

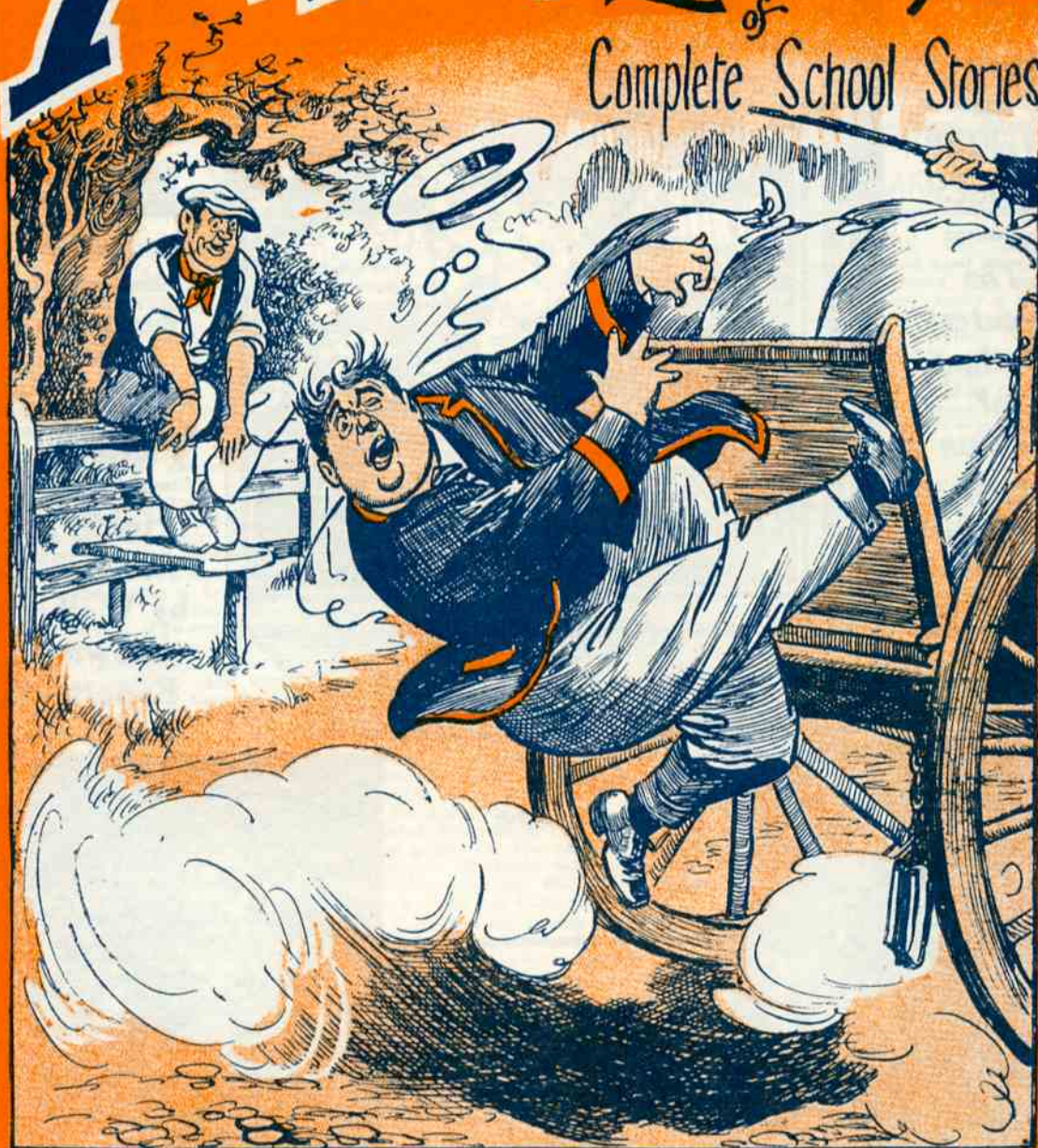
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No. 917. Vol. XXVIII.

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BILLY BUNTER GETS A "LIFT"!

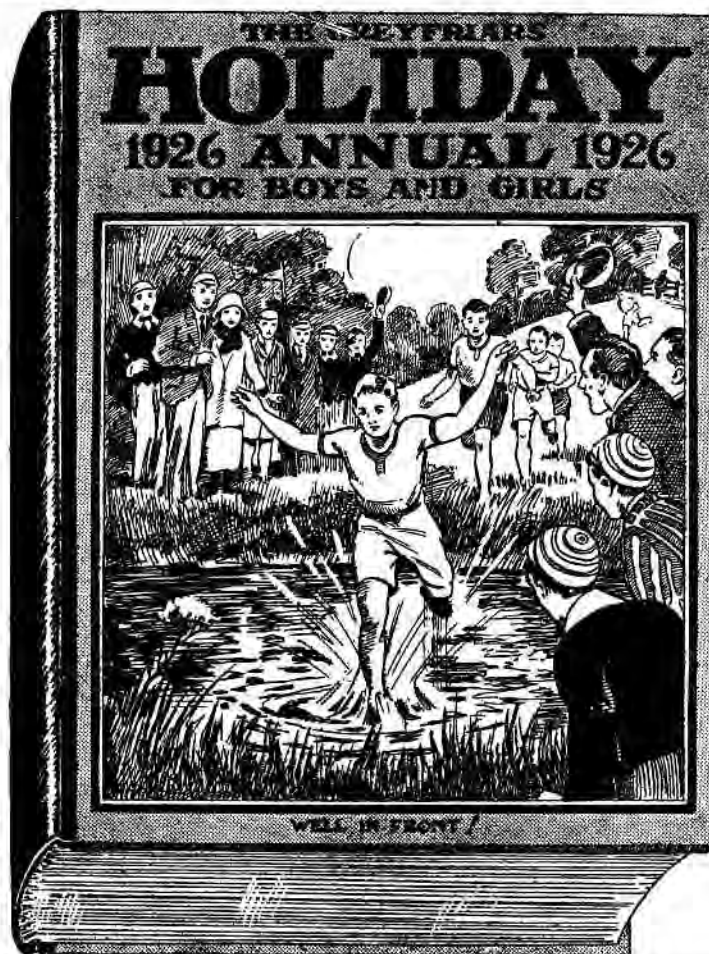
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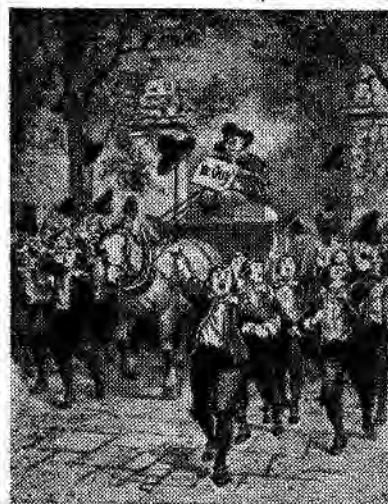


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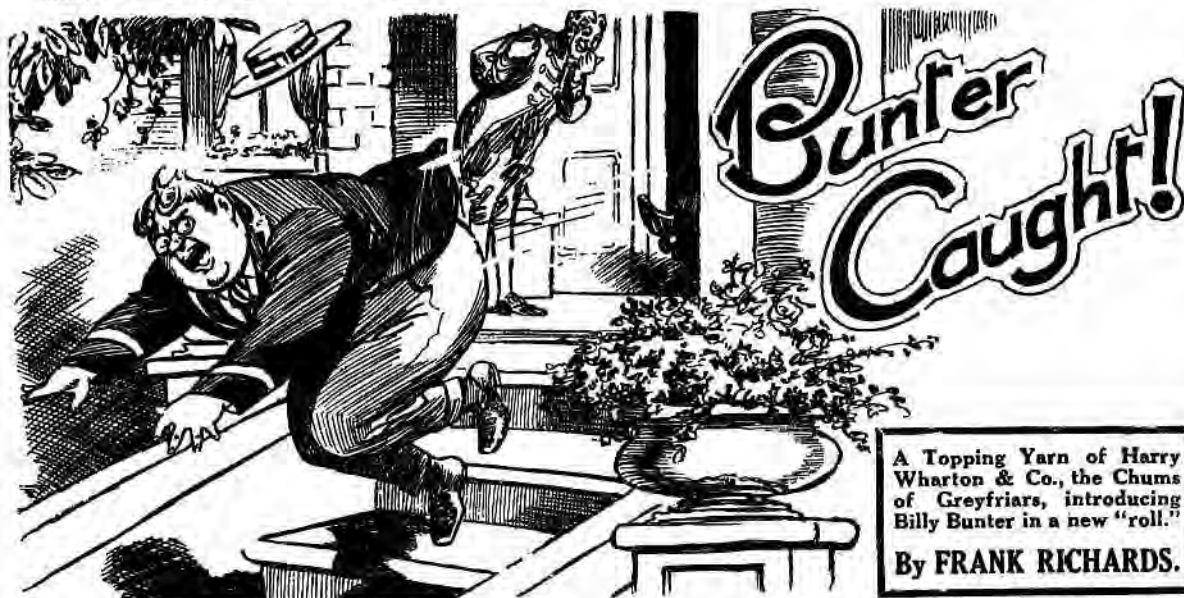
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RETRIBUTION! You've heard a deal of Bunter Court—the "family seat" of the Bunters—which is really a magnificent property owned by Lord Combermere. Now you're going to hear of another—



A Topping Yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars Remove, introducing Billy Bunter in a new "roll."

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Up Against It!

BILLY BUNTER groaned.

It was a deep, deep groan, and seemed to proceed from the very depths of William George Bunter.

It was not his first groan. For an hour or more Billy Bunter had been groaning at intervals. The intervals were mostly filled up with grunting. And when Bunter was neither groaning nor grunting he gasped.

Bunter was in a bad way.

In the first place—first and most important—he was hungry. When Bunter was hungry matters were serious. Bunter's was not an ordinary hunger; it was like the hunger of five or six fellows rolled into one. An hour after a meal he was hungry. Two hours after he was famished. Three hours after he was ravenous. Four hours and he was in a state of desperation. And now it was ten or twelve hours since he had fed; so the anguish of William George Bunter may be better imagined than described.

In the second place—not so important, but still very important—he was tired. His fat little legs felt as if they would fall off at every step. A mile was enough for Bunter at the best of times. Now he had walked miles and miles.

In the third place, it had started to rain. As if matters were not already bad enough, the rain came on as a sort of finishing touch.

It was no wonder that the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove groaned.

He groaned loud and he groaned long.

He did not even know where he was, as he tramped wearily and drearily on the muddy road. All day long the road had been dusty and hot. Now it was wet and muddy with the rain that came along with nightfall. He was tramping westward—at least, he hoped that he was, but he had lost his sense of direction. He hoped that he was in Hampshire; if not, Hampshire was somewhere ahead of him in the rain and darkness. His immediate surroundings were wet fields and weeping hedges and

dripping trees. Bunter also was wet and dripping, and felt like weeping.

It was said of old that the way of the transgressor is hard. Billy Bunter was finding it exceedingly so.

There was one comfort in his unenviable situation—he was far from Combermere, in Kent, where quite a large number of people, including a policeman, were anxious to lay hands on him.

But Billy Bunter was feeling so dismal and forlorn that even that comfort failed to solace him.

Really, the tap of a constable's hand on his fat shoulder would not have been so very unwelcome if the constable would have conducted him to a dry, warm cell with a large supper and a comfortable bed.

Still, it was doubtful whether a constable would have conducted him to such comfortable quarters as that; so no doubt Bunter was better off at a safe distance from the Combermere policeman.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

It might have been his thousandth or his two-thousandth. Nobody could have kept count of them.

"Oh dear! Beasts!"

No doubt Bunter was thinking of Harry Wharton & Co., who had been his guests for the vacation at Bunter Court. Probably they were under a comfortable roof that rainy evening. And where was Bunter?

Tramping the muddy roads under a weeping sky, he hardly knew where. Stony so far as cash went—a condition not new to Bunter, but extremely uncomfortable in present circumstances. There was no sign of any inn; but even had Bunter arrived at an inn, it would scarcely have helped him—inns in these matter-of-fact days are not run on Good Samaritan lines. An extensive supper and a bed for the night were what Bunter wanted, and he had not the wherewithal to pay for either. And nothing was to be had for nothing.

"Oh crumbs!"

Bunter tramped on and groaned again and yet again.

His destination was Mauleverer Towers, the home of Lord Mauleverer of the Greyfriars Remove. But that establishment was many, many a long mile ahead of him even if he had arrived in Hampshire at all, of which he was not sure. By the time he reached Mauly's house—if he ever reached it—it was probable that Bunter would be crawling on his fat hands and knees. Really, the way of the transgressor was very hard!

The last few days had been awful for Bunter.

Since his flight from Combermere and the hornets' nest he had stirred up there he had gone through experiences that might have caused a stone statue to sympathise.

Now he was down on his "uppers."

Cash had long since petered out, and Bunter's watch had followed it. That watch, which he had often told the Greyfriars fellows had cost his father twenty-five guineas, had brought in only seven-and-sixpence in hard cash. Such was the enormous difference between buying and selling, unless Bunter had exaggerated the original cost of the article—which, of course, was barely possible.

That seven-and-six, expended wholly in "grub," had given Bunter new life for a time.

But now he was again on the point of expiring.

One weary foot could hardly be dragged after another. Bunter was conscious of a vast empty space inside him. The glorious dinners, the hefty lunches, the solid breakfasts at Bunter Court tortured his memory. Only a few days before he had fed on the fat of the land—the best had not been too good for Bunter, the largest supply had not been too much; the bills he had run up at Combermere were enormous. Not that the size of the bills made any difference to Bunter, as—big or little—he had no idea of paying any of them.

"Oh scissors! Oh dear! Ow!"

Billy Bunter halted at last.

He took his big spectacles off his fat little nose and wiped the rain from

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them, and set them on his nose again and blinked round him. Any lighted window would have been a beacon of hope to him; he would have been almost grateful for shelter, even without supper. But there was no sign of a building, no glimmer of a lamp from a window.

Bunter groaned deeply and dismally, a groan wrung from the depths of his fat heart. No shelter, no grub, and the rain coming down!

"Oh dear! Oh! Ow!"

Groan!

Bunter gave a last weary blink round. And then suddenly he spotted a faint twinkling light.

He stared at it.

It was not a lighted window. It looked like a lantern that flickered in a barn.

But it was welcome. The shelter of a barn would at least keep off the rain; and surely the most hard-hearted farmer's man would not refuse him that much! Sleep in the hay would be a boon and a blessing; sleep, after all, was the next best thing to grub in the universe.

Billy Bunter turned from the road, groped his way through a wet gateway, and tramped up a muddy footpath towards the twinkling light.

He listened with painful intentness for the sound of a dog. Since he had been on tramp the Owl of the Remove had had some painful experiences with dogs and had learned to hate the whole canine race.

But there was, to his great relief, no sound of a dog. A much more welcome sound—that of human voices—greeted his fat ears as he drew nearer to the wooden building from which the lantern twinkled.

Bunter, wet and weary, plugged on through the mud, and arrived at the open doorway of the wooden shed and blinked in. He did not care if it was a camp of tramping vagrants that he had happened upon—anything for a shelter from the rain and a chance of supper! It was a case of any port in a storm.

But it was not so bad as that. Bunter blinked into the shed, and a grin of relief and satisfaction irradiated his fat face at what he saw there by the light of a bicycle lantern.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Butts In!

"LOOK here, Skinner—"

"Look here, Bolsover—"

"You thumping ass!"

"Same to you!"

"Oh, cheese it, you two! We shall never get any supper at this rate!"

"Shut up, Snoop!"

"Well, what about supper?"

"That idiot Skinner has lost the tin-opener. How can I open a tin of beef without a tin-opener, I'd like to know?"

"You lost it, Bolsover!"

"I tell you—"

"Oh, rats!"

Billy Bunter grinned. The three fellows camped in the shed did not observe him in the doorway; they were too busy slanging one another. The three did not seem to be very good-tempered; but it was a relief to Bunter to find himself in the presence of Greyfriars fellows.

Bolsover major, Skinner, and Snoop of the Greyfriars Remove were not perhaps the fellows he would have chosen to meet. Probably they would

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not be distinguished by hospitality. Bunter would have preferred to happen on some fellows like Harry Wharton & Co., though he characterised them as "beasts." Still, Bolsover & Co. were Greyfriars chaps, and they could scarcely turn him down entirely. At least they would have to let him share the shelter of the barn.

Three bicycles were stacked in the shed. All of them had carriers, with bags on the carriers. The bags were open, and materials for camping had been turned out. A paraffin stove was burning, with a tin kettle set on it, steaming. Snoop was handling a teapot. Bolsover major had a tin of corned beef in his hands and a savage scowl on his rugged face. There was supper in the tin, but the tin-opener was wanting. Evidently somebody had been rather careless.

"Can't you force it open somehow?" said Snoop. "Dash it all, I'm frightfully hungry!"

"If we'd kept on we should have got supper at an inn by this time!" said Skinner.

"If we'd kept on we should have been drenched to the skin!" roared Bolsover major.

"After all, we planned to camp out on this bike tour," said Snoop.

"We didn't plan for Bolsover to lose the tin-opener!"

"You lost it, Skinner!" bawled Bolsover major.

"Oh, rats!"

"I say, you fellows!" said Bunter cheerily.

The three Greyfriars juniors in the shed spun round, greatly startled. They stared blankly at Bunter's wet face as he came into the radius of the illumination shed by the bicycle lamp.

"My hat! Is that Bunter?" said Snoop.

"That fat idiot!" said Bolsover major. "How on earth did you blow in here, Bunter?"

"Blow out again!" suggested Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Anything gone wrong at Bunter Court?" said Skinner jeeringly. "When we broke up at Greyfriars you were going home to Bunter Court—I don't think! Wharton and his gang were taken in, I remember. You look as if you were the giddy lord and master of Bunter Court! Ha, ha, ha!"

Undoubtedly Bunter looked far from prosperous.

His clothes were worn and muddy, he was wet and weary, he looked as if he had been on tramp for days and days—as was indeed the case.

Even Bolsover major's angry face melted into a grin as he stared at the Owl of the Remove.

"My only hat! What a giddy scarecrow!" he remarked.

"Bailiffs in at Bunter Court?" sniggered Snoop.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I've had some hard luck!" said Billy Bunter pathetically.

"You look it!" agreed Skinner. "But don't tell us about it; we've got nothing to lend!"

"The—the fact is—"

"Never mind the facts! Blow away!" said Skinner. "That is unless you happen to have a tin-opener about you!"

"Of course I haven't!" snapped Bunter.

"Then blow away!"

"Do you think I'm going out in the rain?" snorted Bunter.

"You look as if a little more wouldn't do you any harm," grinned Skinner. "Jever see such a drowned rat, you chaps?"

"Never!" chuckled Snoop.

"Blessed scarecrow!" said Bolsover major.

Bunter blinked at the three with deep feelings. Really this was the sort of hospitality he might have expected from Skinner & Co.; but it was not grateful or comforting.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bolsover major.

"Look here, how are we going to get this dashed tin open?"

"Ask me another!" said Skinner.

"I say, you fellows, I'm hungry!" said Bunter.

"So are we! Dry up!"

"I haven't eaten anything all day and—"

"Better go and look for something, then," suggested Skinner. "There's nothing for you here."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"I'll try my pocket-knife," said Bolsover major. "There's nothing for supper but this dashed corned beef and a few dry biscuits. The butter's got squashed, and the bread's wet and soaking. 'Tain't all lavender bike-touring in this dashed weather!"

"If we'd gone on—"

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!"

"Yes, shut up!" said Snoop. "You're always carping, Skinner! Give us a rest, for goodness' sake!"

The three were certainly not good-tempered. The manner in which they addressed one another could not be called polite.

Billy Bunter blinked rather hopelessly at them. They took no further note of his fat existence at all. They were concerned about their own supper, not in the least about Bunter's—which the Owl of the Remove regarded as exceedingly selfish on their part. He was thinking about his own supper, and not about theirs; but this did not strike him as selfish—Bunter's supper, of course, being the most important supper in the wide world.

Anyhow, there was shelter. Bunter squeezed the rain out of his muddy clothes as well as he could and hoped for the best. Certainly, if the tin of beef was opened Bunter meant to annex a "whack" in it somehow.

Bolsover major put the tin on the ground and hacked at it with the big blade of his pocket-knife.

Crack!

"Done it?" asked Snoop.

"Fathead!"

"I heard something go—"

"The blade of my knife!" snorted Bolsover major.

"Oh! Clumsy!"

Bolsover major gave Snoop a deadly look. But he refrained himself and devoted his attention to the tin. He opened the second blade of his knife and attacked the obstinate receptacle of corned beef.

A sudden fendish yell rang through the shed.

"Yaroooh!"

"Broken the other blade?" asked Snoop resignedly.

"Ow! It's shut on my finger!" yelled Bolsover major.

The burly Removite hurled the knife at the tin, and there was a clang. Then he sucked his finger frantically.

Skinner and Snoop exchanged a grin. They seemed to find something rather entertaining in their comrade's mishap.

The three had joined company for a cycle tour that vacation, but there

seemed to be little love lost among them. But if they had waited to join up with fellows who really liked them, no doubt the whole vacation would have passed before they could have fixed up the tour.

"I say, you fellows, shall I try?" asked Bunter.

"Ow! Wow! Grooogh!" came from Bolsover major, as he sucked at his cut finger. "Try if you like, you fat idiot! I hope you'll cut your silly fingers off! Grooogh! You fat dummy—Ow!"

Bunter picked up the tin of corned beef. It was dented, but there was no opening in it so far. The pangs of hunger smote Bunter bitterly as he handled the tin. There was supper; only the casing of the corned beef intervened. Supper, so near and yet so far! Bunter felt like a fat Peri at the gate of Paradise—with the gate shut.

He jabbed at the tin with Bolsover major's knife. Jabbing at it did not seem to make much impression on the tin.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. "You fellows must be silly chumps to lose your tin-opener. This knife's no good. It won't go in," said Bunter. "Rather a rotten knife, I think. I say, how are we going to get this tin open?"

"You needn't worry," said Skinner sarcastically. "Nothing in it for you, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"If the fat idiot can get the tin open the podgy dummy can have a whack in it," said Bolsover major. "We shouldn't have all this trouble if you hadn't lost the tin-opener, Skinner."

"You lost it!" said Skinner. "I put it in your pack. You dropped it along the road somewhere—like a silly ass, as you are!"

"I didn't!" roared Bolsover major. "You dropped it, instead of putting it into my pack."

"I didn't, you ass!"

"You did, you dummy!"

Snap!

"Oh dear! The knife's broken again!" wailed Bunter. The second blade of Bolsover major's pocket-knife had followed the first.

"You silly Owl!" roared Bolsover major. "Have you busted my knife?"

"You see—Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

Bolsover major was already in a bad temper. Bunter's success with his pocket-knife seemed to put the lid on, so to speak. He smote Bunter, and the Owl of the Remove sat down with a bump and a gasp.

The next moment there was a wild yell, and Bunter jumped up as if the floor had been red-hot.

"Ow! I've sat on something—Ow—wow!"

It was the missing tin-opener.

Bunter—quite inadvertently—had found it.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not Popular!

BOLSOVER MAJOR grinned as he picked up the tin-opener. It had been lost to sight in the straw that littered the floor of the shed; had not Bunter sat on it probably it never would have been discovered. Obviously it had dropped there when Bolsover major was unpacking his bag. Bunter's arrival had been fortunate, after all, for the campers. Bunter did not for the moment feel that it was fortunate. It was his impact upon the tin-opener that he chiefly felt, and it



"You silly owl!" roared Bolsover major. "You've busted my knife!" He gave Bunter a push and the Owl of the Remove sat down with a bump and a gasp. The next moment there was a wild yell, and Bunter jumped up as if the floor had been red-hot. "Ow!" he gasped. "I've sat on something—ow—wow—"

It was the missing tin-opener! (See Chapter 2.)

seemed to have hurt him. He howled and wriggled.

"Good man!" said Bolsover major.

"Bunter's found it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

Bolsover major proceeded to open the obstinate tin. It yielded to the persuasion of the tin-opener, and the corned beef was turned out into a tin dish. The three juniors gathered round to supper, and Billy Bunter left off wriggling and joined them.

"What does that fat image want?" asked Skinner, as the Owl of the Remove sat down in the straw. "We're not feeding tramps, I suppose?"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Well, Bunter's the founder of the feast, in a way!" grinned Bolsover major. "Let him join in."

Bolsover major had many faults, but stinginess was not one of them. He helped Bunter liberally. In his own overbearing and bullying way he was ready to be hospitable to a Greyfriars fellow who was so lamentably down on his luck.

Snoop made the tea, and dry biscuits were handed round with the corned beef. It was a poor enough supper, in comparison with what Billy Bunter had grown accustomed to at Combermere. But Bunter was hungry enough to enjoy it more than the magnificent meals served by Walsingham, the butler, at Bunter Court. He fairly gobbled up corned beef and biscuits, and glared round hungrily for more. But when he

stretched out a fat paw to help himself Bolsover major gave it a sharp rap, and Bunter jerked it back with a yell.

"You've had your whack, fatty!" said Bolsover major. "Chuck it!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Shut up!"

"I say, you fellows, isn't there anything more?" asked Bunter dismally.

"There's the bread and butter," said Skinner. "The butter's squashed at the bottom of my bag, and the bread's soaked. But you're welcome to them."

"Beast!"

"Enough's as good as a feast," said Bolsover major. "You've had more than enough, so shut up, Bunter! Look here, what are you doing wandering round the country like this—like a tramp on his uppers?"

"Something gone wrong at Bunter Court, what?" grinned Skinner.

"Hem! Yes," said Bunter. "You— you see, I—I had to leave Bunter Court rather suddenly—"

"In too great a hurry to order out the Rolls-Royce?" asked Skinner.

"Yes, exactly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And what's become of Wharton and Bob Cherry and Nugent and Bull and Inky?" asked Bolsover major. "They went home with you for the vac."

"I've turned those fellows down," said Bunter loftily. "They didn't treat me well."

"Fed up with your borrowing their money?" asked Skinner.

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"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"But what's the truth about it?" asked Bolsover major. "Is there really such a place as Bunter Court, after all? Wharton must have thought so, as he left Greyfriars with you for the hols."

"What's the good of asking Bunter for the truth?" said Skinner. "They're always been strangers. I know he stuffed Wharton with some yarn, and I know there wasn't anything in it. Look at him now! Looks as if he belonged to a magnificent establishment, doesn't he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the fact is, I—I've had some bad luck since I left Bunter Court," said the fat junior. "Some rotters in a train got me playing cards, and I lost all my money—"

"Tons of it, of course?" said Snoop.

"Oh, only fifty or sixty pounds or so!" said Bunter. "Not much to me; but it happened to leave me stony."

"Ha, ha, ha! Fifty or sixty farthings, you mean!" chortled Sidney James Snoop.

"Oh, really, Snoop—"

"Oh, Bunter may have had some money!" said Skinner. "He's had Wharton and his friends staying with him, and I fancy he's made them pay for their keep."

"That's so," agreed Snoop.

"And what are you up to now, Bunter?" asked Bolsover major.

"I'm going to Mauleverer Towers," explained Bunter. "I'm paying a visit to old Mauly."

"Does Mauly know he's invited you?" chuckled Skinner.

"Well, I'm so pally with Mauly that a regular invitation isn't needed, you know," said Bunter. "Mauly will be delighted to see me."

"I don't think!"

"Mean to say you've got the cheek to butt in at Mauleverer Towers without being asked, Bunter?" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"Mauly's such a pal—"

"Well, he's a soft ass—possibly he won't kick you out," said Bolsover. "I know I would!"

"Of course, I'm always welcome there," said Bunter. "And I'll tell you what, you fellows. I'll take you with me if you like. You stand by me now, like pals, you know, while I'm temporarily down on my luck, and I'll get you a chance to put in a few days at Mauleverer Towers. See? You fellows don't often get your feet inside a decent house, do you?"

"Eh?"

"It will be a change for you, mingling for a time with my aristocratic friends," said Bunter. "Of course, you will have to behave yourselves. None of your roaring and bawling, Bolsover, at Mauleverer Towers."

"Wha-a-at?"

"And none of your sneering and snapping, Skinner; it's bad form, you know. We put up with it in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, but you will have to draw a line at a decent house like Mauly's. And you, Snoop—"

"What about me?" asked Sidney James Snoop sulphurously.

"Well, you will have to wash a bit more than usual, and clean your fingernails, and so on," said Bunter. "I'll take you; but you'll all have to try to keep up appearances a bit. See?"

Three ferocious glares were fixed on Billy Bunter as he rattled on cheerfully. "That's how it is," said Bunter brightly. "I'll take you along with me."

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if you'll make an effort to keep up appearances, so that I sha'n't be ashamed of you, you know. Of course, I can't exactly say you're friends of mine among the nobs we shall meet at Mauleverer Towers; that's asking rather too much. But—Whoooooop!"

Bunter went over suddenly backwards under the heavy hand of Bolsover major.

He rolled in the straw and roared.

"Yaroooooh!"

Bolsover glared at him.

"Have another?" he demanded.

"Yow-owooooop!" roared Bunter.

"You beast, Bolsover! Leave off kicking me, Skinner, you rotter! I jolly well won't take you with me now! Ow! Snoop, you cad, leave off thumping a chap! Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Shove him this way!" said Bolsover major, jumping up. "I'll kick him out of the shed!"

"Yaroooooop!"

Billy Bunter scrambled up and dodged downward. Bolsover major had a big boot ready, and Bunter did not like the look of it.

"Come back and be kicked!" shouted Bolsover.

"Beast!"

The tin that had contained the corned beef whizzed from the hand of Harold Skinner, and there was a demoniac yell from Bunter as it caught him on the back of the head.

Then Bunter was out in the rain again.

It was very wet rain, but really it was more agreeable than Bolsover & Co. just then. A roar of laughter followed Bunter as he went.

"Oh dear!" gasped the fat junior.

He lurked round the doorway of the shed, with the rain falling on him, and blinked in. Snoop waved the tin-opener, and Bunter backed off again.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Get out!"

"I say, let a chap in!" implored Bunter. "I—I—I'm wet!"

"Good enough for you!" said Bolsover major. "Keep wet! Come in again, you cheeky fat frog, and I'll give you my boot!"

"Oh dear!"

Evidently Bunter had offended Bolsover & Co. He did not quite see how or why. But there was no doubt about the fact itself.

"I—I say, Bolsover, old chap—"

"Shut up!"

"Skinner, old fellow—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Dear old Snoop—"

"Ha, ha, ha! I'll give you dear old Snoop if I get near you with this tin-opener!" chuckled Sidney James.

"Oh dear!"

Swank had been Bunter's undoing in the affair of Bunter Court. It had served him an ill turn again! Bolsover & Co. were so extremely hostile that he did not venture into the shed until the three had turned in for the night in their rugs and the straw. Then, as Bolsover major blew out the bike lamp and darkness reigned, Billy Bunter ventured to crawl in.

Any fellow but Bunter would have settled down as quietly as possible in the circumstances. Not so Bunter.

"Got a spare rug for a chap?" he inquired.

"Shut up!"

"I say, I can't sleep without a rug or something," said Bunter peevishly. "Don't be selfish. I—I say, are you getting up?" There was a sound of Bolsover major turning out.

"Yes!" said Bolsover in a deep voice.

"Are you getting up to get me a rug?"

"I'm getting up to chuck you out of the shed!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Another word and out you go!" said Bolsover major. "Just one more word, you fat villain, and you go out on your neck with my boot behind you!"

Bunter did not utter the other word. He realised at last that silence was golden. He snorted and settled down in the straw. Fortunately, there was plenty of straw, and Bunter soon tucked himself up warm and comfortably, and his deep snore was soon going strong.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

On the Track!

"WHITHER?" said Bob Cherry. And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in his peculiar English, remarked thoughtfully:

"The whitherfulness is terrific."

Harry Wharton & Co. were rather at a loss.

Certainly they looked very cheery about it. For days and days they had been hunting Bunter without success. But they were enjoying themselves. Knocking about the country in holiday-time was quite enjoyable, and the Famous Five of Greyfriars liked it.

Still, they wanted to find Bunter.

They had set out from Combermere, in Kent, to find him, and now they were breakfasting in an inn garden on the borders of Sussex and Hampshire.

One clue or another had led them thus far; but some of the clues were dubious, and they were not at all certain that they were on the track of the fleeing Owl of the Remove.

Now they were really at a loss. Whither to wend their steps after they had finished breakfast they did not know. Meanwhile, however, they were enjoying breakfast. It had rained overnight; but the chums of the Remove had found comfortable shelter under the hospitable roof of the Wheat Sheaf, and the morning was bright and sunny. Under the old trees in the inn garden they disposed of new-laid eggs and rashers of bacon and tomatoes at a great rate.

Meanwhile, they considered what was to be done when they took up the trail again. The trail of Billy Bunter was lost; in which direction to seek the Owl of the Remove was a mystery. That he was heading westward they knew; he seemed to have mapped out a route across the southern counties. But they were unaware of his destination, and they had quite lost the track.

"We've got to find the fat duffer!" went on Bob Cherry, as he cracked his fourth egg. "He's got to answer for his potty tricks at Combermere. The thing's got to be settled somehow. If we don't find him, Pilkins, the estate agent, will sooner or later—and that means a bobby tapping him on the shoulder."

"We've got to find him for his own sake," agreed Wharton. "But goodness knows where he's gone."

"He hasn't gone home, at all events," said Johnny Bull.

"No, that's a cert! I fancy he doesn't dare to tell his father that he had the neck to trick a house agent into letting him a furnished house for the summer, and that the liabilities run into hundreds of pounds. I can imagine his father's face!" said the captain of the Remove, with a laugh.

"But he will have to tell him sooner or later," said Frank Nugent.

"The later the better, I fancy Bunter thinks."

"The thing will have to be settled before the end of the vac," said Bob Cherry. "Bunter can't go back to Greyfriars for the new term with a bobby on his trail!"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"The jolly old Head would have a fit, I think, if a peeler dropped in at Greyfriars inquiring after a Remove chap!" chuckled Bob.

"The fat duffer!" said Harry Wharton. "He seems to have done all this without giving a single thought to the consequences. According to Walsingham, the butler, there's some hundreds of pounds owing to the tradesmen in Combermere for goods supplied to Bunter's orders. The rent of the house was forty guineas a week, and it's piled up for weeks and weeks. And all the servants—dozens—Bunter's responsible for their wages. And not a penny paid to anybody."

"He jolly well ought to be taken by a peeler!" growled Johnny Bull. "It's barking, just as Mr. Pilkins says."

"Only Bunter's such a fathead, he really didn't know what he was up to," said Harry. "We've got to arrange the affair somehow; after all, we had a pretty good holiday at the place. Everybody will have to shell out; but, of course, Bunter's father will be hardest hit. The fat idiot ought to have gone home at once when the crash came!"

"No wonder he funk'd it, though," said Nugent, laughing. "But he's got to face the music; if he doesn't turn up and face it he may really be arrested and charged with fraud. The fat duffer doesn't seem to understand that the bills have got to be paid."

"Does he understand anything?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"For his own sake he's got to be found before something worse happens," said Wharton. "But where the dickens are we to look for him? He seems to have come in this direction, from what we've found; but I haven't the faintest idea where to look farther for him."

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

A man with a pack on his shoulder looked over the gate and touched his hat to the Greyfriars juniors and came up the path. He was evidently a country pedlar, and hoped that he had found customers in the cheery party of schoolboys breakfasting under the trees.

"Morning, gents!" said the pedlar. "Good-morning!" said Wharton politely.

"Buying anything this morning, sir? Pocket-knives, pocket-mirrors, pens and pencils, watches and clocks—" The pedlar's pack came down and was opened on the table in a twinkling.

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Thanks, I don't think we want anything," he said. "We've all got watches and pocket-knives, and we don't want any clocks just at present."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry uttered that exclamation suddenly.

He picked up a watch from among the assortment of goods in the pedlar's pack.

It was a large watch, not unlike a turnip in shape, and it gleamed like gold in the sunshine. It was only like gold, however—appearances were deceptive. There was little gold about the watch except its glimmer.

"My hat! I've seen that before!" exclaimed Nugent.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Seen it before! I should say so! Every chap in the Remove has seen it, I think, and heard that it cost twenty-five guineas. It's Bunter's watch!"

"You like that watch, sir?" asked the pedlar. "I'm selling that watch for two pounds, sir."

"The chap who bought it would be rather sold, too, if he gave two pounds for it," said Bob genially.

The pedlar grinned.

"From a gent like you, sir, I'd take thirty shillings," he said.

"Not from a gent like me," said Bob, shaking his head. "You'd have to find a gent very unlike me to give you thirty shillings for that watch. A gent without much brains, you know."

"Make it a pound, sir, and that watch is yours," said the pedlar. "I've only had it on my 'ands since yesterday morning, sir."

"Then Bunter can't be far off," said Nugent.

"Look here," said Bob, "we know the chap this watch belonged to, and we happen to be looking for him now. How did you get hold of it?"

"Bought it, sir, for hard cash, from a young gent," said the pedlar. "He was hard up, he was. He asked me seven-pounds-ten for it, and I gave him seven-and-six, sir; and being as you're a friend of the young gent, sir, you can have it for fifteen bob."

"I don't know that I want Bunter's watch," said Bob. "But we want Bunter. Where did you see him?"

"About ten miles from here it was, sir," said the pedlar. "He was coming this way, he was; asked me the shortest road to Hampshire, he did, and I told him. Hoofing it to Hampshire he was, sir. From the rate he was going, he ain't there yet, sir; got a lot of weight to carry, that youngster has, sir."

"Fat chap, about as broad as he is long?" asked Bob. "Blinks at you like an owl, with big specs—what?"

"That's him, sir."

"Bunter, all serene," said Johnny Bull. "This jolly old turnip of his has put us on the track."

"He can't be very far away, according to this," said Harry. "Let's whack it out for the watch and hand it over to the fat duffer when we find him. He must be in hard luck to sell his watch."

"Let's!" agreed Nugent.

Three shillings each were subscribed by the Famous Five, and the watch changed hands; and the pedlar went on his way, satisfied. Probably he had hardly expected to net fifteen shillings for Bunter's timekeeper, although, according to Bunter, it had cost Mr. Bunter twenty-five guineas.

"This is luck, and no mistake!" remarked Bob Cherry, as he slipped the



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rolled-gold watch into his pocket. "We shall find the fat duffer, after all!"

"The luckfulness is terrific."

"Let's get off!" said the captain of the Remove. "Bunter may be only half a mile away at this very minute; and we'll root about the country till we find him."

"Good!"

And the chums of the Remove paid their bill and packed their bags and walked cheerily away from the Wheat Sheaf, with great hopes now of succeeding in their self-imposed task of hunting Bunter.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Run to Earth!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Shut up!"

Billy Bunter grunted discontentedly. The company of a fellow like William George Bunter—so distinguished and so fascinating, and lately lord and master of so magnificent an establishment as Bunter Court—was an honour to fellows like Bolsover and Snoop and Skinner.

But they seemed quite insensible to the honour.

Bunter, somehow, was not popular in his new company. Instead of giving all their attention to the highly important matter of providing William George Bunter with a substantial breakfast, Bolsover & Co. treated him with a ruthless disregard, as if he did not matter and his breakfast did not matter.

It was a bright and sunny morning after the rain. The three cyclists were in better tempers now—they were, in fact, quite amicable to one another. There was nothing in the haversacks for breakfast, and Bolsover, Skinner, and Snoop were discussing in which direction to ride in order to find the nearest inn. A much more important matter than their breakfasts was Billy Bunter's breakfast, and to that pressing matter they seemed to be giving no consideration whatever.

"Better strike for the nearest inn," said Bolsover major. "I want a bit of a wash and a brush-up after a night in this dashed shed."

"Same here," agreed Skinner. "And I want a good brekker."

"So do I!" hooted Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you're not going to turn a chap down!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "I keep on telling you I'm stony—"

"Is—that something new?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can give me a lift behind on your bike, Bolsover—"

"Yes, I can see myself carrying a ton weight on my bike!" grinned Bolsover major. "I don't think!"

"Will you give me a lift, Skinner, old chap?"

"Only with my boot!" answered Skinner genially. "You can have that as soon as you like. In fact, you'll get it anyway if you don't shut up."

"Beast!"

"The sooner we're off the better," said Snoop. "Thank goodness it's not raining! Let's get a move on."

"I say, you fellows—"

"I'll lend you half-a-crown, Bunter," said Bolsover major generously. "You can let me have it back next term at Greyfriars. If you don't, I'll jolly well punch you! See?"

"Oh, really, old chap—"

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"Catch!" said Bolsover major, spinning the half-crown to Bunter; and there was a howl as Bunter caught it with his fat nose.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter grabbed up the half-crown from the straw. All was grist that came to his mill. But he was deeply indignant. These fellows actually did not seem to care whether he had any breakfast or not, or whether he had to walk miles for it. He blinked at them with deep indignation as they collected up their bicycles. There was an exclamation from Snoop.

"My tyre's down! That dashed puncture has broken out again!"

Bunter grinned.

"I told you you couldn't mend punctures, Snoopey!" said Bolsover major. "You are a cack-handed duffer, you know!"

Snoop grunted, and felt the troublesome tyre with his fingers. It was quite flat.

"Look here, we can't hang on while you mend punctures, Snoop," said Skinner. "I want my brekker!"

"Blow your brekker!" growled Snoop.

"Well, I want mine!" growled Bolsover major. "You'll be half an hour over that puncture. Look here, we'll get on; you'll only have to follow the road to come up with us. We shall stop at the first inn."

"Can't wait for a chap?" snapped Snoop.

"Oh, rot! What's the good of waiting about?"

Sidney James Snoop grunted and proceeded to up-end his bike to deal with the puncture. Bolsover major and Skinner wheeled their machines out, and Billy Bunter followed them. Bolsover put a leg over his machine and pedalled off by the footpath towards the gate on the lane. Bunter caught Skinner by the sleeve.

"I say, Skinney, old fellow—"

"Leggo!"

"But I say— Yooooop!"

Bunter roared and sat down, as Harold Skinner gave him a shove. Skinner chuckled and mounted his machine and rode after Bolsover major, leaving Bunter sitting in the grass and roaring.

The two cyclists turned into the road and pedalled away at a good rate. They kept their eyes open for pedestrians, to ask the way from the first they met to the nearest inn. And barely half a mile from the field in which they had camped for the night they came on five cheery-looking fellows swinging along in a cheery row.

"My hat! Greyfriars chaps!" exclaimed Bolsover major, and he put on the brake and jumped down.

"Wharton and his gang!" ejaculated Skinner, in surprise.

The Famous Five stopped as the cyclists dismounted. Harry Wharton & Co. were following their programme of "rooting" about the countryside in search of Bunter, who was apparently not very far away, according to what they had heard from the pedlar. It occurred to them at once as they sighted Bolsover major and Skinner on their machines that these fellows might have seen something of Bunter, and they stopped to inquire; so both parties halted simultaneously in quest of information.

"Hallo, you fellows!" said Bolsover major. "Fancy dropping on you here! We're looking for an inn."

"We've just left a jolly good one!" said Harry Wharton. "The Wheat Sheaf—about a mile back on this road."

"Oh, good!"

"Have you seen anything of a fat owl, by any chance?" asked Bob Cherry. "We're looking for Bunter, and we believe he's somewhere about this country."

"My only hat! You want to find Bunter?"

"Just that!"

"Well, I'd rather lose him myself!" grinned Bolsover major. "But if you want to find him keep down this lane for half a mile, and turn into a field where you'll see a shed. Bunter's there; he camped with us last night."

"Good egg!"

"Did you fellows have a ripping time at Bunter Court these hols?" grinned Skinner.

"Oh, ripping!" said Bob Cherry cheerily.

"The ripfulness was terrific, my esteemed Skinner."

"You'll find Snoop there," said Bolsover major, as he mounted again. "Tell him where we're gone, will you? He's mending a puncture."

"Right-ho!"

Bolsover major rode on, but Harold Skinner lingered. Curiosity was Skinner's strong point.

"I say, what's this game?" he asked. "What sort of a show was Bunter Court—if there really is such a show at all?"

"Magnificent!" answered Bob Cherry. "Stately halls, and superb butler, and innumerable footmen, and so on."

"Gammon!" said Skinner. "The Bunters couldn't afford to pay for all that!"

Bob chuckled.

"That's just the trouble," he explained. "Hence the bolting of Bunter, and little us hot on his track."

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner. And he mounted his machine and rode after Bolsover major, chuckling.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on. They sauntered cheerily along the sunny lane till they came to the gate on the field where the shed stood. In the doorway of the shed, in the distance across the field, they discerned a fat figure.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter!"

"Run to earth!" chuckled Nugent.

"Come on!"

And the chums of the Remove passed the gate and walked on towards the shed—at the end of their long pursuit at last.

At all events, they supposed that they were at the end of it—with their fat quarry in sight! But, as the ancient proverb has it, there is many a slip twixt cup and lip! Billy Bunter was run down, but he was not caught yet.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bolted!

BILLY BUNTER stared blankly at the five figures in the distance.

He could scarcely believe his eyes or his big spectacles.

Harry Wharton & Co. were the very last fellows he had expected to see so far from the magnificent mansion in Kent where he had entertained them for the summer holidays.

His little round eyes almost bulged through his big spectacles as he blinked at them coming up the footpath across the field.

"Those beasts!" ejaculated Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's powerful voice rang across the intervening space. "Bunter, old bean! Found you at last!"

Sidney James Snoop inside the shed gave a grunt. He had finished his puncture at last and tested his tyre and found that it was satisfactory. He packed his carrier again and prepared to wheel the machine out of the shed.

"Get out of the way, Bunter!"

Bunter did not heed. His eyes were fixed on the advancing five, now close to the shed. But he heeded when Snoop's front wheel smote him on the back of his fat little legs, and he staggered.

"Ow!"

Snoop grinned and wheeled on his machine.

"Hallo, you chaps!" he exclaimed, in surprise at the sight of Harry Wharton & Co. "It seems to be raining Greyfriars fellows! First Bunter, and then you lot!"

"We're after Bunter!" grinned Bob Cherry. "And we've jolly well found you, old fat man!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm jolly glad to see you, of course!" said Bunter. "Quite a pleasant surprise, in fact. I suppose you were rather anxious about me?"

"Well, we wanted to bag you before the bobbies did," said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"I suppose you know that Mr. Pilkins, at Combermere, is yearning to see you taken into custody for bilking him?" said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"My hat! Bunter been bilking again?" said Snoop. "Who's the happy victim this time?"

"Mr. Pilkins, estate agent at Combermere," answered Bob. "Bunter owes him some hundreds of pounds."

"Hundreds of pounds!" yelled Snoop.

"Yes, Bunter has been going it this time!" chuckled Bob. "Forty guineas a week mounts up, you know; and that was the rent of Combermere Lodge—which that fat idiot told us was Bunter Court."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"So that's it, is it?" chuckled Snoop.

"I knew there was something fishy about Bunter Court. You fellows were taken in. Ha, ha, ha!"

"We were," admitted Bob; "and somebody's got to foot the bill. The house agent has got to be paid, the tradesmen have got to be paid, and the servants have got to be paid. Catch on, Bunter?"

"Of course, I shall pay every penny," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I hope you don't think I'm capable of leaving bills unpaid?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But you've left them all unpaid!" roared Johnny Bull.

"That is only temporary, of course," said Bunter. "A few hundred pounds more or less don't make much difference to me. Lot of difference to you chaps, I've no doubt; not much to me. You noticed I spent money pretty freely while you were staying with me, I fancy."

"Whose money?" hooted Johnny Bull.

"That's a very personal question, Bull. It would be beneath my dignity to enter into a sordid discussion," said Bunter.

"I—I—I'm going to kick him!" gasped Johnny Bull. "Let go my arm, Bob! I'm going to kick him, I tell you!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Easy does it, old man—Bunter will get all the kicking he wants, when the Pilkins-man sees him again. Now then, Bunter, are you ready to come back with us to Combermere?"



There was a clatter and a whirr, and Sidney James Snoop spun round towards his bicycle, which Billy Bunter was supposed to be obligingly holding for him. Snoop stood spellbound, for Bunter was in the saddle, and his fat little legs were driving at the pedals with a vigour to which the Owl of the Remove was little accustomed.

(See Chapter 6.)

Bunter gave a yell of alarm.

"You silly ass! Of course not."

"Then get ready, quick," grinned Bob. "For that's where you're going!"

"I'm not!" yelled Bunter.

"You jolly well are!"

"You silly ass! Do you think I'm going to see Pilkins, the estate agent, and Walsingham, the butcher—"

"Just that!"

"And Horrocks, the butcher—"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"And Perkins, the grocer, and Jones, the greengrocer—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Yes, you're going to see the whole jolly tribe, Bunter, from the butler down to the cats'-meat man. You shouldn't go in for bilking, you know, if you don't want to face the music."

"I say, you fellows—"

"You've got to come back, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You've got to come to an arrangement with your creditors. If you don't, can't you understand you'll be charged with fraud."

"I won't come back!" yelled Bunter, in great alarm.

"You silly ass, we've come after you to fetch you back, for your own sake," said Frank Nugent.

"Beast!"

Sidney James Snoop, chuckling, wheeled his bike away to the road. Wharton had told him where to find

Bolsover major and Skinner, and Snoop was anxious for his breakfast. He chuckled as he went. He was thinking of the roars of laughter in the Remove, next term, when the true history of "Bunter Court" was told.

"Get a move on, fatty!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "If you had the sense of a bunny rabbit, you'd know that you'd better see Pilkins before he has you arrested. Come on."

"This way!" grinned Johnny Bull, and he started Bunter with a gentle shove.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

He rolled away after Snoop, the Famous Five walking after him.

Bunter's fat face was the picture of woe.

No doubt, as the chums of the Remove told him, it was better for him to face the music; to grasp the nettle, as it were. But grasping the nettle was an unpleasant business; and Bunter didn't like facing the music. Besides, he still entertained hopes that Lord Mauleverer would somehow be induced to shoulder his troubles. But it was useless to argue with the Famous Five; they had pursued him, they had run him down, and they intended to take him back with them. That it was chiefly for his own sake, and for the honour of Greyfriars, did not appeal to Bunter in the least.

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His own immediate comfort was always his first consideration.

As he rolled dismally on, his fat brain was at work. He was run down—by these beasts, who had not come after him because they were anxious about him, as they ought to have done; but to capture him and take him back to the other beasts whom he had "bilked" at Combermere. But he was not without hopes of dodging them yet. Certainly he did not intend to go back and face the music at Combermere if he could possibly help it.

He blinked at Snoop, wheeling the bike out of the field into the road ahead of him. If Snoop would lend him his bike—but it was useless to ask; he knew that Snoop wouldn't! Snoop, in the selfish way Bunter was accustomed to, was thinking about his own breakfast, and not at all about helping Bunter dodge his creditors. Snoop was a beast—the Famous Five were all beasts—in fact, it was a beastly world altogether, with Billy Bunter almost the only decent fellow in it!

"Bunt, old man—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Bunter, without turning his head. He did not want any of Bob Cherry's cheery conversation.

"Where's your watch, Bunt?"

"My—my watch?"

"Yes; you'll want your watch, you know, when you're doing time. You'll want to count the time you're doing, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I sold my watch," said Bunter savagely. "I only got fifteen pounds for it, too—frightful loss."

"You got—what?" gasped Bob.

"Fifteen pounds! Practically giving it away, as it had cost my pater twenty-five guineas," said Bunter. "All the fault of you fellows, for not standing by me at Bunter Court. If you fellows had backed me up, that beast Pilkins and that other beast Walsingham would still be shut up in the wine-cellars, and—"

"Did the pedlar give you fifteen pounds for it?" chuckled Bob.

"Who's talking about a pedlar?" sniffed Bunter. "A pedlar couldn't have bought my splendid gold watch."

"He might have bought your rolled-gold watch, though."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!"

"Well, if you sold your watch for fifteen pounds, this can't be the article after all," said Bob Cherry, taking Bunter's fat timekeeper from his pocket. "The pedlar we bought this off gave only seven-and-six for it."

Bunter stared at it.

"My watch!" he ejaculated, in amazement.

"Not your watch, old man, after all," said Bob, with a shake of the head. "It was a pedlar bought this watch—"

"I—I remember now it was a pedlar bought my watch!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly generous pedlar, to let us have it for fifteen shillings, after giving you fifteen pounds for it!" remarked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the chums of the Remove, greatly entertained by the expression on Bunter's face.

"The—the fact is—" stammered Bunter.

"Not your watch after all?" said Bob. "Never mind—"

"It's my watch!"

"Can't be—this one only cost the pedlar seven-and-six. Thinking it was your watch, we whacked it out and bought it, to give it back to you," said Bob. "Waste of fifteen shillings, as it turns out not to be your watch."

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"I—I say, gimme my watch!" hooted Bunter. "I'll square the fifteen bob when—I get my postal-order."

"But it isn't your watch, old fat man—I tell you the pedlar gave only seven-and-six for this one—"

"Now—now I come to think of it, I—I sold it for seven-and-six!" gasped Bunter. "That's what I really meant to say."

"Not much difference between fifteen pounds and seven-and-six!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gimme my watch!" hooted Bunter.

Bob Cherry handed over the valuable time-keeper, chuckling. Bunter jammed it into his pocket. He did not trouble to thank the chums of the Remove; such a trifle as that was not worthy of Bunter's attention. He rolled on after Snoop into the road, the juniors following him with grinning faces.

"Snoopey, old man!" called out Bunter, as he rolled into the road.

"Good-bye, old fat man!" chortled Snoop. "Remember me to the nobs at Bunter Court, not forgetting the bailiff's man. Ta-ta!"

"I say, did you drop that ten-bob note, Snoop?"

Snoop, who had a leg over his machine, jerked it back again.

"Yes; where?" he asked.

"Blind?" asked Bunter. "Just by the gate there. If it's not yours—"

"Most likely it is," said Snoop. "Hold this bike a tick."

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

Obligingly he held Snoop's bike.

Sidney James stepped back to the gate, and peered among the grass and nettles that grew round it. As he was evidently looking for something, the Famous Five stopped.

"Dropped something?" asked Bob.

"Bunter says there's a ten-bob note here—"

"Blessed if I see it," said Bob, peering about in the grass. "Have you dropped one?"

"Well, I dare say I have. I—"

Sidney James Snoop broke off suddenly. There was a clatter and a whir, and he spun round towards his bicycle, which Billy Bunter was so obligingly holding for him.

Bunter was in the saddle, and his fat little legs were driving at the pedals with a vigour to which Bunter was little accustomed when he was in the saddle. But it was a time for vigorous action; he had not many seconds to spare. Even Bunter could act swiftly in an emergency; and it was a serious emergency now!

The bicycle fairly leapt forward.

"Here! Get off my bike!" shouted Snoop angrily. "What the thump's this game, Bunter?"

Bunter did not answer. He had no attention to waste on Sidney James Snoop. All he wanted of Snoop was the loan of his bicycle; and he had that.

He drove at the pedals.

Snoop jumped after him, then he stopped and stared. The Co. stared, too. For the moment they did not grasp Bunter's intention. They wondered what on earth he had jumped on Snoop's bike for. Then, as he pedalled frantically up the road, it dawned upon them.

"He's bolting!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Stop!"

"Bunter, stop!"

"Bolting!" gasped Snoop blankly. "On my bike! My jigger! Why, you fat villain—you fat thief—stop! Do you hear? Stop!"

No doubt Bunter heard. But he did not heed. He drove on at the pedals,

and Snoop's machine flew along the road at an almost terrific pace.

"After him!" roared Bob.

The Famous Five sprinted hard, dropping their bags in the grass by the roadside to free their movements. They were good at running; and Bunter was not good at cycling. But a bicycle will always beat Shanks' pony; and Bunter was making unusual efforts now. He raced on, panting, spluttering, his fat face bent and blazing with exertion over the handlebars, while the chums of the Remove panted in vain on his track.

The fat junior went whizzing round the first turning. He vanished from the sight of the Famous Five.

Bob Cherry halted, gasping for breath. "Chuck it!" he panted. "Nothing doing."

"The fat villain!" gasped Nugent.

Evidently there was nothing doing! Harry Wharton & Co., warm and breathless, walked back to the spot where they had dropped their bags. Snoop was there—he seemed rooted to the spot.

"He's got my bike!" gasped Snoop.

"He has—he have!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"M-m-my bike! What am I going to do?" hooted Snoop. "The fat villain! I'll burst him! Why, I'm on a bike tour with Skinner and Bolsover major—and how am I to get on without a bike?"

"Goodness knows!"

"I—I—I'll scrag him! I—I—I'll—" Sidney James Snoop choked with rage. "Why, it's burglary—it's highway robbery! I—I—I—" Words failed Sidney James Snoop.

He started at last to walk to the Wheat Sheaf, to join his comrades. Breakfast was available, if not a bike. He fumed with rage and indignation as he went. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another. They were exasperated; but they were able to see a humorous side to the situation.

Bob Cherry burst into a laugh.

"Well, the fat duffer has done us!" he said. "Poor old Snoop! Are we going on after Bunter again, or are we going to leave the thumping ass to take his gruel on his own?"

"Oh, stick to it!" said Harry.

"After him, then?"

"Yes."

And once more the Famous Five took up the trail of the elusive Owl of the Remove.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

BANG! "Oh dear!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Snoop had had trouble more than once with that tyre. Billy Bunter, having inherited the tyre, as it were, had inherited also the trouble.

Ten miles or more had glided under the bike, Billy Bunter plugging on with desperate determination. His pace had slackened more and more; but he still plugged on—till the tyre went.

He was in terror of pursuit and capture. The Famous Five, being on foot, were left well behind; and there was little to fear from Snoop. But it was very probable that Bolsover major, if not Skinner, would take up the trail of the purloined bike; and against an active, hefty cyclist like Bolsover, Bunter had not a dog's chance in a race. If Bolsover followed him, and sighted him, Bunter's fate was sealed. So he plugged on with desperate energy, with perspiration pouring down his fat face, and his complexion the colour of a newly-boiled beetroot.

And then came the bang of the bursting tyre.

"Oh dear! Oh!"

Bunter jumped down.

The troublesome tyre was flat again—flatter than ever. And to judge by the ragged gash in it, there was a considerable task ahead of any fellow who essayed to mend it.

Bunter blinked at it dismally through his big spectacles.

It had seemed to him quite a master-stroke of strategy to bag Snoop's bike in that lawless way. Of the lawlessness of the proceeding he did not think at all. He had much more important matters than that to think of. He was still the same fatuous Owl who had taken Combermere Lodge, and landed himself in enormous liabilities thereby; his experiences had not taught him any lesson. Bunter's idea had been that Snoop's bike would carry him to Maul-ever Towers, where he hoped to land his troubles upon Mauly. Now the machine lay by the roadside, and Bunter blinked at it dismally.

"Rotten old chunk of scrap iron!" he growled.

Really, Sidney James Snoop might have kept his bike in better condition! It was just like that slacker to land Bunter with a machine like this!

Bunter sat down in the grass beside the disabled jigger, and gasped for breath. He was tired and winded, and glad of a rest.

Mending a puncture was a task that never appealed to Bunter. He disliked work in any shape or form.

And this was a particularly hefty puncture. The more he blinked at it the less he liked the idea of tackling it.

Yet it was evidently the only thing to be done if the bike was to carry him to his destination.

Bunter groaned.

He dragged himself to his feet at last, and blinked back along the sunny, dusty road. There was no sign of pursuit so far. He made a movement to the bike, paused, and sat down in the grass again. After all, he could spare a few minutes for a rest. And some good-natured cyclist might happen along who would lend him a hand. Most cyclists are very good-natured to brothers of the road who have fallen upon bad luck. Some kind-hearted chap might come pedalling along who would lend a hand—if he proved sufficiently kind-hearted. Bunter might even land the whole job on him, and watch him do it. The Owl of the Remove felt that he could afford to wait a little while, and take a much-needed rest.

His eyes closed behind his big spectacles.

A minute more and he was snoring.

Undoubtedly he needed a rest after his uncommon exertions. Now he was taking it.

He snored serenely while the sun rose higher in the sky, and the birds twittered round him, and motor-cars buzzed past him on the road, and passing cyclists glanced at him and grinned.

Bunter slept on.

Once his snore was fairly going, the hoot of a motor-horn near at hand was not likely to awaken him. The roar of a passing lorry had no effect whatever. As for cyclists, they might have passed in myriads, without disturbing Bunter's balmy slumbers.

And so it came to pass that a rather burly cyclist, grinding hard at his pedals, came along at last, and glanced at the sleeping beauty by the roadside, and jammed on his brake. It was Bolsover major of the Greyfriars Remove.

Bolsover jumped down.

"Bagged him, by gum!" he said.

And he leaned his machine against a fence and came over to Bunter, grinning.

Sidney James Snoop had reached the Wheat Sheaf with his tale of woe—which elicited a chuckle from Skinner, and an indignant snort from Bolsover. The latter, having finished breakfast, had turned out at once on his machine, to look for Bunter, and his quest had been successful. But for the burst tyre, doubtless Bunter would have escaped; as matters stood, there he was—snoring peacefully while Bolsover major bore down upon him.

"Bunter!"

Bunter's eyes did not open.

Bolsover major jammed his boot into the fat junior's ribs, and Bunter awoke then with a howl.

"Ow!"

"You fat rotter!"

"Wow!"

"What are you doing with Snoop's bike?" roared Bolsover major.

Bunter sat up.

"Oh! Oh crumbs! Is—is that you, Bolsover? I—I—I say, I—I'm jolly glad to a-see you, old chap!"

"You look it!" agreed Bolsover major.

"I—I say——"

"Get up!"

Bunter crawled to his feet, blinking very apprehensively at Bolsover major.

"I—I say, the tyre's punctured!" he said.

"I can see that! You're going to mend it!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover——"

"Looks a pretty bad gash," said Bolsover major. He sat down in the grass. "I give you an hour. You've given me a thumping long ride looking for you, and now I'll take a rest. I'll watch you. Get on with it!"

"I—I say——"

"If you slack," said Bolsover, "I shall help you with my boot—like that!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"And like that!"

"Whoop! Keep off, you beast!" raved Bunter. "I'm getting on with it ain't I? I—I—I want to mend that puncture."

"Glad to hear it!" said Bolsover major cordially. "As you want to do it, get on with it. And remember my boot's ready!"

"Oh dear!"

In the dimmest possible spirits William George Bunter up-ended Snoop's bicycle and set to work on the tyre. It was a difficult task and a long task and a disagreeable task, and Bunter would not have liked it had it been the easiest and lightest of tasks. But under



Under a blazing sun, with perspiration bedewing his fat brow, Bunter laboured desperately at the worst puncture that ever was. Once or twice he blinked beseechingly at Bolsover major, and received only an unfeeling chuckle in response. Perhaps Bolsover thought that a fellow who "pinched" another fellow's bike did not deserve much consideration. At all events, he did not show Bunter any. (See Chapter 7.)

the eye of Bolsover major he did not venture to slack.

Bolsover major sat in the grass and leaned on the tree and grinned as he watched Bunter. He seemed to find something entertaining in watching the fat junior at work.

Bunter did not find it entertaining. He groaned dimly as he laboured at that troublesome and obstinate tyre.

Worst of all was the knowledge that his labour was for nothing; for obviously Bolsover major was going to take possession of the bike when it was in a state for the road. He was going to take it back to its owner—a cheeky proceeding on his part, to which Bunter was unable to raise objections. He had sampled Bolsover's boot, and did not desire any more samples.

Under a blazing sun, with perspiration bedewing his fat brow, Bunter laboured desperately at the worst puncture that ever was.

Once or twice he blinked beseechingly at Bolsover major, and received only an unfeeling chuckle in response. Bolsover's heart seemed as hard as the nether millstone. Perhaps he thought that a fellow who "pinched" another fellow's bike did not deserve much consideration. At all events, he did not show Bunter any.

By the time Bunter's task was finished he wondered whether life really was worth living!

But he was finished at last. Bolsover major condescended to examine the results of his labours and to nod approval. "You can mend punctures all right, Bunter," he remarked. "I suppose you knew you'd have to do it over again if anything went wrong, what?"

"Ow!" groaned Bunter.

"Tired?" asked Bolsover.

"Ow! Yes! Worn out!" groaned Bunter.

"Feel as if you can't walk away?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"Then I'll start you off!" said Bolsover major.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as Bolsover major started him with a hefty drive of a heavy boot.

Bunter found that, fatigued and worn out as he was, he could walk—in fact, run. Bolsover major roared with laughter as he ran.

Bunter turned at a safe distance to shake a fat and furious fist at Bolsover. Then he limped on his way.

Bolsover major cheerfully remounted his machine, and took Snoop's to ride back with it. Bunter limped on a dusty road under a hot sun and groaned.

A cart came by, and Bunter perched himself on behind, unseen by the driver. It was a much-needed relief. Bunter felt the relief, though probably the horse had very different feelings on the subject.

But even that relief did not last. An unpleasant youth sitting on a stile howled out:

"Whip behind!"

A long lash curled round Bunter's fat legs, and he yelled and dropped into the dust. Then once more he tramped on wearily—convinced, by this time, that life was very far from worth living.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Drawn Blank!

"BEGAD! Bunter!" Lord Mauleverer, of the Greyfriars Remove, sat up and took notice.

His lazy lordship was sitting at his ease leaning on the cushions of a handsome car, when he sighted the weary, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 917.

worn, and woebegone figure that limped along the dusty road.

Lord Mauleverer glanced at it idly for a moment, and then he recognised Bunter and gave quite a jump.

Bunter, with dust and perspiration thick on his face, was not really easy to recognise so far as features went. But his circumference was not to be mistaken.

Bunter was not, perhaps, so broad as he was long. Still, he was not very long, and he was extremely broad. He was of opinion himself that his figure would have attracted attention anywhere. Undoubtedly he was right; it did.

The width of the weary pedestrian struck Lord Mauleverer, reminding him of Bunter; then he caught the gleam of the glasses on the fat little nose. It was Bunter—Billy Bunter, whose existence Lord Mauleverer had happily forgotten for weeks.

Seeing Bunter, Mauly's natural impulse was to signal to the chauffeur to put on speed and escape while there was yet time. But his kind heart was in opposition to the natural impulse. Billy Bunter was evidently down on his luck—most frightfully down on it—and his

This Week's Gem of a Yarn in the "Gem":

"THE BOY WITH A SECRET!"

An Amazing Story of Tom Merry & Co., the Famous Chums of St. Jim's, telling of their Experiences on a Caravan Holiday.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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good-natured lordship, instead of fleeing, signed to his chauffeur to stop.

The car halted a few yards from Bunter as he limped along the roadside, grunting and groaning.

The fat junior blinked round. The whirr of the car made him jump a little, and he was annoyed.

"Road-hog!" he snorted.

"Bunter!"

"Eh—what?"

Bunter spun towards the car.

"Mauly!" he gasped.

Through its layers of dust Bunter's fat face brightened up. He was seeking Lord Mauleverer, but the Towers still lay many a long mile distant. This unexpected meeting was sheer good luck—for Bunter. Nobody who knew Bunter would have considered Mauly the lucky man.

"Oh, Mauly!" he gasped. "Old chap! Good old Mauly!" For once Bunter felt almost affectionate towards a person who was not named W. G. Bunter, so happy and relieved was he by the sight of Mauly's kind face.

"Up against it, old bean?" asked Lord Mauleverer, gazing at Bunter from the car.

"Yes, old chap!"

"Like a lift?"

"What-ho!"

"Hop in!"

Bunter hopped in.

He was tramping the way the car was going. Mauly's intention was to give him a lift on his way; Bunter looked as if he had had enough walking. No doubt his lordship knew that he would

also have to shell out a loan before he parted with Bunter; but Mauly was generous, and he had plenty of money, and he did not mind. Had he known, however, that Mauleverer Towers was Billy Bunter's destination he might have hesitated to give him the lift. Mauly had a kind heart and a generous nature; but there was a limit, and William George Bunter was the limit!

The chauffeur looked at Bunter for a second. But he was a well-trained chauffeur and he did not allow his features to express what he thought of Bunter. The car rolled on again.

Bunter sank back on the soft cushions and grunted with contentment. Life was worth living, after all.

"I say, Mauly, you're a good chap!" said the Owl of the Remove. "I'm dead-beat, you know—fairly done in! I say, this is a good car—nearly as good as the Rolls-Royce at Bunter Court!"

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"Yaas," he said.

"It's no end of a pleasure to see you, Mauly!"

"Yaas?"

"Always pleasant to see a genuine old pal again, isn't it, Mauly?" said Bunter.

Mauleverer coughed. Really, he was not conscious of being Bunter's old pal. But he nodded genially.

"Yaas," he said. Mauly never said "No" if it was possible to answer in the affirmative.

"I was coming to see you, Mauly."

"Eh?"

"Are we far from the Towers?"

"Oh, gad! About fifteen miles."

"That isn't much in a car," said Bunter brightly. "How lucky you picked me up, Mauly!"

"Oh!"

"I actually didn't notice you in the car," said Bunter. "If you hadn't spotted me, you'd have passed, and I shouldn't have known."

"Wish I had!"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean—" stammered Mauleverer.

"I'm up against it, old chap," said Bunter pathetically. "I've been wronged, Mauly—treated with awful injustice!"

"Hard cheese," said Mauly, rather doubtfully, however.

"Honest Injun, Mauly!"

"Yaas," murmured Mauleverer. His lordship knew how honest Bunter's Injun was—or, rather, wasn't.

"I knew you'd stand by me in a scrape like this, Mauly!"

"Did you?" murmured Mauly.

"Oh, yes, old chap—especially as it was your fault, through doing you a favour, that I got landed in it at all!"

"Oh, gad! How do you make that out, Bunter? What on earth's happened to you?" asked Lord Mauleverer, in some alarm.

"I'm hunted——"

"Eh?"

"Hunted and harried," said Bunter, impressively.

"Oh, gad!"

"Those rotters, Wharton and his gang, are following me, to take me back to Combermere——"

"Combermere, in Kent?" said Lord Mauleverer. "That's where you hired a furnished house for the summer, isn't it? Combermere Lodge, or somethin', and you named it Bunter Court, or somethin'." Mauleverer grinned faintly as he recalled the hapless swank of the Owl of the Remove. "Has anythin' gone wrong at Bunter Court?"

"Everything!" groaned Bunter.

"Too bad! Found the expenses a bit steep?" asked Mauleverer. "The

Pilkins man told me it was forty guineas a week. Rather steep, what, to keep up for a long time?"

"I'll tell you all about it, Mauly, from beginning to end—"

"Don't, old chap!" said Mauleverer hurriedly. "I'm not curious."

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"Never was a chap to butt into another chap's affairs," said Mauleverer. "Not a word, old bean. I say, if you're goin' on to Winchester, I'll go round a bit and drop you there."

"I'm not going to Winchester."

"Oh dear!" murmured Mauleverer.

"I was coming to Mauleverer Towers to call on you, Mauly," said Billy Bunter, with a reproachful blink.

"Awful good of you, and all that," said Lord Mauleverer. "But the fact is—"

He hesitated. The good-natured Mauly did not like putting it plain even to a thick-skinned fellow like Bunter. But, really—really and truly—

he did not want William George as a guest at Mauleverer Towers. Mauly's good-nature was almost boundless, but it was necessary to draw a line somewhere.

"What did you say, Mauly?" asked Bunter, blinking at him. Whatsoever Mauly had said was not likely to make much difference to Bunter. Only a boot was likely to prevail upon him not to put up at the Towers.

Lord Mauleverer suppressed a groan. He reflected dismally that he had always been rather an ass, but surely had never been so assine as in picking up Billy Bunter on the road. Really, he might have foreseen that Bunter would stick; and it was a very painful process to a kind-hearted fellow like Mauly to compel him to come unstuck, as it were.

The car glided on swiftly, eating up the miles, Bunter resting comfortably on soft cushions. Mauleverer was evidently heading for home in his car, and Mauleverer Towers drew nearer at every revolution of the wheels. That was a very satisfactory reflection to Billy Bunter.

"I'll tell you what's happened," said Bunter. "I think you'll realise that it was all your fault, Mauly, and that you're bound to stand by me and see me through."

"Oh dear!"

"You remember the end of last term at Greyfriars your uncle asked you to look at a furnished house near Combermere, Mauly, that a friend of his was thinking of taking for the summer?"

"Oh, yaas!"

"You got me to go and look at it for you, and I obliged you, in my thoughtless, generous way—"

"Oh, can it, Bunter!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I thought it was rather obligin' of you at the time, but it turned out that you spotted the place for yourself, and gave me a rotten account of it, so that I wrote to my uncle that it was no good, and he turned it down. Then I found that you'd bagged it for yourself for the summer."

Bunter grinned.

"You see, you were rather an ass, Mauly," he said.

"Was I?" grunted Mauleverer.

"Oh, yes! No doubt about that," said Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was apparently quite satisfied with his diplomacy on that occasion.

The dandy of the Remove looked at him fixedly, but did not speak. His regret at having picked up Bunter was intensifying. The thought had come into his mind now of dropping the Owl of the Remove out of the car. Bunter, happily unaware of it, rattled on

cheerily. He could afford to be cheerful now that he was lolling in Mauly's car and heading for Mauleverer Towers.

"I rather pulled your leg, Mauly, didn't I? You're not very bright, you know."

"I hope I shall never be bright enough to suspect a fellow of playing a dirty trick," said Lord Mauleverer quietly.

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"Let it drop," said Mauly. "Look here, Bunter—"

"Well, that was how it started," said Bunter. "You see, somehow the estate-agent, Pilkins, took me for you—"

"You mean you pretended to be me, as you went over in my car," grunted Lord Mauleverer. "Pilkins had never seen me then, and expected me in the car. You took him in."

"Well, he took himself in," said Bunter. "It's not my fault if people take me for a lord. A fellow can't help looking distinguished—"

"Eh?"

"And—and stately."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The fact is, Mauly, I look the part more than you do," said Bunter. "Who, seeing us together, would take you for the lord and not me—eh?"

"Great gad!"

Next Week's Attractive Story in the MAGNET: "RIVAL OARSMEN!"

A Topping Story of Your Old Favourites, Harry Wharton & Co., describing their Sensational Adventures on the River.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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"You don't mind my mentioning it, do you, old chap? Facts speak for themselves, don't they?"

"Not at all!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "Go it! I never really knew what an entertainin' fellow you were, Bunter! Keep it up!"

"Well, that's how it was," said Bunter. "Pilkins was very keen to let the house, and he took me to see it. He tipped the wink to Walsingham, the butler, to bag me as a tenant—"

"Thinkin' you were me?"

"I really don't know what he thought, Mauly; I'm not a thought-reader," said Bunter peevishly. "I told him not to mention to the servants in the house that I was Lord Mauleverer; that was straightforward, wasn't it? You see, I had to take it in my own name, as Wharton was coming—I mean I wouldn't be guilty of anything like deception, being so straightforward. I treated Walsingham and the servants very generously. By the way, I never settled up for the money you lent me that time, Mauly! Remind me next term at Greyfriars, won't you?"

"Oh, yaas!" said Lord Mauleverer, with deep sarcasm. "You only need remindin' of, of course!"

"Of course," assented Bunter fatuously. "Well, that ass Pilkins was knocked out in a motor-car accident going back to Combermere, and laid up in a nursing home. So I took possession of Combermere Lodge without—without any formalities."

"The butler must have been a howlin' ass to let you do it."

Bunter chuckled. "That was my strategy," he explained.

"Your what?"

"Strategy! You know what a jolly clever ventriloquist I am, Mauly."

"Eh?"

"I put on Pilkins' voice on the telephone—easy enough to me, you know, with my wonderful gift of ventriloquism—and made Walsingham think that Pilkins had let me the house and was settling with my pater. Pilkins, being laid up in the nursing-home, couldn't deny it, could he?"

"Oh, gad!"

"Rather neat, wasn't it?" said Bunter.

"Neat! Neat, was it?"

"Yes; precious few fellows could have handled a situation like that," said Bunter. "So there I was—at Bunter Court. I can tell you it needed a lot of nerve, and a lot of presence of mind, to keep it up."

"I've no doubt it did!" gasped Lord Mauleverer, staring blankly at the Owl of the Remove. "Mean to say your father didn't know?"

"Not a word; he doesn't know now. Of course, my pater's rolling in money," said Bunter hastily. "But—but the fact is, he might have refused to pay forty guineas a week for the place if I'd asked him."

"Yaas; I think he might."

"And then the servants' wages, and the chauffeurs, and gardeners, and all that—at least another forty pounds," said Bunter.

"Oh, gad!"

"You see, I did the thing in style," explained Bunter. "Wharton and his friends were my guests, and D'Arcy of St. Jim's came over for a week; and I can say that I spared no expense to give them a good time. You know my generous nature."

"Oh!" gasped Mauly. "Yaas, I do! Oh, yaas!"

"It would have gone off all right without a hitch, if that man Pilkins hadn't recovered and got out of that dashed nursing home," said Bunter. "But he did. He came to the house to see me. Luckily, I was able to clear everybody off in time, and see him alone."

"What good did that do?"

"You see, it gave me a chance to use my strategy again. I locked him up in the wine-cellar."

Lord Mauleverer gasped.

"You—you—you did?"

"Yes. That was rather neat, too—what?"

"Neat! Oh, gad!"

"I used to chuck grub in to him of a night," said Bunter. "Of course, I couldn't let him starve, though he was a distrustful, suspicious sort of rotter! He called me a bilk, you know! Me!"

"Amazin'!" stuttered Lord Mauleverer. "Now, I wonder why he called you a bilk, Bunter?"

"Oh, these estate-agents are a downy lot," said Bunter. "Suspicious and distrustful, you know. Well, Pilkins was safe as houses, only that fool Walsingham found him in the wine-cellar, and if I hadn't had the luck to lock Walsingham in, too, there would have been a fearful shindy. Luckily I got the key turned on that meddling ass of a butler."

"Luckily!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, gad!"

"After that, all went well enough," said Bunter. "But, that ass, D'Arcy, found me going down to the cellars one

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 238.

HARRY WHARTON, EDITOR

Week Ending Sept. 5th.



NOTES ON NEW BOYS!

Billy Bunter

I'VE made a special study of New Boys. I know all their funny little trix and habbits, and I can size up a New Boy's karracter in less than five minits.

How is it done? Well, I'll tell you. Some people judge a person's karracter from his face, or from the palms of his hands, or from the way he speaks, or from his hand-writing. Now, all these methods are useless. The proper way to judge a fellow's karracter is by the way he eats.

Take a new kid into the tuckshop, and stand him a feed. Study him carefully, and within a few minits you'll know eggactly what sort of a chap he is. Hand him a dish of assorted pastrys, and note what he does. If he promptly grabs at the biggest and fattest cake on the dish, and starts bolting it ravenously—the cake, not the dish!—you can write him down as a greedy, good-for-nothing glutton.

If, on the other hand, he duzzent take a cake at all, but picks up the dish and offers it to the fellow who is standing treat, you can safely assume that he is good-harted and jennerus. You can proceed to tell him that you are eggpecting a postle-order—which has somehow got delayed in the post—and that you would like a little loan on the strength of it. The odds are that he will rise to the occasion.

A fellow who takes a doe-nutt, and dissects it with a knife before he eats it to make sure it's got jam inside is of a narsy, suspicious nature. He is always apt to think the worst of anybody, and if you try to become pally with him, he always imagines you've got an interior motive!

The fellow who helps himself to the most dainty and delicate-looking cake on the dish is what they call a Connie-sue-her. He knows what is good for him, and he is a fellow of taste and refinement.

Beware of the new kid who takes two cakes at the same time, and who crams others into his pockets when he thinks you are not looking. Such a fellow will be of a grasping, mercenary turn of mind. It will be like getting blud out of a stone to try to squeeze a loan out of him.

The fellow who nibbles at a cake, and then lays it aside and samples another, and then tries a third, is a shifty, inconstant, vaccinating sort of chap. (I don't thing vaccinating is the right word; it means to away to and fro, and to be unsteady.) (Doubtless our plump contributor means "vacillating"!—Ed.)

If a fellow, when eating jam-tarts, smears the jam all over his gills, he is a careless, untidy, alphasod sort. But this does not mean that he may not be open-harted and

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jennerus. I've raised many a useful loan from a new kid whose cheeks have been smeared with storberry-jam!

After reading this article, you will now be able to sum up, annalise, dissect, and take stock of a new boy within five minits of his arrival!

FORTY YEARS ON!

Adapted from the famous Harrow School song.)

By DICK PENFOLD.

Forty years on, when you're grizzled and gouty,
When you peer back down the pathway of years,
Will you remember old Quelch and Prouty?
Will you recall all your triumphs and tears?
Will you remember the nervous sensation
When you first toddled, so strange and so shy,
Into the gates of this ancient Foundation,
Feeling so foolish, and looking a guy?

Forty years on, when you're quite an old stager,
Will you remember the trials of yore—
How you were "walloped" by Bolsover major,
Bullied by Loder, and cuffed by a score?
Will you still think of the lines and the lickings,
Wondering hazily which was the worst?
Will you recall all the bumpings and kickings
Which you received when a fag in the First?

Shall we see Bunter as plump and as portly,
Forty years on, as we see him to-day?
Shall we see Mauly as charming and courtly?
Shall we see Cherry as blithe and as gay?
Will Mr. Quelch be decrepit and doubled?
Will Mr. Prout have a beard to the ground?
Will the Head's brow be wrinkled and troubled,
As in a bath-chair he cruises around?

Forty years on, will you ever be yearning
Once more to visit the school down in Kent?
Will you, in aeroplane swift, be returning
To the old place where your schooldays were spent?
Will you spin yarns to the new generation,
Tell of Life's tussles, and victories won?
May you win honour for self and the nation—
Twenty, and thirty, and Forty Years On!

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

FIFTY years ago, when a new boy came to Greyfriars, he was given a grueling time. He was baited and bully-ragged, and given a baptism in the school fountain, and made to get up and sing a song in public on the night of his arrival. If he chose a rousing song, and sang it really well, he was applauded; but if he selected some stupid love-song, and stuttered and spluttered over it, he was promptly pelted with all sorts of missiles. My uncle, Colonel Wharton, was educated at Greyfriars, and he has often told me of the sort of treatment meted out to new boys.

There were bullies in those days—bulking louts who made new boys their particular prey. Loder of the Sixth would have been considered a docile lamb by the side of some of those heavy-handed giants. If a new kid stood up pluckily and manfully to the bullying and baiting he received, he was generally left alone after a day or two; but woe-betide the youngster who showed the white feather, or threatened to sneak to the Head! Such a youngster had to go through the mill "good and proper."

The treatment of new boys has altered considerably since those days. Nowadays a new kid has a fairly smooth passage. He is not called upon to fight the school bully within five minutes of his arrival; he is not ducked in the fountain—unless he happens to be a bumptious and cheeky individual—and he doesn't have to sing on a platform and provide a target for books, bad eggs, peashooters, and so forth.

The new boy of to-day is pumped with questions concerning his ancestry, his attainments—if any—and his ambitions. If he is wise, he answers all these questions good-humouredly, pointing out that his pater is a politician or a pork butcher, as the case may be, and describing his prowess at cricket, footer, and boxing. There is very little bullying of new boys now. Those who try it on generally get more than they bargain for. Whatever the Greyfriars of the past, the Greyfriars of the present doesn't stand for bullying.

This is our Special "New Boys" Number, and our gay contributors have done themselves full justice. Billy Bunter has a humorous article—though it is not intended to be such!—and Dick Penfold has weighed in with a more thoughtful poem than usual. I have persuaded several of the fellows to describe their experiences as new boys, and you will chuckle at their adventures and misadventures.

Next week we are giving you a Special Play-Acting Number, with William Wibley, the clever actor and impersonator, well in the limelight. Wib is the Henry Irving of Greyfriars, and his histrionic achievements make fine reading. Fly to your newsagent—as Billy Bunter would say in his "Weekly"—and order next week's issue of the MAGNET a fortnight in advance!

HARRY WHARTON.

Get a Front Row Seat for
Next Week's
"PLAY-ACTING"
SUPPLEMENT.
Don't Miss It, Chums!



First Impressions of Greyfriars!

A New Boy's First Letter Home.

MY DEAR MATER,—Just a few lines hopping you are quite well as it leaves me at pressant feeling fed-up and far from home.

I got to Friardale quite safely at two o'clock this afternoon, and a crowd of fellows met me at the station—quite a guard of honour, in fact. They asked me if I was the new kid, and I said "Yes. It's awfully good of you fellows to come and meet me." They said "Not at all! Charmed, dear boy!" And they took off their caps and made sweeping bows, and one of them solemnly kissed my hand. I didn't know whether they were in Ernest, or whether they were just pulling my leg. I larked, and said, "You needn't treat me as if I was a Prince of Royal Blud. I'm just an ordinary fellow; my pater made his money out of sossidges." I thought they would cool off when I told them that, but they fussed and fawned on me more than ever. Some of them saw to my luggage, and had it put on the station hack; and their leader said, "Now we'll take you along to the school." We crawled along the country lanes (the hoarse was about a hundred years old; I think it won the Darby in 1830!) and at last we arrived at the school. I was rather disappointed at the first glimpse of it. I thought Greyfriars was a noble and majestic biding; instead of which, it was just an ordinary school like you

see in the streets of London. You know what I mean—just like what they call an Elsie C. school. I said, "Is this really Greyfriars?" And they all started to chuckle. Then their leader said, "No, my son, this isn't Greyfriars. It's Courtfield County Council School, and my name's Dick Trumper." I felt jolly frightened, and started to blub a bit. "What's the little game?" I asked. "Why have you brought me here?" Trumper then said he was going to play a little jape on me. I was marched into the playground, and the rotters dressed me up in a peero's costume, like they wear on the sands at Winklesea. My hands were tied behind my back, and then the rotters painted my fizz, so that I looked like a comic clown. My nose was as red as a storberry, and there were streaks of pink and blue and yellow on my cheeks. Then Trumper stuck a play-card on my chest, with the following discription:

"ANOTHER ADDITION TO THE GREYFRIARS ZOO!"

I was blubbing in Ernest now, and the tears ran down my cheeks and mingled with the paint, and I must have looked a pretty picture. Trumper and his pals were larking fit to bust. They made me step into the station hack, and gave destructions to the driver to take me to

Greyfriars. Away we went, followed by yells of merriment from Trumper & Co. When we got to Greyfriars, I was delighted to see that it really was a fine old place. It had been standing for hundreds of years, and it used to be a monkey-house, or whatever they call those places that Monks inhabit.

When I stepped out of the hack, a crowd of fellows came running up, and they yelled until they were hoarse. "What a guy! Ha, ha, ha!" A big, berly fellow (whose name I afterwards lerned was Bolsover) opened fire on me with his peashooter; and I was helpless, with my hands tied behind my back. But pressantly five awfully decent fellows came rushing to the reskew. They bowled Bolsover over in the mud, and then they untied my hands, and I heard them vow vengeance on Trumper & Co. I was taken into the biding, where I had a hot bath and got rid of the peero costume. My reskewers then treated me to a topping tea. They were Remove fellows, and they called themselves the Famous Five. After tea, I was taken along to interview my Form master—a big, fat balloon named Mr. Wally Bunter. He was quite decent to me, but a bit sarcastick. He tested my nollidge, and then said, "You're not quite good enough for the First Form, but as there isn't a lower Form at Greyfriars, you'll have to go there. Strickly speaking, you ought to be in a kindergarten."

I am writing this letter in the Fags' Common-room. It's just like a fried-fish shop; everybody seems to be toasting herrings on pen-holders! I think I shall get on jolly well here, but I'm feeling a bit mizzerable and homesick at pressant. Trusting you are the same, dear Mater,

I remain,
Your loving son,
TONY.



When I Came to Greyfriars

Some Amusing Recollections of our Contributors.

BOB CHERRY:

The first thing that struck me when I came to Greyfriars was not the height of the old tower, or the majesty of the building, or the human beehive that was swarming in the Close. No; the first thing that struck me was a football—full in the face! I strolled in at the school gates at a very unfortunate moment! The Fourth were playing the Remove, in a rough-and-tumble game in the Close, and Cecil Reginald Temple welcomed me to Greyfriars by banging the muddy ball into my dial. It was a shot at goal, really—the gates being the goal. Instead of going down on his hands and knees, and making an abject apology, Temple raved and stormed at me for getting in the way at the crucial moment, and preventing a certain score for the Upper Fourth!

BILLY BUNTER:

When I first arrived at Greyfriars, after making the long jerney from Bunter Court, I was famished in every limb, so to speak. Owing to an oversight, however, my pater had forgotten to give me a parting tip, and I was broke. I hadn't the price of a pear-drop! However, I rolled along to the tuckshop, hoping to get a good feed on tick. I said to Dame Mimble, "You

needn't have any hezzitation in serving me, ma'am. It will be quite all right. My pater's one of the pillars of the Stock Exchange. He's a milly-millionaire, -which means a millionaire a million times over! Let me have a jolly good feed, and I'll settle up in the morning, when I'm eggsppecting a big check from home." Unfortunately, I reeseved a big check there and then. Dame Mimble flatly refused to serve me until she had seen the culler of my coin; and as I had no coin to show her, I was obliged to take tea in Hall. Bread-and-scrape and weak tea! That's how William George Bunter was welcomed to Greyfriars!

ALONZO TODD:

When I first came to Greyfriars I was conducted by a very obliging fellow named Skinner to a delightful sitting-room, which I was told was a special banqueting-hall for new boys. Certainly there was a most appetising dinner waiting for me, and I did full justice to it. I was lying back in my chair, serene and surfeited, when an imposing personage in gown and mortar-board stalked into the room. "Boy!" he roared. "You have eaten my dinner!" It was the Head! I was full of apologies, and in my confusion I unwittingly betrayed

Skinner, who was made to realise—through the medium of the Head's cane—that the way of the practical joker is hard!

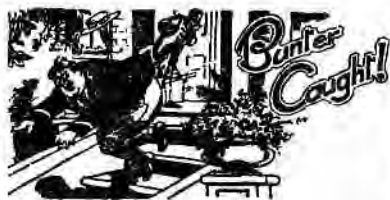
HURREE SINGH:

I will admittfully confess that when I made my esteemed and ludicrous debut at Greyfriars I half-expected to be treated despisefully by some of the fellows, on account of my dusky skinfulness. But I was welcomed with the open armfulness, and treated to the handsome spreadfulness, and made to feel at-homefully at my ease. Greyfriars seemed a very strange place after my native Bhanipur; but I soon got usefully accustomed to it—and to the esteemed English language, in which I had been well grounded by my native tutor. I can now speak English as correctfully and fluently as the next fellow!

WILLIAM GOSLING:

"I never come to Greyfriars as a noo boy, as you might say, but as a noo mau. That was—lemme see—forty-two years ago. Master Cherry declares it was ninety! But my name ain't Methuselah; it's plain William Gosling. When I first come 'ere, the scholars at Greyfriars was as saucy a set of young rips as I ever clapped heyas on! Always a-pullin' of my leg, they was, an' playin' practical jokes. The first night I slep' in my lodge, one of the young warmints dressed 'isself up as a ghost, an' 'e started a-flappin' an' a-flutterin' hout-side my bed-room winder. It fair give me fits! They was himperent young himps wot was 'ere in them days; an' I'm sorry to say the present jenny-ration ain't no better."

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(Continued from page 13.)

night with a bag of grub for those two rotters, and, thinking I was sleep-walking, followed me, and found it all out. Fortunately, I locked him in as well."

"Holy smoke! Fortunately!"

"Yes, Lucky, wasn't it?" said Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer gazed at the Owl of the Remove like a fellow in a dream.

"So—so—so you had three of them locked in the wine-cellar!" he stuttered.

"Oh, gad! You were getting quite a collection! Are they still there?"

"No. Wharton and his lot missed D'Arcy, and in the most unfeeling way they insisted on letting him out, when they found where he was—they actually refused to back me up, Mauly, though I explained to them that it was serious. I had only just time to bolt before they let out the whole lot, and Walsingham or Pilkins had the frightful cheek to telephone for a policeman, and I saw the bobby coming, you know—and if I hadn't bolted goodness knows what would have happened!"

Billy Bunter shook his head seriously. Evidently he felt deeply injured by the inconsiderate conduct of the prisoners of the wine-cellar in sending for a policeman.

"Great gad!" said Lord Mauleverer faintly.

"So all the fat was in the fire then," said Bunter. "Of course, all the tradesmen will have showered in their bills before this—hundreds of pounds, very likely."

"Oh! You bilked the tradesmen, too, did you?"

"That's a beastly way of putting it, Mauly. I suppose I had to feed my guests!" said Bunter warmly. "There's such a thing as hospitality, Mauly. As for the tradesmen, they will be paid."

"Who's goin' to pay them, then?"

"You are, old chap."

"Eh?"

"That's what I'm coming to," explained Bunter, blinking cheerily at the dazed countenance of Lord Mauleverer. "You see, it was your fault in the first place—getting me to go and view that furnished house for you. You see that? You being to blame, you're bound to stand by me. What?"

"Great gad!"

"That's why I'm coming to Mauleverer Towers, old fellow. I knew I could rely on you to get me out of a scrape, after getting me into one," said Bunter.

"Those cheeky cads, Wharton and his garg, are after me—actually after me, you know, thinking they're going to take me back to Combermere and fete the music, as they call it. Jever hear of such a cheek?"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"As for that cad Pilkins, I shall certainly never condescend to see him again. Walsingham's a disrespectful servant, and I shall not even send him any gratuity," said Bunter. "I say, old chap, are we very far from Mauleverer Towers now?"

Lord Mauleverer did not answer that question. He fixed his eyes on the Owl of the Remove. Bunter's narration of his amazing experiences at "Bunter Court" seemed to have taken his lord-

ship's breath away. But Mauleverer found his voice at last.

"So it comes to this," he said. "You bagged the place by a trick, and kept it by a lot more tricks. You've bilked people right and left; you owe a ton of money; and you've come to land it all on me, your reason being that in the first place you took me in and played me a dirty trick—what?"

"Oh, really Mauly!"

Lord Mauleverer signalled to the chauffeur, and the car halted. Lord Mauleverer threw the door open.

"Jump out, Bunter!"

"Eh?"

"Jump out!"

"We're not at Mauleverer Towers yet, old chap," said Bunter, blinking at him in astonishment.

"Quite so! Jump out!"

"What am I to jump out for, Mauly?"

"Because I'm goin' to kick you till you do, old bean," said Lord Mauleverer genially. "Like that!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"And like that—"

"Whooooop!" roared Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove slighted from the car in a great hurry. Lord Mauleverer landed a final kick as he went, and Bunter went over on his hands and knees. In that attitude he blinked round dizzily at the schoolboy earl, who looked after him from the car.

"Good-bye, Bunter! If I see you again, I'll telephone for a policeman to take you back to Combermere. Good-bye!"

The car rolled on.

Bunter staggered up.

He blinked after the car, till it vanished in the dusty distance. Lord Mauleverer was gone.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh! Oh, dear!"

Lord Mauleverer had failed him. Mauly, his last resource, had been drawn blank! Obviously—even to Bunter—it was useless to keep on to Mauleverer Towers now. He did not want any more kickings, and he assuredly did not want Mauly to telephone for a policeman to take him back to Combermere. Of all the places in the wide world, "Bunter Court" was the very last that Bunter desired to see again.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

He crawled to the roadside, and sat down in the grass. His last resource had failed him, and William George Bunter was at the end of his tether.

Billy Bunter, lately lord and master of Bunter Court, now turned down by all the world, sat in the grass and groaned.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Good Samaritans!

GRON!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Gron!

"Sounds like somebody with a pain!" remarked Bob Cherry.

Gron!

"Better have a look," remarked Harry Wharton. "A car passed a few minutes ago, and it may have run over somebody."

"Chance for us to put in the Good Samaritan stunt," agreed Bob, detaching himself from the grass. "Sounds horrid!"

Gron!

It was a dismal and almost incessant groaning, and it came to the ears of the Famous Five through the thick hawthorn hedge.

Still hunting Bunter, the chums of the Remove were not, as Bob Cherry had expressed it, breaking their necks about it. They were taking their self-imposed task in a leisurely spirit, suited to the hot weather and the holiday season. A ramble about the countryside had not, so far, revealed any signs of Bunter; but they had come on Bolsover major wheeling back Snoop's bike, and so they knew that the fat Owl was dismounted and not very far away. And as Bolsover had mentioned Bunter's statement that he was heading for Mauleverer Towers, the juniors had a clue now to follow, and they were keeping on in the direction of Mauly's home.

Still, they were not hurrying. Bunter had to be roped in, and taken back to Combermere to face the music, for his own sake. Meanwhile, it was holiday-time, and the Famous Five were taking it easy.

In the hot afternoon, they were camped in the shadow of a big tree, by a hawthorn hedge that shut off the dusty road. A pleasant field stretched before them, with cattle grazing in the distance. Farther on, three or four farmer's men were making a haystack. The sky was blue, the scene was pleasant, the weather was hot, and the juniors had a basket of provisions and ginger-beer, and were enjoying a picnic tea in the sweet-smelling field under the shady tree. Life seemed quite good to them, and they really did not mind if the hunt for Bunter continued to the end of the summer vacation, so long as the weather held good.

Motors buzzed by in the high-road beyond the hedge, unheeded by the picnickers. But they sat up and took notice when they heard that series of dismal groans from the roadside.

A few minutes before they had heard a car stop, and then rattle on again, and the deep and dismal groaning that followed seemed to hint that there had been an accident of some kind.

Someone, apparently, had crawled to the roadside, and sat there, divided only by the high hawthorn hedge from the picnickers in the field. And he was groaning away as if for a wager.

Bob Cherry moved along the hedge to a gap, and looked through into the road. If it was a case of first aid being required, the chums of Greyfriars were prepared to throw aside their picnic at once and rush to the rescue. Bob stared hard through the gap, half-expecting to see some pedestrian who had been knocked down by the passing car. But it was something quite different that he saw, and he gave a yell:

"Bunter!"

"What?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Bunter!" roared Bob.

"Oh, my hat!"

Bob Cherry leaped through the gap in the hedge, and ran along to the spot where William George Bunter sat in the grass.

He expected the Owl of the Remove to leap up and flee.

But Bunter hardly moved.

He just turned his head, and blinked at Bob through his big spectacles with a dismal and lack-lustre eye.

There was not, in point of fact, a run left in Bunter. His fat little legs were aching with fatigue. His podgy person was bedewed with perspiration. Dropped from Lord Mauleverer's car, Billy Bunter had not even thought of crawling on his way. Now that Mauleverer Towers was barred to him he had no destination to seek. Even if he had

ANSWERS

Every Saturday—PRICE 2:

thought of going home, several counties lay between him and home. The unfortunate Owl of the Remove was at the end of his tether, and in the distressing circumstances he could think of nothing better to do than to sit in the grass by the hedge and groan.

So he sat and groaned, little dreaming upon what ears his groaning fell. But he did not care when he made the discovery. He was tired, he was dusty, he was hungry, he was athirst, and he had been turned down by Mauly. He only blinked dismally at Bob Cherry, and made no effort to escape.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here you are, Bunter!" chuckled Bob, as he came up with the groaning Owl, and looked down on him with a cheery grin.

"Beast!"
"So we've found the fat chump!" said Johnny Bull, through the hedge.

"Here he is, as large as life!" chuckled Bob.

"Beast!"
"Ready for a little trip back into Kent, Bunter?"

"Beast!"
"Hungry?" asked Bob.
Bunter groaned.
"Starving!" he said. "That beast Bolsover lent me half-a-crown, and I got some bread and cheese and toffee; that's all I've had to-day. Oh dear!"

And the Owl of the Remove gave a deep, deep groan.

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now, you fellows!" called out Bob. "Bunter's only had half-a-crown's-worth of grub to-day, so far."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Beasts!"
"You don't seem jolly glad to see us, Bunter!" grinned Bob.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.
"We're having a picnic in the field there."

"Oh!"
Bunter brightened. The mere mention of tuck was sufficient to rally him.
"We've got a cake—"

"Oh!"
"And a bag of tarts—"

"Good!"
"Lots of buns, and some chocs."

Bunter staggered to his feet.
"And ginger-beer galore!" said Bob.

"I—I say, Bob, old chap, you're a good sort, old fellow! You know I always liked you, Bob!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Come on," said Bob. "You stood us a lot of feeds at Bunter Court, didn't you? And now we've got to manage somehow to pay for them, haven't we? We'll stand you a feed now that's paid for. Rather a change for you, after Bunter Court—what?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Come on, old fat man!"

Bunter had ceased to groan. His fat face had brightened wonderfully. Bob helped him through the gap in the hedge, and Bunter rolled up to the camp of the picnickers. His eyes gleamed behind his spectacles at the sight of the good things in the grass.

Harry Wharton & Co. had a good supply, which was fortunate, in the circumstances. Numerically, only one was added to the party; gastronomically, the picnic-party was doubled. Bunter plumped down in the grass, and clutched up ham sandwiches with both hands.

He did not speak. There was no time to waste in talk. Bunter's jaws went at a wonderful rate. Ham sandwiches disappeared with amazing celerity. If he paused for a second, it was only to gulp down ginger-beer.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched him, with grinning faces, and helped him liberally. Bunter had been up against

it, that was certain. He was weary and worn, and he was hungry; and hunger, in Bunter's case, was an awfully serious thing. True, his troubles were all his own fault, brought upon him by his own fatuous folly and propensity to swank. But it was not a time to think of that now. He was down on his luck, and the chums of the Remove rallied round him.

"Any more sandwiches?"

Bunter spoke at last.

"Nunno! You've scoffed the lot."

"Pass the cake."

"Here you are!"

Silence again while the cake disappeared. It was a large cake, and the juniors had not yet started on it. It was too late now! Bunter started on it and finished on it—first in and first out, so to speak. The Famous Five watched him with almost a fascinated gaze as the cake disappeared. It was a mystery where Bunter stowed it all. Even his great circumference hardly seemed to

afford sufficient space for taking in supplies in bulk like this. But the cake went, and Bunter, like Oliver Twist, asked for more.

"Did you say you had some tarts, Bob?"

"Yes!" gasped Bob. "Only a dozen left—but they'll last you a second or two, old chap."

The tarts followed the cake.

"What about the buns?"

"Lots of buns," said Harry. "But—but don't you think you'd better go a bit easy for a while, Bunter? We haven't got an ambulance with us."

"If you're going to be mean, Wharton—"

"Oh, my hat! Give him the buns!"

The buns went a little more slowly than the tarts. But they went. Billy Bunter blinked into a paper bag and picked out a few loose currants and devoured them.

"Did you say chocs, Bob?"

"MAGNET" PORTRAIT GALLERY.

No. 1.—Harry Wharton.



A great personality in the Lower Fourth, of which Form he is captain. Leader of the select band of Removites known as the Famous Five. An all-round sportsman, an impartial judge when occasion demands, and as fearless as a lion. Held in great esteem by the decent fellows at the school, and in respect by his enemies. As straight as a die and strong morally, Harry's only fault, perhaps, lies in a hot temper which, fortunately, seldom gets the better of him. Shares Study No. 1 with Frank Nugent.

"Great pip!"

With an almost awed look Bob Cherry passed Bunter a bag of chocolates. The bag was full; but it was soon empty.

Bunter breathed hard.

"I say, you fellows, I'm really hungry," he said. "It's jolly decent of you to stand me a feed. Anything more?"

"Nothing more!" said Harry, with a smile. "You've finished the lot, Bunter."

"I say, didn't you say you were having a picnic?"

"We were; but you've had it instead, old fatty."

"I don't call that much of a picnic!" said Bunter. "I'm still hungry. I'll finish the ginger-beer if you don't mind."

"Not at all! Go it!"

Bunter finished the ginger-beer. If he could not continue to eat, there was a minor satisfaction in drinking.

"Sure there's nothing else?" he asked, with a sigh.

"Only the ginger-beer bottles," said Johnny Bull. "You can wolf them if you like!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Still hungry?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Well, not exactly famished now," said Bunter. "I'm ready for tea, if you fellows like to drop into an inn—"

"Ready for tea!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Oh, my hat!"

Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove with an almost amiable blink. He had had nine-tenths of the picnic and it had certainly made him feel better. Life, after all, was worth living, especially if he could get tea fairly soon, with supper to follow early.

"I say, you fellows, it's really up to you to stand me something, you know, after the splendid time I gave you at Bunter Court," he said. "You had some jolly good spreads there—what?"

"Oh, top-hole!" said Bob. "You didn't mention that we should have to pay the bills afterwards. Of course, that was rather an oversight."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Can you walk, Bunter?" asked Wharton. "You've got rather a lot to carry now. Still, we'll roll you back to Kent like a barrel if you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not going back!" snapped Bunter. "I dislike that man Pilkins, and I despise Walsingham; and as for the footmen and the other servants, I look on them as an ungrateful, carping lot! They'll be worrying me for wages, or something of the kind, if they see me again. An ungrateful crew! Then the Combermere tradesmen—I gave them magnificent orders, as you know. But are they grateful? I'm fed-up with the whole mob of them, and I'm jolly well never going near Combermere again!"

"You jolly well are!" grinned Bob. "And we're going to see that you do! That's why we came after you, old pippin!"

"I decline to do anything of the sort," said Bunter. "I suppose I can do what I like?"

"You suppose you can do whom you like, you mean!" grinned Bob. "But you can't, unless you leave us out of it. Look here, Bunter, as we stayed at Combermere Lodge with you, and it was partly our being there that helped you to impose on people, we feel responsible. All the bills have got to be paid. We're all going to get our people to help; but, of course, your father will have to weigh in."

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in most of all, as he's responsible for you. You can't wriggle out of it, you fat duffer; if you don't go with us you'll have to go back with a bobby's hand on your shoulder."

"Beast!"

"As for your idea of landing it all on Mauly, that chicken won't fight. Mauly may be ass enough; but we're not letting you. See?"

"You needn't mention Mauly to me! I've dropped that rotter's acquaintance," said Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Have you seen old Mauly, then?"

"The rotter passed me in his car and picked me up," said Bunter. "I explained to him how rattlers stood and pointed out to him that he was really responsible for the whole thing, and he simply called me names and kicked me out of his car."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Mauly's a beast—even worse than you beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" howled Bunter.

"Look here, I'm not going back! I'm not going home, either. My pater would have a fit if I told him about the bills! I jolly well know that he wouldn't pay them! I think you fellows might be a bit sympathetic when a fellow's up against it like I am, all through his thoughtless generosity in entertaining his friends on a lavish scale. I shall have to lie low for a bit. You can lend me some money—"

Harry Wharton rose from the grass.

"Time to get a move on," he remarked.

"Lend me—"

"Come on, Bunter! It's only a couple of miles to a railway-station."

"I'm not going to a railway-station!"

"Come on!"

"I won't!" roared Bunter. "I tell you—Yaroooooh! Leave off kicking me, Bull, you beast! I'm going, ain't I?"

And Bunter went.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Pleasant for Mr. Pilkins!

CRASH!

Parker, in the outer office at Mr. Pilkins' business establishment at Combermere, grinned.

The crash came from the inner office. It sounded as if Mr. Pilkins had kicked over a chair. No doubt he had.

For many days—ever since the crash had come at Bunter Court, in fact—Parker had been accustomed to sounds of fury from Mr. Pilkins' inner office.

The Combermere estate agent was like a bear with a sore head, only more so. The sun had gone down upon his wrath, not once, but many times. With the passing of days Mr. Pilkins' wrath had not decreased. Rather, like wine, it had improved with age.

Billy Bunter's remarkable tenancy of Combermere Lodge, re-christened Bunter Court, had left a legacy of trouble to the hapless estate agent. The noble owner of the Lodge, residing in a Swiss hotel, had been inquiring whether the house was let—an inquiry which Mr. Pilkins did not know how to answer. Certainly the house had been let; but no cash had been forthcoming, and cash was the really important consideration in the matter.

Walsingham, the butler, seemed to lay the whole blame of the transaction on

Mr. Pilkins. Mr. Pilkins, on his side, laid it on Walsingham. Both, of course, agreed in laying it on Bunter, but they agreed on nothing else.

The Combermere tradesmen—with enormous accounts still unsettled, and likely to remain unsettled—divided their attentions between Mr. Pilkins and Walsingham, not being able to lay a finger on Bunter.

Then the innumerable servants at the Lodge, whose wages were supposed to be paid by the furnished tenant, wanted to know where those wages were, and they seemed to want to know very emphatically.

Mr. Pilkins, raging, wanted to get hold of Bunter. And Bunter had vanished apparently into empty space.

Even the legal aspect of the matter was dubious. Billy Bunter, obviously now, had nothing. Could his father be sued for such enormous debts contracted by a schoolboy? Even if he were sued, and sued successfully, could he pay?

Could Bunter even be sent to "chokey" for bilking on such a scale? Could he even be lodged in a reformatory?

It was quite doubtful.

Mr. Pilkins knew what he deserved. Peine-forte-et-dure, flogging, the treadmill, and something lingering, with burning oil in it, and a few of the tortures of the Spanish Inquisition—such, in Mr. Pilkins' heated frame of mind, appeared the proper way of dealing with William George Bunter. But he had only too much reason to fear that the magistrates would not agree with him.

Crash!

Parker, the estate-agent's clerk, grinned again. This time it sounded like the inkpot in the inner office.

Mr. Pilkins seemed to be having a field-day, so to speak.

A car rumbled outside in the High Street of Combermere, and stopped at Mr. Pilkins' office. A good-looking and elegantly dressed youth walked in, and Parker jumped to attention at once at the sight of Lord Mauleverer.

"Mr. Pilkins at home—what?" asked Mauleverer.

"Yes, my lord. He's in the inner office now," said Parker.

Crash!

Another chair had been kicked over.

"By gad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "What—"

"Mr. Pilkins is a little—hem!—a little annoyed this afternoon, my lord. The way that young feller Bunter—"

"Oh, quite!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"I'll see him—I've called to speak about that young fellow Bunter."

"Yes, my lord."

Parker opened the door of the inner office.

"Lord Mauleverer, sir."

Mr. Pilkins came out. He did not bow or scrape to his lordship. He glared at him. The last time Lord Mauleverer had called at Mr. Pilkins' office the estate-agent had fairly oozed respect and deference. But Mr. Pilkins was in a changed mood now. Mauly, certainly, had had nothing to do with that unfortunate tenancy of Combermere Lodge. But it was through Lord Mauleverer that Mr. Pilkins had first come into contact with Bunter. Hence the glare he gave his amiable lordship.

"Oh! You!" he snorted.

"Little me," assented Mauleverer.

"Do you know where that scoundrel is?"

"Eh?"

"That villain!"

"What?"

"That bilk!" roared Mr. Pilkins.

"Oh, gad!"
"Hundreds of pounds!" howled Mr. Pilkins. "Hundreds! Where is he? You are his schoolfellow at Greyfriars! Do you know where he is?"

"My dear chap—"
"Bilked! Bilked by a schoolboy! But I'll make him squirm! I'll make him wriggle! I'll—"

"Dear man," said Lord Mauleverer cheerily, "calmness—calmness, old chap! What's the good of fireworks? Besides, I've looked in to arrange the matter."

"What?"

"Can't have people bilked by a Greyfriars man," said Lord Mauleverer, shaking his head. "Besides, I feel responsible, in a way. That fat idiot would never have seen Combermere Lodge but for me. It all came about through my feelin' tired one afternoon and gettin' that duffer to look at the dashed furnished house for me. Of course, a fellow couldn't help feelin' tired—it's a tirin' life altogether. But there you are—I feel bound to see the matter through. Any objections?"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Pilkins. "Oh! None—none at all! If—if your lordship takes the responsibility—"

"I don't know about that. I've buzzed along to pay what's owing, that's all. I feel bound to do that. I've kicked Bunter—I felt I was entitled to that much. But—"

"I hope you kicked him hard, my lord!"

"Fairly hard," said Mauleverer. "I remember he gave a fearful howl. I left him yellin' somewhere in Hampshire yesterday. But he will have to turn up again at Greyfriars for the new term in a week or two, and I don't want a bobby comin' there after him. If you've got a bobby on tap, turn him off. Bunter's not really a rogue, you know—only a born idiot and a blinkin' chump and a thunderin' ass, and a thumpin' dummy, and some other things like that. May I take it that the bobby will be sent home to roost if I square the jolly old bills?"

Mr. Pilkins gasped.

"Anything your lordship likes—anything your lordship desires! I shall be only too happy to meet your lordship's wishes in every way! Your lordship has only to command."

"You're a jolly obligin' chap, Pilkins! It's a pleasure to do business with you," said Lord Mauleverer cordially. "I've talked the matter over with my guardian. He jibbed a bit, but I got round him. Anyhow, I've got plenty of dubs, so I should have played up, anyhow; but as it stands, my guardian has given me a blank cheque to fill in to the required amount. I'm here to find out what the amount is. I'm afraid it's givin' you an awful lot of trouble, Mr. Pilkins," added his lordship considerably.

"Not at all, my lord!" gasped Mr. Pilkins. "I am entirely at your lordship's orders! I will telephone to the police-station and tell them that the matter is now closed."

"Oh, good!"

"Of course, I should have been extremely regretful to take extreme measures in dealing with a—a young gentleman who had the honour to be a schoolfellow of your lordship's."

"Oh, of course!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm sure you'd have gone as easy as possible with Bunter; you look a good-natured chap."

"Yes—yes—quite! I—I—I should have gone very easy—as easy as—as possible!" gasped Mr. Pilkins. Parker



"As you won't jump out, old bean," said Lord Mauleverer genially, "I am goin' to kick you out! Like that!" "Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. "And like that—" "Whoooop!" The Owl of the Remove alighted from the car in a great hurry. Lord Mauleverer landed a final kick as he went, and Bunter went over on his hands and knees in the roadway. (See Chapter 8.)

winked at a bluebottle on the office wall, remembering what Mr. Pilkins had been saying about Bunter for the last week. "I—I dare say he is—is quite an estimable young gentleman, only—a little thoughtless. Boys will be boys! Ha, ha!" Mr. Pilkins could afford to laugh now.

"Yas," assented Mauleverer. "I suppose I'd better run up to the Lodge in the car and see Walsingham. He will have the tradesmen's bills—what? And your little account, and so on—shall we get to business?"

And they got to business, to the immense satisfaction of Mr. Pilkins. And then Lord Mauleverer rolled away in his car to Combermere Lodge, leaving Mr. Pilkins rubbing his hands with joy.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Order of the Boot!

"I—I—I say, you fellows—"

"Get on!"

"Beast!"

"Get a move on, Bunter!"

"Yah!"

"Kick him, Bob! You've got the biggest feet!"

"Yarooooooh!"

Billy Bunter moved on.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked with him, grinning. It was a pleasant afternoon, and the Combermere road was sunny and bright; but William George Bunter was not enjoying the walk,

The Famous Five had guarded him carefully on the way back to Combermere. At the inn where they had passed the night Bunter had risen early, for once—but he found that Bob Cherry had risen earlier! At every railway-station where they had changed Bunter had attempted to bolt, and had made the attempt in vain. The Bunter-hunters had lost their quarry once, but they were not losing him again!

And so they had arrived at Combermere Station, where Bunter alighted in the very lowest of spirits. Now they were walking up to Combermere Lodge, where once the Owl of the Remove had strutted and swanked as the lord of "Bunter Court." Deeply and intensely did Bunter desire never to see again that scene of his former greatness. But there was no help for it—he had to go.

At a snail's pace the hapless Owl of the Remove limped along the sunny road, and he stopped when the gates of Combermere Lodge came in sight. But Bob Cherry's boot restarted him, and he rolled on again.

"I say, you fellows, I—I'm not going in, you know!" groaned Bunter. "I—I—I can't, you know! I tell you it's no good telegraphing to my father to come and see me through! He wouldn't come!"

"The matter's got to be settled," said Harry Wharton quietly. "We're all going to help. Walsingham's a reasonable man, and he will talk it over and see what can be done. If the bills are

paid I've no doubt they'll overlook your potty trick of locking them in the wine-cellar. They'll be glad to get their money."

"I keep on telling you that the bills will all be paid in—in time!" howled Bunter.

"And how, you fat duffer?"

"I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"What!"

"Several postal-orders, in fact. It will be all right."

"You silly owl!" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"And how many postal-orders will you need to make up some hundreds of pounds?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"That's all right! I'm expecting quite a lot of postal-orders—from my titled relations, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I keep on telling you it's all right. Now, chuck it!" said Bunter, stopping again. "I can't see that man Walsingham. He's a cheeky fellow, and it's beneath my dignity to argue with him. You understand?"

"Quite! Get on!"

"Look here—Yaroooooh!"

Bunter got on again. Really, it seemed useless to assure the Famous Five that it was all right. In answer to all Bunter's frantic assurances, they still urged him on towards Combermere Lodge, and assisted him with the business end of a boot when he lagged.

Bunter groaned dismally as they reached the gates. The lodge-keeper let them in, with a curious look at Bunter. The days when Bunter had tossed him pound notes for opening the gates were over. Bunter had no pound notes—not that he would have tossed about his own pound notes had he possessed any. The Famous Five walked Bunter up the drive, leaving the lodge-keeper staring after the party.

Bunter dodged to the right and dodged to the left. A shove from Bob Cherry and a kick from Johnny Bull kept him to the path. There was no escape.

The party walked on to the house. A handsome car was standing on the drive, and Bunter blinked at it. He remembered having seen that handsome car the day before.

"I say, that looks like Mauly's car," he said.

"Come on!"

"If Mauly's here, I don't want to see him. He turned me down in the most unfeeling way, and I shall decline to speak to him next term at Greyfriars."

"There won't be any next term at Greyfriars for you, fathead, if this affair isn't fixed up," said Nugent. "Do you think you can go back to Greyfriars with a bobby after you?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"You're stopping, Bunter!" said Johnny Bull, drawing back his foot.

Billy Bunter rolled on again.

"I say, you fellows, you can see that I don't want to meet Mauly; and I'm sure that that's Mauly's car. I'll tell you what—you fellows go in and see if Mauly's there, and—and I'll wait for you here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I—I wouldn't bolt, you know—"

"The boltfulness would be terrific. I think, my esteemed and fabricating Bunter!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Kim on!" chuckled Bob.

Billy Bunter was marched up the steps. Wharton glanced at the chauffeur waiting with the car; it was Lord Mauleverer's chauffeur. The captain of the Remove wondered what Mauly was doing at Combermere Lodge. Evidently he was there, as his chauffeur and his car were waiting.

Walsingham, the butler, opened the great door of Combermere Lodge, and surprise dawned in his well-groomed face at the sight of the Greyfriars fellows with Billy Bunter.

To the Famous Five he was deferentially civil, but his eyes glinted at the Owl of the Remove for a second. Apparently, Walsingham had not forgotten his imprisonment in the wine-cellar with Mr. Pilkins; he was not likely to forget an incident like that so easily as Bunter. Bunter blinked at him uneasily. He would not have been surprised if Walsingham had taken him by the collar; he had given up expecting proper deference from the servants at Combermere Lodge.

But the Combermere butler did not so far forget himself. He bowed the Famous Five into the spacious hall of Combermere, taking no notice of Billy Bunter, whose commands he had once

been deferentially eager to anticipate and obey.

"We've brought him back, Walsingham," said Harry Wharton.

"So I see, sir!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter! Now we've got the fat duffer here," went on Harry. "We want to go into the whole thing. Every shilling is going to be paid; and we want to get at the total first, you see, and then make arrangements. That's why we're here now."

Walsingham smiled.

"You young gentlemen are not responsible," he said, "and the sum total is enormous."

"It's got to be faced," said Harry. "We're going to put it to our people, and they will all help. Bunter's father must be fetched here, to begin with, and then—"

"He won't come!" wailed Bunter. "He won't pay anything! I keep on telling you that he won't!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Gentlemen," said the Combermere butler, "I have some good news for you. You need take no further trouble about the matter. Lord Mauleverer called here this afternoon—"

"I say, you fellows, I decline—"

"Dry up, Bunter!"

"Beast!"

"His lordship is still here," said Walsingham. "He has very kindly and generously taken the whole matter upon himself. He has settled with Mr. Pilkins, and has been kind enough to go through the accounts with me, and settle the amounts due."

"Oh!"

"In the circumstances, as his lordship has done me the honour to ask it as a favour, I have consented to overlook that person's conduct." Walsingham's eyes glinted once more at Bunter, whom he thus scornfully alluded to as a person. "Nothing will be said either by me or by Mr. Pilkins about the incident of the wine-cellar, gentlemen. We are bound to do everything in our power to oblige so generous a young gentleman as Lord Mauleverer."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob.

The chums of the Remove looked at one another.

Undoubtedly, it was great news. It relieved the juniors of the very serious liability they had felt bound to take over, and it was just like Mauleverer. Billy Bunter's fat face beamed.

He was clear now.

No longer was he haunted by the dread of a constable's hand tapping him on the shoulder. No longer did he quake at the prospect of an interview with his pater. His appeal to Lord Mauleverer had not, after all, been in vain. Mauly had kicked him out of his car, it was true, but he had played up, and after all, a kicking more or less did not matter very much to William George Bunter. He had collected innumerable kickings in the course of his fat career.

"Begad! You fellows, what?"

Lord Mauleverer came across the hall from a morning-room with a cheery smile on his face.

"Mauly, old man—"

"Jolly glad to see you chaps," said Mauleverer, shaking hands with the Famous Five one after another. "You seem to have had rather an excitin' time here, from what I hear."

"I say, Mauly—" began Bunter.

"Oh, you blow away, Bunter!"

"Dear old pal—"

"Blow away!"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

(Continued on page 28.)

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boy assistant,
Jack Drake.**



"Now We Sha'n't Be Long!"

WITHOUT waiting for more, Ferrers Locke dived ahead of Pyecroft, and began tearing across the open veldt.

Even as he was speaking, a shadow had seemingly detached itself from the myriad others cast by the boulders and bushes—a shadow that had quickly resolved itself into a human figure—and, with just one swift, backward glance, had flitted across Locke's angle of vision, and disappeared again.

But this time Locke was not going to be beaten. Pyecroft, tearing along after the detective, saw him vanish round a huge boulder, and, as he drew near, the inspector heard a sharp cry of triumph.

"Got you this time, my pippin!" Locke's voice rang out into the silence in an exultant shout.

"Oh, you're showing your teeth, are you?"

Pyecroft redoubled his pace as sounds of a fierce struggle came to him. He swept round the angle of rock like a human whirlwind, to fall back as quickly with a gasp, as two figures reeled drunkenly towards him, tripped, and plunged headlong to the ground.

There followed a sharp, fierce struggle, and then Locke's voice again rang out:

"Lend a hand here, Pyecroft—quick, man!"

The inspector sprang forward. Only with difficulty was he able to make out Locke's figure in the whirling mass of arms and legs.

He pounced on to the other, who was momentarily uppermost. There followed another sharp tussle, dramatically brief, but not without its uncomfortable side, so far as Pyecroft was concerned.

Then both Locke and the Yard man drew erect, breathless and perspiring, while the mysterious stranger lay panting on the ground, his hands held together behind his back by a pair of handcuffs neatly clicked round his wrists by Inspector Pyecroft.

"Yank him up!" snapped Locke. "Let's see who he is, anyway!"

Pyecroft sprang forward. The man, who had fought madly, seemed little the worse for his encounter. But he was obviously spent, and offered no resistance as the inspector dragged him erect.

Locke stepped forward, and flashed his electric torch full into the man's face. Then both he and the Yard man gave united gasps of astonishment.

"Stephen Jarrad!"
There was a moment's tense silence.

Stephen Jarrad turned a white, haggard face towards his captors—a face from which two dark, glittering eyes burned in sunken, shadowed sockets, like the dying embers of a fire.

He was panting for breath, and his face was bathed in perspiration, which trickled down from his dark hair on to his torn collar. His jacket, ripped in several places, hung like a tattered remnant from his stooping shoulders, his tie had been literally torn clean away, and his shirt was wide open at the neck.

Altogether he presented a pitiable spectacle of mingled misery and defiance.

"Well," he said thickly, "now you've got me, I suppose you're satisfied!"

Locke gazed at him thoughtfully. The detective's brows were drawn together in a perplexed frown. He seemed strangely disappointed.

But Pyecroft was exultant. His eyes were gleaming triumphantly as he faced the man whose wrists he had so neatly clamped with the handcuffs.

"Very well satisfied indeed, Mr. Stephen Jarrad!" he exclaimed. "But we are still waiting to hear what you've done with the contents of Daft Dave's ebony box!"

Stephen Jarrad started back as if he had been shot.

"Daft Dave's ebony box?" he repeated blankly.

"Now, my good man, it's absolutely no use your trying to pull off the baby-innocent stunt on us this time!" protested Pyecroft sarcastically. "It simply won't work. We want the contents of that box, and you're going to hand 'em over, quick and lively, before we take you back to Jo'burg and charge you—"

"Charge me?" Stephen Jarrad's voice broke

WHO'S WHO.

FERRERS LOCKE, the world-famous detective, who is engaged in solving the mystery surrounding the tragic end of **SIR MERTON CARR**, a South African mining magnate, who has been murdered, uncle of

GERALD BRISTOW—alias Arthur the Dude—an escaped convict, who has made his way over to Johannesburg to seek the treasure of the Golden Pyramid.

GRIGGS, the valet at Sir Merton's house at Parktown, a suburb of Johannesburg.

STEPHEN JARRAD, the late baronet's private secretary, who has mysteriously disappeared, thereby leading the Jo'burg police to assume that he is guilty of the murder.

DAFT DAVE, a local half-wit, who apparently knew the true facts of the murder, but dies before he can make a full confession. He helps in the quest, however, by directing Locke to seek the "black box under the kloof at Devil's Elbow."

JACK DRAKE, Locke's capable boy assistant.

INSPECTOR PYECROFT, a Scotland Yard detective.

INSPECTOR VANE, a member of the South African Police Force.

The treasure of the Golden Pyramid supplies the motive of the murder of Sir Merton, for it turns out to be a rich asbestos reef in the region of Great Zimbabwe, Southern Rhodesia. Before visiting the place Locke, Drake, and Pyecroft make for Devil's Elbow in search of the black box. The box is found, but its contents have been removed. Suddenly Locke sees a figure of a man who is evidently watching them. The detective closes with him, but the fellow breaks free, and is lost in the darkness. Locke, scouting round, sees him again. "Jove, Pyecroft!" he exclaims. "Look there!" Before Pyecroft can reply the detective darts away.

(Now read on.)

in ere Locke, who had now stepped forward, could intervene. "What are you going to charge me with? The murder of Sir Merton Carr, I suppose? Well, you can get on with it—you hear? You can take me back and charge me—you can send me for trial, you can sentence me to death, and you can jolly well hang me, and I'll thank you for doing it! I'm sick to death of the whole business, anyway, and I'll be glad to take my ticket out of it for good and all!"

"Oh, search the blighter!" snapped Pycroft, darting forward impatiently.

"Yes, search me!" exclaimed Jarrad excitedly. "Come on—I don't mind! You're welcome to all you may find! I tell you I know nothing about any ebony box. It's the first time I've ever heard of the darned thing!"

"That for a tale!" sneered Pycroft, running his hands swiftly and methodically through the other's clothing.

"It's true, I tell you!" shouted Jarrad, appealing now to Locke. "I've just said I was running away. I couldn't sponge on the mater any longer. She'd have been found out, though I'd only turned up two days ago and begged her to keep quiet. So I started to trek for Pretoria, and intended to cut through to the farmlands beyond Zeerust. Got a good chance of losing myself way back there in the backveldt."

"Why were you running away, if you were innocent of Sir Merton's murder?" asked Locke quietly.

Pycroft had now desisted in his search, having found nothing at all.

"What was the use of sticking it out, anyway?" countered Jarrad hopelessly. "The case was all against me—I could do nothing—I had no proof—"

"Neither had we," came Locke's startling rejoinder.

Jarrad fell back with a gasp. Pycroft stared at the detective as if he had taken leave of his senses.

"Well, of all the blamed fools, Locke—" began the inspector.

But Locke waved him aside with a smile.

"It's all right, Pycroft," he said. "I know what I'm doing. We had a case, of sorts, against Jarrad. But it was purely superficial, as you very well know. Stop and think for yourself, man! What was it that first put the idea into our heads that Jarrad had committed the crime? His contradictory statements on the morning after! But the man was shaken up—his nerves were all to pieces. He realised that, of everyone in the household, he was the most likely to be suspected. He knew nothing of Bristow, or Daft Dave, or the Golden Pyramid. And then, while we were still busy sifting things out, Jarrad accidentally stumbles across the dagger, hidden in his own room—hidden there by the person who committed the murder, for the very obvious reason that he wanted to lay a false trail. It was child's play, man! But Jarrad was overwrought, he was in a blue funk. And so he bolted, and so promptly centred suspicion upon him until it became almost a moral certainty. But, just the same, I tell you, Pycroft, we have no case against Stephen Jarrad, and I tell you that, here in his presence, because I know, and you know, too, that it's the stark truth. And fair play's a jewel any day and any where!"

Pycroft stood as if spellbound.

"Yes, but—but what's he want to behave so mysteriously for?" he spluttered at last. "After all, we're not to blame. His whole conduct—"

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"His conduct has been criminally foolish," agreed Locke. "But it's also been amazingly human, in the circumstances."

He turned towards Jarrad now, who had stood listening in sheer amazement to what Locke was saying.

"You've heard my view, Jarrad," said the detective quietly. "I'm playing fair with you because I believe you're a white man. And you're going to play fair with me. You're going to answer my next question straightforwardly, without fear, without prevarication. Did you or did you not kill Sir Merton Carr?"

Jarrad flung back his head.

"I did not, as Heaven's my sole judge!" he declared solemnly.

"That's good enough for me," said Locke promptly. "And it's good enough for you, too, Pycroft. And now I think we'll hustle back home. But first take those durbies off Jarrad. They're most uncomfortable things at the best of times—"

"But—but the ebony box—" began Pycroft.

"I'm afraid," answered Locke slowly, "that the clouded moon is to blame. There were two figures floating around here! One was Stephen Jarrad, and the other—"

"Gug-good heavens!" gasped the inspector. "The other was our man, then!"

Locke nodded.

"And he's got away with the contents of the box—if there were any contents," he replied.

"But—but who the thunder was he, anyway?" protested Pycroft. "That elusive scoundrel Bristow—"

But Locke shook his head.

"I'd know Arthur the Dude anywhere, even in the dark," he returned. "And I'm willing to stake my reputation it was not he. I'm afraid, Pycroft, old man, that I cannot answer your question at present."

"You—you mean to say that you don't know—"

"I mean to say that there's a third party in this little game of hide-and-seek," murmured Locke. "A third party, whose identity we've never even guessed at so far. But come along, Pycroft, time's creeping on, and I'm tired!"

They wended their way to the car, Locke quiet and strangely indifferent to the inspector's obvious amazement, Jarrad exhausted, but immeasurably relieved and feeling a queer sense of warm gratitude towards the great-hearted British detective.

They reached the Parktown house just as dawn was beginning to tint the eastern sky.

Jack Drake was already up, and with him was Superintendent Vane.

They were plainly amazed to find Stephen Jarrad with Locke and Pycroft, but there was something else which seemed to be occupying their thoughts just now.

Jack came forward as Locke walked quietly up the drive towards the house. The detective's young assistant seemed consumed with pent-up excitement.

"Guv'nor," he whispered, drawing Locke aside, "we've been waiting for you! There may be nothing in it, of course, but—but—well, you remember Griggs?"

"Griggs?" repeated Locke slowly. "Oh, you mean Sir Merton's valet! Oh, yes. A very curious chap Griggs, a queer card if ever there was one. But what about him, anyway?"

"He's disappeared—vanished!" exclaimed Jack tensely.

Locke stopped dead and stared at his young assistant for fully a minute.

Then he nodded his head very slowly, and a queer gleam crept into his eyes. "Good!" he said at last. "Very good indeed! That's just what I've been waiting for! Now we sha'n't be long!"

The Burnt Newspaper I

BOTH Jack Drake and Inspector Pycroft stared at Ferraers Locke in speechless amazement.

Always something of a human enigma, Locke had never, perhaps, behaved in quite such a mystifying manner as he had done throughout this present case, and his latest statement had left them positively breathless.

"Excuse me, Locke, old man," said Pycroft, in a strangely calm voice, "but would you mind saying that again?"

"With pleasure, old fruit." The detective seemed to be enjoying the situation immensely. "Jack has just told me that Griggs, the valet, has disappeared, and my reply to that altogether splendid, if not exactly unexpected, piece of news was 'That's just what I've been waiting for!'"

A tense silence followed his words, during which both Pycroft and Jack glared at the famous detective sulphurously.

"Huh!" grunted Pycroft at last. "I suppose you will have your little joke about—"

"I'm afraid, Pycroft, that there's something seriously wrong with your supposer," returned Locke, with mock gravity. "I assure you I am not joking in the least. Griggs has very conveniently obliged us by disappearing—By the way, Jack, I take it you're certain on that point?" His tone changed momentarily to one of sudden anxiety.

"Absolutely," nodded Jack. "We've searched the house from top—"

"Good!" interrupted Locke, smiling again. "And now, I think, we can get down to work in real earnest."

"Well, that's interesting, anyway," growled Pycroft. "And what, may I ask, is the first item on this mysterious programme?"

"Now, look here, Pycroft," said Locke, serious for once. "There's nothing whatever to get ratty about, and I'm not pulling your leg or anybody else's leg, either, for that matter."

"There's a whole heap of tangled threads in this astounding case, and we've had our nerves frayed badly in the process of disentangling them. I've just said I'm glad Griggs has disappeared, simply because it throws open the final road which will, I firmly believe, lead us to the conclusion of the whole affair."

"But I'm afraid I can't explain anything more just now—you know I hate making definite statements until I am quite sure of my ground."

"But I promise that you shall be in at the death, and that everything will be explained as quickly as I can manage it."

Both Jack Drake and the inspector realised, from the tone of Locke's voice, that he was in deadly earnest now; they also realised that it would be futile to expect any further enlightenment, at this stage, anyway, from him.

They were frankly puzzled and could not in the least follow his train of thought, and so they did the only possible thing in the circumstances—they decided to leave everything to him.

Locke's first action was to go at once to the servants' quarters, where he made

a thorough and painstaking search of the room till lately occupied by the absent valet, Griggs.

He found that Griggs had taken practically all his belongings with him. But there were signs of a fire having been lighted in the grate, and as the weather at this particular time was distinctly sultry—the glass stood somewhere in the region of 80 in the shade—Locke pounced upon the remains of the fire with the air of one who is on the verge of a highly interesting discovery.

Ten minutes later he was busy endeavouring to piece together some charred fragments of what appeared to be a torn newspaper cutting. It was a ticklish task, and when it was completed there were some disappointing gaps which made the reading of the printed lines a hazardous affair.

As Jack Drake and Pycroft looked over the great detective's shoulder, they saw a couple of headlines and perhaps half a paragraph of print, badly charred but fairly intelligible:

.... EASE FROM ONEMOOR

.... RIOUS SNEAK TH T
LIBE GAIN

.... Hedger, the noto ief, who was described by Mr. Justice Harwood eing an habit iminal of the most incurable type, was rel onemoor Prison yest fter serv tence of two ye

"I think that's pretty plain, guv'nor," murmured Jack. "It's a newspaper paragraph concerning the release from Stonemoor Prison of a chap called Hedger, a notorious sneak-thief, who was described by the judge as being an habitual crook of the most incurable type—"

"Yes, all that is clear enough," nodded Locke. "But I wish I could have got at the date of this newspaper. Unfortunately, the rest of the cutting has been burnt, otherwise there might have been a clue of sorts—"

"Should say it's pretty ancient, though," cut in Pycroft thoughtfully. "Meantersay, it'd be at least some months old. Also, it's an English newspaper, not one printed in this country—there's a subtle difference in the type faces and the setting up of the pages."

Locke nodded. "You're quite right, Pycroft," he said. "This is an English newspaper, and by the style of type used I should say it's the 'Daily Radio'—"

Seized with a new idea, he picked up the charred fragments gingerly and turned them over, rearranging them so

as to get some sort of idea of the print on the obverse side.

"It's a dodge that sometimes works, you know," he explained. "When the date's missing, you can sometimes find a scrap of news or other information on the back of the cutting by which an approximate period could be fixed, and— Ah, here we are!"

He smoothed the paper out with elaborate care and pointed to several lines of blurred type.

"This is a part of a critique of a new play produced at the Tribune Theatre, London, and called 'The Snare.' Jack, you're the dramatic enthusiast of this little syndicate, so perhaps you can enlighten us as to the date when this play was first produced?"

Jack, whose face had now lighted up, nodded and smiled. He was an incurable theatre "fan" and "first-nighter" when in London, and what he did not know about plays and players was scarcely worth troubling about.

"The Snare," he said, rattling off the information like a parrot, "was brought over to London from the States and put on at the Tribune by Modern Play Productions, Ltd., and the first night was Tuesday, January 4—"

"That's barely three months ago," cut in Pycroft.

"Matter of fact, we were coming across the Atlantic just then, on our way to Cape Town," nodded Locke.

"But what's all this got to do with the case in hand?" asked Jack suddenly.

"Lend a hand here, Pycroft! Quick!" The Inspector sprang forward. Only with difficulty was he able to make out Ferrers Locke's figure in the whirling mass of arms and legs. (See page 21.)

"A whole lot, my boy," smiled Locke. "This man Hedger, the sneak-thief, and Griggs, the valet, are one and the same person!"

"Jupiter!" gasped Pycroft. "How on earth did you tumble to that?"

"I knew it almost as soon as I first set eyes on Griggs," said Locke quietly. "As a matter of fact, I happened to be present in court when Hedger got his last sentence, and I distinctly remember the judge uttering the very words reported in this newspaper cutting. Also, as I think you know, my memory for faces is rather good."

"And—and you mean to say that you recognised this fellow Griggs as easily as all that—after a lapse of two years?" gasped Pycroft.

"I recognised him by one thing," answered Locke. "His appearance had changed, of course—for example, he has grown a heavy moustache. But the man Hedger had a curious, arrow-shaped scar behind his left ear, and if you have taken the trouble at any time to have a look at Griggs, you will have noticed that same scar in precisely the same position. Also there's the slight cast in his left eye—"

"Glory be!" muttered Jack, in open admiration. "What a memory you've got, guv'nor!"

"It's a perfectly ordinary memory, Jack," answered Locke quietly. "You, or Pycroft, or anyone else possessed of ordinary intelligence, could do just as

well—it's purely a matter of training. As I have so often tried to impress upon you, there's nothing magical about detective work. It's all a matter of concentration, of making proper and logical use of one's reasoning powers and one's observation."

That was always Locke's way. His worst enemy could never accuse the great detective of conceit. To Locke, his extraordinary powers were the most natural things in the world, and he invariably maintained that anyone could do as well as he, provided he trained himself along the right lines.

But Locke's ingrained modesty caused him to overlook that one additional factor in his success—that faculty of vision, of intuitive imagination and constructive fancy which alone set him high above most others in his chosen profession. In this respect, Ferrers Locke was a genius; and, like most geniuses, was sublimely unaware of the fact.

The great detective concluded his search of Griggs' room at last, and then announced his intention of going to bed.

"But—but what about following up Griggs?" protested Pycroft.

"Oh, he's all right," laughed Locke. "To-morrow we'll make one or two inquiries, just to get confirmation of what has already become my theory—namely, that Griggs has made a bee-line for the North—for Rhodesia—"

"Rhodesia?" echoed Jack. "But—but how do you know—"

"I don't know," cut in Locke. "But I'm willing to bet you any amount that that is precisely what friend Griggs has done. It's only a question of making use of your imagination, my boy."

"Just think for a moment. We've just proved that Griggs and Hedger are one and the same. We know that Hedger, the sneak-thief, was released from Stone-moor Prison a few months ago. We also know that Bristow made his escape from that self-same prison shortly after Hedger's release.

"Those things are facts. Now for theories. Bristow and Hedger were in the same prison. It is conceivable—in fact, probable—that they may have worked in the same gang, that they may have struck up, in a secret way, a sort of friendship together.

"Assuming all that to be true, it is but a step to the next theory. Bristow may have confided in Hedger, or Hedger may have wormed odd details out of Bristow, concerning the crime for which Bristow was imprisoned. In this way Hedger may have picked up, in fragments, the whole story of the Golden Pyramid, the secret treasure of Devil's Spruit, and so on.

"Another step. Bristow, learning that Hedger was shortly to get his release, and knowing that he—Bristow—was 'in' for a good long stretch, might, in

his desperation, have suggested a scheme to Hedger—a scheme whereby the latter, on his release, might engineer Bristow's escape, after which he and Hedger would perhaps go fifty-fifty in the little matter of the Golden Pyramid."

"Gee-whizz!" gasped Pycroft. "You should give up plain, ordinary detective work, Locke, and go in for writing mystery novels instead!"

"There's a good deal in what the gov'nor says, though," said Jack seriously. "It may be only theory, but it rings astonishingly true."

"To carry the idea a bit further," went on Locke, "what was to prevent Hedger, on his release, from double-crossing Bristow and deciding to work the whole stunt on his own account? We know something of Hedger's character. We know that he is a mean sneak-thief, an habitual criminal of the most incurable type, to quote the words of the judge who last sentenced him. It's just about the kind of rotten, back-sliding thing a man of his type would do. Besides, what is he doing in Johannesburg at all, and in Sir Merton Carr's household of all places?"

"Then—then you think that Hedger, or Griggs as we know him over here, must have set out to worm his way into Sir Merton's service for the sole purpose of getting hold of the contents of that old biscuit-tin?" said Pycroft.

"I think it is a feasible, even an extremely probable, fact," answered Locke. "And where does Bristow come in?" asked Jack.

"He doesn't come in at all," returned the detective, with a dry smile. "That's just his trouble. He escaped from Stone-moor shortly after Hedger's release, and you will remember, Jack, that when Bristow came to me he said something about a man having double-crossed him. It all fits in like the parts of a jig-saw puzzle.

"Bristow has trailed his man across the Atlantic and came here with the intention of confronting him, or, at any rate, of preventing him from getting the secret of the Golden Pyramid from Sir Merton. And then, of course, the murder of Sir Merton turned the whole scene into a public place, and Bristow had to hold his hand—"

"Look here, Locke," Pycroft strode forward now and looked straight into the private detective's eyes. "Who the merry dickens did murder Sir Merton Carr?"

A slow, shadowy smile played around Ferrers Locke's lips.

"It wasn't Jarrad," he said. "And it wasn't— But, no! I don't think I'd better commit myself further at this stage."

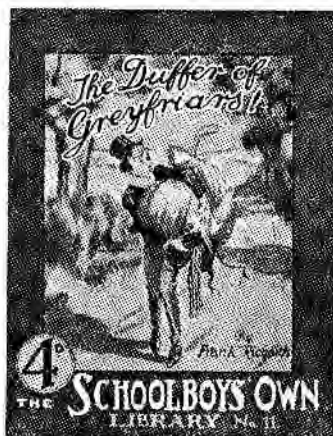
"But do you know who did it?" persisted Jack Drake.

"I think so," answered Locke, still smiling. "But until I've proved it finally I'm not going to say any more. But I'll tell you this much. Bristow and Griggs have so far eluded each other—or, rather, Griggs has done the eluding. Sooner or later they are bound to meet. And when they do—well, we'll have to be darned quick if we're going to avert another tragedy, that's all!"

In Terrible Peril!

IN deciding to take no further action until the morning, Ferrers Locke was not, as his companions at first imagined, wilfully wasting valuable time or permitting one of the principal suspects in this altogether amazing drama to make a clean get-away.

Locke's theory had been formulated



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on the basis that Griggs, alias Hedger, was playing a deep game, and that that game was very intimately connected with the secret of the old Boer's fortune and therefore bound up with the mystery of Sir Merton Carr's murder.

But, since it was, at present, little more than a theory, and there was no real, tangible proof on which to take action, Ferrers Locke had resolved on a wise strategy in permitting Griggs to go where he pleased, the detective shrewdly believing that, by so doing, the ex-convict valet would inevitably lead him and his two colleagues to the final stage of the case—in other words, to Zimbabwe, and in this way himself supply the as yet missing evidence required to effect Griggs' arrest.

Locke also knew that, even though Griggs intended to make for Rhodesia, the man could not possibly get away from Johannesburg until the following day, since there were only three trains a week to Bulawayo, and the last one had left the day before.

As to the means by which Griggs had obtained the necessary information about the locality of the asbestos reef, Locke had frankly to confess to himself that he had no real information; but he sagely guessed that the fact that Griggs had been run into by both Locke and Jack Drake in the most frequent and unexpected places at the Parktown house, in itself supplied a good and reliable source of information.

Griggs had been here, there, and everywhere, often appearing as if out of the very air itself.

There had been the instance of the fight in Locke's own bed-room that night, when Bristow had attempted to ransack Locke's suitcase in quest of the clues to Piet de Jongh's treasure.

In that case alone, as Locke very well knew, Griggs had made a most timely appearance, suggestive of the fact that he must, indeed, have expected some such event to take place.

And on more than one occasion Locke had abruptly left the room in which he had been working to find that Griggs was but a yard or so away along the passage.

It was obvious to Locke that Griggs had been carrying on an elaborate system of spying, by which, most probably, he had picked up odds and ends of information without appearing to do so, and had finally strung them together.

Moreover, there were the newspaper reports of the murder and the subsequent investigations, in themselves a mine of information to the valet, when it was remembered that he was already well primed with the main facts concerning the Golden Pyramid and its secret.

"He's a most ingenious scoundrel!" murmured Locke as he retired to rest that night. "Throughout the whole of this case he has succeeded in throwing dust in the eyes of everyone, in behaving in the most elusive fashion. And even now he's got away with it. But I rather fancy he's on his last lap this time."

Locke was up betimes next morning, to find a telegram awaiting him.

The night before, after Jack and Pycroft had already retired, Locke had put through an urgent inquiry to police headquarters, asking them to have a watch kept on all railway-stations and other means of exit from the city.

And now the police's reply had come. "Man answering to your description," ran the message, "boarded south-bound train at Park Station at 11.25 last night. Took out single ticket for Fourteen Streams."

Locke smiled, and passed the message on to Jack Drake and Pycroft.

"It's quite all right," he said, noticing their puzzled looks. "It only means that Griggs probably got the wind-up on finding that there was no direct train to Bulawayo until to-day, and thereupon decided to get clear of the town at any cost."

"The train he has taken is the Cape express, via Fourteen Streams and Kimberley. Griggs will alight at Fourteen Streams, stay there till the ordinary Rhodesian mail comes up from Cape Town, and then re-book."

"It means a delay for him, being the longest route to his destination, but it makes no real difference, and besides, it gives us a better chance."

A few hours later Ferrers Locke, returning from a visit to the town, announced that they would start almost immediately for Bulawayo by aeroplane.

"But why aeroplane?" asked Pycroft, who had a rooted dislike of travelling by air. "There's a train to-night."

"Too slow," said Locke. "Besides, from inquiries I've been able to make this morning, there's good reason to believe that Bristow has already made a start; in fact, he's probably half-way there by now."

"My hat!" exclaimed Jack. "Then he must have succeeded in deciphering that letter which he took from me! He's been pretty slick."

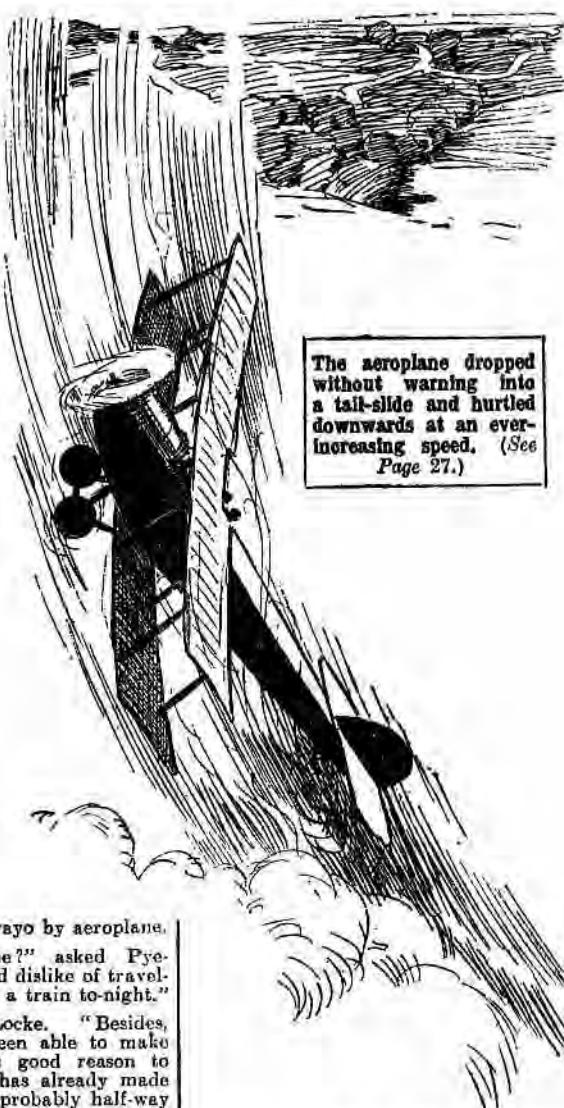
"Arthur the Dude always was 'pretty slick,'" smiled Locke. "He's an amazingly clever man, and it's a thousand pities he never turned his undoubted talents to more honest uses. However, that's all by the way. We're off by aeroplane at once, and if you, Pycroft, are afraid of a dose of air-sickness—"

"Gr-r-r-h!" snorted the inspector. "Air-sickness be blowed! I'll be right there in half a jiffy!"

Locke turned away to hide the smile that crossed his lips. The famous private detective knew his Pycroft, and could always be relied upon to get round him in the most adroit manner.

An hour later the journey had commenced, and soon the forest of magnificent buildings that comprised Johannesburg was left far behind, and they were soaring over a vast expanse of barren, sun-scorched veldt, with the vague outlines of towering mountains, set in a mist of blue and gold, rising up on almost every hand.

In due course they reached Mafeking, on the edge of the great Bechuanaland desert, and here they broke the journey, to spend the night at one of the prin-



The aeroplane dropped without warning into a tail-slide and hurtled downwards at an ever-increasing speed. (See Page 27.)

cipal hotels in this tiny yet world-famous town.

But they had resumed again almost before the first red rim of the African sun had appeared over the horizon and were speeding away over countless miles of bleak, scrubby land with great patches of grey-white sand flashing past at intervals, and always, in the distance, the long line of blue and gold mountain ranges.

To Jack Drake it was the experience of a lifetime, and when at last they crossed the border that separated the Union of South Africa from Rhodesia, the boy detective's enthusiasm was at fever pitch.

Never had he seen such wonderful changes of scenery in so short a space of time, such an ever-moving panorama of mighty, rugged mountains, great table-lands, vast undulating stretches of utterly barren and apparently lifeless veldt, mile upon mile of arid desert sands, and finally, the glorious, vivid green of Rhodesia's fields and meadows, so strangely reminiscent of the English countryside.

They came at last in sight of the town of Bulawayo, approaching it from the south, from which aspect it presented a queer suggestion of scatteredness, almost

as if the town had "grown up" where it liked without regard for plan or scale.

But as they drew nearer, and at last hovered almost dead centre over it, they could just make out the finely-planned, wide streets, the red and green roofs of the houses, the solitary majesty of the numerous statues which were erected at various points in the centre of the town.

They came down in a great open field on the outskirts of the town, and a little later had booked accommodation at one of the principal hotels, Locke having decided to remain here for a while.

Thanks to Locke's forethought in deciding to accomplish the journey by aeroplane, they had reached their destination a good thirty-six hours ahead of Griggs, and Locke's plan now was to lie in wait until the valet's appearance on the scene. He knew that, although the valet would be making for Great Zimbabwe, he would be compelled to break his journey here, and in all probability wait for at least a day for a connection to the Victoria district, where the famous and mysterious ruins were standing.

Meantime the detective began at once to make quiet and unobtrusive inquiries, with a view to discovering whether Bristow had been seen anywhere in the town, but without any useful result.

Nor did he himself come across any sign of that elusive gentleman, despite the fact that Bulawayo is in reality a small town, where strangers are almost certain to be picked out when they chanced to traverse the main streets.

Locke gave up the search at last, feeling somewhat mystified, but finally deciding that Bristow must have made for Great Zimbabwe by another route.

But for once the famous detective was at fault, for though he was completely unaware of it Bristow was actually in Bulawayo on the day that Locke and his companions arrived in their aeroplane. Moreover, Bristow had personally witnessed their arrival, and had been most emphatically interested therein.

But though Bristow was in Bulawayo, and had been there for at least twenty-four hours prior to Locke's arrival, he had been cunning enough to keep well clear of the town itself.

His knowledge of the locality—born of many years spent in Africa prior to his connection with the Golden Pyramid case—had stood him in good stead, and he had very craftily contrived to secure the use of an old prospector's hut situated five miles beyond the municipal area, and well off the beaten track.

For supplies Bristow had depended mainly on native stores in the vicinity, and on very occasional visits to the outskirts of the town itself—and then only at night—and to such stores as those usually patronised by the negro fraternity, and therefore not likely to be visited by any of the white population.

Locke and his companions had arrived in their aeroplane in the early morning. From his hut, barely two miles away across the open veldt, Arthur the Dude had watched the landing with a malevolent smile.

That same night, after Locke, Pycroft, and Jack Drake had all unsuspectingly retired to their beds in the hotel, Gerald Arthur Bristow crept stealthily forward towards the aeroplane, where he spent some fifteen minutes in minutely examining the engine, and in performing one or two distinctly queer acts ere he finally returned to his hut with every appearance of being well pleased with himself.

An hour later Bristow left the hut, and made his way on foot to a native location about a mile or so away.

Here he entered into a long and low-voiced conversation with a certain tall, brawny-looking son of Ham, and a number of coins of the realm exchanged hands.

"And don't you forget, Mafazu!" said Bristow, as he prepared to take his leave. "You're to be at the place arranged—about twenty miles east of Lapanzi—by daybreak on Thursday. Savvy!"

The native's eyes glittered, and a slow smile curled the corners of his thick lips.

"Me savvy, inkoos!" he muttered. "Me wait there for the great white bird with the broken wing!"

Which response apparently gave Arthur the Dude much satisfaction, for he made his way back to his lonely hut with a conspicuously jaunty step.

Two days later Inspector Pycroft en-

tered the private sitting-room of Locke's suite at the local hotel, a blank expression on his face.

"Nothing doing!" he exclaimed. "I've spent an hour on that blessed railway-station, watching every single passenger on the up-train from Cape Town, and never a sight of our man anywhere!"

Locke frowned, and clicked his teeth together with a snap of annoyance. In all his conjectures he had never for a moment reckoned on this eventuality.

According to the information given him by the Johannesburg police, Griggs had certainly entrained for Fourteen Streams, which was on one of the main line routes to Rhodesia. By Locke's own reckoning, Griggs would be due in Bulawayo on the train which had now arrived, and which Pycroft, watching under safe cover, had met, scrutinising every single passenger who passed through the ticket-barrier for a sight of the wanted man.

"Griggs was not on that train; I'm absolutely certain of it," said Pycroft. "What's more, when I found no trace of him, I had a chat with the train-conductor, the guard, and even the chief dining-room steward, and they all said that no man answering to the description of Griggs had been seen on the train throughout their half of the journey, which began at Kimberley; and thus, of course, included Fourteen Streams."

Ferrers Locke paced restlessly up and down the room for some moments.

This hitch in his plans had seriously upset him. He was frankly mystified, too, for there was no reason, as far as he could see, why Griggs should have missed this particular train—indeed, there was every conceivable reason for him to take the greatest pains not to miss it.

"Maybe he was taken ill, or something," suggested Pycroft, though not very hopefully. "Maybe he'll arrive on the next train—"

"The next train isn't due in until the week-end," snapped Locke, "and we can't hang around here until then!"

"What do you propose to do, guv'nor?" asked Jack, after another awkward pause.

Locke swung round.

"Do! We're clearing out of here—at once!" he exclaimed, with sudden briskness. "We're going by plane direct to Great Zimbabwe, and we're going to get there just as quickly as we know how!"

Jack Drake glanced meaningfully at Pycroft.

"You think, then, that Griggs may have taken another route?" suggested Locke's assistant.

The detective shook his head.

"There's no other route as quick as the ordinary mail train," he said. "But there's another means of travel, and we don't happen to hold the world's copy-right in bright, original ideas."

"Jove!" breathed Jack, his eyes suddenly flashing. "You—you mean that Griggs, too, may have managed to charter an aeroplane?"

"I don't know," answered Locke. "But, in view of Pycroft's latest report, I should say it's extremely probable. Anyway, we can't afford to waste any more time hanging about here. Why, for all we know, Griggs may even now have stolen a march on us and got there already!"

Locke ceased speaking now, and began to make immediate and rapid arrangements for their departure; and in a sur-

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OUT ON FRIDAY!

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prisingly short space of time they had motored out to the place where the aeroplane had been parked, and all was in readiness to resume their journey.

The sun was high in the heavens when the plane at last rose, like a great bird, from the ground, to the accompaniment of a chorus of excited yells from a crowd of natives which had gathered round to see it depart.

As in the case of their initial trip from Johannesburg, Ferrers Locke himself was in control. Once they had set their bearings, he went all out for speed, urging the machine onward to its utmost capacity, till the engine roared and droned in their ears, making conversation absolutely impossible.

Bulawayo was quickly left behind, and almost before they realised it they were passing over isolated mining camps and lone farmsteads, heading in a direct line for Gwelo—the "midlands" of Rhodesia—thence to swerve abruptly onwards towards Victoria, beyond which the ruins of Great Zimbabwe were situated.

Soon they found themselves on the fringe of a great expanse of sand and scrub, stretching like a vast, dreary waste over an apparently limitless area. The whole scene was bleak and arid in the extreme, though away to the north they could just glimpse the merest suggestion of green which marked the fresher, more fertile land of the Zambesi.

And then something happened which caused Locke's face to go stark white.

With abrupt and terrifying suddenness the aeroplane gave a lurch, flinging him against the cockpit, and almost knocking the breath out of his body.

Instantly alert, he began at once to search for the cause of this unaccountable actions on the part of a machine which had, up to now, behaved in a thoroughly exemplary manner, answering his every demand with a ready response which was almost human.

But ere he could begin his examination there came a startled cry from Jack Drake.

"Heavens, gov'nor! We're crashing!"

The aeroplane had dropped, without any warning, into a tail-slide, and was hurtling downwards at an ever-increasing speed. The wind hissed past the wings and the rounded fuselage, setting the landing-wheels whirling as it sang through the under-carriage.

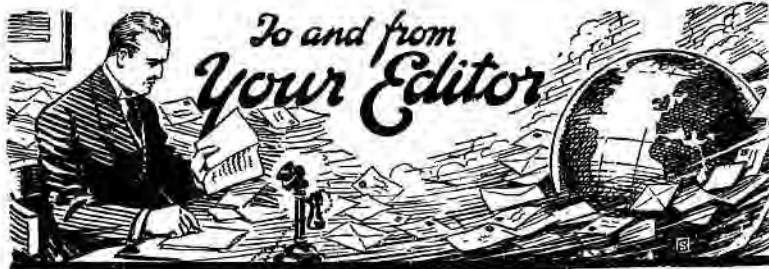
Desperately Locke strove to right the machine, and at length succeeded in checking its fall, so that it suddenly bucketed upwards again, the tail flattening and tipping once more towards the sky.

But in a moment the plane was shooting nose-first for earth in a vicious volpique, its engine spluttering and coughing as Locke vainly strove to restart it.

Once more the machine steadied somewhat, and Locke, working away with white, set face, contrived at last to quieten the engine and train the nose to a less acute angle.

Then the machine came planing down in an almost oblique line, the earth itself seemed to come up to meet them, and a moment later the landing-wheels tipped against a slight rise, while the machine, nose-high, slid to earth in a perfect "pancake," with every inch of its fabric trembling.

(There are more thrills in store for you next week, boys. Ferrers Locke is never happier than when he is in a tight corner. Don't miss next week's instalment of this fine tale.)



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

THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL.

This week's chat would not be complete without a mention of this world-famous story book, for the new "Holiday Annual" will be seen on all the bookstalls throughout the kingdom on Tuesday,

SEPTEMBER 1st.

That it is just as formidable a value-for-money proposition as it has been in the past goes without saying. I'll go one better. The new Annual beats all its predecessors into a cocked hat. There are ripping yarns of Harry Wharton & Co., Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, and Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood. The star turns from these famous schools are represented, too, in verse by the Annual rhymester. Adventure stories of the Wild West, motor racing yarns packed with thrills, sporting stories, gorgeous coloured plates by the leading artists of the day, splendid photographs, articles, plays, and hobby hints are but a few of the items from its extensive programme. Which reminds me—

HOLIDAY ANNUAL

contains an index. Hurrah! I know that piece of news will delight my readers. No more fussing about with the pages when you want to turn to a particular story. All you have to do now is to look at the index, and—well, there you are! I'm not going to take up all this week's chat with descriptions of the Annual, for really, it needs little recommendation from me. Its great appeal to the reading public was made years ago, and

SEPTEMBER THE FIRST

is now looked forward to just as much as our Bank Holidays. A great day, a great Annual, a great public satisfied—in fact, a great success all round. Trot along to the newsagents now and have a look at it.

THE "GEM!"

Just a tit-bit of news concerning our splendid companion paper, the "Gem Library." The St. Jim's stories, featuring Tom Merry & Co., will, in future, be much longer than has been the case lately. The serial, too, is worthy of mention, for it is a super story of mystery and intrigue, introducing a sturdy, fighting Britisher, "Penny Rudd," who pits his wits against a yellow Napoleon in the shape of the outcast Prince Yen How. Get this week's copy of the "Gem," boys—you'll be treating yourself to something good.

FOOTER!

With the coming of September goal-posts, corner-flags, and footballs once more see the light of day. I expect the majority of my reader chums are keen disciples of footer, the truly styled King of Winter Games. A more healthy sport

it would be hard to find, for football tends to mould the character in the right channels. It teaches us all a certain amount of restraint, and by the same token gives us the necessary training to seize opportunities while the other fellow is dreaming about them. Hard knocks there are in plenty, but what sport doesn't throw out these blows, whether physical or otherwise? Determination plays its part in footer, too—the will to win. Taken altogether, football despite the unkind criticism of some spoil sports, is a grand game. It quickens the combined action of brain and brawn, it's chock-full of quick decisions, unselfishness; but, above all, it fosters the true sporting spirit without which humanity would be lost for ever. A fellow who plays a clean game of footer can usually be reckoned to play a clean game in the sterner walks of life. In my schooldays we were given this motto at the start of the footer and cricket seasons—"Play up, play up, and play the game!" It's sound all through. You remember it!

TO BAG THE "MAG."

Maurice Radney Gould, 19, Hoveden Road, Shoot-Up Hill, Cricklewood, N.W., sends me word of the huge appreciation entertained for the MAGNET in Cricklewood. He also mentions a hobbies club he has in view. The one idea in Cricklewood is to bag the latest MAGNET—and jolly good reason, too!

Next Monday's Programme.

"RIVAL OARSMEN!"

By Frank Richards.

Magnetites will meet their old favourites, Harry Wharton & Co., on the River Sark next week. It's a grand story this, full of "meat" served up in Mr. Richards' own delectable way.

"THE VELDT TRAIL!"

A ripping instalment of this detective adventure yarn is billed for next Monday. The net has been cast; are long Ferrers Locke will haul it in, and you can bet your bottom dollar the catch will be a good one.

"PLAY-ACTING."

Look forward to a topping supplement by Harry Wharton & Co., dealing with the above subject. It's a winner!

BOB CHERRY.

The sturdy Bob, he of the large feet, makes No. 2 in our Portrait Gallery. Some programme, you will agree. Mind you enjoy it. If you don't, it won't be the fault of

Your Editor.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 917.

