk of Johnny Bull's cake. He was not going to get a safe refuge in his affectionate brother's study for nothing.

"Sit down, old fellow," said Billy Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Sit down, old chap."

"I haven't any money," said Sammy. "I'm not asking you for any, am I, you fat tot?" demanded the Owl of the Remove indignantly.

"You called me 'old fellow,'"

"Look here, Sammy—"

Sammy Bunter grinned and sat down. Both the Bunters munched cake and blinked at one another; not a handsome pair, but very much alike.

"I've been looking for you, Sammy," said the Owl of the Remove. "I wanted to speak to you. We don't see enough of one another, considering that we're brothers, old fellow."

Sammy's eyes opened wide behind his spectacles. As he had told his major he hadn't any money, he simply could not guess what this brotherly affection meant.

"As your major, it's up to me to see you sometimes, and keep an eye on you, and all that," said Billy Bunter.

"It doesn't seem to have struck you, all through the term," said Sammy sarcastically. "You do see me whenever you hear that I've had a remittance, though. But I haven't had one now, so what the thump are you getting at, Billy? Come down to it."

"How are you getting on in your Form, Sammy?" asked Bunter, still in the role of the affectionate elder brother.

"Can it!" said Sammy derisively. "That chicken won't fight, old man. Tell me what you're driving at."

Bunter frowned. Really, it was disconcerting to have his brotherly solicitude thrown back in his teeth in this way. But he proceeded to come down to business, as he was dealing with such an exceedingly businesslike youth.

"I've got something special to tell you, Sammy."

"I thought so; though I'm blessed if I can guess what it is," said Sammy Bunter. "Get on with it. I'm staying in this study till those fellows have chucked up looking for me, anyhow."

Bunter grinned.

"They're not after the cake, Sammy—they don't know that you had it. They wanted to ask you some questions and to get you to give me away. Of course, you wouldn't."

"Put it plain," said Sammy; "and cut it short. If they're not on the war-path, there's no need for me to stay here."

"You young sweep, don't you want to talk to your only brother sometimes?" demanded the Owl of the Remove indignantly.

"No fear; besides, it ain't a question of talking, but of listening, when you get your chin going," retorted Sammy. "You'll have lots of chances of jawing when we're home in the holidays; no getting away from you then. I don't see why I should stand it at school."

"How'd you like to come away for the holidays with me, Sammy, to one of the finest places in Kent?" asked Bunter.

"You've stuck some chap for the holidays, and he'll let you bring me?" asked Sammy with interest.

"No!" roared Bunter.

"Then what do you mean? I'll stay till I've finished this cake; so buck up with it."

Bunter breathed hard.

"I'm in for a good thing, Sammy, and I'm going to let you into it, because—because you're my brother, and I'm fond of you," he said.

"Gammon!" said Sammy.

"Anyhow, I'm letting you into it, if you stand by me and back me up, you fat little beast!"

"That sounds more like it," grinned Sammy. "Well, I'm on, if there's anything good. Come to the point, and don't be so jolly long-winded!"

"I'm not going home for the vac," said Bunter. "You know I've told the fellows in my Form all about Bunter Court—"

"He, he, he!"

"Well, I'm going to Bunter Court," said the Owl of the Remove. "I've fixed it all up. I'll explain, if you'll shut up for a minute. The other day Mauleverer was asked to look at a furnished house at Combermere, for a friend of his uncle's, who was thinking of taking it. He got me to go to save him trouble, and I stuffed him that the place was no good. See? That's the place I've taken for the holidays—Combermere Lodge, one of the biggest places in the county, furnished, with butler and footmen and servants, and cars and stables, and everything complete."

"You've taken it?" gasped Sammy.

"Yes."

"Potty?"

"No!" howled Bunter. "I've taken it, and I've had the name changed to Bunter Court—it's painted up over the gates now. I'm going there for the vac, and taking a party; and, of course, they'll believe that it's really Bunter Court, our own place—see?"

Apparently Sammy Bunter did not see. He blinked at his major in utter amazement.

"But how could you take the place?" he demanded. "If you're not potty, you must be pulling my leg. What's the rent?"

"Forty guineas a week."

"What?" yelled Sammy.

"And the servants' wages and other expenses, and all that. Probably about eighty pounds a week the lot."

Sammy looked as if he were going to faint.

"You've taken it? Actually taken it?"

Bunter nodded.

"Then you're potty enough to be put into an asylum," said Sammy Bunter. "Who's going to pay for it?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Somebody will have to pay, I suppose?"

"I—I suppose so," said Bunter, rather slowly. "I hadn't thought about that. It doesn't matter, anyhow."

"Doesn't it?" gasped Sammy.

"Not at all. I can't be made to pay for hiring a furnished country house, as I'm a minor in law. Besides, I haven't any money."

"Then they'll come on the pater."

"They can't; it's not what they call legally a necessity. They can't touch the pater for anything."

"My only hat! Then how have you worked it?" demanded Sammy. "If you know all that, the people know it, too, and they wouldn't let you the house."

Bunter winked.

"That's where I was jolly clever!" he said. "When I went over to Combermere, the estate agent, Pilkins, somehow supposed that I was Lord Mauleverer. You see, he had been expecting Mauly to come in the car."

"You mean, you swanked as Mauly, making out that you were a lord?" said Sammy derisively. "Just like you!"

"Well, he took me for Lord Mauleverer, and was no end impressed," said Bunter. "But I didn't let that out at the house. The butler, Walsingham, knows me as Mr. Bunter, who has taken the house. He knew Pilkins wanted to bag me as a tenant, but didn't know that Pilkins thought I was Mauly—see?"

"But as soon as they compare notes together—"

"They won't!" grinned Bunter. "Pilkins has been knocked out by a motor-car accident, and he's in a nursing-home at Combermere, and can't attend to business for weeks to come. He won't see Walsingham. I've let Walsingham know that I've taken the house."

"But there has to be a lease, or an agreement, or something," said Sammy blankly. "You can't get a house without that."

"Don't I keep on telling you I've worked it? I telephoned to the butler as Pilkins. You know I can imitate any man's voice; that's what comes of being a jolly clever ventriloquist!"

"Phew!"

"You see, Walsingham had seen me with Pilkins, and knew that Pilkins was jolly keen to bag me as a tenant. So when he got that phone message from Pilkins, as he supposed, he thought it was all right," explained Bunter. "And I'd tipped all the servants at the lodge liberally—especially Walsingham. You see, Mauly gave me the money for the tips, as I was going there on his business, and I did it well—"

"You would—with another chap's money!" agreed Sammy.

"They all think I'm a giddy millionaire, rolling in it!" said Bunter. "I can tell you Walsingham is jolly keen to see me installed at the lodge. He hasn't the slightest suspicion that it's not all right. Besides, it is all right. I'm taking the house for the vacation, and I'm a good tenant, I suppose. I shall treat the servants well, and tip them well—"

"What with?" grinned Sammy. "I suppose Mauly won't shell out again, will he, to help you in a spoof?"

"I'm taking a party there for the hols. I suppose, in the circumstances,

they can hardly refuse to lend me a little ready money occasionally."

"Make 'em pay for their keep—what?" grinned Sammy.

"That's a rotten way of putting it, Sammy. You're coarse. Still, I suppose it amounts to that," said Bunter. "Now, if you play up decently, Sammy, I'll take you there with me for the holidays. See? Ripping place, and the fat of the land to live on, and liveried footmen kow-towing to you all the time, and a jolly old butler waiting behind your chair, and all that."

"Phew!" said Sammy.

"Now, those chaps, Wharton and the rest, don't trust me," said Billy Bunter sorrowfully.

"You don't say so!"

"I do," said Bunter, more in sorrow than in anger. "They doubt my word, Sammy! After all I've done for them, and when I'm going to give them a ripping holiday at my magnificent place in Kent, they still doubt me. It's a bit sickening, isn't it? Still, there it is. They're going to ask you about Bunter Court, and get you to give me away."

Sammy Bunter whistled.

"So that's what they wanted me for, was it?"

"That was it."

"And I thought it was the cake!" chuckled Sammy.

"Now I've put you wise, Sammy, you're going to stand to it, aren't you?" said Bunter anxiously. "The pater bought Combermere Lodge, and changed the



Bunter, turning up his fat little nose, walked out of the study, intending to depart with lofty dignity and leave Peter Todd crushed. Crash! A boot landed behind Bunter as he went, and the lofty dignity of his departure was somewhat marred.

"Whoooooop!" roared Bunter. (See Chapter 6.)

name to Bunter Court—see? The name's painted up now, and I've had notepaper printed with 'Bunter Court' on it, too. The whole thing's all right. You'll have no end of a time there, Sammy; and just think of the feelings of the fags in the Second when they see you leave Greyfriars for the vac in a whacking motor-car with a chauffeur in livery."

"Phew!"
"Rather decent — what?" grinned Bunter.

"Ye-es. But it's bound to lead to some trouble in the long run," said Sammy uneasily. "You can't spoof people like this without the dickens to pay in the long run."

"Oh, rot! Besides, I'm responsible," said Bunter. "You're not responsible, Sammy; you'll only be there like Wharton and the rest."

"That's so," assented Sammy.

"You back me up—"

Bunter minor nodded.

"I'll do that! My word, it will be a facer for Gatty and his crowd!" he said. "They've always laughed when I told them about Bunter Court, same as the Remove fellows did at you, Billy. My hat, this will take them down a peg, if it comes off!"

"It will come off all right. Of course, I want Wharton and his friends to know that it's all right, or they won't come," said Bunter. "I can't have a holiday without friends with me—besides, I shall need some ready money from time to time—"

"He, he, he!"

"Is it a go, Sammy?"

"It's a go!"

"That's all right, then," said Bunter, detaching himself from his armchair. "Don't let them know I've put you wise, of course. Now I'm going to tea. I've been asked to tea—"

"You mean, you've asked yourself!" grinned Sammy.

Billy Bunter did not answer that. He rolled out of Study No. 7, having finished with his minor now. Sammy Bunter chuckled, and finished the last crumbs of the cake, and then he, too, rolled away; he did not mind how soon he met Harry Wharton & Co. now.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Seeing Is Believing!

"BUZZ!"

"I say, Smithy—"

"Buzz!" repeated Vernon-Smith inexorably.

"I was going to ask you—"

"Well, don't!"

"If you'd care to come down to Bunter Court for the holidays."

Vernon-Smith stared at Billy Bunter for a moment or two blankly, and then burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Redwing grinned. He seemed as entertained as the Bounder by that kind invitation.

Bunter stood in the doorway of Study No. 4 in the Remove, and blinked at the owner of that study. Apparently, Bunter could see nothing to chortle at, and was surprised by the reception he had met with.

"I mean it, Smithy!" he exclaimed.

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

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Do you really imagine that you're going to stick me for a tea with a yarn as thin as that?" demanded Herbert Vernon-Smith. "You may be able to take in Wharton and his crowd, but that chicken won't fight in this study!"

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"I mean it! I've got six fellows coming to Bunter Court for the vac, including my minor. Make a seventh, Smithy. I'll take Redwing, too, if you like," added Bunter generously.

"Thank you for nothing!" said Tom Redwing, laughing.

"How do we get to Bunter Court?" inquired Vernon-Smith humorously. "I know that you dreamt that you dwelt in marble halls; but how does a fellow get to the giddy marble halls you saw in dreamland?"

"Look here, Smithy, I'll tell you all about Bunter Court over tea—"

"You've told me more than enough about it, old fat man, and you're not teasing in this study, anyhow," said the Bounder. "Buzz!"

Bunter did not "buzz." It was tea-time, and he was hungry, and the Bounder's study was flowing with milk and honey. Bunter was going to have tea with the Bounder, if he could.

"I'd really like you to come, Smithy," he said. "Look here, you can run over to Bunter Court and see the place before we break up, if you like. It's only about fifteen miles from Greyfriars."

"I can see myself travelling fifteen miles to arrive nowhere," chuckled the Bounder. "Try again."

"Then you won't come?" asked the fat Owl, with a hungry eye on Smithy's well-spread table.

FOUR WONDERFUL CUT-OUT STAND-UP ACTION PHOTOS OF HOBBS, SUTCLIFFE, PARKIN, AND HENDREN GIVEN AWAY WITH THE "MAGNET" DATED AUGUST 15th. STAND BY, BOYS!

"Of course I won't, ass! I'm not likely to pass a vacation in your suburban villa, wherever it is," said the Bounder disdainfully.

"It's the biggest place in Kent—"

"Pile it on!"

"Extensive park, lake, garage, three cars, stables, horses, butler and footmen—"

"Go it!"

"Telephone number Combermere One-O," said Bunter. "You can find it in the directory, if you like. It used to be called Combermere Lodge before my father bought it."

"Good old Bunter!" said the Bounder admiringly. "I've seen Combermere Lodge; I've biked that way. Topping place. Worth thirty thousand of the best. I can see your pater buying it—I don't think!"

"Thirty thousand isn't much to my pater."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Smithy, you're doubting my word," said the Owl of the Remove warmly. "I don't call that civil when I'm asking you to an expensive holiday at a magnificent country mansion."

"Isn't he a coughdrop?" said the Bounder. "Keeping it up just as if he believed in it himself. How does he do it, Reddy?"

"Blessed if I know," said Tom, who was staring blankly at Bunter. "Of course, there isn't a word of truth in it. We know that."

"Oh, really, Redwing—"

"Shut the door after you, Bunter," said Vernon-Smith. "I'm going to

have my tea now, and your face rather takes a fellow's appetite away."

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Bunter.

"Boot him out for me, Reddy!"

"I jolly well won't take you to Bunter Court now!" howled Bunter.

"Oh, what a loss!" sighed the Bounder.

Bunter gave Herbert Vernon-Smith a ferocious glare. Really, it was hard to be doubted like this, when he was stating the facts for once. For undoubtedly there was now a Bunter Court, and Bunter was able to take any amount of friends there for the vacation. Certainly, he had achieved that desirable state of things by "ways that are dark and tricks that are vain." But he had achieved it, and it was extremely exasperating not to be believed, now that, for the first time in history, there really was something behind his swank.

Skinner of the Remove passed the study doorway, and stopped and glanced in. The Bounder looked at him. He did not ask Skinner in to tea, as Harold Skinner hoped that he would, but he called out:

"Chance for you, Skinner."

"Eh? What's that?" asked Skinner.

"Bunter's making up a party for the hols at Bunter Court. Be nice to Bunter, and get a front seat."

Skinner chuckled.

"He seems to have taken in Wharton and his crowd," he remarked. "I've heard them say that they actually heard Bunter telephoning to the place to order the car to be sent here when we break up."

"Some sort of a dodge, of course," said Vernon-Smith. "Some fellows will swallow anything."

"You can telephone yourself, if you like!" hooted Bunter. "Ring up Combermere Lodge, and ask for Walsingham, the butler. Ask him whether I'm not taking a party there for the holidays."

"My dear old porpoise, you're going to be shown up without that," said Skinner, laughing.

"Eh?"

"You've told all the Remove that your pater bought Combermere Lodge, and had the name of Bunter Court put up. Well, Ogilvy and Russell have gone for a bike spin that way, and I've asked them to look at the place—"

"Eh?"

"And see with their own giddy eyes," chuckled Skinner. "They're coming back for tea, so we'll soon have news of Bunter Court."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled the Bounder.

Skinner grinned at the Owl of the Remove, fully expecting the fat junior to look dismayed. But Bunter only smiled.

"Right-ho!" he said. "That will settle it."

"It will jolly well settle that you've been gassing out of the back of your neck, as usual," said Skinner warmly.

"Wait till they come in, then!" sneered Bunter. "If they don't tell you that the name of Bunter Court is painted on the gates, I'll eat my hat!"

"Rats!"

"Bunter always keeps up a spoof till the last minute," chuckled Vernon-Smith. "He'll tell us then that the gates are being repainted, or something, and the name happened to be missing when Ogilvy and Russell passed."

"That's about it," said Skinner.

Bunter grinned serenely. He knew that Mr. Walsingham had carried out his instructions to have the new name painted up on the gate-posts at Combermere Lodge. He was quite safe there.

"You're a betting man, Smithy," he said. "What will you put on it? I'll give you ten to one in pound notes."

"Why not a hundred to one, as you haven't any pound notes, and couldn't settle ten to one in brass farthings," said the Bounder. "But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll stand you a study spread against a licking, if you care to take the bet."

"Done!" said Bunter at once.

"Mind, it's straight," said Vernon-Smith warningly. "If Ogilvy and Russell say that Bunter Court is painted up at Combermere Lodge, I stand you a spread. If they say it isn't, I give you six with a fives-bat, jolly hard!"

"Done!"

"Great pip!" said Skinner, with a curious stare at the Owl of the Remove. "I know he hasn't squared Ogilvy and Russell; he didn't even know they were going over to Combermere to-day. Besides, they wouldn't tell whoppers for him. What do you mean, Bunter?"

"Wait till they come in," grinned Bunter.

Skinner glanced along the Remove passage. Two rather dusty juniors had come up the staircase.

"Here they are," he said.

"Good!" grinned the Bounder.

"There's a fives-bat in the cupboard, Tom. Get it out, ready!"

"This way, you chaps!" called out Skinner.

"Yes," said Ogilvy.

"You looked, as I asked you?"

"Yes; and you could have knocked me off my bike with a feather!" said Russell. "There it was, as large as life."

"There what was?" exclaimed Harold Skinner.

"Bunter Court—newly painted up on the gate posts," said Russell.

"What?" roared the Bounder.

"What?" hooted Skinner.

"Didn't I tell you?" chuckled Bunter.

"It's gammon!" exclaimed the Bounder. "Look here, if you fellows are trying to pull my leg—"

"Honest Injun!" said Ogilvy. "We were jolly surprised, I can tell you. Who'd have guessed that Bunter was telling the truth?"

"Oh, really, Ogilvy—"

"There was a lodge-keeper mooching round by the gates," said Russell. "I got down and spoke to him. I asked him whether it was Combermere Lodge, and whether it was called Bunter Court now. He said it was."

"Great Scott!"

Billy Bunter pulled a chair up to the Bounder's table.

"I haven't had tea," he remarked. "I can do with that spread, Smithy. You'll make it a decent one, of course."

The Bounder had nothing to say. In fact, he was too surprised to speak.

Ogilvy and Russell went their way, and Skinner followed them; and before long most of the Remove fellows knew how Harold Skinner, in seeking to "show up" the Owl of the Remove, had produced positive proof of the Owl's statements. Meanwhile, the fives-bat was tossed back into Smithy's cupboard, and Billy Bunter spread himself at the festive board.

"Well, this beats it!" said the puzzled Bounder at last. "I've lost the bet, and you can tuck in as much as you like, Bunter. But it beats me! Mean to say you were telling the truth all the time?"

"Of course," said Bunter, with his mouth full.

"Blessed if I believe it now! Do you, Reddy?"

Tom Redwing shook his head.

"But Ogilvy and Russell saw it," said Smithy. "They weren't gammoning."

"No; that's all right."

"Then it must be true."

"I suppose so; but—"

"They couldn't be mistaken."

"No; but—"

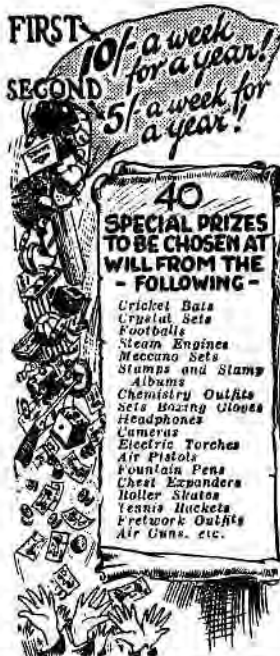
"But what?"

"Well, I don't quite catch on to it, that's all," said Redwing.

"I'm blessed if I do, either!" said the Bounder, in great perplexity. "Why, the Lodge is a tremendous place; it belonged to Lord Combermere. My pater was thinking of buying it, but it's a bit steep even for him, and he's rolling in money. This has got me beat, and no mistake."

Billy Bunter grinned serenely. Matters were shaping very well indeed for William George Bunter, and—however his extraordinary adventure turned

THESE ARE FOR YOU—See Page 2.



out in the long run—he had reason to be satisfied so far. The most doubting of the doubting Thomases in the Greyfriars Remove could scarcely contend now that there was no such place as Bunter Court.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Sammy Tells the Tale!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

Sammy Bunter of the Second Form grinned as the Famous Five bore down upon him in the quadrangle.

He grinned for two reasons—because he knew what the chums of the Remove wanted now, and was prepared to stuff them, and because all the members of the famous Co. bore signs of the tussle in the Second Form-room.

The scrap with the Second had ended quite unpleasantly for the Famous Five. They had retired from the fags' quarters rather hurriedly, followed by hoots and yells and whizzing inkpots;

and then they had had some damages to repair, and the repairs did not quite conceal all the damages.

So Bunter minor grinned as he blinked at them through his spectacles. He was rather amused.

"You fellows looking for me?" he asked.

"Yes, you fat young bounder!" said the captain of the Remove.

"He, he, he! Where did you get that nose?"

Harry Wharton passed his hand over his nose. It was a handsome nose, in its natural state; but it looked like Marian's in the ballad, rather red and raw at present. A fellow could not receive an inkpot on the nose without retaining a few traces of the impact.

"Anything wrong with your eye, Nugent?" went on Sammy cheerily. "Or are you just winking at me?"

Frank Nugent's eye certainly was winking, though unintentionally.

"Don't you be a cheeky little fat toad, Bunter minor," said Bob Cherry warningly. "Now, we want to speak to you—"

"The want is all on your side," said Bunter minor independently. "I don't care to be seen talking to the Remove, really!"

"Why, you—you—"

"I'm rather pressed for time, too," said Sammy, and he turned and walked away with cool independence.

The next moment he was whirled back by a grip on his collar.

"Yow-ow! Leggo, Bull, you beast!" roared Sammy.

"Shall I bang his head on a tree, you fellows?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Ow! Leggo!"

"No," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Here, Sammy, don't be a little cheeky ass! We want to ask you something. I dare say you know we've arranged to go home for the holidays with your major."

"How should I know?" retorted Sammy.

"But, as you mention it, it's a bit thick, in my opinion, for Billy to crowd out Bunter Court with a lot of Remove chaps. The pater wouldn't let me bring home a gang of the Second."

"Bunter Court?" repeated Harry.

"Yes, that's our place."

"Hem!"

"Where is Bunter Court exactly?" asked Wharton, after a pause. "We've never been able to get its precise bearings from Billy. According to what he's told us, it's stood in nearly every county in England at one time or another."

"It's in Kent, of course!"

"Oh! Where exactly?"

"Near Combermere."

"Oh!"

The Famous Five exchanged glances. They had sought Sammy Bunter for confirmation of William George's statements. This looked like confirmation.

"According to Billy, it's been in the giddy Bunter family for generations and generations," remarked Nugent.

"That's only Billy's gas," said Sammy brightly. "It wasn't in our family till the pater bought it from Lord Combermere, and changed the name."

"Oh!"

"Tell us all about it, Sammy," said Bob Cherry encouragingly.

Sammy blinked at the Famous Five.

"I was just going to the tuckshop," he said. "If you fellows like to come along with me you can."

Sammy started off again. Johnny Bull's hand came out to arrest his progress as before, but the captain of the Remove intervened.

"Come on," he said. "It's worth a gingerpop to know the facts, and to know where we stand!"

"I know already!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, come on, old chap!"

The chums of the Remove walked to the tuck-shop with Sammy Bunter.

Sammy sat on a high stool at the counter, and gave them an expressive look. Billy Bunter had primed him with a story to tell; but Sammy considered that the telling of the story was worth something, as the Remove fellows were keen to hear it. He priced it, so to speak, at a ginger-pop and a jam-tart.

Harry Wharton was well acquainted with the manners and customs of the Bunter tribe. He ordered the ginger-pop and two jam-tarts, and Sammy beamed with cordiality.

"Fact is, I'm glad you fellows are coming home with us," he said. "We'll get on all right. Plenty of room for the lot of us if we want to give one another a miss—see?"

"I—I see," said Harry slowly.

"You could easily lose yourself in the park," said Sammy airily. "In fact, you could jolly nearly lose yourself in the picture-gallery alone! Immense, you know!"

"Is—is it?"

"Why, the servants' hall is bigger than Big Hall here," said Sammy calmly. "I'm blessed if I remember how many footmen Walsingham has under him—"

"Walsingham?"

"Our butler, you know."

"Oh!"

"Not less than a dozen," said Sammy reflectively, as he rubbed jam from his fat little nose. "Of course, now we've set up Bunter Court we rather do things in style. You'll have a good time there—boating on the lake, fishing in the river, shooting in the woods—"

"Oh!"

"If you care for motoring, there's half a dozen cars to choose from," said Sammy. "As for the grub, you can trust Billy to see to that. Me, too."

"Well, this beats it!" murmured Bob.

"Then—then—then the car's really coming to take us away when the school breaks up?" asked Wharton.

"Of course, if Billy's asked you for the vac. I shall telephone to Walsingham to send another for me. I'm not going to be packed in with a crowd of Remove chaps. I may be taking a friend or two with me, too."

The Famous Five looked at one another. Sammy Bunter, having disposed of his tarts, looked at Mrs. Mimble's further supply. But Harry Wharton & Co. had finished with Bunter minor now, and they walked out of the tuckshop, leaving Sammy grinning a rather jammy grin.

"Well, this looks like real business!" said Harry Wharton. "It looks to me as if we're booked. We can't turn Bunter down if the thing's genuine."

"We can't!" agreed Nugent.

"Who'd have thought it?" said Bob Cherry ruefully. "It was my idea to pull Bunter's leg by taking on his giddy invitation. But who'd have guessed that it was anything but swank?"

"Nobody!" said Harry. "We all went into it for a jape on Bunter, and we've got landed. It wouldn't be decent to turn him down now."

"Oh, no, that's so!"

"I don't believe it now," said Johnny Bull stubbornly. "Bunter's filled his minor up with that yarn to stuff us."

"It's possible, of course," said Harry. "But—"

"You fellows heard?" asked Skinner of the Remove, joining the Famous Five as they walked towards the House. "It's the news of the term—the catch of the season. Bunter Court—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Do you know anything about Bunter Court, Skinner?" asked Bob, in surprise. "You don't mean to say you believe in it?"

"Well, it looks like it," said Skinner.

"My hat!"

The Famous Five knew that Skinner was a fellow who rather prided himself upon not believing in anything or anybody. If Skinner believed in Bunter Court, it was confirmation strong as proof of holy writ, so to speak.

"Ogilvy and Russell have seen the show!" explained Skinner. "At least, so they say!"

"If they say so, it's so," said Bob.

"Let's go and ask them, you chaps."

"Let's!" said Harry.

The Famous Five proceeded to Study No. 3 in the Remove, where they found Robert Donald Ogilvy and Dick Russell at tea. The two juniors grinned as the chums of the Remove looked in. Already they had received quite a large number of callers, and all the callers had called to inquire about Bunter Court.

"You want to know, too?" chuckled Ogilvy.

"About Bunter Court—" began Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha! I thought it was that!"

"Skinner says you've seen the place—"

"That's so," said Russell, and he told over again what he had told the Bounder.

"That does it!" said Bob Cherry.

Even Johnny Bull had nothing to say. He was quite staggered by this accumulation of testimony.

As Harry Wharton & Co. left Study No. 3, they came on Billy Bunter, rolling away fat and shiny and satisfied from the spread in Smithy's study. He blinked cheerily at the Co.

"I say, you fellows, if you like to ask Ogilvy—"

"We've asked him," said Harry.

"He's seen Bunter Court!" said the Owl of the Remove with dignity.

"Yes; he's told us so."

Bunter gave the chums of the Remove a lofty blink.

"I hope you're satisfied now," he said. "Ye-es—"

"You could have asked my minor," added Bunter. "Sammy could have told you all about it, if you'd asked him."

"We have asked him."

Billy Bunter's lip curled now. With so much proof on his side, Bunter had to be believed. As he had to be believed, he considered himself entitled to feel the natural indignation of a fellow whose word had been doubted.

"Well, I think this is rather thick," he said disdainfully. "I ask fellows to come home with me for the hols, they accept my invitation, and then they go round inquiring whether I've really got a place to ask them to. That isn't what I call cricket. Not gentlemanly, in fact."

Wharton coloured, and his comrades looked very uncomfortable. There was some foundation in Bunter's complaint, and they could not deny it. Certainly they would not have treated any other fellow in the same way. Bunter was unique, and so—to speak—called for special treatment.

"Well, you're such a giddy spoofer, you know," said Bob Cherry. "It's all your own fault, Bunter."

"I must say I rather despise fellows who do such things," said Bunter scornfully.

"Look here," said the captain of the Remove abruptly. "We own up that

you were telling the truth this time, but nobody would ever have expected you to tell the truth, knowing you."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"If you want to call the invitation off, we're ready to let you out," said Harry.

"Oh, certainly!" said Nugent.

"With pleasure," said Bob Cherry.

"The pleasurefulness will be terrific."

"Yes, call it off!" said Johnny Bull, with a nod.

Bunter's manner changed at once. He was not in the least disposed to call it off. Guests at Bunter Court were an absolute necessity to him, as he simply had to have a supply of ready cash during his holidays. And the Famous Five, the great chiefs of the Remove, were rather a distinguished party for any Remove fellow to take home with him.

They eyed him rather anxiously.

It was really impossible to turn Bunter down, after accepting his invitation, though it had only been accepted by way of a jape. But if he chose to call the matter off, there was no doubt that Harry Wharton & Co. would be pleased. Really they were not yearning to spend their vacation in the fascinating company of William George Bunter.

But the Owl of the Remove shook his head.

"My dear chaps," he said, "that's all right! It's rather late to make up a new party now, just before break-up. Besides, I want my old pals with me. Don't say another word. You're coming."

"But—"

"You haven't treated me well," said Bunter. "But dash it all, I don't expect you fellows to come up to my standards in matters of principle."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I shouldn't have acted as you've done," continued Bunter, pursuing his advantage. "I must say that! But I don't expect everybody to be so particular as I am. That would be expecting too much. So it's all right."

And Bunter rolled on, leaving the Famous Five speechless.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Mauly Wants to Know!

LORD MAULEVERER wore a worried look.

He felt as worried as his look indicated.

In the Remove Form-room, he looked so thoughtful over his lessons in the sunny morning that Mr. Quelch gave him a glance of approval. As a rule, Mauly did not do much thinking over his lessons; it was a change to see his noble brow wrinkled with deep cogitation as he sat in class. Naturally a pleasant change to a painstaking master like Mr. Quelch.

Mauly was quite unconscious of the Remove master's approval.

It was undeserved, as it happened. Lord Mauleverer was thinking; but most decidedly he was not thinking about irregular verbs.

Mauly was an easy-going fellow, and he hated exertion, either mental or physical. Now he was exerting himself mentally, and he did not like it. On top of his reflections, he really could not have stood irregular verbs.

He wore a worried look at dinner that day, and after dinner, making up his noble mind with an effort, he looked for Billy Bunter.

For once, Bunter was not easily to be found.

Often and often would the Owl of the Remove, at other times, look for Lord Mauleverer; and his lordship would

dodge round corners, or scud into the Cloisters, or vanish along corridors, to keep out of the way of the fat junior. But in these days, immediately preceding the break-up for the summer holidays, Bunter, contrary to custom, seemed to be avoiding the schoolboy earl.

Mauly had not specially noticed it; only he had noticed that Bunter did not seem so much in evidence, that he had not been driven to dodge the fat Owl so often; and that, of course, had been a relief. But he realised that Bunter did not want to see him, now that he started looking for the Owl.

For he sighted Bunter in the quad, and called to him; and the Owl of the Remove rolled away in another direction at once.

It would have been easy enough to overtake Bunter; his movements resembled those of a very fat snail. But Lord Mauleverer only gazed after him in surprise, and did not pursue. He had to speak to Bunter, on the topic that was worrying his noble mind; but it was not worth exertion. He decided to catch Bunter as the Remove went in that afternoon. For this reason, Lord Mauleverer arrived early at the Form-room, and adorned the door thereof with his noble person in a lounging attitude till the Lower Fourth came along for class.

When Bunter appeared, he did not come alone. Fisher T. Fish, Skinner, and Snoop were with him, and they were walking round Bunter with very attentive manners. Since Ogilvy and Russell had reported that they actually had seen Bunter Court, with their own eyes, Skinner & Co. had awakened to the fact that William George Bunter was not, after all, a bad sort of chap. Qualities that they had never noticed before now appeared in Bunter; they were beginning to speak of him affectionately as "old Bunter." Instead of having to run down some hapless fellow and fasten on him, Bunter now found that he had company unasked and unsought. He was becoming a person of some consideration in the Remove; fellows were already fishing for invitations to Bunter Court. Doubts, perhaps, still lingered; but Skinner & Co., at least, thought that it was worth while to be civil to Bunter.

Bunter walked with a strut now, as became the heir of so magnificent a residence as Bunter Court.

Since the existence of that commodious and desirable mansion had been demonstrated, Bunter had "swelled visibly." The extraordinary series of tricks by which Bunter Court had come into his—temporary—possession, hardly lingered in his fat mind at all; and he did not give a single thought to the inevitable consequences of his trickery. His motto was that sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof; and the morrow could take care of itself, or, at least, could be left uncared-for. Meeting troubles half-way had never been Bunter's system; he preferred to dismiss them from his mind, which was as good as not meeting them at all—until the crash came.

So Bunter was perfectly satisfied with himself and things generally, and he swallowed the civility of Skinner & Co. like a hungry gudgeon.

He blinked at Lord Mauleverer, as he came up with his new friends, rather uneasily, however.

Mauly was the fly in the ointment, so to speak.

It was Mauly who had sent him over to Combermere Lodge to look at the



"I'll take Redwing, too, if you like," said Bunter. "I don't know what the servants will think at my taking a common fellow like Redwing home with me, but, dash it all, I'll chance it." Crash! Bunter's shining hat was suddenly squashed over his head, as the Bounder smote it with a heavy hand. (See Chapter 8.)

place and report on it, to save his lazy lordship a journey. Mauly, therefore, knew that Combermere Lodge, only a week ago, had still been the property of Lord Combermere, and "to let," furnished during the absence of its owner on the Continent.

Lord Mauleverer was too lazy to take much interest in the talk that went on in the Rag, and the passages, and studies; and what he heard he heeded not. But even Mauleverer had been bound to hear the talk about Bunter Court, and to hear that that wonderful dwelling-place was the one-time Combermere Lodge. It was a perpetual topic in the Remove now, and Lord Mauleverer simply couldn't help hearing it at last.

That was what was now worrying his noble mind. It was upon that subject that he desired to speak to Bunter; and it was for that reason that Billy Bunter carefully avoided his lordship. Bunter did not want to be questioned on that subject.

However, here was Mauly, leaning on the Form-room door, and evidently not to be escaped this time.

"Bunter, old man—"

"Sorry, Mauly—"

"Eh? What are you sorry about?"

"Sorry it can't be done, Mauly," said Bunter firmly. "I've thought it over, but I can't ask you for the holidays."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Sorry, and all that, but it can't be done," said Bunter, and he rolled into the Form-room, leaving Mauly dumb.

"Great gad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer, at last.

By the time Mauly recovered from his astonishment, Mr. Quelch was coming along to the Remove Form-room. It was too late to tackle Bunter now, and Mauleverer had to leave it till after class.

After class, his lordship was unusually active in his movements. He fairly ran Bunter down in the passage, and collared him before he could dodge away.

With a hand on his fat shoulder, Bunter had to stop.

"Leggo, you ass!" exclaimed the Owl of the Remove.

"I've got to speak to you, old fat pippin," said Lord Mauleverer. "I can't make this biznez out, and I've got to make it out. There's some sort of spoof goin' on."

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

Skinner & Co. were coming round, and Bunter blinked at them in alarm. He did not want Skinner & Co. to hear.

"Come up to the study, Mauly," he grunted.

"Oh, all right; no dodgin', you know!"

"Yah!"

Bunter felt that he was for it now; he could not put Mauly off till the vacation, as he had hoped. He led the way to Study No. 7 in the Remove, and shut the door; he was not too short-sighted to notice that Harold Skinner was loafing in the Remove passage, with an inquisitive expression on his face.

"Now, what is it, you ass?" demanded Bunter.

"About Combermere Lodge," said Lord Mauleverer. "You offered to go over there the other day for me—"

"Well, I went, didn't I?" snapped Bunter.

"Yaas. You told me that it was a rotten show, with the drains up, and the roof down, or somethin' of the kind; and I wrote to my uncle that it wasn't worth takin' for the summer."

Bunter grinned.

"What about it?"

"Well, now I hear that you've got hold of it," said Lord Mauleverer. "The fellows are sayin' that your father has bought the place, and that you're goin' there for the hols."

"That's so."

"Well, what does it mean?" demanded Mauleverer quietly. "I may be an ass, but I'm not a howlin' ass. You're spoofin' the fellows somehow, Bunter, and I suppose you're makin' somethin' out of it somehow, though I don't see how. I want to know."

Bunter blinked at him. It was quite unlike Lord Mauleverer to take any interest in any other fellow's affairs.

"You're getting jolly inquisitive, Mauly," grunted the Owl of the Remove.

"It isn't that. But it's through me that you ever saw the place, and if there's some spoof on, I'm partly responsible," said Mauleverer. "Did you play any of your knavish tricks when I sent you over there the other day?"

"Look here—"

"I've telephoned more than once to the doctor at Combermere, who's got the man Pilkins in his nursin' home. It seems that Pilkins has an impression that it was I who came over to see him that day. Did you let him know that I'd sent you, or did you gammon him somehow?"

"He may have supposed that I was Lord Mauleverer," admitted Bunter. "I've often been taken for a lord. People judge by appearances, you know—what are you grinning at, you ass?"

"So you swanked there as me," grunted Lord Mauleverer. "But that doesn't explain it. Have you really got hold of Combermere Lodge for the hols?"

"Yes," snapped Bunter.

"Don't tell me that your pater's bought it," said Mauleverer. "I happen to know that it wouldn't be sold under fifty thousand pounds."

"That's not much to my pater."

"Oh, cut it out!" said Mauleverer sharply. "Look here, Bunter, you've been up to some trickery, and if you don't explain, I shall take the trouble to go over and see Pilkins in the nursin' home, if he's able to see visitors, and ask him all about it."

Bunter almost shuddered.

He had had a wonderful run of luck, in the series of tricks by which he had turned Combermere Lodge into Bunter Court. But a word from Lord Mauleverer to the estate agent would have knocked his card-castle of trickery and deception to pieces.

"I—I say, Mauly—" he stammered.

"I'm waitin' for you to explain," said Lord Mauleverer quietly. "If you've been makin' use of my name, and

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playin' tricks, you're fool enough to land yourself in a matter of fraud, and I'm jolly well goin' to stop you before it's too late. Your father hasn't bought the Lodge, so how have you got hold of it for the hols?"

"The—the fact is—"

"Well?"

"The—the fact—"

"Take your time," said Lord Mauleverer sarcastically.

"The—the actual fact—"

"I'm waitin' to hear the facts, Bunter."

"To—tell you the truth, Mauly, my father hasn't bought the Lodge," said Bunter, in a burst of frankness.

"I know that already."

"It's a secret, of course," said Bunter.

"A fellow doesn't want to tell all the school that his people have taken a house furnished for the holidays."

"Why not, if it's true?"

"Well, I don't," said Bunter crossly; "and I suppose I can do as I like. I told my pater about the place, and asked him to take it for the summer, and he's taken it. See?"

Lord Mauleverer looked at him grimly.

"You fat toad!"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"You went to look at the place for me, on my nunky's account, and you stuffed me that it was no good, and asked your father to take it!"

Bunter realised that his account of the transaction was not calculated to raise him in Lord Mauleverer's estimation. But there was no help for that.

"Oh, a fellow has to look after himself, you know!" he said.

"You worm!"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"But never mind that," said Lord Mauleverer. "Nunky wasn't specially keen on the place, and it doesn't matter very much about that. I was afraid it was somethin' worse when I heard that you'd been braggin' that your father had bought the place. So the fact is that he has hired it for the summer, furnished."

"Just that!" said Bunter.

"That's all right, then," said Mauleverer. "That's no business of mine. Glad to have done with you."

Lord Mauleverer turned to the door.

"You won't give me away, Mauly?" exclaimed Bunter anxiously. "I don't want all the fellows to know that we've only hired the place."

"You silly ass! It's no bizney of mine if you go in for silly swank. I sha'n't say anythin' about that."

"Good!"

Lord Mauleverer left the study, extremely glad to have done with Bunter, and at the same time relieved in his mind. The whole thing had looked suspicious even to his unsuspicious mind, but Bunter's explanation had relieved him. It was, indeed, quite in keeping with Bunter's character to announce that his father had bought a lordly mansion if that gentleman had only hired it furnished for a few weeks.

Bunter, too, was relieved. What Lord Mauleverer would have thought had he guessed that Mr. Bunter had not hired the mansion at all Bunter could not surmise. But certainly his lordship would have intervened in the matter.

The Owl of the Remove chuckled.

By admitting as much as he had admitted he had thrown the dust in Lord Mauleverer's eyes concerning the rest of the transaction, and it was still Bunter's own secret that he had taken the Lodge on his own sole responsibility by a process of amazing trickery.

Peter Todd came into the study and glanced at the fat junior, whose fat chuckle he heard as he came up the passage.

"Well, what's the joke, fatty?" he asked.

"He, he, he! I've had to turn down Mauly," said Bunter. "He came up to the study and fairly begged me to take him home for the vac. But I'm too fed up with Mauly, Peter!"

"Gammon!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

Peter Todd surveyed his fat study-mate curiously.

"You've astonished the natives, Bunter," he said. "I can't understand it; but there's a general belief that you've been telling the truth. If you have, how did it happen?"

"Yah!"

"Accidents will happen, I know; but this is such a jolly extraordinary accident," argued Peter. "I've always supposed that you couldn't tell the truth if you tried—and I've never seen you trying. How did you manage it this time?"

Bunter gave him a scornful blink. "I suppose you're rather waxy because I decline to ask you home for the holidays, Toddy—"

"What?"

"I'd do it," said Bunter. "But a fellow's bound to be rather particular about the chaps he takes home to a place like Bunter Court. I'm no snob personally, but my pater would expect me to draw the line somewhere. That's how it is, Toddy."

And Bunter, turning up his fat little nose, walked out of the study, intending to depart with lofty dignity and leave Toddy crushed.

Crash!

A boot landed behind Bunter as he went, and the lofty dignity of his departure was somewhat marred. Bunter flew out of the doorway and landed in the passage on his hands and knees with a roar.

"Whooooop!"

Peter Todd grinned after him.

"Have another?" he asked genially.

"Ow!"

Bunter shook a fat fist at Peter and scuttled down the passage. Apparently he did not want another.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Soft Sawder!

"I GUESS it's the genuine goods."

Thus Fisher T. Fish.

Skinner & Co. nodded assent.

They were all convinced by this time that it was the genuine goods, as Fishy described it.

They had done Bunter injustice. Bunter, a really fine fellow when you came to understand his ways—Bunter had been doubted, mocked, even scorned—and Bunter all the time had been offering the genuine goods. Bunter Court, far from being a delusion and a snare, really had a genuine existence, a local habitation, and a name.

It was amazing—almost unnerving—to discover that Billy Bunter had been telling the truth—that there was a

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foundation of fact for his gaseous swank. But there it was.

Bunter—on this occasion, at least—had not been swanking; he had, so to speak, delivered the goods.

"I guess it's all serene—in fact, O.K.," said Fisher T. Fish. "I calculate that Bunter's chat cut no ice with me. But proof's proof. I've been on the telephone."

"What?" ejaculated Skinner.

Fisher T. Fish nodded sagely. If Bunter was going home to Bunter Court for a happy and expensive holiday, Fisher Tarleton Fish was prepared to go with him; and to that end he was ready to expend any amount of soft sawder upon the Owl of the Remove. A still more acid test, he was prepared to make him small loans—sprats to catch whales. But he wanted to be absolutely certain first. Fisher Tarleton Fish prided himself upon having had his eye-teeth cut early, in Noo Yark. If any galoot in the little old earth was going to be taken in, that galoot's name was not going to be F. T. Fish!

"Yep!" said Fishy. "I guess I got on to Prouty's telephone when Prouty was on a trot, and rang up Bunter Court. I reckon Old Man Bunter got hold of the place quite recent, as it's still given as Combermere Lodge in the telephone directory. But there it is. I got through and spoke to the butler galoot—man named Walsingham. Regular butler voice came back—very high-class, but respectful. Some butler, I guess, to judge by his toot."

"And what did he say?" asked Snoop eagerly.

"I guess I asked him point blank whether Billy Bunter was bringing a party there for the summer holidays," said Fishy. "And he said yep."

"Is he an American butler?" asked Skinner, with a grin.

"Eh? I guess not. Why?"

"Then I fancy he must have said yep, not yep."

Snoop and Stott and Micky Desmond chuckled, and Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"Oh, don't waste time on funny business!" he said. "I guess the butler galoot stood for it, and that shows it's all right. He spoke of Mr. Bunter, as he called him, in an awfully respectful way. I reckon Bunter has been tipping him."

"Blest if I see how!" remarked Stott. "Bunter hasn't any money, and he wouldn't give any away if he had."

"Chuck that, Stott!" said Skinner severely. "That's not the way to speak of old Bunter."

"I guess not!" agreed Fisher T. Fish. Stott stared.

"What do you mean? You jolly well know he hasn't any money, whether he has a decent place at home or not."

"They do seem to keep him a bit short of cash," said Snoop. "But his people must have lots of money if they've got hold of Lord Combermere's place. Besides, Bunter spends a lot on grub."

"Friends may have lent him a little ready cash," said Skinner. "I know I'm ready to make old Bunter a little loan at any time if he wants one. I think that is up to me, as a pal."

"Sure!" agreed Fishy.

"You'd never see it again," said Stott. Frederick Stott was a little slow on the uptake, as it were.

"We may see Bunter Court, though," said Skinner, with a grin.

"Oh, I see!"

"Time you did, fathead! The fact is," said Skinner, "Bunter's a decent sort of chap—one of the best, in fact; and



The car ran on and stopped at the large gates of Combermere Lodge. On the pillars of the gateway and suspended on a frame between them the new name of the establishment was painted up—Bunter Court. "Give that chap a few half-crowns, Wharton, will you?" said Bunter as the lodge keeper saluted Bunter with great respect. "I always tip servants when they're civil." (See Chapter 9.)

his friendship is an honour to any fellow. I always liked Bunter."

"Great pip!" ejaculated Stott.

"I always liked him, and now I like him more than ever. It was my idea to get Ogilvy and Russell to look at his place, and prove to all the fellows that there was no gammon about it."

"I thought you did that to show him up."

"Then the sooner you leave off thinking so the better, you crass ass! I think, as we break up so soon, we'd better ask Bunter to tea."

"Do," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'll come!"

Skinner glanced at the Transatlantic junior rather unpleasantly.

"I was thinking that you'd ask him, and we'd come," he explained.

"Good egg!" agreed Snoop.

"Forget it!" said Fisher T. Fish derisively.

"Let's whack it out," suggested Snoop. "It's no small thing to stand Bunter a spread. Between ourselves, he's an awful pig!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Strictly between ourselves," agreed Skinner.

"I guess it's a cinch," said Fisher T. Fish. "I want to write home to the popper and mopper that I've spent a vac in one of the stately homes in England, as some pesky poet says. I calculate I'll stand my whack in feeding Bunter."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, Bunty, old man!" said Skinner cordially. "Just going to look for you. You mustn't let your social engagements take you too much away from your old friends, you know."

"Nunno," said Bunter, blinking at him. "But the fact is, Skinner, a fellow who's so much sought after—"

"I understand that, of course," agreed Skinner. "A fellow has to pay the penalty of popularity. They don't leave you much time to yourself, old chap. I dare say you get a bit fed at times."

"Well, I do, you know," assented Bunter. The Owl of the Remove liked flattery, like pineapple, in chunks; and Skinner was undoubtedly handing it out in chunks. "With so many friends, you know, all a fellow can do is to ration them, as it were."

"Oh! Ah! Yes. Exactly."

"I was going to mention," went on Bunter, "that I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

"Oh!"

"I was expecting it this morning, but there's been some delay in the post. It's from one of my titled relations, you know."

"Um!"

Fisher T. Fish strolled away with a careless air. He was very keen to get to Bunter Court for the vacation, but when it came to parting with money,

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

Supplement No. 232.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR.

Week Ending July 25th, 1925.

WHY I LIKE THE SEASIDE!



By Our Merry Contributors.

BILLY BUNTER:

I like the seaside bekwase bathing and boating and donky-riding give you such a terrifick appetite, which you can always grattify by visiting a seaside cally. They do you well at seaside caffies. (They did me out of half-a-crown at the last one I went to!) But, joaking apart, the grub you get at the seaside is far better than you can get anywhere else, eggsept at a country farmhouse. When I look back on my feeds at Folkestone, my bankwetts at Brighton, my dinners at Dover, and my suppers at Southsea, my mouth starts watering, and I rush to the cubberd in Study No. 7, in the hope that my greedy, gluttenus study-mates have left me some grub. But I always share the fate of Little Miss Muffet, the old lady in the nursery rhyme, who went to the cubberd to get her poor spider a bone.

MARK LINLEY:

I think the reason I like the seaside is that people are always at their best and cheeriest when you meet them on holiday. They come out of their shells, as it were, and plunge whole-heartedly into all the fun that is going. Long faces are the exception at the seaside. Everybody seems to be fairly brimming over with fun and good-humour, and those are the qualities that make life worth living.

ALONZO TODD:

It is always the joy of paddling that lures me to the seaside. I don't mean paddling a canoe. I should not be bold enough to brave the bounding billows in one of those crazy affairs. I mean paddling on the fringe of the water, with ones shoes and socks off. Of course, there is the danger that you may be nipped by a crab, or that a shower of spray may strike you in the face, but this element of danger only adds spice to the paradisaical pleasures of paddling.

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DICKY NUGENT:

i like the seaside bekwase i'm awfully keen on catching winkels and cockels and muscles and other members of the shellfish tribe. My idea of a perfect day is to spend it on the winkel-beds. "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," said the poet. But i'd rather gather winkels!

WILLIAM GOSLING:

Which I 'ates the seaside like poison! You sits down in a deckchair, an' the young rips starts smotherin' you with sand. You goes out in a boat, an' you suffers all the agonies of seasickness. You goes in to bathe, an' a crab fastens its talents on to your big toe. You goes back to your boardin'-ouse, an' they gives you a bill wot makes you bankrupt for a year. Don't talk to William Gosling about seaside joys. There ain't none!

BESIDE THE SEASIDE!

By LORD MAULEVERER.

THEY tell me Brighton's toppin'
For roamin' fancy free;
A splendid place for shoppin',
Or swimmin' in the sea.
A place of balmy breezes,
Where every prospect pleases,
An' no one taunts or teases—
The very place for me!

It boasts a Grand Pavilion,
A handsome Palace Pier,
Where people by the million
Go swarmin' every year.
There's miles an' miles of shingle,
Where trippers mix an' mingle,
An' donkeys' bells all jingle
With music sweet an' clear.

The motor-boats in dozens
Go boundin' o'er the blue,
With sisters, aunts, an' cousins
In dress of every hue.
There's pierrots gaily hummin',
An' nigger minstrels strummin',
I wish that I was comin'
To Brighton, boys, with you!

But if I came to Brighton
I'd doze an' dream all day;
Employ a man to frighten
The wasps and things away;
An' on the beach reclinin',
With old King Sol a-shinin',
I'd bless the silver linin'
That made the prospect gay.

I'd not oppose the wishes
Of any pals of mine;
I'd let them catch their fishes
Or wallow in the brine.
An' in a deckchair lazin'
I'd linger, idly gazin'
At all the sights amazin',
An' vote it jolly fine!

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

"I DO like to be beside the seaside!" sang a comedian long ago. And most of us echo his sentiment, especially on sweltering summer days when stuffy Form-rooms are intolerable, and when bathing in the briny is the proper caper. On such days we all would like to be beside the seaside. We would all like to stroll along the "prom-prom-prom," and hear the brass band play "tiddley-om-pom." And, better still, we would like to float at our leisure in the blue waters, gazing up dreamily at a cloudless sky.

Greyfriars is lucky. It is beside the seaside all the time. It stands upon the surf-bound coast of Kent, fronting on to the North Sea. But there is no big, popular seaside resort near the school. So we are as keen as anyone to get away sometimes to Margate or Folkestone or Brighton. It makes a welcome change from Pegg, which is a one-eyed, sleepy old show. There is no pier at Pegg, no picture palace, no promenade—not even a policeman! Just a few whitewashed fishermen's cottages and a crazy old jetty, which looks as if it won't weather the storms of another winter. But perhaps Pegg will develop later on. Some doctor will discover a magic quality in the ozone of Pegg, and it will be "boomed" as a health resort, and we shall have people flocking from north, south, east, and west to pitch their tents, so to speak, in Pegg. But this is looking rather a long way ahead. I can't see poor little Pegg becoming prosperous in our generation.

This, my chums, is our Special Seaside Number. We could publish a dozen such numbers without exhausting all that we've got to say about the seaside. It's a topic that opens up such a wide range of interests—bathing, boating, fishing, smuggling, exploring, and winkle-catching. To squeeze all these subjects into the scope of a single issue would require the skill of a sardine-packer. So we must content ourselves with one of Dicky Nugent's masterpieces, a seaside ditty by Lord Mauleverer, a column of general gossip, and, last and least, this Editorial. Not such a comprehensive number as we could wish; but I think our contributors have caught the true seaside "atmosphere," which my readers will catch in turn. Some of you will be wishing, when you have read this issue, that you could "pack up your troubles in your old kitbags," and proceed forthwith to Breezy Brighton or Sunny Southsea!

HARRY WHARTON.



The Head's Dilemma!

DICKY NUGENT

An Amazing Story of
JACK JOLLY & Co's Seaside Adventures

"I WISH hollidays lasted for ever!" Jack Jolly side wistfully as he spoke. Jack and his two chums, Merry and Bright, were enjoying a glorious sun-bath on the beach at Winklesea. They were reclining on the silvery sands, and the sun beat down upon their freckled faces and tanned limbs.

The heroes of St. Sam's were having a topping time. They had already caused something of a stir at Winklesea. On the very first night of their arrival there had been a terrible shipwreck, a big fishing liner having come to grief on the rocks. There was no lifeboat available, so Jack Jolly & Co. had swum gallantly out to the wreck, breasting the bounding billers, and bringing the members of the stranded crew ashore one by one. For this grate deed of valler they had been publicly thanked next morning by the Mare and Corporation, and presented with gold watches, specially made at the local brass foundry. They had also been wreckomended to the Royal Humane Sossociety, from whom they will doubtless reseve meddles and sustificates in due corse.

They had had lots of other advenchers, but pressure of space will not permit the orther to record them.

Now, as they lay basking in the sun, the singing of the waves was suddenly drowned by another sort of singing.

A rasping noise, like somebody filing a petition in bankruptsy, fell upon their ears.

"Grate Scott!" gasped Jack Jolly.

"What the merry dickens—" began Merry.

"It's a nigger minstrel," said Bright. "A chocklit-cullered coon! Look! He's coming towards us."

A very old and decreppit nigger, carrying a very old and decreppit tamberine, tottered towards the juniors. He was as black as the ace of spades, eggsept for his lips, which were ruby red. Even his long, flowing beard was black, though it looked as though it might have been white at some time or other, and then died.

Jack Jolly & Co. stared at the strange figger in astonishment.

"First time I've ever seen a nigger minstrel with a beard!" said Jack Jolly.

"Same hear!" mermered Merry.

The aged nigger halted and drummed his black fingers on the tamberine, and started to croke:

"Upon de Swanee Riber,
Dat's where I wanna be;
Upon de Swance Riber,
Way down in Tennessee!"

"What a voice!" said Jack Jolly, with a shudder. "Sounds like a wild beast in its death throws!"

"It's awful!" agreed Merry. "I hardly know which is worse—his voice or the pantaloons he's wearing."

"If the perlice spot him he'll be had

up for 'brecches' of the peace!" chuckled Bright.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The nigger minstrel hurled a look of reproach at the larking juniors, and they ducked their heads in the nick of time. Then he went on with his warbling.

"When I am playin' wid my brudder
Down upon the Alabama shore,
I hear those gentle voices callin'
It ain't a-gonna rain no more."

Jack Jolly & Co. were obliged to stop their ears. That voice was too awful to be endured. It was like a raven coking and a kettle singing at the same time.

When the singer had finished he hurled another look of reproach at the juniors, and they, in turn, heaved sighs of releef.



The minstrel gave a violent start and jerked his head out of the tub.

"Thank goodness he's come to a fool's top!" said Jack Jolly. "I suppose we ought to give the poor beggar something, if only to bribe him not to brake out again."

"That's so," agreed Merry.

The aged nigger had taken off his hat and was holding it out to the juniors. With an air of condensation Jack Jolly tossed a bad shilling into it, and Merry and Bright took advantage of the opportunity to get rid of some suspect coins which had been rejected at the school tuckshop.

"Tank you, young massa!" said the nigger, addressing Jack Jolly. "Tank you—tank you!" he added, as Merry and Bright wayed in with their contributions.

And then the old Sambo drifted away along the beach.

Jack Jolly gazed after him thoughtfully.

"There's some mistery about that chap," he remarked. "He duzzent seem a genuine darkie to me. I notissed one or two streaks of white in that black beard of his. Looks to me as if it's a white beard died black. And then there's his voice. I don't mean his singing voice, but his speaking one. It's quite refined."

"The fellow's no nigger," said Merry,

with konviction. "I vote we follow him and see what his little game is."

The juniors rose to their feet and went off in serch of the elderly minstrel. He had disappeared from sight by this time, but they ran him to earth at last. It was behind a bathing-tent that they found him.

The nigger was on his knees with his head plunged into a tub of water. He had a scrubbing-brush in each hand, and he was rubbing and scrubbing away as if for a wager.

"My hat!" gasped Jack Jolly. "He's no black man! That woolly mop of his was false. Look, he's taken it off! And now he's scrubbing all the black off his chivvy!"

At the sound of the juniors' voices the minstrel gave a violent start and jerked his head out of the tub and looked round.

Instantly there was a shout from Jack Jolly & Co.—a shout of sheer stupefaction.

"The—the Head!" stuttered Jack Jolly.

It was indeed the aged and vannerable headmaster of St. Sam's who confronted the juniors. Now that he had discarded his woolly mop and scrubbed all the black off his face, he could be easily recognised. The water glissened on his bald pate, and trickled down his face and swamped his beard, which was now as white as the driven snow.

The Head was no less startled than the juniors.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" he said, in his skollerly tones. "I'm fairly bowled out now!"

"Sir," eggsclained Jack Jolly, "what does this mean? I think you owe us an eggsplanation."

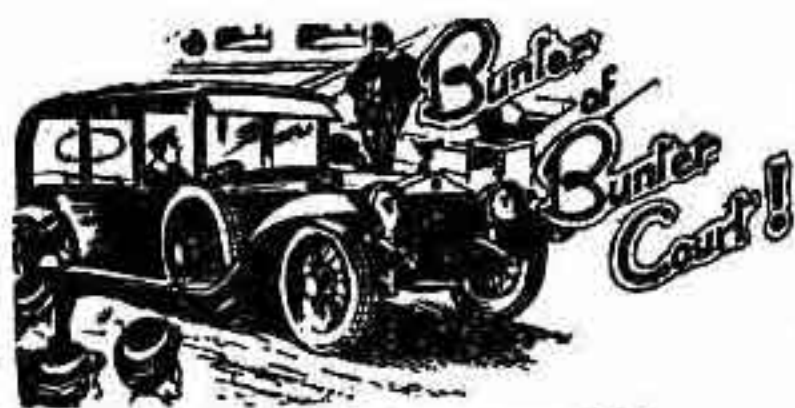
There was a paws, during which the Head dried his fizz with a towel.

"My boys," he said at length, "I will eggsplain how I came to be transformed from a headmaster into a chocklit-cullered coon. I happen to be staying in Winklesea—at the Hotel de Poshe. It is an eggspensive hotel, and I happened to run short of tin, or, as the vulgar would say, spondulix. I have been spending munny rather recklessly at the automatic masheens on the pier. My bill was presented to me this morning, and I hadn't enuff dough to meet it. I simply had to raise the wind somehow, so I thought I'd disguise myself as a nigger minstrel and sing coon songs on the beach. I've been at the game all day, and have managed to raise sufficient for my needs. I trust you will keep this dark when you get back to St. Sam's. If the guvverners came to know of this it is quite possible that I should get the push, or, as common people say, the bullet. Can I rely on you, my dear boys, to keep mum?"

Jack Jolly & Co. nodded without speaking. The Head's eggsplanation had left them speechless.

THE END.

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(Continued from page 13.)

something rose up within Fisher T. Fish.

Skinner & Co. hesitated. It was a case of nothing venture, nothing win; and they felt that they would never be asked to Bunter Court if they refused to oblige the Owl of the Remove in the small matter of cashing a postal-order in advance. Yet they hesitated.

"It's only a trifling sum," said Bunter airily.

"Half-a-crown?" asked Micky Desmond.

"Quite a trifle—a pound," said Bunter calmly. "If one of you fellows would like to lend me the quid and take the postal-order when it comes—" Billy Bunter paused, like Brutus, for a reply.

The reply was slow in coming.

Bunter Court might be the genuine goods. There seemed no doubt about that now. But Bunter's celebrated postal-order was rather too well known.

"Not that it matters," said Bunter carelessly. "I'll ask Trevor. So-long!"

Bunter turned away.

"Hold on, old chap!" said Skinner, taking a mental plunge, as it were. "You needn't look farther than your old pals if you're in want of a little loan, Bunter."

"Oh, certainly!" said Stott.

Micky Desmond sauntered away after Fisher T. Fish. Bunter Court was all very well, but cash was cash; and to Micky's shrewd Celtic mind a bird in hand seemed of more value than any number in the bush. But Skinner & Co. decided to take the chance. Bunter could scarcely leave such obliging fellows out of his party for the holidays, they considered.

It cost Skinner & Co. an effort, but they "parted." Billy Bunter rolled away with ready money in his pocket and a happy grin on his fat face. Skinner & Co. exchanged rather dubious glances.

"After all, it's worth it," said Skinner.

And Sidney James Snoop nodded.

That evening there was a tea-party in Skinner's study. Billy Bunter was the guest of honour.

He did himself remarkably well.

Honeyed politeness surrounded him. Bunter and Bunter Court were the topics of genial conversation, and Skinner & Co. were very careful not to tell their guest what they thought of him.

Bunter was beaming with good-humour, and he was very agreeable to Skinner & Co. But on one point—an important point—he was rather vague. He did not ask his old pals to join him at Bunter Court for the holidays. It seemed that he had to consult his people before he asked any more guests to the Court. And when Bunter rolled away from Study No. 11 he left Skinner & Co. unsatisfied.

The fact was that Bunter was selecting his guests with a view to making sure of a supply of ready cash during the holidays, and Skinner & Co.'s resources in that line were rather limited. Moreover, they were not the kind of fellows to reflect credit on their entertainer, like

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Harry Wharton & Co., for instance. It was something to take home the great men of the Remove; it was nothing at all to take Skinner & Co. So, if the wily Skinner had only known it, all his soft sawder and his chunks of flattery had been a sheer waste, and he had cashed Bunter's celebrated postal-order for nothing.

Fortunately, Skinner did not know it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Breaking-up at Greyfriars!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"All serene, old fat man! We're ready," said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"The readyfulness is terrific."

Bunter looked at his watch.

"The car will be here in half an hour," he said.

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at Bunter. Even at that late moment, in spite of all the proof they had received, some sort of a doubt seemed to linger. But Bunter was looking happy and cheery and confident, and the last doubt vanished.

Greyfriars School was in a buzz of excitement with breaking-up for the holidays. The Greyfriars fellows were about to scatter to the four corners of the kingdom. Lord Mauleverer was already gone. Coker of the Fifth had departed with Potter and Greene in a big car. All sorts of vehicles were gathering to take the fellows to the station. But Billy Bunter was not one of the common ruck who were departing by train. A tremendous Rolls-Royce car was coming over from Bunter Court to take away Billy Bunter and his friends, and even in the excitement of breaking-up for the holidays the Remove fellows were rather keen to see that car.

Bunter was beaming.

For the first time in history he was leaving Greyfriars in style—in tremendous style.

For the first time in history, instead of fishing for invitations among the Remove and the Fourth, Bunter was receiving hints, and loftily disregarding them, from fellows who wanted to come to Bunter Court.

For the first time in history, William George Bunter was able to swank to his fat heart's content, and nobody said him nay.

Naturally, the fat junior was greatly elated.

On this great occasion he was not a fisher for invitations; he was the fishee, so to speak.

Skinner & Co. fairly haunted him that morning.

They had not, after all, been asked to Bunter Court. The previous day Skinner had come out quite plainly on the subject, feeling extremely sore about the various little loans and teas in the study that Bunter had had from him during the past week. Bunter, on his side, had come out plainly, also. Skinner & Co. were not on good terms with Harry Wharton & Co., and Bunter could scarcely ask, in the same party, fellows who were at loggerheads with one another. Otherwise, he would have been delighted. And Bunter rolled away, leaving Skinner in a state of fury.

But on this special morning Skinner was all smiles. He was yearning to take Bunter by his fat neck and bang his head on the old oak door of the House. With that yearning in his breast, it was a little difficult to smile on Bunter, and greet him with honeyed cordiality, and generally treat him like

a little tin god. But Skinner managed it somehow, and he managed it in vain. There was nothing doing.

Bunter had the unusual, and extremely elating, experience, of dodging fellows who wanted to plant themselves on him, just as Lord Mauleverer had been wont to dodge Bunter!

The Famous Five, having made up their minds to it, were ready for the car. Bunter found them outside the House, and eyed them rather critically through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, you don't mind my mentioning it," he said, "but we rather keep up appearances at Bunter Court, you know."

"Eh?"

"That necktie, Cherry—"

"What?"

"I suppose it is a necktie," said Bunter, blinking at it through his big spectacles.

"What did you think it was?" asked Bob Cherry, in a sulphurous voice. Bunter grinned.

"Blessed if I know!" he said. "Looks as if you'd been trying to hang yourself, old chap. He, he, he!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Sorry I can't stop. I've got to say good-bye to a lot of fellows. I'll give you some more of my time later, of course."

Bunter rolled away, leaving Robert Cherry with an extraordinary expression on his face.

"Nice chap!" murmured Nugent.

"The niceness is really terrific."

Having impressed upon the Famous Five that they were, in his estimation, rather small beer, Billy Bunter rolled cheerfully away, and rolled fairly into Fisher T. Fish, who was looking for him.

"Hyer, Bunter, old man—"

"Sorry, Fishy; can't stop."

"I guess—"

"See you next term, old chap."

Bunter rolled on, and found himself captured by Micky Desmond. Micky was beaming with his most cordial beam.

"Sure, I've been looking for you, Bunter!" he exclaimed.

"Lots of fellows have!" grinned Bunter, in great enjoyment.

"It's a real nut ye're looking to-day," said Micky, regarding Bunter with great admiration.

Bunter smirked.

"When's the car coming, old chap?"

"Half an hour," said Bunter. "You can stand round and see me off, if you like, old fellow."

Micky Desmond eyed him.

"Haven't ye room for another pal in the car?" he asked persuasively.

"Full up, old man—packed, in fact," said Bunter airily; and he walked on, leaving Micky gazing after him with a very expressive gaze.

Vernon-Smith came out of the House with Tom Redwing. Bunter rolled up to the Bounder at once. Smithy was in a position very different from that of Skinner & Co. The son and heir of Samuel Vernon-Smith, millionaire, was a fellow whom Bunter delighted to honour.

"Hallo, Smithy, old bean!" said Bunter affectionately.

The Bounder stared at him coolly.

"Hallo, Fatty! Roll away!"

"Sure you won't change your mind, Smithy, and come to Bunter Court for the vac?" asked the Owl of the Remove. "I'll have you, with pleasure."

"Sorry! You must get somebody softer than little me to cash your postal-orders, old fat bean."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Bunter.

"Buzz!" said the Bounder tersely.

Smithy, at all events, had no soft sawder to bestow on the heir of Bunter Court.

"I say, Smithy—"

"Can it, and cut!"

"I'll take Redwing, too, if you like," said Bunter, in a burst of generosity. "I don't know what the servants will think of my taking a common fellow like Redwing home with me; but, dash it all, I'll chance it, if you want to bring him, Smithy!"

Tom Redwing coloured, but he did not speak. The Bouncer's eyes glittered at Bunter.

"I mean it, Smithy," said the Owl of the Remove. "Is it a go?"

Crash!

Bunter's shining hat was suddenly squashed over his head, as the Bouncer smote it with a heavy hand.

"Ow! Oh! Yaroooooh! You beast, Smith!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith and his comrade moved on, leaving Bunter struggling with his hat, which looked a good deal like a concertina now. Harold Skinner rushed up to his assistance. He helped Bunter to extract his head from the hat, and Snoop took the hat and squeezed out the dents in it.

"Cheeky cad, Smithy!" said Skinner.

"Awful ruffian!" said Snoop.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

"That hat looks a bit damaged," said Skinner. "I'll lend you my best topper, if you like, Bunter."

"Thanks!"

"I've been speaking to Wharton," said Skinner casually. "He doesn't seem to mind if we join the party, Bunter. We've had our rows; but he's not a fellow to bear malice, and I'm sure I'm not."

"Same here," agreed Snoop.

"So if you want us, Bunter—"

"Oh, we'll come!"

Bunter set the damaged hat on his head again.

"Sorry—nothing doing," he said airily. "You see, I'm simply overwhelmed, as usual, with fellows who want to come home with me for the vac. Another time, I'll see what I can do for you."

Bunter turned away.

It was the finish, and Skinner understood it. Soft sawder was of no use; it was a chicken that would not fight. But there was one solace left to Harold Skinner. As Bunter turned, Skinner dropped his honeyed politeness like a cloak, and reached out and grasped the fat junior.

Bump!

"Whooop!"

"Collar him, Snoopey!" gasped Skinner. "He's been pulling our leg; but we'll take it out of his fat hide, anyhow."

"What-ho!" said Snoop.

"Yaroooh! Leggo!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Oh crumbs! Oh crikey! Leggo!"

Help! Rescue! Fire!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Whoooooooop! Help!" yelled

Bunter. "Rescue! I say, you fellows! Harry, old chap—Bob— Oh crikey!"

Bump!

Harry Wharton & Co. ran up, laughing, and Bunter was rescued at last. Skinner and Snoop scudded away, feeling that they had had their money's worth. And Billy Bunter gasped and spluttered, and spluttered and gasped, and was still gasping and spluttering when the big car arrived from Bunter Court.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Off for the Holidays!

"BUNTER!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
"Bunter!"
"Roll up, Bunter—here's the jolly old bus!"

It was not a bus, but undoubtedly it was a very large and very handsome car. There was plenty of room for Billy Bunter and his guests, and for their baggage. The chauffeur, in livery, looked a quite expensive chauffeur. The whole turn-out, in fact, was top-hole,

quite worthy of the best traditions of Bunter Court.

Fellows gathered round from far and near to look at it.

Even Fifth and Sixth Form fellows gave that whacking car a glance. Obviously it had not cost less than a thousand guineas; and evidently it had come for Bunter.

Skinner & Co. eyed it almost hungrily. Peter Todd stared at it as if it were a vision in a dream.

Peter asked himself whether, indeed, he was dreaming this. If it was real, Bunter had been telling a lot of truth

YOUR EDITOR REGRETS

that, owing to unforeseen mechanical difficulties having arisen over which, naturally, he has no control, the wonderful Cut-out Stand-up Photos of Famous Cricketers promised to readers with this and last week's MAGNET will not be given away until August 15th, when, instead of TWO SUPERB CUT-OUT PHOTOS, each copy of your favourite paper will be accompanied by

4 CUT-OUT STAND-UP PHOTOS!

Much as it goes against the grain for me to disappoint my thousands of reader chums, I would rather do that than, to "save my face," give them Free Gifts of an inferior quality. This latter course was open to me, but I refused point blank to adopt it. "Magnetites have always had the best," was what I said, in effect, "and Magnetites are going to have what was promised them. They're going to have the best this time, even although it means postponing our gigantic Free Gift scheme for a week or two."

I feel sure you will readily appreciate the unenviable corner I was in, and will also appreciate the stand I have taken. That's the position, chums, and although no one could be more sincerely apologetic than myself, apologies, alas! won't help the mechanical side of the business. There's still the treat to come—that's one comfort—and I know Magnetites are not in the habit of crying over spilt milk. When you get these long-promised Cut-outs you'll agree with me that they were well worth waiting for. It seems ironical that I should urge you to look out for the issue of this paper dated

AUGUST 15th,

in view of my previous "chin-wag" on this subject, but there it is. On that date *definitely*

THE FIRST FOUR GORGEOUS FREE GIFTS

will be given away with every copy of the MAGNET. Till then, chums, think not too hardly of

YOUR EDITOR.

when Peter had supposed, as a matter of course, that Bunter was spoofing, as usual. Now that the whacking car had materialised, really it seemed as if there might be some foundation for the celebrated postal-order that Bunter was always expecting; in fact, after seeing the car, Peter would not have been surprised to see one of Bunter's titled relations.

Bunter rolled down to the car in magnificent style.

His feet seemed scarcely to touch the earth as he strutted. His fat little nose was turned high. He blinked with a lofty and patronising blink. He was swelling, like the frog in the fable, almost to bursting point, with swank and importance.

"Some car!" remarked Bob Cherry. "The somefulness is terrific," assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bunter smiled serenely. "One of our small cars," he said. "Eh?"

"The big car is being repainted," drawled Bunter. "That's why I've had this one sent."

"Oh! Isn't this a big one?" said Nugent, with a grin.

"Big enough for us," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We could pack half the Remove into it. Gosling, old bean, our bags go on this car—this is Bunter's family bus."

"Yes, Master Wharton."

Old Gosling was grinning his most genial grin, which he turned on specially on breaking-up day. It was a day of tips for Gosling; also, he was going to have a long rest from the Greyfriars fellows. So even the crusty old porter was quite merry and bright. Bunter, certainly, had never overwhelmed Gosling with tips; but the sight of that magnificent car encouraged Gosling to hope that even the Owl of the Remove would shell out this time. So Gosling quite fussed over the party, and was wonderfully obliging. Half-crowns from the Famous Five came as a matter of course; but from the owner of that topping car Gosling looked for a ten-shilling note, at least.

"That your car, Bunter?" asked Loder of the Sixth, pausing to look at the big automobile.

Bunter nodded carelessly.

"One of our cars," he answered.

Loder stared at him, stared at the car, and walked away quite puzzled. Kenney of the Fourth strolled up to Bunter. Kenney had expected to go home with Aubrey Angel; but Angel of the Fourth had omitted to ask him. Kenney gave Bunter the ingratiating smile he generally reserved for Aubrey.

"Goin' home by road, what?" he asked pleasantly.

"That's so," assented Bunter.

"That looks a decent car."

"Oh, not so bad," said Bunter. "Of course, I shouldn't ask the pater to send a really first-class car to take home a crowd of schoolboys."

"Oh!" said Kenney, greatly impressed. "If you are going by way of Courtfield, you can give me a lift if you like."

"I'm going by way of Courtfield, but I'm not giving anybody a lift," answered Bunter calmly. "You fellows ready? We'd better get off before we get fellows butting into the car."

Kenney scowled and gave it up.

"Sammy!" shouted Bunter.

Sammy Bunter was not to be seen. The Owl of the Remove blinked round for him. Bunter minor rolled out of the House, with Gatty and Myers. Gatty and Myers, for reasons of their own, were very friendly with Bunter minor.

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now. Judging by their present manners, nobody would have guessed that only a few days ago they had turned Sammy Bunter out of his own Form-room, and kicked him out of their honourable company. Sammy Bunter now was a fellow worth knowing, in the estimation of the Second Form.

Bunter frowned at him.

"Look here, Sammy, you're not bringing a gang of grubby fags home," he exclaimed.

Sammy blinked defiance.

"I'm bringing a couple of friends," he answered.

"I can't have fags wedging into my car!" said Bunter firmly.

"We ain't coming in that car," said Sammy coolly. "I'm going to have a car for myself and my pals."

"Where are you going to get it from, you young duffer?"

"You're going to telephone for it."

"What?"

"And the sooner the quicker," said Sammy. "Cut into the House and ask Mr. Quelch to let you use his phone."

"You can jolly well go by train if you're taking these fags home with you."

"Rats!"

"Look here, Sammy—"

"Look here, Billy—"

Billy Bunter read menace in his minor's blink. He was masking in swank now; but a few words from Sammy would have been sufficient to cause the glory to depart from the House of Israel, so to speak.

Bunter swallowed his wrath.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "Wait a minute, you fellows, while I phone for a car for Sammy. We can't have fags crowding us."

"Oh, there's plenty of room, and we don't mind fags," said Bob Cherry good-naturally.

"I do!" said Bunter loftily.

And he rolled into the House.

Bob Cherry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Well, this does beat it!" he said.

"This giddy car has nearly knocked me over; and it seems that Bunt has more cars on tap, and only has to phone for them. Can you fellows understand it?"

"Don't ask me!" said Nugent. "I'm beaten to a frazzle, as Fishy would say."

"The beatfulness is terrific."

"I suppose we're not dreaming it," said Johnny Bull. Johnny, the stubborn unbeliever, had never expected the car to arrive. It had arrived, and Johnny simply did not know what to make of it.

Quite a crowd of fellows stood round, looking at the car from Bunter Court, while the Owl of the Remove was busy on the telephone. Bunter came out of the House.

"It's all right, Sammy," he said. "I've told Walsingham to send another car; it will be along soon."

"Right-ho!" grinned Sammy.

"Pile in, you fellows."

The Famous Five had said their good-byes; the baggage was stacked on the car, the Co. took their places. Bunter, the cynosure of all eyes, followed them into the car. The chauffeur sat at the wheel. Gosling came to shut the door of the car, with his most beaming air. Bunter glanced at him.

"Good-bye, Gosling!" he said, with lofty patronage. "See you again next term, Gosling! Here's a ten-bob note for you."

"Thank you kindly, Master Bunter."

Bunter fumbled in his pocket.

"Where did I put my note-case?" he said. "You fellows see what I did with my note-case?"

"Nunno!"

"Tip Gosling a ten-bob note for me, Wharton, will you? I'll settle as soon as I find my note-case."

"Oh! All right!"

Gosling's gnarled paw closed on the currency note.

"Thank you kindly, air! Best wishes, Master Bunter! I hope you'll have a 'appy holiday."

The car moved on.

It was sheer joy to Billy Bunter to glide down the drive in that great car, with admiring and envious eyes upon him. He was quite sorry when the car turned out into the road, and the sea of eyes were left behind.

He settled back comfortably on the cushioned seat.

"This is something like, what?" he remarked.

"Yes, rather."

"We're going to have a jolly time," said Bunter. "I mean to do you fellows rather well. Walsingham has my instructions, and he's made some little preparations."

"Good."

"It's rather unfortunate that the pater and the mater can't be at home," went on Bunter; wondering a little, meanwhile, what on earth his father and mother would have thought, had they an inkling of his remarkable arrangements for the summer holidays. His parents supposed that he was spending the vacation with some school friends; as indeed was the case, though not in the way they supposed.

"Yes, that's so," said Bob Cherry politely. As a matter of fact, the chums of the Remove were not likely to miss Bunter's parents.

"Still, we shall get on all right," said Bunter, "Walsingham's a wonderful manager. He knows what to do. Sort of butler you only find in a really good old family, you know."

"Oh!"

"We're going towards Courtfield," said Harry Wharton, glancing out of the car. "Aren't we calling at Cliff House for your sister Bessie?"

"Eh? Bessie's going home," answered Bunter unthinkingly.

"Home!" repeated Wharton blankly.

"Yes—I—I mean—"

Bunter stammered. It was always a difficulty with Bunter, that while, as the proverb declares, a certain class of persons ought to have good memories, Bunter had a bad one.

"Isn't Bunter Court your home?" demanded Dob, staring at the Owl of the Remove.

"Yes! Of course! I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I—I mean, Bessie is going with the mater for the holidays," explained Bunter.

"You said she was going home."

"I mean, she isn't going home. That's what I really meant to say."

"Oh!"

Doubts were rising again. Bunter seemed to think that he had explained his thoughtless remark satisfactorily; but naturally his companions did not think so. It was all so odd, so unexpected, that though they had been driven to believe in Bunter Court, it was difficult to get used to the idea. Really, the chums of the Remove would hardly have been surprised, if it had turned out that this magnificent car had only been hired to keep up Bunter's "spoof" to the very latest possible moment. As they passed through Courtfield, they almost expected Bunter to mention that the holiday at Bunter Court was off, and to suggest that they should stop at the station, and take the train for Wharton Lodge after all.

But the station in Courtfield was passed, and the car whizzed on merrily by the Lantham road.

At Lantham, Harry Wharton & Co. could not help exchanging glances. Was Lantham Junction the real destination of the car—was the spoof to be thrown over at this point?

But it was not so.

The car ran on through Lantham, and headed for Combermere. That little town came into view at last.

"Only a mile now," said Bunter.

"Oh!"

The car ran on, and stopped at the lodge gates of Combermere Lodge. On the stone pillars of the gateway, and suspended between the gates, the new name of the establishment was painted up—"BUNTER COURT." There it was, just as Ogilvy and Russell had seen it with amazed eyes a few days before.

The lodgekeeper opened the gates, saluting Bunter with great respect, though with a glimmer in his eyes. Bunter gave him a lofty nod, in the manner of a prince coming back to his principality.

"Give that chap a few half-crowns, Wharton, will you? I always tip servants when they're civil."

"Oh!"

Bunter's system of tipping seemed likely to prove rather expensive to his friends.

The car ran on up the great drive, between magnificent oaks and beeches. The great facade of Combermere Lodge, with its terrace and innumerable windows, burst on the view of the Greyfriars fellows.

The great door stood open.

The portly figure and clean-shaven face of Walsingham, the butler, appeared there; behind him, liveried footmen were ranked in the great hall.

Walsingham was expecting Master Bunter.

His manner could not have been more impressively respectful had he been receiving Lord Combermere himself, instead of a tenant who had taken his lordship's house furnished. In point of fact, Walsingham preferred Master Bunter to Lord Combermere. His noble master, like most noblemen, was rather short of cash; and Walsingham's opinion of Bunter was that he belonged to the "new-rich" tribe, with unspeakable manners but plenty of money.

That was the impression that Bunter had made by scattering Lord Maul-ever's currency notes at Combermere Lodge. And Walsingham, though conscious of the honour of serving a nobleman of ancient lineage, was also conscious of the fact that that nobleman did not always pay his wages on the due date; while from Bunter, on the other hand, he expected quite a harvest of cash. He was quite prepared to see Mr. Bunter arrive with a crowd of fat and swanking fellows like himself, and was rather surprised by the sight of Harry Wharton & Co., who certainly did not fit that description.

"Here we are, you fellows," said Bunter airily.

Johnny Bull pinched himself to make sure that he was awake. Johnny, the most doubtful of the doubting Thomases, had to own up at last; he was convinced.

Walsingham bowed low to his distinguished master. He understood the Owl of Greyfriars quite well; he knew that what Bunter wanted was deference, and plenty of it; flattery, and tons of it; and Walsingham was prepared to hand out what was required to any extent. Bunter was going to pay for it all; at least, Walsingham supposed that he was.

Bunter declined to acknowledge the butler's existence, with a lofty nod.



"Please send a cheque for a hundred pounds by return of post," said Bunter, dictating his "letter" to Walsingham. "Love to the mater and Bessie, and give my kindest regards to Lord Robert and Sir George." "Lord Robert and Sir George," said the butler, who was by this time very much impressed. "That will do," said Bunter. "I'll sign the letter now." (See Chapter 10.)

"Well, here we are, Walsingham!" he said.

"Welcome home, sir, if I may say so with respect!" murmured Walsingham.

"Oh, quite—quite! You've carried out my instructions, Walsingham?"

"To the very letter, sir."

"Very good. Trot in, you fellows."

Harry Wharton & Co. entered.

They entered between two rows of bowing footmen. Walsingham, knowing his Bunter, was doing the thing in style.

"Our rooms are ready, of course, Walsingham?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"Show my friends to their rooms."

"Very good, sir."

And so William George Bunter took possession of Bunter Court.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Whole Hog!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. turned out the next morning, still in a state of astonishment.

They had passed a very comfortable night.

Combermere Lodge, alias Bunter Court, was undoubtedly a dwelling-place where a fellow could make himself comfortable. Each of the juniors had a magnificent room, and all their rooms had french windows opening on a great balcony that gave a view of the sweeping

park and woodlands. They gathered on the balcony before going down to breakfast and looked out on the broad acres which—apparently—belonged to the tribe of Bunter. It seemed impossible to doubt any further—for there they were. But it was still astonishing.

"Beats me hollow," Bob Cherry remarked, for about the twentieth time, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh declared that the hollowfulness was terrific.

Bunter was not up so early as his guests. Now that there was no longer a rising-bell in the morning, Bunter believed in having a snooze out. Bob Cherry kindly called him, but received no gratitude therefor.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob bawled in at the door of Bunter's room. "Are you getting up, Bunt?"

"Eh!"

"Turning out, old fatty?"

Bunter sat up in bed.

He glared at the cheery face of Robert Cherry, framed in the doorway.

"You silly ass!" he shouted.

"What!"

"You thumping chump!"

"My hat! Is that the way you greet jolly old visitors in the morning, Bunter?"

"You dummy! What did you want to wake me up for?" howled Bunter.

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"Don't you want to get up? It's nearly nine!"

"No, I don't! And I don't want to be disturbed! I don't want a thundering hooligan bawling into my room!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I don't want any of your Remove passage tricks here, Bob Cherry! Just remember that you're at Bunter Court, where something like manners is expected of a chap."

And Bunter laid his head on the pillow again, and recommenced snoring.

Bob Cherry stared at him. He was strongly inclined to yank Billy Bunter out of bed, and pillow him with his own pillow. But he remembered that he was, after all, at Bunter Court, and not in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars. So he left Bunter to balmy slumber.

Harry Wharton & Co. went down and found Gatty and Myers of the Second Form wandering about the great house, staring at all they saw. The two fags were feeling rather overwhelmed by the magnificence of the Bunter abode. Indeed, Myers had already made the awful mistake of addressing Walsingham as "sir." Sammy Bunter was not down yet. He was following his major's example of having his snooze out now that there was no rising-bell in the morning.

"I say, this is a pretty decent show, you chaps!" said Gatty. "Blessed if I knew the Bunters were fixed like this!"

"Knocked me out when I saw it," confessed Myers. "I say, I've been round to the garage, and there's three cars."

"Horses in the stables, too," said Gatty. "I say, do you chaps know where there's brekker? A fellow loses his way in this thundering great place! Sammy's still fast asleep."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the jolly old butler!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Walsingham sailed up, with a graceful bow.

"Will you gentlemen be pleased to breakfast before Mr. Bunter comes down?" he inquired.

"No good waiting for Bunter, you chaps," said Bob. "He may be hours yet. Let's get brekker and get out—what?"

"Yes," assented Harry.

"This way, gentlemen!"

The breakfast-room into which the butler ushered the Greyfriars party was larger than a Form-room at Greyfriars. Breakfast was quickly on the table, and the juniors did it full justice. Everything was of the best, and there was plenty of it. Judging by appearances, anybody would have supposed that a small fortune was spent every week on housekeeping at Bunter Court. It was oddly out of keeping with the fact that Billy Bunter was always hard up for half-a-crown, and generally for a shilling. But the chums of the Remove had almost given up being surprised now.

Sammy Bunter came down before breakfast was over, and new supplies were brought in for him by the footmen, under the magnificent superintendence of Mr. Walsingham himself. Billy Bunter was breakfasting in bed that morning, and was not likely to show up much before noon. Bunter had his own manners and customs in the way of entertaining guests.

But Bunter's guests were not, as a matter of fact, keen on the company of their host. They would not have taken offence had William George Bunter slept the clock round.

After breakfast they walked out in a cheery party to look round Bunter Court. Sammy ordered out a car, and disappeared with Gatty and Myers—all

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the fags breathing more freely when they were out of sight of the magnificent Walsingham.

The Famous Five came back for lunch, which was served in the stately dining-hall, where, in the prosperous pre-War days, Lord Combermere had been wont to entertain a hundred guests. Now his lordship was living in a Swiss hotel with his noble family, and the great house was "let furnished"—thus were the mighty fallen; and this particular "let" was not likely to prove a very profitable one for his lordship, considering the remarkable nature of the new tenant and his tenancy.

"I say, you fellows, where have you been?" asked Bunter peevishly. "I've been down ten minutes."

Apparently Bunter expected his guests to wait about all the sunny morning in order to be on the spot when he came down ten minutes before lunch.

"Had a look round the place?" asked the Owl of the Remove, blinking at the Famous Five.

"Yes."

"What do you think of it?" grinned Bunter.

"Top-hole, old chap!"

"The top-holefulness is terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Bunter!" said Hurree Singh.

Bunter smiled complacently.

"What did I always tell you?" he said.

"Quite right, so you did," agreed Wharton; "and the place is really better than your description. You're a lucky bargee, Bunter!"

"You don't often get asked to a place like this—what?" said Bunter.

"Hem!"

"It rather beats Wharton Lodge, doesn't it?"

"Quite!" said Harry.

"A bit of a change from your show at home, Bob! He, he, he!"

Bob Cherry made no reply to that. Really, it was a little difficult to hold conversation with Billy Bunter, and at the same time show him the politeness due from a guest to a host.

Walsingham and his myrmidons waited at lunch, magnificently and impressively. As a matter of fact, the Greyfriars fellows would have preferred a little less magnificence; but Bunter fairly basked in it. After lunch Bunter disposed his plump person in a deep, comfortable chair to take a little nap;

he had disposed of a lunch that might have made a boa-constrictor feel that it was necessary to sleep it off.

"Aren't you coming out, old bean?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No; I may take a drive later," said Bunter sleepily. "You fellows take a car out. Walsingham, order out a car for my friends."

"Very good, sir!"

Bunter closed his eyes behind his big spectacles when his friends were gone. He opened them presently, and became aware of the fact that Walsingham was standing before him, regarding him with a very curious countenance. As Bunter's eyes opened, however, Walsingham's face lost its peculiar expression, and reassumed its habitual deference. Bunter blinked at him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I thought, sir, that perhaps you would like to give me your instructions," said Walsingham.

"I've given them."

"I trust, sir, that my arrangements have given satisfaction so far," said Walsingham. "You ordered me to provide everything of the best, sir, regardless of expense."

"That's right," assented Bunter. "That's what I'm accustomed to, of course. Expense is no object."

"Quite so, sir! I have given orders to the tradespeople on that understanding," said Walsingham. "When will it please you to look over the bills?"

Bunter waved a fat hand.

"I leave all that to you," he said. "I can't be bothered on a holiday with sordid details of that kind."

"Very good, sir! In that case, no doubt you will place a sum of money in my hands for general expenditure."

Bunter felt an inward quake.

He had had a vague idea that a fellow living at a place like Combermere Lodge could give orders right and left, and put off the day of reckoning indefinitely.

"Oh, that's all right!" he said. "Order whatever is wanted. Use your own judgment. Dash it all, I don't keep a butler in order to take a lot of trouble myself."

"Oh, quite so, sir! But if I am to pay the accounts, I shall, of course, need cash in hand," said Walsingham.

Perhaps there was a trifle gone from Walsingham's deference, and Bunter scented danger.

"Yes; I see that," he agreed. "I'll ask my father for a cheque. I suppose a hundred pounds will do to go on with?"

"Oh, most certainly!" Walsingham's manner was the quintessence of deference again.

"Mind, I don't want any cheese-paring," said Bunter. "It's as easy to ask the pater for two hundred as for one. I simply want to be free of sordid details in this matter."

Billy Bunter was keeping to the facts there. It was as easy to ask Mr. Bunter for two hundred pounds as for one hundred. Getting either sum from him was quite a different matter.

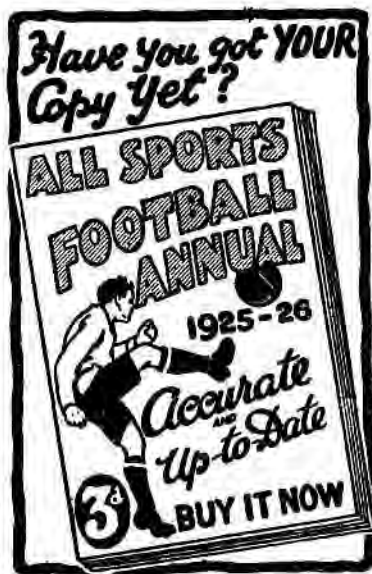
"The smaller sum, sir, will do for present needs," said Walsingham.

"Right-ho! I'll write to-night," said Bunter carelessly.

Walsingham coughed.

Bunter again felt an inward quake. His reckless extravagance with Lord Mauleverer's money had produced a proper impression in the servants' hall at Combermere. But obviously Bunter's house-party could not live through the holidays on that impression alone. Walsingham still had the undoubting belief that Bunter was a "new-rich" fellow with more money than he knew

(Continued on page 27.)



GUILTY OR—For a man suspected of murder to disappear when he has given his word to stay and face things out is decidedly suspicious and yet not conclusive proof that he is the guilty party!

The VELDT TRAIL!

A magnificent story of thrilling adventure in South Africa, featuring Ferrers Locke, the world-famous detective, and his boy assistant, Jack Drake.



A Surprise for Ferrers Locke!

A TINY golden pyramid—which Locke instantly recognised—a scrap of well-thumbed paper covered with scrawly handwriting, and plentifully besprinkled with blots—and a cheque form, drawn on the National South African Bank and signed "Piet de Jongh!"

Ferrers Locke studied each of these in turn for quite five minutes, and then slowly and thoughtfully replaced them in the biscuit-tin. Then, turning towards Inspector Pycroft, who was standing near by, he began speaking in his usual brusque, businesslike tones.

"I'd like to have a chat with every member of the household who was present at or about the time the crime was committed," he said.

Pycroft nodded.

"You don't mind if I don't stay for the palaver, Locke?" he said, as he pressed a bell. "I've got a bit of an idea of my own, and I'd like to follow it up."

"Go ahead," returned the detective.

Nothing was said then about the return to England, but while journeying down in the motor-car from town, Locke had hinted to Pycroft and Jack Drake that it might be found advisable to postpone their return.

It seemed now, from the way in which the famous private detective was investigating the case, that he would certainly be remaining in Johannesburg for the time being. Jack Drake knew, anyway, of the deep friendship that had existed between Locke and the dead man as the result of the Golden Pyramid case, and he shrewdly guessed that the detective would not rest until this terrible mystery had been cleared up to his satisfaction.

Locke now got right down to business, interviewing every single member of the household, from Stephen Jarrad, a tall, athletic young fellow, who seemed very upset and equally anxious to help, to the lowliest native messenger, whose big eyes rolled with horror as he caught sight of the grim form lying on the floor in the library.

But the net result of it all, so far as Jack Drake was able to gather, was nil. Nobody seemed to know anything, and Griggs, the valet, who had made the awful discovery, seemed too overcome to be able to speak intelligently at all.

Finally, Locke dismissed them all, and, after a further glance round the room, turned to Jack Drake.

"Pycroft has gone off on his own," he said. "But we'll doubtless meet him at dinner at the hotel. We'll get back there now and see Bristow again. We can return here later and continue our investigations if necessary."

Jack Drake nodded, and together they set out, politely declining Superintendent Vane's offer of a car, Locke saying

WHO'S WHO.

GERALD BRISTOW, an escaped convict who has made his way over to South Africa in search of a hidden treasure which, if it really exists, belongs to **SIR MERTON CARR**, his uncle, a big mining magnate, living in Johannesburg.

FERRERS LOCKE, the world-famous detective, who, with

JACK DRAKE, his boy assistant, and **INSPECTOR PYCROFT**, of the C.I.D., has just completed a "case" in Africa, and is about to return to England.

SUPERINTENDENT VANE, of the Johannesburg police.

On his arrival in Johannesburg, Bristow—or Arthur the Dude, as he was once styled—breaks into his uncle's house to steal money, clothing, and food. To his horror, he finds his uncle stretched out on the floor of the library apparently dead. While he stands there, terror-stricken, Bristow hears Sir Merton's voice, and the words uttered signify that the baronet is under the impression that he has been attacked by Gerald Bristow. In a state of blind terror Bristow flees from the house. Some time later he meets Ferrers Locke, to whom he tells the whole story. Locke is inclined to believe Bristow, and offers to look into the case. He places the convict on his honour not to leave the suite of rooms in the hotel until he—Locke—returns from his investigation. In company with Drake, Locke sets out for Sir Merton's house. Vane and Pycroft are already on the scene of the tragedy. Suddenly Locke takes from an open safe in the library an old battered biscuit-tin, and proceeds to tip its strange contents on to the floor.

(Now read on.)

he preferred to travel by ordinary electric tram.

In due course they reached the hotel and hastened up to their suite of rooms.

Locke was anxious to see Bristow again, to interrogate him closely in regard to certain vague but none the less definite ideas which had formed in his—the detective's—mind.

He flung open the door and strode into the room. A moment later he gave a gasp of amazement.

The room was deserted!

Gerald Bristow had vanished—escaped.

"I ought to have known better," muttered Locke angrily, between clenched teeth, "than to have trusted him! Yet I could have sworn that he was in earnest—that he'd keep his word, and—"

He broke off as something caught his eye. Next instant he had dived across the room to where, on the floor near the fireplace, was a scrap of paper. Locke picked it up and stared at it with furrowed brows.

It contained a few words, a half-completed sentence, hurriedly scrawled with an obviously blunt pencil, and only just legible.

"Mr. Locke," the detective read, "I have not broken my word, but leave here against my w—"

The detective stared at it blankly for a moment, and then handed it to Jack Drake.

"What do you make of that, eh?" he asked, in a tense voice.

Broken Trails!

JACK DRAKE took the scrap of paper from Locke and stared at it.

Then he shook his head helplessly. He was as deeply puzzled as was the detective.

"I can't fathom it at all, guv'nor," he returned. "Seems to me that Bristow was waiting here for our return when he was surprised by the appearance of someone else, who has compelled him to clear out—"

"Either that," nodded Locke, "or he has deliberately bluffed us!"

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Jack Drake started. "You think—" he began; but Locke held up his hand.

"I don't know," he interposed cautiously. "Bristow is a weird card—a human enigma, if ever there was one. Sometimes he has an air about him which is well calculated to deceive even the most careful character-reader. He's a wonderful actor, you know. It is quite possible that he was forced to leave here against his will, for that is what he was apparently engaged upon writing on this scrap of paper when something happened to interrupt him. On the other hand, he may be playing a deliberate, deep game of bluff."

Ferrers Locke broke off and began to pace the room thoughtfully, while Jack continued to study the scrap of paper on which had been scrawled that interrupted message.

That it was written in Bristow's own handwriting there could be no reasonable doubt. In the recent case of the Golden Pyramid, Jack himself had had more than one opportunity of studying Bristow's calligraphy, and he was ready to swear now that this pencilled scrawl was written by "Arthur the Dude."

"But it's jolly strange," he said suddenly, as an idea occurred to him, "that Bristow should have been interrupted and compelled to leave this room. Meantersay, this is an hotel, not a private house, and this suite of rooms is occupied by you and me. Apart from the fact that no stranger has any right to make an uninvited entry into these rooms, surely somebody—if only a native servant—must have seen—"

Locke nodded and pressed a bell.

"We'll make inquiries, anyway," he said, "though personally I doubt if they will come to anything."

The native bed-room "boy" who answered the bell emphatically denied that anyone had been seen in the vicinity of Locke's suite, which, as it happened, was situated at the extreme end of the corridor on the second floor of the hotel.

Locke pursued his investigations further, sending for and questioning everyone likely to have any information of strangers within the hotel, and not stopping even at interviewing the manager himself.

But the result was always the same.

No stranger had been seen by any member of the hotel staff to be wandering about in the vicinity of the detective's suite. But, on the other hand, as Locke shrewdly pointed out to Jack Drake afterwards, nobody had seen Bristow leave the hotel.

Yet they knew positively that Bristow had done so.

Without necessarily casting any aspersions on the vigilance of the hotel authorities, it thus went without saying that there must have been a certain freedom of access and egress, particularly in regard to this part of the hotel.

Locke knew, of course, that no special watch would be kept on his suite unless he expressly requested it, which, of course, he had not done. But he was distinctly surprised to find that, of all the staff of the place—and it was one of the principal hotels in Johannesburg—nobody seemed to have seen anything, even, of Bristow, whose departure, at least, was a known fact.

By the time Locke's inquiries had been completed night had fallen, and the detective suddenly remembered a very important matter.

"That cable you sent this morning to

London, Jack," he said quickly. "It will have to be cancelled."

"Then we're remaining here, in Johannesburg, for the present?"

"We're staying till this mystery has been cleared up," was the detective's emphatic response. "Apart from the fact that a sense of personal friendship for Sir Merton Carr impels me to avenge his murder, there is, I am sure, an element of the unusual about the whole case which interests me deeply. I cannot be sure, of course, at this early stage, but I feel almost inclined to wager you that we are on the eve of some distinctly amazing adventures—the whole affair is so peculiar, so unusual—"

He broke off, and, crossing to a table, began to make out a fresh cablegram, which he then handed to Jack Drake.

"I could, of course, have the cable despatched by one of the hotel staff," he said, with a smile; "but somehow I'd rather you took it. There's an air of mystery around us, my boy, an ominous sort of feeling which bids me take especial care in everything I do. I don't know what it is. You can call it instinct, or intuition, or what you like, but it's there all the time."

He broke off, with a laugh.

Jack Drake looked at him keenly for a moment as he took the cable from his hand. There was a curious, almost strained expression in the famous detective's eyes, an expression which Jack had very rarely seen there. It worried him a little, but he decided to say nothing.

A moment later he had set out once more for the cable office, just as the deep, booming notes of the post-office clock chimed the hour of ten.

A Message from Pyecroft!

JACK DRAKE did not hurry to the cable office. For one thing, the office was, as he knew, open all night, and for another, Jack was feeling too uncomfortably hot and tired to want to indulge in any unnecessary exertion.

The day had been unusually hot, even for Johannesburg, added to which, Jack had been on his feet almost all the time, and by now was feeling rather worn out.

His way took him through some of the principal streets of the great South African city—streets which, even at this hour, were alive with traffic and ablaze with light.

He reached the cable office at last, sent the cable, and then strolled in leisurely fashion and by a roundabout route back towards the hotel, studying the traffic, the people, and the surroundings with ever increasing interest.

Turning out of Commissioner Street, whose quiet and almost deserted appearance was in sharp contrast to most of the other central thoroughfares—mainly because its tall, imposing buildings consisted mostly of business offices, now closed—he strolled down Loveday Street and thence, via the town-hall, through several byways, till he came to Pritchard Street, where he mingled freely with the laughing, chattering crowd which overflowed from the pavements into the road itself, holding up most of the traffic, or compelling it to turn off into the various side-streets.

Jack Drake was never so happy as when he was studying life "in the raw," as he would put it. And he had ample opportunity to study it in one of its most interesting phases just now.

Pritchard Street, Johannesburg, is perhaps one of the most famous and

unique thoroughfares in the world. Flanked with superb shops on either side, dotted here and there with the brilliant lights of all-night cafes and cabaret shows, it has always, at night-time, by common consent of the people, formed a sort of open forum, a social meeting-ground for all good Johannesburgers.

The crowd, jolly and care-free, jostled against each other in a surging, friendly, noisy mass, strolling up and down the wide, wood-paved street, many of them arm-in-arm, some bursting into song, others laughing uproariously at some joke or tall story, all of them chattering incessantly yet brightly and in that happy-go-lucky manner which seems characteristic of the average South African.

Though he was quite alone, Jack Drake did not feel lonely as he moved through the crowd. There was an air of warm friendliness here which he had never experienced anywhere else—a cheery atmosphere that made one feel at home even though every man, woman, and child in this noisy collection of people was a virtual stranger.

Now and again someone or other would fling him a careless, friendly greeting, to which he replied with equal cheerfulness, though the speaker was quite unknown to him.

He passed down the great, wide street and into Eloff Street, turning back towards the hotel.

The change from the noisy excitement of Pritchard Street to the comparative quietude and semi-darkness of this new thoroughfare was indeed striking. Pritchard Street was a blaze of glittering, multi-coloured lights, whereas here the lights were far fewer, the shadows deep and almost forbidding.

The musical tinkle of a ricksha bell broke in upon his thoughts. The ricksha, drawn by a huge barefooted native, came swinging round a corner, and after a moment's hesitation, darted right across the street, its puller's weird native headdress bobbing back and forth grotesquely in the semi-darkness.

"Baas! Baas!"

Jack Drake halted and faced round.

At the same instant the ricksha came to a standstill, and there sprang from it a tall, hefty-looking native who held up his hand in respectful greeting.

"Baas Drake?"

Jack nodded, frowning in some mystification.

Then, as the native moved nearer to a street-lamp, he suddenly recognised him. It was one of the servants employed at the late Sir Merton Carr's Parktown house.

"I follow you, baas, all de way from Pritchard Street," said the native somewhat excitedly, as he handed Jack a note.

Ferrers Locke's young assistant ripped open the envelope and took out a sheet of paper on which were a couple of hastily-scrawled lines.

"Can you come at once? Have struck something mighty important."

The note was signed by Inspector Pyecroft!

Jack read the note through again, and then turned to the native boy.

"Where do you come from?" he asked.

"From Inspector Pyecroft, inkoos," returned the native. "He say, go find Mr. Locke at hotel. I go, but Mr. Locke he has gone out—"

"Gone out?" Jack echoed the words, puzzled.

What should have caused Locke to leave the hotel at this time of night?

The detective had said nothing, when Jack had started out for the cable office, about going out on his own. Indeed,

Jack was under the impression that Locke was going to get to bed right away.

He glanced at the envelope, and noted that it was addressed, "Ferrers Locke, Esq.," with the added superscription, "Or, Mr. Jack Drake."

"Baas Pycroft, he say no come back till you find Baas Locke or Baas Drake," went on the native. "At hotel, dey say Baas Locke he gone out, but p'raps come back soon. But inspector he say 'go all same too quick,' so I go look for Baas Drake—"

"Who told you where to look?" asked Jack suspiciously.

"Inkoos at hotel," returned the native promptly; "he say you all same done gone to cable office. Me go cable office, but no find you. Me get ricksha, and come all same by Pritchard Street, and see you in crowd—"

Jack nodded. The explanation seemed satisfactory enough. He peered at the native keenly for a moment.

"You know where Baas Pycroft is?" he asked.

"Me know," nodded the native emphatically. "You come ricksha, I show you all same too quick!"

Jack hesitated still, but after a moment decided to go.

He remembered now that Inspector Pycroft had gone off on a trail of his own that afternoon, and he knew that the Yard man was not the sort of fellow to send useless messages.

Most probably he had indeed struck something, and, equally probably, that "something" might be of such vital importance as to require the presence either of Locke or his assistant.

"All right," said Jack; "I'll come with you. But first I must telephone to the hotel to leave a message for Mr. Locke."

He looked keenly about him, and then, espying a public telephone-box, hastened towards it.

In a moment or so he had got through to the hotel, and had left a message with the inquiry-office clerk, asking him to inform Locke that he—Drake—had gone off in response to an urgent summons received from Pycroft.

"Where shall I say you've gone to, sir?" asked the clerk over the wire.

Jack started.

Come to think of it, the native had said nothing of Pycroft's whereabouts, and Pycroft's own note bore no clue.

However, there was no time now to go into that.

"Oh, it doesn't matter!" replied Jack. "Tell Mr. Locke I'll get back as quickly as I can."

He replaced the receiver, hastened out into the street, and then clambered into the ricksha.

The native messenger did not follow him, it not being considered "the thing" for a native to ride in the same conveyance as a white man.

Instead, he ran lightly along beside the other "boy," who pulled the vehicle, and soon they had left the main streets of the city behind and were making, as far as Jack's necessarily imperfect knowledge of the place was concerned, for a place called Vrededorp—a suburb on the outskirts, its general character having earned for itself the name of the South African "Shadwell."

In due course the ricksha entered upon a fringe of dark, narrow, evil-smelling streets, and began to pick its way through a positive maze of queer-looking byways, finally coming to a halt outside a tumbledown building which was completely shrouded in darkness.

Jack Drake clambered out of the vehicle and, at a sign from the native, followed in his wake as he turned down a narrow gulley and was quickly swallowed up in a maze of shadows.

Ferrers Locke Investigates!

MEANTIME, back at the hotel, Ferrers Locke was pacing restlessly up and down, turning over and over in his mind the amazing details of this sudden and unexpected interruption to his pre-arranged plans.

The murder of Sir Merton Carr had come as a very profound shock to him; and the sudden reappearance of Gerald Bristow had been equally astonishing, while that worthy's abrupt departure from Locke's hotel rooms had but served to deepen the air of almost grotesque mystery with which this case was all too rapidly becoming surrounded.

Locke sat down at last and began to make a study of the queer contents of the battered old biscuit-tin which he had brought away with him from the scene of the crime.

The tiny golden pedestal he set definitely aside. There was no need for him to trouble about that; he was already only too familiar with it and with its history.

But he was particularly interested in the letter, signed Piet de Jongh, and the cheque on the National African Bank, bearing a similar signature.

The letter, which was written in ink and decorated with a variety of blots and smears and much crossing out, had apparently been penned by one who was more accustomed to highflown speech than to literary practice! Though the wording was more or less grammatical, the handwriting was obviously that of an illiterate, or at least a very uneducated person.

It was undated, and read as follows:

Locke studied this altogether amazing document intently for some time, reading it again and again with furrowed brows.

His mind went back over what Sir Merton Carr had told him at the conclusion of the Golden Pyramid case.

The tiny golden emblem had been given to Sir Merton by an old Boer farmer named Piet de Jongh when he lay dying. Sir Merton, it appeared, had been a good friend to the old Dutchman, who had wished to repay the baronet's kindness; and the pyramid, as had since been proved, gave the key to the treasure supposedly hidden at Devil's Spruit.

Sir Merton had left England, promising to follow up this key; and had doubtless done so, with the result that he had discovered this battered old biscuit-tin, buried some five feet or so under the ground. Within the tin was the cheque for £500,000, and this extraordinary letter written and signed by the dead farmer Piet de Jongh.

"Well," mused Locke, with a grim smile, "if this is what De Jongh calls his treasure, I must say the old gentleman had a pretty queer sense of humour! I'll bet poor Sir Merton was no end disgusted to find that this was all that resulted from his long and wearisome trek over the African back veldt! Looks like a gigantic leppull, to my mind, and not altogether in the best of taste, either!"

Again he turned his attention to the letter, but though he read it through again and again, he could not make any real sense out of it.

The whole thing seemed childish and absurd—a nonsensical screed, without rhyme or reason.

The detective picked up the cheque and gazed thoughtfully at it. He saw that it was drawn on the National South African Bank, Limited, that it bore no



Devils Spruit, S.A.

my dear friend, great reward Cometh only After great
that you have found my secret Treasure and
may the discovery Be useful Use and profit to you in
my lifetime: Suffered but now I am at peace & Happy
I do not forget my friends for that but because
they loved me, they have included in for £500,000
but my friends Are Really worth 10 times more. Do
not stand wastfully the money which has been so
hard won. For fear a Thief or Untrustworthy
person should steal away my Money, I am
humble & speak plainly, but I abhorred Illness,
debility & sorrowful, especially Pains & Grief. All
the good of this world are given for mere use, so
is it then, O my friend that Beloved Englishman, you
find this my Rare treasure, to the best use you
Really find and enough to Ever Alms to the poor,
see to it that you write Zulu for truth. In devotion
for Mine progress and Beware of All these
Bankholding banks. Who would Endeavor to steal
the fruits of your labours, And may a kindly
Providence Watch over your Efforts & Bring them to a
Successful Issue

your friend in Death
as in Life
J. G. de Jongh

date, and that it was signed by Piet de Jongh.

He also noted, with special interest, that in one corner appeared a blue pencil mark, consisting of the significant banker's sign, "R.D."

"Refer to drawer!" muttered Locke, with a grim laugh. "That means that Sir Merton must have passed the cheque through for payment, and had it returned to him. In other words, it was dishonoured—as, of course, it was bound to be! 'Pon my soul, I'm rather surprised that a keen business man like Sir Merton should have even troubled to present such a manifestly absurd cheque. It must surely have occurred to him that such a proceeding might only hold him up to ridicule."

He broke off. The telephone on the table at his elbow had begun to buzz sharply.

"Mr. Locke?" The voice at the other end was that of the inquiry-office clerk downstairs. "Your assistant Mr. Drake has just phoned through from a public call-office, Mr. Locke, and asks me to inform you that he has been intercepted on his way back to the hotel with a message from Inspector Pycroft, asking him to accompany the bearer to see the inspector. Mr. Drake further adds that he expects to be home very shortly, and would be glad if you would not trouble to wait up for him!"

Locke thanked the clerk and replaced the receiver. But the detective was frowning somewhat thoughtfully as he did so.

"Funny that Jack should have been content to leave the message with the inquiry-clerk, instead of getting put straight through to me!" he reflected. "It's not like Jack to do a thing like that! I wonder— But, hang it all, I'm beginning to get suspicious about nothing! It's this absurd letter and this equally absurd cheque that's got on my nerves, I suppose!"

He dismissed the matter impatiently from his mind, and after a few moments rose, yawned, and prepared to retire. He was feeling unusually tired to-night, and not a little dejected.

The shock of Sir Merton Carr's tragic death and the amazing mystery surrounding the crime, together with the totally unexpected reappearance of Gerald Arthur Bristow, had upset him.

But he realised instinctively that if he were to pursue this mystery to its final solution, he must entirely eliminate the personal element—he must rigidly exclude all private feelings, as being detrimental to a clear-sighted judgment of the facts before him.

"I'll pop over to Parktown again in the morning," he muttered, as he disrobed, "and have a good look round. Maybe I shall be able to unearth some more useful clues."

He clambered into bed and fell asleep almost at once.

But it seemed, to his overtired brain, that he had barely been slumbering an hour or so when a knock at the door announced the arrival of the early morning coffee.

He dressed quickly, and, feeling much fresher in himself, hastened down to breakfast, where he was somewhat puzzled to find that Jack had not joined him.

He dispatched one of the native waiters to the suite, but the boy returned a few moments later to say that Jack Drake was not there—that, in fact, his bed had not even been slept in.

"Great Scott!" muttered Locke, vaguely alarmed now. "Wonder what on

earth has happened to keep him out all night?"

Suddenly he remembered the telephone message of the night before, and, hurriedly finishing his breakfast, he had a chat with the inquiry clerk, who, however, was unable to give the detective any further information.

"I could swear it was Mr. Drake's voice over the wire, sir," he said. "I think I know the young gentleman's tone by now. But I'm sorry I can't give you any other news than what I told you at the time. Mr. Drake spoke quite calmly, sir—in fact, in his usual business-like tone—and I'm quite certain that he said he hoped to get back very shortly."

Locke thanked the man and went back thoughtfully to his room.

Then, struck by an idea, he hurried out again.

Come to think of it, he hadn't seen anything of Pycroft, either, this morning!

He made his way to the room occupied by the inspector, but here again he drew blank, and found, with somewhat mixed feelings, that, as in the case of his own young assistant, Pycroft's bed had not even been slept in!

"Well, at least that seems to bear out Jack's statement!" he muttered. "He said he had been intercepted by a message from Pycroft, who, I know, went off on a trail of his own during the late afternoon from Parktown. They can't both have been misled."

After a few moments' worried thought the detective decided to let the matter rest—at least, until he had been out on a second visit to Sir Merton's house.

By that time, he reflected, both Jack and Pycroft would doubtless have made their appearance, or, at least, have communicated with him in some way.

He chartered a taxi, and was soon conveyed to the scene of the crime, where he was met by Superintendent Vane and Dr. Montrose, the medical man who had first been called to inspect the body of the murdered mining magnate.

"Morning, Mr. Locke," said Vane cheerily. "First on the scene, as usual! We've not seen anything of Pycroft as yet."

"Neither have I," replied Locke, briefly explaining the absence of Jack Drake, by informing Vane of the telephone message which he—Locke—had received the night before.

"Funny!" agreed Vane thoughtfully. "But I expect they'll turn up O.K. in the course of the morning. Pycroft always was a bit original in his methods—almost as unorthodox as you are, Mr. Locke," he added, with a laugh.

"Meantime," he went on, "I've just been having a prow round on my own account. Dr. Montrose, here, has just turned up, and what he has to say about the autopsy might be of interest to you."

Ferrers Locke turned towards the medical man with renewed interest.

"Discovered something worth while, then, doctor?" he asked.

"Well," replied Dr. Montrose guardedly. "That depends on your point of view. But I've located the exact cause of death—which you had already correctly surmised to have been directly due to the knife-wound—and, what's even more useful, I think I can fix the time of the crime practically to a few minutes."

"Good!" nodded Locke. "And what is your contention in that respect?"

Locke was particularly interested in this matter of the time of the murder. He had questioned Bristow pretty closely at the hotel only the day before, and had

gleaned from that worthy some very definite statements.

"Sir Merton's body was discovered," answered Dr. Montrose, "by the man Griggs, at five minutes to one o'clock yesterday afternoon. My examination of the body proves beyond any shadow of doubt that at five minutes to 1 p.m. Sir Merton had already been dead quite fourteen hours. In other words, I should place the time of the murder as being between the hours of ten and eleven o'clock the previous night!"

It was only with difficulty that Ferrers Locke succeeded in concealing the surprise which he felt at Dr. Montrose's words. The medico's diagnosis, as Locke instantly realised, completely knocked the bottom out of Bristow's own statement as to the time at which he—Bristow—had broken into and discovered the dying baronet.

"Well past midnight," Bristow had said, and he had stuck to this statement doggedly, despite the closest cross-examination.

Further, he had sworn that Sir Merton was still alive at that time, and had, in fact, openly accused him, Gerald Bristow, of committing the crime.

Locke turned swiftly to the doctor.

"Tell me," he asked, "would the knife-wound which killed Sir Merton have caused instant death?"

"Practically," agreed the doctor. "At any rate, I should certainly say that Sir Merton could not have lived for more than—well, shall we say ten minutes at the outside, after the blow was struck."

"Are you quite positive about the time of death?"

"Absolutely. At the most, I should say that I could not be more than about half an hour out in my reckoning."

Superintendent Vane stepped forward, a puzzled frown on his face.

"As a matter of fact, I'm feeling a bit worried about this medical evidence myself," he said. "You may remember, Mr. Locke, that you yourself questioned all the household here—at least, all of those who happened to have been on the premises at the time of the murder."

Locke nodded.

"That's right," he agreed. "Why?"

"Among those you interrogated," went on Vane, "was Mr. Stephen Jarrad, the murdered man's secretary?"

Again Locke nodded.

"According to notes which I made at the time," went on the superintendent, "Mr. Jarrad could give you no information; he said that he accompanied Sir Merton and the valet Griggs from the hotel to this house, and that he—Jarrad—got leave from the deceased to retire earlier than usual, and he was not feeling any too well."

"You asked him, Mr. Locke, if, after he had retired, he had heard anything unusual; you will recollect that Mr. Jarrad's bedroom is situated almost exactly over the library, where the crime was committed."

"Quite right," agreed Locke. "And Mr. Jarrad assured me that he had heard nothing."

"Since hearing Dr. Montrose's evidence," continued Vane, "I thought I'd better have another talk with the staff here. And, as the result of that, I got Jarrad to amend his previous statement. He now states—in fact, he says he is prepared to swear—that he heard Sir Merton's voice, as if engaged in an angry altercation with someone as late as half-past twelve!"



Stephen Jarrad stared with hunted eyes from Vane to Ferrers Locke, his hands plucking spasmodically at his coat, his whole appearance like that of a rat in a trap. Then, suddenly, Jarrad flung out his hands towards the detective in a gesture of wild appeal. "I didn't do it!" he almost screamed. (See this page.)

The Shellac Clue!

FERRERS LOCKE wheeled sharply and faced the superintendent.

"You mean that Mr. Jarrad has withdrawn his previous statement?" he jerked.

"Exactly!" agreed Vane.

"I'd like to speak to him myself, please!" Locke's voice had become suddenly stern and hard.

Vane nodded, and turned away.

A few moments later and the door of the library—in which Locke, Vane, and the doctor were conversing—opened, and Stephen Jarrad entered.

Locke looked keenly at the young man, his deep-set, hawk-like eyes taking note of every detail of the fellow's appearance, expression, and demeanour.

"You sent for me, sir?"

Stephen Jarrad seemed haggard, nervous, and ill-at-ease. There were dark rings round his eyes, which had become strangely hollow and sunken, and the corners of his lips twitched spasmodically, while he seemed unable, for some peculiar reason, to look directly into the detective's eyes.

"Yesterday," said Locke sternly. "you told me that you had noticed nothing unusual after you had retired for the night."

"That's so, sir."

"You have now withdrawn practically the whole of your statement to me, and have told Superintendent Vane here that you distinctly heard Sir Merton's voice, raised in a presumably angry tone, at a time which you knew to be well after midnight!"

Stephen Jarrad moistened his lips, took a step forward, coughed slightly, and then nodded his head in a nervous, jerky fashion.

"That—that's right, sir," he said. "You see, I—I had forgotten about the incident when I thought I heard Sir Merton's voice—"

"You had forgotten! You thought you heard!" Locke's tone was sharp and impatient. "Come, come, man! Let us have a little less uncertainty! Don't you realise that this is a case of murder, that we're out to find the man who killed Sir Merton, that everyone here is under suspicion, that even you may find yourself in an unpleasant predicament if you don't tell all that you know?"

The man started back with a low cry, and his already white face became positively ashen.

He stared, with hunted eyes, from Vane to Locke, his hands plucking spasmodically at his coat, his whole appearance strangely like that of a rat in a trap.

Then, suddenly, and so unexpectedly as to cause even Ferrers Locke to give a gasp of surprise, Stephen Jarrad flung out his hands towards the great London detective in a gesture of wild appeal.

"I didn't do it!" he almost screamed. "I don't know any more about it than you do! He—he was the best friend I ever had! I didn't kill him, I tell you—I didn't kill him!"

It was a wild, frenzied appeal, uttered in a tone which almost froze the blood in the veins of his listeners.

The man was obviously blind with panic and fear, and his eyes glittered with a strange, almost mad look, as they turned from one to the other.

"Pull yourself together, man!" snapped Locke, who, though not wishing to be unsympathetic, yet realised that a sharp tone was the only way in

which to compel the young man to get a better control of his feelings. "Nobody has accused you of anything yet. You are simply asked to tell what you know—to keep nothing back! I suppose you do want to help the police and myself as much as you can?"

"I swear I do, sir!" returned Jarrad fervently. "I—I'd give anything in the whole world to bring the murderer of Sir Merton to justice! It was only that I had forgotten. I was so distracted, so overcome with horror when—when Griggs sent for me, and—and when I saw—"

His fear-stricken eyes roved instinctively round the room to the spot where Sir Merton's dead body had been found the day before. He shuddered, and covered his face with his hands.

After a moment or so, however, he seemed to become more composed, and his voice was much steadier when he again addressed Ferrers Locke.

"As I explained yesterday, sir," he said, "I accompanied Sir Merton here from the hotel, having previously been with him on his business visit to Natal. Not feeling too well—I have only recently got over a nasty dose of malaria—I asked to be excused, and Sir Merton, in his usual kindly way, at once allowed me to go to my room. That would be about half-past seven in the evening."

"Wait a bit!" interposed Locke. "What were you doing during the day?"

"After we reached this house, about midday," replied Jarrad, "I was busy going over it, sending out messages to such of the servants as happened still to be absent. You see, Sir Merton returned to Johannesburg somewhat earlier than he expected, and, of course,

the house, save for the caretaker and a couple of native boys, was deserted.

"Then, after that, I was busy taking down letters at Sir Merton's dictation, and generally performing my usual secretarial duties.

"At seven o'clock Sir Merton prepared for dinner, and I joined him in the dining-room at seven-thirty, but asked to be excused, as I was feeling so unwell. I then retired to my own room, and spent the next hour in unpacking my trunks and preparing for bed.

"I got into bed, I suppose, about nine o'clock, but could not sleep, and so I picked up a book and tried to read. I suppose after a while I must have dozed off. Anyway, the next thing I remember was opening my eyes and finding the electric light still on and my book on the floor."

"What time would that be?"

"About a quarter to ten, sir. As it happened, I had my watch beside me, and glanced at it as I got out of bed to switch off the light."

"Yes. And then?"

"Then I tried to go to sleep again, and did manage to doze a bit. Next thing I remembered was hearing sounds from downstairs—in this room, sir. I didn't take much notice, for I knew that Sir Merton was notoriously late in retiring, at the best of times, and I supposed he had got company. He may have telephoned to somebody at the Rand Club, as he sometimes did when he was feeling a bit lonely.

"I took no more notice of the sound of voices, and tried to go to sleep again, but the voices somehow seemed to distract me even though I tried to ignore them. And then I thought I heard Sir Merton speaking in an unusually loud tone, as if he were angry. There was a kind of confused murmuring, as of someone answering, and then the voices died down again.

"I lay awake in the darkness for quite a long time; in fact, I remember hearing the clock in the hall chiming eleven, and then twelve. Shortly after that—I suppose it'd be about twenty minutes or so—I thought I heard a voice, Sir Merton's voice, in the library. It was raised in the same angry tones, but only for a moment, and then there was silence. In fact, I fancied I must have imagined the whole thing, and gave no more thought to it."

"You didn't happen to catch any of the words?"

"No, Mr. Locke. It was only the general tone—sort of high-pitched and angry, or, at any rate, irritable."

"And you are positive this happened after midnight?"

"Quite. As I have said, I heard twelve o'clock chime about twenty minutes before."

"Of course, the voice may have been someone else's—not Sir Merton's?" was Locke's next shrewd question.

"It may have been, but I don't think so," came the response. "As I say, I thought perhaps it was my imagination,

which was why I didn't mention it in the first place, when you questioned me yesterday, Mr. Locke. But since then I have thought it over, and decided that I really did hear it, and that it was certainly Mr. Merton's voice!"

"You don't know whether Sir Merton was definitely expecting any visitors, either during the day or in the evening?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir," answered the secretary, more composed now. "But, of course, I didn't always know his movements. Sir Merton was a—well, a queer chap at times. Interested in all manner of unusual things, in fact, and always had such a soft heart for those who are down on their luck."

"What precisely do you mean by that?" asked Locke with sudden sharpness.

"Well—er—I was thinking of the case of Dave Quirk, sir," replied Jarrad. "Daft Dave, they call him round these parts. A well-known figure in Jo'burg, and a bit of a 'twister,' in my opinion—you know, out to get all he can. Sir Merton ran into him one day at the Auckland Park races, and Daft Dave spun him some sort of yarn, and the next thing we knew was that Sir Merton had invited Daft Dave to this house and stood him high tea, and then sent him off with a ten-pound note!"

Locke turned with suddenly renewed interest towards Superintendent Vane.

"Know anything about this Daft Dave?" he inquired.

Superintendent Vane smiled.

"Should rather think we do, Mr. Locke," he replied. "Considering that he's been hauled up before the local courts times out of number for malingering and so forth. A public nuisance, he is, but I don't think there's any real harm in him. But 'dippy,' as you might say—you know, a screw loose in the upper storey." And the superintendent tapped his forehead significantly.

Locke nodded, and, after addressing a few further questions to Stephen Jarrad, thanked him and gave him permission to leave.

But Ferrers Locke's keen eyes followed the young secretary's half-stooping figure till it had disappeared out of the room and the door had closed behind it. There was a frankly puzzled, almost worried look on the detective's face.

However, it cleared after a moment or so, and Locke began a systematic search of the library, covering all the ground which he had merely surveyed the day before.

The local police, under Superintendent Vane, had, of course, already gone over the whole house, but Locke preferred to go about things in his own way, and usually he was well rewarded for the extra care and trouble he took.

It was not that the official police necessarily overlooked anything; indeed, as a general rule, they were most thorough.

But Ferrers Locke had the knack not merely of seeing a thing, but of reading a meaning into it; and in this way he often enough picked up unexpected clues from which he was enabled to build up those frequently astoundingly clever deductions and theories for which he had long been famous.

"There was nothing missing from the safe, Mr. Locke," said Vane, at last. The two were alone together now, Dr. Montrose having taken his departure. "We made an inventory of what was found, and this was checked off by Mr. Jarrad, who assures us that everything

FAMOUS CRICKETERS' NAMES!

This list includes the name of every cricketer used in connection with the simple Competition on page 2.—Wire in, chums!

Abel, Abercorn, Abraham, Adams, Aitkin, Akroyd, Allen, Allison, Anderson, Andrews, Antill, Appleton, Arbuthnot, Armitage, Armour, Armstrong, Arnold, Ash, Ashley, Ashton, Astill, Athfield, Attewell, Awdry, Ayling.

Bacon, Bagshaw, Bailey, Balnes, Baird, Baker, Banks, Bannister, Barber, Barclay, Bardeley, Barker, Barlow, Barnes, Barratt, Bastow, Bates, Bather, Bayes, Bean, Beet, Bell, Bennett, Bestwick, Blagwood, Birch, Bird, Bishop, Blackburn, Blades, Bland, Bligh, Bloodworth, Board, Boardman, Bolton, Boot, Borradaile, Bourne, Bousfield, Bowden, Bowley, Box, Boyes, Braddell, Brand, Braund, Bray, Bridges, Bright, Bristowe, Broadbridge, Brooke, Broughton, Brownlee, Bryan, Bryant, Buckle, Bull, Bullock, Burn, Burrell, Burrows, Bush, Butcher, Butler, Butterworth.

Cadman, Cadwalader, Caldwell, Campbell, Carless, Carpenter, Carr, Carroll, Carter, Carver, Castle, Catterall, Cave, Chapman, Cherry, Clay, Cole, Coleman, Collier, Collins, Constable, Conway, Cook, Cooper, Corder, Coverdale, Cox, Craven, Crawford, Crossland, Crow, Curtis.

Dakin, Dale, Dark, Davies, Dawson, Day, Decie, Denton, Diamond, Diver, Dixon, Dolphin, Douglas, Drake, Draper, Duck, Dunn, Durston.

Earle, Edwards, Emery, Evans, Kwbank, Farmer, Faulkner, Featherstone, Fender, Field, Fielder, Fisher, Fletcher, Flint, Flowers, Ford, Foster, Fothergill, Fox, Freeman, Fry.

Gale, Garrett, Gatehouse, Gears, Gibson, Gilbert, Gilligan, Goodman, Gore, Grace, Greenwood, Gregory, Gregson, Grimshaw, Grundy, Gull, Gunn.

Hake, Hall, Hallows, Hammond, Hancock, Haad, Hardestate, Hardman, Hardstaff, Hardy, Hare, Hargreaves, Harper, Hartkopf, Hartley, Hay, Hayward, Haywood, Head, Hearne, Hendren, Hendry, Heseltine, Hewitt, Hill, Hill-Wood, Hirst, Hitch, Hoare, Hobbs, Hogg, Holland, Hollingworth, Hollins, Holmes, Howell, Hubble, Huddleston, Humphrey, Hunter, Hurst.

Illingworth, Inglis, Ingram, Ireland, Ire-

Jackson, Jardine, Jarvis, Jearcocke, Jeeves, Jephson, Jervis, Jessop, Jewell, Jones, Jupp.

Kaye, Kelly, Kennedy, Kendrick, Kerr, Kettle, Kilner, King, Knight, Knott, Knox.

Lacey, Lamb, Lane, Leach, Leaf, Lee, Leveson-Gower, Lewis, Lilley, Lillywhite, Lindsay, Lines, Lipscombe, Lock, Lockwood, Lord, Lorrimer, Loudon, Lowe, Lucas, Lupton, Lyon, Lyttelton.

Macaulay, MacBryan, MacDonald, MacLaren, Mailey, Makepeace, Mann, Marriott, Marsden, Marshall, Matthews, McBeath, Mead, Middleton, Miles, Miller, Mills, Mitchell, Moon, Mordaunt, Mundy, Murdoch, Murrell.

Napier, Nawanagar, Needham, Newman, Noble, Norton, Nourse.

Oates, O'Brien, Oldfield, Oldroyd.

Page, Palairot, Palmer, Parker, Parkin, Partridge, Patterson, Payne, Payton, Peach, Pease, Peele, Pegler, Pellew, Penn, Penny, Pickering, Piggs, Pilch, Plank, Pollitt, Porter, Potter, Powell, Price, Pritchett.

Quaife.

Ranjitsinhji, Raynor, Reed, Relf, Rhodes, Richardson, Richmond, Riley, Robson, Rock, Rogers, Roper, Rose, Rowe, Rowley, Royston, Rush, Russell, Ryder.

Sachs, Sadler, Sanderson, Saunders, Seobell, Scott, Sedgwick, Sewell, Seymour, Sharp, Shaw, Shepherd, Sherwell, Shine, Slater, Spalding, Speak, Spofforth, Spooner, Staples, Stanton, Steel, Stoddart, Stone, Storer, Stark, Streafeld, Street, Strong, Strudwick, Studd, Sugg, Susskind, Sutcliffe.

Tarrant, Tate, Taylor, Tennyson, Thorp, Thresher, Thwaites, Tomkinson, Tower, Townsend, Trollope, Trotter, Trumble, Tubb, Tufton, Turbulla, Tydesley.

Underwood, Upton, Vallance, Vane, Veitch, Verulam, Vihart, Vine, Vizard.

Waddington, Wadsworth, Walden, Walker, Walker, Wall, Waller, Wallington, Ward, Warner, Waters, Watson, Wauchope, Webb, Wells, Wetherall, Whale, White, Whittaker, Whysall, Wilson, Winslow, Winter, Wood, Woodbridge, Woolley, Woosnam, Wright.

Yardley, Yates, Yonge, Young, Zulch.

is intact, save that old biscuit-tin which, I believe, you took possession of yesterday."

Locke nodded without answering. He was busy probing about in the ashes of the firegrate, and presently he had collected a few half-burnt fragments of paper which he carefully put away.

"There were some papers on the desk at which the deceased had been seated," went on Vane, "including a large book which Sir Merton had evidently been keeping as a sort of private diary. I haven't had time to look at it as yet to—"

Locke turned and picked up the book indicated, gazing at it thoughtfully for a few moments, turning the pages idly and noting that most of the entries were in shorthand.

"This looks interesting," he murmured. "If you don't mind, I'd like to take it away and study it myself for a day or so."

Superintendent Vane nodded.

"By all means, Mr. Locke," he agreed at once.

The detective murmured his thanks, slipped the book into the valise which he usually carried around with him, and continued his investigations.

A slight "rick" in the carpet near the desk attracted his attention, and next moment he was down on one knee, probing beneath it.

After a moment or so he drew erect, with a broken fragment of something jet black and shiny in appearance grasped between finger and thumb.

"What have you got there?" asked Vane with sudden interest.

But Locke did not answer.

He was busy studying his "find," turning it over and over in his hand, clicking it with his fingers, even holding it for a moment to his nose.

"Looks like a bit of—what do you call that stuff—oh, shellac, isn't it?" said Vane, taking a peep at it over the detective's shoulder.

But before Locke could answer a shadow appeared on the carpet before him, and he glanced up.

At the half-open french windows a figure had appeared—a figure which caused both Locke and Vane to give starts of surprise.

(Who is this newcomer—what light can he shed upon the mystery? Mind you read next week's instalment of this top-ging yarn, boys.)

"BUNTER OF BUNTER COURT!"

(Continued from page 20.)

what to do with. But he was a business-like man; he naturally wanted cash in hand. Billy Bunter, obtuse as he was in some matters, was sharp enough in others. He quite realised that this matter had to be dealt with diplomatically. The butler's cough was a warning.

"In fact, I'll write now," he said. "Bring me something here—pen and ink, Walsingham."

"Very good, sir!"

A table was placed at Bunter's elbow, with pens and ink, and the new notepaper engraved with the name of Bunter Court.

Walsingham waited. Even if he had no doubts about Bunter's money, he certainly intended to see that letter posted. And a sort of intuition warned Bunter that the letter would be read in the butler's room before it found its way to the post.

He lolled back in the chair and yawned.

"Write it for me, Walsingham!" he said. "I'll sign it!"

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"Very good, sir!"

Bunter breathed hard for a moment. But he was committed to the amazing trickery by which he had secured "Bunter Court" for the holidays; and it was too late to draw back now.

"Dear Father," he began. "Got that?"

"Yes, sir!"

"We're home for the holidays now, and I'm very sorry you can't come at present."

"At present," murmured Walsingham, as he wrote.

"Please send a cheque for a hundred pounds by return of post. That will be enough to see me through for a week or two."

"Week or two!" murmured Walsingham.

"Love to the mater and Bessie, and give my kindest regards to Lord Robert and Sir George."

"Lord Robert and Sir George!" repeated Walsingham, writing it down.

"That will do," said Bunter. "Give me the pen."

He signed the letter.

"And the address, sir—"

"W. S. Bunter, Esq.," said the Owl of the Remove, "care of Lord Robert de Vere, De Vere Hall, Northumberland."

"Very good, sir!" said Walsingham.

"Mind you catch the collection with it," said Bunter, with a yawn. "Send a footman at once."

"Very good, sir!"

Bunter winked at his ample back as he went.

That letter would never get to Mr. William Samuel Bunter, that was certain. But undoubtedly it would travel as far as Northumberland, which was a satisfactory distance away. Possibly it would find its way later to the Dead Letter Office, as no such place as De Vere Hall existed outside Bunter's fertile imagination. What became of it was not a matter of concern to Billy Bunter.

He had satisfied Walsingham for the present. Some days, at least, would elapse before the butler became suspicious, and in the meantime the Owl of the Remove was lord of Bunter Court, living on the fat of the land. Undoubtedly there was a day of reckoning to be looked for; but that could be dealt with when it came along, and Bunter dismissed the whole matter airily from his fat mind. The future could be left to take care of itself. For the present, at least, all was calm and bright!

THE END.

(How long will the fat and fatuous Bunter be able to keep up this combination of swank and trickery? See next week's magnificent story—"Billy Bunter's Master-Stroke." You'll enjoy it!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 911.

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

THE BUNTER-GO-ROUND!

I HAPPENED to be over in France a few days since, and the thought of the fat and funny Owl came to me as I passed through the lines of stalls at an odd, old-fashioned fair. No, it was nothing to do with food, though I'll be bound old Bunter would have made great play with the hot and flaky gaufres which were on sale. It was the merry-go-round which caught my attention; for, in place of the ordinary wooden horses, there were gigantic figures, each carrying an immense tray, on which the passengers sat. And three of the enormous figures were so like the porpoise you would not have been able to tell the difference. Bunter is pretty well known in France, and the clever artist who was responsible for these laughable figures had caught the porpoise's likeness to a T.

A LOVER OF NATURE,

One way and another I get a good many letters about natural-history subjects, and I have just to hand a question from a Maguette living in the South of England

concerning the Purple Emperor butterfly. He has read about this gorgeous fellow, but, search for it as he may, he cannot find a specimen. I am not a bit surprised. I once saw a little company of these butterflies—the *Apatura Iris*—but the season was exceptional. They were fluttering about the tops of some tall poplars. The Purple Emperor is rare. A naturalist whose opinion I have always respected, puts the date of appearance as July 28th, but that is only approximate. Butterflies do not keep exactly to the calendar. If my correspondent can get into East-Sussex inland from Rye, he may manage to track the exquisite butterfly down, but it is only a chance.

SHOULD HE LEAVE HOME?

A chum of mine in Manchester asks me a question which I find it rather difficult to answer. He wants to know whether, now that he is out at work earning good money, it would not be better if he cut himself adrift from the old home? He has got it into his head that it is a bit kiddish to remain on at the old place. He is not unhappy at home. His mother has come to rely upon his help a good deal, and two young brothers look to him for advice in a lot of things. But his idea that he ought to be completely independent worries him; he allows himself to fret over it. I can assure my correspondent that he is troubling himself absolutely without a cause. He is wanted just where he is. It is up to him

to stop where he is, and stand by those who are glad of his presence. Home's got broken up all too soon. Fellows who help to keep a home going are doing some of the grandest work in the world. So let my chum dismiss his scruples. He is to be congratulated on the success he has made of his life.

NEXT MONDAY'S PROGRAMME.

"BILLY BUNTER'S MASTER-STROKE!"

The title alone of the yarn for next week speaks eloquently enough of the treat in store. I don't believe any "Bunter" story has ever proved unsuccessful. And when I say that this Greyfriars story is better than anything Mr. Richards has ever given us, you must know you're on a really good thing. Look out for it, chums!

"THE VELDT TRAIL!"

Another long instalment of this amazing mystery story is included in next week's issue.

"HOLIDAY" SUPPLEMENT!

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Your Editor.



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