

4 GORGEOUS FREE GIFTS—INSIDE!

No. 914. Vol. XXVIII.

Week Ending August 15th, 1925.

The **Magnet** 2

Library of
Complete School Stories

EVERY MONDAY.



H. SUTCLIFFE

*England's
First Pair!*



J. B. HOBBS



C. H. PARKIN

Free 4

**SPLENDID STAND-UP
CUT-OUT PHOTOS**

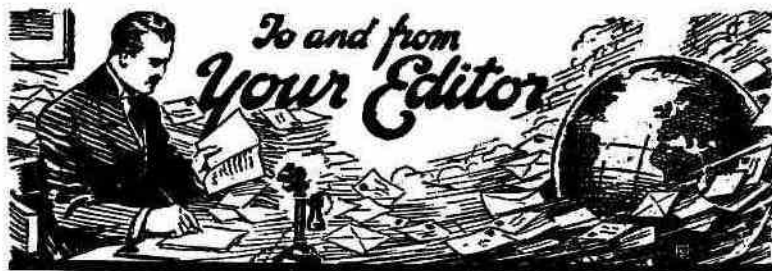
INSIDE

**NEXT WEEK—
MEAD AND WHYSALL
WOOLLEY AND DIPPER**



E. HENDREN

10s. A WEEK FOR A YEAR. 5s. A WEEK FOR A YEAR.
40 OTHER SPECIAL PRIZES. (See the Grand Competition inside.)



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 (1932), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HERE THEY ARE!

WHAT do you think of the Free Gifts given away with this issue, boys? Aren't they just scrumptious? Aren't they amazingly lifelike? Aren't they worth waiting for? "Rather!" I can hear the great roar of assent—in imagination, of course—going up from Magnetites all over the land.

WITHOUT PARALLEL.

Nothing like this in the way of Free Gifts for readers has ever been done before on so gigantic a scale. *Four Beautiful Free Gifts each week!* Gee! I'll wager your mouths are watering; I bet you're anxious for next Monday to come round. Don't these cut-out photos look well on the mantelpiece in your den? Don't they stand up well? Won't they make a fine collection? I could go on talking to you like this for hours, and then I should run out for want of suitable words to describe them.

FOUR MORE AGAIN NEXT WEEK!

That's what you mustn't lose sight of. Mead, Whysall, Woolley, and Dipper—all good men and true—will form the subject of next Monday's wonderful cut-out photos. See that you get them, chums. Drop in at your newsagents' now and order a copy of next week's MAGNET. If you leave your order later you may be disappointed, for once the value of these superb free gifts become known thousands of new readers will throng to the MAGNET banner. Take the tip!

10s. A WEEK POCKET MONEY!

How would you like that sum of money coming in regularly for fifty-two weeks? My word, wouldn't you have a good time with it! And yet we can do more than talk about it. Such a handsome weekly allowance is within your grasp. You must have seen the simple competition on pages 16, 17, and 18. Well then, why don't you buckle to and have a shot at winning it. The second prize of

5s. A WEEK FOR A YEAR.

presents just as attractive a vision, and is really worth having, while there are forty more topping awards that can be chosen at will from the following: Cricket Bats, Cameras, Footballs, Meccano Sets, Air Guns, Crystal Sets, Steam Engines, Electrical Toy Outfits, Fretwork Outfits, Tennis Rackets, Roller Skates, Chemistry Outfits, etc., etc. Wire in with this competition now, chums.

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A NOTE FROM BOMBAY.

A chum of mine at Bombay has just joined up with the army of Magnetites. His name is Rusy J. Bilimoria, and his address runs, Khalack Dina Terrace, Gowvelia Tank Road, Bombay. As he says, the MAGNET is "the" paper, and Harry Wharton's a real chum! If any reader can give our Bombay friend any tips on riding he will be glad. I have passed the interesting letter on to Coker. He can ride the high horse, but possibly Bunter is the right fellow for this kind of thing. He can ride the P.O. stunt to the last gasp.

Next Monday's Programme!

"THE PRISONERS OF BUNTER COURT!"

By Frank Richards.

A sensational story of Billy Bunter's amazing imposture at Bunter Court, otherwise Combermere Lodge, with Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars and Arthur Augustus of St. Jim's playing leading parts.

"THE VELDT TRAIL!"

Another trenchant instalment of this baffling story, featuring Ferrers Locke, the world-famous criminal investigator, and his clever boy assistant, Jock Drake.

"CELEBRATION SUPPLEMENT."

A special "Greyfriars Herald" Supplement by Harry Wharton & Co., dealing with those important and joyous occasions—Celebrations.

MEAD, WHYSALL, WOOLLEY AND DIPPER!

Interesting articles on these four famous cricketers, who, incidentally, form the subject of next week's topping free gifts.

Your Editor.

THIS WEEK'S FREE GIFTS. WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO!

First separate the two figures by cutting along the white lines dividing the green bases, then bend the cardboard back where it says "Fold here." It will at once be seen that a natural support is given to the photo, enabling it to stand up anywhere in an amazingly lifelike attitude.

FAMOUS CRICKETERS' NAMES!

This list includes the name of every cricketer used in connection with the simple competition on pages 16, 17, and 18.—Wire in, chums!

Abel, Abercorn, Abraham, Adams, Aitkin, Akroyd, Allen, Allsop, Anderson, Andrews, Antill, Appleton, Arbutnot, Armitage, Armour, Armstrong, Arnold, Ash, Ashley, Ashton, Astill, Athfield, Attewell, Awdry, Ayling.

Bacon, Bagshaw, Bailey, Baines, Balratow, Baker, Banks, Bannister, Barber, Barclay, Bardsley, Barker, Barlow, Barnes, Barratt, Bastow, Bates, Bather, Bayes, Bean, Beet, Bell, Bennett, Bestwick, Bigwood, Birch, Bird, Bishop, Blackburn, Blades, Bland, Bligh, Bloodworth, Board, Boardman, Bolton, Boot, Borradaile, Bourne, Bousfield, Bowden, Bowley, Box, Boyes, Bradell, Brand, Braund, Bray, Bridges, Bright, Bristowe, Broadbridge, Brooke, Broughton, Brownlee, Bryan, Bryant, Buckle, Bull, Bullock, Burn, Burrell, Burrows, Bush, Butcher, Butler, Butterworth.

Cadman, Cadwalader, Caldwell, Campbell, Carless, Carpenter, Carr, Carroll, Carter, Carver, Castle, Catterall, Cave, Chapman, Cherry, Clay, Cole, Coleman, Collier, Collins, Constable, Conway, Cook, Cooper, Corder, Coverdale, Cox, Craven, Crawford, Crossland, Crow, Curtis.

Dakin, Dale, Dark, Davies, Dawson, Day, Decie, Denton, Diamond, Diver, Dixon, Dolphin, Douglas, Drake, Draper, Duck, Dunn, Durston.

Earle, Edwards, Emery, Evans, 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, Hardcastle, Hardman, Hardstaff, Hardy, Hare, Hargreaves, Harper, Hartkopf, Hartley, Hay, Hayward, Haywood, Head, Hearne, Hendren, Hendry, Heseltime, Hewitt, Hill, Hill-Wood, Hirst, Hitch, Hoare, Hobbs, Hogg, Holland, Hollingsworth, Hollins, Holmes, Howell, Hubble, Huddleston, Humphrey, Hunter, Hurst.

Illingworth, Inglis, Ingram, Ireland, Iremonger.

Jackson, Jardine, Jarvis, Jeecocke, Jeeves, Jephson, Jervis, Jessop, Jewell, Jones, Jupp, Kaye, Kelly, Kennedy, Kendrick, Kerr, Kettle, Kilner, King, Knight, Knott, Knox, Lacey, Lamb, Lane, Leach, Leaf, Lee, Leveson-Gower, Lewis, Lilley, Lillywhite, Lindsay, Lines, Lipscombe, Lock, Lockwood, Lord, Lorrimer, Loudon, Lowe, Lucas, Lupton, Lyon, Lyttelton.

Macaulay, MacBryan, MacDonald, MacLaren, Mailey, Makepeace, Mann, Marriott, Marsden, Marshall, Matthews, McBeath, Mead, Middleton, Miles, Miller, Mills, Mitchell, Moon, Mordaunt, Mundy, Murdoch, Murrell.

Napier, Nawanagar, Needham, Newman, Noble, Norton, Nourse, Oates, O'Brien, Oldfield, Oldroyd, Page, Palniet, Palmer, Parker, Parkin, Partridge, Patterson, Payne, Payton, Peach, Pease, Peele, Pegler, Fellow, Penn, Penny, Pickering, Pigg, Plich, Plank, Pollitt, Porter, Potter, Powell, Price, Pritchett.

Ranjitsinhji, Raynor, Reed, Relf, Rhodes, Richardson, Richmond, Riley, Robson, Rock, Rogers, Roper, Rose, Rowe, Rowley, Royston, Rush, Russell, Ryder.

Sachs, Sadler, Sanderson, Saunders, Scobell, Scott, Sedgwick, Sewell, Seymour, Sharp, Shaw, Shepherd, Sherwell, Shine, Slater, Spalding, Speak, Spofforth, Spooner, Staples, Staunton, Steel, Stoddart, Stone, Storer, Stork, Streathfield, Street, Strong, Strudwick, Studd, Sugg, Susskind, Sutcliffe.

Tarrant, Tate, Taylor, Tennyson, Thorp, Threshen, Thwaites, Tomkinson, Tower, Townsend, Trollope, Trotter, Trumble, Tubb, Tufton, Turnbull, Tyldesley.

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, Whysall, Wilson, Winslow, Winter, Wood, Woodbridge, Woolley, Woosnam, Wright, Yardley, Yates, Yonge, Young, Zulch.

THE GREAT W.G.! No, this is not a reference to the greatest cricketer that ever lived. It concerns William George Bunter, who, although he doesn't know the first thing about cricket, fancies that he can put W. G. Grace, J. B. Hobbs, and the rest of them completely in the shade. You'll shriek when you read how our "W. G." skippers—



A Rousing, Long Complete School Story
of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Thomas Asks for It!

BILLY BUNTER snored. It was ten o'clock in the morning—a bright August morning. Anyone but Billy Bunter might have been supposed to have finished snoring by that time.

But William George Bunter was still going strong.

In the summer vacation the Greyfriars rising-bell was only a horrid memory. Billy Bunter was at liberty to snore as long as he liked. And he snored loud and long.

At Combermere Lodge—renamed Bunter Court since it had come into Bunter's possession—the Owl of Greyfriars was lord and master, and there was no one to say him nay.

His guests had long been stirring.

At school or on holiday, Harry Wharton & Co. were not likely to waste the golden hours of the morning slacking in bed. Bunter's other guests, D'Arcy of St. Jim's, was not perhaps quite so energetic as the Greyfriars fellows. But he had long been up. Billy Bunter snored on contentedly, regardless of the flight of time; and if he moved, it was only to turn his head on the pillow. He was good for another hour yet.

Then breakfast in bed would follow, keeping Bunter busy for an hour or so. That would leave him time to turn out and dress for lunch. Lunch following so closely on the heels of breakfast might have incommoded any other fellow. But Billy Bunter was always ready to restart after an interval, howsoever short; in fact, the shorter the interval the better he liked it.

That was Bunter's usual programme during his reign at Bunter's Court. For the first time in his fat career he was able to do just as he liked. The most impetuous fellow at Greyfriars, the unremitting borrower of half-crowns and "bobs," revelled in the midst of plenty, and reposed in the lap of luxury. And he enjoyed it all tremendously.

But on this especial morning Bunter's usual programme was not to be carried out.

Twice Thomas the footman had looked in at the door of Bunter's bed-room and coughed. His cough passed unheeded, and Thomas retired.

A third time Thomas looked in, and this time he coughed more emphatically. His discreet cough being still unheeded, Thomas advanced into the room, and ventured to the bedside of the lordly Bunter.

Bunter still snored.

With his somewhat extensive mouth open, and a smear lingering on his fat face from the jam-tarts which had wound up his previous night's supper, Billy Bunter was not a thing of beauty.

Thomas gazed at him, not admiringly.

"Hem!"

Thomas coughed again.

Snore!

FOUR TOPPING CUT-OUT STAND-UP PHOTOS — OF — FAMOUS CRICKETERS INSIDE !

"Sir!"

Snore!

"Master Bunter!"

Snore!

"A man has called, sir—"

Snore!

"He insists upon seeing you, sir—"

Snore!

"Excuse me, sir, but—"

Thomas' persistence had its reward. Billy Bunter's round eyes opened, and he blinked at the footman.

"Eh? What? What's the time?"

"Ten o'clock, sir."

Bunter glared.

"What do you mean by calling me before eleven?"

"Excuse me, sir. I—"

"I won't excuse you!" howled Bunter.

"Can't a gentleman rest in his own

house without being disturbed by silly servants?"

"But, sir—"

"Get out!"

"But—"

"Do you want to be sacked?" howled Bunter.

"Oh, sir!"

"Buzz off, blow you!"

"But—"

Bunter sat up in bed. He bestowed a ferocious blink upon Thomas, the footman, and clutched up his pillow.

It was so obviously his intention to swipe the importunate Thomas with the pillow that the footman jumped back in alarm.

"I—I—I say—"

"Get out!"

"A man has called—"

"Bother him! Bother you!"

"He insists—"

"Insists!" howled Bunter. "Nobody has a right to insist in this house, Thomas, excepting its master. Who's master here?"

"You are, sir," said Thomas. "But this man Horrocks—"

"Never heard of him. Get out!"

"He's the Combermere butcher, sir."

"Blow the Combermere butcher!" howled Bunter. "Will you let me go to sleep, you dunderhead?"

"He has brought his bill, sir—"

"Blow his bill!"

"He requests payment—"

"Buzz off!"

"He insists—"

Whiz!

Bunter, fed up with the footman's importunity, hurled the pillow. It caught Thomas on his clean-shaven, well-trained face.

"Oh!" gasped Thomas.

Bump!

Thomas, the footman, sat down with a heavy concussion. Bunter glared at him from the bed.

"Take that, you footling ass! Go and tell that low tradesman to clear. Shut the door."

"Oh! Oh dear!" gasped Thomas.

"Shut up!"

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Thomas rose to his feet. He picked up the pillow. For a moment Thomas was powerfully tempted to return that pillow with a crash. But he remembered in time the many tips he had received from Master Bunter, and—still more to the point—the many more tips he expected to receive during Bunter's tenancy of Combermere Lodge.

He suppressed his feelings. "Your pillow, sir!" said Thomas, with really a master-stroke of well-trained footman civility.

And he replaced the pillow gently under Bunter's head, and retired from the room. Bunter's head wallowed luxuriously in the softness of the down pillow. The door had scarcely closed behind Thomas when he was snoring again.

Tradesmen who wanted their bills paid might call, and call again, but Bunter's comfort was not to be interfered with. The skies might fall, indeed, and so long as the fall thereof did not awaken Bunter, his unmusical snore would continue long and loud. Indeed, when Bunter's snore was fairly going strong it was doubtful if the Last Trumpet would have drawn more than a passing grunt from him.

Thomas retired, and the master of Bunter Court was left to repose. And the great spaces of Lord Combermere's state bed-room echoed to the rumble of his happy snore.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Wharton is Wanted!

"WELL hit, Bob, old man!" Frank Nugent called out cheerily, as Bob Cherry sent the round red ball whizzing.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's.

Billy Bunter's guests were all out of doors that sunny August morning. Billy Bunter, as a host, left much to be desired. Nevertheless, his guests were succeeding in having quite a good time.

D'Arcy of St. Jim's, the latest addition to Bunter's party, had been rather dubious—first dubious about coming, and then dubious about staying. Bunter had bothered him to come, till the easy-going swell of St. Jim's had consented; and dubiety came too late. But on the whole, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy found himself quite merry and bright at "Bunter Court."

Little was seen of William George Bunter before lunch, any day; and so the mornings, at least, were very pleasant. And after lunch Bunter generally had a nap, and so the afternoons were agreeable enough so long as his nap lasted. Bunter's guests might, perhaps, have considered themselves a little neglected, had not Bunter been a fellow whose absence was much more enjoyable than his presence.

As it was, his manners and customs made the holiday quite a success; Harry Wharton & Co. were sufficient unto themselves; and they got on excellently with Arthur Augustus. The later Bunter slept in the morning, and the longer he napped in the afternoon, the better it was for everybody concerned.

On this especial morning, the chums of the Remove had turned out on the Combermere Lodge cricket pitch. But Harry Wharton was seated under one of the shady trees thinking—thinking hard.

In the days before Lord Combermere had become one of the "new poor," there had been "cricket weeks" at the Lodge, and great doings in that line. Cricket weeks were over now so far as Lord Combermere was concerned. Wharton was thinking of the queerness

of that vacation at Combermere Lodge and the strangeness of being there with Billy Bunter at all.

It had been simply as a jest that the Famous Five had accepted Bunter's invitation for the holidays; they had been astounded when it turned out that Bunter really had a place to ask them to. For days after their arrival the chums of the Remove had had to believe that Bunter Court really did exist—for there it was.

Then they had learned that Bunter had the place furnished from the owner, and had coolly and cheekily re-named it Bunter Court. Then they had met Mr. Pilkins in Combermere, and learned that Bunter had secured the place while the agent was ill in a nursing-home. They had witnessed Mr. Pilkins' rage and dismay at finding that Bunter was tenant of the lodge. Yet, somehow, Mr. Pilkins seemed to be satisfied now; at all events, he did not seem to have disturbed Bunter in his possession. That looked as if it was all right; and yet—

Wharton was thinking; but, really, he did not quite know what to think. There was something odd, something hidden, something he could not understand, about this extraordinary vacation with Bunter. Certainly the chums of the Remove were enjoying their holiday; Bunter Court offered every kind of resource, and their own company sufficed for them. And the coming of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's was decidedly an improvement, too. Still, Harry did not feel quite at ease in his mind; and what was the reason of the sudden and unexplained departure of Sammy Bunter the day before?

Really, it was amazing that Billy Bunter should be in possession of such an establishment. Lord Combermere had once held high state within those lofty walls; now he was one of the "new poor," and could not afford to live in his own magnificent establishment. He was in a Swiss hotel while a stockbroker's son enjoyed the magnificence of his home. *Sic transit gloria mundi*—thus were the mighty fallen.

From Lord Combermere to Billy Bunter was undoubtedly a drop from the sublime to the ridiculous. "The stately homes of England," celebrated by the poetaster, were in the melting-pot. Sooner or later the magnificent lodge would have to be sold, probably, to some bloated profiteer; meanwhile, it was "let furnished," and Billy Bunter was its unexpected and remarkable tenant.

With careful management, the house could have been run on about eighty pounds a week. Bunter was running it on nothing at all. The bills that were piling up might have frightened him if he had given any thought to them. Fortunately for his fat comfort, he didn't.

However, Harry Wharton & Co. knew nothing of all that. They believed that Bunter's father had taken the house for him, for the summer holidays—simply not knowing what else to think. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was still under the impression that it was the genuine "Bunter Court" of which Billy Bunter often talked. The Greyfriars fellows knew better; but they had not enlightened the St. Jim's junior—they were rather amused and a little irritated by Bunter's lofty swank, but they did not think of giving him away. Bunter could call Combermere Lodge "Bunter Court" if he liked, and have the new name painted up at the gates; it was nobody's business but his own.

Little dreaming of the sword of Damocles that was suspended over Bunter's unthinking head, the chums of the Remove were having a good time. Lord Combermere's cricket pitch, where

once distinguished county players had disported themselves, was in excellent condition; and this bright morning the juniors were getting a little practice.

Bunter had talked of fixing up a cricket match with a Combermere team, thus keeping up the sporting traditions of the place he had bagged, and Harry Wharton & Co. had been glad to hear of it. They were quite willing to meet the Combermere Ramblers, of whom the local estate-agent's young man, Parker, was skipper. Bob Cherry was at the wickets now, and his mighty hits showed that he had lost none of his skill since Greyfriars had broken up for the summer vacation.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the champion junior bowler of Greyfriars, was sending down some of his best, and Bob was dealing with them in great style. Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull were leather-hunting.

Harry Wharton and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sprawled in the grass under a wide-spreading beech, looked on at the cricket practice. They would have welcomed Bunter cheerily enough, had he cared to turn out and join the cricketers; but they were not exactly sorry that the Owl of the Remove elected to spend the morning in bed. Bunter's absence made the heart grow fonder, as it were.

Thomas, the footman, came down from the direction of the house, with a hesitating manner.

Since the sudden departure of Walsingham, the butler, Thomas had been head of the household, and he had carried on in a way that satisfied William George Bunter. As there was no news of Walsingham's return, Thomas nourished hopes of stepping into the butler's shoes, and becoming the great chief of the servants' hall. He was therefore extremely anxious to stand well with Master Bunter.

But Thomas was perplexed and disquieted now; the visit of Mr. Horrocks, the Combermere butcher, had greatly disturbed him. Mr. Horrocks was an emphatic gentleman; and his aggressive manners quite shocked Thomas's ideas of the fitness of things. In Lord Combermere's time, a sort of aristocratic penury had reigned in the great house; but certainly no angry tradesman had ever called there to insist upon his account being paid.

It was an occurrence that shocked Thomas; and as Master Bunter flatly declined to turn out of bed and deal with the matter, and the butcher refused to go, Thomas was in a position of great difficulty. Hence his hesitating approach to the Combermere cricket ground. He felt that all he could do was to consult Master Bunter's friends; something, undoubtedly, had to be done, and Thomas did not know what to do.

"Master Wharton!"

Harry looked up.

"Hallo! Yes, Thomas?"

"Perhaps you will excuse me speaking to you, sir," said Thomas. "Something has 'appened, sir, that is very awkward."

"Yes," said Harry. "But hadn't you better speak to Bunter?"

Thomas made a grimace.

"I've tried to do so, sir, but Master Bunter refuses to wake up, sir. His instructions is to be called not before eleven."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Well, what is it?" asked Harry. "If there's anything I can do, I will do it, of course."

"Mr. Horrocks has called, sir, and refuses to go without his money."

"Eh?"

"The butcher, sir," said Thomas.

"Oh! The butcher?"

"Yes, sir, and I don't know how to deal with him. He had actually raised his voice, sir," said Thomas.

"Dear me!" said Harry.

"In fact, sir, he is a-carrying on," said Thomas. "He seems to think, sir, that his bill will not be paid. Perhaps if you, sir, was to speak to him, you could induce him to go away quietly, sir, and call again after Master Bunter has rose, sir."

"Oh!" said Harry.

The captain of the Remove half-rose from the grass, and then sat down again. He was extremely disinclined to butt into Bunter's personal affairs. Thomas looked very anxious.

"You see, sir, the bill has really been running a very long time," he said, "ever since Master Bunter took over the 'ouse, in fact. Mr. Walsingham sent very large orders, sir, to the local tradesmen, on Master Bunter's instructions, and the accounts have mounted up, sir. I know Mr. Walsingham was growing a little troubled about it, sir, before he left. But so long as he was here, the tradesmen thought it was all right. Now Master Bunter has sent Mr. Walsingham away, and some of the tradesmen have asked for their accounts. Mr. Horrocks has asked three times, sir, and has refused to send anything more till he is paid. When I told Master Bunter so, sir, he instructed me to change my butcher, which I did accordingly; but that only seems to have made Mr. Horrocks excited, sir, and now he has come up to the 'ouse and refuses to go."

Thomas paused, looking very distressed.

Wharton looked worried.

"Blessed if I see how I can interfere," he said. "I suppose Bunter's father will send the man a cheque."

"Yes, sir, but it hasn't been sent," said Thomas, "and Mr. Horrocks has even used the word bilk, sir."

"Oh, my hat!"

"He says, sir, as he's dealt with tenants in furnished 'ouses before, sir, and he really suspects that Master Bunter may flit, sir, leaving the bill unpaid, sir," said Thomas, looking very shocked.

"Oh!" murmured Harry.

He did not look at Arthur Augustus; but he knew that the expression on that noble youth's countenance was extraordinary.

Arthur Augustus was learning some unexpected facts with regard to "Bunter Court."

Thomas, quite unaware of the extent to which he was enlightening the swell of St. Jim's, gazed anxiously at Harry Wharton.

"In the circumstances, sir, perhaps you will speak to the man and reassure him," said Thomas. "To tell the truth, sir, he's fairly bawling, and all the servants, sir, can hear him. Such a thing, sir, has never occurred at Combermere Lodge before—not all the time that I've been a footman in his lordship's service, sir. I dare not think, sir, what Lord Combermere would say if he knew these things were going on, sir; and Master Bunter refuses to see the man, or even to wake up, sir."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus faintly.

"So if you'd see the man, sir, and assure him that his money is safe—" said Thomas.

Wharton knitted his brows.

Undoubtedly he had wondered how



"Blow the Combermere butcher!" howled Bunter. "Will you let me go to sleep, you dunderhead?" "He has brought his bill!" said Thomas. "Blow his bill!" "He requests payment!" "Buzz off!" "He insists—" continued Thomas. Whiz! Bunter hurled the pillow, catching Thomas on his clean-shaven chin. (See Chapter 1.)

Bunter had been able to carry on with so much reckless extravagance at Bunter Court. He had wondered that Bunter's father was willing to stand such enormous expenses—wondered, indeed, how the stockbroker could afford to do so. But certainly it had not occurred to him that Bunter was "running the show" on a system of unlimited "tick."

"Dash it all, man, the money must be safe," said the captain of the Remove. "Bunter couldn't be such an ass as to run up bills without his father's permission. But, of course, I don't know anything about the matter personally. I don't see how I can interfere. Bunter must see the man."

"But, sir—"

"You had better call Bunter again," said Harry. "If he won't get up tell the man to wait until he does. I'm sure Bunter would not like me to chip in. He was annoyed when I saw the estate agent's clerk, who called the other day, and I can't let the same thing happen again."

"Very well, sir!" said Thomas.

And he took his way back to the house to make one more effort to rouse William George Bunter, and, that failing, to placate the irate Mr. Horrocks, and endeavour to induce him to wait quietly till it pleased the lordly lord and master of Bunter Court to turn out of bed. But the expression on Thomas' clean-shaven face was not hopeful.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Wrathy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY removed his celebrated eyeglasses from his eye rubbed it slowly and thoughtfully, and replaced it.

Then he turned upon Harry Wharton's rather troubled face.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked.

Wharton's brows were knitted. The information he had received from Thomas had been rather a shock to him. "Wharton, dear boy—" murmured D'Arcy.

"Yes, old scout?"

"A fellow does not want to be curious, of course," said Arthur Augustus. "I twust I should nevah be guilty of the bad form of inquirin' into 'thah fellows' affairs. But this is vewy odd. Is it a fact that Buntah has this house, furnished, on a lease, and that it is not his own place?"

"Hem!"

"Accordin' to what the footman was sayin', that is the case, dear boy."

Wharton smiled faintly.

"But accordin' to what Buntah has told me, this place is Buntah Court, the ancestral home of his family," said Arthur Augustus.

"Hem!"

"It has struck me as wathah wemarkable, you know," said the swell of St. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 914.

Jim's, thoughtfully. "Buntah has wewpewesented this place as his ancestwal home, where genewations of Buntahs have flouwished, but he has also said that his fathah gave fifty thousand pounds for it. The statements do not seem to agwee, somehow."

"Bunter's statements don't always agree," said the captain of the Remove, with a laugh.

"Wathah not. But weally, if he has taken the place furnished for the vacation, he must be a howlin' ass to stuff a fellow about it."

"Well, he is a howling ass," said Harry. "I hope he hasn't been ass enough to land himself in trouble that he can't pull out of. It's a jolly queer bizney from beginning to end, and I'm blessed if I quite like the look of things. Good man, Inky!"

"Bwavo! Well bowled, deah boy!" chirruped Arthur Augustus, waving his eyeglass.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had sent down a ball that whipped Bob Cherry's middle stump out of the ground. Harry Wharton and D'Arcy forgot the existence of Billy Bunter for the moment.

"How's that, my esteemed Bob?" grinned Hurree Singh.

"Looks like out!" chuckled Nugent.

Bob made a grimace.

"Good old Inky! You're a rod in pickle for the Combermere johnnies when they come up here for cricket. I fancy they haven't seen bowling like yours in Combermere, so far, old man."

"Wathah not," said Arthur Augustus, "and your battin', deah boy, is weally top-hole. I weally think it's as good as Tom Mewwy's, or Talbot's, and we think a lot of their battin' at St. Jim's. I wathah think I will twy to handle your bowlin', Huwwee Singh."

"The pleasuredfulness will be terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous D'Arcy," answered the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Arthur Augustus grinned. He was not so accustomed to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's wonderful flow of English as the Greyfriars fellows were. He found it rather entertaining. Hurree Singh had first learned English from the wisest moonshee in Bhanipur, and he had never unlearned it, as it were; but an instructor who had instructed him that "ludicrous" was a complimentary expression in English must have been, as Bob said, "some teacher."

"Take my bat," said Nugent, "Bob's will be rather hefty for you."

"Thank you, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus took Nugent's bat and went to the wickets to see what he could do against the dusky nabob's bowling.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Who's this jolly old merchant?"

Wharton glanced round.

A stout, red-faced man, whose look was excited and angry, was coming down to the cricket ground in a great hurry. The captain of the Remove guessed who it was. Thomas had not succeeded, obviously, in pacifying the Combermere butcher, or in rousing out Bunter to deal with him. The lord of Bunter Court was still snoring, and the Combermere butcher was bent on making somebody or other listen to his tale of woe. And here he was!

The cricket practice stopped. All eyes were fixed on the stout gentleman as he hurried excitedly up.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "The man looks quite excited, you know. I twust there is not goin' to be twouble!"

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"It looks to me as if the troublefulness is going to be terrific," answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Looks like it!" grinned Nugent.

Johnny Bull grunted.

"Why the thump doesn't Bunter pay his bills? Pretty thick to land his dashed tradesmen on his blessed guests."

Mr. Horrocks arrived. He surveyed the group of cheery cricketers with an irate eye. They smiled at him politely. They had no quarrel with Mr. Horrocks, though he certainly looked as if he had a quarrel with them.

"Pretty goings on!" was Mr. Horrocks' first remark.

"Good-morning!" said Harry Wharton politely.

"Yaas, wathah! Good-mornin'!" said D'Arcy.

"Soft sawder's no good to me!" said Mr. Horrocks.

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"What I'm after," said Mr. Horrocks, "is sixty-five pounds seven shillings and ninepence."

"Bai Jove!"

"And it seems that Mr. Bunter ain't to be seen," continued the Combermere butcher. "Ain't out of bed at 'arf-past ten in the morning. Well, that ain't my business, so long as my bill's paid. I'm after my money. I ain't supplying this here house with meat—best quality English—for nothing! My shop ain't a blinking philanthropic institootion."

The Greyfriars fellows and the St. Jim's junior looked at Mr. Horrocks, and looked at one another.

Doubtless Mr. Horrocks' complaint was well founded. The most generous-hearted butcher could not reasonably be expected to run his business on purely philanthropic lines. Still, it was no business of his present hearers. They had not run up a bill with him.

"I've dealt with furnished tenants afore, I have," resumed Mr. Horrocks—"a bilking lot, if you ask me!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My belief is that Lord Combermere will have to whistle for his rent!" said Mr. Horrocks emphatically. "I know the grocer and the baker and the green-grocer in Combermere ain't been paid—not a brown! Not a blinking brown! I know I ain't been paid! Twenty-five pun on account was what I asked first—and I was told a tale about a cheque that was coming! It ain't come! Well, now I want my money! I ask you, as man to man, ain't a man entitled to his money for goods delivered fair and square?"

Mr. Horrocks paused, like Brutus, for a reply.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the Greyfriars juniors did not speak. "I should certainly considah that you were entitled to your money. I wegard that as vewy faih."

"Glad you can see it, sir," said Mr. Horrocks sarcastically. "P'raps you can get that there Bunter to see it, too."

"I feah that it would be wathah impertinent of me to interfere in Buntah's pwivate business affaihs," said D'Arcy, shaking his head.

"Ho!" said Mr. Horrocks.

"You see, we have nothing to do with this, Mr. Horrocks," said Wharton mildly. "We are Bunter's guests here, that is all. You ought really not to tell us anything about this, you know."

Snort, from Mr. Horrocks.

"I'll tell the 'ole blooming county, if it comes to that, and the judge in the county court, too!" he retorted.

"Orders comes to me from Mr. Walsingham, butler to Lord Combermere. Of course, I supplies goods as ordered, thinking it's all O.K. Furnished tenant, rolling in money, I 'ear. Tenant who can afford to pay forty guineas a week for a furnished house is good for a butcher's bill, I thinks, naturally. But it runs on and on; nothing even paid on account. I asks for my money, and I'm put off. I comes up to the house to see Mr. Walsingham, and I'm told that the butler has gone to London. I goes down to the estate-office in Combermere to see Mr. Pilkins, who let the house for his lordship. I find that Mr. Pilkins has been away from his office for a long time, and his clerk, Parker, don't know what's become of him. Parker thinks there's foul play of some kind."

"Gweat Scott!"

"That's what he thinks, he does," said Mr. Horrocks. "He's jolly well thinking of calling in the police to look for Mr. Pilkins, he is!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Something fishy about the 'ole game!" said the Combermere butcher. "Where's Mr. Pilkins, the estate agent? Where's Walsingham, the butler? Nobody to tell a man anything, and bills running up! I call to see Mr. Bunter, and he's in bed and can't see a man, at 'arf-past ten! Dodging a man! You young gents are Mr. Bunter's guests here, are you? Don't know nothing about the matter, of course!" Mr. Horrocks grew heavily sarcastic. "Well, I've 'eard that story before many a time. I've come across bilkers in my time!"

"You cheeky ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly. The angry butcher was evidently classing the whole party together as "bilkers."

Wharton frowned.

"Look here, Horrocks," he exclaimed, "we've got nothing to do with the matter—nothing at all. You've no right to come talking to us about Bunter's affairs!"

"None at all!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You shouldn't supply goods on credit without making proper inquiries first."

"Ho!" said Mr. Horrocks. "And 'ow was I to know that Mr. Walsingham, his lordship's butler, had been took in by a bilk? I've dealt with Mr. Walsingham for years on end, and bills always paid on the nail. His word was as good as gold to any tradesman in Combermere. If he was 'ere to speak to a man, I'd wait for the money if he told me it was all right. But he's gone—and Mr. Pilkins is gone—and it looks fishy! If Mr. Bunter's got the money, why don't he square a man's bill? He's a bilk, that's what he is, jest as Parker told me yesterday at the estate-office."

"My belief is that he hasn't paid a penny rent on this here house, and I know he hasn't paid the servants' wages because they've told me so. Running about in cars, with a bill for petrol mounting up, and nothing paid on it, as they told me at the garage in Combermere. Ordering the best of everything, and not paying a shilling! You can say it ain't your business, if you like. But you're here, and Bunter ain't to be seen, so I tell you straight I want my money."

Mr. Horrocks paused, gasping for breath. He was a stout gentleman, rather short in the wind, and his eloquence had exhausted his supply of breath.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is weally vewy distwessin', you know! Buntah will be

feahfully annoyed when he hears of this!"

"Serve him jolly well right!" growled Johnny Bull. "What does he mean by landing this kind of thing on his guests?"

"If it's all fair and square, where's my money?" resumed Mr. Horrocks, having partly recovered his breath. "Let me see Mr. Walsingham. Where is he? If he's gone away, what's his address? Answer me that!"

Wharton shook his head.

"I know nothing about the butler," he said. "I only know that he left suddenly one day last week while we were up the river in a boat."

"Where's Mr. Pilkins, then?"

"Haven't the least idea. I understood that he went to London to see Bunter's father about signing the papers for letting the house. He doesn't seem to have come back yet."

"Well, all that ain't good enough," said Mr. Horrocks. "It's too fishy for me, and I can't afford to lose sixty-five pounds seven shillings and ninepence! Money's money!"

"You must see Bunter!" said Harry.

"Not out of bed—at 'arf-past ten!" snorted Mr. Horrocks. "The blinking footman called him, and he clucked a pillar at the blinking footman!"

"I'll call him," said Harry. "He must see you. I've no doubt he will set the matter right—at least, I hope so! I'll go up to the house with you."

"Then come on!" snorted Mr. Horrocks.

And Harry Wharton walked away with the Combermere butcher.

They left a silent and troubled group behind them. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon one thoughtful face after another. He was the first to speak.

"This is vewy queeah, you fellows!"

"The queerfulness is terrific!"

"Too jolly queer!" grunted Johnny Bull. "The best thing we can do is to clear off and leave Bunter to handle his blessed tradesmen on his own. We were duffers to come!"

"Pewwaps that is cowwect, deah boy. But I don't know about clearin' off," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "If Buntah is in a difficulty I wathah think we are bound to stand by him. Acceptin' his invitation heah is admittin' him to the wank of a fwiend, and a fellow is bound to stand by his fwiends."

"Something in that!" said Bob Cherry. "But Bunter's friendship would come jolly expensive at sixty-five pounds seven shillings and ninepence!"

"Yass, wathah! But——"

"And the other tradesmen," said Nugent. "It must run into hundreds of pounds! Phew!"

"But dash it all, the rent of the place must have been paid!" said Bob Cherry. "How could Bunter get hold of the place at all without paying anything?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Weally, it is a vewy awkward posish," said Arthur Augustus. "It is vewy unpleasant all wound. In the circumstances, it seems to me that the best thing we can do is——"

"Is what?" asked Bob.

"Get on with the cwicket, deah boy."

The Remove fellows grinned.

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Bob Cherry. "Let's!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went back to the wickets, and the juniors got on with it.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Very Rough on Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER was still snoring when Wharton looked into his room with a frowning brow.

It was not yet eleven, and the lord of Bunter Court had no intention of turning out before his usual hour.

But it was Wharton's intention to turn him out; the captain of the Remove had had enough of interviewing Bunter's tradesmen for him.

Bunter was dreaming, but not a happy dream, to judge by the expression on his fat face. Generally his dreams were of tuck, and of spreads in the study at Greyfriars; visions that would call up a beatific expression to his fat slumbering countenance. But perhaps the visit of the importunate Thomas had disturbed him, or perhaps the extraordinary situation of affairs at Bunter Court, which he firmly dismissed from his mind in his waking hours, haunted him in sleep and would not be denied.

Bunter was dreaming of Mr. Pilkins and Mr. Walsingham, whom he had shut up in the deep wine-cellars beneath Combermere Lodge.

In his waking hours, when he thought of his masterly strategy, Bunter was quite satisfied with it.

The troublesome estate-agent, who had been prepared to give his undesired

tenant endless worry and trouble, had been disposed of safely—at least temporarily—by locking him in the wine cellars. Walsingham, the butler, who had discovered him there, had been locked in along with him—really a master-stroke of strategy on Bunter's part.

Indeed, Bunter considered that there were very few fellows who could have handled so difficult a situation in so masterly a manner.

He was right; there were very few indeed! Certainly only Billy Bunter's amazing obtuseness could have made him satisfied with such a state of affairs.

Both the obnoxious persons who threatened trouble to the tenant of the Lodge being safely locked up, and the key of the cellars safe in Bunter's possession, the Owl of the Remove did not see any occasion for worrying.

The only worry was that Bunter had to supply his hapless prisoners, somehow, with provisions; and as the strictest secrecy was essential, this meant creeping down to the cellars at dead of night, when the house was buried in slumber.

Bunter was dreaming now that he had unlocked the lower door to the wine-cellars, and that the estate agent and the butler had suddenly leaped on him and seized him.

It was a most unpleasant dream.



The cricket practice stopped as Mr. Horrocks arrived. "Bal Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The man looks quite excited, you know!" "Pretty goings on!" was Mr. Horrocks' first remark. "Good-morning!" said Harry Wharton politely. "Soft sawder's no use to me!" growled Mr. Horrocks. "What I'm after is sixty-five pounds seven shillings and ninepence!"

(See Chapter 3.)

Harry Wharton, quite unaware of the alarming vision that haunted the lumbering brain of the Owl of the Remove, came across to the bed.

"Bunter!"

Snore!

"Bunter, you ass!"

Snore!

Wharton grasped the fat junior by the shoulder and shook him forcibly to awaken him.

There was a gasping howl from Bunter as he came out of the land of dreams. For the moment he still supposed that he was in the grasp of the estate agent and the butler.

"Owl! Leggo! Pilkins, you villain, leggo! Walsingham, you scoundrel, hands off! Owl! Leggo!"

"Bunter—"

"I won't bring you any more grub!" howled Bunter. "Do you hear? Ungrateful brutes! I— Why, what—who— Oh, I've been dreaming!"

Billy Bunter gasped and blinked up at the captain of the Remove.

"Is that you, Wharton?"

"Yes, you ass!"

"Owl! I thought it was that beast Pilkins—"

"You silly Owl!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Have you heard anything about Pilkins?" asked Harry.

"Eh? Yes! No! I—I mean I didn't think it was Pilkins!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't dreaming about Pilkins, or Walsingham either! Nothing of the kind!"

Harry Wharton stared at him.

"What the thump are you waking me up for?" demanded Bunter angrily.

"It's not eleven yet, is it?"

"Not quite. But—"

"Well, let me alone, then, blow you!" exclaimed Bunter. "Thomas has orders to wake me at eleven with my brekker. Leave me alone, bother you!"

Bunter settled his head on the pillow again. Wharton shook him more forcibly than before.

"Bunter, you ass—"

"Leggo!"

"You've got to turn out!" exclaimed Wharton impatiently. "You've got to see a man who's waiting for you downstairs. The butcher—"

"Blow the butcher!"

"He won't go without being paid!"

"Let him stay, then!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

Bunter glared at the captain of the Remove.

"Can't you mind your own business?" he roared. "Whose house is this, I'd like to know? Is this how you behave when you're a guest in a gentleman's house? I'd like you to remember, Wharton, that you're not in the Remove passage at Greyfriars now."

"You silly chump!" roared Wharton. "The man has asked us for his money. Do you want your guests to pay your bills?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?" snapped Wharton.

"Tell the man to go—"

"He won't go!"

"Blow him! Tell him to wait, then."

"You can tell him to wait yourself. I'm fed-up!" exclaimed Harry. "I'll send him up here to you."

"Oh, my hat!"

Bunter sat up in bed, wide awake now. He did not want to interview the angry butcher personally.

"Look here, Wharton, give him a message!" he gasped.

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"Well, what message?" growled the captain of the Remove.

"Tell him I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"What?"

"From one of my titled relations—"

"You silly Owl!" shrieked Wharton.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"You must see the man, Bunter! If you're really bilking the tradesmen, as he thinks, something will have to be done."

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "Why, I've given ten times the orders he was used to in Lord Combermere's time. I've ordered everything of the best, and stacks of it, and never grumbled about the prices. What more does he want?"

"He seems to want to be paid."

"Just like these rotten tradesmen! Blessed if I know what these dashed shopkeepers are coming to!" said Bunter warmly. "Well, if he wants to be paid, pay him, and I'll settle with you after breakfast."

"You silly ass, do you think I've got sixty-five pounds in my pockets?" exclaimed Wharton, in exasperation.

"Oh, my hat! Is it sixty-five pounds?"

"So he says."

"I dare say he has piled it on; you know what tradesmen are when you run up a bill," said Bunter. "I shall have to go through that account very carefully before I pay it."

"You'd better tell him so, then," growled Wharton.

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"I don't want to see him. A fellow in my position has a right to keep clear of sordid matters like this," said Bunter loftily. "What the thump do I keep a butler for, if I've got to see tradesmen myself? I'm not going to keep a dog and do my own barking, by Jove! Can't Thomas make the man go away?"

"No, ass!"

"Tell the servants to chuck him out, then."

"Fathead!"

"Well, tell him that Walsingham will deal with him," said Bunter.

"Walsingham's not here, you ass! How can he deal with the man when he's not in the house?" howled Wharton.

Bunter grinned. The Combermere butler was much nearer at hand than Wharton supposed.

"What are you grinning at, you image?" exclaimed Harry.

"Oh, nothing! Give the man my message! Tell him Walsingham is coming back this afternoon, and will telephone him," said Bunter. "Now, let me go to sleep. I shall miss my sleep at this rate. It will be time for brekker jolly soon."

Bunter laid his head on the pillow again. Harry Wharton stared down at the fat face.

"Is that all, Bunter?"

"That's all; don't talk any more. You're keeping me awake!"

"Well, I'll tell him."

"Do! Now, go out quietly, and don't make a row shutting the door."

Harry Wharton left Bunter's room, and a snore followed him out. The Owl of the Remove was slumbering again already.

Mr. Horrocks received the message with a grunt. However, he seemed relieved to hear that Walsingham was returning.

"Well, if that's so, all right," said Mr. Horrocks. "But, mind, if I don't hear from Mr. Walsingham this afternoon, I'm coming back; and you can tell Bunter so. And tell him that I'll bring a blooming bobby with me! I don't like the look of this here! A gang of bilkers, if you ask me!"

And with that Mr. Horrocks took his departure, much to the relief of the captain of the Remove. Wharton went back to join the cricketers, not in a very happy frame of mind.

A quarter of an hour later Bunter was sitting up in bed to breakfast, with Thomas ministering to him.

"Has that impudent tradesman gone, Thomas?" asked Bunter.

"Yes, sir."

"You will be careful, Thomas, not to deal with him again. A very impudent and ill-bred man."

"I don't think he would let me deal with him again, sir," said Thomas stolidly. "Not unless his account is paid, sir."

"Let me have his bill, Thomas, and I will see that a cheque is sent at once," said Bunter.

"Very good, sir."

"A very unpleasant occurrence altogether," said Bunter, frowning. "I really don't know what tradesmen are coming to in these days. Do you, Thomas?"

"No, sir," said Thomas.

"I have been disturbed," said Bunter. "I have actually not been allowed to finish out my sleep in peace. That is rather serious, Thomas."

"Oh, quite so, sir."

"You must be very careful, Thomas, to see that it does not occur again."

"Very good, sir."

Perhaps Thomas wondered how he was to see that it did not occur again, if the other Combermere tradesmen should follow the example of Mr. Horrocks. But he did not say so.

Bunter breakfasted contentedly, and his lofty equanimity was restored when he had disposed of eggs and bacon and kidneys sufficient for several hungry fellows. And then he turned out cheerfully and came down to lunch.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Team!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. eyed Bunter rather curiously when they sat down to lunch with the lord of Bunter Court.

Horrocks was gone; but, naturally, the Greyfriars fellows had not forgotten his visit; in fact, it lingered very obtrusively in their minds.

A vacation on these lines, even amid the magnificence of Bunter Court, left a good deal to be desired. Really, the chums of the Remove did not want to spend their summer holidays in interviewing irate tradesmen for their kind host and entertainer. Neither did they like being characterised as a "gang of bilks," even by a butcher who had lost his temper.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shared the feelings of the Greyfriars juniors.

The whole party, indeed, had debated whether they had better "clear," thanking Bunter for his hospitality up to date, and making one excuse or another for a sudden departure.

But there were difficulties in the way. On an earlier occasion when Wharton had suggested going, Bunter had

declared that such a departure would be 'letting him down.' And really it did not seem quite the thing.

Moreover, the cricket-match had now been arranged with the Combermere fellows, and it was scarcely possible to clear off and leave the match unplayed. At all events, it was not the kind of thing that Greyfriars cricketers cared to do.

The chums of Greyfriars were relieved, therefore, to find Billy Bunter quite merry and bright at lunch.

Neither the visit of Mr. Horrocks, nor his Gargantuan breakfast, had affected Bunter's appetite. He made a tremendous lunch.

That a fellow could enjoy his lunch so contentedly, if the sword of Damocles were suspended over his head, seemed unlikely. It appeared fairly certain that Bunter's financial difficulties were due only to carelessness, or else that he had thought of a way of dealing with them.

It was rather a delicate matter for his guests to offer any opinion upon; and as Bunter did not mention the subject, they could not.

Apparently the whole matter was satisfactorily settled—to judge by Billy Bunter's manner, at least. His guests were only too glad to think so.

Coming to think of it, they did not want to break up the party, unless it really was necessary to do so. Although they could not help feeling that there was something queer in the whole affair—something going on at Bunter Court that was mysteriously hidden from them, they admitted that they were, upon the whole, having a very good time there.

Instead of speaking about Mr. Horrocks, whom he had apparently dismissed from his mind, Bunter talked cricket at lunch.

Bunter was looking forward to the cricket-match, and he mentioned that he had given instructions to Thomas to provide refreshments on the most liberal scale for the great occasion. That was a detail that William George Bunter was not likely to overlook. In many ways Bunter was found wanting as a host; but in matters concerned with refreshment, liquid and solid, Bunter was "all there."

"Of course, they're rather a scratch lot, taken as cricketers," Bunter observed. "We shall rather make them open their eyes with Greyfriars cricket. Do 'em good—what?"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob.

"And St. Jim's cwicket—what?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, rather," said Bunter. "Let's see, six of us, and you make seven, Gussy. We shall want four more men. I'll pick out some of the menservants who can play cricket."

"You will?" asked Wharton.

As Wharton was cricket captain in the Remove at Greyfriars, the party had taken it for granted that he would captain the Bunter Court team. That did not seem to be Bunter's idea, however.

"Yes," said Bunter. "Lord Combermere used to stand cricket weeks here, you know, before he got too jolly hard up to live here at all. Some of the servants used to come in as extra men when players were wanted. So Thomas tells me."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus; and the Famous Five grinned.

Bunter had forgotten, for the moment, that Combermere Lodge was Bunter Court, the ancestral home of the Bunter tribe.

"Thomas says he can bowl," resumed Bunter. "Albert has played as extra man, too. I'll pick out a couple of others; in fact, I'll have some of 'em



The ball came down. Bunter spread himself to that ball. He was going to knock it to the boundary. But Bunter's sweeping bat missed the ball by about a yard. Crash! "How's that!" hooted Parker. "Ha, ha, ha!" Bunter stared at his spread-eagled wicket in amazement. "Oh!" he ejaculated.

(See Chapter 8.)

down to practice, and see what they can do."

"Oh!" said Harry.

Wharton certainly did not want to put himself forward in any way; but, really, this was extremely obtuse of even Bunter. Except, perhaps, for Coker of the Fifth, Billy Bunter was the very worst cricketer at Greyfriars, and he could scarcely expect the mighty men of the Remove to follow his lead in the field. Yet it seemed that that was precisely what he did expect—or, rather, what he took for granted.

Johnny Bull opened his mouth to speak, but closed it again. Johnny had to be very careful to remember that Bunter was his host, and to restrain the remarks he would have made in the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

Bunter rattled on cheerily:

"I must put you fellows through your paces, too."

"Eh?"

"Must you?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, yes! You see, it wouldn't do to risk a beating from the Combermere crowd. We've got our Greyfriars reputation to consider. Now"—Bunter stopped a well-laden fork half-way to his mouth, and blinked amiably at Bob—"you can bat, Cherry, in a way."

"Oh! Only in a way?" ejaculated Bob.

"But you're rather given to wild hitting," said Bunter. "Your style is a bit fluffy, in fact."

"Is it?" stuttered Bob.

"I dare say Wharton hasn't noticed it—anyhow, I don't remember his finding fault with you at Greyfriars. But I've a rather critical eye, you know. You see, I understand the game."

"And Wharton doesn't?"

"Well, not in the same way, or to the same extent," said Bunter, shaking his head. "The fact is, I never was quite satisfied with Wharton as cricket captain in the Remove. He never came up to what I consider a good standard in cricket—not my style at all."

"Not your style!" gasped Bob. "No, he wouldn't have been cricket captain in the Remove long if he'd played in your style, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Of all the—" began Johnny Bull.

And then he broke off suddenly, and glared at his plate instead of Bunter.

"You don't mind my mentioning it, Wharton, do you?" asked Bunter cheerily. "At Greyfriars you're somebody, I know—quite a little tin god in the Remove; but here you're nobody in particular, you know."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"Not that I'm going to leave you out of my team," said Bunter. "I don't mean that at all."

"Your team?"

"My team!" assented Bunter with a cheery nod. "The Bunter Court team, you know. I should be jolly short of

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men if I left out all the rotten cricketers here, what? Hee, hee, hee!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying Billy Bunter with a sort of fascinated gaze. Bunter, evidently, was fully satisfied with his own polished manners. But how anybody but a Prussian Hun could be satisfied with such manners was a mystery to Arthur Augustus.

"Only I want you to be rather careful, Wharton," went on Bunter. "I'll give you some tips when we go down to practice, and you'll see what I mean."

"You'll give me some tips—on cricket!" said the captain of the Remove faintly.

"Yes, old chap. Don't worry about thanking me. I'm prepared to help any chap on with the good old game," said Bunter. "I'll keep an eye on the lot of you, and when you go wrong rely on me to set you right."

Harry Wharton & Co. did not worry about thanking Bunter. They manfully restrained their strong desire to shy things at him.

The Owl of the Remove turned his big spectacles on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with a friendly blink.

"You, too, Gussy," he said. "You're my guest, you know, and I'm going to do all I can for you as well as these chaps. I've seen your cricket at St. Jim's, and I'm sure you won't mind my mentioning that I didn't think much of it."

"I have no objection to your mentionin' anythin' you please, Buntah, at your own table," said Arthur Augustus with calm dignity.

"Just so," assented Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was blessed with a thickness of skin that a rhinoceros might have envied. "Your style at the wickets is what I call rather flashy, you know."

"Indeed!"

"Just that," said Bunter. "If you had to stand up to my bowling you'd be out first ball."

"Bai Jove!"

"However, I'll give you some tips about batting," said Bunter cheerily. "I'll try to find time this afternoon, as the Combermere crowd will be along here to-morrow. I must have a little nap. I find that a nap after lunch freshens a fellow, but after that—"

"Weally, Buntah—"

"Don't thank me, old fellow. It's a pleasure. I'll be on the ground about four o'clock, and if you fellows are there, I'll show you something of how cricket should be played. See?"

Bunter rose from the table.

His guests gladly followed his example. They had finished lunch long before Bunter, and they were glad to have finished that enjoyable conversation with him.

Bunter rolled away, and the juniors strolled out. On the terrace they looked at one another.

"So it seems that Bunter is going to captain us in the giddy cricket match," said Frank Nugent, half-laughing.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Look here, I'm fed-up!" growled Johnny Bull. "Wharton's cricket captain, and we'd better tell that fat idiot so plainly."

"Oh, let him rip!" said Harry. "The fact is, we can't call him to order as if we were at Greyfriars."

"It is weally wathah a difficult posish," said Arthur Augustus. "But I suppose that weally Buntah means well."

"Are we turning up for instruction this afternoon, from the biggest idiot at

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cricket that ever was heard of?" demanded Johnny Bull sulphurously.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Not quite. Bunter said four o'clock. Who's coming out in a boat?"

"Good egg!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Six cheery juniors ran out a boat and pulled away up the river. What time they would return to Bunter Court was uncertain. But it was absolutely certain that they would not return in time to receive any cricket instruction from William George Bunter.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Game of Spoof!

"COMBERMERE one—two!"

Billy Bunter sat at the telephone.

Harry Wharton & Co. had left the Owl of the Remove, as they supposed, to take his usual nap after lunch. But as a matter of fact, Bunter was not thinking of napping just yet.

Business had to be attended to first. Only very pressing business could have kept Bunter away from his pillow, after a Gargantuan meal. But the business of Mr. Horrocks, the butcher, was very pressing indeed.

The irate butcher had to be placated somehow. Placating him by paying his bill being out of the question, Bunter had had to devise other means. Fortunately, the Owl of the Remove was seldom found wanting when a knavish trick was required.

There was a telephone in the state bedroom at Combermere, now occupied by Bunter. Instead of turning in, Bunter sat down to the instrument, after locking the door to make sure that there would be no listeners. Now he was ringing up Mr. Horrocks. Mr. Horrocks was expecting to be rung up that afternoon by Walsingham. Walsingham's voice would undoubtedly have had a soothing effect on him. And Walsingham's voice was at the disposal of the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

Walsingham himself, certainly, was not at Bunter's disposal. Walsingham was raging in the wine-cellar, a prisoner along with Mr. Pilkins. But the Greyfriars ventriloquist had the gift of imitating voices, and that peculiar gift had saved him more than once already. But for his trickery in imitating Mr. Pilkins' voice in telephoning to Walsingham, and Walsingham's voice in telephoning to Mr. Pilkins, it was doubtful whether he would ever have obtained possession of Bunter Court at all. Now his idea was to play the same game again, with Mr. Horrocks as the victim.

This was another example of Bunter's masterly strategy, by which he was keeping possession of Bunter Court, and piling up terrifying liabilities which would have to be met in the near future.

But Billy Bunter did not bother about the future. So long as he could jog along comfortably in the present, he thought no more of the future than of the past. The present tense was enough for him.

"Hallo!"

A voice came through on the wires.

"Is that Mr. Horrocks?" Bunter's voice was now Walsingham's fruity voice to the very life.

"Mr. 'Orrocks speaking, Mr. Walsingham. So you're back, are you?"

"I have returned to-day, Horrocks. I have to go back to London on important business for Lord Combermere, however. But Master Bunter has asked me to ring

you up. I was very much surprised, Horrocks, to learn of your visit here this morning."

"That's all very well, Mr. Walsingham, but sixty-five pounds seven shillings and ninepence is no joke," answered Mr. Horrocks.

Bunter grinned over the telephone. Evidently the Combermere butcher had not the slightest suspicion that he was speaking to anyone but Walsingham.

"I repeat, Horrocks, that I am surprised," said Bunter, in the butler's fruity voice. "Master Bunter has given instructions for the butcher to be changed, and really it was only to be expected. I shall endeavour to obtain for you his custom. But you must be more careful."

"Sixty-five pounds—"

"That may seem a large sum to you, Horrocks. It is the merest trifle to Master Bunter."

"That's all very well, Mr. Walsingham. If you answer for it personal that the money's all right—"

"Most certainly! However, I shall see Master Bunter's father in a day or two, and will specially ask him to send you a cheque, if you wish. Your money is quite safe, Horrocks."

"Thank you, Mr. Walsingham." The butcher was much mollified. "I own up I was a bit scared. In fact, I fair got the wind-up when I 'eard that you was gone, and no bills paid. If you say it's all right, right it is. There'll be a fair bit coming to you, sir, when the account is paid."

Bunter suppressed a chuckle. Apparently Walsingham had made his arrangements to pocket a commission on the lavish orders he gave on Master Bunter's account.

If Walsingham had to wait till the accounts were paid, however, before he pocketed that commission, it was likely to be a very long time before the commission was in his pocket.

"Very well, Horrocks, very well!" went on Walsingham's voice. "I am glad I had this opportunity of speaking to you. I advise you to be very careful how you deal with Master Bunter, as his father is now making arrangements to purchase the property from Lord Combermere. I shall remain as butler to Mr. Bunter, and I trust that our dealings will continue as in the past."

"Certainly, Mr. Walsingham! Perhaps you will tell Master Bunter that I am sorry—or shall I call personal?"

"I will convey your apology to him, Horrocks. To be quite candid, my good fellow, the Bunters have more money than they know what to do with, and when they are settled permanently at this house, it will be a very good thing for all parties."

"I get you, Mr. Walsingham. You rely on me, sir," said Mr. Horrocks amiably. "Now, I've had a word with you, sir, I'm satisfied, of course. It was you going so sudden that scared me about my bill. I dessay you can manage it to give me the Lodge custom again, sir? I've no doubt that you can twist that fat young fool round your finger."

"Eh?"

"Between ourselves, Mr. Walsingham, that Bunter is a fat young idiot, and no gentleman!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Of course, all sorts of people have money nowadays, and though a respectable tradesman would rather deal with the quality, Mr. Walsingham, a man can't afford to pick and choose. It would be better for trade in Combermere to 'ave a rich profiteer at the Lodge than his lordship. It's a come-down for the place; but, after all, we live on our trade, Mr. Walsingham."



Billy Bunter turned himself into a sort of catherine wheel and the ball shot from his hand. Where the ball went was a mystery for a second—then the mystery was elucidated as a fiendish howl came from D'Arcy. "Yawoooooh!" The swell of St. Jim's leaped clear of the ground. (See Chapter 10.)

But it's 'ard on you, sir, having to put up with such upstarts after his lordship." Billy Bunter breathed fury over the telephone.

It is said that listeners seldom hear any good of themselves; and Bunter was in the position of a listener now. Certainly, Mr. Horrocks had no suspicion that he was speaking to Bunter.

"You—you—" gasped Bunter. He stopped in time, before he told Mr. Horrocks what he thought of him. He remembered that he was speaking as Mr. Walsingham, the butler.

"Eh? I didn't catch that, Mr. Walsingham."

"I must ring off now!" gasped Bunter, glaring at the telephone.

"Very good, sir. I hope I shall receive further orders, sir—you can work it with that fat young swanker, surely, sir! Tell him that the other butcher's meat isn't good enough for him. Between ourselves, sir, anything would be good enough for the feller, or too good; but—"

The rest of Mr. Horrocks' conversation was lost; Bunter jammed the receiver back on the hooks with a savage jam.

"Cheeky rotter!" he gasped. "I jolly well won't pay his bill now!"

And it was some minutes before William George Bunter was sufficiently composed to settle down to his afternoon nap. The real opinion of Mr. Horrocks, inadvertently communicated, had had quite a discomposing effect on him.

Bunter's belief had been that he was living up to the best traditions of Combermere Lodge; in fact, improving on them. Mr. Horrocks had almost shaken that belief for a moment.

But only for a moment; Bunter's fat self-satisfaction was too firmly established to be disturbed for long.

He resolved not to pay Mr. Horrocks' bill, as a proper punishment for Mr. Horrocks' impertinence. And then he went to sleep.

Having enjoyed his nap, Bunter rang for Thomas, and refreshed himself with lemonade and jam-tarts—it was not tea-time yet, but Bunter disposed of enough

tarts to make up several teas for ordinary fellows. It was sheer enjoyment to Bunter to be able to ring for "grub" whenever he liked. Whether he was popular in the servants' hall at Combermere was a question, but the cook, at least, had reason to feel that her efforts were fully appreciated.

Full of jam-tarts and lemonade and satisfaction, William George Bunter rolled down to the cricket ground, to give Harry Wharton & Co. and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy some tips on cricket.

He had stated it to be his intention to take on the instruction of those youths at four o'clock, but he was late—it was nearly half-past four now. But if he was late, they were later; there was no sign of them.

Bunter blinked round about and up and down through his big spectacles, and waited a few minutes impatiently. Then he called to a man who was rolling the pitch, and inquired where the fellows were. But the man did not know, and Bunter rolled away in a state of considerable exasperation.

When tea-time came round, he had tea in solitary state—his guests had not returned. From the amount of tuck consumed, anyone might have supposed that the lord of Bunter Court had entertained quite a numerous party to tea. It was not till dusk was falling that he heard the cheery voices of the Famous Five again, and rolled out to meet them.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"I looked for you on the cricket ground!" said Bunter. "Don't blame me if the Combermere fellows give you a jolly good licking to-morrow. I was going to do my best for you. It's too late now! Don't blame me."

"We won't!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Wathah not, deah boy."

"The blamefulness will not be terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous Bunter."

"Well, you fellows ought to have turned up," grunted Bunter. "Bad manners, I call it."

"Weally, Buntah—"

"Shocking manners," said Bunter.

"You silly owl—" began Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"My dear chap," said Bob Cherry, "every time you undertake to teach us cricket, you'll find us missing. Catch on?"

"If you want to bat to-morrow, Cherry, in your usual carpet-beating style—"

"My—my what?"

"Carpet-beating style, I can tell you it won't do. And I don't want you to bowl, Inky, in your usual style of chucking the ball about as if you were doing coconut-shies. As for you, Wharton—"

"As for me, give me a rest, old man," said the captain of the Remove, laughing. "We'll try hard to do you credit to-morrow, Bunter—but, of course, you can't expect us to play cricket like you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Remove went cheerily in to change for dinner, leaving Bunter snorting.

Bunter was not satisfied. Fortunately, it did not matter whether he was satisfied or not.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Cricket Captain!

BOB CHERRY had rather a thoughtful expression on his rugged face when he turned out after breakfast the following morning—a sunny morning that gave promise of a blazing day.

That day, Parker and his merry men were to arrive for the cricket match at Bunter Court, and—according to present arrangements—Billy Bunter was to captain the house side.

That arrangement seemed satisfactory to Bunter. It seemed far from satisfactory to everybody else concerned.

Harry Wharton declined to speak to Bunter on the subject. If the Owl of the Remove had had the sense of a bunny rabbit, according to Wharton, he would have taken a back seat in the matter. But since he insisted upon a

front seat, it was not for his guest to say him nay.

It was always possible, of course, to refuse to play under Bunter's remarkable leadership. Still, it was difficult for a guest to refuse to play for a host who had got up a cricket match, ostensibly for the entertainment of his guests.

Wharton did not think of refusing to play. Cricket was cricket, even if the match was not on the lines to which the Greyfriars Remove were accustomed. Bunter had to be in the team, anyhow; even if Wharton had captained the side, he could scarcely have left out the lord of Bunter Court, futile fumbler as he was, especially as players were short. As Bunter was to play, his calling himself captain of the side might not matter very much, if he had sense enough not to meddle. It was only to be hoped that he had sufficient sense for that.

But that was a very doubtful point, and that was what Bob Cherry was thinking about as he walked down to look at the pitch after breakfast. If he knew anything of Bunter, that fat and fatuous youth was certain to take advantage of this opportunity of swanking at cricket—an opportunity that so seldom came his way. Fellows who agreed to take on a chap as captain, had to obey that chap on the field, that was only playing the game. Moreover, Bunter was quite likely to bag the bowling; he fancied himself as a bowler. And his style of bowling really was calculated to leave untouched the side of a large house, unless the house was very near at hand.

Bob Cherry was keen on cricket, and keen on winning. He did not want a Greyfriars crowd to be beaten by fellows belonging to Combermere. Other things being equal, Greyfriars ought to win; and it would really be too bad to lose the match owing to Bunter's fatuous folly. Moreover, the Combermere skipper, Parker, was a very unpleasant fellow, and the more disagreeable he was, the more Bob Cherry wanted to send him home licked. It was quite irritating to think of being beaten at cricket by that unpleasant shiny young man, Parker.

Hence the thoughtful expression on Bob's face, as he walked over the cricket ground, and surveyed the pitch, which was in beautiful condition. Everything promised a good game; excepting Bunter. It was really a bright idea of Bunter's to fix up the match, though it was fairly clear that he had only done so as a chance for swanking as a cricketer. But it was a rotten idea for him to think of captaining the house side; indeed, it was not a good idea for him to think of playing at all, really. Looking on, and dealing with the refreshments, was Bunter's mark.

Bob wondered whether it would be of any use appealing to the Owl of the Remove, as a sportsman and a sensible chap. Bunter was, in point of fact, neither the one nor the other; still, there was a chance, and Bob resolved to try it. So he walked back to the house to see Bunter.

As Combermere were booked to arrive at ten, Bunter had to turn out earlier than usual that morning. Turning out early—nine o'clock seemed horribly early to Bunter—did not improve his temper. He breakfasted downstairs for once, and Bob found him finishing breakfast, with a frowning brow. Bob was not aware that Bunter had been up in the night; being blissfully unconscious of the fact that there were two prisoners in the Combermere wine-cellars, whom Bunter was under the painful necessity of supplying with food.

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Bunter blinked at Bob as he came in. His blink was not promising, but Bob decided to try his luck.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life, old bean?" he asked cheerily.

Grunt!

"Glad to see you down in time for the match, anyway."

Grunt!

When Bunter was peevish, he did not take the trouble to disguise the fact from consideration of his guests. Chesterfieldian manners were not in Bunter's line; or indeed any manners at all, so far as a fellow could see.

"Feeling fit, old man?" said Bob.

"I'm always fit."

"Oh!"

Bunter helped himself to his seventh rasher. It was the last on the dish, and he blinked angrily at Thomas.

"Can't a fellow have enough to eat in his own house?" he inquired. "Bring some more bacon, man?"

"Very good, sir," said Thomas.

Thomas retired, with a singular expression on his face. Bob could read in his face that he longed to bonnet Bunter with the bacon-dish. Fortunately, the Owl of the Remove was too short-sighted to observe it. Not that Bunter would have been likely to read Thomas's expression aright. In his new and lofty patrician haughtiness, Bunter had quite fallen into the way of regarding servants as machines, which existed only to minister to his comfort. The aristocratic Owl would really have been quite surprised to learn that Thomas had any feelings of his own.

"I've been looking at the pitch, Bunter," remarked Bob.

"All right, I suppose? My father paid hundreds of pounds to have it laid out," said Bunter.

"Hem!"

"What are you grunting about, Cherry?"

"Um! What about making up the side, Bunter?"

"I've done that."

"Hem! I suppose you're going to ask Wharton to captain the side?"

Bunter stared at him.

"I don't see why you should suppose anything of the sort," he answered, "I don't intend to, anyhow."

"But look here, old chap—"

"Oh, don't talk rot, you know," said Bunter. "We let Wharton muck up the matches at Greyfriars; but I've got the cricket traditions of my ancestral home to consider, here."

"Oh, my hat!"

"We're going to win this match," said Bunter. "I mean, I'm going to win it. I want you fellows to help all you can. That's what I expect of you."

Bob Cherry breathed hard. He would have been glad to have Bunter back in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, just then, for a few minutes. However, there he was, at Bunter Court; and it was out of the question to deal with him as he deserved. So Bob controlled his feelings.

"But really, Bunter, old chap, Wharton ought to captain the side," Bob urged patiently. "He's our cricket captain, you know."

"Rot!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Rubbish!"

"You fat duffer!" exclaimed Bob, forgetting for the moment that he was far from the Greyfriars Remove passage.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Bunter disdainfully. "You can talk till you're black

in the face, Bob Cherry, but I'm not letting Wharton muck up this match as he does the matches at Greyfriars. Who's Wharton, anyhow?"

There was a pause. Thomas returned with new supplies of provender, and Bunter's peevish face became more amiable as he tucked into it.

"Well, look here, Bunter," said Bob, at last. "What about D'Arcy? It would be rather a compliment to a St. Jim's chap to ask him to captain the side."

"Bosh!"

"D'Arcy's a good man—"

"I know my old pal Gussy better than you do," said Bunter. "Socially, he is quite my style. But not at cricket."

"Oh, my only hat!"

"We're going to win this match, and I'm going to show you fellows how to do it," said Bunter. "That cad Parker is going to be licked at cricket—I've a good mind to lick him with my hands, for his cheek; but I shouldn't care to soil my fingers on him. He came here and cheeked me the other day—here, under my own roof."

"He cheeked Wharton, too," remarked Bob.

"Well, that doesn't matter, does it? But the fellow will have to learn that he can't cheek a Bunter of Bunter Court."

"Hem!"

"For goodness' sake, stop grunting," said Bunter.

"Bunter, old man, do the sensible thing," urged Bob. "You want to beat the Combermere lot, don't you?"

"I'm going to beat them."

"Then ask Wharton to captain the side?"

"Rats! I'd as soon ask you," said Bunter, "and that would be about the limit, wouldn't it?"

Bob Cherry made a movement. Bunter was helping himself to jam now, in large quantities; and he never knew what a narrow escape he had of getting the jam-dish on his fat little nose. Fortunately, Bob restrained his just indignation, and walked away instead of jamming Bunter. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strolled in as Bob departed.

"Wippin' mornin', deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's cheerily.

"Oh, topping!" said Bunter. "It's rather rotten, turning out so early, though."

"Bai Jove! Early!"

"Well, I'm accustomed to taking it rather easy, in vacation," said Bunter. "Why shouldn't a fellow enjoy life, when he's rolling in money, and has a horde of servants at his beck and call?"

"Hem!"

"I shall put you down second to bat, Gussy."

"Aftah Wharton?"

"No; after me."

"Bai Jove!"

"I shall open the innings, of course," said Bunter. "It encourages a side to see a really good start, you know."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"But what?"

"Nothin', old bean," said Arthur Augustus, thinking it better to leave his thoughts on the subject unuttered.

Billy Bunter had finished his breakfast now. How he was going to run that morning, with that terrific meal inside him, was a question. Not that an answer to the question was necessary; Bunter, the batsman, was not likely to take any runs, if it came to that.

The fat junior rolled to the window-seat, and sat down. He leaned back and closed his eyes, and Arthur Augustus wondered whether he was going to take a nap after breakfast. So far as D'Arcy could see, Bunter's life on holiday was made up chiefly of eating and napping.

(Continued on page 19.)

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HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

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THE GREYFRIARS BELLS!

(After the famous poem by Edgar Allan Poe)

By DICK PENFOLD

Hear old Gosling ring the bell—
Rising-bell!
What a fortune we would give, in sweet
repose to dwell!
How we shiver, shiver, shiver,
In the icy air of morn!
While our sleepy eyelids quiver,
And we drowsily deliver
Muttered epithets of scorn!
At the clang, clang, clang,
From our cosy beds we dash;
And we shudder at the clashing and the
clanging of the bell,
At the clamour and the clangour of the
bell!

Hear the morning lesson bell—
Hateful bell!
What a tale of task and toil its tolling
seems to tell!
When it rings at nine o'clock,
Gee! it gives us quite a shock;
And we rush to get our books with
startled yell!
And our hearts go pitter-patter
When we hear the crash and clatter
And the terrifying sound we know so
well,
Of the twanging
And the clanging
Of the hateful lesson bell!
And the jangling
And the wrangling
Of the dreaded lesson bell!
And the swinging and the ringing of
the beastly lesson bell;
The rolling and the tolling of the bell!

Hear the school assembly bell—
Solemn bell!
What a glut of gloomy thoughts its
monodies compel!
In the solemn morning light
How we shiver with affright
At the melancholy menace of its tone!
It means some silly duffer
Must a public flogging suffer
With a groan!
And the porter—ah, the porter,
Why, the wretch deserves no quarter,
You must own.
Old Gosling, 'tis who tolls,
And he rolls, rolls, rolls,
Rolls a pean from the bell!
And his chest, it seems to swell
With the pean of the bell,
And he gives a gloating yell!
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of ruthless rhyme,
To the pean of the bell.
With its knell, knell, knell—
Hark! the moaning and the groaning of
the bell!



I HAVE just witnessed a public expulsion—not in Big Hall, but in Loder's study. Loder was reclining in his armchair, with a cigarette between his lips, and he was expelling a cloud of smoke!

EXPULSION is often referred to as the "long jump." It might just as appropriately be termed the "sack" race! The Head plays the part of "judge" and "official starter," and the "course" is from Big Hall down to the school gates!

FANCY Mr. Quelch going in fear of expulsion! Sounds absurd, doesn't it? Yet when Mr. Prout ran amok with his Winchester repeater the other day, Mr. Quelch seemed mortally afraid of getting "the bullet"!

LOOKING back through the school records, I found that there was a fellow named Muskett expelled in 1895. I wasn't surprised. A fellow with a name like that was bound to be "fired" sooner or later! I believe the whole school saw him "go off," and his pater, although he lived many miles away, heard "a dreadful report"!

IN 1899 a fellow named Train was expelled. I suppose he had gone "off the rails" in some way; and, anyway, he was bound to be "shunted" sooner or later! History tells us, however, that he left Big Hall with an upright "carriage."

BILLY BUNTER thinks that a fellow ought to be given a first-class feed before being expelled, in order to fortify him for the ordeal. If such a concession were made, Bunter would come up smiling for an expulsion to-morrow morning!

I WELL remember Carberry of the Sixth, the fellow who was expelled for "blugging." He was a big, hefty bounder. Reminded me very much of an elephant—particularly as he took his "trunk" with him!

WHO will be the next Greyfriars fellow to suffer sentence of expulsion? It's quite on the cards that Loder of the Sixth will be the unlucky one. I understand that Loder received an anonymous gift of a needle and cotton during the week. There was a note enclosed, which read: "I am sending you this so that you can mend your ways!"

THE writer of these notes will never suffer expulsion. It's safe to prophesy that Being of a sunny disposition, I never allow anybody to "put me out."

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

WE have chosen rather a grim subject for this week's special number—the subject of expulsion, or, as Gosling, the porter, would term it, "expollution." Some time ago we had a Special Flogging Number, which was thoroughly enjoyed. It's much nicer to read about floggings than it is to receive them! Certain readers wrote and asked me to go a step farther, and produce a Special Expulsion Number. Well, I have done so. But you mustn't expect this number to be grim and gloomy, although the subject of it happens to be so. We always endeavour to treat grim topics in a humorous way, and we can squeeze plenty of fun even out of a public expulsion, as you will see.

Some of our contributors are authorities on expulsion, for they have been expelled themselves. Of course, their sentences were rescinded, or they would not be here to-day to tell the tale.

There was a time when every member of the Famous Five was "sacked" in turn. It was Vernon-Smith who brought about this amazing state of affairs. Those were the days when Smithy was a reckless, unscrupulous, devil-may-care fellow who stopped at nothing. A bitter feud existed between the Bounder, as he was then, and the Famous Five, and our cheery Co. got the worst of it. How we were sacked, one after the other, and how Bob Cherry brought us back by means of a big barring-out is now history.

Two expulsions stand out vividly in my memory. One was the expulsion of Carberry of the Sixth for "pub-haunting" and other shady pastimes; the other was the expulsion of Heath of the Remove for theft. Heath was about the most despicable character it has ever been my misfortune to meet. He cunningly contrived to fasten the guilt on to Bob Cherry, and it really looked at first as if the innocent would have to suffer for the guilty. Heath, however, was "howled out" at the finish, and there were plenty of dry eyes at Greyfriars when he was given marching orders.

There are several fellows at Greyfriars to-day who can thank their lucky stars that they have managed to steer clear of expulsion. Loder of the Sixth will have to go very warily, or he will find himself following in the footsteps of the late unlamented Carberry.

HARRY WHARTON.

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An Expulsion of the Future!

An Amusing Pen-Picture of a Public Expulsion in the Year 2,025, when Fags will be in power, and Headmasters mere "nobodies."

THERE was a solemn hush in Big Hall at Greyfriars. The bell had tolled forth its summons to a General Assembly, and the white-faced pupils were in their places.

Trouble of a serious nature was in store for somebody. That was certain; for the birch and block had been placed in position on the raised dais. A public flogging was on the tapis, and it would possibly be followed by a public expulsion.

"Somebody's for it!" murmured Horton of the Remove.

His chum, Berry, nodded grimly. "Hope it isn't one of us, that's all!" he whispered apprehensively.

Suddenly the hush grew more intense, as the door of Big Hall was swung open, and Jones minor, garbed in gown and mortar-board, came strutting in. Pale faces grew paler, guilty consciences became more acute. The Head and the masters, who occupied the seats which the Greyfriars fags used to occupy years before, looked particularly uneasy.

Even when Jones minor tripped over his gown and went sprawling nobody dared to smile. Every face was owl-like in its gravity.

Jones minor picked himself up, with a muttered imprecation and continued to strut, like a perky cocksparrow, towards the dais.

"Silence!" he squeaked.

There was no need for the command. The silence was so profound that you could have heard an acid-drop.

"Little boys," said Jones minor, glaring at the bearded old jossers who sat in the masters' seats, "I regret to say that one of your number has been guilty of a grave dereliction. (I swotted up that word in the Dic.) I call upon the Head to stand forward!"

Quaking from head to foot with guilt and terror, the Head stepped out from his place and tottered with feeble steps towards the platform.

"Dr. Funguss," piped Jones minor, "you had the brazen impudence, the astounding nerve, the colossal cheek, to lay hands upon a member of the fag fraternity yesterday. You actually walloped him with an ashplant! Deny it if you dare!"

"I—I don't deny it, sir," stammered the Head in faltering tones. "I admit I gave young Pranker a good thrashing. He was most rude to me—he called me a bearded old buffer!"

"And so you are!" snapped Jones minor. "That didn't give you the right to punish Pranker. Why, it's like going back to the bad old days, when headmasters had the power to punish! Have you anything to say, Dr. Funguss, in defence of your conduct?"

The Head shook in his shoes.

"I can only plead old age," he muttered. "Being in my second childhood, sir, I often do things that a sane man would not dream of doing. I will make young Pranker a public apology, and I suppose that will settle the matter."

Jones minor frowned.

"There's something wrong with your supposer, then! Dr. Funguss, I am going to make a public example of you! You will receive a round dozen with the birch, after which your name will be struck off the school thingummybob, and you will be expelled in disgrace from Greyfriars School!"

A shudder ran through the assembly as they listened to that solemn sentence.

"Where is De Creppit, the porter?" asked Jones minor, glancing round.

"Ah, there you are! Come and hold this wretched boy in position over the block while I wield the merry birch!"

"Mercy!" wailed the Head.

"Rats!" growled Jones minor.

And he pointed grimly to the block.

Very reluctantly the Head got across it, and the porter seized him by his long beard.

Jones minor then got busy with the birch, and the victim's screams of anguish rang through Big Hall.

A dozen times the great birch rose and fell, and the school shuddered at each sturdy stroke.

The terrible ordeal was over at last, and the Head lay squirming and groveling on the dais.

Jones minor pointed to the door.

"Go!" he screeched. "I've beaten the dust off your trousers, and now you can shake the dust of Greyfriars off your feet!"

Moaning and groaning, the Head staggered towards the door. It clanged behind him, and he was gone. Greyfriars would know him no more.

"Thirsty work, this!" panted Jones minor, laying aside the birch. And he signalled to the master of the Remove to run and fetch him a ginger-pop from the school tuckshop!



If I Were Expelled!

OUR CONTRIBUTORS TELL US WHAT THEY WOULD DO IF "THE CHOPPER CAME DOWN."

BILLY BUNTER.

If I were eggspelled Greyfriars would go to the bow-wows. That's a sure fact. It's only through me being here that our school is in the public eye. Ask any casual stranger if he's ever heard of Greyfriars, and he'll say, "Yes. That's Bunter's school, isn't it?" If it wasn't for me being a skoller here, nobody would have heard of the place. When I'm a prosperous Old Boy, I shall use my influence to get the name of the school changed from Greyfriars to St. Bihy's. Not that I profess to be a saint by any means, but I think my name ought always to be closely linked with the school. There's no fear that I shall ever be sacked from Greyfriars. The Head finds it a paying proposition to keep me here; I'm such a tremendous attraction, you see. People only send their sons here to be educated because I happen to be here. I bring jolly good bizziness to the place, and I think

the Head ought to jolly well pay me commission!

ALONZO TODD:

If I were expelled! Dear me! There is quite a big "IF" about that. My expulsion from this illustrious and noble edifice is indeed a remote possibility. I never commit a punishable offence, let alone such an enormity as would warrant expulsion. The greatest crime I ever committed was to whisper in the Form-room, and then I only whispered to Skinner that I thought Mr. Quelch was a dear, kind master whom I adored. Vernon-Smith, who is inclined to be cynical, declares that it's the goody-goody fellows who ought to be expelled, whilst the law-breakers should go scot-free. If ever discipline is administered in that topsy-turvy manner, I shall be the first to be cast out from the school in disgrace!

GERALD LODER:

If I were given the "long jump" from Greyfriars, I should attribute my downfall to those priggish young pups in the Remove. I refer to Wharton and his set. Before shaking the dust of Greyfriars from my feet I should wallop Wharton, chastise Cherry, bash Bull, noble Nugent, and slay Singh. Then I should go striding down to the gates, and snap my fingers in scornful farewell at this beastly prison, where a fellow is bound down by iron rules and regulations.

HAROLD SKINNER:

I shouldn't have the slightest objection to being expelled, so long as the Head, in a burst of generosity, didn't throw in a public flogging with the expulsion! Frankly, I don't like floggings. They put such a strain on my vocal chords. The last time I was flogged I yelled and roared to such an extent that I got a "clergyman's sore throat." It's the Head who really ought to get that malady—through too much "preaching"! Cheerfully would I pack my traps, and say "Good-bye" to Greyfriars to-morrow, if I could be assured that there would be no public execution in Big Hall before I went!

DICKY NUGENT:

If I was expelled I should cause terrific excitement in big hall by standing my ground and refusing to go. The head would say nugent minor you are expelled in disgrace and your name has been struck off the school register go wretched boy you will find the station hack waiting for you outside and I should flick my fingers in his fizz and say rattls likewise bosh I jolly well won't budge and then the head would be in an awful dilemmer wouldn't he?

(Not in such a dreadful "dilemmer" as those who try to make head or tail of Dicky's non-stop screed!—ED.)



HERBERT SUTCLIFFE.
The Yorkshire Record-breaker.

ALL ABOUT THE FOUR FAMOUS CRICKETERS

who form the subject of
**This Week's Superb Free
Stand-up Cut-out Photos.**



J. B. HOBBS:
Surrey's Hero!

W. G. GRACE'S RIVAL.

ONE of the sensations of the present cricket season has been Jack Hobbs' wonderful effort to rival the record of 126 centuries made by the famous Gloucestershire cricketer, W. G. Grace. At the moment of writing the Surrey professional is within one century of the record, and there is every possibility of his bringing off the feat before the cricket season ends.

This season he has already scored twelve centuries. The record number of centuries scored in a single season is thirteen, and C. B. Fry, Tom Hayward, and E. Hendren have all achieved this feat. There is every chance of Jack breaking this record as well as that put up by W. G. Grace; while, if he keeps up to his present form, there is little doubt that he will improve on the 2,827 runs which he scored during 1920—the highest single-season total that he has yet reached.

Hobbs is not quite so daring as he used to be in the batting-crease; this, however, is compensated by his more finished batting style. In the early days of his career he put up some wonderful performances, and Hayward partnered him in at least three fine stands. One of these was in 1909, when the two put on 352 runs for the first wicket against Warwickshire at the Oval; in this match Hobbs accomplished the feat of hitting up two centuries, 160 and 100.

In 1913 the same pair put on 313 against Worcestershire at Worcester; in 1914 they made a stand that provided 290 against Yorkshire.

Jack Hobbs has played seven times in England against the Australians, and last year he went "down under" with our Test team, his fourth visit. There is not the slightest doubt but that he will play against the Aussies when they come over here again next year—and it won't be Jack's fault if they don't leave the Ashes behind them!

A YORKSHIRE GIANT.

Herbert Sutcliffe is another great batsman who will certainly face the Australian bowling during 1925. He was the hero of the England team's visit to Australia in 1924,

when he put up records which will stand for many years to come.

It was Sutcliffe who partnered Hobbs in the record wicket stand of 1924; this was against the visiting South Africans at Lord's, when they put on 208 runs for the first wicket—far and away the best partnership of the season. If they can reveal the same form when the Aussies come over, no one will be likely to grumble.

These two, Sutcliffe and Hobbs, opened the England innings for four out of the five games against the Australians in the last Test series. Between them they knocked up no less than 1,307 runs in these games alone—more runs than were made by any other two batsmen of either team.

Sutcliffe has always been keen on work with the willow, and to play for Yorkshire was one of the ambitions of his boyhood—an ambition that was realised six years back. It is an interesting fact that he played in Yorkshire's 1,000th match in the County Cricket Championship; this was the Yorks v. Surrey game at Leeds on May 27th, 1924.

Herbert Sutcliffe is now thirty-one years of age, and his birthday is November 25th.

the same week, when Lancashire played Glamorgan at Liverpool, he took ten wickets in the match for 36 runs, bowling twenty-five overs, fourteen of them being maidens.

THE MIDDLESEX "SLOGGER."

If it had not been so wet last "summer," it is more than likely that "Pat" Hendren would have made even his great 1923 batting average look small. As it was, the 1924 averages show him third on the list, with 2,100 runs to his credit for an average of nearly 57 each innings.

But in 1923 Hendren was right at the top, with 3,010 runs and an average of 77.17 runs; 200 not out being his highest single innings score. This was a great season for him, and he made no less than nine centuries. He made only two in 1924, which brought his total up to fifty-two centuries in first-class cricket.

He went to Australia with the Test team last year—his third tour—doing yeoman service when England most needed it in the third Test match and making 92 runs; Australia beat us in this game by just 11 runs.

"Pat" came second in the batting averages of all matches played in Australia by the England team, with 1,317 runs to his credit for an average of 62.70.

Perhaps his best performance in Australian cricket was during the 1920-21 series, when he partnered J. W. H. T. Douglas at Melbourne against Victoria; they put on 323 for the sixth wicket.

No one looks to a batsman like Hendren for anything great in the bowling line, but he accounted for Mailey's wicket during the first innings of the third Test match in the last series! "Pat" also took the ball against Surrey at Lord's last year; he bowled only one over, and four runs were scored off him.

Hendren says that Lord's is his favourite batting ground; he once came very near to breaking the record of the ground. With a better summer than we had last year, "Pat" is going all out to improve on even his wonderful 1923 performance.

NEXT WEEK!

MEAD (Hants).
WHYSALL (Notts).
WOOLLEY (Kent).
DIPPER (Gloucestershire).

MIND YOU GET THEM, BOYS!

A LANCASHIRE LAD.

Cecil Parkin is easily the most popular figure in Lancashire cricket, and he thoroughly deserves the admiration which his sensational bowling evokes. He has accomplished many surprising feats since he first played county cricket, and not the least of these was when he took fourteen Leicestershire wickets at Liverpool during his very first game for Lancashire in 1914.

He was born at Eaglescliffe, near Yarm-on-Tees, Durham, on November 18th, 1886, but it was not until 1922 that he managed to get in a full season's cricket for his county. He owes his bowling success to the tremendous amount of spin that he gets on the ball, and the way in which he can vary his pace and length has puzzled the finest batsmen that ever held a willow.

He took nine wickets in the Gentlemen v. Players match in 1920, and this feat assured him of a place in the England team during the subsequent tour in Australia, when he played in three games. He also played when the Aussies came over in 1921, taking part in four games out of the five.

Parkin's bowling is exceedingly difficult to hit, a fact that is testified by his 1924 average; he took 100 wickets for an average of 13 runs each, and he bowled 500 maiden overs out of a total of 904 in the season!

His best 1924 performance was made in May, when, at Manchester, he took eight Derbyshire wickets for 20 runs, bowling a total of twenty-one overs, of which no less than thirteen were maidens. At the end of



C. PARKIN.
A Lancashire Lad.



"PAT" HENDREN.
The Middlesex Slogger.

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

(SEE THE GRAND LIST OF PRIZES, OPPOSITE.)

THIS splendid competition has "caught on" with Magnetites, and bids fair to be the most popular contest the good old paper has ever run. Everybody is invited to join in, and there is no entrance fee!

We are making this week a special occasion for NEW-COMERS, so you will find the First Set given again below. The Second and Third Sets appear opposite, and on Page 18, a reprint of the Fourth Set will be found, together with this week's puzzles—Set No. 5. The complete List of Cricketers' Names, which includes the name of every "cricketer" represented by a picture throughout the competition, is given again on Page 2.

Thus, all those who missed this great contest in its earlier weeks have a remarkable opportunity of starting here and now—and without the expense of getting back numbers. Present competitors may, of course, use these reprinted sets to build up a second attempt to win one of our topping prizes.

THE WAY TO WIN.

Each picture represents the name of a famous cricketer, and when you have made out the answer to each of the puzzles, write it IN INK in the space underneath. Then keep the sets by you until next week, when we shall give you the final set, the necessary coupon, and full directions for the sending in of your entries.

The contest is a six-week one, and the amended closing date will be THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3rd, 1925.

You must adhere strictly to these Rules.

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

You may send in 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.

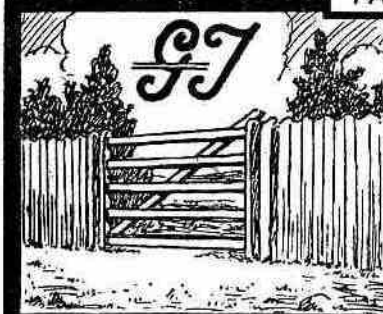
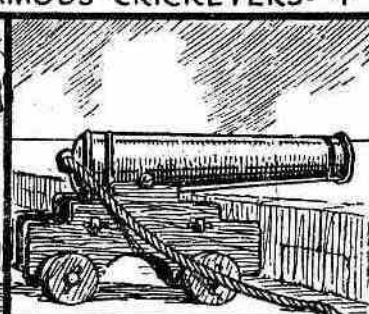
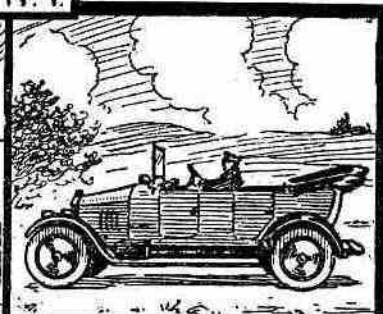
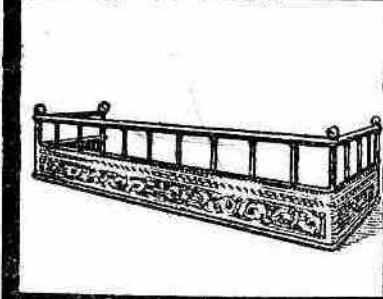
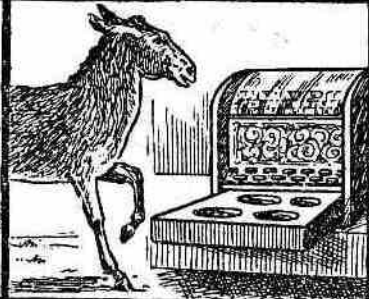
Employees of the proprietors of the MAGNET may not compete.

PRESENT COMPETITORS!—This Week's Set (No. 5) appears on Page 18.

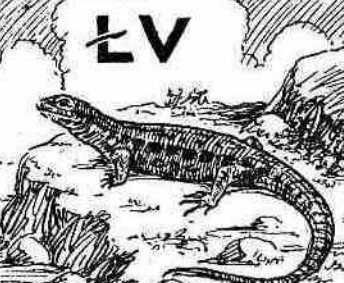
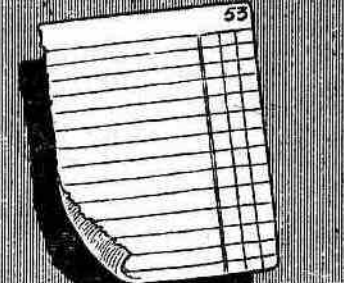
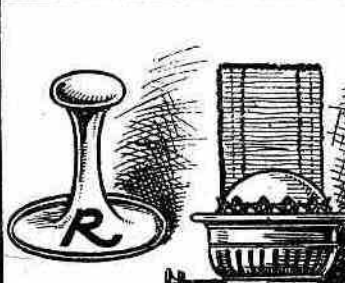
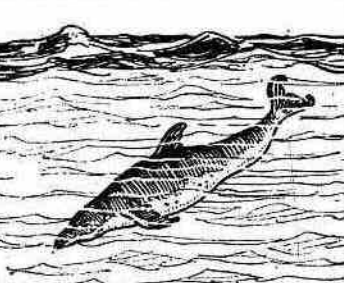
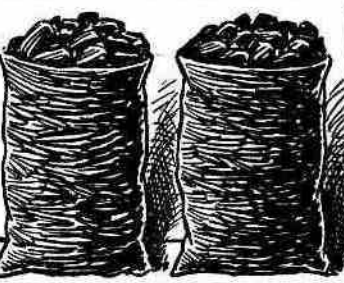
FIRST SET—

—AGAIN!

"FAMOUS CRICKETERS" No. 1.

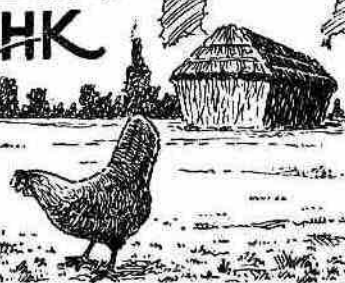
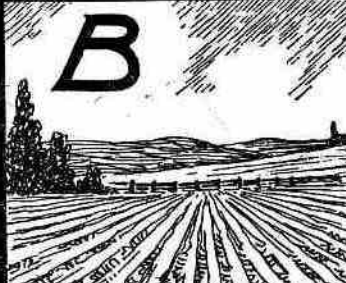
		
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4	5	6

"FAMOUS CRICKETERS" ♠ No. 2.

		
7	8	9
		
10	11	12

PRIZEWINNERS IN THE THIRD GRADE MAY CHOOSE FROM THIS LIST!
 CRICKET BATS, SWIMMING COSTUMES, CRYSTAL SETS, FOOTBALLS, BATTING PADS, STEAM
 ENGINES, MECCANO SETS, STAMPS AND STAMP ALBUMS, CHEMISTRY OUTFITS, SETS OF BOXING-
 GLOVES, HEADPHONES, PAINT-BOXES, ELECTRICAL TOY OUTFITS, CAMERAS, ELECTRIC TORCHES,
 AIR PISTOLS, COMBINATION POCKET KNIVES, FOUNTAIN PENS, CHEST EXPANDERS (GYM EXER-
 CISERS), ROLLER SKATES, TENNIS RACQUETS, AIR GUNS, AUTOGRAPH ALBUMS, FRETWORK OUTFITS.

"FAMOUS CRICKETERS" ♠ No. 3.

		
13	14	15
		
16	17	18

"FAMOUS CRICKETERS" No 4.



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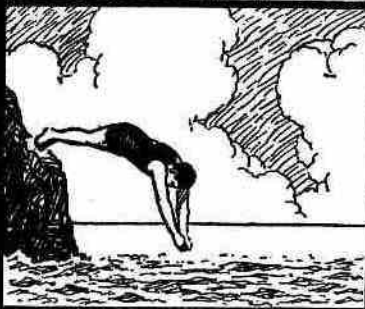
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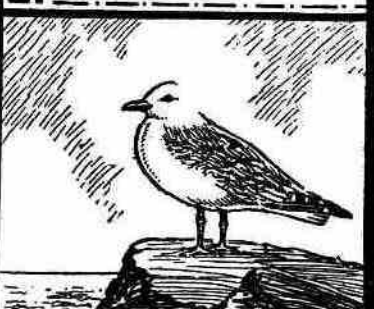
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HW



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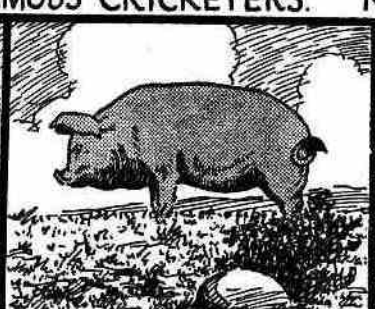
REMEMBER THE CLOSING DATE!

THURSDAY,
SEPTEMBER 3rd.

"FAMOUS CRICKETERS" No 5.



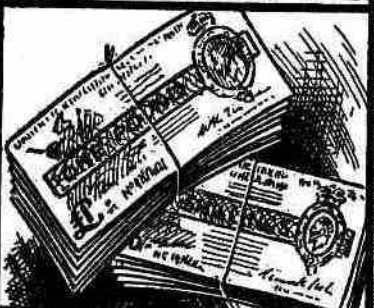
GH



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(Continued from page 12.)

Bunter opened his eyes again and blinked at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Tell 'em to call me when Parker's crew get here," he said. "I think I'll have forty winks."

"Didn't you sleep well, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus sympathetically.

"I always sleep well," said Bunter. "But last night—"

The Owl of the Remove broke off suddenly.

"But you couldn't sleep last night?" said Arthur Augustus. "That's weally too bad, before the match to-day. I woke up in the night myself once, and heard somebody walkin' past my door. Was it you, old bean?"

Bunter started.

"Oh, no! I slept like a top," he said. "Imagination, old chap! You couldn't have heard anybody, you know. I didn't pass your door, and, besides, I trod very lightly—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I—I mean—"

"Bai Jove! I weally do not quite see what you mean, Buntah!" said Arthur Augustus in astonishment.

"The—the fact is—" Bunter stammered. "The—the actual fact is, I didn't sleep well, and I turned out to walk in the corridor for a few minutes. That's how it was. I didn't go downstairs. Why should I?"

Arthur Augustus gazed at him.

Why even Billy Bunter should tell untruths, upon so apparently trivial a matter, was a puzzle to him.

"If those fellows have been telling you anything—"

"The fellows have not been tellin' me anythin', Buntah."

"That's all right, then," said Bunter. "If they spin you any yarn about findin' me wandering about at night, they'll only be pulling your leg, you know. Nothing in it—nothing at all. Besides, I suppose a chap can walk about his own house at night if he chooses?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Not that I do anything of the kind, you know. The actual fact is, that I've been subject to sleep-walking at times," said Bunter, blinking at Arthur Augustus. "If by any chance you ever happened to see me about at night while you're staying here put it down to that—see?"

"I see," said D'Arcy, though he did not quite see.

Bunter closed his eyes again, satisfied that he had satisfied Arthur Augustus; though certainly that noble youth was little likely to guess that Bunter had gone down in the night to take food to prisoners in the wine-cellars. A gentle snore was heard, which grew, crescendo, into a deep and resonant one. Bunter was taking his nap. Arthur Augustus sauntered away to join the Greyfriars fellows.

"Poor old Buntah!" he murmured. "It must be howwid to be subject to sleep-walkin'—chap might fall down stairs and break his neck, bai Jove! But I weally do not see why he couldn't mention that at first without tellin' silly whoppahs to begin with!"

Arthur Augustus had already discovered that Bunter lived, and moved,

and had his fat being, in an atmosphere of "whoppers," and Gussy did not approve of whoppers. Still, he felt quite sympathetic towards Bunter. Somnambulism was undoubtedly a troublesome affliction—if Bunter suffered from it.

Billy Bunter had enjoyed more than forty winks when he was awakened by a vigorous shake.

He opened his eyes and blinked at Bob Cherry.

"Owt! Leggo! 'Tain't rising-bell!" he mumbled.

Bob chuckled.

"Wake up, old top!"

"Leggo, you beast!"

"Wake up! The jolly old cricketers have arrived!" chuckled Bob. "Time to get changed, Bunter."

"Oh!" Bunter rubbed his sleepy eyes. "All right! Tell 'em to wait till I'm ready!"

And Bunter rolled away to change, and then rolled down to the Combermere cricket-ground, clad in flannels, and looking as if he were on the point of bursting out of them.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter the Batsman!

BILLY BUNTER, of course, was last on the cricket-ground.

He found that Harry Wharton & Co. were all there, and were in cheery conversation with some of the Combermere fellows.

Parker, the captain of the Combermere Ramblers, did not seem quite at his ease, though he responded to the civility of the Greyfriars fellows.

Parker's last visit to the house had been paid after the mysterious disappearance of his employer, Mr. Pilkins, the estate-agent. Parker had come up to inquire after Mr. Pilkins, receiving no satisfaction from either Walsingham, the butler, or Billy Bunter, the lord of the domain.

Parker's manners, on that occasion, had undoubtedly left much to be desired. He had gone so far as to term Bunter a "bilk," which was libel, according to the old saying that the greater the truth the greater the libel.

Neither had the estate agent's young man concealed his opinion of the whole party as a "gang of bilks," which was naturally very offensive to the chums of Greyfriars, and led them to look upon Parker with inimical eyes.

Since that date Walsingham, the butler, had followed Mr. Pilkins' example of performing the vanishing trick, without a word of explanation to anyone; and Parker was more perplexed and suspicious than ever.

He was so suspicious that he had even thought of calling in the aid of the police; but he naturally hesitated to take that extreme step.

He realised that he would have looked extremely foolish afterwards had Mr. Pilkins returned with the simple announcement that he had been unexpectedly detained in London for a week or two.

In the circumstances Harry Wharton & Co. were rather surprised that Bunter had fixed up the match with the local club. Parker, however, had been quite keen on it—for his own reasons.

Having been ejected by the footmen on his last visit, he could not call at Combermere Lodge again; and the cricket match gave him the opportunity of coming up to "have a look round," as he expressed it to his friends.

His suspicions, though vague, were deep, and growing deeper. There had been no word from Mr. Pilkins; and now the butler was gone without a

word, and Parker felt that there was a lot that required explaining. He did not dream of suspecting that the two men were still on the premises; but he hoped to discover something by keeping an eye on Master Bunter—whom he was firmly convinced was a "bilk" of the first water. Hence Parker's alacrity in arranging to bring his melt up to the Lodge for a cricket match.

The cheery greeting of Harry Wharton & Co. rather disarmed Parker. He was not a particularly bright young man; but on closer contact with the chums of Greyfriars he realised that, whatever Bunter might be, these fellows were not bilks or the confederates of a bilk.

He came to the conclusion that they were "mugs" taken in by Bunter; and the latter part of his conclusion, at least, was correct.

"I suppose Mr. Walsingham will umpire for the house," he was saying as Bunter rolled into view.

"Walsingham! No, he's away," said Harry.

"I heard that he came back yesterday," said Parker, with a keen and rather sidelong look at the captain of the Remove.

"Did he? I saw nothing of him, then."

"Mr. Herrocks told me last night that Walsingham had telephoned to him from Combermere Lodge."

"First I've heard of it," said Harry carelessly. "Anyhow, I'm pretty certain he's not here now."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter," said Bob Cherry. "Is Walsingham at home, Bunter?"

Bunter shook his head.

"No; I've had to send him back to London on important business," he said. "Never mind Walsingham. Good-morning, Barker!"

"My name's Parker," said the estate office young man, with unpleasant emphasis.

"Is it? I forget names," said Bunter casually. "Well, if you're ready, Barker—"

"Parker!"

"Yes, yes, Parker! Parker if you like!" said Bunter impatiently. "Let's see about getting started; no time for jaw!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, almost overcome by this sample of William George Bunter's polished manners.

The preliminaries having been arranged, the two captains tossed for choice of innings. Bunter was established now as captain of the house side; no one raised any further objections. Wharton had looked over the Combermere crowd, and his opinion was that the Greyfriars fellows ought to win—if Bunter let them.

The Combermere men were older. But the Famous Five were great cricketers, and D'Arcy of St. Jim's was a first-class man at the game, in spite of his dandified ways. Thomas and Albert had been taken in to play, as well as the lodge-keeper's son and the gardener's boy, to make up the eleven. These recruits were probably not very valuable, but the Famous Five would not have hesitated to tackle Parker & Co. on their own. The problem was whether Bunter, in the role of cricket captain, would give his men a chance of winning the game. That was what remained to be seen.

Bunter won the toss and elected to bat.

"Gussy, old man—"

Arthur Augustus contrived to smile genially. As Bunter's guest he could

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not let Bunter know how he disliked being called "Gussy" by the fat junior of Greyfriars.

"Yaas, deah boy."

"You'll go to the other end, old chap," said Bunter. "Try to keep the innings open for me."

"Bai Jove!"

"You haven't seen much of my batting," said Bunter. "You see, at Greyfriars I'm kept a good bit in the back-ground, so far as games are concerned. There's a lot of jealousy in cricket."

"Weally, Buntah—"

"That's why you've never seen me play for Greyfriars when we've sent men over to St. Jim's, you know. You don't mind my telling D'Arcy the facts, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I haven't heard you tell him any facts, so far," he answered.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Well, roll on, old porpoise, if you're going to open the innings," said Bob Cherry. "Somebody get ready to chalk up a big round nought on the board."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it, Cherry! This isn't a time for petty envy," said Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The fact is, I expect to be not out, Gussy," said Bunter. "You can see that the fellows we're playing aren't much class at cricket. What?"

"Oh, deah!" murmured Arthur Augustus, quite distressed. Parker was in hearing, but a trifle like that did not disconcert Bunter. It disconcerted the swell of St. Jim's considerably.

"What I want you to do is to keep the innings alive while I score," explained Bunter. "All you fellows do the same."

"The sameness will be terrific, my esteemed fatheaded Bunter," grinned Hurree Singh.

"Don't you worry about run-getting, Gussy. Leave that to me. Just put in some stone-walling, and don't try on any St. Jim's swank, you know."

Leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy quite speechless, Bunter rolled away cheerily to the wickets. Arthur Augustus stood rooted to the ground, gazing after him. Bob Cherry grinned and jogged his elbow.

"Man in, you know," he said.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I—I—I suppose Buntah weally means no offence, you know. But for a fellow who means no offence he has a weally remarkable way of expressin' himself."

And the swell of St. Jim's trotted away to his wickets, to stand aside while Bunter received the bowling.

The Combermere men were in the field, and Parker went on to bowl. The estate-office young man rather fancied himself as a bowler; but as a matter of fact, he would not have been very useful against the average man in Harry Wharton's team at Greyfriars. But Bunter was very far from being an average Greyfriars cricketer. When it came to games Bunter was in a class by himself—entirely by himself.

Parker sent down the ball. Bunter spread himself to that ball. He was going to begin by knocking the first ball far and away beyond the boundary. That would be encouraging to his side, and would show the Combermere men the kind of cricketer they had to deal with. No doubt Bunter would have landed a "sixer" but for the trifling circumstance that his bat missed the ball by about a yard.

Crash!

"How's that?" hooted Parker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Out!"

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Bunter stared at his wicket.

The middle stump was out of the ground, and the balls lay low. Even William George Bunter could not deny that it was "out." He was prepared to dispute with the umpire, if necessary; but really, in this case, there was no room for a dispute. A spread-eagled wicket was not to be argued about, even by a cricketer of Bunter's quality.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How's that?" shrieked all Parker's men.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove; this weally does take the bun! I wondah how much wun-gettin' there would be in this match if we left the wun-gettin' to Buntah, as he requested."

"Get a move on, fatty!" called out Johnny Bull as Billy Bunter stood staring at his wrecked wicket.

"Extraordinary!" said Bunter.

"What a game this is for flukes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the lord of Bunter Court carried out his unused bat and left the innings to lesser mortals.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Not Satisfied!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. piled into the game with great energy.

All the Combermere fellows were grinning at the sample they had received of Greyfriars cricket, and really the Co. could not blame them for grinning. Still, they felt a keen desire to give Combermere something more serious to think about than grinning.

They soon succeeded.

It was Bunter's lofty command that his local recruits should bat before the Famous Five; doubtless he wished to make it clear that he considered those great chiefs of the Remove very small beer.

So Thomas and Albert, and the gardener's boy, and the lodgekeeper's son all went in as the wickets fell, while the mighty men of the Remove waited.

But they did not have to wait long.

Parker & Co. were not great cricketers, but they were much more than equal to dealing with Thomas and Albert, etcetera.

The score was at five for four wickets when Bob Cherry went in, to join Arthur Augustus, who was still steady at his post.

By that time Parker & Co. seemed to be looking on the game as a sort of procession, and their grins were wide and extensive.

Now they woke up, as it were.

Bob Cherry started with a hit to the boundary, and followed it up with another, and then ran three with Arthur Augustus. Then Arthur Augustus landed a two and a three.

"This looks a bit more like!" remarked Johnny Bull with a chuckle.

"Just a bit!" said Harry.

"The more likeliness is terrific!"

"There it goes again! Bravo, Bob!"

"Well hit, old man!"

"Bravo!"

"Good old St. Jim's! Bravo, D'Arcy!"

Bob Cherry and Arthur Augustus, between them, were making the fur fly. The Combermere eleven quite woke up now. Parker ceased to grin as he laboured at the House wickets, and laboured in vain. His change bowlers had no better fortune.

Arthur Augustus had contributed forty when he was caught out at last. He came back smiling to join the Co. "Man in!" grunted Bunter. "Now then, get a move on, Wharton, for goodness' sake! Don't keep us waiting all day!"

"Why, you fat duffer—"

"No back chat. Get on the field!"

The captain of the Remove suppressed snapped Bunter, his feelings and went to the wicket vacated by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"The innings is practically over, Gussy," Billy Bunter observed confidentially.

Arthur Augustus stared at him.

"Bai Jove! I thought it was only just beginnin'," he replied.

"Not at all. You don't know much about cricket at St. Jim's, you know."

"Weally, Buntah—"

"Wharton may fluke a few runs, but it won't last long," said Bunter. "You see, I know the game, and I know what a fellow can do. I may say I'm a past-master of it. But the best players may have had luck—as you saw in my innings! Rotten fluke—what?"

"Was it a fluke, Buntah?"

"Oh, yes; that man Parker can't bowl for toffee! Sheerest accident I ever saw, his taking my wicket like that."

"Oh!"

"You'll see something different in my next innings," said Bunter. "I shall show these country joskins what real cricket is like. I shall want you to open the innings with me, D'Arcy, and I want you to be a bit more careful. Your batting is a bit wild and fluffy, if you don't mind my mentioning it. Don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you, Gussy."

But Gussy seemed deaf.

Even his polished politeness seemed to be wearing a little thin at last. Bunter, apparently unaware of the strain he was putting upon Gussy's good manners, blinked after him in surprise.

"Hallo! There goes Cherry's wicket," he remarked. "That's an easy catch he's giving them! Well, my hat! Missed it! Butter-fingers!"

"You blithering Owl!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "The ball didn't go within three yards of the man!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Can't you open your eyes and shut your mouth for a change?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed Johnny!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. And Johnny Bull gave a grunt and moved off. Bunter was never easy to tolerate, and he seemed hardest of all to tolerate on the cricket field.

"Cheeky rotter!" said Bunter. "Hallo! Wharton's down! Well, my hat! The umpire says not out! What's the man about?"

"It's not out, ass!" said Nugent. "The ball was yards late!"

"Rot! You can't teach me anything about cricket, Nugent! Talk about things you understand, old chap!"

Frank Nugent moved away after Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter continued to blink at the game impatiently. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were putting up a great innings, and the Combermere field panted after the ball, and perspired after it, and realised that they were in for hard work. The easy catches which Bunter's wonderful eye detected never came the way of the hapless fieldsmen. The score was going up by jumps, and Wharton and Bob looked like staying in till lunch.

"What bowling!" said Bunter. "What fielding! My hat! How long is this rot going to last?"

"Do you want your own men out, my esteemed and ludicrous Bunter?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bunter grunted discontentedly.

He did not exactly want his own men out. But he wanted to get on to his second innings, when he was going to show the universe what real cricket was like. His fat face quite brightened when Bob Cherry was bowled at last by the crimson and perspiring Parker.

"Time, too!" grunted Bunter. "Man in, Bull! Don't hang about buckling your pads. Why aren't you ready? Haven't you ever played cricket before? For goodness' sake, get going!"

"You fat idiot—"

"Look here—"

Johnny Bull went out to join Wharton. Billy Bunter gave Bob a sarcastic blink.

"Call that cricket?" he asked. "My hat! You were out about fifteen times if those howling asses knew what a catch was! It really wasn't fair to stay in!"

"Fathead!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Give us a rest, Bunter."

"If that's the way you talk when you're on a visit, Cherry—"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"Hallo! Bull's out!" chuckled Bunter.

Bunter was right this time. Johnny Bull had had bad luck. The Combermere field gasped with relief to see him go out without a run.

"Man in, Inky!"

"I am ready, my esteemed Bunter."

"Well, hurry up, and don't waste time talking!"

"My worthy, fatheaded Bunter—"

"Dry up! This is a cricket match, not a conversazione."

Evidently William George Bunter, being dressed in a little brief authority, did not mean to let his authority sleep. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh went to the wickets with suppressed feelings.

"Good for about 2!" remarked Bunter.

But the Nabob of Bhanipur was good for more than 2. He proved to be good for 30. And then Frank Nugent went in. Nugent was perhaps the least formidable batsman in the Co., but he proved a good second to the captain of the Remove. The runs piled up and the total was 160 by the time Nugent's wicket fell.

Harry Wharton came off smiling, not out—160 runs was a good total, and Harry Wharton thought it probable that the House side would not have to bat again. He was quite satisfied; but it appeared that Bunter was more exacting, he was not satisfied at all.

"Lunch now," said Bunter. "In our next innings I want you fellows to do a bit better. I don't want to find fault, of course; but I really should like you to remember that you're playing cricket, and not just knocking a ball about for fun. Keep that in mind."

And Bunter marched off with his fat little nose in the air. The Co. stared after him, and Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Some skipper!" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

And both teams went to lunch. Parker & Co. were glad of the rest, and certainly they liked the lunch. It was ample and it was good. Whatsoever Bunter's shortcomings as a cricketer, he was in his element in the catering line, and his hospitality was unbounded when he did not have to foot the bill—as in the present case.



Bunter missed his footing and pitched headlong, landing on the earth with a terrific crash. "Yaroooooh!" "Ha, ha, ha!" The players doubled up with laughter and yelled—while Bunter yelled, too, though in quite a different manner! (See Chapter 10.)

As for Bunter, he devoted his whole attention to lunch. He was going to do great deeds as a bowler and a batsman that afternoon; but in the meantime there was a matter of much greater importance to think of, and Billy Bunter dismissed cricket from his fat mind, as—in comparison with lunch—a trifle light as air.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

"Some" Bowler!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER rolled on the green, sunny field loftily and swanking in manner, but gasping a little.

He was in his proper place as captain of cricket, he felt that. His deeds of derring-do were going to keep up the best traditions of Combermere Lodge in that line. He was going to show Parker & Co. and his unbelieving schoolfellows of Greyfriars how the grand old game should be played when it was handled by a master-hand.

But there were drawbacks.

A cricket captain was barred off from long and happy naps in the afternoon of a one-day match.

That was not only a drawback, but a very serious one. With his lunch inside him—what any other fellow would have considered six or seven lunches inside him—Bunter was more disposed for slumber than cricket. Deep, soft grass,

or a hammock under shady trees, appealed powerfully to him; the summer game seemed small beer in comparison.

The Owl of the Remove was strongly tempted to tell Wharton to carry on, and put a substitute in the field for the Combermere innings, while he laid his fat self out to rest for an hour or two in pleasant shade.

Only one consideration really deterred him. The other fellows would have been so glad to see his back that Bunter was resolved that they shouldn't.

Moreover, he wasn't going to have that match chucked away by rotten cricketers. Good bowling was wanted, and Bunter fancied himself in that line.

So, after a really intense struggle, Bunter chose the path of duty, instead of the primrose path of indulgence, and rolled down to the cricket ground with his team.

He was not in a good temper. A fellow who had disposed of six or seven lunches in succession, and was deprived of his nap, couldn't be expected to be jolly.

Bunter's temper was short and sharp. He was determined to stand no nonsense. He was captain of the House side, and every fellow on the field was going to know it. In fact, the Owl of the Remove was looking out for faults to find. He wanted to hear rebellious objections, so that he could sit upon them in the most crushing manner. His little round eyes

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blinked peevishly through his big spectacles looking for trouble.

Bob Cherry was the first fellow who asked for it.

It was so obviously the right thing to give Hurree Janset Ram Singh as much bowling as possible, that Bunter could be trusted not to do it. On that subject Bob felt bound to speak a word, and he found difficulty in speaking the word politely. But he contrived to do so.

"Bunter, old man—"

"Well?" yapped Bunter.

"You'll be giving Inky the bowling, I suppose?"

Billy Bunter eyed him contemptuously.

"Inky? Hee, hee, hee!" Bunter's fat cackle expressed the utmost derision.

"Inky's a good man, you know," urged Bob. "We look on him as our best bowler in the Remove."

"I've no doubt you do," agreed Bunter. "You would! You don't know what bowling is, you know!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"I might have given Inky a trial," said Bunter. "I offered yesterday to give him some tips in bowling. He didn't choose to take advantage of it. I'm not chucking this match away to amuse you, Cherry, or Inky either. I may want him once or twice as a change bowler. But that's the limit."

Bob Cherry breathed deep.

"Who's bowling, then?" he asked.

"Wharton's good—"

"I dare say you consider Wharton good," agreed Bunter. "Goodness only knows what you consider, on a subject you don't know anything about. I consider him jolly bad."

"D'Arcy's a fairly good bowler, I believe—"

"Next to me, the best of the lot," assented Bunter. "I shall give Gussy a lot of the bowling. Inky may send down an over or two, but I shall keep most of it in my own hands, of course—that is, half. I'd jolly well keep the lot if the rules allowed. You see, I want to win this match."

"You fat idiot—"

"Go to your place, Cherry!"

Bob Cherry went to his place with deep feelings. Parker and another Combermere man were going to the wickets, and Bunter took the ball. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in the slips, watched him rather curiously. Arthur Augustus' opinion was that what Bunter did not know about cricket would have filled huge volumes, and he was curious to see how Bunter would shape as a bowler, after his striking exhibition as a batsman. He felt curious and interested, little dreaming what he was going to feel like after the Owl of the Remove had delivered his first ball.

Bunter gripped the ball, and blinked along the pitch. Short sight was rather a handicap to a bowler. But Bunter did not seem to think so. At all events, he was going to make the whole show sit up and take notice. Parker glanced along at him, and grinned. He did not think that he had much to fear from Billy Bunter's bowling. It did not occur to the fieldsmen, for the moment, that they had anything to fear from it. They were going to learn that Bunter could be a dangerous bowler, though not to the batsman.

Bunter turned himself into a sort of podgy catherine wheel, and the ball shot from his hand.

It was what Bunter called bowling; to anybody else it looked like a most palpable throw.

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Where the ball went was a mystery for a second. Parker knew that he was not going to see it at close quarters, that was all.

One second, and the mystery was elucidated by a fiendish yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's was seen to leap clear of the ground, clapping his hand to his head.

"Yawwooh!"

"Great Scott!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"D'Arcy's got it!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yooooop!" roared Arthur Augustus in anguish. "Oh cwumbs! Oh cwikey! Oh, my nappah! Bai Jove! Ow!"

Bunter blinked at him in wonder.

"What's the matter with D'Arcy?" he called out.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Buntah, you silly ass! What did you chuck the ball at my head for?" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "You have vewy neably

Words failed Arthur Augustus. He rubbed his head in anguish, and almost made up his noble mind to walk off the field. However, he decided to keep on, but he decided to field deep. And after that example of Bunter's bowling, all the field decided to field deep—very deep indeed.

Bunter gave the grinning cricketers a disapproving blink, and proceeded to bowl again.

He did not have any more chances of braining the field; they took care of that. Neither did he have any chance of hitting the wicket. What Bunter was bowling at, if he was bowling at all, was an interesting problem. It had to be presumed that he was aiming at the wicket. But that was only presumption. It did not look like it at all.

"They'll win this match on byes," Johnny Bull remarked.

Certainly, Bunter's remarkable bowling had a very encouraging effect on the Combermere side. The batting was not by any means first-class, but tenth-rate batting would have been too good for Bunter. The over gave Parker and his partner sixteen runs.

"Some game!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"The born idiot!" growled Harry Wharton. "I suppose we were rather asses to agree to play at all for the fat duffer. Still, we're going to win, somehow."

"Not if Bunter can help it!" said Bob ruefully.

"Gussy!" called out Bunter, when the field crossed over. "Take the ball, old bean!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I will do so if you desiah, Buntah, but my head is singin' frightfully, and I weally think you had bettah give it to somebody else."

Bunter grunted. His chief object, as cricket captain, seemed to be to keep the Famous Five in the background as much as possible. But even Bunter hesitated to call on Thomas or Albert to bowl.

"You, Inky!" he snapped.

"The pleasuredfulness will be terrific, my esteemed, ridiculous Bunter."

"Oh, take the ball and dry up!"

"My esteemed Bunter—"

"You talk too much," said Bunter.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh went on to bowl the second over. If the Combermere Ramblers expected more bowling in Bunter's style they were disappointed. There was a shout from the field.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

The Nabob of Bhanipur grinned a dusky grin. The batting was nowhere up to his form, and he handled the Combermere men easily.

"How's that?" came another roar, a couple of minutes later.

"Out!"

"This is a bit more like," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Bwavo!" chirruped Arthur Augustus.

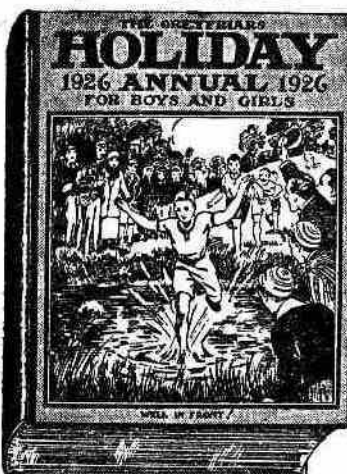
A third Combermere wicket went down, and the Greyfriars chums cheered the hat trick. Billy Bunter did not add his fat voice to the cheering. As captain of the House side, he ought to have been pleased to see the visitors' wickets going down at this rate. Perhaps he was pleased. But assuredly he did not look pleased.

But Hurree Janset Ram Singh was not finished yet. A fourth and a fifth wicket went down before he was finished.

Parker looked rather blue. He looked black when Bunter called out to him:

"Is that what you chaps call batting?"

ON SALE



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bwained me! I shall have a feabful bwaise! Ow, ow!"

Bunter jumped.

"Did—did—did it go near you?" he stuttered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh cwumbs!" D'Arcy pressed his hands to his damaged head, while Frank Nugent fielded the ball. "Oh deah! You utter ass—"

"What do you mean by getting in the way?" demanded Bunter.

"What?"

"Can't you play cricket at St. Jim's at all?"

"Eh?"

"Talk about leg before wicket!" said Bunter. "What did you want to put your silly head in front of the wicket for?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, D'Arcy, I want to be civil, and all that," said Bunter crossly. "But this won't do. You're in my team now, and I don't want any of your St. Jim's fumbling. Catch on?"

"You—you—you—" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"That will do!" snapped Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!" exclaimed Wharton.
"Mind your own business, Wharton!"
"Don't mind the fat idiot, Parker," called out Bob Cherry. "Being a born idiot, he can't help it, you know."
"Shut up, Cherry!" roared Bunter.
"Here, give me that ball! I'm going on to finish them!"

At which Parker brightened up again. There was still life in the game, for the Combermere side, so long as Bunter did his share of bowling. Billy Bunter rolled to the bowler's crease with a determined air. He was going to put the visitors out of their misery, as he expressed it to himself. All eyes were upon Bunter.

He took a short run, as gracefully as a walrus, and doubled himself up. What Bunter supposed he was doing was rather a mystery to the onlookers. What he actually did was to miss his footing and pitch over headlong, and land on the earth with a terrific crash. For a moment he looked as if he were making a desperate attempt at a nose-dive to the centre of the earth. Only the solidity of the earth's crust prevented that from happening. As it was, the circumference of the globe stopped Bunter.

Crash!

"Yarooooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And both sides in that remarkable cricket match doubled up with laughter and yelled, while Billy Bunter yelled, too, though in quite a different manner.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Parker Puts it Plain!

"**H**A, HA, HA!"
"Gweat Scott!"
"Oh, dear!" Bob Cherry wiped his eyes. "Bunter will be the death of me yet! Oh, dear!"
"Hurt, old bean?" Harry Wharton dragged Bunter up. The Owl of the Remove sat up dazedly, and blinked round him in a dizzy way.

"Wha-a-at was that?" he gasped.

"Eh?"

"Was it an earthquake?" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton. "Nunno! Not quite."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm hurt! Ow! Where's my specs? Don't tread on my specs, you silly owl! I've lost my specs!" howled Bunter.

"Here's your blessed barnacles, old man," stuttered Bob Cherry. "Here they are—not broken! I hope you're not broken, either."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The brokefulness really ought to be terrific!"

"But what were you doing, Bunter?" asked Johnny Bull, with a puzzled air.

"Did you go to sleep and dream you were diving into a swimming-pool?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow! I'm hurt!" roared Bunter. "I knocked my head on something—"

"Must have been the giddy earth," said Bob. "If you try to dive on solid land, the earth's bound to get in the way, you know."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's was a forgiving youth. But there was a bump on his noble head; and perhaps he was not sorry that Bunter had sampled his own powers as a bowler.

"You silly owls!" roared Bunter.

"What are you cackling at? Look here, I can't go on! My head's quite dizzy. I've bashed my nose! I believe I've broken my arm and my backbone—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



Billy Bunter was not in bed. He was reposing his podgy person on a large couch by the window, propped up on innumerable cushions and pillows. Two little tables stood near at hand, both loaded with refreshment, liquid and solid. "Feeling better?" asked Harry, with a smile. "No!" grunted Bunter. (See Chapter 12.)

"I say, Bunter—" began Wharton. The Owl of the Remove interrupted him.

"You needn't jaw, Wharton. I'm not going on."

"We'll play it out a man short, then," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You can sit in a deckchair and look on, Bunter."

"Shan't!"

"Well, do as you like, old bean; but if you're going, roll off and leave us to it."

"And the sooner the quicker," said Johnny Bull.

"Yes, rather! Hop it, Bunter!"

Bunter snorted.

"Nothing of the kind. This match is postponed—"

"What?"

"We'll play it out another time," said Bunter.

"Well, my hat!"

"Tell those Combermere cads to clear off. Chuck the whole thing! I'm going."

And Billy Bunter went.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed after him. Really, William George Bunter had taken their breath away.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking quite overcome. "Bai Jove! That chap Buntah weally is a corkab, you know—a weal corkah!"

"The cheeky ass!" gasped Nugent.

"The cheekfulness is terrific."

"I suppose we're not taking any notice of his cheeky rot, Harry?" asked Bob Cherry, looking inquiringly at the captain of the Remove.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No fear! I'll speak to Parker."

Wharton walked across to Parker, who was looking on from his wicket with a sarcastic grin. The Combermere Ramblers were not accustomed to a too meticulous regard for the rules of the great game of cricket. But Bunter's management of a cricket match was a surprise to them.

"That fat duffer has chucked it, Parker," said Harry. "It's rather a blessing for all concerned. We'll play it out—what?"

"Oh, yes, rather!" said Parker. "We haven't come up here for nothing. But, my hat! What sort of a silly idiot does he call himself?"

"I don't know," said Harry, laughing. "But we call him every sort. We're going on, then, without our jolly old captain."

Billy Bunter had disappeared in the direction of the house. Apparently, he supposed that his lordly command was being carried out. As a matter of fact, in a few minutes the cricketers had forgotten not only Bunter's lordly commands, but his very existence.

A man short in the house team did not matter very much, when that man was Bunter. Deprived of such a skipper and such a bowler, the house eleven was wonderfully strengthened.

With Harry Wharton in his old place as skipper, the Famous Five proceeded to make hay of Parker & Co.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Harry Wharton put in most of the bowling. The ball was offered to Arthur Augustus more than once, but with his head

singing as a result of Bunter's remarkable bowling, the swell of St. Jim's declined. Arthur Augustus was really more in need of lying up for repairs than Billy Bunter was, but nothing would have induced him to leave the field. And even with a terrific ache in his noble head, Arthur Augustus brought off a first-class catch that put Parker out of court.

Wickets fell fast, and Parker & Co. exchanged rather sickly glances when they were all down for thirty-five.

It was nowhere near tea-time yet, and Parker & Co. followed on with their second innings.

Parker hoped to do better in that innings, but without the valuable assistance of Bunter, the last state of the Combermere Ramblers was worse than their first.

The innings was brief, but it was full of incident. Wickets came down to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's bowling almost like leaves in Vallombrosa. It was still early for tea when the last Rambler was dismissed, with a total of twenty for the innings.

"Looks something like a win for little us!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Yaas, watahah!"

Parker grinned rather ruefully at Harry Wharton, but he took his defeat good-humouredly. He walked off the ground with the captain of the Remove. "You won't have to bat again," he remarked. "You're too good for my crowd, and there's no getting round

and played cricket with you, I fake it back. But mind you, I still think just the same of Bunter. He's a bilk!"

"Look here, Parker!"

"A bilk, if ever there was one," said Parker. "But what I didn't see at first, and what I see now plainly enough, is that he has taken you young gents in, as well as Mr. Pilkins and Walsingham and the rest. Taken everybody in all round. How he's done it I don't know—anybody looking at him would think him more fool than rogue. But he's done it. I'm putting you on your guard, sir," added Parker, as Harry was about to speak. "You're in a pretty queer position here, when it all comes out."

"When what comes out?" exclaimed Wharton.

"I don't quite know yet—only that there's something jolly fishy going on behind the scenes," said Parker. "Something's happened to Mr. Pilkins—and it happened the day he came to see Bunter, when he found that that young bilk had got hold of Combermere Lodge. Now Walsingham's vanished; and I don't need telling that Bunter has got rid of him somehow."

"What rot!"

"Then Horrocks, the butcher, has been put off by Walsingham telephoning to him from here yesterday," said Parker. "Well, I've been asking questions among the servants, and nobody saw Walsingham here yesterday, sir—any more than you and your friends did. Walsingham wasn't here."

by a young swindler, and if you know what's good for you, you'll clear out of Combermere Lodge before the crash comes."

And Parker left the captain of the Remove, without waiting for Harry to reply. He left him with plenty of food for thought.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

BILLY BUNTER did not appear at tea.

Harry Wharton inquired for him, and was informed that Master Bunter was lying down; recuperating, apparently, after his great exertions in the cricket match.

Bunter was not missed, however; the longer he lay down, the more enjoyable life was generally at "Bunter Court."

Without Bunter, the cricketers had a cheery tea under the trees, ministered to by Thomas and his myrmidons.

Parker & Co. took their beating cheerfully, and it was quite a merry party. Parker, indeed, tried to be as agreeable as he could; evidently repenting him of the hard opinions he had hitherto entertained of Harry Wharton & Co. The meeting on the cricket field had cleared the air, as it were.

Wharton was a little thoughtful. Parker's warning lingered in his mind, adding to the vague misgivings he had long felt on the subject of "Bunter

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that. A few more Bunters in your lot, and we should have pulled it off, though."

Harry Wharton chuckled.

"Bunter's a valuable man—to the other side!" he assented.

Parker gave him a rather curious look.

"I think I ought to apologise to you, sir," he said suddenly. "I take back a lot of things I've been thinking about you and your friends."

"I don't quite catch on," said Harry, staring at him.

"Well, look how the matter stands," said Parker. "I don't mind owning up that I came up here for this match, as much as anything else, to see how things were at Combermere Lodge—to use my eyes."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Well, I've used them," said Parker. "I can't play cricket like you, but I'm no fool. I know a straight chap when I see one."

"Thank you," said Harry, hardly knowing whether to be amused or annoyed. "I'm glad you think us straight, at all events, Parker."

"You and your friends," said Parker. "Not Bunter! Bunter's a fool at cricket, and a rogue at everything else in my opinion."

Wharton frowned.

"I can't listen to this," he said.

"I'm bound to tip you the wink," said Parker. "You've treated us decently, and played a good straight game, and there's no side about you. I own up I thought you were all in the game of bilking; but now I've seen you

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"He must have been here if he phoned to Horrocks," said Harry blankly.

"Then he came in, and cleared off again, without a soul in the house seeing him," said Parker. "What beats me is that Horrocks knew it was Walsingham because he knows Walsingham's voice so well. But the butler wasn't here, and he never telephoned—and so it was a trick of some kind. He couldn't have been here without being seen—and he wasn't seen—while you were lunching. I was asking questions, sir, and I've asked every servant in the house."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"There's only one explanation," said Parker, "and that is, that somebody managed somehow to imitate Walsingham's voice on the telephone. Can you tell me, sir, whether young Bunter has any gift in that line? You know him!"

Wharton started violently.

Only too well he was acquainted with the weird ventriloquial gifts of the Owl of the Remove.

Parker grinned rather maliciously.

"So that's that!" he said. "You needn't answer, Master Wharton—I can see it in your face. I know where I stand now."

"Look here, this isn't cricket," exclaimed Wharton, rather hotly. "You've no right to ask me questions about Bunter, and to catch me napping."

"Perhaps not," admitted Parker; "but I'm Mr. Pilkins' clerk, and I've got my duty to do to my employer. He's let in for an enormous sum of money if he's let a bilk into this house who can't or won't square. And after playing cricket with you, sir, I felt bound to put you on your guard—you're being made use of

Court" and the Owl's possession of that magnificent abode. He wished very much that Parker had told him nothing; but he realised that Mr. Pilkins's young man had meant to be good-natured, and put him on his guard.

Parker had the deepest suspicions of Bunter; and the estate-office young man, though not equal to Greyfriars fellows at cricket, was certainly far beyond them in knowledge of the world—especially of the "bilking" fraternity. It was not the kind of knowledge that Wharton would have liked to possess; but there it was: Parker knew his way about, and his belief was that a "crash" was coming at Combermere Lodge. Which was an exceedingly uncomfortable reflection for Bunter's guests.

After Parker and the Combermere cricketers were gone, the captain of the Remove made up his mind to speak to Bunter. It was rather a delicate matter for a guest to discuss with his host, but Wharton felt that if Bunter's fatuous folly had landed him in some serious scrape, it was up to the other Remove fellows to help extricate him from it if they could. But getting the truth out of Bunter was not likely to be an easy task. Really, it was rather doubtful whether Bunter could have told the truth if he had tried; and it was not on record that he ever had tried.

"Howwid, isn't it, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, meeting Wharton as he was going up the great staircase of the Lodge.

Wharton started.

"My hat! Has Parker—" he began.

(Continued on page 31.)

WEIRD! A battered biscuit tin, a worthless cheque for £500,000, a nonsensical letter, and two tiny pieces of shellac, all play their part in this baffling mystery story!

The VELDT TRAIL!

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



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Night Shadows!

"A VERY complicated case," Ferrers Locke, the world-famous detective, tapped the burnt ash from the bowl of his pipe and settled himself more comfortably in his chair.

"Complicated isn't the word for it!" This time the remark came from Inspector Pycroft, a leading light of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard. "I shall be durned glad when it's all settled, and I'm back in Old England."

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"You are far too impatient, Pycroft," he remonstrated. "This case will make history in the annals of criminology and—"

"Make me grey-headed, you mean!" grunted Pycroft. "What with the heat and the flies! South Africa's all right, but there's too much of it," he added. "What do you say, Jack?"

He turned to Locke's assistant—a youth of fifteen or thereabouts.

"Oh, I'm taking to it all right!" he grinned. "In fact, I like being in South Africa very much. But the guv'nor's got a trump card up his sleeve, bet your life, Pycroft, old bean. It's not such a 'complicated' case as we imagine."

Pycroft scratched his head.

"I dunno," he muttered dismally. "I've been over the ground a hundred times, and I'm blessed if I can see daylight! All I know is that Sir Merton Carr was murdered in this very house, that his death has something to do with a mysterious treasure left to him by a maniac of a Boer farmer named Piet de Jongh—"

"Perhaps not so much of a maniac as you imagine," put in Locke quietly.

Pycroft shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, when a fellow who wants to do his best pal a good turn leaves him some footling piece of gold shaped like a pyramid, which is supposed to contain the secret of a hidden treasure, only for the pal—in this case—to find an old biscuit tin, with a worthless cheque for £500,000 and a nonsensical letter in it, there's not much else you can call him."

"And yet Sir Merton Carr was murdered," Ferrers Locke reminded his official colleague. "You must admit that there was a motive for the murder,

and undoubtedly the treasure of the Golden Pyramid supplies it. Why, then, if Piet de Jongh was such a madman, should Sir Merton Carr be murdered?"

"A poser, I grant you," said the inspector grudgingly. "Then there's all this confusion in the evidence. One man says that Sir Merton was murdered at a quarter to eleven, or thereabouts, and yet an hour afterwards another witness declares that he heard Sir Merton's voice—"

"True, that evidence is conflicting," said Locke thoughtfully. "And yet the doctor's word is good enough for me. He says that Sir Merton was murdered between ten and eleven o'clock. The mystery of the dead man's voice has yet to be elucidated. When we solve that part of the puzzle the rest will be easy."

"And this rogue of a nephew of Sir Merton Carr," said Drake, breaking into the conversation. "Do you think he's speaking the truth when he says that he knows nothing about the murder, guv'nor?"

"Gerald Bristow's innocence has yet to be proved," replied Locke. "The man's record is enough to hang him."

"You mean the fact that he escaped from Stonemoor Prison in England, that he came over to Johannesburg by the first available boat, and broke into the house of his uncle, Sir Merton Carr, the same night—at about the same time—that the old fellow was murdered," said Pycroft. "Bristow's a deep rogue, if ever there was one."

"He's rogue enough," smiled Locke. "We found that out long before we met him again over here. And yet there's a certain amount of truth in his story. You remember he said he arrived in Jo'burg down and out, that he thought of breaking into his uncle's house for food and money—"

"But why couldn't he approach his uncle in the ordinary way?" snapped Pycroft. "Why break in?"

Ferrers Locke raised his eyebrows.

"I'm surprised that you should raise that question, Pycroft," he said. "You know full well that Sir Merton had washed his hands of Bristow. You know that, despite the relationship that existed between them, he would have sent Bristow back to prison the moment he had shown himself in his house."

"Perhaps," muttered Pycroft. "And yet Bristow, after having told his story, and promising to stay in your hotel until you had investigated things, bunks—vanished into thin air."

"Not exactly into thin air," said Drake, "for weren't we lured away to that rotten house in Vrededorp, and didn't we see Bristow there, immaculate as ever, eyeglass and all?"

Pycroft shuddered at the recollection.

"And weren't you lured there so that Bristow could make me deliver up the biscuit tin and its contents?" put in Ferrers Locke. "Evidently Piet de Jongh was no maniac, Pycroft! Bristow and his friends want that biscuit tin. They were and are prepared to go to extremes to get it."

"I suppose so," grunted the C.I.D. man. "Then if you follow that line of theory, what place in it has the dead man's private secretary?"

"You mean Stephen Jarrad?" said Locke.

"Of course. Why has he run away? Why was the dagger, which we assume was the cause of Sir Merton's death, hidden under the flooring in Jarrad's bed-room?"

Locke smiled.

"I am not going to explain my theory at this juncture," he said; "but, really, I can account for those circumstances. Jarrad, I'm half-inclined to believe, has bolted through sheer fright. As a great statesman once remarked, Pycroft—wait and see."

"I'm waiting all right," grunted Pycroft. "And what about the dagger now?"

"We know that Daft Dave, the local half-wit, took it from us about five minutes ago," replied Locke.

"Took it!" interrupted Pycroft. "Pinched it, you mean?"

Locke smiled.

"Well, well, have it your own way. The dagger was pinched! A pity, really, but we can rectify the mistake. I let Dave go scot-free to give him the impression that he was not suspected of having any hand in this mystery. It's time, Drake," added Locke, looking at his watch, "that you got on his trail. But don't let the fellow know that you are shadowing him. Get back as soon as

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you can, and report to me here. Pycroft and I are going to shake down in this house for the time being. Off you go!"

"Right-ho, guv'nor," said Drake. "I'll stick to him like a leech."

Locke looked across at Pycroft when his assistant had gone.

"A pretty kettle of fish," he remarked. "But we'll straighten it out, never fear."

Pycroft was silent for a moment.

"I was thinking of that deformed lump of humanity they call Daft Dave," he said. "He's not so daft as some people think. He's all there. And the way he hangs about this place is enough to make me suspicious."

"You must remember that Sir Merton gave him free run of the house," said Locke. "Sir Merton apparently took pity on him, fed him, and gave him money. Still, I grant you Daft Dave is not so daft as the locals believe him. Drake will be able to bring us back some more information concerning the movements of Dave, I've not the slightest doubt. But come, Pycroft, old bean—let's turn in early."

The two detectives rose to their feet, and sauntered out of the lounge and up the great staircase. Locke chose Stephen Jarrad's bed-room for reasons of his own, and Pycroft selected the room adjoining. The lights were switched out, and then the big house was wrapped in silence, for, of course, the servants had long since retired.

Ferrers Locke did not, however, fully disrobe. Something—he could not tell what—seemed persistently to warn him to be on his guard.

He clambered into bed only half undressed, and, switching off the light, lay thinking for some time, till at last sleep took him unawares.

"But he sat up with a jerk barely two hours later.

A confused chaos of sounds had percolated through into his slumbers, insistently dinning at his sub-consciousness until at last he awoke, to find passing backwards and forwards before his eyes a succession of weird, gyrating shadows, accompanied by much scuffling and panting of breath.

"Ye gods!" he muttered. "There's a blessed fight going on in this very room!"

He sprang out of bed in a flash, and then fell staggering backwards as the shadows—now most uncomfortably substantial!—bumped heavily into him and swayed past him, knocking over a chair and then a table in their mad struggle.

Through a chink in the curtain at the window the moonlight shafted inwards, and as the shadows careered madly about the room Locke gave a low cry of surprise, for the moonlight had gleamed for a fleeting second against something that glinted and glittered and then disappeared.

"An eyeglass!" muttered Locke. "That's Bristow for a dead cert!"

He dashed across the room towards the electric switch, for he realised that it was useless to attempt to join in the mad affray without more light. The two men seemed inextricably locked in a deadly embrace, and were obviously fighting wildly, desperately for mastery. But barely had Locke's hand touched the switch when there came a sudden flash and a sharp report, followed by a low cry.

The fingers separated just as the detective's finger pressed down the switch and flooded the room with light. At the same instant the door was thrown open, and Pycroft, in night attire, appeared on the threshold.

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"What the—" he began.

But Locke, with a sudden shout, had thrust him aside, and was pounding towards the french windows in the wake of a rapidly disappearing figure.

A Fresh Trail!

HE returned a few moments later, a disappointed look on his face.

"That was Bristow for a cert!" he panted. "And the other—Why, what the dickens—"

He broke off.

Pycroft was swaying about the room, clutching at the figure of Griggs, Sir Merton's valet, and finding it exceedingly difficult to hold the man, on account of his—Pycroft's—injured and still bandaged arms.

Griggs himself was struggling violently, and a splash of blood showed up distinctly on his left wrist where Bristow's shot had struck him.

"Let me go, confound you!" he panted. "I'm not your man! Can't you see he slipped away—"

Locke hastened forward, frowning.

"What's the idea, Pycroft?" he demanded. "This is Griggs, the valet! Let him free, man. Can't you see he's injured?"

Pycroft released the fellow, with a growl.

"That's all very well!" he muttered. "But what was I to think? He was trying to sneak out of the room when your back was turned—in the excitement he didn't seem to see me!"

"What?" Locke turned, surprised, towards the valet, who was now nursing his injured wrist. "Why were you trying to get away, Griggs? I thought you were fighting that other fellow, who broke into this room—"

He broke off. There was something peculiar about all this.

Come to think of it, how did Griggs get here at all? His room was in the basement of the building, a good distance from here. He could not, surely, have heard Bristow's entry—an experienced cracksmen like Arthur the Dude works, as Locke well knew, in almost utter silence.

"How did you come to be here, Griggs?" snapped Locke suspiciously.

"I heard a noise!" exclaimed the valet indignantly. "And I came up to see what it was all about, and—then that other chap sprang on me, and—"

"Then why did you try to sneak away afterwards?" Locke asked, ignoring for the moment the question of how Griggs could have possibly heard anything from the basement.

"I—I wasn't—I—I mean I didn't—"

The man stuttered and floundered stupidly, and then broke off with a frightened gasp as Pycroft suddenly stepped forward.

"Perhaps he'd like to explain why he was taking this with him," said the inspector grimly, and held out something to Locke.

"My wallet!" muttered the detective, taking it quickly and staring from it to the now speechless valet.

"I—I took it from him—from that burglar fellow!" exclaimed Griggs, finding his voice at last and beginning to protest wildly. "He—he had it in his hand—he'd pinched it from your coat pocket—"

"How do you know that?" cut in Locke swiftly. "How did you know it was in my pocket?"

"I didn't know it!" almost howled the now obviously panic-stricken valet.

"I—I only saw that fellow hovering about round your clothes, and—and then

I closed with him and snatched this away—"

"And tried to sneak out of the room with it afterwards," put in Pycroft.

"I didn't!" flashed Griggs, veering round furiously. "I—I forgot—I didn't realise I had it in my hand—"

Ferrers Locke examined the wallet, and was relieved to find that its contents, which included the curious letter and the worthless cheque found at Devil's Spruit, were intact.

Then he glanced keenly at the valet, who now stood glowering before him, an expression of angry bitterness on his face.

"You're a very curious fellow, Mr. Griggs," murmured Locke, staring straight into the other's eyes, "and your behaviour is more curious still. However, we'll give you the benefit of the doubt. You may go."

Griggs hesitated, mumbled something, and then left the room, favouring Inspector Pycroft with a particularly malignant glance as he went.

"That chap," said Pycroft deliberately, as the door closed behind the valet—"that chap's pretty deep! Says he heard a noise, did he? And came here, all the way from the basement, to tackle the intruder who attempted to steal your wallet? Well, if you've sucked all that in, Locke—"

"I've not sucked anything in yet!" muttered the detective, a strangely tense look in his face. "But I've struck a new trail, Pycroft! And it's turned up far quicker than I ever hoped it would."

Pycroft stared at him in speechless amazement.

"What in the name of goodness do you mean by that?" he asked at last.

But before Locke could answer there came a sudden and dramatic interruption.

Across the threshold of the now wide-flung french windows appeared a shadow—a shadow that moved quickly, disappeared, and gave place to a human figure.

"Jack Drake!" exclaimed Locke, striding forward as his young assistant, hatless and out of breath, stood before him, his face expressive of the most profound excitement.

"Guv'nor!" panted Jack, as he hurried into the room. "I've struck the most amazing thing in the world! Guv'nor, Sir Merton's not dead; he's alive! I've heard his voice—barely half an hour ago!"

The Riddle of the Voice!

JACK DRAKE'S dramatic declaration was followed by a tense hush.

Accustomed though he was to surprises, even Ferrers Locke was amazed now, while Pycroft merely stared at the detective's young assistant in frank disbelief.

"Sir Merton not dead!" snorted Pycroft. "Fiddlesticks!"

"But I tell you I heard him talking and—"

"Talk sense, man!" interposed Pycroft irritably. "Sir Merton's body, quite dead, was found in this house, and has since been examined by several doctors. Why, it's in the mortuary at this present moment! Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"I tell you—"

"Easy does it!" he murmured, with a faint smile. "At least, let's hear what Jack has to say about this extraordinary business."



Daft Dave suddenly reached out and snatched up the oil lamp. Next instant he had flung it, with the full weight of his crippled, deformed, yet amazingly strong body behind it, clean at Ferrers Locke. (See page 29.)

The little group stood there now, in Locke's—or, rather, Jarrad's bed-room, in the small hours of the morning. But there was no more sleep for any of them now. Locke himself had become exceptionally alert, while Pycroft's face was alive with excitement.

"Cough it up, old chap," said Locke, clinging himself down on the side of the bed and lighting a cigarette.

The eminent private detective was never more in his element than now. Like all hard workers—and Locke was a Trojan for work!—he detested what he called "child's play" cases. And this present mystery was very far from being child's play. Indeed, it seemed to grow more and more mystifying as each hour crept by.

"You sent me off to follow Daft Dave," began Jack, after a momentary pause, "and I've been hard at it ever since. The fellow, despite his crippled condition, seemed absolutely tireless, and led me a dickens of a dance all over Jo'burg.

"More than half the time was taken up in irritating delays, while Daft Dave stopped every now and then to speak to someone or other in the street. Everyone seemed to know him in the city.

"I got as close to him as safety would permit on most of these occasions, but I quickly found that the conversation between him and those he met amounted to nothing of importance. Just empty chatter, such as you might expect a chap of his calibre to indulge in.

"But at last, after what seemed an endless tour from place to place, with nothing coming of it, Daft Dave got going, after night had fallen, and made his way out of the town and across the country.

"His route lay past the fringe of mines headed by the Robinson Deep, and he kept pegging along till the city had been left a good way behind, and we were out on the open veldt.

"I thought the journey would never end, and I was pretty spent, I can tell you, by the time old Daft Dave halted

outside a biggish sort of house about four miles beyond the mine area.

"The place looked rather posh—I decided it must be the country residence of one of the big mining magnates—and I was astonished to see Dave make his way round to the back entrance and simply turn the handle of a door and walk in!

"Well, I waited a bit, and then scouted round on my own account. I found the house was wrapped in darkness save for one window on the upper floor, from which a light shone.

"I eventually decided to get in and take the risk of being discovered, and at length I found myself at the top of a flight of stairs and facing a long, well-carpeted corridor. The whole house was sumptuously furnished, but seemed quite empty, save, of course, for Daft Dave.

"I listened, and finally heard Dave's voice. He was talking to someone, but the other voice was too indistinct for me to catch its tones properly. I slipped into an adjoining room, fortunately unoccupied, and, finding an intercommunicating door, I settled down for a quiet game of patience at the keyhole.

"Barely had I done so when I heard Sir Merton's voice. I tell you I was not mistaken—it was his voice! I ought to know it by now, didn't I?

"I only managed to catch a few words here and there, but, anyway, it seemed as if he was very angry, choking somebody off fit to beat the band.

"I was so thunderstruck that I suppose I momentarily forgot where I was.

"Anyway, I made a bit of a slip and knocked something over. I heard a sharp word of suspicious inquiry followed by the scraping of chairs, and then—well, I decided it was time to bunk!

"There was no time for me to get out by the way I had come, so I had to climb through a window. How I ever managed it, I don't know; but, anyway, I was not pursued—perhaps the fellows in the other room decided it had been a false alarm.

"I slithered down a rainpipe in double

quick time, and then pounded like mad across the veldt, and kept on running till sheer exhaustion made me pull up for a breather. And—well, that's all.

"But I tell you, on my sacred oath, I heard Sir Merton's own voice. There's no two questions about it. It was his own voice or I've gone dotty!"

He ceased speaking on a note almost of defiance, flinging a challenging look towards Pycroft as he did so. The inspector glared in return, grunted something unintelligible, and turned towards Locke.

Ferrers Locke's face was like a mask. Throughout Jack's astounding story he had sat perfectly still, puffing calmly away at his cigarette, and only the gleam in his eyes told of the excitement he had felt.

Now he rose deliberately to his feet, stubbed the fag-end of the cigarette in an ash-tray near by, and turned towards his companions.

"I'm afraid," he said, with a slight smile, "that there's no more shut-eye for us to-night. Not that I suppose that cuts any ice for I can see that you are both simply bubbling over with excitement."

"What are you going to do?" asked Pycroft.

"What else is there to do," returned Locke, "except to get across to that house just as quickly as our legs can carry us? Things are developing even more quickly than I had expected. And that means that we shall have to move quickly, too, otherwise we may side-track one of the biggest chances we've ever had!"

"Busted if I can follow you at all, Locke," said Pycroft, in an injured tone. "Meantime you're going to take in this cock-and-bull story about the dead man's voice? I'm not 'challenging Jack's report," he added hastily, "but, just the same, I think he must have been genuinely mistaken—"

"If that's what you think," put in Jack somewhat heatedly. "then all I can say

is that you've got another think coming! I tell you—"

"Yes, yes, you've told us before, my lad," interrupted Locke gently. "And we believe you, so don't worry. And now I'm going over to that house right away."

"And I'm coming with you," said Jack promptly.

"I'm afraid you're done in, old fellow," remarked the detective anxiously. "You've had a stiff day, and I think you ought to take a rest—"

"I can't rest with all this on my mind," said Jack eagerly; "and, anyway, I'm good for a good bit yet, guv'nor. Besides, you must have someone to show you the way."

Ferrers Locke's eyes twinkled.

"Very well," he replied. "But I think that you, Pycroft, had better remain here. Apart from the fact that your arms must still be a bit wonky, I feel it would suit our united purpose better if I could be sure that we had a representative here on the spot. Not that I mistrust Vane in the least, but—well, you understand, don't you?"

Pycroft nodded.

"Only too glad to oblige, Locke," he said. "Personally, I'd rather remain on here. I'm not shirking, mind you. Only I—"

"That's all right, then!"—cut in the detective, with a smile. "Take it as read. Meantime, if we're not back here within twelve hours from now you might get in touch with Vane and come out with a posse of men. Can't afford to take too many risks in a dangerous game like this. Jack, you give Pycroft the best idea you can of the locality of this house you speak of while I slide into some togs."

Less than a quarter of an hour later Ferrers Locke and Jack had started out.

For reasons which the detective did not choose to explain at the moment, Locke took the most elaborate precautions about getting out of the house, being obviously very anxious not to disturb anyone in the servants' quarters.

In the garage at the back of the house was Sir Merton's own private car, and this the detective immediately commissioned.

Apart from the fact that Jack himself was really too spent to undertake the long journey on foot, Locke knew, from what his young assistant had told him, that the house to which they were now going must be at least seven or eight miles distant, if not more.

It meant, anyway, that they must traverse Johannesburg itself from one end to the other, and come out on the other side, where a long country run still awaited them.

And that was no small undertaking, for the "Golden City"—as Johannesburg is still called—is a big place, being the largest town in Africa south of Cairo.

Soon the car was speeding through some of the main streets—which were now, of course, empty and silent.

Then they emerged on to the belt of gold-mines beyond, cutting through the long, winding roads flanked by the great white sand dumps; which loomed up like mountain ghosts in the moonlight.

And finally they found themselves on the broad, open veldt, with only a light here and there.

Presently, round a bend in the road, they came upon the house—a long, rambling, double storeyed building, standing in its own park-like grounds.

Obviously, as Jack had suggested, it was the private country residence of some "big pot," probably one of the mine-owners in the district.

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But Locke was surprised to see that this magnificent place had apparently become a sort of secret meeting-place for crooks. It mystified him considerably, though he said nothing to Jack at this stage.

The detective turned the car off into a narrow cut, where it could safely be left, screened from sight by the looming walls of a large kopje.

Then they clambered out and began to make their way cautiously towards the house, which, so far as they could see at present, was wrapped in complete darkness.

"Of course, there's just the chance that Daft Dave and whoever else was with him will have decamped by now," muttered Locke, as they crept along under the shadow of a well-cut hedge which fringed the estate. "Though I rather fancy—"

He broke off and stopped dead in his tracks, making an urgent sign to Jack to do likewise.

They had just come to a break in the hedge, caused by a tall iron gate, which evidently formed the tradesmen's entrance. And even as they did so Locke slipped quickly back into the shadow, at the same time peering through the bars of the gate, past the gravel path, and away across the well-trimmed lawn towards the house itself.

"Keep still, Jack!" he whispered.

"And watch!"

Jack Drake, his heart suddenly thumping against his ribs, did as he was bid, straining his eyes in his endeavour to pierce the deep shadows immediately before them.

FOUR MORE

BEAUTIFUL CUT-OUT STAND-UP PHOTOS—

NEXT WEEK!

Then there came a sudden shaft of pale amber light as the moon—a full one—broke through a rift in the clouds and cast a swift radiance over the scene.

And as it did so Locke gripped Jack's arm; and Jack's eyes widened in amazement as he caught sight of a tall but stooping figure which now crept warily, yet with the ease of one long familiar with his bearings, across the furthestmost fringe of the lawn and finally disappeared round a bend in the wall.

"Bristow!" whispered Locke tensely. "He must have come straight here when he took to flight from Sir Merton's house a couple of hours ago! Though how he's covered the distance in the time beats me!"

"Might have had a car—or a stink-bike—concealed near by for emergencies," suggested Jack sagely; and Locke nodded, but did not reply.

After a moment or so the detective nudged his assistant, and they tried the latch of the gate, which they found gave readily. Then they slipped through and began to edge their way by a circuitous route towards the rear part of the house.

As they drew slowly nearer Jack gripped the detective's arm.

"There you are, guv'nor!" he whispered, nodding towards the house before them. "That's the room where I heard Sir Merton's voice. See the light?"

Locke nodded and pressed onward until at last they came to a side window, through which the detective, after only a momentary hesitation, forced an entrance.

And a few moments later they were creeping as silently as a couple of panthers along a well-carpeted passage to the main hall, and thence up a flight of broad stairs to the floor above.

Jack led the way now, and at length softly opened a door leading into the room immediately adjoining that from which the sound of low voices could now be heard indistinctly.

They both passed within. The room was in total darkness, save for the soft beams of the moon which shafted their way through a gap in the curtains at the large double-fronted windows.

By this pale light Locke was just able to observe that the apartment was apparently furnished as a bed-room.

Apart from the occupants of the adjoining room—and, of course, Locke and Jack themselves—the whole of that vast, beautifully-furnished house seemed to be deserted.

Locke, noticing the door which formed a communication between this room and the next, now crept swiftly towards it.

From where he stood the sound of voices could be heard, though indistinctly. But by applying his ear to the keyhole he could pick out a sentence here and there, and quite easily recognised the voice of Gerald Arthur Bristow, alias Arthur the Dude.

"I tell you I simply couldn't help it!"

Bristow was saying in a tone which seemed to suggest mingled irritation and nervousness, strangely unlike the usual suave, complacent tone associated with this "gentleman crook."

"I don't know anything about that," came the response; and Locke's brows drew together in a half-puzzled frown as he heard it. "But the stuff has got to be obtained—and quickly, too. I've told you already what the penalty is if—"

"All right, all right! Don't rub it in!" snarled Bristow.

"Not at all," came the response at once. "But just to let you see that I am really in earnest—how about a little demonstration? How about asking Sir Merton Carr himself, the man you killed—"

"That's a lie!" almost shouted Bristow, breaking dramatically in upon the other. "I tell you I had no hand—"

"Steady, steady! Don't get so excited! Save your excitement for a little while, and perhaps it may be justified. As I was saying, how about asking Sir Merton himself to declare, in his own voice, that you—and you only—were responsible for his most untimely end?"

Ferrers Locke, to whose ears every word of this astounding statement came clearly now, waited tensely, his eyes suddenly narrowed and glinting.

There came a slight suggestion of movement from the room beyond, and then Gerald Bristow's voice—high-pitched, frantic with sudden fear—cut into the momentary silence:

"No, no! For Heaven's sake, not that, you fiend!"

Clear and loud his voice came, and it sent a shiver of horror and amazement through Jack's veins.

Hitherto always so complacent, so urbane, Bristow seemed by his voice to have suffered some extraordinary change—to have crumpled up in that moment into a shuddering, fear-stricken being. His voice was charged with the uttermost panic, and broke off almost on a shriek of despair and appeal.

And then, cutting dramatically into Bristow's own words, came the voice of another—a deep-toned, resonant voice—raised in accents of anger, a voice that brought with it something of that vague atmosphere of the supernatural

which can arouse speechless awe even into the bravest heart:

"I tell you I'll listen to your impudent request no longer! I've had more than enough of you and your double dealing! Fool that I have been ever to have lent an ear to you in the first place! This comes of trying to give a helping hand to one who—"

"For mercy's sake," broke in the voice of Bristow, "stop that terrible voice!"

"What? You'd strike me, would you?" Again the voice came, clearly and unmistakably that of Sir Merton Carr, and followed by a sudden crash, as of something being overturned.

Then came unmistakable sounds of a fierce struggle, followed by a sudden, sharp cry of agony, and a momentary, tense silence. And then—

"You scoundrel! You—you've killed me! But I know you, Ger—"

"Stop it, I say! Stop it, or I'll—"

Bristow's agonised scream was interrupted by a sudden, abrupt laugh, a blood-freezing cackle of evil triumph which almost caused Jack himself to cry out.

Both he and Locke recognised that laugh, yet, though they knew it, though they were sure that it had come from the lips of Daft Dave, the sense of horror it had brought with its first utterance the day before seemed as strong as ever.

Locke turned swiftly towards Jack. The detective's face was set in grim lines now.

"Come on!" he muttered. "We're going to rush that room and take them by surprise!"

The Fight with Daft Dave!

FERRERS LOCKE sprang across the room to where he had espied an electric switch. But though he clicked it down, no light was forthcoming.

"As I expected," he grunted; "cut off at the main. The real owners of this house are away, and Dave and Bristow and their gang have sneaked in and taken possession!"

But the detective wasted no further time.

He crept towards the communicating door now, and, with a quick nod to Jack, turned the handle, which he had previously tested, and flung the door wide.

Both Locke and Jack had drawn their automatics now and were quite prepared for a struggle.

As the door was flung wide, there came a howl of amazement from Daft Dave, which was echoed by Bristow, as both men rose swiftly to their feet.

"Put 'em up, both of you!" snapped Locke. "Quick and lively, now!"

Just for a fleeting second they stared at the newcomers in gaping astonishment.

Jack, glancing about him, saw that there was a table in the centre of the room on which stood a smoky oil lamp and a curiously-shaped ebony-coloured box.

That much and no more he was able to take note of in that swift second.

Then there came a roar of rage from Daft Dave, no longer the simpering idiot as they had become accustomed to finding him, but a snarling, furious, hunted beast.

"Look out!" yelled Locke suddenly, and ducked.

But he was a split second too late.

Daft Dave, instead of obeying Locke's curt command to throw up his hands, had suddenly reached out and snatched up the oil lamp which he raised over his head like a figure of demoniacal fury.

And next instant he had flung it

with the full weight of his crippled, deformed, yet amazingly strong body behind it, clean at the detective.

The lamp caught Locke a glancing blow against the side of the head. Had he not ducked when he did, it would assuredly have stunned him altogether.

As it was, it sent him reeling back with a cry of anguish, while the lamp itself sped onwards to crash to the ground a moment later just behind the spot where Jack Drake was standing.

Locke, however, quickly recovered himself, though his head was spinning and dizzy with the shock of the blow.

He rushed forward, immediately behind Jack, who had already dashed in.

The room was in darkness now, and the fact that the moon had by now disappeared behind a bank of cloud added to the confusion.

But a yell from Jack proved that he had seized hold of someone, and an answering cry gave Locke the clue, for

A livid tongue of flame streaked suddenly through the darkness, cutting it almost like a lightning flash. It came from a thin lace curtain hanging over a window near the communicating door. Evidently the oil lamp, which Dave had flung at them as they rushed into the room, had not been extinguished and the flames were now greedily eating up the carpet and rushing up the curtains with swiftly-increasing strength.

Locke made to rush at the curtains with a view to dragging them down, but a crooked shadow loomed up before him and he found himself struggling madly the next moment with Daft Dave.

Meantime, Jack Drake had taken Locke's place and was now tearing at the curtains which at last collapsed almost atop of him, causing him to cough and splutter madly with the smoke and fumes.

He stamped fiercely on the curtains, but without much avail. The fire had



Ferrers Locke and Daft Dave staggered and reeled about the room, sending articles of furniture crashing down on all sides, kicking and plunging in a wild, headlong battle for mastery. (See page 30.)

it was unmistakably in the high-pitched voice of Daft Dave.

The detective crashed into a couple of reeling figures, stumbled over a chair, fell headlong, drew himself erect again instantly and spying a figure near the window—a figure that could only be Bristow's—he made a swift charge.

But even then Bristow was a shade quicker. He had the window up in a trice and a moment later had vaulted lightly through it, swinging easily out as if thoroughly well acquainted with his bearings.

Locke lunged out desperately and secured a grip on the man's fast-disappearing ankle. There came a yell of anger from Bristow who swiftly kicked backwards.

It was a cruel blow and it caught Locke squarely between the eyes.

With a cry of pain and dismay the detective released his hold and fell back, momentarily blinded. And ere he could properly recover himself there came a sudden shout from Jack.

"Quick, guv'nor! Dave's slipped me—and the place is afire!"

Ferrers Locke, forcing himself, by a sheer effort of will, to draw erect, spun round.

by now secured something of a grip and was making rapid strides, flinging queer, dancing shadows about the room, shadows which revealed the struggling swaying forms of the detective and his adversary as each sought the mastery.

Despite the fact that Daft Dave was a cripple and horribly deformed, he seemed now to be imbued with the strength of three men, and he fought with the desperation of a cornered animal.

Locke himself was no mean fighter, and in any other circumstances would certainly have put up a far better show.

But he had already received two nasty blows on the head, and his brain was singing and reeling, added to which the fumes of the fire were steadily increasing in volume and threatening to choke the last ounce of breath out of his lungs.

Back and forth they swayed, Jack's figure being lost in the struggle; and then, as a particularly vivid flame shot clean across Daft Dave's face, Ferrers Locke saw something that almost made his blood run cold.

Daft Dave's eyes, jade green in the flame-light, were snapping and rolling, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 914.

his lips sagging and revealing a double row of jagged, yellow teeth, and there was something frothy curling round the ends of his mouth.

"Heavens!" gasped Locke, as he sought vainly to break away from the man's clutch. "The fellow's gone clean mad!"

As if in dramatic confirmation of his terrible discovery, there now burst from the lips of Daft Dave another of those wild, discordant laughs which reverberated away into a thousand echoes.

"Mad! That's it! Quite, quite mad!" he shrieked. "But not too mad to finish you, Mr. Ferrers Locke! Not too mad to put an end to your career! He, he, he!"

The fellow's voice, cracked and high-pitched, and ending abruptly with a repetition of that awful laugh, sent a shiver of horror through Locke.

He began to fight with renewed desperation, seeking release from the man's frenzied embrace, for he could feel Daft Dave's fingers slipping steadily nearer to his throat—and Locke knew what that meant!

Even the finest of fighters finds himself up against one of the toughest propositions possible if he gets into the clutches of a madman, for madness invariably seems to bring with it the most superhuman strength, and once Daft Dave got his fingers round Locke's throat, the detective knew that he would stand little chance of escape from being throttled to death.

They staggered and reeled about the room, sending articles of furniture crashing down all about them, thudding heavily into the walls and reeling away from them again, kicking and plunging in a wild, headlong battle for mastery.

Locke wondered vaguely what on earth had become of Jack. He seemed to have disappeared altogether.

And, meantime, the fire had gained a strong hold now, its flames beating with a fierce heat about them, scorching their clothes, causing both Locke and his opponent to cough and splutter as the fumes found their way down their throats.

At last the detective succeeded in twisting himself almost free of the madman's clutches, and wrenching one arm clear he drove it home clean between the other's wildly rolling eyes.

There came a stifled howl from Daft Dave's lips, and he reeled back, releasing his hold, to stagger and finally collapse in a heap on the floor, with the smoke forming a screen about him, while Locke himself reeled back choking and panting, striving to keep himself from falling.

The detective's head was spinning round like a top now, and something warm was trickling uncomfortably down his face, while he could feel that his clothes were torn and tattered almost to ribbons.

It had been a frightful, desperate encounter, one of the worst he had ever experienced.

And the trouble was that the worst was not yet over.

The fire was now steadily eating its way, and had secured such a hold that the room was rapidly being transformed into a furnace.

"Jack! I must find Jack!" muttered Locke dazedly, as he stumbled and reeled about, finally pitching headlong over something that barred his path.

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He dragged himself to his knees, groping around in the smoke-encircled gloom.

A sudden vivid flash of flame lighted up the spot for a fleeting instant, but it was more than enough.

"It's Jack! Good heavens, he's been overcome by the fumes!"

Consumed with sudden fear, Locke flung out his arms and lifted the still, inert figure, heaving it unsteadily over his shoulders. Then, glancing wildly about him, he sought a means of escape.

But everywhere the flames leapt up as if to mock him, barring his path, forcing him steadily backwards, no matter in what direction he attempted to go.

"Heavens!" he groaned. "We're trapped; we'll never get out of this!"

For a moment stark despair gripped him, as he stood there swaying dazedly with his senseless burden, while the flames roared and crackled about him like a thousand furies.

Then, seeking a comparatively safe corner, he put down his burden while he dragged his handkerchief from his pocket and fastened it tightly about his mouth.

Once more he picked up the unconscious figure of Jack, and, with a determined effort, forced a way through the scorching heat towards the door.

Blindly he groped his way along, and after what seemed an eternity he reached comparative safety.

The flames had spread into the next room, and were already battering at the rooms immediately beneath. But beyond this the fire had not so far moved, and in a little while Locke found himself downstairs, dragging frantically at the front door, which at last came open.

Then he rushed with his senseless burden into the cool, revivifying air.

He set Jack down, and was immeasurably relieved to find that he was already showing signs of coming round.

He examined him carefully for a minute or so to assure himself that the boy was not in any way seriously injured.

HOBBS, SUTCLIFFE, PARKIN, HENDREN.

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Then suddenly he stood erect again, his eyes distended with horror.

"Daft Dave!" he gasped aloud. "I—I forgot him! He's in there!"

And without waiting any further, he dashed pell-mell back into the house, the sound of his footsteps booming distantly upon Jack's brain as the detective's young assistant began to regain consciousness.

Up the stairs rushed Locke, dangerously heedless of his own safety.

The room in which that terrible fight had taken place now seemed like a roaring furnace, and Locke fell back a step with a groan of dismay.

"But I must get to him!" he panted. "Can't leave the poor fellow to be burnt alive!"

He glanced quickly about him.

In the corridor where he stood he espied a wall fixture consisting of a washbasin and tap. He rushed towards this, turned the tap, muttering a prayer of thankfulness as he saw the water gush forth.

Then he cupped his hands and flooded his head and neck with the water, finally soaking his handkerchief and once more fastening it round his mouth and nostrils.

Then he hastened back, and, after a moment, found a possible opening where the flames had already practically burnt themselves out.

Into this he dived, forcing his way blindly, groping about till, after what seemed an immeasurable length of time, he found the still, prone figure of Daft Dave.

Swiftly, he picked the man up and slung him over his shoulders, as he had done in the case of Jack.

Then turning about, he began to fight his way back, his head whirling, his whole body teeming with heat and pain, and clouds of steam arising from his clothes, which he had already partially drenched with the water from the washbasin tap.

How he reached the head of the stairs he never knew, but he found himself clattering down them, to be met halfway by Jack Drake, his face white and strained, his eyes distended with fear.

"Guv'nor!" cried the boy. "Thank heavens you're safe so far! Here, let me lend a hand, for goodness' sake!"

Jack, who had not suffered to anything like the extent that Locke had done, found his strength almost fresh again, and quickly relieved Locke of his burden, at the same time contriving somehow to lend the detective a hand.

They groped their way down the rest of the staircase, with the roar and crackle of the flames dinning now into their ears, and at last found themselves outside, where Jack quickly but gently put down the ominously inert form of Daft Dave.

He swung round again just in time.

Ferrers Locke, a bedraggled, tragic figure, was swaying dizzily, his hands outstretched blindly before him.

"Heavens! I—I'm done! I—I can't keep up—"

Locke's voice trailed off, and Jack sprang forward just in time to catch his chief's body as it crumpled, with a low moan of exhaustion, into the boy detective's arms.

(What is the outcome of this dramatic meeting with Daft Dave? Will he live to help the great detective in this amazing case or—? See next week's gripping instalment.)

THE BUNTER COURT ELEVEN!

(Continued from page 24.)

D'Arcy, being a St. Jim's fellow, Harry had a natural repugnance to the idea of the noble Gussy hearing anything of "bilking" with a Greyfriars man.

"Parkah!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "It wasn't Parkah—it was Buntah, you know."

"Bunter's told you—"

"He hasn't told me anythin', deah boy."

"Then what—"

"I was alludin' to this feahful bwtise on my nappah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Oh!"

"It is weally howwid!" said Arthur Augustus, running his fingers tenderly through his hair. "Buntah ought weally to be westwained from playin' cwicket, you know. My head's still singin'—I weally do not think that I shall sleep to-night, you know. Luckily I bwoight my 'Holiday Annual' in my bag, and I can wead it if I have to sit up. But it's howwid, isn't it?"

"Rotten," agreed Wharton, much relieved, however, to learn that it was only the bump on his noble head that was worrying Arthur Augustus. His mind had been full of Bunter and "bilking," but evidently D'Arcy had heard nothing from Mr. Pilkins' young man.

Wharton went up the stairs and knocked at Bunter's door. There was no answer, and he went in.

"Feeling better?" asked Harry, with a smile.

"No!" grunted Bunter.

"Too bad, old chap!"

"I'm not sure whether I shall play that match out on another date, after all," said Bunter. "I never had proper backing from my team—a rottenner lot of cricketers I never saw. I think I shall scratch it."

"That's all right, old man—we finished the game," said Harry, laughing. "We beat Parker and company by an innings and more runs than we could count."

"You had the cheek to play on after I left the field?" exclaimed Bunter.

"We had!"

"Well, you cheeky sweep! Of all the nerve! Look here, Wharton—"

"Oh, can it, old man!" said the captain of the Remove. "I didn't come here to talk cricket—let's keep to things you understand."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Parker has been talking to me—"

"Blow Parker!"

"Look here, Bunter, I want to know how the matter stands," said Harry.

"We're here with you, and you're a Greyfriars chap, ass as you are; and if you're in trouble the best thing you can do is to get it off your chest, and let us see what can be done. Parker thinks—"

Bunter raised a fat hand.

"I don't want to know what Parker thinks. It would be beneath my dignity to take any notice of such a person."

"That's all very well," said Harry impatiently. "But can't you understand that the chap may give you trouble?"

Bunter sneered.

"Things are coming to a pretty pass when a common fellow can give trouble to a chap in my position!" he said scornfully. "I call it Bolshevism."

"You can call it what you like, but there it is," said Harry, as patiently as

ALL THE WINNERS!

RESULT OF "WHAT IS IT?" COMPETITION NO. 3.

In this competition so many competitors qualified for the second and third prize grades that some little rearrangement of the prizes has been necessary.

The THREE CAMERAS have been awarded to the following competitors who sent in correct solutions:

KENNETH COPE, 15, Greenwood Gardens, Palmers Green, London, N. 13.
LESLIE GILLHAM, 138, Ashbourne Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey.
RICHARD NOVIS, 17, Linden Rd., Bexhill-on-Sea.

POCKET-KNIVES have been awarded to the following twenty-five competitors whose solutions came next with one error each:

V. A. ABERNETHY, Post Office House, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick.
T. ALMOND, 21, Mosley St., Blackburn.
L. G. BIRKBY, The Cottage, Silverlea Gardens, Horley, Surrey.
E. R. BOWDLER, 164, Stafford St., Wolverhampton.
B. L. BRITTON, Red Lion, Whitehall Rd., Easton, Bristol.
H. E. BRUMHILL, 42, Brook St., Northampton.
F. F. CARTER, 12, Burleigh Park Rd., Peverell, Plymouth.
P. G. CARTER, 5, Gordon Rd., Maidenhead, Berks.
A. G. DISHLEY, 14, Westwood St., Moss Side, Manchester.
H. S. FITZSIMMONS, 44, Freehold St., Fairfield, Liverpool.
G. C. FRANCIS, High St., Thorpe-le-Soken, Clacton-on-Sea.
D. M. HANNAH, "Inchbrae," Beecherof Cdn., Wembley Pk., Middx.
W. HARMER, 9, Knights Place, Holland St., Southwark, London.
F. HOLLIS, 66, Victoria Rd., Headingley, Leeds.
R. JENKINS, 311, Battle Rd., Hollington, St. Leonards-on-Sea.
MISS I. JOHNS, 56, School Rd., Tilehurst, Reading.
A. KEMP, 23, Grosvenor Rd., Lowestoft.
I. M. LAMB, 2, Abercorn Avenue, Willowbrae Rd., Edinburgh.
C. A. MACK, 2, Midland Rd., Carlton, Nottingham.
F. MATHER, 8, Stover Place, Cheekes St., Exeter, Devon.
MISS D. MEAKIN, 53, Kimberley Terrace, Craghead, Co. Durham.
J. PATERSON, 4, Toft Cottages, Elie, Fife.
V. C. QUINN, 8, Moss Terrace, Up. Moss Lane, Hulme, Manchester.
C. SPEAR, 34, Clive St., Grangetown, Cardiff.
E. TODD, 10, Ellesmere Crescent, Redbourne St., Hessle Rd., Hull.

The Correct Solution was as follows:

1. Church.
2. Motor-vans.
3. Policeman.
4. Factory.

5. Stores.
6. Newsboy.
7. Railway Terminus.
8. Hoarding.

he could. "Bunter, is it all fair and square about this house? It's a frightfully expensive place—"

Wharton breathed hard.

"Will you tell me, Bunter—"

"I've told you that my father gave fifty thousand for the place," said Bunter calmly.

"Ass! We know that you've got it on a lease or something—that it's let furnished!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Even if I have, do you think I shan't pay the rent?" sneered Bunter. "Do you think forty guineas a week is as much to me as to you?"

"I don't want to rub it in, Bunter, but you've borrowed practically all our money while we've been here, and that doesn't look as if your father were shelling out, as you say. It seems to me that you've landed yourself in trouble; and what I want you to understand is, if that's so, and you own up and let us know what's what, we'll try to help you out of it."

Bunter's fat lip curled.

"When I want help I'll ask for it," he said. "Don't you know it's bad form to be inquisitive, Wharton?"

"Inquisitive!" roared the captain of the Remove.

"Don't yell at a chap! What do you call it, then? Here I am, standing you the most expensive holiday you've ever had, in my magnificent mansion," said Bunter warmly. "Instead of thanking a chap, you butt in with questions it would be beneath my dignity to take any notice of."

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

keep on telling you that if you've landed yourself in trouble, in your usual style, we'll try our best to help you out of it. If it's all square, well and good; if it isn't, for your own sake own up before it's too late. Can't you understand?"

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

Really, if Bunter was in such a position as Parker suspected, it seemed incredible that he should carry on in this style. But of old the captain of the Remove knew Bunter's unlimited fatuousness.

"For the last time, Bunter," he said, "is it all right, or is there anything we can do?"

"Oh! Yes," said Bunter. "There's something you can do, Wharton."

"What is it?"

"Pass me that cake."

Wharton looked at him for a moment with deep feelings; then, in silence, he passed the cake, manfully restraining his desire to bonnet Bunter with it.

Bunter grinned as the captain of the Remove left him. His idea was that he had put Wharton in his place; he did not even reflect that he had thrown away a last chance of getting out of the extraordinary situation in which his fatuous folly had landed him. He did not trouble to think about that extraordinary situation at all. The cake was in his fat hands, and he devoted his attention to the cake.

THE END.

(If you want a good laugh be sure and read "The Prisoners of Bunter Court"—next week's rousing yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.)

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