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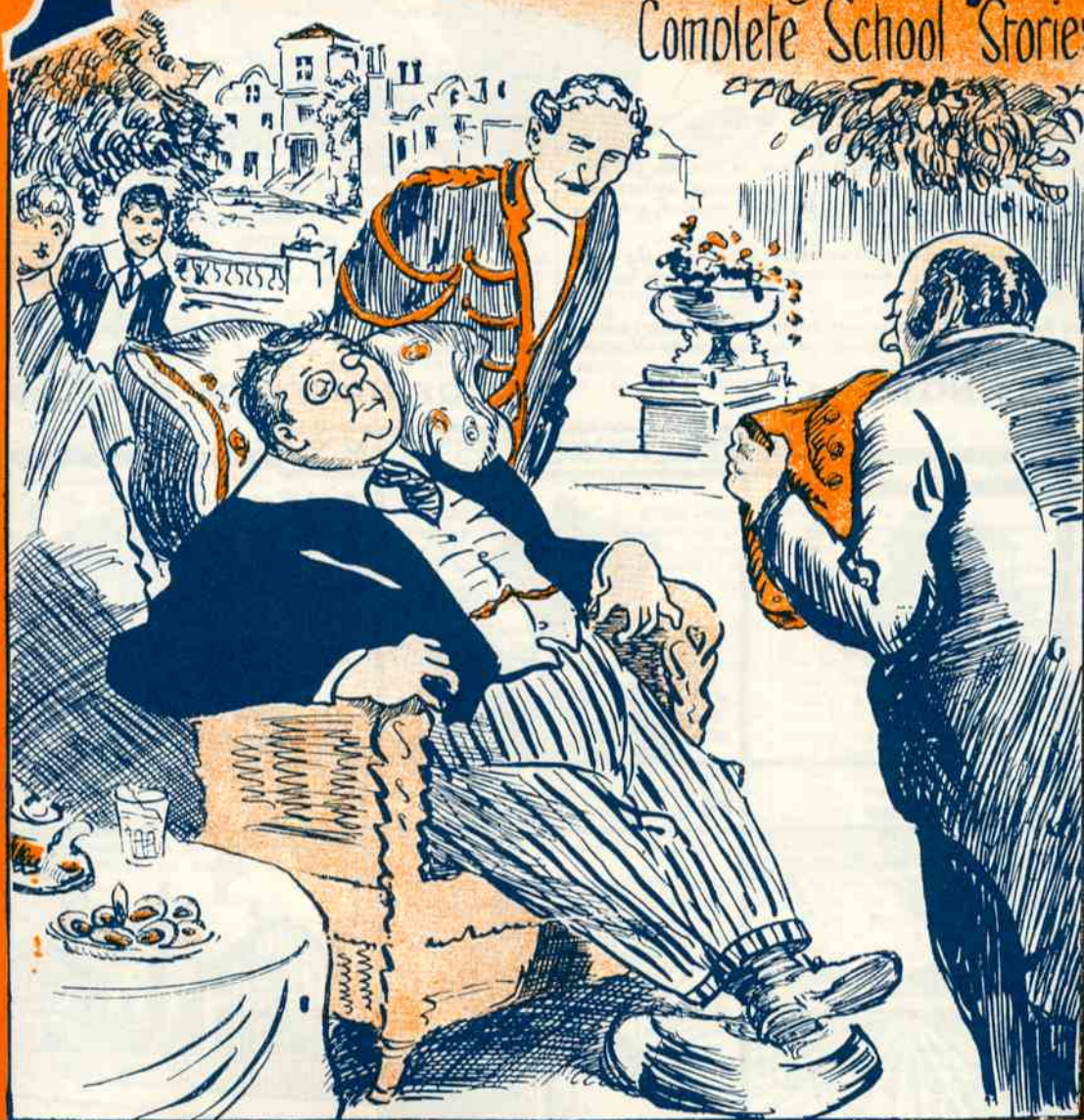
No. 912. Vol. XXVIII.

Week Ending August 1st, 1925.

The

Magnet²

Library EVERY MONDAY.
of
Complete School Stories.



BILLY BUNTER TAKES THINGS EASY AT BUNTER COURT!

(With servants all round him ready to satisfy his every whim and fancy, Billy Bunter thoroughly enjoys himself.
Read the magnificent Greyfriars story - inside.)

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 20.

THE good old MAGNET has had many interesting and popular competitions in the past, but this new contest, the third 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 Third 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 until next week, when we shall give you the Fourth Set of puzzles to solve.

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.

If you have missed the opening weeks of this contest copies of the MAGNET can be obtained on application to MAGNET

Back Number Department, Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

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.

START NOW.

LIST OF NAMES ON PAGE 26.

"FAMOUS CRICKETERS" N° 3.

		
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THE WHOLE HOG! When Billy Bunter lands himself into trouble it's an unfortunate habit of his to plunge deeper into the mire rather than extricate himself at the first chance—the idea being to put off the evil day as long as possible. Yet this "plunging" habit of his carries with it a certain amount of roguish cleverness, as you will learn from reading—



Billy Bunter's Master-Stroke!

A magnificent new long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., introducing in the shape of Billy Bunter the fattest and funniest schoolboy in the world.

By
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter in all His Glory!

"**WALSINGHAM!**"

"Sir?"

"Bring me a footstool."

"Certainly, sir."

Billy Bunter leaned back in the wicker-chair, and rested his feet comfortably on the footstool.

For a whole minute he was silent.

That was an unusual circumstance with Bunter. But he was feeling very fat and lazy and comfortable. It was very pleasant that hot afternoon, under the shade of the big elm, on the lawn before the great house.

But it was only for a minute or so that Bunter was silent. Then his fat voice was heard again.

"James!"

James, the footman, came hurriedly up.

"Bring me a cushion."

"Very good, sir."

James went into the house for a cushion.

Billy Bunter blinked round at five cheery faces, every one of which wore a grin.

Judging by their expressions, Harry Wharton & Co. might have been sitting round at an entertainment.

As a matter of fact, Billy Bunter, of Bunter Court, was an entertainment in himself, though he was quite unaware of the fact.

Bunter was enjoying himself.

Next to eating, which, of course, came first, William George Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, enjoyed swanking.

Now he was swanking to his fat heart's content.

Butler and footmen awaited Bunter's beck and call; they obeyed his slightest command, and indeed seemed to anticipate his wishes.

That, in Bunter's opinion, was exactly how things should be.

At Combermere Lodge—lately rechristened Bunter Court—the Owl of the Remove was monarch of all he surveyed.

That summer's afternoon Bunter and his guests were taking tea on the lawn.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky nabob of Bhanipur, quite liked it. They had not yet quite recovered from their surprise at discovering that Bunter Court had a real existence. They were still astonished to find themselves there for the summer vacation. But there they were; and they found it quite agreeable, so far.

Perhaps Billy Bunter's manners and customs, as host, left something to be desired. But undoubtedly he entertained his guests—more thoroughly than he intended.

Bunter, as head of a great house, swanking in his new and amazing prosperity, giving lofty orders to servants, simply for the sake of giving orders, was a sight for gods and men and little fishes.

At Greyfriars School Billy Bunter was nobody, or, rather, less than nobody. There he received orders—from a Form master, from prefects, from senior fellows. Here, at Bunter Court, he gave orders. And an order was one of the things which it was more blessed to give than to receive.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at his guests through his big spectacles, and frowned a little as he saw them smile.

He could see nothing to smile at, personally.

He was monarch of all he surveyed, and his opinion was that he was carrying on in quite a royal style.

James came back with the cushion.

"Put it behind my head!" yawned Bunter.

James put the cushion behind Bunter's head and retired respectfully. Bunter rested his bullet head on the cushion, and then raised it again. He was not satisfied. It was difficult to satisfy Bunter.

"James!"

"Sir!"

"Take this cushion away and bring me a softer one."

"Very good, sir."

James walked off with the cushion.

Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove again, triumphantly. It was a case of Bunter saying, "Do this, and he doeth it." That was a new and quite exhilarating experience for the fattest junior of Greyfriars.

"What are you grinning at, Bob Cherry?" he asked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Was I grinning?" asked Bob.

"Yes, you ass. You're grinning, too, Inky."

"The griffulness is not terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I know how to manage servants," said Bunter.

"Do you?" murmured Wharton, rather dubiously.

Certainly Bunter's method did not recommend itself to the captain of the Remove.

"Give 'em plenty to do and keep 'em at it," explained Bunter. "Never let the lazy beggars loaf round in idleness. Keep 'em in their place, you know. That's a tip for you fellows, if you ever live in a decent house and keep a decent establishment—not that you're ever likely to."

The Co. chuckled.

This was a sample of Bunter's polished manners and customs. But the Co. were used to him, at Greyfriars; and they did not expect much from Bunter in the way of manners, whether at school or on vacation.

"See the idea?" asked Bunter.

"Oh, yes!" said Harry, smiling.

"But—"

"But what?"

"Oh, nothing! You're running the show, old fat man. And the servants seem to stand it remarkably well."

"They know their place!" explained Bunter. "Servants really like obeying a fellow of good family, whom they recognise as their natural superior."

"Oh!"

"You fellows, of course, wouldn't get obeyed like I do," said Bunter airily.

"I'm accustomed to it. You're not."

"Oh!"

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"Where's that dashed footman?" said Bunter. "He hasn't brought back my cushion yet. I'll sack him if he's not careful!"

Bunter blinked round towards the many-windowed front of the great house. James had not yet reappeared.

Harry Wharton & Co. smiled serenely. They had watched Bunter's antics, as lord of Bunter Court, with considerable amusement, ever since they had arrived at that great establishment.

Bunter's swank had tickled them, and they had rather wondered how Walsingham, the butler, and the footmen stood it.

Bunter emphasised his importance by incessantly giving unnecessary orders in a sharp and dictatorial tone, being under the happy delusion that that was the way to demonstrate that he was accustomed to a magnificent establishment.

He was not aware that the staff at Combermere Lodge took it for granted that he was a "new-rich" young fellow, basing that opinion on his manners, and on the way he scattered lavish tips. But for the lavishness of the tips Walsingham & Co. certainly never would have stood Bunter. Even as it was they only stood him, tips and all, because his occupation of the place was only temporary, and they wanted to make hay while the sun shone.

Bunter began to blink angrily. James had been gone five minutes, and still had not returned.

"Where's that cheeky footman?" said Bunter. "He hasn't come back with my cushion! I shall have to sack him! I say, you fellows, some of you run in and tell him to come at once."

The chums of the Remove sat tight.

A certain amount of swank they were prepared to take smilingly from their host; but really they were not there to run about at Bunter's orders after a footman, as if they were footmen themselves.

"Do you hear?" snapped Bunter. "You go, Cherry. Sharp's the word!"

"Fathead!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bunter blinked at the house again.

James, the footman, had received many tips from Bunter. Keeping up his character of a wealthy fellow, with whom money was like water, Bunter had scattered pound notes far and wide. He believed—or, at least, did his best to believe—that he was admired and obeyed because he was one of those naturally aristocratic fellows who are born to command, and whom common persons felt it an honour to obey. But in his heart of hearts it was probable that Bunter realised that the tipping did it.

Lord Mauleverer's currency notes had enabled him to make a terrific impression in the servants' hall at Bunter Court, alias Combermere Lodge. Since then Bunter had annexed loans from all his guests, one after another, and so long as the money lasted he made it fly. But there seemed to be a limit to that resource, and for a couple of days past there had been no tipping. Perhaps the servants' hall was now feeling the draught, so to speak. Walsingham, the butler, was as polished and urbane as ever. But Bunter had detected signs of restiveness in other quarters. Now the perfunctory performance of duty by James, the footman, looked almost like open rebellion.

Had there been any more pound notes about Bunter, no doubt he would have reasserted his authority by means of

another shower of largesse. But the horn of plenty had run dry.

There was nothing for it but to assert his personality, and bring James to heel by the exertion of his natural masterful superiority.

"I shall make an example of that fellow!" said Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co. made no rejoinder.

They had no objection to Bunter making an example of one of his men-servants if he wanted to. Indeed, they looked on the prospect with interest, as a further entertainment.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" murmured Bob Cherry.

And Billy Bunter sat upright, and fixed a lofty, disdainful, and crushing blink on the recalcitrant James as he approached.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Turning of the Worm!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. devoted their attention to tea and cake, with perfectly grave and unconscious faces. Their cue, as nicely mannered guests, was to remain in absolute ignorance that anything of an untoward nature was going on at all. But although their faces expressed elaborate unconsciousness of the existence of James, the footman, and the fact that he was being called on the carpet, they could not, of course, help observing and hearing what passed. And their assumption of grave unconsciousness was put to a severe test. It really was hard to keep from smiling, at least.

James had brought a new cushion. There had been nothing the matter with the first cushion brought by James. Bunter had found fault simply for the sake of giving orders and keeping James in his place.

"You've been a long time, James!" snapped Bunter.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Walsingham stopped me to speak."

"Did you not tell Mr. Walsingham that I had sent you for a cushion?"

"No, sir!"

"You did not!" exclaimed Bunter hotly. "Do you understand that I have been waiting for that cushion?"

James murmured something indistinctly.

"I have been actually uncomfortable for several minutes for want of that cushion!" exclaimed Bunter.

This piece of information ought to have withered up James on the spot. If so important a person as William George Bunter was rendered uncomfortable for several minutes, it was time for the skies to fall, and for a footman to crumple up like a withered leaf in autumn.

But James' clean-shaven, almost expressionless face took on a dogged expression. He did not answer, but stood with the cushion in his hand, and an observer might have detected that James was thinking how agreeable it would be to "biff" Bunter on the head with it. But Bunter did not observe that. He was not likely to dream that such thoughts could pass through the mind of a man-servant.

"You stopped to talk with my butler, instead of carrying out my orders!" exclaimed Bunter angrily.

"Yes, sir!" murmured James.

"You are an impertinent rascal, James!"

"Oh, sir!"

"And a low beast!" went on Bunter, blinking at the Famous Five to note how

they were taking this. He was showing them his masterly style of "dressing down" a careless servant. But the faces of Harry Wharton & Co. expressed nothing. Whatever they thought of Bunter and his methods, they did not let their looks betray their thoughts.

"And a cheeky menial!" added Bunter.

"Sir!"

"On another occasion, don't waste a single instant when you have orders for me to carry out!" said Bunter.

"Very good, sir!"

"Now place the cushion behind my head."

"Yes, sir."

Bunter moved his head for the cushion to be slid behind it, and James slid it there.

Perhaps he did not place it with a gentle hand. Bunter uttered an angry growl.

"You clumsy ass!"

"Sir!"

"It's rather hard cheese that a gentleman cannot be made comfortable when he keeps a whole swarm of lazy servants!" exclaimed Bunter. "Take it away again. That won't do. You're a clumsy fool, James!"

"Thank you, sir."

"I've a jolly good mind to sack you!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Don't jam your low paws on the back of my head!" snorted Bunter. "Haven't you been taught to place a cushion behind a gentleman's head without pawing him? This is really intolerable. Ow!"

Bunter gave a yelp as James' knuckles, by accident or otherwise, clumped on the back of his bullet head.

The Owl of the Remove jumped out of the chair. He turned his spectacles on James with a glare of wrath.

"You clumsy chump! You're sacked!"

"Sir!"

"Sacked!" roared Bunter. "Get out of it! I discharge you! Go to Walsingham and ask him for your wages, and go! Leave the house this very day! Do you hear?"

And with that, Bunter gave his guests a triumphant blink. This was the way he kept his servants in order! He was disappointed to find that Harry Wharton & Co. were deeply interested in the view of the park in the summer sunshine, and did not even glance in his direction.

Bunter expected James, in a crumpled state, to limp away dismayed to the house. That was what ought to have happened. But things that ought to happen, do not always happen. There was a human being inside the plush breeches and coat of the Combermere footman, and that human being was in a state of great exasperation by this time.

"Yes, sir," said James, and his well-trained, expressionless face relaxed into an untrained grinning visage that was quite expressive. "I'll go, sir. But it ain't any good asking Mr. Walsingham for my wages. I've asked him more than once, and he ain't paid me."

"Silence."

"I ain't been paid since Lord Combermere went on the Continent," said James, unheeding, "no more 'ave the others, and I can tell you, Mr. Bunter, that we ain't satisfied. Which his lordship was generally be'ind with a man's wages, but he was a gentleman."

"What!"

"But if a man's serving a master what ain't a gentleman, he can't be left without his wages," said James cheerily. "Tipping a man is all very well, but wages is wages. I ain't 'ad a shilling since his lordship went abroad, and I ain't 'ad any wages from you, Mr.

Bunter. The terms on which this 'ouse was let was that servants' wages was to be paid by the tenant taking it. You ain't paid anything so far."

Bunter gasped.

Crushing James, and discharging him, was all very well. It showed Harry Wharton & Co. how a lordly fellow like Bunter could deal with menials. But this retort from James was decidedly awkward. That Bunter had taken Combermere Lodge furnished for the summer, getting possession of the place by a series of amazing tricks, was quite unknown to the chums of Greyfriars. They had been told that Bunter's pater had bought the place and renamed it Bunter Court. They were learning something now!

"You ain't paid anything," persisted James, as Bunter gasped helplessly. "All the wages is in arrear, and the servants don't like it. Mr. Bunter. All very well for Mr. Walsingham to say that you've got 'eaps of money, and it's all right; but we ain't seen the 'eaps of money. Pay me what's my due, and I'll go with pleasure. I ain't keen on serving a low feller."

"A—a what?"

"A low feller!" said James deliberately. "I was brought up to serve my betters, sir, and you ain't my betters, you ain't. You're a low feller, Mr. Bunter."

Bunter spluttered.

Harry Wharton & Co. remained grave, expressionless as graven images. But it was hard work.

"A low feller!" repeated James, with relish. "Hordering a man 'ere, and hordering him there. Never a 'Thank you!' Lord Combermere would say, 'Thank you, James!' when I served his lordship. He was a gentleman, though he was ar'd up. It was a pleasure to serve him, and I'd have cut off my 'and sooner than ask him for my wages. But I ain't serving a low feller for nothing!"

Gasp from Bunter.

"In fact," pursued James, who seemed to be beginning to enjoy this conversation—"in fact, Mr. Bunter; wages or no wages, I'd rather go. I've got my character as a footman to consider. It's against a man, looking for a job in a good family, to 'ave served a low feller. My job is serving the nobility and gentry, and they don't want a man what has been in service with a feller who's low and common."

Bunter was crimson with rage.

"You—you—you impertinent scoundrel!" he gasped. "Get out before I kick you out!"

"You ain't paid my wages yet, sir," grinned James.

"Go!" roared Bunter.

"Very good, sir; I'll go, and bring you up in the county court for my wages," said James. "I'm fed up with you, sir, and I can tell you so. Making out to these young gents that the 'ouse is yours, and you've only took it furnished for the summer!"

That was too much for Bunter.

It was the total collapse of his wonderful scheme, by which he had convinced the Greyfriars fellows that Bunter Court had a real existence.

The Owl of the Remove made a rush at James.

He was going to collar James, slew him round, and kick him as far as the house; the only adequate way of dealing with so extremely disrespectful a manservant.

But again the things which ought to have happened did not happen.

James, in the way of business, was prepared to tolerate much from an employer; and certainly he had had plenty



James' large hand grasped Bunter's collar, and the Owl of the Remove spun round like a teetotum. Then James' large foot was planted on Bunter's tight trousers. Bunter flew! Crash! He landed on the tea-table, sending the cups and saucers flying in all directions. "Ow! Wow!" roared Bunter. (See Chapter 2.)

to tolerate from Bunter. But his business relations with Bunter were now at an end; and certainly he did not expect any more tips. So as Bunter rushed at him in overwhelming wrath it was not James who was collared and slewed round. It was Bunter.

James' large hand grasped Bunter's collar, and the Owl of the Remove spun round like a teetotum.

Then James' large foot was planted on Bunter's tight trousers.

Bunter flew.

Crash!

The Owl of the Remove crashed into the tea-table, and cups and saucers flew in all directions; and, amidst crashing crockery, the Owl of Greyfriars collapsed on the lawn.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared James.

And he turned and walked away to the house, still chortling. And Billy Bunter, gasping for breath, sprawled among broken cups and saucers.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Temporary Difficulty!

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Wow! Wow!"

Harry Wharton & Co. tried hard not to laugh. They felt that they ought not to laugh. But they could not help it. Their self-control had reached the limit. Bunter's method of managing servants, and its extraordinary result, was really too much for them. They yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh dear! Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter sat up amid wrecked crockery.

"Ow! Wow! Wow! Ow!"

He groped for his spectacles, and set them straight on his little fat nose, and blinked furiously at the chums of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows—"

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

"What are you cackling at?" shrieked Bunter.

Really, it was an unnecessary question. The chums of Greyfriars rocked with hilarity.

"You silly chumps—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is this what you call manners?" howled Bunter.

Harry Wharton tried hard to check his merriment. He wiped the tears from his eyes.

"Sorry!" he gasped. "But— Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chump—"

"Sorry!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"But— Oh dear! Let me give you a hand up, old chap!"

Bunter was dragged up.

He collapsed breathlessly into his chair. The Famous Five succeeded at last in reducing themselves to a serious state.

Bunter blinked at them wrathfully. But he was uneasy as well as wrathful. Harry Wharton & Co., in spite of their elaborate affectation of indifference, had certainly heard James' startling revelations. They knew now precisely

how Combermere Lodge had been turned into Bunter Court.

"I say, you fellows, you heard what that cheeky menial said?" stammered Bunter.

"Well, we couldn't help hearing it, could we?" grinned Frank Nugent.

"Of course, there was nothing in it."

"Hem!"

"The fellow was malicious at being sacked, you know," said Bunter. "As for my taking this place furnished for the summer, and making out my pater had bought it, that's all rot, of course."

"Hem!"

"I suppose you can take my word for it?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's rather low to doubt a fellow's word," said Bunter. "And the agent could confirm all I say—that man Pilkins, who had the letting of the house at Combermere. I—I mean, the man who hadn't the letting of the house, of course—it wasn't to let, you know."

"Oh!"

"My pater bought the place for—for fifty thousand pounds," said Bunter. "I forget whether it was fifty thousand or sixty thousand."

"A difference of ten thousand would be a mere trifle, of course!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"Exactly," assented Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was blind and deaf to sarcasm.

"Oh, my hat!"

"As for Pilkins, Pilkins had nothing whatever to do with it. Besides, he's in the nursing-home at Combermere now, and away from business. If you think he took me for Lord Mauleverer when I came to see the house you're making a mistake."

"Great Scott!"

"As for what that low menial said, it's simply cheek," said Bunter. "Pure cheek, because I discharged him."

"Oh!"

"Still, I thought I'd explain the matter," said Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove, apparently under the impression that he had explained quite satisfactorily. "It's rather unfortunate that the pater is away on—on important financial business, and the mater with him. It leaves me rather short of ready money."

"Oh! Does it?"

"I'm bound to pay that cheeky menial before he goes," said Bunter. "And I happen to be short of cash—temporarily. I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"Great Scott!"

"From one of my titled relations. In the meantime, I suppose some of you fellows could lend me a few pounds to carry on?"

"Oh!"

"I'm bound to pay that low rotter; it's a question of personal dignity," said Bunter loftily. "It's not much; only ten or twelve pounds, I should think. Lend me twenty."

"Oh!"

"As you fellows are my guests, I naturally expect you to stand by me in a temporary difficulty like this," said Bunter firmly.

"But—"

"The butfulness is terrific—"

"It's not a question of buts," said Billy Bunter. "I simply must have some money to pay that cheeky menial. I happen to have run out. You can't very well leave me in such a hole."

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances.

Bunter had already helped himself to some extent from their cash resources. But they were well provided with cash

for their holidays, and at Bunter Court they had had no occasion, so far, to expend much money—except in the way of little loans to Bunter.

In the circumstances it was difficult to refuse Bunter's request. Besides, even if Bunter had only taken Combermere Lodge furnished for the summer, that was evidence that there was, for once, money about in the Bunter family. That Bunter had obtained possession of the place by trickery, and that his father was utterly ignorant of the whole transaction, naturally did not occur to the juniors. That Bunter was almost every kind of an ass they knew; but they did not yet know the full extent of his asinine fatuousness.

Harry Wharton laughed rather ruefully.

"It's up to us, you chaps!" he said.

"I suppose the man must be paid!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, yes!"

"The upfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I have an esteemed fiver at your service, Bunter."

"Shell out, and I'll settle with the man and clear him out," said Bunter.

"But, dash it all!" said Johnny Bull.

"You'd better write to your father and point out to him that the servants' wages are not paid. It's rather odd that he should have overlooked that."

Bunter grinned.

He wondered what Mr. William Samuel Bunter would have thought if he had been asked to pay the wages of a butler and a crowd of footmen and maidservants at an immense establishment of which he had never even heard. Certainly Billy Bunter had no intention of asking him.

"What are you grinning at?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"My dear fellow, the pater has overlooked that trifling thing," said Bunter airily. "Dealing with thousands and thousands of pounds, he's not likely to bother his head about such trifles. Still, I'll certainly remind him. But shell out a few pounds now to pay that scoundrel before I kick him out of the place."

The chums of the Remove shelled out. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh contributed a couple of fivers, the nabob being the best provided with money in the party. The other fellows contributed a couple of pound notes each.

Billy Bunter rose from the chair.

"You fellows can go for a walk," he said. "I prefer you not to be present when I'm dealing with my servants." Bunter had learned a lesson on that subject already. "So long!"

Bunter rolled away towards the house. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged smiles.

"Well, this is a giddy discovery!" said Bob Cherry. "I felt all along that there was something fishy in it."

"The fishyfulness was terrific."

Johnny Bull grunted.

"We might have known!" he growled.

"We know Bunter's gas well enough. He's got the place furnished for the summer, and it's not Bunter Court, as I said all the time. Just his cheek calling it Bunter Court while he's staying here. I wonder what the owner would think if he saw the new name painted up over the gates?"

"That giddy footman has explained it all!" grinned Nugent.

Harry Wharton wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"Not quite all!" he said. "Even if Bunter has only hired this place furnished for the summer, it must run into a frightful lot of money. His father must be spending money right and left

for him. I should say that the rent would run into thirty or forty pounds a week."

"Phew!"

"Old man Bunter doesn't seem to be paying the servants' wages," grunted Johnny Bull. "Perhaps he isn't paying the rent either."

"But he would have to," said Harry. "Before you take a furnished house, especially an expensive place like this, you have to sign an agreement, and sign an inventory of all the things, and so on, and I believe you generally have to pay in advance. Anyhow, you couldn't get hold of such a place without giving ample security. Mr. Bunter will have to pay, if he hasn't paid already."

"It's jolly queer!" said Johnny Bull.

"I never supposed that the Bunters had money to chuck about like that. Isn't it jolly odd that old Bunter should take such a frightfully expensive place just for Billy to spend the vacation in?"

"Jolly odd!" agreed Harry.

"The oddfulness is terrific."

"I—I suppose old Bunter really did take it—Bunter hasn't done it on his own somehow!" said Johnny Bull.

"My hat! How could he?"

Johnny Bull nodded slowly.

"No, I suppose he couldn't," he agreed.

"Come on, let's go for a trot," said Bob Cherry. And the chums of Greyfriars sauntered away across the park and walked cheerily down the road to Combermere.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Horn of Plenty!

WHERE'S Walsingham?"

Billy Bunter asked that question as he rolled into the house and came on Thomas, of the footman tribe.

He snapped out the question, and Thomas eyed him in a dubious sort of way.

Possibly the unhappy incident on the lawn had made the lord of Bunter Court a little more observant. Evidently Thomas knew what had happened; perhaps he had seen it all from a window; no doubt James had told him also. Under Thomas' livery—as under James'—there lurked a human being, and probably Thomas would have been as pleased to kick Bunter across the spacious hall as James had been to kick him across the well-kept lawn. Certainly Thomas' clean-shaven, wooden-looking face did not express all that; but, by a kind of sixth sense, Bunter was aware of it.

He realised that his sway in Combermere Lodge was in danger; he was rather in the position of an officer whose company trembled on the verge of mutiny, or a sea captain who has detected a spark in the powder-magazine. Bunter was quite on the alert now.

His hold on the place was rather precarious; he was safe, so he supposed, so long as Mr. Pilkins, the house agent, was laid up in the nursing-home as the result of a motor accident. But if anything happened to open Walsingham's eyes he was done for. And Walsingham was expecting a large remittance from Bunter's father for the expenses of the house, which had not arrived, and never would arrive. And the servants, who had been taken over with the house and the furniture, might very likely begin to "kick" if their wages were not paid—as, indeed, James had "kicked" already. Bunter realised that he was skating on thin ice.

He did not think of mending his manners. But he was in funds now for tipping, and he had observed the result of lavish tipping on the staff of the Lodge.

Lord Combermere, the noble owner of the mansion, had never lavished tips on his household; and, indeed, had seldom paid their wages at the due date. Walsingham & Co. expected to make a good thing out of some wealthy "bounder" who should take the house furnished for the summer, while his impecunious lordship languished in a cheap Swiss hotel. So long as they made money out of Bunter all was well. Only they were mistaken in supposing him to be a wealthy bounder. He was a bounder, but not wealthy.

But so long as Bunter had any money he was ready to scatter it, especially as it was not his own. He certainly could not pay the servants' wages, but he could tip them—which was the next best thing—somewhat like a customer who allows a tradesman to overcharge because he does not intend to pay the bill at all.

Whatever difficulties might be in his way, Bunter intended to hold on to his grandeur as long as he could. Harry Wharton & Co. had learned that "Bunter Court" was not the property of the Bunter family. But they still supposed that the place was taken furnished by the Bunters—which was impressive enough, as the rent alone was forty guineas a week. Besides, Bunter was expecting more guests later—St. Jim's fellows and others, and they would not know that Combermere Lodge was not Bunter Court. To them Bunter would be the lord of a great mansion, rolling in fat prosperity.

So, as Thomas the footman eyed him in a curious, uncertain way, Billy Bunter's fat hand slid into his pocket in a way Thomas knew.

Quite well Thomas was aware that the fat fingers were taking hold of a pound note, to be bestowed in a tip.

Thomas' manner became intensely respectful all at once.

His late noble master, Lord Combermere, had had to be careful with half-crowns. So Thomas' natural appetite for pound-notes had never been satisfied. He could have stood a lot of nonsense from William George Bunter at a pound a time.

"Mr. Walsingham is in his room, I think, sir," said Thomas, in deferential tones. "Shall I ascertain, sir?"

"I'll go there," said Bunter. "Show me the way."

"Very good, sir."

Thomas ushered Bunter along to the butler's room.

Bunter had already visited the butler's room several times, and knew the way perfectly well. But he preferred not to remember it, and to demonstrate that he could do simply nothing without the help of a servant. Indeed, since he had been installed at Bunter Court, the Owl of the Remove had developed a personal helplessness which might have been admired and envied by the most degenerate Roman patrician of ancient days. Without the aid of a servant, he was unable to put his boots on, or even to pick up a dropped collar-stud.

Bunter rolled loftily along after Thomas.

Thomas knocked at Mr. Walsingham's door and opened it.

"Mr. Bunter, sir!"

Bunter tossed the dutiful Thomas a pound-note.

Thomas caught it dexterously and retired, closing the door softly, and leaving Bunter with Walsingham.

The Combermere butler was seated by his window, reading a sporting paper, which he instantly dropped, jumping up as Bunter was announced.

He bowed so respectfully to Bunter that he was a little breathless when he reassumed a vertical position; Mr. Walsingham being a little portly in build, and of a circumference not unlike Bunter's own.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Walsingham!"

"Sir! This is an honour—my poor room—" murmured Walsingham. "A very great honour, sir—I feel it deeply, sir, if I may say so with respect. Will you do me the kindness to be seated, sir?"

Bunter did him that kindness at once.

Walsingham remained standing respectfully, in an attitude of deferential attention. He did it so well, as to indicate that this was not the first experience Mr. Walsingham had had in pulling a master's leg.

"Walsingham, I have been treated disrespectfully!"

"Surely not, sir!"

"A footman has been insolent."

"I am deeply pained to hear it, Mr. Bunter."

"I have discharged him," said Bunter loftily. "His name, I think, is James." Bunter affected a bad memory for names. "James—or George. But no matter; I have discharged him. See that the man is paid and turned out at once."

"Very good, sir."

Mr. Walsingham coughed.

Aware that Mr. Pilkins, the house agent, had been very keen to secure Bunter as a tenant, and believing that Bunter's father had settled all business details with Pilkins, the butler had no doubts about the temporary master of Combermere Lodge. Nevertheless, he had not yet seen the colour of Bunter's money, excepting in the way of tips. And bills were running up on all sides, to an extent that might have alarmed even Bunter had he given the matter a thought—which he did not. So long as he had plenty of the best, Bunter was not the fellow to think about the day of reckoning, until it could be put off no longer.

"I was going to request your permission to speak to you, sir, on the question of my being placed in funds," said Walsingham. "I have not yet heard from your honoured father, sir."

"Oh, the pater's very busy," said Bunter carelessly. "I dare say he's forgotten to post the cheque."

"No doubt, sir, no doubt," said Walsingham. "But some of the tradespeople are asking for their accounts, sir, and the servants—"

"I'd better phone to the pater, perhaps," said Bunter thoughtfully.

"Perhaps it would be as well to remind him, sir," said Walsingham. "There is a telephone in this room, sir, if you would care to use it."

Bunter breathed a little quickly. He had not observed the telephone in the butler's room. Certainly he could not telephone to his father in Walsingham's presence.



Mr. Pilkins looked hard at the juniors, and his deferential smile was replaced by a puzzled expression. "Where is Lord Mauleverer?" he asked. "Here!" said Mauly cheerfully. Mr. Pilkins stared at him. "What!" he exclaimed. "You are not Lord Mauleverer!" "I jolly well am!" said Mauly, in surprise. (See Chapter 5.)

But he did not lose his presence of mind. Bunter was growing wonderfully wary.

"Oh, quite!" he said. "I'll phone! But see about that man James at once. I cannot allow an insolent servant to remain in the house. On second thoughts, don't pay him before he goes. I think he deserves a lesson for his insolence. Make a note of the amount due to him, and let me have it, and I will ask my father to send him a cheque."

"Very good, sir."

There was a faint restiveness about Walsingham. He had heard a great deal about Mr. Bunter and his cheques; but it was borne in upon his mind again that he had not seen any of the cheques yet.

"The rest of your men, Walsingham, have given great satisfaction," said Bunter. "You may tell them so from me."

"I am sure they will be deeply gratified, sir."

"Quite so. And as my pater seems to be keeping them waiting a bit, you may hand them a couple of pounds each, from me," said Bunter. "And keep the fiver for yourself."

"Thank you, sir."

The notes which Bunter had collected from his guests passed over to Walsingham. In the innocence of their hearts Harry Wharton & Co. had supposed that Bunter felt it imperative to pay James before he went, and had shelled out for that purpose. But Billy Bunter knew a trick worth two of that. He was not wasting money in paying the wages of a man who was going; he was expending it in confirming the loyalty of those who were remaining.

Walsingham undoubtedly was confirmed in his loyalty, for the time being at least. A fellow who handed out tips like this could scarcely be short of money, so far as Walsingham could judge.

"Where's the phone?" said Bunter. "Bring it here."

The butler's telephone was only a yard from where Bunter was sitting. But the Owl of the Remove had developed too much patrician helplessness to be able to get to it. Walsingham placed a little table by Bunter's elbow, and placed the telephone on it. Then he left Bunter in possession of his quarters.

Bunter winked at the door after Walsingham had gone out and closed it.

Certainly he did not intend to telephone to his father. It would have been quite useless to phone to Mr. W. S. Bunter for such a sum as was required for the running of an establishment like Combermere Lodge. The mere mention of such a sum might have made Mr. Bunter faint. Bunter did not mean to phone to anybody; only to give Walsingham the impression that he had phoned; though how long this game of spoof could be kept up was a really interesting problem.

But, as it happened, a minute after Walsingham was gone, and was engaged in distributing Bunter's new shower of largesse among his staff, the bell rang at Bunter's elbow, and made him jump.

He jerked the receiver off the hook at once, without thinking, his idea being to stop the bell before it had fairly buzzed, so that Walsingham would not come back. The bell ceased after hardly more than a tingle.

Having the receiver in his hand, Bunter clapped it to his ear. He supposed that some tradesman had rung up Walsingham, and it would be easy to tell that tradesman he had the

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wrong number, thus choking him off. As Bunter was supposed to be telephoning to his father for money just then he did not want Walsingham to be butting in again. Any inconvenience that might result to Walsingham did not matter. It was inconvenience to Bunter that mattered.

"Hallo!" said Bunter into the transmitter.

"Hallo! Are you there, Walsingham?"

Bunter jumped so violently that he nearly dropped the receiver.

He knew that voice.

It was not the voice of a Combermere tradesman, ringing up the butler on the subject of cabbages or cauliflowers, or meringues, or mutton chops.

It was the voice of Mr. Pilkins, the estate agent of Combermere.

Mr. Pilkins—the agent who had the letting of Lord Combermere's house, and who had—all unconsciously—let it to Billy Bunter without the prospect of receiving one sixpence of the forty guineas a week rental—Mr. Pilkins, who had been taken to a nursing-home after his motor accident, thus leaving the way open for Bunter's amazing trickery. Evidently Mr. Pilkins was no longer in the nursing-home.

The voice of the estate agent fairly froze Bunter with terror.

But for the accident that he was in the butler's room, and had sent Walsingham away, the butler would have taken the call. He would have learned the truth, and Bunter's house of cards would have collapsed all of a sudden! Once the two men compared notes the whole thing was bound to come out.

Bunter sat with the receiver shaking in his fat hand.

What was going to happen now?

"Walsingham!" repeated Mr. Pilkins hoarsely, his voice full of excitement. "Walsingham! Is that you, Walsingham?"

"Yes!" gasped Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove pulled himself together. It is said that there is such a thing as a 'fool's luck' and undoubtedly Bunter's luck was holding out.

"Hold on a minute, Pilkins!" he gasped.

He crossed to the door and locked it. He was safe now if Walsingham should come back. Then he picked up the receiver again, and proceeded to take the call intended for Mr. Walsingham.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

An Amazing Discovery!

"MAULY!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's old Mauly!"

Harry Wharton & Co., sauntering along the shady road to Combermere, waved their hands to the youth who sat in the passing car. They were surprised to recognise Lord Mauleverer, of the Greyfriars Remove, but they were glad to see that noble youth.

Mauleverer glanced at them and nodded, and then signed to his chauffeur to stop. The Famous Five came up to the car.

"Fancy meeting you here, old man!" said Harry Wharton. "What are you doing down here in the vac?"

"Jolly glad to see you, anyhow, Mauly," said Bob Cherry. "Staying about here, or just passing through?"

"I'm goin' to Combermere," said Lord Mauleverer. "I've got to see a man. Glad to see you fellows. You're stayin' with Bunter—what?"

"That's it," said Harry.

"If you're goin' my way, hop in, and we'll have a jaw," said Lord Mauleverer—"that is, if you'd like a lift."

"Good! We were walking down to Combermere," said Nugent.

"That's where I'm goin'. Man named Pilkins that I'm goin' to see."

The Famous Five found room in the car, and it rolled on its way again towards the little country town.

Lord Mauleverer looked at the five cheery faces rather inquiringly. Perhaps he was wondering how they were getting on with their host at the Lodge, William George Bunter.

"Havin' a good time?" he asked.

"Oh, pretty good!" said Harry, with a smile. "It's no end of a place we're staying at. Bunter's got Combermere Lodge, you know."

"It's called Bunter Court now," grinned Nugent.

"The fat bouncer stuffed us that his pater had bought it," growled Johnny Bull. "But it's come out to-day that he only got it furnished for the summer."

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"Oh, you've found that out?" he asked.

"Did you know, Mauly?"

"Yaas. Bunter asked me not to mention it, but there's no harm in mentionin' it if you know now. It's on account of that I'm here in the vac."

"You're going to see Bunter?"

"No fear!" said Lord Mauleverer promptly. "I see enough of Bunter in the term at Greyfriars—too much, in fact. I've got to see that man Pilkins. I feel bound to give him a look in, considerin' what's happened. He was on my business, you see, when he was knocked over."

"Blessed if I know," said Harry.

"Who's Pilkins, and what happened to him?"

"Estate agent at Combermere. He let the lodge to Bunter, or Bunter's father, I suppose; he could hardly have let it to a schoolboy. You see, my uncle, old Brooke, asked me to look at the lodge, as a pal of his was thinkin' of takin' it furnished, just before we broke up at Greyfriars. I got Bunter to go—I was feelin' tired that day—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter reported that it was a rotten show, and I told nunky so, and the thing was dropped, so far as he was concerned. Of course, I never thought Bunter would play a trick like that. It was a dirty trick, if he had sense enough to see it. Of course, he hasn't."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Havin' put me off it, he nipped in an' bagged it," said Lord Mauleverer, rather ruefully. "Dashed if I know where the Bunters get the money from. It's forty guineas a week an' expenses, which must come to as much more, I should think. But the point is this, that while showin' Bunter the place the man Pilkins was hurt in a motor accident, and had to be shovelled in a nursin'-home. As he was wanderin' about on my account, I felt that it was up to me to see him through—what?"

"Just like you, Mauly. But—"

"I telephoned from Greyfriars to Dr. Brown at Combermere, and asked him to put it all down to me, if there was any difficulty in the matter," said Lord Mauleverer. "The poor chap had to stay away from business for weeks; and, of course, that's a serious matter, with a tremendous doctor's bill into the bargain—what?"

"I suppose so."

"So I asked the medical johnny to phone me at home, when Pilkins was leavin', and I'd come down and see him about it," said Lord Mauleverer. "That's why I'm here. It's really no trouble. A chap may as well motor in one direction as another—what?"

The chums of the Remove chuckled.
"Pilkins left the nursin'-home this mornin'," said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm goin' to his office now to see if he's there."

"I see," assented Harry.
"It's really hard cheese on the poor chap, and I've got plenty of dibs to stand the damages," said Mauly, "and it's only civil to look in and ask him how he is—what?"

The car was in Combermere High Street now, and a few minutes later it stopped at Mr. Pilkins' Estate Office.

The Greyfriars juniors alighted.
"If you fellows have nothin' better to do, we might have a run round after I've finished with Pilkins," said Lord Mauleverer. "It's no end of a pleasure to see your jolly old chivvies again!"

"Jolly good idea!" said Harry. "We'll wait."

The Greyfriars fellows entered the office.

A sleepy-looking clerk was in attendance there, dozing in a chair at a desk, and occasionally starting into feverish activity to chase a buzzing bluebottle with a folded newspaper.

He gave the juniors a look of sleepy inquiry.

"Mr. Pilkins about?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"Yes, sir; he's come down to the office for the first time this afternoon. He's been ill."

"Good! Ask him if he can see me now. Tell him it's Lord Mauleverer."

"Oh, certainly, my lord!"

The clerk went into the inner office to announce the noble visitor.

The communicating door closed, but opened again at once. Mr. Pilkins appeared in the doorway, with a deferential smile on his plump visage. The name of Lord Mauleverer was an "open sesame." Mr. Pilkins was still under the impression that it was Lord Mauleverer whom he had shown over Combermere Lodge a few weeks ago, and who had scattered currency notes with a reckless hand among the servants there.

He looked at the juniors, and the deferential smile was replaced by a puzzled expression.

"Where is Lord Mauleverer?" he asked.

"Here!" said Mauly cheerfully.

Mr. Pilkins stared at him.

"What! You are not Lord Mauleverer!"

"I jolly well am!" said Mauly, in surprise.

Mr. Pilkins stared harder.

"Come, come, young man," he said. "I met his lordship some time ago, and you are not in the least like him. Come, come! What nonsense is this?"

"Oh gad! What does this mean, you fellows?" asked Lord Mauleverer, appealing to his companions. "Have you any idea what it means?"

"I give it up," said Harry Wharton.
"Mr. Pilkins—if you're Mr. Pilkins—this certainly is Lord Mauleverer. He is our schoolfellow at Greyfriars, and we've known him whole terms."

"Yes, rather!"

"This is very extraordinary," said the estate agent suspiciously. "On the day I had my motor accident, Lord Mauleverer came over from the school to see a house I had on my books, on behalf of his uncle, Sir Reginald Brooke. He was not in the least like this young gentleman."

"Oh, my hat!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Bunter!"

"Great Scott!"

"Was he a fat chap in glasses?" asked Nugent.

"Just so!" assented Mr. Pilkins.

BRAVO, THE PRIZEWINNERS!

RESULT OF "WHAT IS IT?" COMPETITION NO. 1.

In this competition some rearrangement of the prize list has been necessary. The THREE CAMERAS have been awarded to the following competitors whose solutions, each containing one error, came nearest to correct:
C. W. ALLINGHAM, 24, Barnmead Rd., Beckenham, Kent.
WILLIAM HARMER, 9, Knights Place, Holland St., Southwark, London, S.E.
FRANK ASTON HINE, 145, Cannon St., London, E.C. 4.

So many competitors qualified for the third grade of prizes that the value of the twelve pocket-knives has been added to that of the six MODEL YACHTS, which have been increased to NINETEEN, and awarded to the following competitors whose solutions each contained two errors:

R. ARTHUR, 114, Kennington Park Rd., London, S.E. 11.
R. C. AUSTIN, 35, Coronation Buildings, Sth. Lambeth Rd., London, S.W.
EDMUND BRIGHT, 187, Latchmere Rd., Battersea, London, S.W. 11.
DENNIS CRIDLAN, 39a, The Broadway, Worthing, Sussex.
F. CARTER, 220, Chapeltown Rd., Leeds.
HARRY CLARK, 61, Wingfield St., Bradford.
LESLIE E. DOORNE, 54, Providence St., South Ashford, Kent.
ALFRED GAZZARD, 101, Eade Rd., Finsbury Park, London, N. 4.
ESME GRIMBLE, 123, Warton St., Lytham, Lancs.
WALTER HOBSON, 43, Cumberland St., Devonport, Devon.
RICHARD JENKINS, 311, Battle Rd., Hollington, St. Leonards-on-Sea.
K. KIRKWOOD, 35, Adelaide St., Stonehouse, Plymouth.
ARTHUR RANSOM, 192, Priory Rd., Hastings.
GEORGE H. REES, 82, Guinness' Buildings, Brandon St., Walworth, S.E.
RONALD SEDDON, 144, Lea Bridge Rd., Clapton, London, E. 5.
RONALD J. SALMOND, 17, Rosedene Avenue, Streatham, London, S.W. 16.
J. SHEPHERD, 1, Beamister Villas, Hillfield Rd., Cove, Farnboro', Hants.
JOHN SMITH, 7, Lloyd St., West Bromwich.
FRED. TAYLOR, 48, Charnwood Rd., Sth. Norwood, London, S.E. 25.

The Correct Solution was as follows:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Lighthouse. | 5. Cliffs. |
| 2. Cruiser. | 6. Fisherman. |
| 3. Jetty. | 7. Groyne. |
| 4. Swimmers. | 8. Yawl. |

"Then he jolly well wasn't Lord Mauleverer," chuckled Bob. "This is the genuine article, warranted all wool."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer. "There's a little mistake. I asked Bunter to come over for me, Mr. Pilkins, and—and you seem to have taken him for me. My mistake! I apologise. I remember now, Bunter told me somethin' about his bein' mistaken for me. I thought the fat bouncer had been swankin', and forgot all about it."

Mr. Pilkins frowned portentously.
"I certainly supposed the boy to be Lord Mauleverer!" he exclaimed. "I had received a letter from Sir Reginald Brooke, stating that Lord Mauleverer would call in a car, and the chauffeur addressed him as his lordship."

"Of course, he spoofed the chauffeur, too," said Mauly. "It was a hired car from Courtfield, and the man was expectin' me."

"I have been taken in, then!" exclaimed Mr. Pilkins wrathfully.

"Looks like it," assented Lord Mauleverer. "But never mind, Bunter's only a harmless ass, and there's no harm done. All the same, I don't quite see how you haven't found out the mistake before, as you've let the house to Bunter."

Mr. Pilkins jumped.

"Let the house!" he repeated.

"Yaas."

"Are you referring to Combermere Lodge?"

"Yaas."

"I have been away from business since my accident," said Mr. Pilkins. "The letting of Lord Combermere's house has remained in abeyance. Combermere Lodge is not let!"

"Eh?"

"I shall be taking that matter in hand again at once," said Mr. Pilkins. "My

client is very anxious to let his house. I—"

"But it's let!" roared Bob Cherry.

"It is not let!" snapped Mr. Pilkins.

"I suppose I know whether I have let Combermere Lodge or not?"

"But it's let to Bunter!"

"Nonsense!"

"Well, whether it's let to him or not, he's got it!" said Bob.

"Nonsense!" repeated Mr. Pilkins.
"It's a solid fact, old bean," grinned Bob.

"Absurd! What puts such an idea into your head?" exclaimed Mr. Pilkins irritably.

"Only the simple little fact that we're staying at the house with Bunter for the vacation," said Bob Cherry.

Mr. Pilkins staggered.

"You—you—you are staying at Combermere Lodge!" he ejaculated.

"Certainly!"

"Impossible!" gasped Mr. Pilkins.

"It's called Bunter Court now," said Bob, "and Bunter is running the show. Mean to say that you haven't let the house to Bunter's father?"

"I have never heard of Bunter or Bunter's father!" raved Mr. Pilkins.

"Oh, great pip!"

Mr. Pilkins turned to his astonished clerk, who was no longer looking sleepy, or giving any attention to the blue-bottle.

"Parker!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped the estate agent's clerk.

"You have not let Combermere Lodge during my absence?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Pilkins!"

"You hear what these young gentlemen say?" exclaimed the estate agent.

"They say that the house is now occupied by a tenant named Bunter. Have you any knowledge of it, Parker?"

Parker gasped.

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"I knew the house was occupied," he stuttered. "There have been large orders coming to all the tradesmen in Combermere from the Lodge. I—I supposed that you had let the house, sir, to the client you were seeing on the day you were hurt in the accident."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Pilkins, aghast.

The Greyfriars fellows looked at one another. They were making discoveries now, with a vengeance, on the subject of Bunter Court.

"But what was Walsingham thinking of?" howled Mr. Pilkins. "He had no right to let a tenant into the house without an agreement duly signed, and an inventory taken, and a substantial sum paid in advance. Nothing of the kind has been done. Besides, the house could not be let to a schoolboy—a minor. What does it mean, Parker?"

But Parker could only gasp. He did not know in the least what it meant, any more than Mr. Pilkins himself did.

"Oh gad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "I seem to have stirred up a giddy kettle of fish here. Wish I hadn't come, by gad!"

Mr. Pilkins clutched at his scanty hair. He was utterly astounded and dismayed by what he had discovered.

"What can Walsingham mean by it?" he babbled. "The man must be mad—mad! What can it mean? I must speak to him at once, and find out what this means. Excuse me, Lord Mauleverer."

"Oh, yaas!"

Mr. Pilkins rushed back into his private office, and grabbed the receiver off the telephone, and rang up the butler's room at Combermere Lodge. And—befriended by foot's luck—Billy Bunter took the call in Walsingham's room at "Bunter Court."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Stuffing Mr. Pilkins!

"PILKINS—is that Pilkins?" demanded Billy Bunter into the transmitter.

Bunter had pulled himself together. The estate agent's voice had frightened him almost out of his fat wits for a moment or two. But the fat junior realised that the position was serious, and that it had to be handled with care. He collected all his fat faculties for this delicate affair.

The tones of the estate agent revealed the fact that he was excited and enraged, and Bunter had no doubt that he had made a startling discovery—which he was bound to make as soon as he left the nursing-home. That had always been a certainty; but Bunter had given the contingency no thought at all. It was but seldom that the Owl of the Remove allowed his fat thoughts to stray beyond the passing moment.

Bunter's weird gifts as a ventriloquist came in useful now. Instinctively, almost without thinking, he imitated the rather full and fruity voice of Walsingham, the butler—just as he had imitated the nasal tones of Mr. Pilkins in telephoning to Walsingham, weeks before, that the house was let to Mr. Bunter. There were few things that Bunter could do well, but ventriloquism was one of the few, and his skill in imitating voices was really uncanny.

Often and often had he been kicked for it in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, where the fellows knew him too well to be in doubt about it when Bunter played his knavish tricks on them. But his

weird gift, which had earned him more kicks than halfpence at Greyfriars, came in very useful now. Rather by instinctive cunning than by thought, Bunter imitated Walsingham's fruity tones, so that Mr. Pilkins should suppose that he had got through to the Combermere butler.

Mr. Pilkins undoubtedly did suppose so. Apart from the voice sounding like Walsingham's, he was not likely to suppose that anyone was in the butler's room at the lodge, taking the call in the place of the portly butler. Fuming with anger and anxiety, while Harry Wharton & Co. and Lord Mauleverer waited in the outer office, Mr. Pilkins fairly bawled into the telephone, under the impression that he was talking to Walsingham.

"Yes, it's Pilkins! I'm Pilkins!" he shouted. "Walsingham, you ass—"

"What?"

"Is the Lodge let?" bawled Mr. Pilkins.

"Oh, yes!"

"To whom? Quick! To whom?" shrieked the estate agent.

"To Mr. Bunter."

"A fat fellow in spectacles?"

"Oh! Hem! Ah! Yes!"

"The fellow who pretended to me that he was Lord Mauleverer?" shrieked Mr. Pilkins wildly.

Bunter jumped.

He had almost forgotten that he had first gained the confidence of the unfortunate estate agent by passing himself off as Lord Mauleverer, the schoolboy millionaire of Greyfriars. That had been the first of his tricks, and caused chiefly by swank, Bunter not foreseeing at the time what it would lead to. Step by step and trick by trick the Owl of Greyfriars had proceeded from that vainglorious swank to the bagging of Lord Combermere's house for the vacation.

"Do you hear me?" yelled Mr. Pilkins. "Is it the same fellow?"

"Oh, yes! That was only a little joke of—of Master Bunter's. He was simply pulling your leg that time, Pilkins. No harm done!"

"No harm!" roared Mr. Pilkins. "If I hadn't supposed him to be Lord Mauleverer, Walsingham, do you suppose I'd have brought him to the house, and accepted him as a tenant, and tipped you the wink to make sure of him?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Now I know why he didn't want me to mention that he was Lord Mauleverer!" howled Mr. Pilkins. "He was already thinking of this—this fraud—this swindle—this—this hold-up—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"He could never have brought it off if I had not been knocked out by a motor accident that day. But how did he impose on you, Walsingham? How did you come to let him into the house without seeing me or my clerk, or knowing whether any agreement had been signed or lease taken or anything of the sort?"

"I—I—"

"Believing him to be Lord Mauleverer, I tried hard to nail him, and tipped you the wink, as you know. But if he's taken the house in his own name he can't have led you to suppose that he was Lord Mauleverer."

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter. "I know who I am, of course—"

"What?"

"I—I mean I know who he is."

"Have you been drinking, Walsingham?"

"Eh? Oh, no!" stuttered Bunter.

"Your talk sounds like it. Look here, I was keen to bag Lord Mauleverer; but, of course, I should not have let him

the house personally, as a schoolboy and a minor—his guardian would have had to deal with me. You seem to have let a schoolboy take possession—unquestioned! What do you mean by it, Walsingham? You are answerable to Lord Combermere for this; I disclaim all responsibility!"

Bunter gasped.

He wondered dizzily what Walsingham would have thought on hearing that he had been taking the call. Fortunately—from Bunter's point of view—Walsingham was not there.

"Are you deaf?" raved Mr. Pilkins.

"Nunno!"

"Then speak, you ass!"

"You—you see, I—I—" Bunter was willing to speak, but he hardly knew what to say. It really was a difficult matter to deal with.

"Who is this Bunter?" shouted Mr. Pilkins. "I suppose a schoolfellow of Lord Mauleverer—and of these boys who are now in my office—"

"Oh! Are they?"

"But who—what is he? Has he any money? Is he an arrant swindler and adventurer?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"It looks like it, by the way he has acted in getting possession of the house. No paper whatever has been signed, no inventory taken—I was simply knocked over when I learned, a few minutes ago, that the house was let to this—this young scoundrel who has taken possession! He must be ejected at once!"

"Oh!"

"If he has stolen anything—"

"S-s-stolen anything?" stuttered Bunter.

"Yes—if he is a thief as well as a swindler, and has stolen anything, you are answerable, Walsingham!"

"Oh dear!"

"How can we tell what he may or may not have taken? No inventory of the contents of the house has been signed. There are many articles of great value—some running into hundreds of pounds. The fellow may be an experienced thief!"

"Phew!"

"You are responsible, Walsingham! I wash my hands of it!" howled Mr. Pilkins. "You let this—this young villain into the house while I was detained in a nursing-home, unable to attend to business. I had not the faintest idea that any step was being taken in the matter of letting the house. I was astounded to hear that it had been let to this—this villain—this rascal—this—this Bunter!"

"Phew!"

"Has he paid you anything?" shrieked Mr. Pilkins. "Is there any possibility of indemnification for this loss? Lord Combermere will expect his money if he hears that the house has been occupied. Has this rascal any money? Have the scoundrel's people any money? Do you know? What possessed you to let him into the house at all?"

Bunter grinned.

It was Bunter, telephoning in the voice of Mr. Pilkins, who had induced Walsingham to believe that the house was let to its present tenant. But the estate agent was not likely to guess that.

"Answer me, Walsingham!" hooted Mr. Pilkins. "Cannot you understand that I am on tenterhooks? Who is this fellow? What are his people? Have they any means? Are they worth going for?"

"Calm yourself, Pilkins!" said Bunter, in Walsingham's fruity tones. "It is all right, I assure you!"

"All right, is it?" hooted the excited estate agent. "And how do you make out that it is all right?"

"Mr. Bunter is a wealthy young gentleman—"

"Is he?"

"Extremely so. And his father is perhaps the richest man on the Stock Exchange—simply rolling in money!"

"That's all very well. But have you seen the colour of his money?" hooted Mr. Pilkins.

"Oh, certainly! Master Bunter spends money like water; a fiver to him is less than a half-crown to you, Pilkins."

"Oh!" Mr. Pilkins calmed down a little. "I remember the young fool was chucking money about the day I brought him along to see the property. A swanking, new-rich young upstart, I thought him; I could not understand a nobleman acting in such a way, though I believed him at the time to be Lord Mauleverer—a swanking, purse-proud, affected young upstart—"

"You cheeky ass!" roared Bunter, quite forgetting for the moment that he was speaking in the character of Walsingham.

Mr. Pilkins in his personal interview with Bunter some time before had been deference and civility personified; it had seemed as if butter would not melt in his mouth. So it was rather startling to hear his real opinion of his client.

"What—what—what did you say, Walsingham?"

"I—I mean I—I—" Bunter recollected himself. "I mean, kindly speak more respectfully of Master Bunter, Pilkins."

"I'll speak respectfully enough of him when I see a cheque for the week he's been at Combermere Lodge!" hooted Mr. Pilkins. "If he pays for the week and clears out, well and good. He can stay on if he will pay for the whole term in advance. Then I'll speak respectfully of the young scoundrel. Not till then!"

"Pooh! The sum is a trifle to Master Bunter!"

"If it's a trifle he can hand it out. Is he in the house at the present moment?"

Bunter chuckled.

"Yes—quite near at hand, Pilkins."

"Then ask him on the spot for the money; if he's rolling in it, as he's led you to believe, he can hand out forty guineas on the spot!"

"A mere trifle to him. I assure you, Pilkins. Hold on a minute and I will speak to him."

"Quick, then!"

Billy Bunter laid the receiver on the table, and blinked thoughtfully at the telephone. It was easy enough to spin Mr. Pilkins a yarn, in the fruity voice of Walsingham. That would satisfy the estate agent for the moment. But what would follow?

Bunter could not guess. But on the principle of starving off the day of reckoning till the latest possible moment, he determined to "stuff" Mr. Pilkins, and keep that gentleman from telephoning to Walsingham again in a hurry. Even a day gained was something! Something might turn up! The chapter of accidents had befriended William George Bunter so far, and might befriend him again.

He picked up the receiver once more, after a few minutes of rapid thought. In his present peculiar position the Owl of the Remove was getting into the way of giving his fat intellect much more exercise than it had been accustomed to.

"Are you there, Pilkins?"



"If you want me to kick you, Sammy—" roared Bunter. "Yah!" said Sammy. "My hat! I jolly well will!" exclaimed the Owl. He made a rush at his minor and Sammy dashed up the drive at great speed, making for the house. (See Chapter 7.)

"Yes, waiting."

"I have spoken to Master Bunter—"

"Well?"

"I am afraid that Master Bunter was a little offended by my asking him for money, but I explained that you were anxious on the subject."

Bunter was almost astonished himself at the fertility of his invention. But he had, of course, had long practice in the peculiar art of Ananias.

"That's all right! I'll take the responsibility!" growled Mr. Pilkins. "What I want to know is, has he handed out any hard cash? That's the important point."

"Yes."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Pilkins. "How much?"

"Forty guineas, in banknotes."

"Phew!"

"He has also handed me a cheque from his father for two hundred pounds."

"Great Scott!"

"I will send both the banknotes and the cheque to your office by a footman without delay."

"Good gad!" Mr. Pilkins' nasal voice was quite calm and pleasant now. "Dash it all, Walsingham, it seems that it's a good deal, after all. It's very irregular—no agreement, no inventory—but if the young fellow pays up it's all right, of course. Better be civil to him. Treat him well."

Bunter grinned.

"I shall certainly treat him the best I know how, Pilkins."

"That's all right. Of course, the matter must be regularised. I must see Master Bunter, and the necessary papers must be signed by his father or legal representative. I will come up to the house this evening."

Bunter shivered.

"No, that won't do, Pilkins!" he exclaimed hastily.

"I had better. And you can hand me the money, instead of sending it to my office."

"Mr. Bunter is engaged this evening—he has a party of friends, and there is a little celebration on. He would be greatly annoyed by a business call at such a time, and I shall be very busy, too. You had better make your call to-morrow."

"Well, that will be more convenient for me, certainly," said Mr. Pilkins. "I will call on you in the morning, Walsingham. You have very greatly relieved my mind. I was alarmed—very much alarmed—"

"No occasion whatever for alarm. I will request Master Bunter to telephone to your office in the morning, making an appointment."

"Right. But in any case I shall call—I simply must see him. The matter is too irregular already. So if I do not hear from him I will call about eleven in the morning."

Bunter breathed hard.

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"Good-bye, Walsingham."

Mr. Pilkins rang off.

Bunter sat and stared at the telephone. He had put off the evil day—at the cost of a little more romancing he had satisfied Mr. Pilkins—temporarily. But it was purely temporarily. The estate agent was relieved, but by no means wholly reassured; he was quite determined to have a personal interview with his very peculiar tenant. And when he came up to the Lodge and found that there was no cash—

The thought of it made Bunter feel quite dizzy for some moments. Then, in his usual style, he dismissed the matter from his mind. Nothing was to happen till the morrow—and the morrow could take care of itself. It was getting towards dinner-time; and if there was to be only one more dinner at "Bunter Court" that was all the more reason why Billy Bunter should enjoy it thoroughly, with a mind free from care.

He let himself out of Walsingham's room, and rolled away, and his fat thoughts concentrated on dinner, Mr. Pilkins and all his works being dismissed as comparatively unimportant.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Major and Minor!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. waited in Mr. Pilkins' outer office in a wondering frame of mind while that gentleman was busy on the telephone.

They simply did not know what to make of the strange situation.

It looked as if Billy Bunter had obtained possession of Combermere Lodge, alias Bunter Court, by some extraordinary trickery; but how the Owl of the Remove had "worked the oracle" was a deep mystery to them. They were uneasy, and a little alarmed. They understood Bunter, and knew that he was fatuous enough to "land" himself in almost anything; and other fellows, who did not understand him so well, might very easily have supposed him to be an unscrupulous young rogue, which Bunter really was not. He was simply unable to realise that any other inhabitant of the globe had any rights or interests as important as his own; like Ancient Pistol, Bunter regarded the world as his oyster, which he had to open somehow.

But though it might be fatuousness, and not fraud, that led Bunter into a lawless scrape, the consequences might be very serious. But what had he done—and how had he done it?

The Famous Five were quite mystified. Even Lord Mauleverer was taking the trouble to give the matter some thought.

All the Greyfriars party were relieved, therefore, when Mr. Pilkins looked out of the inner office, having finished telephoning, with a cheerful expression on his aquiline face. Obviously he was relieved in his mind.

"Pray step in, Lord Mauleverer," he said. "It is very kind of your lordship to give me a call."

Mauly blinked at him.

"What about Bunter?" he asked.

"I think that that matter will be arranged satisfactorily," said Mr. Pilkins. "Walsingham tells me that Master Bunter is quite able to meet his engagements, irregularly as he has entered into them."

"That's good!" said Harry Wharton. "I confess that I was very much alarmed," said Mr. Pilkins. "But Master Bunter, though somewhat erratic in his methods, seems quite

straightforward, from what Walsingham tells me. I shall be seeing him at the Lodge to-morrow morning, and everything will be arranged, I hope, satisfactorily. If your lordship will step in—"

His lordship stepped into Mr. Pilkins' private office.

Harry Wharton & Co. remained in the outer office, while Lord Mauleverer was having his little talk with the estate agent.

They understood that Mauly was there to settle an account for damages; and though it was not, of course, an account that Mr. Pilkins could have claimed, that made no difference to Mauleverer. He felt that he was responsible, in a way at least, as Mr. Pilkins had been going about business for him at the time he was knocked out by the motor accident. And Mauly was in the happy position of possessing almost unlimited cash, which enabled him to follow the dictates of his kind heart.

The chums of the Remove waited, while Parker, the clerk, dozed at his desk and killed flies with a newspaper. Lord Mauleverer emerged at last, and Mr. Pilkins emerged with him, beaming with deference and satisfaction. It was but seldom that Mr. Pilkins' dusty, dusky little office was honoured by the presence of a real live lord; and Mr. Pilkins was evidently enjoying it.

He came out to the car to see his lordship safely on board; he shed a few of his beams of satisfaction on Harry Wharton & Co., as they were enjoying the distinction of being his lordship's companions, and shone, as it were, with the reflected glory of his title and wealth.

The car rolled away with the juniors packed in it, Mr. Pilkins bowing almost to the pavement as it departed.

"We'll have a run about, and I'll land you at the Lodge on my way home—what?" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Good! Why not drop in at the Lodge?" grinned Bob Cherry. "I'm sure Bunter would be glad to see you."

Lord Mauleverer looked alarmed. "Oh gad! No fear! I'll drop you at the gates," he said. "No more Bunter for me than I can help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "It seems all right about jolly old Bunter Court," said Bob Cherry. "Blessed if I wasn't beginning to think that there was a swindle of some kind on!"

"Looks like it to me," grunted Johnny Bull.

"The lookfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed and nosey Pilkins seems to be satisfied."

"If he's satisfied, I suppose it's all right," said Harry Wharton, rather dubiously, however.

"Yaas; it's all right; he's satisfied," said Lord Mauleverer. "I gathered that he's rather pleased than otherwise that Bunter's taken the place, since his talk with the butler on the phone. It was rather a difficult place to let, with such thumpin' big expenses attached. He was tellin' me that Bunter's pater has shelled out a cheque, or somethin' of the sort. It seems to be all serene."

"Thank goodness for that!" said Nugent. "It would have been rather rotten for us all round if there had been trouble."

It was a general relief to the Famous Five to find that Mr. Pilkins was satisfied, after all. Their position would have been a very unenviable one, as Bunter's guests at Bunter Court, had it proved that Bunter was a "biht," with an enraged estate agent on his trail.

The chums of the Remove enjoyed their run in Mauly's car. They had always liked the dandy of the Remove, and his company was more agreeable than ever as a change from Bunter's.

They would have been very pleased had Mauly decided to join the party at the Lodge. There was no doubt that William George Bunter would have welcomed him there. But Mauly, as he had said, had too much Bunter during the term at Greyfriars School. He did not want any more.

The car rolled along to the Lodge at last, to drop the Famous Five there in time for dinner. Three fags of the Second Form of Greyfriars were coming along to the gates—Sammy Bunter and his friends Gatty and Myers. The three looked red and dusty, and Sammy Bunter's nose had a swollen look, which indicated that there had been some forcible sort of argument among the fags. Possibly Gatty and Myers had forgotten that they were Bunter minor's guests, and had acted as if they were still in the Second Form-room at Greyfriars. Sammy was scowling as he rubbed his nose, and Gatty and Myers were eyeing him disdainfully.

The car passed the fags, and left them behind. A few minutes later it stopped at the Lodge gates, and Harry Wharton & Co. turned out and bade farewell to Lord Mauleverer.

"I say, you fellows—"

It was Billy Bunter. He was loafing about the gates, and his little round eyes gleamed at the sight of Lord Mauleverer. He came sprinting towards the car as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

"Mauly, old man—"

Lord Mauleverer hurriedly signalled to the chauffeur.

The car moved on.

"Stop!" shouted Bunter. "I say, Mauly, old man! Mauly! Stop! Mauly, old fellow! You silly ass, are you deaf?"

Apparently Lord Mauleverer was deaf. At all events, he did not answer, and the car vanished with a rush in a cloud of dust.

Billy Bunter blinked round at the grinning faces of the Famous Five.

"You silly asses—"

"What?"

"You've met Mauly somewhere. Why didn't you make him come in to dinner? I'd have been glad to have him."

"No doubt!" grinned Bob Cherry.

It was very probable that Bunter would have been glad to have an easy-going millionaire as a guest at Bunter Court. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh murmured that the gladfulness would have been terrific.

"Better company than you chaps," said Bunter.

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter cast a regretful blink after the vanishing car. Lord Mauleverer was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked up the drive, leaving Bunter still blinking after Mauly's car. The Owl of the Remove was deeply annoyed by Mauly's departure. In his present situation Mauly would have come in wonderfully useful at Bunter Court. But he was gone. The car disappeared round a bend of the road, leaving nothing but a cloud of dust for Bunter to blink at.

Bunter grunted.

ANSWERS
Every Saturday — PRICE 2:

Three dusty fags tramped up, and the Owl of the Remove turned his spectacles upon them. Sammy and Gatty and Myers did not really look a credit to so magnificent an establishment as Combermere Lodge. Bunter blinked at them with disparaging disdain.

"Precious set you look!" he growled. "What's the matter with your nose, Sammy?"

"That cad Gatty punched it!" snapped Sammy.

"I'll punch it again," said Gatty.

"My hat! Are these the manners of the Second Form?" sneered Bunter. "Is that how you fags behave when you're on a visit to a first-class country house?"

"We ain't staying much longer," jeered Gatty. "We're going this evening, ain't we, Myers?"

"We are!" said Myers, with emphasis.

"Borrowing a fellow's money, and calling him names!" said Gatty, with a snort. "If we're going to pay for our holiday, we don't want it here, I can tell you. I'd rather spend the money at the seaside."

"Much rather!" said Myers.

The two fags tramped up the drive, taking no further heed of the two Bunters. William George blinked severely at Samuel of that ilk.

"You've been borrowing money of your friends, Sammy!" he said sternly.

Sammy Bunter sniffed.

"Haven't you?" he demanded. "I know jolly well that you've fairly cleared out your blessed visitors."

"That's no business of yours, Sammy. I may have borrowed a few pounds of my friends, or I may not. You shouldn't have borrowed money of your visitors, Sammy. It's bad form."

"Following your example," said Sammy. "Rats!"

"So they're going, are they?" said Bunter. "Well, that's so much to the good. I don't want Second Form fags about the place. Scrapping, as if you were in the Form-room at Greyfriars!"

There's such a thing as appearances. You don't think enough about keeping up appearances, Sammy. There's the butler and the footmen to consider."

"Blow the butler and bless the footmen!" answered Sammy independently.

"If you want me to kick you, Sammy—" roared Bunter.

"Yah!"

"My hat! I'll jolly well—"

"Rats!"

Billy Bunter made a rush at his minor, and Sammy made a dash up the drive. The lodge-keeper came out of his lodge to close the gates, and stared up the drive at the entertaining sight of Sammy Bunter racing for the house, and Billy Bunter racing on his track, striving to get within kicking distance. Fortunately for Sammy, he won the race.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter on His Own!

BILLY BUNTER presided at the dinner-table that evening at Bunter Court in all his glory.

It was a tip-top dinner. Walsingham was playing up even to the satisfaction of William George Bunter, who was an expert in the gastronomic line.

Harry Wharton & Co. were cheery enough, only Sammy Bunter looked rather surly. His nose was still feeling the effects of his argument with Gatty.

Gatty and Myers, of the Second Form at Greyfriars, were no longer there.

They had departed, bag and baggage, for Gatty's home, shaking the dust of Bunter Court from their feet without the formality of any polite farewells.



"Thomas," said Bunter, "take a car and all of you clear off to Ramsgate and take a holiday. Let me know afterwards what expenses you run into, and I will foot the bill." "Oh, sir," gasped Thomas. "This kindness—" "I always treat servants well when they behave themselves," said Bunter magnificently. (See Chapter 9.)

Sammy, following his major's noble example, had "touched" his guests for loan after loan, doubtless on the principle of making them pay for their entertainment; and the heroes of the Second Form were evidently "fed up" with that kind of hospitality. Hence the state of Sammy Bunter's nose, and the sudden departure of Gatty and Myers.

Billy Bunter's fat face, however, wore an expression of beatific satisfaction, as he disposed of course after course of a tremendous dinner.

Not only was the dinner good, but the attendance of a butler and footman gratified Bunter almost as much as the dinner itself. For the present, he had dismissed from his fat mind the disturbing thought of the extremely precarious tenure by which he held this magnificence. That was a matter that could be thought out afterwards; it would have been absurd to allow it to spoil his dinner.

After dinner, however, Bunter's uncommon exertions at table told upon him, and he dropped off to sleep in an armchair. Sammy dozed in another armchair, and the two Bunters snored one against another, as if in a sort of snoring competition—which caused many grins and winks to pass among the footmen—fortunately unseen by the Bunters.

Harry Wharton & Co., however, did

not remain to witness—and listen to—the Bunter snoring competition.

All the resources of Combermere Lodge were at their disposal, and they did not find the time hang heavily on their hands. It was a beautiful summer evening, with a full round moon sailing over the Kentish downs. Lord Combermere's handsome motor-launch was run out on the river, and the chums of the Remove enjoyed themselves with a moonlight trip, and came back rather late to bed. And the circumstance that Bunter preferred to snore indoors did not detract from the pleasure of the trip on the river.

Bunter was gone to bed when they came in, and the Famous Five did not feel any special pang at not seeing him again that evening. They went off to their rooms in cheery spirits.

The next morning, when they came down to breakfast, they were rather surprised to find their host already down.

It was the first time since they had arrived at Bunter Court that Billy Bunter had come down to breakfast. The Greyfriars rising-bell was a thing of the past now, and Bunter was enjoying his freedom from rule and restraint in his own fat and lazy way. Every morning he snored till ten o'clock, or half-past,

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

Supplement No. 233.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week Ending August 1st, 1925.



DICK PENFOLD

A is for ARUNDEL, down by the sea,
Its picturesque Castle would surely suit me!

B is for BLACKPOOL: Mark Linley retorts
That it is the Queen of our seaside resorts.

C is for COWES, where they hold a Regatta.
I don't own a yacht, so what does it matter?

D is for DOVER, from which Walter Raleigh
(Or some other hero) swam over to Calais!

E is for EASTBOURNE, a popular spot.
In the month of July, when the sun's piping hot.

F is for FOLKESTONE, not far from our school;
In its smooth, lapping waters we love to keep cool.

G is for GRIMSBY, where holiday trippers
May watch all the fisherfolk curing the kippers!

H is for HASTINGS, a famous old spot
Where battles were waged as far back as Year Dot!

I is for ILFRACOMBE, somewhere in Devon.
A holiday there is a foretaste of Heaven!

J is for JERSEY, an island of bliss.
Its manifold beauties no fellow should miss.

K is for KINGSTOWN, on Erin's fair shore.
"Be jabers!" cries Desmond. "That spot I adore!"

L's for LLANDUDNO—of wonderful Wales.
Dave Morgan can tell the most marvellous tales!

M is for MARGATE, where bathers in bands
Go frisking and frolicking over the sands.

N's for NEWHAVEN, upon the South Coast.
It's nice to be there when the sun's warm as toast.

O's for OSTEND: it's a foreign resort
Where parties from England will find ripping sport.

P is for PEGG, it's a village near here
With a pump and policeman, but not a proud Pier.

Q is for QUEENSTOWN, which Desmond declares
Is better than Brighton, and Bude, and Broadstairs.

R is for RAMSGATE, it's Margate's twin-brother.
In fact, I can never tell one from the other!

S is for SOUTHSEA—they christened it "Sunny,"
But you find it quite dull when you've spent all your money!

T's for TORQUAY, on the Devonshire coast,
Where you sample a sun-bath and frizzle and roast!

U is for UXBRIDGE—it's not by the sea,
But we'll ask the Town Council to shift it to Leigh!

V is for VENTNOR—gee, a wonderful spot!
Where the water's delightful, the sun baking hot.

W's for WHITSTABLE—oysters agree
"It's no healthy spot for such fellows as we!"

X is for 'XMOUTH—the "E" is omitted:
It had to be done, or it wouldn't have fitted!

Y is for Yarmouth, the haunt of the bloater.
My uncle once brought a crate home in his motor!

Z's for ZEEBRUGGE, where by warships of Britain
The boats of the Huns were effectively smitten!

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EDITORIAL!



Of course, it simply had to come—a special number dealing with holidays and jolly days, as distinct from melancholy days!

Gladly we hail the Summer Vacation, with its long, happy days of sport and sunshine. Breaking-up Day finds us all agog with excitement. For weeks past we have been plotting and planning all sorts of delightful diversions for the holidays; and now (loud and prolonged cheers!) the holidays are here!

Life without holidays would be unthinkable. We should have nothing to live for, nothing to look forward to. There would be no red-letter days in the schoolboy's calendar—no green and refreshing oases in the dreary desert of swotting and studying.

Tom Brown, who drops into my editorial den for a pow-wow whenever he feels like it, has just been airing his views on summer holidays. He says they ought to start earlier and finish later. "Five weeks aren't enough," declares Brownie. "Greyfriars ought to shut up shop in April, and not reopen till October. A six-months' holiday is the proper caper. I'd be able to go home to New Zealand then. The present holidays aren't long enough; they only whet our appetites for more!"

I can't quite agree with Brownie. He wants jam on it, as the saying goes. Holidays would soon lose their charm and their flavour if we were overdone with them. I've got no less an authority than Shakespeare for saying this, for the Bard of Avon wrote:

"If all of life were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work."

Hear, hear! To my way of thinking, the existing holiday arrangements are top-hole. By the time the last day of the Summer Vac. arrives, we have just about had our fill of holidaying, and are eager to get back to Greyfriars to see all the old familiar faces.

Many of my reader-chums will be on holiday when this issue comes into their hands. Some will be camping-out; others will be sunning themselves on the sands; and there will be walking tours, and cycling tours, and caravan tours, and all the other delights that help to make life worth living.

Whatever kind of holiday you have chosen, may you enjoy it up to the hilt, and return to "the daily round, the common task," like giants refreshed!

By the way, look out for our next supplement. It deals with sport—a subject you all like.

H. WHARTON.

**HOBBS,
SUTCLIFFE,
PARKIN,
and
HENDREN!**

CUT-OUT

PHOTOS
of these
FAMOUS
CRICKETERS
will be

GIVEN
AWAY
FREE

with the
"MAGNET"
dated
August
15th!



BOB CHERRY:

I once spent a wonderful holiday at Wharton Lodge during a heat-wave. I fairly revel in sunshine, even when the heat is tropical. Colonel Wharton allowed me to sleep on the lawn in a little tent; and Harry slept in a hammock in the orchard, with a mosquito-net over his chivvy. I think the only fellow who slept indoors was Inky, who, being an Indian, complained bitterly of the cold! We played cricket every day in the sweltering sun; we cooled our limbs in the lake, and we had all our meals out-of-doors. We became as brown as berries; in fact, I grew almost as swarthy as Hurree Singh! That was indeed a topping holiday, engraved indelibly on the tablets of memory.

DICK PENFOLD:

I think it was at Colwyn Bay I had my happiest holiday. I cycled there with Rake and Brown; we wandered round the charming town, went swimming in a sapphire sea, and felt as happy as could be! We took our ease upon the sands, and listened to the

minstrel bands. And all the guests at our hotel were merry as a marriage-bell. The days flashed very quickly by, as in the twinkling of an eye. Old Father Time, I do declare, galloped along like Turpin's mare! I'll not forget for many a day those happy hours at Colwyn Bay!

BILLY BUNTER:

My happiest holiday was spent with a wealthy uncle of mine—Uncle Toby. He was a Field-Marshal in the Navy, and is now retired. Uncle Toby held strong views on the subject of eating and drinking. He was always writing to the newspapers saying that the publick duzzent eat enuff. Instead of "Eat More Froot!" he used to say, "Eat More Everything!" And when anybody went to stay with him, he used to stuff them up, not only with thrilling tails of his adventures in the Navy, but with good, wholesome grub. Plump and jeeenal Uncle Toby—how I loved him! But his doors are closed to me now, owing to a little misunderstanding which arose when I last stayed with him. Seeing a



"So this is Brighton?" I grunted, as Sammy and I rolled out of the noisy station. "Well, I haven't fallen in love with it at first sight. Can you see the sea anywhere, Sammy?"

"No," said Sammy; "but I can see a jolly fine resterong! Let's go and fortify ourselves after that beestly trane jerney."

"You'll have to pay your whack," I said, as we headed for the resterong. "I've brought you down here for the day, Sammy, and I'm going to trot you round and show you all the sights; but I'm blessed if I'm going to be your banker! You've got to pay your way."

"Oh, all right!" growled Sammy. We had a jolly fine feed at the resterong; in fact, we were quite inflated after it. And so was the bill! I thought I'd economise by giving nothing to the waiter.

At last we found the beach, and plumped ourselves down in a couple of deck-chairs. Presently the attendant came along.

"Five shillings each, please!" he said. "What!" I shouted, glaring at him. "The proper charge for these chairs is tuppence!"

"I know all about that, sir," he said. "But you've ruined them chairs—gone clean through the seats of 'em! They're not meant for the likes of you. The

weight of the sitter isn't supposed to exceed half a ton!"

Sarkastio beest! He didn't get ten bob out of us anyway. He got his just dues—fourpence.

We sat basking in the sunshine for about an hour, and then Sammy complained that he was feeling peckish. So was I, as a matter of fact. It isn't often that we let a whole hour elapse between meals. So we toddled along to a refreshment place on the front, and fortified ourselves with sandwiches and ginger-pop.

"Sammy," I said, after we had footed the bill, "I'm broke!"

"Same here," grunted Sammy.

"Thank goodness we've got return tickets, or we'd never be able to get home!" I said. "Look here, we must raise the wind somehow. It's awful to be broke in Brighton! We sha'n't be able to see the sights—the Palace Pier, and the Grand Pavilion, and the Aquarium, and all the rest."

"But what can we do?" asked Sammy helplessly.

I put on my thinking-cap for a minute, and then I said:

"I've got a brane-wave, Sammy boy! We'll go for a bathe—jolly lucky we've brought our costumes with us!—and you must arrange to get out of your depth and yell for help. Then I'll swim gallantly to your reskew and bring you

lobster sallah on the dining-room table, I scoffed it, not knowing it was the snack which Uncle Toby always had between tea and dinner. There was an awful rumpuss, and I was sent packing next morning. But I'd give every postle-order I possess to spend another holiday with Uncle Toby!

WUN LUNG:

Me once spendee a velly happy holiday in Switzerland. Me climb-climbee up the Alps, and little Chinese enjoy himself ne end fine. Me wishee there were some snow-topped mountains near Greyfriars; then me would muchee likee to go climb-climbee on half-holidays.

(All serene, old chap; we'll get the Courtfield Town Council to rig up a mountain for you!—Ed.)

WILLIAM GOSLING:

'Olidays? Don't tork to me about 'olidays! I ain't 'ad an 'oliday, 'appy or otherwise, for as far back as I can remember. When the young rips of Greyfriars goes off enjoyin' of theirselfs, William Gosling 'as to remain at 'is post. 'E can't pack up 'is troubles in 'is old kit-bag, an' go toddlin' down to Brighton! Neither can 'e save up 'is tips an' gratooities, an' pop over to Monty Carlo to try 'is luck at the tables. I once 'eard of a gate-porter who won ten thousand francs in a single night at roulette. When 'e come back to England, 'e bought 'isself a mansion in the country, an' lived 'appy ever after. But I can't foller in 'is footsteps, 'cos I never gets no 'oliday. Mine is a miserable lot, as ever was!

(Cheer up, Gossy! You must remember that fortunes are lost, as well as won, at Monte Carlo. Think of all the money you've saved by not going!—Ed.)

ashore, and some bonnevolent old gent will go round with the hat and raise a collection on my behalf. They always do that at these seaside places, you know."

"Oh, good!" said Sammy.

A few minutes later we were in the water. Sammy played his part to perfection. He went a goodish way out, and then he let up a dreadful yell.

"Yaroooo! Help! Reskew! I've got the cramp, and I'm sinking fast!"

Promptly I swam to the reskew, and made a pretense of having a fearful struggle to get Sammy ashore. I succeeded at last, and I foolishly eggspected all the holidaymakers to start clapping and cheering.

But, to our intense disgust, nothing happened! Nobody clapped; nobody cheered; nobody went round with the hat. The whole affair was a garsly wash-out!

I was beginning to wish we had never come to Brighton, when suddenly I spotted a familiar figger taking a sun-bath on the steps of a bathing-masheen. It was my Uncle Claude! Sammy and I fairly pelted towards him, and breathlessly poured into his ears a tale of woe, saying we had spent all our munny.

Uncle Claude is a decent old buffer, and he took kompassion on us, and offered to take us round and show us the sights. When he had dressed, he took us on to the Pier, and we spent a happy hour in the Palace of Fun. Then we went to see all the other places of interest, and finished up with a first-rate feed at a high-class caffy. Uncle Claude seemed to think we'd had nothing to eat all day, for he flatly refused to let us stop gorging. I love a man who makes flat refusals of that sort!



(Continued from page 15.)

and then breakfasted in bed, with a couple of menservants in attendance, it being too much exertion for the aristocratic Bunter even to lift a cream-jug for himself. But on this especial morning Billy Bunter was down the first of the party, and Harry Wharton & Co. found him already in the sunny breakfast-room when they appeared.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You up, old top!" greeted Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Yes. You fellows are rather late. You're getting into rather lazy ways away from school."

"Eh?"

"Don't let it grow on you," said Bunter, in a tone of admonition. "You'll have to toe the line at Greyfriars again next term, you know, and you'll feel the draught if you've got into lazy, slacking ways."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's good—from you!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"The goodfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But it is a great and esteemed pleasure to see your handsome and ludicrous countenance at the breakfast-table, my excellent and disgusting Bunter!"

"The fact is, you fellows," said Bunter, as Walsingham helped him to kidneys and bacon on a large scale—"the fact is, I'm arranging a bit of an outing for to-day."

"Good!"

"How would you like a good long run in the car, turning out immediately after brekker, and doing a few hundred miles, and coming back again in the evening?"

"Not a bad idea," said Harry Wharton. "We'd like it all right, Bunter. Won't it tire you, though?"

"Oh, I sha'n't be able to come!"

"Oh!"

That extended motor drive became popular at once with the Famous Five. If Bunter wasn't able to come, there was no reason why it should not be very enjoyable indeed.

"Sammy Bunter won't be able to come, either," said Bunter. "I'm sorry; but we've got some business to go through to-day. I don't want to worry my guests with business matters, of course. That's why I'm arranging this excursion for you."

"Jolly good of you, old pippin," said Bob Cherry rather wonderingly. Really, it was not like Bunter to be so very thoughtful for other fellows, even when they were his guests. "But, I say, can't you chuck the business and come along? We'll have no end of a time!"

"Can't be done. I've got to see my agent, Pilkins, about some affairs," said Bunter. "I've rather neglected business details; but, after all, they have to be seen to. I'm putting in the morning at it."

Walsingham's well-trained face was generally expressionless; but there was a flicker over his grave visage as he heard this. Undoubtedly the Combermere butler was glad to hear that Master

Bunter was coming down to business details at last.

"Pilkins has been ill, you know," went on Bunter. "He was knocked out in a motor accident."

"We know," assented Harry.

"Now I hear that he's back at his office, so I'm seeing him to settle some details of business. I shall go down to his office, Walsingham!"

"Sir!"

"Order the largest Rolls-Royce for my friends in half an hour's time."

"Very good, sir!"

"And have the small Rolls ready for me at eleven."

"Very good, sir!"

The chums of Greyfriars breakfasted in good spirits. A day's motoring in a good car appealed to them, and though they would have been glad, in a way, for Bunter to share their pleasure, they really could not help feeling that the day would be rather more of a success without the swank, the incessant chin-wag, and the almost equally incessant grouching of the Owl of the Remove. They walked out to the car after breakfast in a cheery mood. Only on Johnny Bull's face was a rather curious, thoughtful expression.

"What's Bunter's game?" he asked Harry Wharton quietly, while the car was being brought round.

"Eh? What? Game?" repeated the captain of the Remove.

"Yes. Why does he want to get shut of us for to-day?"

"Does he?" asked Harry, in surprise.

"Looks like it to me."

Wharton shook his head.

"Blessed if I see why he should. It seems to me that he's playing up rather better than usual. Anyhow, if he wants to get shut of us for a day, perhaps we sha'n't be exactly overcome with grief at getting shut of him, so it's fair play on both sides."

Johnny Bull grinned.

"That's all right," he said. "But it's queer to me. Bunter wants to get rid of us to-day for some reason."

"Well, let him!" said Harry, laughing.

Johnny Bull nodded; but he was perplexed. Still, undoubtedly he was pleased. Bunter could not be more keen to get rid of Johnny Bull than Johnny was to be got rid of by Bunter.

Five cheery juniors found plenty of room in the big car, and it rolled away down the drive.

Bunter waved a fat hand after it, and the chums of the Remove waved back. Really, at that moment they quite liked Bunter.

After the car was gone, Billy Bunter rolled back into the house, with a thoughtful expression on his fat face. He had cleared off the Greyfriars fellows. That was the first step in Bunter's programme. If Mr. Pilkins came to the lodge that morning, at all events, Harry Wharton & Co. would not be witnesses of what might transpire.

Sammy Bunter was at breakfast when Bunter rolled back to the room. A footman was waiting on Sammy. A lordly sign of dismissal from Billy Bunter sent the man away.

"So Gatty and Myers went last evening, Sammy?" said Bunter, sitting on a corner of the table and blinking at his minor in an unusually amicable way.

Sammy grinned.

"Yes; and a good riddance!"

"I've sent my friends away for the day," said Bunter. "We've got the place to ourselves, Sammy."

"Have we?" grunted Sammy. Apparently Sammy was not specially delighted at the happy prospect of a whole

day in the fascinating society of his brother William George.

"Yes, Sammy. That will be nice, won't it?"

"Will it?" grunted Sammy.

"Make a good breakfast, old man," said Bunter encouragingly.

"I mean to. What did you sheer off the footman for?" demanded Sammy irritably. "I suppose I can be waited on as well as you, so long as this game lasts. Shove the marmalade over this way, anyhow."

Bunter passed the marmalade.

"I've sent him away so that I can speak to you, Sammy," he said, in a low voice. "It's rather important."

Sniff from Sammy.

"I've got no money!" he said.

"What?"

"Stony!" said Sammy. "If you've squeezed your friends dry you'd better borrow something from Walsingham. He, he, he!"

Bunter breathed hard through his fat little nose.

"It isn't that, Sammy, you fat rotter. The fact is, things are getting rather thick. That man Pilkins is out of the nursing-home, and he's found out a lot of things. He's coming here this morning."

Sammy jumped.

"Oh, my hat! Then the game's up!"

"It jolly well isn't!" said Bunter.

"I'm not giving up all this if I can help it, Sammy. I'm going to manage that man Pilkins somehow. I want you to help me manage him."

"Rot!" said Sammy. "There's nothing doing, of course. If he's found you out you had better cut before he gets here. Go while the going's good. He, he, he!"

"I'm not going," said Bunter obstinately. "I tell you I'm sticking to this as long as it lasts, and I'm jolly well making it last as long as I can! That man Pilkins is going to be handled somehow; and I want you to help. See?"

Sammy Bunter rose from the table.

"Cut it out!" he said derisively. "If you can manage him somehow and hang on here, I'll hang on along with you. The grub's good, and there's plenty of it. But that's all I'm going to do. I'm going to have a car out and run across to Margate for the day."

"It's for me to order out the cars here, Sammy; not you."

"Then you'd better order one for me sharp if you don't want trouble with me as well as with Pilkins!" jeered Sammy.

Billy Bunter gazed at him through his big spectacles. Whatsoever scheme Bunter had thought out, in the recesses of his fat brain it was clear that he would have to carry out that scheme on his lonely own; there was no help from Sammy. Bunter minor was prepared to take his share in the loaves and fishes so long as they lasted, but he was not prepared to take any risks.

"You fat rotter!" exclaimed Bunter at last.

"He, he, he!"

"I've a jolly good mind—" roared Bunter.

Sammy beat a strategic retreat to the door.

"Better order that car, old man," he said, and he disappeared just in time to escape a whizzing coffee-cup.

A quarter of an hour later Billy Bunter had the pleasure—or otherwise—of beholding his minor rolling away in a

car, bound for the joys of a day at merry Margate. And William George Bunter was left to face his extraordinary problem on his own.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Clearing for Action!

BILLY BUNTER sat in the library in a deep leather chair, where once had reposed the noble limbs of Lord Combermere—now reposing in a Swiss hotel, while his imposing residence was "let furnished."

Bunter had touched the bell for the butler.

His fat face was corrugated with thought.

On his usual principle of never meeting trouble half way, or at all if he could help it, Bunter had postponed the problem of Mr. Pilkins till the danger was quite near.

That morning Mr. Pilkins was to arrive at the house for a personal interview with Master Bunter, when undoubtedly he would discover that his supposed talk with Walsingham on the telephone the previous day had been only one more trick of his remarkable tenant.

A vague scheme had formed in Bunter's mind since he had, almost at the eleventh hour, concentrated his fat intellect on the subject. That was why he had turned out of bed early for once, and had cleared off Harry Wharton & Co. from the precincts of Bunter Court.

Bunter was getting desperate.

He was too anxious to hold on to his new grandeur to stick at a trifle, or more than a trifle, for the sake of keeping in possession of Lord Combermere's magnificent establishment.

The man Pilkins had been safe in the nursing-home; had he only remained there indefinitely it would have been all right for Bunter. But he had not remained there. He had to be dealt with, and Bunter looked on him as a troublesome interloper who was going to spoil everything by butting in in the most inconsiderate way. A fellow was justified in not being too particular in his methods in dealing with a troublesome interloper who was inconsiderately butting in. That, at least, was the view taken by William George Bunter.

And the scheme outlined in his fat mind was certainly not too particular. If Bunter had had as much common-sense as a rabbit he certainly would never have thought of it. But Nature, which had gifted Billy Bunter with remarkable cunning, had denied him the gift of common sense. His fat mind was made up. Pilkins had to be kept quiet; it was necessary for Bunter's comfort and peace that he should be kept quiet—and Bunter's comfort, of course, was the most important consideration in the wide universe. Bunter had not the slightest doubt on that point, though he knew that there were ill-bred, unpleasant persons who did not agree with him.

Walsingham came in with his soft tread.

Whatever uneasiness the Combermere butler had felt had been dispelled by Bunter's declaration that he was seeing Mr. Pilkins on business that morning. So yesterday's fiver had its full effect, and Walsingham was fairly oozing deference.

"You rang, sir!" said Walsingham, his manner implying that it was a great honour and distinction to be rung for by Master Bunter.

"Oh, yaas!" said Bunter. "I want you to do something for me, Walsingham."

"I am entirely at your service, sir."

"I suppose your staff can carry on if you are away for a few hours?"

"Perfectly."

"I want you to go over to Canterbury."

"Indeed, sir."

"A very special matter," said Bunter.

"One of the lootmen—" Walsingham ventured to suggest. He wanted to keep in with this fat youth who was apparently overflowing with wealth, but really he did not like being sent on messages. It was beneath his dignity as Lord Combermere's butler.

Bunter shook his head decidedly.

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"It's a special matter," he said. "I want you to go personally. You can take one of the cars."

"Very good, sir!"

"You will go to the Grand Hotel, at Canterbury, and ask for Mr. Bunter—my father, you know."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" said Walsingham, rather more brightly. He was very curious to see the father of Master Bunter.

"You will give him this letter, and bring back an answer," said Billy Bunter. "I dare say my pater will ask you some questions about how I am getting on here and all that. If he can spare the time for a run over here, send him back in the car, and return by train yourself."

"Very good."

"Most likely he will be at the hotel for lunch; but if he is late, wait for him."

"Quite so, sir."

"Lose no time in getting off, Walsingham, as the pater may be at Canterbury quite early, and may not stay there for lunch. He is a very busy man."

"Very good, sir. I will go immediately."

Walsingham took the letter Bunter handed to him and retired.

Bunter winked at the ceiling when he was gone. The Combermere butler was safely disposed of.

Walsingham retired to his own quarters—where, as Bunter had certainly foreseen, he opened the letter entrusted to him with the aid of the steam from a kettle. Bunter, who always judged others by himself, was occasionally right in doing so.

Walsingham, who was intensely curious on the subject of the Bunters, was not likely to let slip this opportunity of enlightening himself. He wanted very much to know what was in Bunter's letter to his father, and he had no more scruples in these matters than Bunter himself.

In a few minutes he was reading the letter.

"Dear Father,—Let me know by bearer whether you have arranged for Sir George and Lord Robert to come down here. The bearer is Walsingham, the butler—a very good and obliging servant, and you might tip him a fiver. Your affectionate son,

"W. G. BUNTER."

Walsingham re-enclosed the letter in the envelope, without a trace that it had been opened.

There was a genial smile on his portly face. That letter was very reassuring, as Walsingham was not likely to guess that it had been written specially with a view to his reading it surreptitiously.

Ten minutes later Walsingham was on his way to Canterbury in one of his master's cars.

Bunter, from a window, watched him through his big spectacles as he went, and grinned.

As Mr. Bunter had no intention whatever of visiting Canterbury that day Walsingham was not likely to see him there; but he was certain to hang about the Grand Hotel waiting for Mr. Bunter to arrive until he gave him up and returned to Combermere Lodge. That was all the astute Bunter wanted; he had got rid of the butler for the day, and without raising his suspicions.

Walsingham safe off the scene, Bunter rang the bell for Thomas, the head footman.

Thomas came in very respectfully.

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"Ah, James—I mean Robert—that is, Thomas!" yawned Bunter. "Has Walsingham gone?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I shall be going down to Combermere soon, and shall go on in the car to visit some friends," said Bunter. "You've all been very dutiful and attentive while I have been here, and this is a good opportunity to give you a holiday."

"Yes, sir," said Thomas, in some surprise.

"As I shall not be at home to-day I shall not require your services," explained Bunter. "You and all the other footmen will take the day off and go on a holiday. Have you been to Ramsgate?"

"Yes, sir," said Thomas. "I have had a holiday at Ramsgate, sir."

"Good! Go there to-day."

"Eh?"

"All of you," said Bunter. "Take a car, and all of you clear off to Ramsgate and take a holiday. Let me know afterwards what expenses you run into—in round figures, of course—and I will foot the bill."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Thomas.

"Get off early," said Bunter magnificently. "Don't bother about me; I can look after myself for an hour or so."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"That's all right—go!" said Bunter.

"But, sir—"

"You should not argue, Thomas," said Bunter severely.

"Oh, no, sir! Certainly not, sir! But you told me to take a car, sir," gasped Thomas. "Master Wharton and his friends took one car, and Master Samuel another, and Mr. Walsingham has taken a car to Canterbury; and there is only one car left, sir—the car that is taking you to Combermere, sir."

"Oh," said Bunter. "Take that car. I can walk down to Combermere; I will telephone for my friends to pick me up in a car there."

"Oh, sir," gasped Thomas, "this kindness—"

"I always treat servants well, when they behave themselves, Thomas," said Bunter, with a wave of his fat hand. "Get off at once. I want to see you all off to enjoy yourselves before I leave."

"Oh, yes, sir. Certainly, sir!"

"Lose no time."

"Very good, sir!"

Thomas retired with unusual celerity. In the servants' hall there was rejoicing. For once Bunter was really popular in that quarter of Combermere Lodge, in spite of his usual manners and customs.

Possibly the footmen were afraid that their generous master might change his mind, for in a remarkably short space of time they were starting in the car for Ramsgate.

Bunter watched the car off with a grint of relief.

Except for the cook and the maid-servants, Bunter had the great house all to himself now. The women servants' quarters were far enough away for Bunter to disregard that contingent of the Combermere household.

He picked up the receiver of the telephone and rang up Mr. Pilkins' number in Combermere.

"Mr. Pilkins—"

"Mr. Pilkins speaking!"

"Very good! Good-morning, Pilkins! W. G. Bunter speaking from Bunter Court."

"Oh! Hem! Good-morning, Master Bunter! It was my intention to call upon you this morning, with reference to—"

"Quite so, quite so, Mr. Pilkins. Can you call here about eleven?"

"Certainly!"

"I desire to have this matter placed upon a regular footing, Mr. Pilkins. Owing to your being away from your office so long there has been some little irregularity, and, of course, I am not satisfied with that."

"Oh!"

"Now that I hear you are back at your office I must see you at once. The present state of affairs is far from satisfactory."

"Very far indeed!" agreed Mr. Pilkins.

"Please bring your papers with you—agreement, and inventory, and so forth. My legal adviser will be here to go through them with you."

"Very good—very good indeed! I may say that you have relieved my mind very much, sir!"

"Indeed!"

"I—I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean, Pilkins! Be here sharp at eleven, and let us get this matter settled."

"Rely upon me, sir."

Bunter rang off. He wiped a bead or two of perspiration from his fat brow. There was no doubt that Mr. Pilkins would arrive at eleven sharp—no doubt that he would have arrived, anyhow, even if Master Bunter had not telephoned. And in the great, deserted house Billy Bunter was going to deal with him—somehow!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Trapped!

MR. PILKINS removed his silk hat, wiped his fevered brow with a silk handkerchief, and replaced the hat.

Calling at such an establishment as Combermere Lodge, on such a wealthy young gentleman as Master Bunter, in an affair involving the most expensive "let" in his career as an estate agent, Mr. Pilkins was sporting his topper, which gleamed in the blazing sun from a recent careful brushing.

But it was very hot.

He had walked from Combermere. Mr. Pilkins travelled in cars only when he could do so at the expense of his

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Bunter made a sudden jump through the doorway and dragged the oak door shut after him. Crash ! Click ! Mr. Pilkins was too astounded for the moment to move. Then he made a bound at the door and dragged at it. But it was locked on the staircase side—and it was immovable. Mr. Pilkins was a prisoner ! (See Chapter 10.)

clients. Master Bunter might really have sent a car for him, as the owner of the Lodge had left four for the furnished tenant. But Master Bunter hadn't. So Mr. Pilkins walked, and he was feeling very hot and dusty when he arrived within sight of the house which he had—inadvertently—let to William George Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove. It was a glorious summer's day, and no doubt Harry Wharton & Co. were enjoying their motor trip, and Walsingham his run to Canterbury, and Sammy Bunter his day at Margate, and Thomas and the other footmen their joy-ride to Ramsgate. But Mr. Pilkins did not enjoy a mile on a dusty road under a glaring sun, with no better shelter than his silk hat. So he was rather irritable, as well as warm and discomfited, by the time the many-windowed front of Combermere Lodge dawned on him in the distance through lordly oaks and beeches.

"Pilkins!"

"Oh! Master Bunter!"

There was the Owl of the Remove. He had done Mr. Pilkins the honour to walk down the road to meet him.

Mr. Pilkins suppressed his irritability and raised his shining hat politely to Bunter.

If Bunter turned out a desirable tenant Pilkins was prepared to worship the ground he walked on. If he did not, Mr. Pilkins was prepared to give him a liberal allowance of boot-leather to begin with, and a dose of legal proceedings to finish with. In the meantime, matters being uncertain, Mr. Pilkins assumed his best estate-agent manners, and was as polite as possible to the dubious young gentleman.

Bunter acknowledged his salute with the briefest nod. He was in some secret terror of Mr. Pilkins, but he was keeping up his character of a wealthy and lofty fellow, who had little consideration to waste on common persons. Mr. Pilkins smiled politely, but there was a glint in his eyes. This was the fat fellow who had imposed himself on the estate agent as Lord Mauleverer. Mr. Pilkins was ready to forgive that little jest—if it was a jest—so long as Master

Bunter turned out to be a pigeon worth plucking. Not otherwise.

"Oh, here you are, Pilkins!" said Bunter carelessly. "I was taking a little walk. Lucky I didn't miss you."

Mr. Pilkins breathed hard.

"As I was calling by appointment, sir—"

—he began.

"Oh, quite! You could have waited,

of course."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Pilkins. "Yes, of

course! I could have waited."

"Quite so! But come along now. We'll go up to the house through the

park," said Bunter. "It's more shady."

"Certainly, sir."

Instead of approaching the great gates, where the lodgekeeper was in attendance, Billy Bunter opened a wicket-gate in the park wall, and entered with Mr. Pilkins.

They walked by a shady path through the extensive park towards the house. Mr. Pilkins was glad of the shade, and assuredly it did not occur to him that Master Bunter was taking him to the house this way in order to elude the lodgekeeper's observation. He was quite unaware of the amazing programme that Master Bunter had mapped out for the day.

"This way!" said Bunter, and he led Mr. Pilkins to the french windows of the library. The great door of the house was closed, and Mr. Pilkins did not know that there were no footmen in attendance to open it.

Bunter rolled into the library, and Mr. Pilkins followed him in.

Afterwards, it came into the estate agent's mind that Bunter had cunningly introduced him into the house unseen. But at present Mr. Pilkins was thinking chiefly of the heat, and of the coming business interview.

Mr. Pilkins expected to be asked to sit down, and to proceed with the interview in the library. But that was not Master Bunter's intention. The interview was not destined to be anything like the estate agent's anticipation.

"I think you had better see Walsingham first," remarked Bunter thoughtfully. "Possibly Walsingham has informed you that I have handed him a cheque?"

"Mr. Walsingham told me so by telephone yesterday," answered Mr. Pilkins, and wondered why Bunter grinned at the remark.

"I'll take you to the butler's room," said Bunter.

"Pray do not trouble, sir. I know my way about this house perfectly well, of course," said Mr. Pilkins.

"Oh, I'll come with you!" said Bunter.

"Very well, sir!"

Bunter and Mr. Pilkins proceeded to the butler's room. They found it unoccupied, which was not surprising, as Mr. Walsingham was almost at Canterbury by that time.

"Dear me! Where is Walsingham?" said Bunter, blinking round the butler's room through his spectacles.

"If I ring for a footman—" suggested Mr. Pilkins, and again he wondered why Bunter grinned. Really it would not have been of much use ringing for one of the menservants, who were half-way to Ramsgate.

"It's all right," said Bunter. "I remember now. Walsingham is down in the wine-cellar. Shall we go down and see him, or call him?"

Bunter led the way to the cellar staircase.

That staircase was closed by a strong oak door, which was kept locked. But the key was kept in Walsingham's room, and was now in Billy Bunter's possession. He had already unlocked the door, and it stood ajar.

He pushed it wide open, and blinked down the dusky staircase, which wound downwards into deep gloom.

"Walsingham!" he called out.

"Yes, sir?" came a voice from below—the fruity voice of the Combermere butler. Naturally, Mr. Pilkins did not know that Billy Bunter was a ventriloquist, and celebrated at Greyfriars for his queer gift. Mr. Pilkins knew nothing of Greyfriars and its celebrities.

"Oh, you're down there, Walsingham?"

"Yes, sir. Shall I come up?"

"No; we'll come down," said Bunter. "I haven't been over the wine-cellar yet, Walsingham."

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He descended the staircase.

"Come down, Pilkins."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Pilkins, suppressing his irritation. Really, he did not want to wander about wine-cellars; he wanted to get to business. But it was for Master Bunter to decide. And, anyhow, he was anxious to see Walsingham.

At the bottom of the staircase was another strong oak door, opened by the same key as the door above. It stood ajar now, and a light glimmered beyond. In the centre of the main cellar glimmered an electric bulb.

Bunter stood aside for Mr. Pilkins to pass on, and the estate agent went forward, expecting to see Walsingham.

As his back was towards Bunter he did not see that fat youth slip a key into the outside of the lock of the cellar door.

Bunter grinned and followed him.

The wine-cellars below Combermere Lodge were deep down, and no gleam of daylight ever penetrated there. They were ventilated by hidden pipes, and a cool and even temperature reigned there all the year round. The coolness was grateful and comforting to Mr. Pilkins after his walk in the blazing sun.

But he was surprised not to see Walsingham.

Stone passages branched off the main cellar, lined with bins. But the bins were empty. In other days—before the War—the dear, dead days beyond recall—the Combermere cellars had been well supplied. But Lord Combermere was now one of the "new poor," and, so far from being able to replenish the supplies laid down by his father and grandfather, he had had to sell off what remained of those supplies, to meet the heavy charges on his estate. There was scarcely a bottle of wine left in the extensive ramifications of the great cellars under the magnificent lodge. The bins were there—empty, and likely to remain empty until Lord Combermere, at long last, was obliged to sell his estate to some wealthy profiteer.

Mr. Pilkins stared round him.

"Walsingham?" he called out.

"Wait a few minutes!" came back the fruity voice, from one of the deep, dusky stone passages. "I'm busy for the moment."

Mr. Pilkins grunted. He could not imagine how Walsingham could be busy at the other end of the long, unlighted passage.

"Right-ho!" called back Bunter.

"No hurry, Walsingham."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Sit down, Mr. Pilkins."

Mr. Pilkins sat down on an oaken settle. To his further surprise, he noted that a loaf of bread, a large chunk of cheese, and a jug of water stood on the end of the settle. He could not help staring at them. It looked as if Walsingham had brought a light lunch down to the wine-cellars, which was so surprising that Mr. Pilkins could not help being astonished.

Billy Bunter was breathing rather hard. Mr. Pilkins observed that the fat youth was in a state of suppressed excitement, though he did not imagine why.

"Now, we may as well talk business while we are waiting for Walsingham," said Billy Bunter.

"As you choose, sir," said Mr. Pilkins, who was growing restive, perhaps a little uneasy.

"I've taken this house," went on Bunter, standing before the seated estate agent, and blinking at him. "I'm keeping it for the summer. I'm entertaining a series of parties of friends here, in fact."

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"Quite so."

"At the end of the tenancy I shall settle up in full," went on Bunter. "But it is not convenient to pay in advance—see?"

"What?"

"You need have no doubt about your money, Pilkins. I am expecting a number of postal-orders—"

"Eh?"

"From some of my titled relations—"

"Upon my word!"

"In the meantime, I am running the show on tick, and I want all accounts to stand over till I leave," said Bunter. "Is that agreeable to you?"

Mr. Pilkins gasped.

"I—I—I—Certainly not!"

"Think it over," said Bunter. "I can't pay you anything, and you may as well make the best of a bad job, you know."

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"You—you cannot?" stuttered Mr. Pilkins.

"Not at present. Later on—"

"Later on will not do!" roared Mr. Pilkins, greatly enraged. "Am I to understand, sir, that I am dealing with a swindler?"

Bunter started, and coloured with wrath. It had never even occurred to Bunter's fat brain that what he was doing was swindling. He was going to pay—somehow—some time; at least, he considered that he was going to pay—when convenient. That his extraordinary proceedings should be looked on as swindling was quite startling to him, and very annoying. In what other light they could have been considered it would have been difficult to say. Bunter simply hadn't thought the matter out at all. The fat intellect of William George Bunter moved in mysterious ways its wonders to perform.

"Why, you—you—cheeky rotter!" he ejaculated.

Mr. Pilkins jumped up, in great excitement.

"You will leave this house at once!" he roared. "You will be ejected if I do not receive a cheque immediately! You will be sued for the amount already due!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bunter. "You can't sue a minor!"

"I shall sue your father!" bawled Mr. Pilkins.

"You can't!" said Bunter. "You can only sue a minor's parents for necessities, and I suppose a furnished house of this size can't be called a necessity."

Mr. Pilkins gazed at him open-mouthed.

"You ought to know that," said Bunter. "You're an estate agent, so you must have done a lot of downy things in your time!"

"Eh?"

"The fact is, you can't get anything out of me unless I choose!" said Bunter. "But I'm going to pay in full, of course. I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"You young rascal!"

"Also, I'm expecting some rather wealthy guests here—"

"You—you—"

"The best thing you can do is to make up your mind to take it calmly, and let me the house in legal style," said Bunter, blinking at him. "Rely on my personal honour for the money."

Bunter spoke quite loftily. His personal honour might have been a very precious possession, judging by his tone. Mr. Pilkins, however, did not seem to think it a very valuable asset.

He trembled with rage.

"You young scoundrel! You shall be ejected, and the money you have handed to Walsingham—"

"I've handed nothing to Walsingham," said Bunter calmly. "Only some tips to keep him respectful. It was I who telephoned to you yesterday, Pilkins; not Walsingham. I happened to be in his room and took the call."

Mr. Pilkins collapsed helplessly on the oak settle.

He stared at Bunter, as if that fat youth had been a grisly spectre. His breath seemed to be taken away.

"Now, take a business-like view of the affair," said Bunter encouragingly. "I'm giving you a chance, Pilkins. Is it a go?"

Mr. Pilkins spluttered.

"I shall go directly from here to the police-station!" he stuttered.

"You mean that?"

"I mean it, every word!" roared Mr. Pilkins furiously.

"Then you don't leave me any choice in the matter," said Bunter. "I regard you, Pilkins, as an insolent rotter; distrustful, too! If you can't take a gentleman's word you can go and eat coke!"

Bunter was backing towards the cellar door as he spoke.

He made a jump through the doorway, and dragged the oak door shut after him. Crash! Click!

Mr. Pilkins was too astounded for the moment to move. Then he made a bound at the door, and dragged at it.

But it was locked on the staircase side; and it was immovable. It dawned upon the hapless estate agent that he was locked in the wine-cellars, and was to remain there. Into his dazed mind there glimmered the meaning of the bread and cheese and jug of water standing on the settle. This had all been planned; and he was a prisoner.

He staggered away from the door.

"Walsingham!" he hooted.

(Continued on page 23.)

CLUES! These must be the bugbear of a detective's existence, for often they "lead him up the garden." On the other hand, if your detective is as clear-headed as Ferrers Locke, they might lead along such an adventurous a path as—



THE VELDT TRAIL!

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adventure story,
staged in Africa,
featuring the
wizard detective,
Ferrers Locke.

Pycroft's Amazing Story!

"GOOD-DAY to you, sirs—a very good-day," wheezed a cracked and high-pitched voice. "I come to see my very good friend and benefactor, Sir Merton Carr—no, yes?"

And the speaker punctuated his remarks with a sudden burst of idiotic giggling.

Locke and Vane stared at the newcomer.

He was a very small, even undersized man, almost dwarf-like in appearance, with a hunched back and a pair of unusually large, sprawling feet, encased now in dirty, broken boots. He was dressed almost in rags, covered with dust and grime, and his face bore a three days' stubble, and looked as if it could do with a good wash.

To add to the generally grotesque appearance of the man, Locke noticed that he was distinctly cross-eyed, that he carried a sort of knapsack over one shoulder, and an old and bent stick, made of blackthorn, in one bony, grimy hand.

A human oddity if ever there was one, thought the detective, as he gazed wonderingly at this latest arrival on the scene.

"Sir Merton Carr I come for to see—no, yes?" went on the newcomer, peering from one to the other. "He expect to see me, I think."

"Daft Dave!" said Vane, stepping forward suspiciously. "You old scoundrel! Surely you've heard about Sir Merton?"

Daft Dave shook his head stupidly. "No heard anything, milord policeman," he murmured.

"Aw, cut out the baby stuff, Dave!" snapped the superintendent. "Sir Merton's dead—been murdered! It's in all the papers to-day—"

"Sir Merton dead!" The words came

in a sudden scream from the other's sagging lips, and he fell back a pace. "Sir Merton murdered! No, no; it's a lie! It's a wicked lie!"

He strode into the room, his knapsack

WHO'S WHO.

GERALD BRISTOW, an escaped convict who has made his way over to South Africa in search of a hidden treasure belonging to

SIR MERTON CARR, his deceased uncle, a big mining magnate of 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—on 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, but when Locke returns from his investigation he finds that Bristow has disappeared. Not long afterwards Drake receives a message purporting to come from Inspector Pycroft, who is following a trail of his own, asking Jack to accompany the bearer of the note. Drake does so. Meantime, Ferrers Locke revisits the scene of the tragedy. While he is in deep discussion with Vane a figure appears at the open French window, his peculiar appearance causing both Locke and Vane to start with surprise.

(Now read on.)

rolling from side to side on his stooping, hunched back. He thrust his blackthorn before him, as if to prod the superintendent in the ribs.

"I tell you it is a big lie!" he repeated angrily. "You try to trick me—me, poor Daft Dave—hey? I want to see Sir Merton. He say I must come, and—"

He broke off.

His eyes, roving around, had suddenly dropped on to the broken piece of shellac still held in Ferrers Locke's hand.

The sight of that jet-black fragment seemed to get something going in the weird old man's head, for with a sudden, hoarse cry he swung round on the detective, and at the same time made a sudden grab for the shellac.

"Where you get that—hey?" he almost snarled. "Give it me—give it me, I say!"

Locke stepped back just in time, thrusting the shellac quickly into his pocket. At the same instant Superintendent Vane jumped forward and seized the queer-looking little man in a grip of steel.

"Now, see here, Dave!" he barked. "None of your monkey-tricks! We've got you nicely dated, and you know it, so come off it—savvy?"

"But where he get that?" persisted Dave, beginning to struggle. "I want to know—"

"You want to know nothing!" jerked Vane, tightening his grip. "And if there's any more of your tomfoolery, you'll be bunged into tronk* D'ye get me? I'm not going to stand for—Why, what—what the thunder—"

He broke off, mechanically releasing the other and falling back.

His exclamation of blank amazement

* Tronk—Afrikander term for gaol.

was echoed by Locke a moment later, as the detective swung round at the sound of the sudden flinging open of the door behind them.

A figure stood framed on the threshold—a portly, all too familiar figure, but dusty and dishevelled now, hatless and perspiring, and with an expression of the gravest alarm and excitement on his face.

He swayed almost giddily, and might have collapsed altogether had not Locke darted forward.

"Pycroft!" gasped the detective. "What the dickens has happened, man?"

As if by an effort, the Yard man pulled himself together, though he was still trembling violently, and seemed utterly dazed and fatigued.

"For Heaven's sake, Locke," he panted, "come at once! Jack Drake—they've got him, just as they got me and—"

"Jack Drake!" echoed Locke, filled with sudden alarm. "What do you mean? What's happened to him?"

"They've got him, I tell you—Bristow, and that ghastly native scoundrel—they've trapped him, just as they trapped me! Come at once, man, if you want to save him!"

And with a sudden moan Pycroft flung himself down into the nearest chair and buried his face in his hands.

Ferrers Locke stared in blank astonishment at the Scotland Yard man, who, after making that dramatic declaration, had dropped into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

Plainly, Pycroft, who was not normally an easily unnerved man, was in a state not far removed from complete collapse.

The weird scene with Daft Dave, which Pycroft's arrival had so abruptly interrupted, had momentarily passed out of the detective's mind now.

He was consumed with anxiety over this new turn of events, and particularly over the safety of his young assistant, Jack Drake.

After a moment or so he crossed over to Pycroft and laid a kindly hand upon the Yard man's bowed shoulders.

"Take it easy, old man," he murmured. "Don't worry. Try to pull yourself together, and tell me all about it. Then we'll get down to business without any delay."

Locke's kindly words, masking his own rational impatience and anxiety, had the desired effect.

After a moment or so, Pycroft recovered somewhat and looked up.

But though he now spoke in a calmer tone, it was evident that he was still greatly distressed.

"I'll try to put the whole thing before you as clearly as I can," he said, "but it's not going to be easy. I've had such a series of shocks that I hardly know whether I'm on my head or my heels. And that last pelt all the way here from Vrededorp about put the finishing touch on it. I've had all the stuffing knocked out of me, and my head's spinning round like a top!"

Superintendent Vane, who had been listening intently, now came forward with a glass containing some liquid.

Locke took it from him with a murmur of thanks, and held it out to the still partially dazed Yard man.

"Lap it up—all of it!" he said. "Do you good!"

Pycroft did so, almost greedily, then returned the empty glass with a deep sigh of relief, mopping his face with a gaudily coloured handkerchief.

The colour seemed to be creeping back

into his face now, and his eyes were noticeably brighter.

"It all began," he said, "through my deciding to follow up a little trail of my own—a blind trail it proved to be, as I soon found out. In fact, I know now that I was deliberately deceived."

"While I was prowling round this house yesterday afternoon the behaviour of one of the native servants struck me as—well, suspicious. He seemed to be watching me, to be following me about, as it were."

"As soon as I discovered this I altered my demeanour accordingly, and after a while I saw this fellow making off across the grounds outside the house. I decided to follow him, and a mighty long and disastrous trek it proved to be, I can assure you!"

"This native, whose name appeared to be Umlili, and who was employed as a kitchen 'boy' here, got clear of the grounds, and began to make tracks down the hill towards the city."

"I followed, and in due course I saw that the boy was not going citywards, but had turned off at right angles, and was making for Vrededorp—you know, the slum quarter of Jo'burg, and the happy hunting-ground of many of the worst of the South African crooks."

"He kept straight on, winding his way through quite a maze of filthy, squalid back streets, as if he were thoroughly familiar with his surroundings."

"Now and again he would pull up and glance back, but always I was one too many for him, and got out of sight in the nick of time."

"I've discovered since that all this was a little game of bluff, specially acted for my benefit, that I was being deliberately 'baited.' However, we'll come to that in a minute or so."

"Umlili eventually reached a disreputable-looking native eating-house situated in one of the dingiest streets in the suburb. He turned in through the swing doors, and as I watched him through the nearest window I saw him go to a table and sit down."

"Presently another fellow—a white man this time—entered the place and joined the native. There was a sort of confab; then the white man, whose face I couldn't see because it was all muffled up in a great coat, made off, and the native came out of the eating-house, and made his way round to the back of it to another and smaller place, into which he passed without troubling to knock on the door."

"I decided to follow him, and, finding the door unlocked, I crept into a narrow, evil-smelling passage, utterly dark."

"Hearing no sound, I began to grope my way along, when suddenly something heavy dropped on to the back of my head, and—well, I guess I popped off to sleep!"

"When I came round, with my head singing and hammering, I found that I was trussed up like a sick fowl and flung into a corner of a dark room—at least, it was almost dark, though there was a wretched oil-lamp burning on top of an upturned packing-case, round which were seated the native boy, Umlili, and another fellow."

"This second fellow glanced up after a few moments—he had been making some notes on a scrap of paper—and when I saw his face you could have struck me down with a feather! Locke, old man, who the deuce do you think it was?"

Pycroft broke off, uttering the last words in a low, impressive whisper, and leaning towards the detective, whose lips were now curved in a shadowy but inscrutable smile.

"Gerald Bristow?" suggested Locke. It was a bow at a venture, but it worked.

Pycroft jumped to his feet. "Suffering caterpillars, how the thump did you know that?" he almost yelled.

"I didn't," murmured Locke, his expression suddenly very grim and stern. "But I kind of guessed it; and it seems I was not far out, more's the pity!"

"Pity!" echoed Pycroft angrily. "Blessed if I can see what there is to pity about it, anyway! How on earth you guessed it ticks me hollow, though! Of course, you knew, as I did, that Bristow had escaped from Stonemoor; but—well, hang it all!"

"All right, old man," put in Locke soothingly. "I'll explain later on. Get on!"

Pycroft stared at him blankly for a moment. Then he moistened his lips, and sat down reluctantly. His whole expression was one of profound doubt and mystification.

"Well, anyway, Bristow it was, to the life—" he began, when Locke interposed.

"Half a minute," he said. "Come to think of it, how did you recognise him first go? He had a ragged beard, and it—"

"He had nothing of the sort!" snapped Pycroft, in surprise. "Clean-shaven he was, and complete with eyeglass, as before!"

"Phe-aw!" whistled Locke, with suddenly elevated eyebrows. "Go on!"

"Well, Bristow began talking in his usual impudent way, and said something about getting hold of a bit of paper hidden away in an old biscuit-tin, and believed to have been kept by the dead man, Sir Merton Carr, in his safe."

"He said that he had been prevented from laying hands on this before the police came on the scene of the murder, and he guessed that by now either you, Locke, or I had found and taken possession of it."

"The long and short of it was that he wanted that old biscuit-tin. When I told him I hadn't got it, and wouldn't give it up if I had, he smiled, and then said something about keeping me prisoner till he had found it."

"Then he spoke about you and Jack Drake. He admitted that to make a prisoner of you would be to attempt the almost impossible; but he added, in that confounded callous way of his, that he could at least strike at you through your assistant, Jack Drake—"

"The infamous scoundrel!" muttered Locke, his eyes blazing.

"He then said that a certain man was keeping watch on every movement made by you or by Jack, and he planned that Jack should be decoyed to this place where I had already been trapped, by means of an urgent note written and signed by me."

"Of course, I told him he'd got another think coming, but that didn't seem to upset him. After trying every way he could think of to get round me peaceably, or by dark threats, he gave up, and consulted with that black nigger who had led me into this trap. And then—"

Pycroft broke off, and into his eyes there crept a look of unnameable horror and pain—a look such as Locke had never before seen in the face of his old official colleague.

"And then?" prompted the detective, feeling strangely alarmed now, though he could not at that moment have said why.

Pycroft opened his lips as if about to speak, but apparently could not bring himself to do so.

Instead, he rose unsteadily to his feet,



A figure stood framed on the threshold—the portly, familiar figure of Inspector Pycroft. Dusty and dishevelled, hatless and perspiring, he stood there, an expression of the gravest alarm and excitement on his face. (See page 22.)

stripped off his coat, and very gingerly rolled up his shirtsleeves, at the same time extending his arms before Locke's face.

The detective glanced at them wonderingly for a moment, and then gave vent to a cry of horror and pity.

Pycroft's arms were a mass of livid weals and scars, from shoulder to wrist—wounds which could only have been caused by the application of the most intense heat, such as that of a red-hot poker.

"Good heavens!" gasped Locke, the colour draining from his face. "You see what happened, Vane? When Pycroft refused to write the note intended as a decoy for my assistant, Jack Drake, Bristow and that ghastly native resorted to force—to torture. They've branded him for life!"

Pycroft sank back into the chair, dropping his head once more over his cruelly-scarred arms.

"I stuck it out as long as I could, Locke!" he almost moaned. "I know I'm a rotten, white-livered coward, but I'm not so young as I used to be, and the—the pain—"

He broke off, lifting his head, and looking up at the detective.

Locke saw that the Yard man's eyes glittered suspiciously and the Baker Street detective momentarily turned aside to hide his own feelings.

His vivid imagination pictured that terrible scene in all its awful details. He knew, despite Pycroft's declaration of cowardice, that there were few men as brave as the Scotland Yard inspector, and he also knew that Pycroft would, if needs be, have laid down his life for his friends.

When Ferrers Locke again faced the inspector, his face was white and set, and a hard, bitter look burned in his eyes.

"You did your best, Pycroft," he said. "Indeed, I feel personally responsible that you should have gone so far as you did. You're a man in a thousand, and— But you don't need me to tell you what I think."

He seized Pycroft's hand in a firm grip, and for just a moment the two men, so oddly contrasted in character and yet so strongly bound together in friendship, looked into each other's eyes.

Then Locke became brusque and businesslike once more.

"You needn't tell me what happened afterwards," he said; "I can guess the rest. The note which you were compelled by those infamous scoundrels to write was duly handed to Jack Drake, who, as a matter of fact, telephoned to the hotel to inform me that he had—as he thought—been sent for by you. And, of course, he, too, fell into the trap. But tell me—Locke's voice took on a sharp, anxious note—"have they done anything to him—to Jack—"

Pycroft shook his head.

"Not up to the time when I managed to escape," he replied. "They put him in another room, otherwise I'd have tried to get him free as well as myself. I contrived to loosen my bonds and slip away when both Bristow and the native were temporarily absent."

"First, though, I scouted round for Jack, but could not find him, and then I heard unmistakable sounds of their return, and, with my arms in this condition, I knew I couldn't put up a fight. So I thought my best plan would be to get away on my own, race off to you, and get you to surround the place—"

"Right enough!" interposed Locke. "And we'll get down to the job right away. No, not you, Pycroft. You'd better trot along and have a chat with Dr. Montrose, and get those arms attended to. Vane, here, will go with

you. I'll see you again later—must hurry now!"

He swung round towards the door, seized the handle, and then stopped, his eyes roving about the room.

"Jove!" he exclaimed. "There's only three of us here. What's become of that weird fellow, Daft Dave?"

In their astonishment at Pycroft's dramatic entry and their concentration upon his amazing story, neither Locke nor Superintendent Vane had noticed that Daft Dave had vanished—that he had crept away, all unnoticed.

"He's gone!" muttered Vane, almost shamefacedly. "Fool that I was not to have kept an eye on him! But we'll soon locate him, Mr. Locke. One of my men can cut off right away and find him and bring him back—"

"No, don't do that!" returned Locke, with rather unusual sharpness. "Let him go; don't follow him! It might mess up all my plans!"

And with that decidedly enigmatical remark, the famous private detective hastened from the house.

The Roof Chase!

FERRERS LOCKE moved swiftly now, and, in almost less time than it takes to tell, he had picked up a posse of plain-clothes officers from the Johannesburg C.I.D., and set out for the house in Vrededorp, the plain-clothes men occupying two motors, which sped like the wind towards their destination.

Locke had, before leaving Sir Merton's house, obtained some details from Pycroft as to the exact location of the house in which he had been imprisoned, and in which Jack Drake was still a prisoner, and it did not take the detective long to reach his objective.

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Parking the cars in a convenient open space some distance from the street in which this house was situated, Locke and the plain-clothes men set out to cover the rest of the journey on foot, spreading themselves out fan-wise, in order to make a more or less complete circle of the house, and thus prevent any possible escape on the part of whoever might be within.

They found, as Pyecroft himself had stated, that the house in question was situated in one of the dirtiest of the many back streets existing in that part of suburban Johannesburg known as Vrededorp, the resort of some of the most notorious of South African crooks and confidence men.

Immediately in front of this house was the Kafir restaurant—or "native eating-house," as these places are called out there—to which Pyecroft had made reference, and the place wherein Jack was believed to be still kept prisoner stood well back, hidden amid a forest of chimney-stacks, with a narrow stone alley as the only means of entry.

The planning of the raid was rendered the more difficult because it happened to be taking place in daylight. This meant that the plain-clothes men had to disperse pretty freely, and take every precaution against attracting attention.

The sight of a stranger in these parts, as in some similar localities in the East End of London, was often the signal for suspicion, and even, perhaps, sudden and violent action on the part of the more obstreperous denizens of Vrededorp.

But Ferrers Locke, who was in sole charge of the party, was a past-master in the gentle art of raiding, and he set out his men with the tactical strategy of a general on a battlefield.

Locke himself approached the house in company with only one of the plain-clothes men named Williams.

As they drew near, strolling with studied unconcern along the opposite side of the road, Locke saw that the Kafir eating-house was almost deserted, and that the narrow alley-way leading to his objective was entirely devoid of people.

They slipped easily round the bend in the wall, and came at last to the dilapidated-looking door, which the detective found was now locked.

In the ordinary way he would have knocked at the door and demanded admission in the name of the law, this demand being the signal to several of the other plain-clothes men to appear from their hiding-places and follow behind him as he entered.

But Locke decided to adopt other tactics this time.

Quickly pulling a skeleton-key from his pocket, he inserted it into the lock of the door, and the next moment the door itself was pushed open, and the detective crept warily within, his companion following closely behind.

More from a sense of precaution than from any other reason, they both held their automatics at the ready as they entered.

They found themselves in a narrow passage, surprisingly dark, considering that the time was about midday.

Locke signed to his companion, and began groping his way forward, halting as his foot came into contact with some obstacle, which he afterwards found to be the bottom step of a flight of wooden stairs leading steeply upwards.

Apparently the passage ended abruptly at these stairs; but whether there were any rooms leading off from the passage itself remained to be seen.

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Locke decided that there must be, unless the rest of the house—or, rather, the rest of the ground floor—was shut off, as is often the case in buildings of this type.

But after waiting for fully a couple of minutes in absolute silence and finding that no sound was to be heard anywhere, the detective resolved to make his way upstairs, more especially as he had now caught the faintest of movements from over his head—a sort of dull "thud-thud," as of the pacing about of bare feet on the floor above.

He crept up the stairs, one at a time, for they creaked badly, and the sound, slight though it was, thanks to his and the plain-clothes' man's united efforts, seemed almost to echo throughout the place.

At the top of the stairs the darkness was relieved by a highly-placed window, thick with dust and cobwebs, through which a certain amount of daylight filtered murkily.

By this pale light they saw that they stood on a narrow and rickety landing, with, facing them, three doors, all of which were closed.

Locke hesitated a moment, and then tried one door. It gave readily to his pressure and fell back noiselessly.

But the room was empty and deserted.

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He was about to turn to the next door when a fresh sound caused him to stop dead in his tracks.

"Stand back, man!" he hissed, signalling to his companion.

They fell back, stepping into the empty room into which Locke had first looked, remaining on the threshold, their automatics gripped in readiness for instant use.

There came the click of a latch, and the door of an adjoining room was pulled open, letting out a flood of light, apparently from a window within, and throwing across the landing a bulky shadow.

For a moment the shadow remained motionless; then it moved forward, and again Locke and Williams heard the "thud-thud" of bare feet.

Next instant the figure of a gigantic native, whom Locke instantly recognised as having been one of the kitchen staff at Sir Merton Carr's house, appeared on the landing, peering about, this way and that, suspiciously.

Only for an instant did he remain thus. But it was enough for the quick-witted London detective.

Making a swift sign to his companion, Locke stepped noiselessly forward and raised his automatic.

"Hands up!" he barked, speaking in the Zulu tongue.

The native swung round with a gasp of amazement, the whites of his eyes rolling grotesquely in the half-light. Then they dropped to the automatic which Locke held, as firmly as a rock, pointed unerringly at the man's head. His hands went up sharply, and he gave vent to a low mutter of anger.

Locke stepped out of the room on to the landing, and, jabbing the muzzle of his automatic into the native's ribs, propelled him across the threshold into the room he had just vacated.

"We'll deal with this fellow ourselves," he said quietly to Williams. "Your colleagues can then be summoned to go over the whole house, from top to bottom, though I rather fancy they'll find nothing. I think I know my friend Bristow well enough by now!"

"You mean he's bunked?"

"Bet your sweet life!" grunted Locke with a bitter laugh. "Still, we can't afford to take too many risks. Just run through this native's pockets, will you? These wily niggers sometimes carry deadly weapons in the most unexpected places."

Williams stepped forward and began to go systematically through the clothes worn by Umlili, while Locke stood back a few feet, keeping his automatic pointed at the native's head.

Presently Williams gave a grunt, and flung down an ugly-looking knobkerrie, which he had found cunningly hidden on the native's person.

"That discovery alone will get you a stiff sentence, my lad!" he muttered.

But the native made no answer, though he well knew that the carrying of knobkerries by natives was forbidden by law.

Suddenly Umlili flung up his head in a listening attitude. Williams glanced up, pausing a moment in his search.

"What's getting at you now?" he jerked. Then he stared open-mouthed at the nigger, whose eyes had suddenly dilated, as with fear, his jaw dropping and his limbs beginning to tremble violently.

"What the thump's the matter with the fellow?" asked Williams, so amazed that he momentarily forgot what he was doing, and turned his head towards Locke.

Next instant Williams gave a sudden yell of dismay as the native's burly arms came down with a swoop and pinioned his own to his sides in such a vice-like grip that he was unable to move so much as an inch.

In a flash both Locke and Williams realised the meaning of the native's strange behaviour.

That listening attitude, that fit of trembling, had been all pretence!

It was an old trick, but one which is ever new—a device to distract their attention, if only for a moment.

And it had worked!

Ferrers Locke, though taken for the moment off his guard, now rushed forward, his finger instinctively pressing against the trigger of his automatic.

"Release that man instantly," he cried, "or I shoot to kill!"

But the native only laughed insolently as, with a swift, dexterous movement, he dragged Williams, as though he were a mere babe, in front of him, so that the plain-clothes man stood now, spread-eagle fashion, before the nigger, screening him from attack.

"Baas shoot now," cried Umlili impudently, "but bullet him go through your friend, not through Umlili!"

The Rescue of Jack Drake.

FERRERS LOCKE'S lips set. This wily native had duped them both in the neatest, yet simplest manner.

It was useless to act, for if Locke pressed the trigger the bullet would assuredly bring death to the plain-clothes man.

So long as things stood just as they were Locke could do nothing. And certainly Williams was even more helpless. The muscular strength of this gigantic native was amazing, yet not unusual in the typical Zulu, of which tribe Umlili was a very good example.

The only thing to do was to come to grips with the native—to tackle him in the good old British way, with bare fists. But Locke had already taken a step forward with this aim in view when Umlili's strong brown arm suddenly whipped before him, and the muzzle of a gleaming automatic was levelled at Locke's head.

The native had taken the gun from Williams' own pocket, and now he released the plain-clothes man and flung him, as though he were so much loose sacking, headlong across the room, Williams crashing headlong to the ground from the impact of the nigger's heavy thrust.

"Better you keep back, baas!" smiled Umlili malevolently. "Me only poor Zulu boy, but me know everyting about dis gun!"

Williams staggered to his feet, and with a roar like an angry bull made to rush at the native.

But Locke waved him sternly back. "Don't be a fool, man!" he snapped. "The scoundrel won't hesitate to shoot you stone dead! Stay where you are." Locke's hand went to his pocket,

where reposed a police whistle. He intended sounding this as a signal to the other plain-clothes men to rush the building.

But once again Umlili was too quick for him.

With a sudden pounce he had reached the detective's side, and Ferrers Locke gasped as the muzzle of the automatic dug, with a violent jab, into his ribs.

"Put hands up!" commanded Umlili peremptorily.

Locke shrugged his shoulders helplessly and obeyed.

The native then quickly snatched the detective's own automatic from his right hand and thrust it into his own pocket.

Then, with a broad grin on his face, Umlili backed towards the window, which, Locke now saw, was half open, the lower sash being raised.

"I go now," said the native. "Better you not follow, because if you do you will make me to shoot, and dat would be very sad!"

He laughed—a great, roaring, gargantuan laugh, whose echoes rang through the half-empty house.

"Stop him!" yelled Williams.

But Locke shook his head.

Though he said nothing at the moment to Williams, Locke knew what he was doing and he had a very good reason for not attempting to prevent the native from making his escape through the window.

There was really no need to take that risk, Locke told himself. He would just let the nigger vanish from sight and then sound his whistle. The whole building was surrounded and the native, in dropping down to the ground beneath—probably by means of a rain-pipe—would all unwittingly fall clean into the hands of a posse of plain-clothes men.

So Locke stood obediently still, while Umlili clambered backwards through the window, working his way along the ledge and holding on with his one free hand, the other still pointing the automatic into the room.

In another moment the nigger had vanished from sight, and just then Locke saw something go hurtling past the window to the ground beneath.

"The automatic!" he muttered, with a grim smile. "That's just like your average native—thinks only of the needs of the immediate moment. The gun has served that immediate need and therefore it is thrown away!"

"But he's still got another!" muttered Williams. "He took yours, you know!"

"Just so. But he can't use it—you see what he's doing—he's clambering up, not down—up to the roof!"

Locke's last words were spoken on a high note of sudden excitement, and he rushed towards the window.

Next instant he had pulled the police whistle from his pocket and was blowing it for all he was worth.

"Stand back, Williams!" he cried, as he threw one leg over the window. "I didn't reckon on this—that wily native will get away over the roofs if we're not sharp! No, don't you come—stay where you are till the others arrive!"

Within an arm's length of the window was a rickety-looking rain-pipe.

Locke made for this, swarming up it to the roof above with the agility of the born athlete.

Even as he did so, the sound of heavily-shod feet came from the floor below, denoting that some of the plain-clothes men had broken in, and were even then in the act of raiding the house.

On the roof itself, the native was busy dodging from one chimney stack



Williams gave a sudden yell of dismay as the native's burly arms came down with a swoop and pinioned his own to his sides in such a vice-like grip that he was unable to move so much as an inch. "Baas shoot now!" cried Umlili impudently. "But bullet him go through your friend—not through Umlili!" (See page 24.)

to another, making for an opening which separated this house from the next.

Locke followed suit, and then, the native suddenly catching sight of him, he paused and swung round, his chocolate-coloured face convulsed with sudden fury and surprise.

Next instant he had whipped the remaining automatic from his pocket and levelled it at Locke's head, pressing the trigger.

The detective ducked in the nick of time as the weapon barked, and the bullet went screaming over his head to "plonk" heavily into the brickwork of a near-by chimney stack.

Iron-nerved though he was, Ferrers Locke realised, with an inward sinking, that he was indeed in an unusually perilous situation.

He was absolutely unarmed, while the native, now apparently half-mad with fury and fright, had a fully-loaded automatic which he would not hesitate—had not hesitated, in fact—to use.

The detective remained crouching behind the chimney stack for a moment until Umlili, apparently satisfied that he had at least frightened his pursuer off, turned away and continued his swift, agile run across the galvanised iron roof, till he came to an abrupt stop on the very edge, over which yawned an abyss caused by a street which separated this house from the next.

The street below was swarming with people now—a huge crowd had collected on hearing the police whistles and now stood, in a gaping, breathless mass, staring up at the amazing drama which was being enacted over their heads.

A yell went up from the crowd as the native's figure—pigmy-like at such a height—appeared on the edge of the roof.

"There he is—there's the nigger!" shouted the crowd.

"Fetch him down! Fling him a rope!" cried other voices in the crowd.

And then the crowd itself was hushed into sudden, gasping silence.

For the native, with just one backward glance to where Locke was crouching behind the chimney stack, suddenly braced himself now and, with a blood-curdling yell, leapt high into the air!

His superbly-proportioned figure, the bare arms and legs gleaming in the sunlight, shot out into mid-air almost with the grace of a bird, clearing the distance between the two houses and landing cleanly and neatly on the roof opposite!

It was an amazing, a wonderful feat—a feat worthy of an expert circus acrobat, and it left the crowd breathless with mingled suspense and admiration.

Umlili lay still, where he had dropped, for a moment. Then he drew

himself erect once more, his figure poised almost on the edge of the roof opposite, his face towards the gulf he had just jumped.

Standing thus, he did not observe what Locke observed—the vague, shadowy outline of a moving figure amid the chimney stacks just behind him.

What is more, in the jump across the open street, the native had perforce to drop the automatic, which had since gone hurtling to the ground below, so that he was now weaponless.

Just for an instant he stood there, as if gathering up his strength.

Then he turned, with the intention of making across this roof and on to the next, hoping in this way to elude his would-be captors.

But ere he had taken more than a few strides across the corrugated iron roofing two figures sprang out from an adjoining chimney stack.

A length of rope spun lightly through the air and dropped clean over the native's head and shoulders, pinioning his arms to his sides, bringing forth a yell of fury and dismay from his lips.

The chase was over!

Ferrers Locke, breathing a sigh of immense relief, made his way back over the roof towards the rainpipe up which he had first climbed.

But the crowd below had sensed the situation now, and even as Locke reached the edge of the roof, a rope ladder came hurtling through the air, its iron grappels striking the corrugated roofing with a metallic sound.

Locke dropped on to hands and knees, catching the end of the rope-ladder just in time.

Then, adjusting the hooks in the ledge over the gully which ran round the edge of the building, he clambered swiftly down, letting himself in, however, by the window through which he had first come.

He was met in the room by a group of plain-clothes men, in the centre of whom was Jack Drake, looking rather white and haggard, but otherwise apparently unhurt.

"We found your assistant trussed up in a large cupboard in the next room, Mr. Locke," said Williams, coming forward. "He's had a rotten time, but assures us he has not been injured in any way."

"I'm real glad to hear that," said Locke, in genuine relief. "I have been in suspense ever since poor old Pyecroft turned up at Parktown, wondering—"

"Well, there's no need to worry any further, guv'nor!" said Jack, with a wan but cheery smile. "Bristow and that native fellow gave me a bit of rough handling—I guess I've got a few beautiful bruises knocking about all over my anatomy!—but beyond that I wasn't hurt."

"Just the same, though, I was about fed to the teeth with being trussed up like a helpless fowl in that confounded cupboard and I'm no end obliged to everyone here for yanking me out of it!"

"Thank heavens you are unhurt, my lad!" said Locke in tones of great relief. And then: "Come, Williams, we must search the house for Bristow."

(Look out for next week's magnificent instalment of this amazing serial, boys. Bristow, the dude, is going to give Ferrers Locke a good run for his money.)

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, Allsop, Anderson, Andrews, Antill, Appleton, Arbutnot, Armitage, Armour, Armstrong, Arnold, Ash, Ashley, Ashton, Astill, Atfield, Attewell, Awdry, Ayling.

Bacon, Bagshaw, Bailey, Baines, Balfour, Baker, Banks, Bannister, Barber, Barclay, Bardsley, Barker, Barlow, Barnes, Barratt, Bastow, Bates, Bather, Bayes, Bean, Bees, Bell, Bennett, Bestwick, Bigwood, 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, Brownee, 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.

Dakia, Dale, Dark, Davies, Dawson, Day, Decie, Denton, Diamond, Diver, Dixon, Dolphin, Douglas, Drake, Draper, Duck, Dunn, Duranton.

Earle, Edwards, Emery, Evans, Ewbank.

Farmer, Faulkner, Featherstone, Fender, Field, Fielder, Fisher, Fletcher, Flint, Flowers, Ford, Foster, Fothergill, Fox, Freeman, Fry.

Gale, Garrett, Gatehouse, Geary, Gibson, Gilbert, Gilligan, Goodman, Gore, Grace, Greenwood, Gregory, Gregson, Grimshaw, Grundy, Gull, Gunn.

Hake, Hall, Hallows, Hammond, Hancock, Hand, Harcastle, 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, Hollingsworth, Hollins, Holmes, Howell, Hubble, Huddleston, Humphrey, Hunter, Hurst.

Hillingworth, Inglis, Ingram, Ireland, Ironmonger.

Jackson, Jardine, Jarvis, Jeacocke, Jeeves, Jephson, Jervis, Jessop, Jewell, Jones, Jupp, Kaye, Kelly, Kennedy, Kendrick, Kerr, Kettle, Kilner, King, Knight, Knott, Knox.

Lacey, Lamb, Lane, Leach, Leaf, Lee, Lovesson-Gower, Lewis, Lilley, Lillywhite, Lindsay, Liles, Lipscombe, Lock, Lockwood, Lord, Lorimer, Loudon, Lowe, Lucas, Lepton, 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, Palaret, Palmer, Parker, Parkin, Partridge, Patterson, Payne, Payton, Peach, Pease, Peele, Pegler, Fellow, Penn, Penny, Pickering, Pigg, Pilch, Plank, Pollitt, Porter, Potter, Powell, Price, Pritchett.

Qualle.

Ranjitsinhji, Raynor, Reed, Reif, Rhodes, Richardson, Richmond, Riley, Robson, Rock, Rogers, Roper, Ross, Rowe, Rowley, Royston, Rush, Russell, Ryder.

Sachs, Sadler, Sanderson, Saunders, Scobell, Scott, Sedgwick, Sewell, Seymour, Sharp, Shaw, Shepherd, Sherwell, Shine, Slater, Spalding, Speak, Spooforth, Spooner, Staples, Staunton, Steel, Stoddart, Stone, Storer, Stork, Stratfield, Street, Strong, Strudwick, Studd, Sugg, Suskind, Sutcliffe.

Tarrant, Tate, Taylor, Tennyson, Thorp, Thresher, Thwaites, Tomkinson, Tower, Townsend, Trollope, Trotter, Trumble, Tubb, Tufton, Turnbull, Tydesley.

Underwood, Upton.

Vallance, Vane, Veitch, Verulam, Vibart, Vine, Vizard.

Waddington, Wadsworth, Walden, Walker, Walker, Wall, Waller, Wallington, Ward, Warner, Waters, Watson, Wauchope, Webb, Wells, Wetherall, Whale, White, Whittaker, Whyall, Wilson, Winslow, Winter, Wood, Woodbridge, Woolley, Wootnam, Wright.

Yardley, Yates, Yonge, Young.

Zulch.



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

CONCERNING OUR FREE GIFTS.

I FEEL I cannot apologise enough for the disappointment you have all experienced in connection with our gigantic Free Gift scheme. As I said in previous issues, the fault lay not with myself, but with the mechanical side of the business. And the fault, without plunging into technical terms, was such that it could not be repaired in time to commence our Free Gift week as had been so extensively advertised. My loyal chums know me; they know I would have done anything on earth to have kept my word with them, but it was not to be. True, I was offered a chance to "get out on my losses"—a chance that would have meant giving my chums something inferior to the quality of the Free Gifts advertised. This I would not do. Of the two evils I thought Magnetites would much prefer a wait of a few weeks, and then have the right thing, than have something dished up whose only merit lay in the fact that it came along with the issue of the MAGNET that had been advertised as a Free Gift number.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER!

Now, these wonderful cut-out action photographs of Famous Cricketers are coming along, and to make up for the wait you are experiencing I intend to present four of these Superb Free Gifts each week. In other words, Magnetites will have all that was promised them in the first place, but instead of two gifts a week they will now have

FOUR TOPPING FREE GIFTS EACH WEEK!

Perhaps the rumour will go round that the whole thing was a catch. I've been a boy myself, and I know how gossip and scandal attend these misfortunes. But there's no catch in it, chums—of that I give you my word. There never has been a catch. Editors cannot afford to play fast and loose with their

regular public. The whole affair is something in the nature of a tragedy, so far as I am concerned, for always the reader comes first with me. I say reader, but Magnetites are far more intimate than that. We are in the habit of referring to ourselves as friends, and I honestly think that Magnetites are my friends. By the same token, I want ALL Magnetites to understand that I am

THEIR FRIEND!

Anything within reason that I have been able to do at any time during my reign of office I have been pleased to do, and shall always be pleased to do. My working time, and, incidentally, a great deal of my leisure time, is yours, and always will be yours so long as I sit in the editorial chair. That's the way of a friend. And as a friend I now ask you a favour. Forget about this beastly disappointment—or, if you must remember it, put it down to mechanical difficulties, over which your friend had no control, and revive your interest in readiness for that issue of the MAGNET

DATED AUGUST 15TH.

As you all know, the MAGNET bears a week-end date, but copies are always obtainable on the Monday preceding it. Do you, then, give this particular issue a good reception. Tell all your friends, show them the wonderful Free Gifts—four of them—and then look forward to the second week of this colossal treat. Don't forget

AUGUST 15TH ISSUE!

ITEMS OF INTEREST!

F. Woodward writes to ask why Mr. Quelch's "History of Greyfriars" cannot be published alternate weeks in place of the "Herald." There is no cut-and-dried

answer to this question. My chum suggests it would be a wise thing to do, if not too dry. Mr. Quelch is never dry, except when he waxes sarcastic. It is a smart notion—something about the ancient monks and the fish they caught in the old moat and the pellucid waters of the Sark. I doubt, however, if it ever entered the learned mind of "Quelch" to go in for serial publication. Another idea is for one issue of the "Schoolboy's Own Library" to be devoted to a yarn by Dicky Nugent, about St. Sam's. Unfortunately, Dicky does not write yarns to that length.

NEXT MONDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"THE MYSTERY OF BUNTER COURT!"

This is really Mr. Frank Richards' masterpiece. The way he's handled the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove, and the way this same Owl, in turn, handles some extremely awkward situations, calls for the highest praise. If any of my chums miss this amazing treat of a story they will never cease to regret it. I'll say no more.

"THE VELDT TRAIL."

There is another trenchant instalment of this astounding mystery story on the programme for next week. We see Ferrers Locke slowly but surely gathering up the threads of the case, although, to the unpractised eye, the more threads there are lying about the more baffling becomes the mystery. Not so with Locke. He has a happy knack of sifting the chaff from the wheat. Keep your eye on him, boys!

"SUMMER SPORTS!"

Harry Wharton & Co., of the "Herald," have obliged with a special supplement dealing with sport. It is distinctly good, and well worth reading. Don't miss it on any account!

"FAMOUS CRICKETERS" COMPETITION!

This competition is creating a furore amongst the reading public. Not for some considerable time has there been such an interesting and simple competition. You have everything to help you along the road to success. The magnificent prizes must be won. See to it, chum, that your name is included in the prizewinners' list.

Your Editor.

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BILLY BUNTER'S MASTER STROKE!

(Continued from page 20.)

He was still under the impression that Walsingham was somewhere in the extensive cellars.

But he shouted for him and hunted for him in vain, and it dawned upon him at last that the butler was not there, and that he had been taken in by a trick. He was alone in the deep cellars under Combermere Lodge—alone, remote from help, with scarcely a hope of making his voice heard if he shouted with all the strength of his lungs.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Pilkins.

He rushed back to the door, and hammered on it. But the door would have resisted the utmost efforts of a dozen Pilkinses.

He hammered and he shouted; but answer there came none.

Billy Bunter had ascended the staircase, and closed and locked the door at the top.

He slipped the key into his pocket. That key was not to be seen in the butler's room again.

Bunter listened at the upper door. He could surmise that Mr. Pilkins was hammering and shouting. But he heard no sound. The staircase was deep: the two oak doors were thick and strong. Not a whisper came into the regions above of Mr. Pilkins' frantic yells.

"I fancy that was rather neat!" murmured Bunter.

He rolled away.

Perhaps somewhere in his fat breast he felt a twinge of uneasiness. But he felt that this was the only way! He had to remain lord of the Lodge—he was determined on that. So Mr. Pilkins, if he refused to listen to reason, had to be disposed of. He was disposed of; and that was all there was about it! That was Bunter's view of the matter.

Bunter had a lonely lunch that day amid the magnificence of Bunter Court. Mr. Pilkins had a still lonelier one; and undoubtedly did not enjoy it half so much.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

All Serene!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had returned in the summer dusk. They came back to Bunter Court a little tired and dusty, but very merry and bright.

Billy Bunter greeted them cheerily.

"Had a good day?" he asked.

"Oh, top-hole!"

"The top-holefulness was terrific, my esteemed Bunter!"

"Have you got through your giddy business affairs while we've been gone, old top?" asked Bob Cherry cheerily.

Bunter grinned.

"Oh, yes, that's all right. Everything's settled first-rate!"

"Good!"

Sammy Bunter was back a little later, sunburnt and perspiring, from the joys of Margate. He looked for Bunter, and gave him an inquiring and suspicious blink.

"Is it all right?" he asked.

"Of course it is!"

"You've seen Pilkins, then?" asked Sammy, staring at him. "Didn't he make a fuss?"

"I had a talk with him," said Bunter airily.

"What is he going to do, then?"

"He's not going to do anything. In fact, he's going to stay for some time in a quiet place, away from business."

Sammy Bunter whistled.

It was later in the summer evening that the Ramsgate party came home. Voices were heard raised in song on the drive; the trip to Ramsgate had apparently impaired the sedate manners of the Combermere footmen. Perhaps it was fatigue that impelled them to hang on to the banisters as they sought their sleeping-quarters. Harry Wharton & Co. saw nothing more of the footmen that evening.

Walsingham was the last to turn up.

The chums of Greyfriars and Sammy Bunter had gone to bed, when a car came gliding up the drive, with the butler in it. Billy Bunter was up, however, nodding in an armchair; and he straightened up and gave Walsingham a severe blink as he presented himself.

"You are late, Walsingham."

"Yes, sir. The fact is—"

"Has my father sent me a letter?"

"The fact is, sir, that I did not find Mr. Bunter at the Grand Hotel in Canterbury," said Walsingham. "I waited the whole day, sir, but he did not arrive."

"What!" exclaimed Bunter.

"I am sorry, sir; but I could not do more!" said Walsingham. "Mr. Bunter certainly did not arrive at the hotel in Canterbury to-day."

"I suppose he must have changed his plans," said Bunter. "Well, never mind, Walsingham; it's very annoying, but it can't be helped. You may go to bed."

Walsingham hesitated.

"You've seen Mr. Pilkins, sir?"

"I've seen him," assented Bunter. "I have arranged matters with Mr. Pilkins, Walsingham. He is going up to London to-morrow to see my father, for the signing of the—the necessary documents."

"Very good, sir!" said Walsingham.

"Good-night, sir!"

Walsingham retired.

Billy Bunter sought his couch that night in a satisfied frame of mind. Having disposed of a dinner large enough for three, and a supper sufficiently extensive for four, he was feeling very fat and comfortable and contented. His masterly strategy had warded off the danger that had threatened his occupation of Bunter Court; and in his happy satisfaction he had no consideration to waste on the hapless estate-agent who was now also a tenant of Combermere Lodge.

What would be the ultimate outcome of his amazing adventure Bunter did not know—and could not guess. As that problem was, at present, insoluble, he gave it up, and dismissed it from his mind in his usual happy style.

Bunter slept well, and dreamed of a study spread in the Remove passage at Greyfriars—the most comfortable and contented of all the tenants of Bunter Court.

THE END.

(How long can Billy Bunter keep up this amazing game? What's going to happen to Pilkins? These questions are answered in—"The Mystery of Bunter Court"—next week's fine story.)



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