

GRAND NEW YEAR NUMBER!

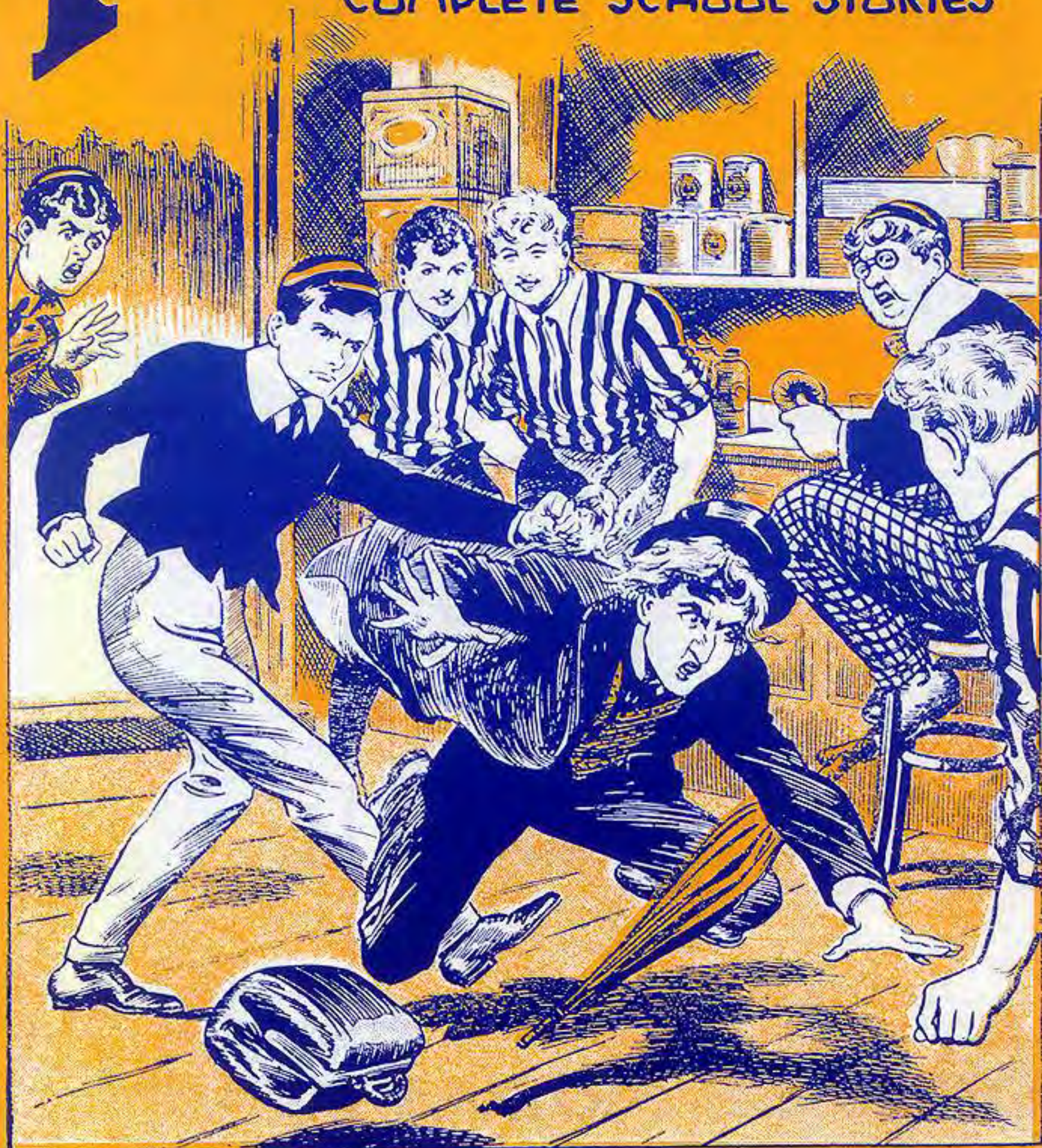
No. 934. Vol. XXIX.

Week Ending January 2nd, 1926.

The Magnet 2^d

Library of
COMPLETE SCHOOL STORIES

EVERY
MONDAY.



BOWLING OUT AN IMPOSTOR!

(A dramatic incident from the long complete school story inside.)

START THE NEW YEAR

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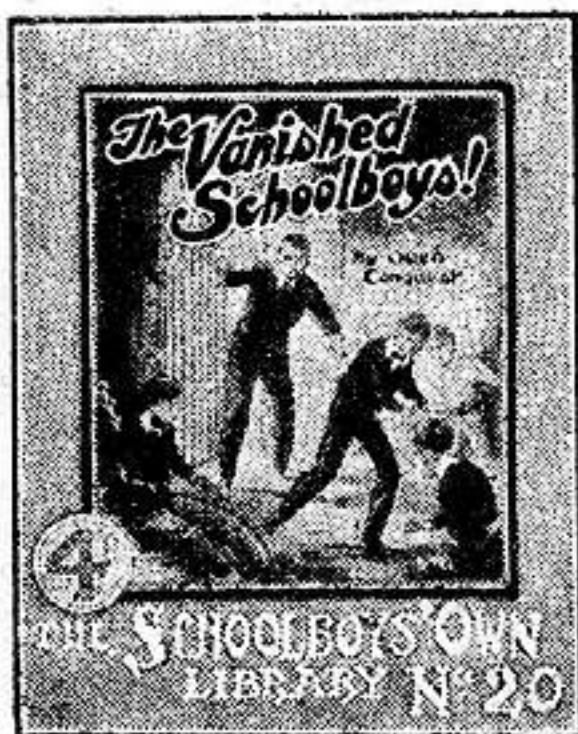
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No. 19 contains a grand story of your old favourites at Greyfriars, featuring the early adventures of Harry Wharton at the school.

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

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TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

THE NEW YEAR!

THIS issue of your favourite paper sets the ball rolling for 1926, and I take this opportunity of wishing you all a Happy New Year. To those words I must add my thanks for your allegiance during 1925, for you, my chums, have stood by me with rare loyalty. The New Year, as a rule, sees us registering resolutions, and I am in the fashion, as it were. I have promised you all a record run of school stories, serials, and something extra special in the way of supplements. Free Gifts! Well, I haven't left those out of my "resolution," but it is early just now to speak of them. Magnetites shall not want for these things—take it from me. Mr. Frank Richards and I have been overhauling the programme for 1926, and between us we have evolved some topping wheezes. Among the first that will gladden your eye, so to speak, will be a series of Greyfriars yarns dealing with Hurreo Janset Ram Singh—and India! I know that will be well received. Just you look out for it. In writing the last New Year's Chat, I said that we were going to double our circulation; that the MAGNET was going to beat its own high-water-mark of quality. Well, in all honesty, I can say that that has been achieved; but it would never have been done without your wholehearted support.

TANNERS!

A Magnetite wants to know the origin of the word "tanner." He doesn't say what kind of tanner. For all I know, he might be inquiring about the gentleman who deals in hides, or he might be referring to the parent who administers a "tanning" to his errant child. Again he might be more interested in the slang term of "tanner" commonly used in reference to sixpence. Somehow or other, I think this latter is the case, for he tells me that he gets a "tanner" every week. I hope for his sake he doesn't mean a "licking" every week! That's too much of a good thing. But all the same for that, I'm afraid I can't tell him how the slang term originated. I wonder if any Magnetite can solve this little problem for my correspondent?

For Next Monday:

"COKER'S NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS!"

By Frank Richards.

That's the title of the next grand extra-long story of Greyfriars. It needs little explanation in advance from me, for the title speaks eloquently of events likely to happen. Mind you read it!

"THE MYSTERY OF LONE MANOR!"

We are drawing near the end of this popular mystery story, and at this stage it would be fatal to miss a line of it. Look out for next week's instalment.

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH!

The Bounder takes a place in our Gallery next week. Mind you add his face to your collection of celebrities.

YOUR EDITOR.

LUCKY OR —? Billy Bunter enters a five thousand pound competition—with someone else's ticket. He really expects to carry off the first prize. But what he does win, however, is hardly worth five thousand pounds. Some people are never satisfied!



By

FRANK RICHARDS.

A Magnificent, New, Long Complete
Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at
Greyfriars, describing Billy Bunter's
"latest."

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter's Way!

"PETER, old fellow—"
Billy Bunter spoke in honeyed tones.
Peter Todd, his study-mate, glared at him across the study table.
"Will you shurrup, you fat ass?" he roared.
"Oh, really, Peter—"
"Dry up, and give your fat chin a rest," hooted Peter Todd. "Can't you see I'm busy?"
"But look here, Peter—"
Peter Todd reached for the ruler.
"If you call me Peter again, you fat clam," he said in sulphurous accents, "I'll rap your fat napper with this ruler! Now shurrup!"
"You beast, Toddy!" grumbled Billy Bunter, glowering across at his irate study-mate. "Why can't you listen to a chap? I only want you to lend me that paper."
"Aren't I using it myself?"
"Yes; but don't I keep telling you I want it?" said Bunter indignantly.
"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "Why, you cheeky fat rotter, isn't it my paper?"
"No, it isn't; it's Mark Linley's."
"Well, Linley's lent it to me, Fatty. Now shurrup!"
"If you're going to be mean, Toddy, I—"
"I am!" snorted the exasperated Peter Todd. "Dry up!"
Billy Bunter blinked at him sorrowfully.
"I'm surprised at you, Toddy," he said, shaking his head. "You're mean, Toddy! And you're jealous—you're afraid I shall enter for that blessed competition and win it!"
Todd looked up at that.
"So you know about it, Bunter?" he exclaimed.

Bunter grinned.
"I happened to hear Linley telling you about it," he grinned. "It's rather funny, really. Linley thinks he's going to win five thousand quids; and you do, too, Toddy. Likely—I don't think!"
"Why, you fat dummy—"
"Likely, isn't it?" grinned Bunter.
"What hopes! Fancy you entering for a competition in which brains are required! You've got rather a nerve, Toddy. You're rather an ass, you know. You don't mind my telling you, do you, Peter, old—"
Crack!
"Yoooooop!"
Bunter had forgotten Peter Todd's grim warning regarding the "Peter." He was sorry now—to gather from his wild howl—that he had forgotten it.
"There, you fat ass!" snorted Peter, throwing the ruler on the table quite crossly. "I warned you, didn't I? I don't mind you calling me Toddy, or fathead, or beast, or rotter, or cad, or any old thing; it doesn't worry me. But I won't be addressed as Peter by you, you fat grampus! Got that?"
"Ow! Yow! Beast!" groaned Billy Bunter, rubbing his head where the ruler had cracked. "Oh, you awful beast, Toddy! You call me Billy sometimes, don't you, you rotter? Yow-wow!"
"Shurrup!"
Peter Todd, breathing hard, returned to his newspaper again. Billy Bunter, still rubbing his head, seated himself at the table and glowered across at him.
Peter Todd looked up after a minute.
"What about your prep?" he asked.
"Aren't you going to do any?"
"Blow prep!"
"But, Quelchy in the morning—"
"Blow Quelchy, too!" grunted Bunter. "Look here, Toddy, don't be such a mean beast, you know. I know

all about that competition, and I'm jolly well going to have a shot at it. I could just do with five thousand pounds."
"My hat! Could you?" ejaculated Todd. The cool way Bunter referred to five thousand pounds quite took his breath away. "But what the thump do you know about footballers, Bunter? I bet you couldn't name a blessed single popular footballer."
Bunter chuckled.
"Couldn't I?" he said confidently.
"That's all you know, Toddy! A regular footer fan like me—"
"A whatter?"
"Footer fan," said Bunter seriously. "No good thinking you could teach me anything in that line, Toddy. I've seen more First League matches than you'll ever see, you know. I always watch a First League match every Saturday in the summer vac."
"Oh, my hat!" gasped Peter Todd. "Sure you don't mean winter?"
"Eh? Oh, yes; I mean winter, of course, Toddy. Anyway," said Bunter, "I've already got four names down."
"Oh! Have you?" said Todd, staring. "Let's see them, Bunter?"
He reached across the table, suddenly aware that Bunter had a pencil in his fat hand and a sheet of paper on the table before him. But the Owl of the Remove was too quick for him.
"No, you don't, Toddy!" he grinned, snatching the paper up. "I'm not so jolly soft as all that! No fear! Think I'm going to let you copy my list, and take the prize from me? Yah!"
"You fat idiot!"
"Catch me!" snorted Bunter derisively. "See any green in my eye, Toddy? Yah! Why—Here! Gimme my list back, you beast!"
Bunter's remarks ended in a howl as

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Peter Todd suddenly and very rudely snatched the list from his hand. Toddy was not at all troubled by Bunter's desire to enter the competition, nor was he at all likely to "copy" Bunter's list of famous and popular footballers. But he wanted to see it nevertheless. He thought it would be entertaining.

It was.
Holding the fat junior off with one hand, Peter Todd looked at the four names. Then he gasped.

"Oh, my hat! Is this your list, Bunter?"

"Four of them! You've seen them now, you beast!" howled Bunter.

"Of popular footballers?" asked Toddy faintly.

"Yes. Gimme my list back!"

"But Inman isn't a footballer!" yelled Peter Todd. "He's a blessed billiards-player, you footling idiot!"

"Rot! Just shows how ignorant you are, Toddy," said Bunter. "No good shouting at me, Toddy! I know your game! You're trying to get me to drop Inman so that you can use him yourself, you beast!"

"But he isn't a footballer, you ass!" howled Peter. "He's a blessed billiards-player! And—Great Pip! Tilden! Why, Tilden's the American lawn tennis champion, you dummy!"

"Rot! That's all you know! I told you you were ignorant of footer matters, Toddy. That just proves it. I've seen both Inman and Tilden play many a time."

"At football?"

"What else?" sneered Bunter. "What do you expect a thumping footballer to play at, Toddy—hopsotch? Yah! Don't try to teach me anything about footer matters, Toddy! I know the game and its players, inside out, you know."

"Oh, my hat! And you've got Jack Hobbs down, too, Bunter! He's a cricketer, you—"

"Bosh! Bunkum! Rubbish!" said Bunter. "You can't pull the wool over my eyes like that, Toddy! I've seen Hobbs play, too, and he's a jolly good man, let me tell you! I've seen him play centre-forward for—for Aston Villa, you know. He scored five goals—scorchers!"

"Oh, crumbs! And—ha, ha, ha!—Steve Donoghue! Have you seen Steve Donoghue score goals, too, Bunter?"

"Well, no. He's a goalkeeper, I fancy," said Bunter reflectively. "He—he keeps goal for Manchester City, I think."

"Ha, ha, ha! Sure he isn't a jockey, Bunter?"

"Of course not! Nothing to cackle at as far as I can see, Toddy, you ass! Go on—laugh! I can see through your game, you rotter," said Bunter indignantly. "Like your cheek to pinch my list like that! Picking my brains, it is! If you use those names in your list, you beast, it'll be rank dishonesty! Dishonourable, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter Todd.

He threw the paper back to Bunter.

"And you're going to send those names in as popular footballers, Bunter?" he choked.

"Of course I am—with eight more, you know. I heard Linley tell you twelve had to be sent in," explained Bunter. "I fancy it won't take me long to get eight more with my exceptional knowledge of League football."

"But those aren't footballers!" shrieked Peter Todd.

"Rot! Don't come it, Toddy!"

Peter Todd controlled himself with an effort.

"You—you ass, Bunter!" he said, grinning faintly. "Those four names are not the names of footballers at all. And, in any case, you've got to go by the list they give you. Here, I'll let you see the advertisement."

He handed over the newspaper to Bunter, who was looking rather taken aback now. As a matter of fact, the fat junior had only overheard snatches of the conversation between Linley and Peter Todd regarding the competition they proposed to enter.

"There you are, Fatty!" grinned Toddy, as Bunter read the notice. "The competition's called the Silver Ring Ballot, and it's in aid of a big London hospital. They give you a list of twenty famous footballers, and you have to choose twelve, and shove them in their order of popularity. There's a first prize of five thousand quid, and hundreds of other prizes."

"Oh, good!" breathed Bunter. "Then that five thou's mine, Toddy."

He had been rather worrying as to how he was going to make the twelve up, and he had a suspicion that perhaps Peter Todd was right regarding the four he had already got, after all. Why, with the names already given it was as easy as falling off a form!

"But you've got to get a ticket first," chuckled Peter. "They're half-a-crown each, Bunter."

"Oh dear!" Bunter's face fell again. "I say, Toddy old fellow," he went on dismally, "you'll lend me the half-a-crown, won't you? I wouldn't ask you, only I've been disappointed about a postal-order this morning; it should have come by the first post. I'm going to complain to the postal authorities about it. I'll pay you out of my next remittance, though, Toddy."

"Nothing doing, old fat tulip! Why not ask the hospital people to wait until your postal-order comes for the half-a-crown?" asked Toddy.

"They—they wouldn't do that, you know," said Bunter seriously. "I say, Toddy, old fellow, look here! Lend me the half-a-crown, and I'll pay it back with five hundred per cent interest—"

"You fat—"

"When I've won the five thousand quids," said Bunter generously. "I can't say fairer than that, Toddy, can I?"

"Oh, dry up, you fat ass!"

"Are you going to lend me the money or not, Toddy?"

"Not! If you ask me again I'll dot you on the boko, Bunter!"

"Beast! Mean beast!" snorted Bunter indignantly. "If nobody else will oblige me I shall blame you for it, Toddy. Practically robbing me of five thousand—that's what it amounts to! Mean, I call it!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Will you lend me that paper to copy the names out, then?" said Bunter warmly.

"Yes, I'll do that," grinned Peter, tossing the newspaper across the table. "No reason why you shouldn't hand the hospital half-a-crown, Bunter—though I expect it will be some other idiot's half-a-crown in any case. Anyway, it's for a good cause."

"Beast!"

That was Bunter's thanks as he took the paper and started laboriously to copy out the names of the footballers. These were given in alphabetical order, with a photograph of the footballer above the name. The fat junior copied the names out, watched by the grinning Peter Todd.

He finished at last, and then he rose to his feet.

"Hallo! Where are you off to now, Bunter?" asked Toddy, staring, as he took the paper back.

Bunter paused at the door and blinked back at his study-mate with lofty dignity.

"I'm going to try to find someone who isn't such a mean, stingy beast as you, Toddy!" he said, with withering scorn. "After all, it's only what one can expect, though, of a blessed hard-up solicitor's son, you know. You're mean; but it's scarcely your fault, Toddy, I suppose. Anyway, you can keep your blessed half-a-crown, and you can go and eat coke! I always knew you were rather a beast! Yah! I suppose—"

Bunter broke off, to make a sudden leap through the doorway. It was as well he did so, for next instant the study ruler crashed against the doorpost, missing Bunter by an inch. When Peter Todd reached the door the next second Bunter had vanished, and Peter recovered his ruler and closed the door, breathing hard. Billy Bunter certainly was trying at times to his long-suffering study-mate.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Half-Crown Wanted!

"FIVE bob!"

"Get out!"

"Only five bob!" urged Bunter. "Don't be mean, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter had looked in at Study No. 1 in the hopes of "touching" somebody there.

"You'll get no five bob out of us, you fat ass!" remarked Harry Wharton, reaching significantly for the inkpot. "Good-bye!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Good-bye!"

"Can't you listen to a chap?" hooted Billy Bunter, keeping a wary eye on the inkpot.

"Not to a chap who wants to borrow five bob," said Frank Nugent.

"Especially a chap who's got no intention of returning the loan," grinned Bob Cherry. "Now, old fat barrel, roll away, there's a good chap! There's nothing doing in the five bob line."

Billy Bunter rolled farther into Study No. 1. It was really surprising how mean the fellows were! He had only just left Peter Todd, who had refused to lend him the money for a ticket for the competition, and now here were the Famous Five also refusing to trust him.

But Bunter felt much more hopeful of the Famous Five than he had done about his own study-mate. He had really not expected Toddy—who knew him so very, very well—to loan him half-a-crown. Indeed, so hopeful did Bunter feel that he was now asking for the loan of "five bob," which would buy him two tickets for the Silver Ring Ballot—thus making the five thousand an absolute "cert."

"I say, you fellows," he said indignantly, "don't be so jolly stingy, you know! It's most important—vitally important—that I should have five bob. Now, there's five of you here—that only means a bob a-piece. You won't miss that."

"We don't intend to! Now, scat!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Clear out!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Half-a-crown, then?" grumbled Bunter. "That's only a tanner a-piece."

"Not a stiver, old lard-tub! We're not a dashed Socialist board of guardians! There's the door, Bunter!"

But Bunter refused to see the door—though Harry Wharton pointed it out to him.

"Look here, you fellows," he said, lowering his voice confidently. "I'm on a jolly good thing, and I must have half-a-crown at least. Lend me half-a-crown, and I'll pay you back when—"

"Here it is!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I knew it wouldn't be long before the expected postal-order would be trotted out."

"I wasn't going to mention a postal-order, Cherry," said Bunter calmly. "But as you have mentioned it, I don't mind paying you fellows back out of my next; it's bound to come by the morning's post. Or you can wait for a week or so for your money. I strongly advise you to wait."

"Oh, my hat! Why?"

"Because I'll be able to return the loan with at least a hundred per cent interest then—five hundred per cent if you like!"

"Great pip! Make it a million per cent, Billy!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Moneylenders always charge according to the risk, you know. A fellow who lends you cash deserves a million per cent at least. In fact, he'd lose at that—lose his half-a-crown."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, do be serious, Cherry!" said Bunter crossly. "I simply must have that half-a-crown, you chaps. I was hoping to send in two attempts, but I'll have to make the best use of one ticket if you chaps are going to be mean and only loan me half-a-crown. It's a cert, I might tell you; and you'll be sorry that you've been such mean beasts when the result of the winner is announced. Look here, I tell you what—"

"What on earth is the silly ass gassing about?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, staring at Bunter wonderingly. "What do you want the half-a-crown for, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"I don't mind telling you chaps," he said. "After all, it's no good you fellows thinking of entering for the competition. It requires a fellow with brains for a job like this. Toddy and Linley think they've a chance. Likely—I don't think! Hand me that half-a-dollar, and I'll tell you."

"Not much! You tell us the game, Billy, and we'll see about the half-a-crown afterwards."

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"I think I can guess what it is," grinned Bob Cherry. "It's that Silver Ring Ballot in aid of the hospitals—popular footballers' competition. The fat ass thinks he's going to rake in that five thousand pounds."

"Oh! That's it, is it?"

"Just that!" grinned Billy Bunter. "It's as easy as falling off a form to a fellow like me. With my knowledge of football and my judgment, I shall romp home with that five thous."

"Oh, my hat!"

"All I want is the half-a-crown—if you can't make it, five bob," explained Bunter earnestly. "I sha'n't forget you chaps when the cash comes; and I mean to keep to my word in regard to the percentage on the loan. I want to make that quite clear, you fellows."

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "Now we want to make this quite clear, Bunter. You're getting no five bob or half-a-crown out of us. There's the door!"

"Eh?"



"There's the door! Hook it!"

"Then—then you won't finance me!" snorted Bunter. "Why, you mean rotters, you're throwing away the chance of a lifetime! It's an absolute cert—not as if you brainless noodles were trying for it!"

"You cheeky fathead!"

"It's selfish, too!" said Bunter scornfully. "Isn't it in a good cause? Only a measly half-a-crown, too! Besides, by refusing to loan me the cash, you're practically robbing me of that five thousand!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"So now you understand the position," said Bunter, with dignity. "I hope you'll drop this mean and selfish attitude."

"You fat ass!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "What's the good of a dummy like you entering for it? You know nothing about footer, or footballers. You couldn't name a single First League player if you were paid to."

"That's all you know, Wharton! I suppose it's personal jealousy. You know jolly well that there are few footer fans with a knowledge of the game equal to mine. Though, mind you, knowledge is not everything on a job like this. Brains and judgment are the things. Luckily, I've got all three. Now what about that half-a-crown?"

"Oh, kick the fat ass out!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Buzz off, Bunter!" grinned Bob Cherry. "And take my tip, leave footer competitions alone! Stick to competitions for telling whoppers and gorging grub, and don't worry your fat head with things you don't understand."

"I tell you I do understand!" said Bunter warmly. "I know the names of dozens of First League men, you awful asses!"

"What a whopper!" grinned Harry Wharton. "I tell you what, Billy. Name half a dozen, and the half-a-crown's yours!"

"Ha, ha! There's a chance for you, Bunter?"

Bunter grinned.

"You mean that?" he said calmly.

"You don't mind my telling you, do you, Peter, old man—" Crack! "Yooop!" Peter Todd brought the ruler down smartly on Bunter's fat skull. "There, you fat ass!" he said. "I warned you, didn't I? I don't mind you calling me Toddy, or fathead, or beast, or any old thing like that, but I won't be addressed as Peter by you! Got that?"
(See Chapter 1.)

"You'll hand me half-a-dollar if I can name six First League players?"

"Just that!" grinned Harry; he felt quite safe in doing that.

"Done!" said Bunter.

He drew from his pocket the list he had copied from Peter Todd's paper, and started to read out the names.

"Here!" gasped Harry Wharton. "I meant name them on your own—"

"Well, aren't I naming 'em?" grinned Billy Bunter.

He went on reading the names from the list until he had read out the twenty. Then he held out a fat and grubby hand.

"Hand over that half-a-crown, Wharton, please!"

"Look here, you fat fraud!" snorted Harry. "You know jolly well what I meant; I meant from memory, you fat clam!"

"You didn't say so," chuckled Bunter. "You said name six, and I've named twenty. You said nothing about from

memory. You claim to be a fellow of your word, Wharton. I keep you to your word, old chap. Hand over the cash."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton's chums roared at the expression on their leader's face. Bunter had done what he had been asked to do, and Wharton would have to pay up, and take it smiling. Harry Wharton was a fellow of his word, even when dealing with Bunter.

With a rueful grin, he handed a florin and a sixpence over to the grinning Owl of the Remove. Bunter pocketed the coins with a chuckle.

"That's all right, Wharton," he said. "Well, you've kept to your word, and I'll keep to mine. Five hundred per cent. I said, didn't I? Well, I'll make it a thousand," added Bunter generously. "I can afford to do that out of five thousand quid, I think."

"You—you fat idiot!"

"And now what about stamps?" said Bunter, with satisfaction. "I've got to send a stamped, addressed envelope for the ticket—that means two stamps! And I shall want a penny for the postal-order. Which of you fellows is going to oblige me with fourpence?"

"You—you cheeky Owl!"

"I hope you fellows are not going to be mean again!"

"Well, no reason why we should be mean about the stamps, anyway," said Bob Cherry, winking at his chums. "Yes, you can have the stamps, Bunter—as many as you like."

"Oh, good! I'd better— Yoooop! Oh, you beast, Cherry! Ow! Gerroff! Yarooooooh!"

Bunter yelled fiendishly as Bob Cherry stamped hard on both his toes.

"Buck up, you chaps!" said Bob. "Let's be obliging to Bunter."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Yarooooooh! Gerroff!" roared Bunter.

He danced about frantically trying to avoid the stamping feet, as Harry Wharton and the others joined Bob in a scramble to stamp on Bunter's toes. From his yells they were obviously not the stamps he had wanted. He tripped backwards suddenly, and as he went down Harry Wharton stamped on him with both feet—and with evident satisfaction. But before the others could do likewise Bunter leaped to his feet, and made a mad leap for the door.

He reached it safely, and vanished into the passage again, roaring. The Famous Five closed the door and returned to their prep grinning. Even Harry Wharton was grinning now. He felt that he had had some payment for his half-a-crown, at all events, whether he ever got his thousand per cent on the loan, or not.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Skinner's Joke!

"TODDY, old fellow—"

Once again Billy Bunter spoke in honeyed tones.

It was a day or two later, and once again it was prep time in Study No. 7. But this time Peter Todd seemed in a little better humour.

He grinned across at his fat study-mate.

"Well, what is it, old fat man?" he inquired, with a chuckle. "Still mugging up famous footballers—what?"

"Yes. Look here, Toddy—"

"You've got your ticket, then?"

"Yes; it came this morning, Toddy. I say, you might help a fellow—"

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"But I thought you were a regular dab at the game, Billy?" grinned Peter Todd. "I thought it was going to be as easy as falling off a form to a chap with your brains and knowledge and judgment."

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"I thought there was nobody who could teach you anything about First League footer, and the men who played in it," went on Peter Todd remorselessly. "I thought you were a regular footer fan, old bean!"

"Oh, really, so I am, Toddy. But a chap forgets, you know—especially a chap with my numerous responsibilities and activities. I say, have you done your list, Toddy?"

"Yes; and sent it in this morning."

"Then look here, old chap. You might help a fellow. You won't mind telling me in what order you've put them, Toddy, and which are the eight you've left out? I know you won't refuse a chap that, old fellow."

"Well, my hat!"

"Not that I expect your effort's any good; in fact, I know it must be utter piffle," explained Bunter, blinking seriously at Peter Todd. "I think you've rather a nerve to expect to win anything, old chap. Still, it's another half-a-crown in a good cause, that's one comfort. You're rather a duffer at most things, if you don't mind me mentioning the fact, old fellow."

Peter Todd grinned. He didn't mind Bunter mentioning that fact at all. He was used to his fat study-mate's little ways, and he much preferred criticism to flattery—from Billy Bunter.

"As for football," went on Bunter cheerily. "It makes me rather smile to think of you entering for a footer competition—it does, really, Toddy. You haven't the ghost of a chance, old chap."

"And yet you want to copy my list?"

"Not—ahem!—at all, Toddy. I—I merely wanted to see it. I thought it would be rather entertaining, you know."

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"All I want you to do, old chap, is to make me out a copy of your list—just as you sent it in. See?"

"So that you can send in the same list, eh?" remarked Peter Todd grimly.

"That's it—I mean nunno; not at all! Just for—for fun, you know. Now, be a sport, Toddy, old fellow."

Peter Todd blinked at him.

"Well, of all the cheeky asses, you take the bun, Bunter!" he said. "Let's have a look at your list. Have you put any down yet?"

"None at all," grunted Bunter dismally. "I—I say, Toddy, do help a chap! I—I admit that it's not quite so easy as I thought, you know."

"Oh, you admit that, do you?" chuckled Peter. "Well, I'll tell you just what to do, Billy. Do what most people who enter competitions do—shove anything down and trust to luck."

"Look here—"

"That's what most people do," said the cynical Toddy. "And I advise you to do the same, Bunter."

"Look here, Toddy, you beast," said Bunter warmly. "Think I'm going to do that? Why, I'd rather spend my half-a-crown on grub. If that's all the help you're going to give me—"

"That's all, old top!"

"You mean beast, Toddy!"

"You've said that before."

"Look here, I'm not jolly well going to waste half-a-crown like that!" howled Bunter. "Are you going to help me or not, Toddy?"

"Not, old chap! Why not try somebody else, Billy? Try Skinner—he's entering the competition, I believe."

"I've already tried that beast," groaned Bunter. "I practically promised him a thousand out of the five thousand if he'd help me. He said he would, and gave me a list of names."

"Did he?"

"Yes. It was all spoof, though. They weren't footballers at all—I'm certain they weren't. He'd put Charlie Chaplin down, and he's a blessed musician; and he'd put Lloyd George down, and I happen to know that he's a blessed artist or something; and he'd got George Robey down, and I know for a fact that he's a thumping cricketer and not a footballer at all. I knew it was all spoof as soon as I saw the list."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Toddy.

"It's nothing to laugh at, Toddy, you mean rotter! The beast wanted to write them down on my list, but I was too fly for him. Anyway, it's the same with everybody. I asked Bob Cherry this afternoon to give me a few tips, and he tipped a bottle of ink over my head—pretended I meant that sort of tip, the beast! It's sheer jealousy; they don't want me to win that five thousand."

"Ha, ha! Have you tried Linley, Bunter? Perhaps he'll let you copy his list—perhaps!"

"Well, he might," said Bunter, brightening up. "I never thought of him, you know. After all, he's soft. My hat! I'll try him, Toddy."

"Do!" grinned Peter Todd. "I'll come along presently to gather up the pieces, old fat man."

"Eh? Don't talk like an ass, if you can't help being one, Toddy," advised Bunter. "Linley's soft. He isn't such a mean beast as you, you know. He'll do it. Not that I blame you for being mean, Peter," added Bunter kindly. "You can't help being the son of a poor, fifth-rate solicitor. I admit that. There's some excuse—Ow!"

Bunter's flow of eloquence ceased abruptly and he jumped for the door, just missing the cushion Toddy threw at him as he did so. Peter usually didn't mind the fatuous Bunter's complimentary remarks; but there was a limit, and Bunter had passed it. Having wrenched open the door, Bunter flew for his life, just missing Toddy's boot by the fraction of an inch.

At the end of the passage Bunter halted and retraced his steps quite unconcernedly. He was used to leaving his study in haste like that.

"Beast!" he grumbled. "Fancy a fellow refusing to help his study-mate win five thousand quid! Mean isn't the word for it. Anyway, I'll try Linley. He's only a measly scholarship pauper, but he knows a lot about League football, I believe. Here goes!"

And, stopping at Mark Linley's study, Billy Bunter pushed open the door and entered. Then he grunted. The room was empty. Evidently Mark Linley and his study-mates had gone down to the Common-room.

"Just my luck again!" mumbled Bunter, in disgust. "I'll go down and see—Hallo! My hat!"

Bunter's eyes had fallen on an envelope on the table—a stamped envelope, with an address that caught Bunter's sharp eyes at once. It was in Linley's neat handwriting, and it ran as follows:

"To the Appeal Secretary,
St. Jeald's Hospital, London."

"Phew!" murmured Bunter. "It's old Linley's ticket, of course. He's forgotten to post it, I expect. I—I wonder what his blessed list's like?"

Bunter blinked at the envelope, and as he blinked the temptation grew in force, as it were.

"I—I think I'll have just a peep," murmured Bunter, stepping to the study door and closing it. "Old Linley must be down in the Common-room, so must Cherry and Hurree Singh and Wun Lung. Here goes! I know Linley won't mind; he's soft!"

Grabbing a pen, Bunter inserted the haft under the flap of the envelope and started to twist it gently.

It was open at last, and Mark Linley's ticket, containing the twelve footballers he had chosen in their order of popularity was at Bunter's mercy.

"Oh, good!" breathed Bunter. "Old



Coker's hair was rubbed in the dust, and his head was rapped again and again on the linoleum. Then, struggling and fuming, he was carried by the Removites to the top of the School-House steps and rolled down them, still roaring threats. (See Chapter 4.)

Linley's a jolly-oute chap, and I bet this is a corker. Some fellows would be unscrupulous enough to pinch this. Luckily, I'm not a fellow of that type. I think I'll just copy one or two names on my ticket. I know Linley won't mind that. After all, he's not a mean beast like Toddy. Just—just one or two!"

And, dipping the pen in the inkpot, Bunter copied one or two names in the order Linley had given them. After that, feeling he might just as well make a thorough job of it, he copied the rest until the whole twelve were copied down on Bunter's list—in the same order as Linley had written his.

"After all," murmured Bunter, "it's just the same as if old Linley had let me copy 'em. I know he would have

done that like a shot. He's soft and like that. I—I think I'll use Linley's envelope as I've not got a stamp for mine. He won't mind, I know. I—I'll post his to-morrow. It—it's really a good thing for Linley I came along. Some dishonest chap might have found it here and destroyed it, or put his own name on it. Some fellows are like that."

And, feeling he was really doing Linley a good turn—or pretending to, which was just the same thing with Bunter—he placed his own ticket in Linley's stamped, addressed envelope, and stuck the flap down again with the aid of the gumpot. Then he left the study, with Linley's ticket crumpled up in his pocket.

He met Skinner, Stott, and Snoop just

turning away from the letter-box in the hall.

Skinner grinned as he noted the envelope in Bunter's fat hand.

"Just posting your ticket for the ballot, Bunter?" he asked.

Bunter nodded and grinned in return. "Yes. You just posted yours, Skinner?"

"Yes, old fat man. I haven't much hope of the five thousand now that you've entered, though, Bunter," said Skinner solemnly.

"He, he, he! Likely you'll win anything, Skinner!" said Bunter derisively. "You are an awful ass wasting half-a-crown like this, Skinner! My list is a
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corker, I can tell you. That five thousand's an absolute cert for me. You'll be sorry now that you didn't accept my offer of a thousand for your help. It's too late now, though."

"Well, you never know your luck, Bunter," said Skinner gravely. "Even duffers like me might win a small prize. We shall know in a few days, I expect. I say, what names have you given, Bunter?"

"He, he, he!" grinned Bunter. "That's telling!"

Popping his envelope into the letter-box, Bunter rolled away, still grinning.

Skinner watched him go reflectively.

"It would be rather a lark to help old Bunter win a prize," he remarked.

"Eh? What d'you mean, Skinner?" asked Stott, who was already rather puzzled at Skinner's manner towards the egregious Bunter.

"I mean what I say. It would be rather a lark to send Bunter a letter saying he'd won a prize, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, but—"

"It could be managed easily, I think," grinned Skinner. "We could type it on Quelch's typewriter, and I'd get my cousin in London to post it from there—what?"

"But—but he'd guess something. It wouldn't be on official notepaper."

"Rubbish! The fat ass would never think of that—and lots of fellows wouldn't, either. My hat! We'll do it. Wouldn't the fat idiot just swank round? He might be wangled into standing feeds and all that—by borrowing on his expectations, as it were. Anyway, it will be a lark! Come on. We'll do it."

"Ha, ha! Yes, but—"

"Come on, and shut up!" grinned Skinner. "Quelch's out at Courtfield, I think. We'll do it now, and I'll post the letter on to my cousin to-night. Think what a sensation it'll cause at Greyfriars when it's known that Bunter has won a whacking great prize!"

"Better not make it too much, though," grinned Snoop. "It might make chaps suspicious at once."

"We won't; we'll just make it a cool hundred quid!" grinned Skinner. "Now, come on!"

Harold Skinner led the way to Mr. Quelch's room. As Skinner expected, he found Mr. Quelch out, but his typewriter was on the table. Skinner soon got busy, with Stott and Snoop keeping cave in the passage outside. And that night a letter went to London—a letter that was to be posted from there to Billy Bunter at Greyfriars, and that was fated to bring joy—for a brief space—to the heart of William George Bunter.

That night, also, as the Remove were disrobing in the dormitory, Bunter spoke seriously to Peter Todd.

"Can you let me have the loan of a postage-stamp, Todd?" he asked. "Despite your shocking meanness, I've managed to get my ticket filled in, and now I want a stamp to send it off with. I hope you won't be so mean as to refuse me this paltry favour."

"Then there's something wrong with your hoping machinery!" said Peter Todd cheerfully. "You won't get a postage-stamp out of me, Bunter."

"Very well, Toddy," said Bunter warningly. "If I get the first prize and Linley doesn't, then don't blame me; it'll all be your fault. Remember that!"

"Eh! What the thump d'you mean, you fat porpoise?"

"Never mind!" said Bunter darkly.

And he rolled into bed, hiding a grin. He had done his best to borrow a stamp, and nobody could blame him as he had

failed. That fact quite settled Bunter's conscience now on the score of Mark Linley's ticket.

How could he send it in without a stamp, when nobody would lend him one or give him one? So Bunter's conscience was quite clear now.

He had done his best, and if Linley's ticket wasn't posted it wouldn't be Bunter's fault. Certainly not!

Bunter dropped asleep with a clear conscience, and Linley's ticket remained crumpled up in his pocket for that night—and many nights after. But Mark Linley wasn't likely to dream of that. He had missed his letter on returning to his study, but he had naturally supposed that one of his chums had kindly posted it for him. It seemed the only possible explanation. Unfortunately, Linley never even thought of Billy Bunter, or another explanation might have occurred to him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Joy for Bunter!

DURING the next few days Billy Bunter fairly haunted the letter-rack—a fact that caused much hilarity in the Remove. Bunter usually was very interested in the letter-rack at any time, but the reason for his eagerness now was perfectly clear to the juniors. Indeed, Billy Bunter made no secret of the fact that he expected a letter from London—a letter acquainting him with the fact that he had won a whacking great prize in the Silver Ring Ballot.

That many thousands of others would be entering such a competition, and that the results were not likely to be made known for some time did not seem to occur to Bunter. And even when Harry Wharton and others kindly pointed that out to him, Bunter refused to believe it or to cease haunting the letter-rack in the hall.

It was on the following Wednesday, just after dinner, that Bunter's patient haunting was rewarded. Rolling into the hall, Bunter suddenly heard his name called, and found Skinner & Co. standing by the letter-rack. There were several other fellows standing near, and they looked round on hearing Skinner.

"Letter for you, Bunter!" called out Skinner carelessly. "Your giddy postal-order come at last, I expect. Here it is."

Bunter rushed forward—just in time to catch the edge of the envelope with his nose as Skinner tossed it over.

"Ow! You beast, Skinner! Whatcher want to pitch it at a chap like that for?"

Grumbling like this, Bunter stooped eagerly, and snatched at the letter which had fallen on the floor. He picked it up, and blinked eagerly at it.

Then he jumped.

The envelope was a business envelope, and the address—"W. G. Bunter, Esq., Greyfriars School, Kent"—was neatly typed. The letter looked very business-like.

"M-mum-my hat!" breathed Bunter.

His eyes fairly shone with sudden excitement.

His pater's office was in London, but Bunter's pater rarely wrote from the office; and he certainly never typed the address. It was obviously not from his pater—Bunter saw that at a glance.

Who could it be from, then?

The Owl of the Remove blinked at the letter. Noting his sudden excitement

the other fellows also blinked at the letter in Bunter's fat paws.

"Open it, Bunter, you ass!" suggested Skinner, hiding a grin.

With a fat, shaking finger, Bunter slit open the envelope, and withdrew a typed letter from it. Then, as his eyes scanned the missive, he jumped again—a foot in the air this time, and yelled:

"Hurrah! Great pip! Hurrah!"

"What the thump—" gasped Coker, who was standing near. "Bunter—"

"Hurrah!"

"What?"

"Hurrah!" roared Bunter, dancing about madly. "Hip-pip-blooming-well-hurrah!"

Bunter danced about the hall like a jumping cracker, still yelling with glee. The fellows stared at him blankly, with the exception of Skinner & Co., who seemed to be highly amused at Bunter's extraordinary antics. Suddenly Skinner stuck out his foot, and Bunter reeled backwards over it, and sat down on the linoleum with a heavy thump.

But Bunter scarcely seemed to feel it. He leaped up again, and continued his dance of joy.

"Well, my hat!"

"What's the matter with the fat ass?"

"He's potty—pottier than ever!"

"Hurrah!" yelled Bunter. "Hip-pip-hurrah!"

At that moment five juniors entered the hall. They were Harry Wharton & Co., and they fairly blinked at Bunter. Harry Wharton caught Bunter suddenly by a fat shoulder, and dragged him to a halt.

"What's the matter, you fat idiot?" he demanded. "Are you potty? You'll have all the school here if you go on kicking up that awful row!"

"Loggo, Wharton!" chortled Bunter, his eyes dancing behind his big spectacles with glee. "Great pi—" A hundred quid! A hundred blessed quidlets! Hurrah!"

"Bunter—"

"Hurrah!" chortled Bunter. "A hundred quid all for nothing! Oh, my hat! It's great—absolutely spiffing!"

"You awful fat idiot—"

"A hundred quid!" gasped Bunter delightedly. "My hat! I told you fellows, didn't I? I knew I'd win a thumping prize!"

"Great pip! You—you don't mean to say you've won a dashed prize in that hospital ballot?" almost yelled Tom Brown.

Bunter ceased his impromptu dancing, breathless and panting, but beaming with joy and happiness.

"Look at it!" he gasped, waving the letter before the eyes of the staring fellows. "A hundred quid! I expected to win the five thousand, but that's good enough to be going on with! He, he, he! What price me now?"

"You—you've won a hundred quid?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Just that," grinned Bunter, his fat features glowing an exultant. "One hundred golden quidlets!"

"Well, the fat fibber!" snorted Coker of the Fifth. "It's utterly impossible, you young duffer! Why, there isn't even a letter for me! Half a minute, though. Just lemme see that letter, Bunter? It may be just a mistake."

He took the letter from Bunter's fat hand. Bunter chuckled and watched Coker's face gleefully, as the Fifth-Former read the letter. Coker was rather slow; it took his powerful brain some time to grasp anything. But he read the letter through at last. Then he snorted, and looked up.

"I thought so," he said. "The silly idiots! It's a mistake—must be!"

"Eh? What d'ye mean, Coker?" said Bunter, with some anxiety. "What—" "It's a mistake," said Coker, looking greatly annoyed. "And yet I wrote my name on the ticket clearly enough. I can't quite make it out. I suppose they mixed my name with this fat idiot's. It's annoying, though!"

Bunter made a sudden grab at the letter.

"Here—look here, Coker!" he howled. "What are you gassing about? That letter's for me, ain't it? And the prize is coming to me! Gimme my letter, you awful beast! Wharton, make him gimme my letter!"

"Hold on! No need to get excited, Bunter! I'm sorry you'll be disappointed. But right's right!" said Coker, shaking his head, his eyes gleaming. "My hat! A hundred quid will come in useful!"

"But it's mine, you beast—the letter's addressed to me!" shrieked Bunter furiously. "Gimme my letter! Can't you see it's addressed to me, you cad!"

"And don't I keep telling you there's been a mistake?" snorted Coker impatiently. "I suppose it can soon be put right, though. I'll write and explain, and they'll send the cheque on to me—see?"

"But it's mine!" shrieked Bunter frantically.

"Rot! Bosh! Haven't I already told you that I entered for the competition?" said Coker, putting great emphasis on the personal pronoun. "Well, that's enough! How can a fat ass like you win a prize—except for over-feeding? Don't be an idiot! The prize is meant for me—must be! Didn't I enter for it? I'm rather disappointed, though. I expected the five thousand. But one must make the best of it, and be thankful for the hundred quid."

"You—you awful—"

Coker held the fuming, almost hysterical Bunter back with a powerful arm.

"That's enough, Bunter!" he said magisterially. "I'm sorry; but there it is. It stands to reason that if there's a prize for Greyfriars, it's for me. You can't get over that. You know I entered, and that should be enough for you. I must say, though, that I'm surprised at people making such a careless mistake. Sheer idiotic slackness!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's amazing attitude proved too much for the juniors, and they howled with laughter—with the single exception of Bunter. Coker always had a great and sublime opinion of his importance and capabilities; but his simple faith in them to win him such a prize was touching. He had entered the competition—that was quite enough! How could he fail to win a prize with his exceptional knowledge and brain-power! And as a prize had come to Greyfriars, and as no other had come to Greyfriars, then it naturally followed that it must be for him. That it had been addressed to Bunter was just a silly mistake—must be! Besides, how could a fat, fatuous idiot like Bunter win a prize? It was unthinkable!

But Bunter did not laugh. He glowered at Horace Coker, his eyes fairly goggling behind his big spectacles. Then he made a frantic rush to grab his letter.

Coker sent him back against the wall, and Bunter howled as the back of his head struck it hard.

"Didn't I tell you that was enough, Bunter?" said Coker, with some exasperation. "No need for any fuss, that I can see! It's just a mistake. I'll take charge of this letter, and write to the silly idiots at once!"

Horace Coker started to walk away. He did not get far, however; Harry Wharton & Co. saw to that. The Remove juniors were greatly amazed and exceedingly puzzled at Bunter's statement of what the letter contained. It seemed too much to swallow—far too much. They would almost have soon believed that the great Coker himself had, indeed, won the prize.

But that was not the point. The letter, whatever it contained, was Bunter's property; it was addressed to Bunter. And they weren't likely to allow a Fifth-Former to walk away with it in that high-handed manner. Not likely!

"Hold on, Coker!" said Harry Wharton grimly, stepping in Coker's path. "Hold on!"

"Eh? What do you kids want?"

"We want you to hand Bunter his letter back, old top!" said Harry. "If you don't, we'll jolly soon make you!"

"You—you'll whatter?" spluttered Coker, frowning. "Here, what's this game? Haven't I told you that it's a mistake? You heard me say the letter was intended for me, didn't you? Well, that's enough. Here, get out of my way, you fags!"

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With that, the great Horace swung Harry Wharton aside, sending him, like Bunter, against the wall with a thump.

That was quite enough for the Removees—more than enough. They were always ready, perhaps, for an excuse to rag Horace Coker, and here was a chance ready to hand with some justification for it.

They swarmed over Coker like an incoming tide, and the burly Fifth-Former vanished beneath them with a surprised howl.

"Here—leggo, you young idiots! Why, I'll jolly well— Yoooop!" roared Coker, as his head struck the linoleum hard. "You young sweeps! Leggo! Potter, Greene—you awful asses! Don't stand there grinning— Yarooooooh! Help! Drag the cheeky young fags off! Why, I'll— Yoooop!"

Crack, crack, crack!

"Wow!"

Coker's head met the floor again and again. Harry Wharton took the letter from his hand, and threw it to Bunter, who was hovering on the fringe of the struggle like a cat on hot bricks, apprehensive of harm coming to his letter.

But though they had recovered the letter and handed it to its rightful owner, the Removees hadn't finished with Horace Coker.

"Teach the silly ass a lesson!" gasped Harry Wharton. "We'll see if he's going to steal Remove fellows' giddy letters. There's much too much Coker here!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Yooooooop! Ow-yow!" roared Coker. "You young cads! I know what it—ow-wow!—is. It's a plant—a plot to collar my—yoooop!—prize! Gerroff me—ow-wow!—chest! Potter, Greene—help, you idiots!"

But Potter and Greene grinned, and strolled out into the quad. Coker had undoubtedly asked for it, and his study-mates were quite glad to see him getting it. There was no help for Coker. His face was rubbed in the dust, and his head rapped again and again on the linoleum. Then, struggling and fuming, he was carried to the top of the School House steps and rolled down them, still roaring threats and fury.

At the bottom he sat up, gasping and panting, and then he jumped up and made a wild charge up the steps. He was promptly collared and rolled down again.

This time he did not attempt another charge. He staggered to his feet, breathing hard, and glared ferociously at the grinning line of Removees awaiting him at the top of the steps.

"Oh, you—you little sweeps!" he panted. "I won't tackle you again! I refuse to lower my dignity by scrapping with a lot of cheeky, grubby fags! But you wait, that's all!"

With that dark threat, Coker picked up his cap, which had been flung out after him, and staggered away in search of his undutiful chums. It was extremely likely that Potter and Greene were booked for a warm time when Coker did catch them up.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Great Expectations!

"POOR old Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was always "poor old Coker!" The fellows were very sorry for Coker, because he was such an awful ass—a fact he was blissfully unconscious of, of course! But their sorrow did not ever prevent them from dealing with the mighty Horace, for all that.

Coker had to be kept in his place for the general good of the community, and also for his own good. A Fifth-Former who persisted in treating Removees as "fags" was not likely to be popular with the Remove, especially a high-handed and heavy-handed individual like Horace Coker.

"Now that awful idiot is disposed of," chuckled Bob Cherry, as the juniors crowded back, laughing, into the Hall, "we'll see what Buntie has to say for himself. If this thumping letter is more of his spoofing—"

"I say, you fellows, it's genuine enough!" grinned Bunter. Now Coker and his claims had been dealt with, Bunter was himself again. "It's an absolute fact that I've won a giddy hundred quid. Look at the letter; isn't it too spiffing for words?"

Harry Wharton took the letter, and as he glanced at it he started. The letter certainly looked very businesslike and official. It was neatly typed, and it was typed on good paper, in the top centre of which was a fairly large monogram in black lettering, the most outstanding letter of which was an "H"; the other letter was a "J."

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton.

He read the letter. It ran as follows:

"St. Jeald's Hospital,
London.

"Dear Sir,—I have the greatest pleasure in acquainting you with the fact that you have succeeded in winning

£100 (one hundred pounds) in our Popular Footballers' Competition, otherwise the Silver Ring Ballot.

"Our representative, Mr. I. M. Renniks, will visit you to-morrow afternoon, at about five o'clock, in order to hand to you the cheque in person.

"May I take this opportunity of congratulating you upon your success?

"Yours faithfully,

"(Signed) W. T. Hops,
"Appeal Secretary.

"W. G. Bunter, Esq.,
"Greyfriars School,
"Kent."

That was the letter. It was no wonder Harry Wharton blinked at it with wide-open mouth. Almost dazedly he handed it round to be read.

"Well?" grinned Billy Bunter.

"Well, my only hat!" gasped Harry.

With varied expressions of amazement, the juniors read the astonishing letter in turn. Then they looked at William George Bunter—now, apparently, a man of wealth.

"Bunter!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "My hat! Fancy an ass like Bunter winning a whacking prize like that!"

"Amazing!"

"Sheer luck, of course!" said Skinner, shaking his head. "Bunter couldn't possibly have won it by skill, or any other way. It's sheer luck—fools' luck!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"I—I suppose it's genuine enough," said Harry Wharton in puzzled wonder. "But it's jolly soon for the results to be announced."

"Yes, rather!"

"But—but there it is," said Bob Cherry. "I suppose they have a thumping big staff to deal with the entries. It—it must be genuine."

Harry Wharton looked at the letter again.

"It's rather queer, for all that," he said, wrinkling his brows. "It—it can't be spoof, I suppose—a practical joke? There's no printed address—it's only typed. But that monogram—it's 'J. H.', certainly, though it's rather a queer way to put it, I think. I suppose hospitals do have crests and monograms and things?"

"Blest if I know!" grinned Bob Cherry. "But it looks like it from that. The 'J.' is for Jeald's, and the 'H.' for hospital, of course."

"I think it's spoof," said Mark Linley in his quiet way. "Anybody might get hold of paper with a monogram like that. The results can't be out yet."

"But the envelope shows the London postmark," said Tom Brown doubtfully. "What about that? If it is spoof it can't be a fellow from Greyfriars, anyway."

"Hardly likely," said Harold Skinner. "It's genuine enough, I think."

"Same here," said Stott seriously. "Just fools' luck! You lucky fellow, Bunter!"

"Of course it's genuine!" said Bunter warmly. "Take no notice of Linley, you fellows. He's jealous—jealous because he hasn't won a prize himself. I'm sorry, Linley," added Bunter, turning to Mark Linley loftily. "I'm sorry you've won nothing, because I know you need the money more than I do, being a poverty-stricken scholarship chap. But there it is—brains and judgment always count. Ability always comes out on top. I'm sorry, but there it is."

"You fat ass—"

Mark Linley turned away, forcing a smile. It was impossible to be really angry with the fat and fatuous Owl of

the Remove. It was also useless. In any case, Linley felt quite certain that disillusionment was coming to Bunter sooner or later. He felt certain that the letter was a hoax.

But few of the other fellows thought so. They knew little or nothing in regard to competitions, and they had never seen a letter from a hospital, so they had nothing to draw comparisons from. The monogram, at all events, gave the letter a very official look. Astonishing as it seemed, the fat and obtuse Billy Bunter had won a prize of one hundred pounds in a competition where some knowledge, if not skill, was required. It seemed astonishing—but there it was!

They crowded round Billy Bunter, congratulating the beaming hero of the hour. A fellow with a hundred quid to throw about was certainly a fellow to be friendly with.

Skinner & Co. were more enthusiastic than anyone to pat Bunter on the back, and to tell him how glad they were and what a really fine fellow they had always thought him.

Skinner & Co. had good reason not to have expectations from Bunter, but they felt it as well to lay it on thickly. Besides, there was always the chance that Bunter might manage to raise cash on the strength of his expectations. In that case—

"Dear old Bunter," said Skinner, linking his arm in that of the fat junior. "I knew you would do it. Billy old man. I'm only astonished that the five thousand hasn't come your way. It must be a mistake, I suppose. Anyway, a hundred quid will be useful."

"He he, he!" chortled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I'm not going to be mean about this. I shall stand a series of extensive feeds when my postal—I mean, when the cheque comes. At the moment I'm rather hard up—stony, in fact. I'd stand you all a feed now if some fellow will loan me a quid or so until five."

Bunter spoke with quiet dignity, and he blinked round him with quiet dignity. There was rather a strained silence. Bunter had certainly got money coming to him, but—but lending the Owl of the Remove money was no joke. Even Bunter's dignity failed to produce the fellow who would loan him a quid.

"It's rather rotten being so short with all that cash coming to me in an hour or so," said Bunter. "However, it doesn't matter at all. Not a bit. Mrs. Mimble will give me credit like a shot when I show her this letter. It's rather exasperating, though, having to humble oneself by asking the mean old cat! I say, Wharton, old fellow, can you lend me ten bob until five?"

Harry Wharton grinned and shook his head.

"Not much," he said flatly.

"What about you, Nugent? You're not such a mean beast as Wharton?"

"I'm meaner," said Franky. "Much meaner, old chap!"

"Beast! What about you, Bull—just until five?"

"Oh, rats! Wait until five, you greedy fat ass!"

"Oh, really, you fellows, I must say I'm rather surprised!" said Bunter sorrowfully. "I'm offering to stand the feed, aren't I? What about you, Browney?"

"Nothing about me, old chap—not a penny."

"You, Cherry?"

"When the cheque comes, Billy," grinned Bob Cherry. "Ask Fishy there, Bunter! Now, Fishy, old chap,

here's a chance to do a bit of business!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Waal," said Fishy T. Fish, the Transatlantic junior, rubbing his long nose reflectively. "I reckon I might do a bit of business with Bunter now you mention it. Yep! If Mrs. Mimble won't give Bunter credit, I kinder guess this hyer galoot will loan him a quid—"

"At a thousand per cent, interest!" grinned Cherry.

"You stow the chin-wag, Cherry," said Fishy, slipping a thin arm in Bunter's. "I reckon this hyer deal's between old Bunter and this critter. Yep! Come along, Bunter."

"Good man, Fishy!" grinned Bunter. "Come along, chaps—my treat! Wharton and Cherry can come along, too—I don't bear malice, you fellows. That's not me. You've treated me rottenly, and you're all mean beasts, but I'll forgive you. I'll overlook your shabby conduct. I'm going to heap coals of fire on your heads now that I've plenty of cash."

"Thanks, Billy!" grinned Harry Wharton. "But I'd rather wait until the hundred quid actually arrives. Come along, chaps!"

And Harry Wharton led the way towards the footer field, his chums and several other fellows following. Few of them doubted the genuineness of the letter, but none of them intended to sponge on Bunter—or, at least, they did not propose to accept his hospitality when it was supplied with borrowed money.

But there were plenty of other fellows who had no such scruples, and they accompanied Bunter willingly enough to the tuckshop, Bunter swanking and crowing at the head of the little procession, and with Fishy and Skinner linking arms with him.

Now Fishy T. Fish had guaranteed the "quid" there was a decidedly good prospect of a feed in the offing, so to speak. And as there were also decidedly good prospects of many more such "feeds" to come—when the cheque did arrive—Bunter's suddenly acquired pals decided to stick to Bunter closer than a brother.

"Now, come on, you fellows!" called Bunter cheerily, as the crowd arrived at the tuckshop. "You'll find there's nothing mean about me. Here we are—pile in, chaps."

"One moment, Master Bunter," said a grim voice.

It was Dame Mimble, and the old tuckshop lady blinked suspiciously—very suspiciously indeed—over the top of her spectacles at Master Bunter and at the swarm of hungry fellows behind him.

"Before I begin to serve anyone, Master Bunter," went on the tuckshop dame, "I wants to know who's going to pay? That's flat, sir."

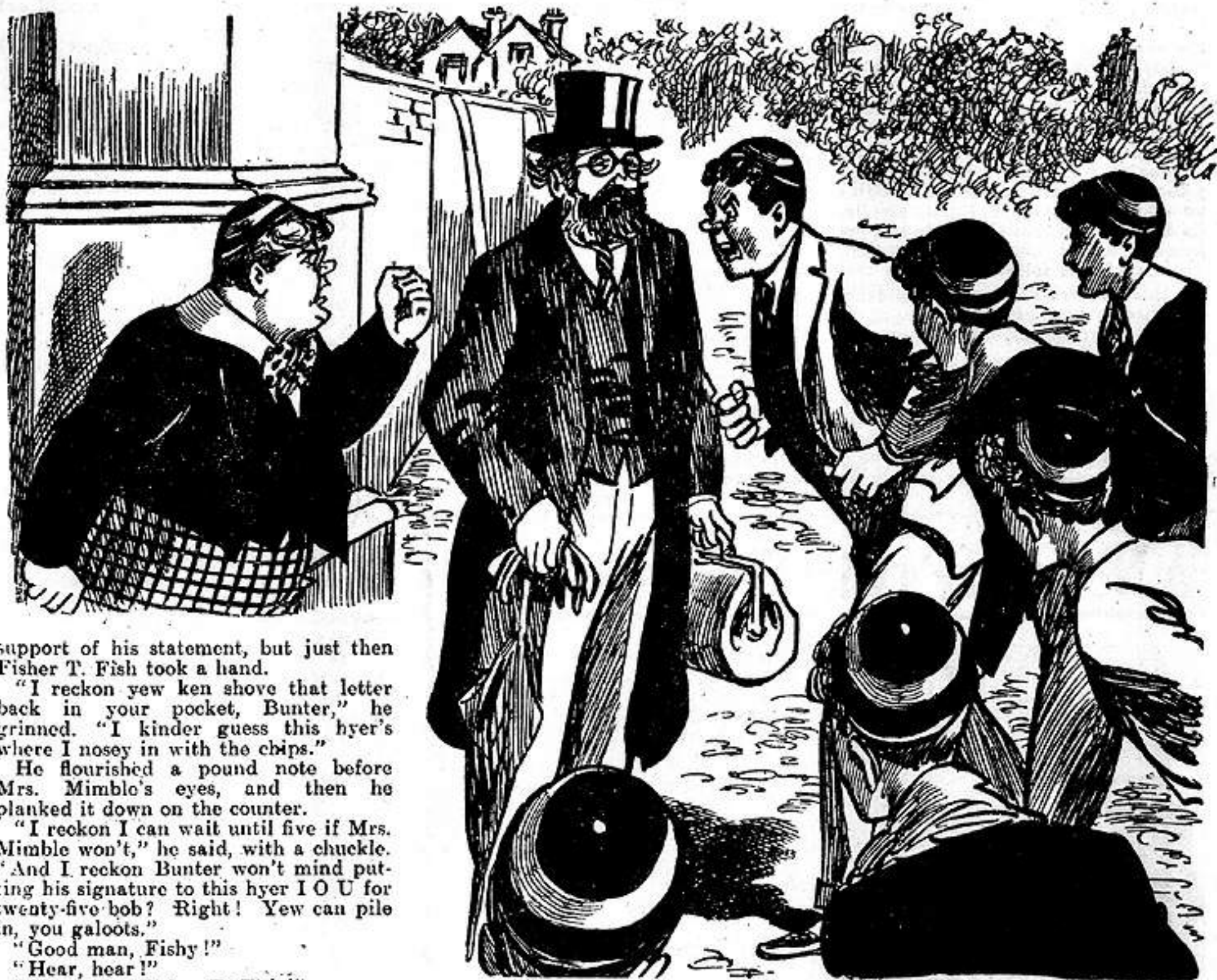
"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble," said Bunter loftily, "I am, of course. At five o'clock I shall have enough quids to buy your stock up, lock, stock, and barrel, Mrs. Mimble."

"That may be," said Mrs. Mimble, with a sniff. "But five o'clock isn't now, Master Bunter. I have had dealings with you before, sir. Unless you can pay cash down, I shall be obliged to refuse to serve any of your friends. You already owe me more than fifteen shillings—"

"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble—"

"Until you've paid me that fifteen shillings, Master Bunter, not a crumb or a drop can you have; and that's flat!"

Bunter gave a snort of indignation. He was about to produce the letter in



support of his statement, but just then Fisher T. Fish took a hand.

"I reckon yew ken shove that letter back in your pocket, Bunter," he grinned. "I kinder guess this hyer's where I nosey in with the chips."

He flourished a pound note before Mrs. Mimble's eyes, and then he planked it down on the counter.

"I reckon I can wait until five if Mrs. Mimble won't," he said, with a chuckle. "And I reckon Bunter won't mind putting his signature to this hyer I O U for twenty-five bob? Right! Yew can pile in, you galoots."

"Good man, Fishy!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Cheers for Fisher T. Fish!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The cheers were given amidst great laughter, and then the company of "galoots" piled in quickly enough. And after loftily signing the I O U for twenty-five shillings, Billy Bunter also piled in with a will.

When the pound note was exhausted, Fisher T. Fish eagerly produced another at the same rate of interest as the first. Like Skinner & Co., the Transatlantic man of business felt that he was on a "good thing."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Representative!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What the thump—"

"What's on now?" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Something on, without a doubt," said Harry Wharton, nodding. "Bunter seems— Oh, I see! It's Bunter's hundred quids," added Harry, with a laugh. "The chaps are waiting for that giddy representative to turn up."

"That's it!"

The Famous Five had just come in from footer practice, ruddy and cheery and hungry. They were surprised to find a big crowd of fellows—mostly Removites, but with quite a sprinkling of seniors among them—waiting by the gates—or, rather, they were surprised until the explanation dawned upon Harry Wharton.

"Come on, chaps," he grinned. "I'm jolly curious to see that giddy representative."

"Hold on, sir!" roared Horace Coker. "Before you hand over the hundred quid to Bunter, I want you to listen to me." "Really, but, but—" "There's a silly mistake, sir," went on Coker. "That hundred quid ought to have come to me." "Indeed," murmured the rusty gentleman. "And why, pray?" "Because I entered for that competition as well as Bunter!" explained Coker. (See Chapter 6.)

"You think it's spoof?" ejaculated Frank Nugent.

"Well, that letter seemed genuine enough," said Harry Wharton. "But—but a fat ass like Bunter winning a hundred quid wants some swallowing. I can't help feeling that there's something fishy about it. Anyway, we'll soon know."

With that Harry Wharton led his chums towards the gates and they joined the crowd there—a crowd that was growing every minute. The fact that Billy Bunter—that fat ass, Bunter!—had won a big prize in a competition, had caused a sensation, and in addition to Harry Wharton there were quite a number of "doubting Thomases." But both believers and unbelievers were curious and eager to see the arrival of the representative and the handing over of the hundred pounds.

Foremost amongst the crowd in the old gateway was the hero of the hour—Billy Bunter, to wit—and his fat face was swelled with importance, and ablaze with excitement, as he blinked out along Friardale Lane.

"I say, you fellows," he said, "I wish the chap would buck up. I'm getting jolly hungry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to laugh at so far as I can

see," said Bunter, with some dignity. "I might tell you fellows that that little snack I stood in the tuckshop this afternoon is only the beginning. When I get the hundred quid I'm going to stand the biggest spread that ever was. I shall engage the village institute for the celebration, and I shall invite every fellow at Greyfriars to the spread. There's nothing mean about me, you know."

"Nor lean," murmured Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I shall refuse to invite you if you don't treat me with proper respect. My hat! I say, you fellows, who's this coming along?"

Bunter's dignified reproof ended in an excited question as the fat youth glimpsed a figure approaching down the lane. It was that of a stranger—and rather a queer-looking stranger. He was short, and ancient apparently, and he wore long hair and a beard, in addition to a rusty pair of black trousers, a rusty frock-coat, and an equally rusty silk hat; he also carried a rusty-looking handbag and a green umbrella of ancient design.

"Great pip!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What a guy! That can't be the chap, Bunter. He'd come in a taxi, anyway."

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But Bob Cherry proved to be wrong there.

The swarm of fellows blinked curiously at the ancient figure as he approached.

"He's coming here, chaps," breathed Bunter.

He was. The rather shabby-looking individual approached the gates, blinking about him short-sightedly through a huge pair of spectacles that rivalled Billy Bunter's own in size. He stopped before the crowd, and blinked genially at the Greyfriars fellows.

"Is this Greyfriars School?" he asked in a curiously high-pitched voice.

A score of voices acquainted him with the fact that it was.

"I am exceedingly gratified to hear it," said the stranger. "The walk from the station was much longer than I had—hum!—anticipated, or I would have engaged a taxi. However, would one of you young gentlemen kindly inform me

"Hold on!" he exclaimed grimly. "Hold on, sir. Before you hand over the hundred quid to this fat idiot, Bunter, I want you to listen to me."

"Really! But—but—"

"I'll explain," said Coker, glaring round as a few chuckles went up. "There's been a silly mistake, sir; that hundred quid ought to have come to me."

"Indeed!" murmured the rusty gentleman. "And why, pray?"

"Because I entered for that competition as well as Bunter," explained Coker. "See?"

Coker uttered that as if it quite explained the situation. He—Horace Coker of the Fifth—had entered for the competition, therefore the prize should have come to him if anybody. That much was obvious to Coker.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Renniks, in some alarm. "If there has been a mistake—"

—they did not see why they should get ragged in Coker's cause.

But before anything further could take place, Mr. Renniks intervened, with upraised hand. His eyes were gleaming queerly.

"One moment, boys!" he called, his voice sounding excited. "Did I hear you refer to this—this youth's name as Croaker, or Coker?"

"Coker, sir!"

"Coker—the silly ass!"

"Coker—the born idiot!"

A dozen voices assured Mr. Renniks—with many remarks, uncomplimentary to Coker—that Coker's name was, indeed, Coker.

"Bless my soul!" gasped the rusty-looking gentleman, blinking down at the grovelling, fuming Fifth-Former. "So—so this is Joker—I mean to say, Coker—so this is the fortunate fellow. Pray allow him to rise, boys, in order that I may tender my hearty congratulations."

"Great pip!"

"What the thump—"

So astonished were the juniors that they released Horace Coker, thus allowing him to rise. So astonished also was Horace himself that he did not think of vengeance—he just blinked at Mr. Renniks.

That gentleman looked at Coker almost with reverence.

"My dear, fortunate fellow," exclaimed Mr. Renniks effusively, taking Coker's hand and pumping it up and down, "pray allow me to congratulate you on your exceedingly great good fortune. It is not given to many persons to win five thousand pounds at one fell swoop."

"Oh, great pip!"

There was a buzz of excited exclamations at that. Coker gaped.

"Five thousand pounds?" he stammered dazedly. "Wha-what d'you mean? I—I don't understand!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Renniks. "You do not understand, you say? Strange—very strange! Your name is Coker?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Horace Coker?"

"Yes, yes—Horace Coker. I entered for the competition!" stammered Coker eagerly, almost frantically.

"And you have not received a letter—a communication acquainting you with the fact that you had won this great, this enormous prize, Master Coker?"

Horace Coker licked his lips—he was almost trembling with excitement.

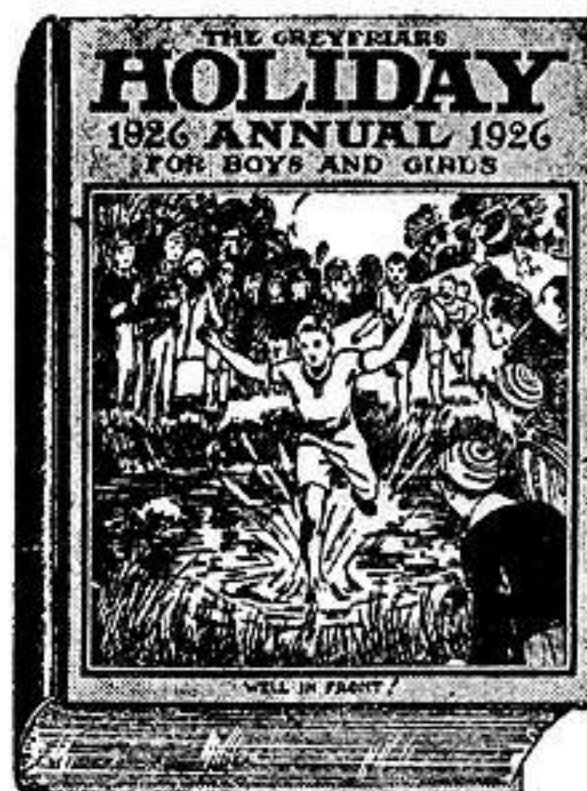
"No!" he gulped. "But—but I knew there was a mistake. It—it looks as if it is a bigger mistake than I had supposed, sir. Great Scott! Do you mean to say—"

"It is strange—very strange!" murmured Mr. Renniks, rubbing his rather long nose thoughtfully. "Possibly the letter has been delayed in the post—possibly not. It should have come by the same post as Master Bunter's communication. Strange—very strange! And you have heard nothing of your great good fortune, Master Coker?"

"Nun-nunno! Not a word!" gasped the bewildered Coker. "Is—is it—can it be true?"

"My dear fellow, I can quite understand that the great news has overwhelmed you. I am exceedingly gratified that I am honoured by being the first to congratulate you, however. Though my object in visiting Greyfriars was, of course, in order to hand Master Bunter his more modest prize, yet I was hoping I should also have the opportunity of seeing you and congratulating you in person on behalf of the—the committee."

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as to the whereabouts of a boy named Bunter—William George Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Here he is—larger than life!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, here I am!" grinned Billy Bunter cheerily. "Are you Mr.—Mr. Renniks?"

"That is my name," said the stranger, beaming at Billy Bunter. "And you are Master Bunter—hey? I see it is quite unnecessary for me to explain what my visit to this school means?"

"Quite!" grinned Bunter. "You—you've brought the hundred quid, sir."

"Exactly! You are an exceedingly fortunate youth, Master Bunter. Before presenting you with the hundred pounds, however, Master Bunter, I should like to—"

Mr. Renniks paused as a rugged-featured senior pushed past the gleeful Billy Bunter and faced him.

It was Horace Coker; and in addition to looking wrathful, the great Horace was looking very determined.

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"Don't you believe him!" hooted Billy Bunter, glowering hungrily at Coker. "The awful rotter is only trying to rob me of the hundred quid. I say, you fellows, don't let that Fifth Form beast rob me!"

"I reckon Coker had better keep off the grass," said Fishy warmly.

"Hear, hear! You clear out, Coker!"

"That's it, you fellows, make him clear out!"

"Why, you fat ass!" snorted Coker. He made a stride towards Bunter, but Snoop placed a foot in the way, and Coker sprawled over it. He jumped up again, and made a savage rush at Snoop.

"Back up, Remove!" yelled Snoop, dodging frantically.

And the Removites backed up quickly enough. A dozen hands grasped Coker, and he went crashing down with a furious howl. In the grasp of the grinning Removites he lay there struggling furiously and yelling for help to his henchmen, Potter and Greene. But Potter and Greene had discreetly retired



THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 255.

HARRY WHARTON, EDITOR

January 2nd, 1926.



New Year News!

By Bob Cherry



HOW tempus does fugit, to be sure! Here we are on the threshold of 1926, and I shall soon begin to feel an old man, if Time whizzes along at this rate! I really think that Father Time ought to be had up in the police-courts for exceeding the speed limit. He is the world's biggest road-hog.

NEW YEAR'S EVE is always celebrated in great style at Greyfriars. There is a big banquet laid out in the dining-hall (loud cheers from Billy Bunter!), and we are allowed to go to bed much later than usual. Certain privileged ones are even permitted to stay up until midnight, in order to see the New Year in. As for the others, they don't forget to tumble out of bed and cheer, when the bells ring out their merry message. It is the time-honoured custom for the Head to climb to the top of the old tower, and supervise the bell-ringing. The Greyfriars bells are very ancient and rusty, but they still give out plenty of good music. In fact, they rank amongst the most famous bells in the county of Kent.

MOST of the Greyfriars fellows have already jotted down their New Year Resolutions in their notebooks. I have been privileged to peep at some of these resolutions, and they are comical in the extreme. Harry Wharton says he is going to give up smoking—a very easy resolve to keep, for Harry never smokes! But perhaps he means he is going to give up smoking herrings at the study fire!

BILLY BUNTER is going to give up eating. Don't collapse, dear reader! Bunter doesn't mean that he is going to be a total abstainer from tuck. He simply means that he is going to give up worrying, in the New Year, because worrying makes him so thin. In other words, he is going to stop eating his heart out with worry!

IT would be a jolly good idea if Lord Mauleverer gave up eating, too. Eating the bread of idleness, I mean. But I suppose this is rather too much to expect of the Remove's champion slacker. Mauly complains that he didn't get nearly enough rest in 1925, and he means to make up the arrears of slumber in the New Year. If Mauly had his own

way, he would go to sleep on January 1st, and not open his eyes again till December 31st. Then he would wish everybody a Happy New Year, and turn over and go to sleep again!

SOME fellows consider that 1926 will be an unlucky year, because it starts on a Friday, and Friday is generally supposed to be an ill-omened day. But the average healthy-minded fellow has no use for superstition—or, as old Gosling calls it, superscription! Personally, I see no reason why 1926 should not be a happy and prosperous year for all and sundry. Anyway, I hope it has heaps of happiness and good things in store for the readers of these Notes.

Seeing the New Year In!



THE old Head climbed the lofty tower; The ringers rang by two, by three. "Pull as you never pulled before! Good ringers, pull your best!" quoth he.

"Play up, play up, O Greyfriars bells! Play all your changes, all your swells! Ring out your merry minstrelsy!"

We stood and cheered within the dorm, Our faces to the windows pressed; The winter night was none too warm, And we were only partly dressed. The moon had raised her lamp on high; The stars were swarming in the sky, And only Mauly was at rest.

We cheered till we were hoarse that night; The noise of bells went sweeping by. We marked the lofty blaze of light Stream from the school tower, red and high.

And still the bells were pealing forth, Their echoes sounding south and north, Announcing the New Year was nigh.

They rang the Old Year out for good; They rang the New Year in with joy. They made their message understood By every list'ning Greyfriars boy. "A glad New Year to one and all! And dauntless hearts, whate'er befall, And happy days without alloy!"

The distant bells of Courtfield town Floated and mingled with our own; And then that cheery youth, Tom Brown, Made merry with his gramophone. "The Miner's Dream of Home" it played, And some were laughing, some dismayed, While some stood silent and alone.

So Nineteen-Twenty-Five is dead, And Nineteen-Twenty-Six is here! No tears of sorrow will be shed To mark the passing of the year. With eager hope our eyes we fix On new-born Nineteen-Twenty-Six, And hail its advent with a cheer!

EDITORIAL!



EXIT the year 1925 from the stage of time! Enter 1926 with a flourish of trumpets! At all events, some of us will welcome it with trumpets. The fag fraternity will hail its advent with mouth-organs and tin-whistles.

The Famous Five of the Remove have found the Old Year quite a good sort, but to others it has been baneful. Wingate of the Sixth, for instance, will not look back on 1925 with any enthusiasm. The popular Sixth-Former has had a very rough passage—thanks to his young scamp of a brother in the Third. It has been a dark time for old Wingate; but now that he has won back the captaincy of Greyfriars, we hope the future will be full of brightness for him.

Billy Bunter declares that the year of grace 1925 has been the year of disgrace, so far as the fat junior is concerned. On every single day of the 365, Bunter has found himself in hot water. (Don't run away with the notion that he has been taking hot baths!) Bunter's grievances against the year 1925 would fill a good-sized catalogue. He has received no end of buffetings and bumpings and biffings. But the Owl of the Remove should blame himself for these calamities—not the Old Year!

Lord Mauleverer is also angry with 1925. He says it owes him nearly a thousand hours of sleep! Mauly considers that we should go to bed an hour earlier, and get up an hour later, and also have a siesta of half an hour after dinner. This would give us an extra two and a half hours' sleep per day, which works out at nearly a thousand hours per year.

Well, there never was a year that gave complete satisfaction to everybody, and I don't suppose there ever will be. The year 1926 seems full of bright promise at the moment, but I expect a good many people will be thankful when the New Year has run its course.

Some of my chums have written to ask me my opinion of New Year resolutions. Are they worth while, or merely a waste of time? Of course, there is only one answer to that. Every worthy resolution is worth while, even though we set ourselves an ideal we cannot possibly live up to. We shall at least be the better for having made an effort.

There is a Greek word which often crops up in the Form-room—the word "static." It means to "mark time"—to rest on our laurels. Fellows who are content to be static, either physically or mentally, will never get anywhere. The opposite word to static is dynamic, which means action and go-aheadness. Bob Cherry is a dynamic; Lord Mauleverer is a static. I like old Mauly, with all his faults; but when it comes to choosing between a static fellow and a dynamic one, give me the latter every time. It's the dynamic fellow who will make headway in the New Year. He will make resolutions, and fight tooth and nail to keep them. But the static fellow won't bother to make any New Year resolutions at all, and he will be the poorer for not doing so.

A Right Happy and Prosperous New Year to you all! HARRY WHARTON.



The Head's Rezzolution!

Dicky Nugent

A Laughable Story
of St. Sam's.

"MIGHT a bloke drop in?" It was the grave and reverend headmaster of St. Sam's who spoke. His long beard was thrust round the door of Bounder's study in the Sixth Form passidge.

Bounder of the Sixth, who was sitting at tea with his two cronies, Blade and Gower, looked jolly uncomfortable. He had good reasons for not wanting the Head to drop in just then. The gay dogs of the Sixth intended to enjoy a quiet game of nap after tea, as well as a convivial cigarette. But if the Head inflicted his unwelcome society on them these little enjoyments would be "off."

The Head did not wait for Bounder to answer his question. He hobbled into the study on his creaking hinges, and dumped his venerable self into a chair.

"Pass the muffins, Bounder!" he said leniently.

Bounder passed the dish with a shaking hand. He was dreadfully afraid that the Head's glance would wander to the mantelpiece, on which stood a box of cigarettes and a pack of playing-cards. If the Head were to see these cymbals of vice, the fat would be in the fire. It would mean the "long jump" for Bounder, Blade, and Gower. They would be expelled from St. Sam's for a cert.

The Head didn't seem to notice the agitation of his hosts. He pitched into the muffins with noisy relish. As luck would have it, he was sitting with his back to the mantelpiece.

Prezantly, however, the Head started to stare round the study.

"A very tastefully furnished apartment!"

he murmured. "It does you credit, Bounder!"

Bounder turned pale.

"Pip-pip-please don't look at the mantelpiece, sir!" he stuttered. "It—it hasn't been dusted, and I'm afraid it's fearfully untidy."

The very mention of the mantelpiece caused the Head's keen glance to turn in that direction.

"H'm! Do my aged eyes deceive me, or is that a pack of playing-cards?" he asked.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Blade promptly. "They are picture-postcards, sir. You see, I collect them."

"Might a cove have a squint at them?" inquired the Head, with interest.

"Nunno, sir!" said Blade, again. "They—they're not worth looking at, really. They are just ordinary pictures of kings and queens, and clubs and spades."

"And what's in that box?" demanded the Head, pointing to the box of cigarettes.

"Chocklits, sir!" said Gower at once.

"Indeed! I may say that I am very fond of chocklits," said the Head. "Although I am toothless, I have a very sweet tooth. Pass them over!"

The Sixth-Formers groaned, and exchanged glances of dismay. It was Bounder who saved the situation.

"I—I shouldn't touch those chocks, sir, if I were you," he said. "They're old and stale. My fag pinched one the other day, and it poisoned him!"

"Great pip!" gasped the Head.

And he went on with his muffins. The seniors congratulated themselves on their narrow escape.

When tea was over, the Head turned to his hosts with a beaming smile.

"I wish you all a Happy New Year, my

boys!" he said kindly. "I hope it will rain prosperity in large and hefty drops in 1926! You will be interested to know that I have a New Year rezzolution."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said the seniors in a respectful chorus.

"I have come to the conclusion," went on the Head, "that I was too lofty and superior in 1925. I have ridden the high horse, and stood on my dignity, and all that sort of thing. I've strutted and swanked far too much!"

"Yes; we've noticed that, sir," said Bounder.

"From now onwards," said the Head, "I'm going to be friendly and sociable—one of the boys, as you would say. I'm not going to be so strait-laced and severe in future. Like the sellybrated Nelson, I shall view any breeches of the rules with a blind eye."

"Oh, good, sir!" said Bounder. "How about a game of nap?"

"The very thing!" said the Head. Then, with a sly wink at Blade, he added: "Produce your pack of picture-postcards, Blade!"

The table was cleared, and Blade shuffled the cards.

"I think I should like to smoke one of your chocklits, too, Gower!" said the Head, with another wink.

And Gower handed the cigarettes round, amid shouts of laughter.

The study door was locked, and the party settled down to their game of nap. They played for penny points, which duzzent sound very egg-siting. But it is possible to win—or lose—quite a lot of munny, even when such small stakes are played for.

Of course, Bounder & Co. were familiar with the marked cards, and the Head wasn't. As a rezzult, he began to lose heavily, and he got more and more annoyed as the game went on. Finally, when he had lost about eighteenpence he sprang to his feet, his face livid with rage.

"You young rascals!" he stormed. "Gambling and smoking are strictly against the rules of the school, and you know it! You will all appear before me in Big Hall to-morrow morning, and be soundly flogged!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bounder. "But—but what about your New Year rezzolution, sir?"

"Kanselled!" said the Head curtly.

And he stamped furiously out of the study, leaving the black sheep of the Sixth gaping at each other, with feelings too deep for words.

THE END.



Some New Year Resolutions!

(EDITOR'S NOTE.—In the rush of going to press, the following Resolutions seem to have got slightly mixed; but my readers will be able to sort them out for themselves.)

GERALD LODER:

My New Year resolution is to give up the pernicious practice of smoking cigarettes and indulging in card-parties with my fellow-seniors, Walker and Carne. I shall also be less free with my ashplant, and will be kind and considerate to my faithful fag instead of booting him round the study. My feud with the Remove Form will cease, and I shall plot no more dastardly plots to deprive old Wingate of the captaincy of Greyfriars.

ALONZO TODD:

There is scarcely any need for me to form any New Year resolutions, for I am already a paragon of all the virtues. My Uncle Benjamin calls me a little angel. My sole resolution, therefore, is to purchase a pair of wings, so that I shall look the part. I will always obey my kind teachers, and be a "model" to all those who wish to run "on straight lines."

WILLIAM GOSLING:

Wot I says is this 'ere. There ain't goin' to be no slackin' or slouchin' on my part in the New Year. I shall go about my dooties

like a willin' 'oss, as ever was! I shall potter about the Close with my broom, sweepin' away the snow, an' I shall run errands smartly an' willingly. Furthermore an' moreover, I shall drink nothin' but cold, clear water fresh from the crystal spring; an' the various bottles I possess, labelled "Old Tom," I shall throw out of my parlour window. I shall be the most perfect porter that ever carried a portmanteau on 'is roomaticky shoulders!

THE HEAD:

I have resolved to continue to govern Greyfriars wisely and well in the New Year. A headmaster's post is a most exacting one and abounds with difficulties; but I shall not shirk my multifarious responsibilities. My most unpalatable task is that of administering a public flogging, and I sincerely hope that these unpleasant functions will be few and far between in the New Year.

HARRY WHARTON:

My New Year resolution, as Editor of the "Greyfriars Herald," is to make our little

journal better and brighter than ever. I shall keep my contributors up to the mark and permit no slacking. I shall also throw myself heart and soul into my duties as captain of the Remove.

DICKY NUGENT:

My new year rezzolution is to write lots and lots of ripping, gripping stories about St. Sam's. everybody admits that my yarns are the best features in the "Herald." they lick the editorial into a cocked hat! you would never believe, from the brilliant and mature stile of the orther, that they were written by a fag in the second, would you?

BILLY BUNTER:

I have made a resolution to give up eating such enormous meals. I have grown disgustingly fat through over-feeding, and my study-mate, Peter Todd, says that I am liable to burst with a loud report at any moment. In the New Year I shall take only six meals a day instead of the usual dozen. I'm going to ration myself as if it was war-time. No more orgies in the dining-hall; no more little snacks at the tuckshop counter. I'm going to turn over a new leaf; and this time next year I hope to be as slim and scraggy as that fellow Skinner!

HAROLD SKINNER:

My New Year resolution is to get as plump as the famous Fat Boy of Peckham! I'm fed-up with being sneered at and jeered at on account of being so painfully thin. My nickname is "Skinny," and I don't like it. I'd rather be called "Tubby" or "Barrel" any day. I didn't take nearly enough nourishment in 1925; but I shall make amends in the New Year by gorging and stuffing until my figure is as ample as that of Billy Bunter.

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(Continued from
page 13.)

duffer like Horace Coker had won five thousand pounds.

It really was a little too much to swallow. Whether the letter to Bunter was spoof they had their doubts, most of them. But very few had any doubts regarding the "representative," however. Who the old "joss" could be they hadn't the faintest idea—most of them, at least. But he was a "spoof" —there was little doubt about that. Hence the ironical cheers and laughter.

But they all followed Horace Coker, nevertheless. A free "feed" was not to be picked up every day.

"Come on, ass!" chuckled Bob Cherry, as Harry Wharton hung back. "Fall in with Coker!"

"But—but can't you see it's spoof, you ass!" grinned Harry. "That merchant—"

"Of course, it's spoof," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Why worry about that? It isn't often we get a tuck-in at Coker's expense. Make the most of it, chaps!"

"Oh, all right!" laughed Harry. "Might as well! I fancy I can guess who that merchant is. I spotted the clobber at once. It's been pinched from the Remove Dramatic Society's property-box."

"Great Scott! Then—"

"It's that ass, Skinner!" grinned Harry. "I notice Stott and Snoop are here; but Skinner seems to be absent—see?"

"Phew! That's it!" grinned Frank Nugent.

"What's the odds?" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Coker was born to have his silly leg pulled. Come on! We're on in this!"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

With that, the Famous Five rushed after the procession. Coker always had plenty of cash to throw about, and they knew how open-handed he was when he did stand a feed. They did not intend to miss it. Though they had lagged behind, Harry Wharton & Co. were among the first fellows to squeeze into the tuckshop at the heels of Coker and Mr. Renniks.

Mrs. Mimble stared at the swarm of fellows as they crowded into her shop. She gasped, and blinked over the top of her spectacles in great astonishment, and no little alarm.

"What—what—Master Coker!" she gasped.

"I'm standing a spread, ma'am," explained Coker, loftily and carelessly. "Just let these youngsters have what they want. I'll stand it. This gentleman is my guest. Please serve him first, Mrs. Mimble."

"Oh! Oh, yes, Master Coker!" gasped the old dame. "Certainly, Master Coker!"

Coker threw a fiver on the counter with a careless motion. Then he leaned on the counter, and waved a hand with a magnificent air.

"Pile in, kids!" he said.

"What—ho!"

"Good old Coker!"

The "kids" piled in with a will. Coker

turned his attention to "Mr. Renniks"—who was already disposing of a jam-tart, and who had not waited to be told to "pile in" by Coker. The representative appeared to be very hungry. Coker noted the fact, and gave all his attention after that to seeing that his wants were supplied. Coker was feeling very kindly disposed indeed towards Mr. Renniks—to everyone, in fact. A fellow with five thousand of the best coming to him could afford to be generous and kindly.

Coker did not eat himself; he was far too excited for that. His brain was in a whirl, and it all seemed like a dream. He had fully expected to win the big prize—having entered for the competition—but now he knew that he had won it, he could scarcely realise his good fortune. Amidst the clamour of cheery voices and laughter around him, and the busy champing of hungry jaws, Coker leaned on the counter and beamed about him almost vacantly. He wondered if he would wake up every second and find it was, indeed, a dream.

"Two more ginger-pops, Mrs. Mimble!"

"Lemonade for me, ma'am!"

"Hand over those jam-tarts! Great pip! They're nearly all gone!"

"Here, give someone else a chance, Bulstrode!"

"Bung those cream-buns this way, Toddy!"

"More chocolate-biscuits, Mrs. Mimble!"

"Oh, dear! Do wait a moment, Master Cherry!"

The old tuckshop dame scarcely knew whether she was on her head or her heels. She rushed about flustered and dazed by the clamour of voices all calling upon her at once to serve them. But she gave it up at last; she allowed the fellows to help themselves, having lost count long ago. She knew what stock she had—and Horace Coker was paying!

The shop was almost crammed to suffocation by this time. It was next to impossible to eat a cream-bun without getting it squashed over one's features, or drink a glass of lemonade without getting it swamped over one's waistcoat. Accidents were frequent, but taken in good part by all and sundry.

Crash, crash, crash!

"Yarooooop! Oh crumbs!"

In an effort to reach the last jam-tart on a dish, Billy Bunter brought a stack of biscuit-tins crashing down. But the fellows only laughed heartily—excepting those upon whose heads the tins crashed.

"Oh, do be careful, Master Bunter!" wailed Mrs. Mimble.

"Oh dear! Groogh! Ow-wow! Oh, my napper!" groaned Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even Bunter joined in the laughter this time, though he rubbed his head ruefully. But he could afford to make light of a little accident like that. He was in fine fettle, and the way he "shifted" the good things was a sight to see. It was the second free feed Bunter had had that day, and it was only the beginning of great times for Billy Bunter. With a hundred quid to spend, Bunter saw visions of endless and gorgeous feeds stretching out before him. Certainly, Mr. Renniks did not seem in a hurry to hand the cheque over. But it was only a matter of minutes now;

the "representative" could not go on eating and drinking as he was doing for much longer. Indeed, it struck even Coker as rather surprising what a taste the elderly gentleman had for jam-tarts and ginger-beer.

But Mr. Renniks laid down an empty glass at last with a sigh of deep satisfaction. He shook his head as Horace Coker held out a plate of cream-horns temptingly before him.

"No more, Master Croaker—I should say Coker; nothing more, thank you, my dear boy," he murmured. "I feel a new man now—like a giant refreshed, you know. And now to business!"

It was coming now, without a doubt. Billy Bunter pushed his way nearer the representative, even leaving a meat-pie he had been devouring in his eagerness. A hush fell as Mr. Renniks cleared his throat noisily, as if about to begin a speech before presenting the cheque to Billy Bunter.

"Now, Master Bunter," exclaimed the elderly gentleman, taking from his bag a large, blue envelope with a flourish, "I will perform what is to me a very—ahem!—pleasant duty. You have waited very patiently, but now your patience will be rewarded."

"He, he, ho!" Bunter cackled, almost hysterically, as he held out a fat hand.

"Before performing that pleasant duty, however," resumed Mr. Renniks, patting Bunter's shoulder cheerily, "I must, of course, ask permission from your headmaster before handing such a sum to a schoolboy."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"I will now, while you boys are finishing your—ahem!—repast, visit the school authorities, and request permission to hand you the cheque," smiled the representative. "I will then return here immediately to hand you the cheque, Master Bunter."

"Oh, crumbs!"

Billy Bunter's fat face was a picture of dismay. He knew only too well what would happen if the authorities heard of the cheque. They would certainly never allow it to be handed to a junior like Bunter; far from it. They would either send it to his father, or bank it, awaiting his father's instructions regarding it—for his own good, of course.

But Bunter did not see any good in that course at all. He wanted the hundred pounds to do with as he liked.

"Oh, dear!" he gasped, in deep dismay. "I—I say, sir, gimme it now, please! Never mind the Head! He—he won't mind. I—I think he'll be angry if you disturb him on such a—a paltry matter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Renniks shook his head smilingly, while the Removites roared.

"Dear me, that would never do, Master Bunter," he murmured. "I could not risk offending the school authorities in that manner. It is only a matter of a few minutes, my dear boy. Pray continue your repast until I return."

With that, Mr. Renniks started to make for the door. He had only taken a couple of steps, however, when he paused abruptly, his eyes fixed on the quad outside. Through the open window he had glimpsed a couple of figures approaching the tuckshop—a couple of well-known Greyfriars figures.

They were Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, and Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Mr. Renniks.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Such an exclamation, coming from the elderly gentleman in a decidedly boyish voice, was too much for the juniors, and they roared.

ANSWERS
Every Saturday — PRICE 2s

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Disappointing!

"**H**A, ha, ha!" roared the crowd. But Mr. Renniks did not join them. He stared out through the window for a brief moment, a rather anxious expression on his be-whiskered features, and then he started for the door again—this time with a rush, scattering the laughing fellows to right and left.

It was just then that Bolsover major took a hand—or, rather, a foot—in the game. Like Harry Wharton & Co., Bolsover had been suspicious from the first, and by this time he had a fairly good suspicion as to the real identity of "Mr. Renniks," and he wanted to make sure. Bolsover major had a peculiar brand of humour of his own.

As the "representative" rushed past him, Bolsover shoved his foot out swiftly, tripping him up. Mr. Renniks stumbled on hands and knees, but was up again in a flash.

Bolsover acted like lightning again. He grabbed the old gentleman with one powerful hand, and with the other he snatched at his mop of white hair.

The hair and the beard came away, and fell to the floor, revealing a youthful face and head, still covered in grease-paint and other make-up, but easily recognisable.

There arose a howl:

"Skinner!"

"Great pip!"

"Skinner! My hat! It's Skinner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The yell of laughter could have been heard at Friardale.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Skinner. "Leggo! Lemme go, Bolsover, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was Harold Skinner—there was no doubt about that. Even Coker and Billy Bunter saw that now. They did not join in the hilarious laughter, however. They stared and stared, almost petrified with amazement and growing fury.

Billy Bunter almost dropped in sheer dismayed astonishment. Coker's rugged face, growing redder and redder, was a sight to see.

"S-Skinner!" he stuttered. "S-Skinner! Then—then it's all spoo!"

"It is—it arc, Coker, old dear!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Can you really see that, Coker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Skinner!" gulped Coker. "Then—then there's no five thousand for me, after all!"

"Go hon!"

"Great pip!" gasped Coker. "Pulling my leg—me! A—cheeky, insolent spoo! My hat! P-pup-playing a dashed trick like this on me—me, a Fifth Form chap! It—it's Skinner all the time, and I've been waiting on him hand and foot—feeding the little beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Feeding the little cad!" howled Coker, in a sudden burst of rage and excitement. "He—a dashed spoo on me! Pulling my dashed leg—hey? Why, I'll—I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Horace Coker in that horrible moment of awakening. But actions did not fail him. He made a sudden blind rush at the startled Skinner, and the cad of the Remove howled:

"Yaroooh! Keep him off, chaps! Back me up! Haven't I got you a—yooop!—free feed? Keep—Yoooop!"

One of Coker's huge fists tapped Skinner's long nose hard. Skinner sat down violently. But he was up again in a flash, and in the confusion round

the doorway of the tuckshop he just managed to dodge Coker's furious clutch, and then he went through the doorway, sending the hilarious juniors flying to right and left.

"Go it, Skinner!"

"On the ball, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Like a jack-in-a-box, Harold Skinner shot out of the tuckshop, and the irate Coker leapt out after him, yelling threatnings and slaughter. After the two swarmed the crowd of laughing juniors. Unfortunately, Skinner had quite forgotten the fact that Mr. Quelch and Wingate had been approaching the tuckshop, while Coker was blissfully ignorant of the fact.

Skinner met Mr. Quelch just outside the doorway, and Mr. Quelch reeled back with a gasp before the violent concussion—only just being saved from falling by Wingate's ready hand.

"What—what—"

"Got you!" roared Coker.

In his rage and excitement Horace Coker quite failed to glimpse anyone but Skinner, and he sprang on that joker with a yell, and bore him crashing down.

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

"Yooop! Help! Rescue, chaps! Yaroooh! Stop! Oh, my hat!"

Thump, thump, thump!

The raging and humiliated and disgusted Horace thumped away at the hapless Skinner as if for a wager. Mr. Quelch looked on for a moment or two, as if petrified. Then he found his voice.

"Coker, stop this instant!" he thundered. "How dare you, boy? Are you mad? Let that—that individual go this instant!"

To see Horace Coker pummelling away at an apparently inoffensive old gentleman almost took the Form master's breath away.

But Coker did not seem to hear even then, and Wingate had to drag him from his victim. He jumped then as he saw Mr. Quelch.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped.

Wingate helped "Mr. Renniks" to his feet. It was Mr. Quelch's turn to jump as he recognised the well-known features of Harold Skinner beneath the grease-paint.

"Skinner!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "What—what does this amazing masquerade mean?"

"Ow-wow! Oh crumbs!" gasped Skinner. "Oh dear! It—it was only a joke, sir!"

"Joke!" articulated Mr. Quelch angrily. "You have, apparently, caused a disgraceful disturbance, Skinner, and you have caused me grievous bodily harm. It is a joke you shall certainly be held to account for, Skinner! I demand to know without delay what this business means?"

"Oh dear!" Skinner groaned deeply as he realised that nothing could prevent it coming out now. "It—it was only a practical joke on Coker and Bunter, sir. There—there was no harm in it!"

"Go on, Skinner!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

Skinner hesitated a moment, and then he went on in a mumble:

"Oh dear! It was only a joke, sir. Coker and Bunter thought they had won prizes in a competition—the Silver Ring Ballot! Coker thought he had won five thousand pounds—"

"What?"

"He—he thought so," mumbled Skin-



Fisher T. Fish shook a bony fist under Bunter's elevated nose. "Look hyer, Bunter," he snorted. "I reckon you'll pay me out of that cheque, you pesky, goldarned critter! I guess, if you don't, I'll make potato shavings of your fat hide! Savvy?" (See Chapter 9.)

ner, quite failing, apparently, now to see any humour in the fact. And Bunter thought he had won a hundred pounds—

"That's it, sir!" put in Billy Bunter eagerly. "I—I only thought so, of course. It was just a joke—a practical joke of Skinner's, sir. I hope you don't think I really have won a hundred pounds, because I haven't. Certainly not! It's all spoof, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared at that—they could not help it. It was only too clear that the fatuous Owl of the Remove, while knowing Skinner had played a trick by dressing up as the representative, still believed he had actually won the prize, and that the real representative would turn up yet with the hundred pounds. And Bunter did not want that hundred pounds to be taken charge of by the school authorities—hence his eager assurance that it was "all spoof" to Mr. Quelch.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch, glaring round at the hilarious juniors. "This—this is too much! Am I to understand, Skinner, that you led Coker and Bunter to believe that they had won big prizes in a hospital competition, and that you dressed yourself in this extraordinary manner, in order to further deceive them?"

"I—I—I— Nunno, sir!" gasped Skinner, terrified by the ominous note in Mr. Quelch's voice. "It—it was like this, sir. I heard that Bunter was—was expecting a man to bring him the prize at five o'clock. He—he had had a letter telling him he'd won it. So—so I just dressed up for a lark, to pretend I'd brought the money. It—it was only a little joke, sir!" gasped Skinner.

"Bless my soul!"

"Then," gasped Skinner—"then Coker turned up and seemed to think he should have had a prize because he'd entered for the competition. So—so I told him he'd won five thousand pounds. Only a little joke, sir! Coker seems to like having his—his leg pulled, sir!"

"Look here—" began Horace Coker angrily; but his voice was drowned in a howl of laughter.

It was some moments before Mr. Quelch—exceedingly angry now—could quell the noise. The hapless Horace Coker was almost crimson with humiliated rage, and only the presence of the master prevented him from hurling himself again at Skinner.

"This—this is scandalous!" snapped Mr. Quelch, at length. "So—so you looked upon this—this disgraceful affair as a joke, Skinner. Very well! You state that Bunter received a letter stating that he had won a prize, I understand? I demand to see that letter, Bunter?"

All eyes turned on Billy Bunter. That fat junior groaned, and then he took the crumpled letter from his pocket. It was useless to try to hide it now from Mr. Quelch—useless to keep his hundred pounds in his own keeping to do with as he liked. Bunter realised that sad fact now. He handed the letter with great reluctance to Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet-like eyes rested on the letter. Then he stared.

"So—so this is the letter, Bunter?" he said grimly.

"Y-e-e-es, sir."

"Are you aware that this letter was typed in my study, on my typewriter, Bunter?"

"Oh!" Bunter jumped. "Nunno, sir!" he gasped.

"Such is the case, Bunter. Certain letters on my machine are very much

out of alignment, Bunter, and I am familiar with those letters. This letter was typed on my machine, and the paper on which it is typed has apparently been abstracted from a drawer in my desk. It has been selected from a pile of monogrammed notepaper—samples sent to me by a firm of stationers."

"Oh lor!"

"Apparently those monogrammed letters—which happened to be 'J. H.' by mere chance—caused you to believe that the letter was an official letter issued by the hospital authorities. Is that so, Bunter?"

"Ow! Oh dear! Oh, yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch turned a look upon Harold Skinner—a look that frightened that practical joker.

"Do you know anything about this letter, Skinner? Did you write this letter?"

Skinner gulped. He knew he was "for it" over the masquerade. But he knew he would be very much more "for it" if it was proved that he had used Mr. Quelch's typewriter and notepaper to write a false letter to a school-fellow.

"Nunno, sir," he gasped. "I—I know nothing about it, sir."

"Indeed, Skinner. Are you aware that the name 'Renniks,' when spelled backwards, reads 'Skinner'?"

"Oh dear!"

"My hat!"

Harold Skinner was aware of it, of course. It had been a little clever touch, but now he saw he had been a little too clever—as Skinner usually was. The rest of the juniors who had seen the letter and heard the name, started. They wondered how they could have missed seeing that "Renniks," spelled backwards, gave the well-known name of "Skinner."

"It is perfectly obvious to me, Skinner," said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice, "without waiting for Skinner's answer, 'that you are the person who wrote this letter. If further evidence is needed, however, I may mention that some days ago I found a pocket-knife, with your name scratched upon it, lying by my typewriter on my desk. You had, apparently, been erasing something, and had forgotten to take your knife away, Skinner.'"

"Oh dear!"

"I had intended to speak to you on the subject of the knife, Skinner, but the matter had quite escaped my memory until now. I have no need to ask why that knife was found there, boy. Do you still deny being the author of that false letter, Skinner?"

"I—I—I—" Skinner's voice trailed away. He hadn't the nerve to deny it.

Skinner was an exceedingly clever and crafty youth, but his cleverness and craft failed him now.

"I am waiting," said Mr. Quelch in a terrible voice.

"I—I— It was only a joke, sir—a practical joke."

"You admit having written the letter, then?"

"Y-e-e-es, sir," groaned Skinner.

"Very well." The Remove master pursed his lips. "Your action in deceiving Coker and Bunter in such a manner was heartless and cruel, Skinner. It is far from being a joke in my eyes. But you have also committed something approaching a crime in writing such a letter. In addition, you have dared to appropriate property—writing-paper—belonging to your Form master, and you have used his property without permission. You have also caused a disgraceful disturbance in the school."

"It—it was only a joke, sir."

"I propose to look upon it as having been done as a practical joke, Skinner—for which you will be severely punished by me. Did I think you had done this from malice, I should treat it otherwise and take you before the headmaster, Skinner. As it is I propose to punish you myself."

"Oh, sir!"

"Come with me, Skinner. The rest of you boys will disperse."

The Remove master walked away, and Skinner groaned and followed. That luckless junior was a great practical joker—and more often than not his jokes were ill-natured and cruel. More often than not, also, they seemed to go wrong, and recoiled on the head of Harold Skinner. But the cad of the Remove was a fellow who never profited by experience. To judge by his face now, however, he was feeling very sorry that he had ever thought of this "joke."

He stumbled after Mr. Quelch, looking a queer figure indeed, with half his "make-up" missing. His dismal glances about him met only grinning faces, and his ears heard only chuckles. Though Skinner had "got" his school-fellows a feed—a gorgeous free feed—they did not seem grateful at all—only amused. It was sad, but there it was. There was neither gratitude nor sympathy for Harold Skinner.

The master and the hapless practical joker vanished indoors, and their going was the signal for a yell of laughter from the onlookers, who had been almost bursting with merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Skinner!"

"And poor old Coker!"

"And poor old Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What price the five thousand quids, Coker?" inquired Bob Cherry.

Coker's answer was not in words—indeed, his feelings were far too deep for words. He had spent at least four quid in feeding hungry "fags," and he had had his august leg "pulled" unmercifully. He knew he would be the laughing stock of the school after this. And—there was no five-thousand-pound prize for him after all!

So Coker answered by acts and not words.

He made a blind rush at his tormentors, and the Removites and other "small fry" scattered, roaring with laughter. The only fellow Coker managed to catch was Billy Bunter. That disappointed youth was far too dismal—far too dismayed—even to flee from Coker. It was only too painfully clear to Bunter, as it was to Coker, that it was all spoof now, and that there were no prizes for them.

Indeed, Billy Bunter was on the verge of tears, and in such a state of collapse that even Coker refrained from venting his royal rage upon him—Removite as Bunter was. Contenting himself with a kick at Bunter, Coker went off again on vengeance bent.

That evening there was much hilarity in Greyfriars on the subject of Coker and Bunter and the prizes. But Coker, at all events, unheeded it. He was far too busy searching for Skinner. And when he did catch that practical-joking youth towards bedtime, he gave Skinner something against which the severe caning he had received from Mr. Quelch was a mere nothing. After that Coker felt more satisfied.

But Bunter had no such satisfaction. He mourned for the hundred pounds, and would not be comforted. Nor was he the only one. Fisher T. Fish mourned for his two "quids," and would not be comforted. Certainly he had Bunter's I.O.U.'s, but Fisher T.

Fish knew exactly what Bunter's I.O.U.'s were worth. But he did not quite give up hope for all that.

For that night and many, many other nights and days, Fishy haunted Bunter, making the fat youth's life scarcely worth living—which was hard lines on Bunter. But Fishy did not get his two pounds!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Amazing News!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Letter for Master W. G. Bunter! Where is the fat man?"

It was a week or two later, and Harry Wharton & Co. were standing round the letter-rack in Big Hall. The affair of Skinner's practical joke over the Silver Ring Ballot prizes was practically forgotten by this time by the juniors, and Bob Cherry was far from thinking about it as he drew attention to the fact that there was a letter for Master W. G. Bunter.

"Letter for Bunter?" echoed Frank Nugent, with a grin. "Perhaps Bunter's postal-order has come at last. Can you see any whiskers showing under the flap of the envelope, Bob? If you can it's the postal-order without a doubt. It's been coming so long that it's bound to have grown a beard."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Doesn't look like a letter from home!" grinned Peter Todd. "It's typewritten, I see. From one of Bunter's business acquaintances in the City, I suppose—containing a money-lender's circular, you know. I'll take it along to him."

"I say, you fellows—"

At that moment Billy Bunter himself rolled up, thus saving his study-mate the trouble of "taking it along."

"I say, you fellows," he said eagerly, "any letters for me?"

"Here you are, old fat man," said Peter Todd, handing over the letter. "Don't let their tempting offers swamp your common sense, Billy."

"Eh? What—"

"It's a moneylender's circular, I expect, Billy. I must say I'm surprised at you, Bunter, having dealings with those gentlemen!" said Toddy severely.

"Oh, really Toddy—"

Bunter broke off as he looked the envelope over. As on a previous memorable occasion, the envelope looked very business-like, and Bunter blinked at it in no little excited wonder.

"Wonder who it's from?" he mumbled. "There's no crest on it, so it can't be from one of my titled relations, Toddy."

"Hardly," grinned Peter Todd. "Why not look, though?"

Bunter did look. He opened the flap rather gingerly and drew out the enclosure. It was a typewritten letter, and pinned to the typewritten letter was a long slip of rather stiff, pinkish-tinted paper.

It was a cheque. Bunter saw that at a glance, and he jumped. The other juniors also saw it and whistled.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "A cheque for Bunter. Wonders will never cease! How much is it for, Billy—two pence?"

But Bunter ignored Cherry's flippant remark. He was reading the letter—reading it with eyes that grew wider and wider as he read on. Then he gasped—gasped aloud in sheer astonishment.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped.

"What the thump—"

"Oh crumbs! Oh—oh crumbs! Oh k-k-k crumbs!"

"MAGNET" PORTRAIT GALLERY.

No. 18—Samuel Bunter (of the Second Form).



Perhaps the easiest way to describe Samuel Bunter of the Second Form would be to say that he is William George Bunter in "miniature." The most charitable thing we can say in his favour is that he is not old enough to know better. Greedy, grubby, and rather unscrupulous, Sammy is not the type of schoolboy the majority of us admire, but for the purposes of contrast his character—such as it is—is a very useful one. A duffer at sports, lessons—in fact, everything that goes to make the schoolboy—Sammy Bunter would not be missed by his Form fellows if he faded out of Greyfriars entirely. We can record one good deed that came from this grubby fag. Once Wun Lung was supposed to have been drowned, and Hop-Hi, his minor, was inconsolable. Sammy tried to console him with a chunk of toffee—Sammy's own toffee, too!

That was all Bunter appeared to be capable of articulating. He repeated the remark again and again. His eyes were wide open like saucers, and his mouth was gaping. Quite evidently the letter contained astounding news.

It did!

"What the thump is the matter, Bunter?" said Toddy curiously. "What's in the dashed letter? Anything private, fathead? If it isn't, we're all itching to hear the good news."

"Oh k-k-k crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "Twenty quid!"

"What?"

"Twenty quid!" gasped Bunter, trembling with excitement. "It's a cheque for twenty quid—for me, chaps! I've won it in that hospital ballot!"

"What?"

It was a yell this time.

"You—you've whatter?" yelled Peter Todd.

"I've won it in that Silver Ring Ballot, you fellows!" gurgled Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"Gammon!"

"Don't start all that again, Bunter!" grinned Harry Wharton, though he looked curiously at the letter and cheque still clutched in Bunter's fat hand.

"Don't be an ass and—"

"I tell you it's true!" gasped Bunter,

his eyes dancing with excitement. "I've won twenty quid, after all. That other was all Skinner's spoof, the beast! But this isn't. It's a solid, thumping fact! Look for yourselves!"

Bunter handed the letter and cheque over to Peter Todd. He looked at it, with the other juniors crowding round and blinking over his shoulders.

There was a simultaneous gasp as one and all grasped the contents of the letter, which ran as follows:

"To: Master W. G. Bunter,
"Greyfriars School,
"Kent.

"St. Jeald's Hospital,
"London.

"Dear Sir,—In regard to our recent Popular Footballers' Competition, I have much pleasure in informing you that you have succeeded in winning a prize of twenty pounds, and I am enclosing a cheque for that amount herewith.

"The endorsement of the cheque constitutes a receipt, and no other acknowledgment is therefore necessary.

"I am,

"Yours faithfully,

"(Signed) JAMES THOMPSON,
"The Appeal Secretary."

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"Great pip!"

"Well, upon my word!"

"It—it's genuine this time!" gasped Harry Wharton.

There was really little doubt about that. The cheque was undoubtedly genuine. The letter bore the printed—not typewritten—heading and address of the hospital. And underneath the signature at the bottom of the letter was the stamped words, "The Appeal Secretary."

There was no doubt about it this time. It was genuine. Bunter had indeed won a twenty-pound prize in the Silver Ring Ballot!

"Well, upon my word!" repeated Peter Todd, staring at the grinning Billy Bunter in wonder. "Bunter, you fat, lucky bouncer, how on earth did you manage it?"

"Need you ask that?" grinned Bunter, as other fellows crowded round to get a glimpse of the letter and cheque, and to express their wonder and amazement. "I've told you before, Toddy, that if you want brains, come to me. I'm the man for jobs of this sort. I knew all along I'd win something. It isn't quite what I had expected, of course. The five thous ought to have come my way. But this'll do to be going on with."

"Great pip! I should jolly well think so!"

There was a buzz of excitement as the news spread. Fisher T. Fish came rushing up, and he almost leaped out of his skin as he grasped the great news.

"I guess that's let me in, Bunter!" he grinned gleefully. "You owe me two quids, with a quid interest—that's three quid, I reckon. I guess this hyer galoot means to have his dollars back this time, Bunter, you fat jay!"

"Oh, really, Fishy," said Bunter loftily, elevating his fat little nose—Bunter was already beginning to swank—"I hope you don't mean to insinuate that I wasn't going to pay you back what I owe you?"

"Waal, I guess this galoot—"

"I shall certainly pay you back, Fishy. If I don't happen to pay you out of this small cheque, I shall pay you out of my next postal-order when it arrives," said Bunter, with dignity.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish shook a bony fist under Bunter's elevated nose.

"Look hyer, Bunter," he snorted, "I reckon you'll pay me out of that cheque, you pesky, goldarned critter! I guess if you don't I'll make potato shavings of your fat hide! Got that?"

"Oh, really, Fishy! All right, you beast! I'll pay it out of this when I get it changed. I say, you fellows, how am I to get my cheque changed?" asked Bunter, turning to Wharton anxiously. "If I go to Quelchy he'll only collar it, won't he?"

"Ha, ha! Very likely, Bunt!" laughed Harry. "You can get it changed at the bank in Courtfield, I expect."

"Who wants to go all that way?" said Bunter. "Besides, those rotten bank chaps know Quelchy. They might easily ring him up and tell him."

"Try Mauly, then?" grinned Bob Cherry. "He's a giddy millionaire!"

"Gee whizz! That's the galoot, I reckon, Bunter!" chimed in Fisher T. Fish eagerly. "Mauly will change it, I guess."

"Yes, that's the wheeze, Bunter, old man!" said Skinner quite affectionately, slipping his arm in Bunter's. "Mauly will lend you something substantial on

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the cheque, anyway. Come on, old chap!"

"Yes, come along, Billy, old fellow," said Sidney James Snoop, taking Bunter's other fat arm and "speaking quite as affectionately as Skinner." "We'll see you through with the cheque bizney."

"Leave it to us," added Stott, while Bolsover patted Bunter in friendly manner on the shoulder. "Come on, old fellow."

"He, he, he!" Bunter fairly beamed round on the fellows—though his blink was rather lofty and condescending now. He was unaccustomed to being treated with such affectionate attention—especially by fellows like Bolsover and Skinner & Co. It did not seem to occur to him that it was the twenty-pound cheque that was making the change.

A fellow with twenty pounds to do as he liked with was no less worth "palling" on with than a fellow with a hundred pounds. Yet, though he failed to see that, Bunter was beginning to feel very important indeed, and he swanked accordingly.

"I say, you fellows can all come along if you like; and afterwards we'll visit the tuckshop, and I'll stand a whacking, great spread," he grinned. "Come along! Wharton, you and your pals can come, too."

And Billy Bunter rolled away, surrounded by Skinner & Co., and several other fellows of like kidney. But Harry Wharton & Co. did not follow, nor did any of the more decent fellows. They chuckled and dispersed, still amazed and scarcely crediting the news for the most part.

It was certainly rather startling.

"It beats me hollow," remarked Harry Wharton rather thoughtfully, as he went up the stairs with his own chums and Peter Todd and Mark Linley. "How has the fat ass managed it, I wonder? He knows nothing about footballers or football."

"Blest if I can make it out," confessed Peter Todd, wrinkling his brows. "The silly ass didn't even know the name of a blessed First League player. He thought Steve Donoghue and Tilden and Inman and Jack Hobbs were footballers. Fancy that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fat idiot wanted me to help him fill his ticket in," grinned Toddy.

"I refused, and suggested he should try you, Linley. Did he?"

"He didn't come to me," laughed Linley. "I don't remember it, anyway."

"Then he must have just shoved his list down anyhow, and trusted to luck," grinned Toddy. "Sheer luck, of course!"

"Just luck!" said Bob Cherry enviously. "There's something in being a born idiot, after all. They say it's the fools for luck. I wish you'd nabbed the dashed twenty quid, though, Linley, old chap. You'd have made better use of the twenty quid than that fat idiot will."

"I wish I had won it!" said Mark Linley, with rather a shaky laugh. "I could have done with the cash—badly. But it's not my luck. In any case, I'm not at all sure that my entry went in."

"Eh? How's that?" demanded Peter Todd sharply.

"I'm not sure, of course," explained Linley ruefully. "But after I had filled in my ticket, I sealed the envelope up and left it lying on the study table, meaning to post it later that evening. When I came back, though, I found it

was gone. I supposed Bob or Inky or Wun Lung had posted it for me."

"My hat! Of course, I remember now!" said Bob Cherry. "And none of us had when you asked us afterwards."

"The rememberfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "But someone else may have posted it, my esteemed Mark."

"I know. That was just what I thought—some chap had seen the stamped, addressed envelope, and posted it to oblige me," smiled Linley. "Still, I've wondered once or twice since whether some chap did post it, or not. In any case, I hadn't much hope of winning anything, though I did my best, of course. There must have been thousands who entered a competition like that."

"Yes, rather!"

"It—it's rather queer, though," said Peter Todd, as if speaking to himself. "Jolly queer. It's rather too amazing for that fat ass to win a prize by sheer luck in such a competition, though I suppose it's possible. You're sure you didn't give him any tips, Linley?"

"Quite, quite sure; he didn't even come to see me, Toddy."

"He went to your study, anyway," said Toddy. "I watched him from my own dashed study door. I was expecting him to come flying out on his fat neck. Then Dutton came along, and I let Bunter rip. But—but I wonder—"

"You wonder what, Toddy?" asked Wharton, staring.

"Oh, nothing!" said Toddy. "Well, cheerio, chaps!"

And reaching the door of Study No. 7 just then, Peter Todd nodded, and stepped inside, leaving the others to go on along the Remove passage. Once inside his own study, Peter Todd's eyes gleamed queerly.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Toddy on the Trail!

"FISHY!" murmured Peter Todd. "Thundering fishy, in fact!"

With the door closed upon him, Peter Todd rubbed his rather prominent nose thoughtfully—very thoughtfully, indeed. Bunter's sharp-witted study-mate really thought the whole business of Bunter's prize was "fishy," and, knowing Bunter as he did, Toddy had good reason to think it was fishy.

In fact, Peter Todd was worried about it.

It might have been just luck, of course, that had won Bunter the prize. But Toddy remembered distinctly how emphatic Bunter had been in refusing to waste half-a-crown by trusting to luck. He had gone off to interview Mark Linley, and Peter had seen him vanish inside Linley's study. And as Linley stated that he had not seen Bunter, then Linley must have been out just then.

If the envelope had been lying on the table then, and if nobody else had been in the study but Bunter, then it was more than possible that Bunter knew what had happened to Linley's letter containing his entry for the competition. Knowing Bunter as he did, Peter Todd began to feel very suspicious indeed.

Was it possible that Bunter had opened the envelope, taken the ticket out, and had sent it up as his own effort, or something like that?

The more Peter thought of the matter, the more he felt that it was possible. He could not help, also, remembering Bunter's strange words before climbing into bed that night. Because Peter had refused to loan him a stamp, Bunter had disclaimed all responsibility should

Linley fail to win a prize! Rather a queer thing for Bunter to disclaim! It seemed suspiciously as though Bunter had had a guilty conscience on the subject.

"Blest if I don't believe there's something in it!" breathed Toddy, jumping up from his chair. "And I'm blest if I don't go and tackle the fat fraud about it before he spends any of that dashed twenty quid. Oh, the awful idiot! I'll take a stump along with me, too. If he starts any fibs, I'll touch him up with that!"

With a grim look on his face, Peter crossed to the cupboard and wrenched the lower doors open. Then he rummaged amidst the conglomeration of articles inside for a cricket-stump. There were all sorts of things in that bottom cupboard—exercise-books, caps, footer gear, and cricket gear, and other things, mostly rubbish that had been shoved there by the careless juniors. In his search for a stump, Peter dragged a heap of rubbish out from the cupboard out on to the floor by accident. Amongst the heap there happened to be a bundle, a rolled-up Eton jacket, that unrolled itself on dropping to the floor. And from a pocket in the jacket there tumbled a crumpled ticket.

Peter picked it up.

"Hallo!" he gasped.

Dropping the jacket, Peter Todd turned his attention to the ticket. Peter wasn't interested in the jacket. It was rather a grubby, greasy jacket, and anyone who knew Bunter could have told that it belonged to Bunter. There was a great, ugly stain of ink on the jacket, and Toddy remembered Bunter spilling the ink on the jacket only a week or so ago—an accident that had caused the jacket to be relegated to the rubbish cupboard.

But Toddy was very much interested in the ticket.

It was a half-a-crown ticket for the Silver Ring Ballot, and on it was Linley's list, and the ticket was signed by Mark Linley.

Peter Todd fairly blinked at it. It seemed to him an amazing coincidence that he should drop upon the evidence he wanted just then, an amazing piece of sheer luck!

"Phew!" he breathed. "So—so I was right, then. Oh, the awful little idiot! The—the fat worm! He'll end up in the blessed reformatory yet!"

For a brief moment Toddy blinked at the ticket, and then, without bothering further to find a stump, he hurriedly left the study, and went along to Study No. 1. To his satisfaction he found Mark Linley in there, chatting to the Famous Five.

Bursting into the room, Peter handed the ticket to Mark Linley.

"That belongs to you, I fancy, Linley," he said breathlessly.

Linley stared at the ticket. Then he gave a sudden exclamation.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "Why, it's my ticket, Toddy! Where on earth did you dig this up?"

"Found it in a pocket of dear old Bunter's old jacket," said Toddy grimly. "I fancy it explains why Bunter won that twenty quid—or, rather, got it! What? I think we'd better go after the fat worm before he breaks into the cheque."

Mark Linley handed the ticket without a word for Harry Wharton to look at.

"Phew!" breathed the Remove captain. "Then—then—"

"It's pretty plain, I think," said Toddy seriously. "That fat idiot has copied Linley's list, and sent it in as his own."

And Peter told the astounded juniors of his suspicions, and his reasons for suspecting, and also how he had stumbled so amazingly upon the evidence.

"Well, my only hat!" gasped Harry Wharton, frowning darkly. "The—the fat rotter! Come on; we'd better go after the fat fraud. We can't let him rob Linley like this."

"Rather not!"

"No fear!"

The juniors crowded out of the study.



"I say, you fellows, someone must have planted that list in my pocket, you know. I—I believe it was Toddy—in fact, I'm sure that beast Toddy did it!" "I planted it?" yelled Peter Todd.

(See Chapter 10.)

In the passage they bumped into Vernon-Smith. The Bounder was grinning.

"Seen Bunter, Smithy?" demanded Harry quickly.

"The dear man has just gone to visit old Coker," chuckled Smithy. "He drew blank with Mauly—his giddy lordship has gone out somewhere. So Bunter's gone to try to get Coker to loan him something on the cheque. I fancy Coker will make mincemeat of the fat ass!"

"Come on!" said Harry.

Leaving Vernon-Smith staring, the juniors rushed along to the Fifth Form passage. As they neared Coker's study they saw Skinner & Co., and several more of Bunter's new "pals," in the passage outside. They were grinning. From within Coker's study proceeded Coker's voice in a roar, and then a terrific commotion, above which rose Billy Bunter's voice in a howl of dismay.

"Yarroooooh! Leggo, you awful ass! Yooooop! Rescue, you fellows! Yarroooooop!"

"Come here pulling my dashed leg, would you?" roared Coker. "Why, you cheeky, fat little sweep, I'll smash you! I'll give you twenty quid! I'll give you trying to spoof me again! Take that, and that, and that—and out you go!"

"Yarroooooh!"

"Look out!" yelled Bob Cherry suddenly.

A fat form came hurtling out of Coker's study, and the juniors just sprang back in time. It was Billy Bunter, and he collapsed against the opposite passage wall, roaring with anguish. Apparently Horace Coker had mistaken the object of his visit, had imagined Bunter had called to pull his leg, and to rub in the humiliation of weeks ago.

Coker's door slammed, and Peter Todd stepped to Bunter and dragged him to his feet.

"Ow-wow!" groaned Bunter. "Oh, the awful beast! Jever know such a beast! Went for me like a madman! Just because I mentioned the ballot you know! Ow-wow! Didn't even give me time to explain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. could not help laughing.

"Never mind, Bunter," said Peter Todd, becoming suddenly grim. "It won't be necessary for you to change that cheque, old fat man! You'll come along with us, you little worm!"

"Oh dear!"

Bunter looked suddenly alarmed as he heard that, and caught sight of Linley with the juniors. As a matter of fact, the fat junior's conscience—even Bunter had a conscience, of sorts—had been troubling Bunter rather a lot during the last half-hour. He seemed to feel instinctively what he was wanted for.

"I—I say, you fellows," he gasped in sudden alarm. "I—I'm not coming, you know. I say, Skinner, Bolsover, back me up, you know. You're my pals, aren't you? Back me up against these chaps!"

"We'll jolly soon do that, Bunter, old fellow," said Bolsover, glaring belligerently at Wharton & Co. "Look here, Wharton; don't you come shoving your oar in here! Old Bunter's under our protection!"

"Until he loses the twenty quid," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Shut up, Bob!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "Look here, Bolsover, you can drop that rot. That twenty quid doesn't rightly belong to Bunter. We've found that out—at least, we think we have!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, you beast—"

"Come along, Bunter! If you chip in, Bolsover, and you, Skinner, you'll be sorry for it. This fat ass has got to come!"

"I won't!" gasped Bunter. "Rescue, chaps!"

But neither Skinner & Co., nor Bolsover, made any attempt to rescue Bunter after that. Harry Wharton's grim words had startled them not a little—knowing Bunter as they did. And Bunter, protesting and struggling furiously, was hauled along to Study No. 1. Skinner & Co. followed wonderingly now, as did a swarm of curious fellows. Wharton allowed them to enter the study, and then he closed the door, and faced the shivering Bunter.

"Now, Bunter," said Harry grimly. "We want to know where you got your list from—the list you sent up for that competition?"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I don't know what you're talking about!" gasped Bunter, blinking furiously around him. "You're only jealous because I've won that prize. You're trying to rob me of it. If you think I copied the list from another fellow's list you're mistaken—quite mistaken. Besides, I didn't even know Linley was entering for the competition. And as for copying his list on to my card and keeping his back, I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing!"

And Bunter blinked indignantly around him after making that statement. He was quite surprised at the looks he received.

"So you did copy Linley's list, Bunter!" snapped Harry Wharton. "You've given yourself away nicely, you fat idiot! Nobody has mentioned Linley's name or list yet!"

"Oh dear! Did I say Linley?" gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't mean Linley, of course. Don't I tell you that I didn't even know Linley was entering for the competition? I must say," added Bunter sorrowfully, "that I am surprised at you fellows ever suggesting such a thing. As if I would copy

another fellow's list. You fellows ought to apologise for entertaining such low suspicions."

"You fat ass! You deny, then, that you copied Linley's list, and kept his back, Bunter?"

"Of course I do! Don't I keep telling you I know nothing about Linley's list?"

"Very well, then," snapped Harry. "I'm going to Quelch now, Bunter. And perhaps you'll be able to explain to him how it comes that Linley's list was found by Toddy in your jacket pocket. Show the fat worm the list, Linley!"

"Oh dear!"

Linley quietly held out the ticket for all to see.

"Great pip!" gasped Bolsover. "No blessed wonder you collared the fat villain! Why, it's practically pinching twenty quids from Linley!"

"Phew!"

Bunter fairly shook as he blinked round at the accusing faces of the juniors.

"I—I say, you fellows, it's all a mistake!" he gasped. "You—you're on the wrong horse, you know. It's Linley who must have copied that list from mine. See?"

"Great pip!"

"You fat idiot!" hooted Harry Wharton. "Can't you see you're bowled out, you awful worm? Do you want to be sacked? If you don't, you'll own up for your own sake."

"Oh dear! I say, you fellows, someone must have planted that list in my pocket, you know. I—I believe it was Toddy—in fact, I'm sure that beast Toddy did it."

"I planted it?" yelled Peter Todd.

"Exactly! You—you look guilty, you know, Toddy. Why don't you own up—be a man, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Harry Wharton did not laugh. He felt the matter was a little too serious for laughter.

"Look here, Bunter," he said quietly, at last. "You'd better drop this silly rot. I advise you for your own sake to go along and own up to Quelch at once. If you don't, it's bound to come out, and it means the sack then, more likely than not. If you own up yourself, the Head will be lenient with you."

"I keep on telling you—"

"You can keep on telling us until Doomsday!" snapped Harry. "But it will make no difference, Bunter. We know you did it, and we know that that twenty quid belongs by right to Mark Linley. And what's more, we mean to see that he gets it, Bunter. If you don't go straight away to Quelch now, I shall do so. If Quelch isn't satisfied with the proof, I suppose he'll write to the ballot people and ask for a copy of your ticket, Bunter. They'll send it on, I'm certain, and then you'll be bowled out all right, Bunter. In that case, after denying it to Quelch or the Head, it's bound to mean the sack, you fat idiot."

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. It was a groan from the depth of Bunter's fat being. Not only did he see his twenty pounds slipping away from him, but he saw serious trouble ahead. Bunter's sins were coming home to roost—as they usually did.

"Well?" said Harry Wharton.

"I—I say, Wharton," gasped Bunter, "I—I own up. I—I copied Linley's list. It—it was only a—a lark, you know. You—you won't tell Quelch if I hand Linley the cash, will you?"

"Can't you see that Quelch will have to know the truth?" said Harry grimly.

"All the school knows by this time that you're supposed to have won twenty quid in the competition. Quelch is bound to hear about it—if he hasn't heard already. He'll want to see the cheque, and he'll want to know all details. That's absolutely certain, Bunter. There's no getting out of it. We can't let you keep the cheque, and it's no use trying to spoof Quelch—you know that. The cheque is made out to you, and if you endorse it, making it over to Linley, he's bound to want to know why, and he's bound to want to hold the money in his charge. He isn't likely to allow a fat ass like you, Bunter, to carry such a sum about with you."

"Oh dear!"

"Will you go to Quelch, Bunter? He's no need to know you did not intend to own up—he's no need to know you intended to keep the money actually; and we sha'n't give you away, though that's less than you deserve. Well?"

"Oh dear! Ye-e-es, I'll do it! Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

"Come on, then," said Harry quietly.

And Bunter went. He crawled away after Harry Wharton towards Mr. Quelch's study, and even Skinner forbore to grin as he crawled away, so miserable did Billy Bunter look. He looked so down and out that the juniors could not help feeling sorry for him in the hour of his sad fall. But their sorrow for Billy Bunter was nothing like Billy Bunter's sorrow for himself.

It did not prove so bad for the Owl of the Remove, after all. Harry Wharton left the matter to Bunter himself, and Bunter—his wits sharpened by his danger for once, acquitted himself well as regards his defence—both to Mr. Quelch and the Head.

As Harry Wharton anticipated, Dr. Locke was lenient with Bunter—seeing no reason to doubt Bunter's willing confession and remorse. And, having always looked upon the fat and obtuse youth as being more fool than rogue—a really general opinion at Greyfriars—the Head contented himself with a severe lecture and a more severe caning, and there the matter ended in so far as the authorities were concerned—excepting that the cheque, duly endorsed by Bunter, was handed to Linley, its rightful owner.

Having changed the cheque, Linley sent fifteen pounds of it home to his people in Lancashire, and the remainder he kept himself, standing the whole Remove a great spread out of the five pounds on the following day.

Even Billy Bunter was invited by the forgiving Linley, and Bunter excelled himself in the eating line. And so the affair ended quite happily for everybody in the Remove—unless one excepted Fisher T. Fish, who never got his two pounds—or his twenty shillings percentage of the "loan." But nobody wasted any sympathy on the crafty, greedy Transatlantic junior.

THE END.

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FOUL PLAY! Fathoms deep in the Thames estuary Ferrers Locke and a professional diver seek the Green Spider, buried in the cabin of a sunken yacht. One of these two divers is doomed never to rise from the bed of the sea again. Who is that man?



The MYSTERY of LONE MANOR

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Gone to the Bottom!

IT was all over in a moment. The River Ghost came up for a brief instant on to an even keel as the steamship cut her off from the wind. Then the River Ghost lurched and shuddered. Smashing like an egg-shell, her bows crumpled up as the iron cutwater bit into them. The mangled little vessel was flung aside almost contemptuously. The great grey sides of the steamship slid past.

Jack found himself in the water, and the icy chill of it made him catch his breath. But his brain was clear and quick, and instantly he dived, his instinct being to avoid the suction of the vessel's wash.

And as he fought his way down through the darkness he remembered Ferrers Locke.

The guv'nor! Could he hope to save the guv'nor after all?

He kicked out harder, heading downwards. Jack was a powerful swimmer, as skilful as a seal. He knew that he was over the spot where Locke had sunk, and his hands were groping frantically.

And suddenly he touched something in the water that sent a thrill through him. He grabbed and caught it, his lungs already near to bursting, and kicked upwards on the instant.

Had Scaramanga fixed a heavier weight to Locke's ankles, Jack could never have succeeded in the task he had set himself. But the weight had been a small one—just sufficient to carry the detective down through the salt water.

As it was, the strain was terrific, and but for the wiry youngster's healthy muscle he could never have reached the surface with his burden. But after what seemed an eternity, his head shot up above the surface, and he gasped the cold air into his burning lungs.

The steamship was yards away now, but Jack heard dimly the shouting on her decks and the clanging of a bell. But their meaning was lost upon him. Somehow it had not occurred to him that those aboard the vessel were aware of the wreck of the yacht.

The swirling mist hemmed them in—the white-faced youngster and the unconscious man in his arms.

INTRODUCTION.

TOM TRAVERS, a clever goalkeeper playing for Larkham City.

ADAM GUELPH, his miserly uncle, owner of Lone Manor.

ARMITAGE, Guelph's butler.

FERRERS LOCKE, the celebrated detective of Baker Street.

JACK DRAKE, his boy assistant.

SILVA, SCARAMANGA, and DROOD, a blind man, members of the Wolves, a powerful secret society.

Adam Guelph mysteriously disappears, and Tom Travers enlists the aid of Locke and Drake to find him. This they eventually do, for the old man has been kidnapped by the Wolves. But Guelph's rescuers are unable to discover the motive of the Wolves in capturing him, for the old miser is suffering from brain fever. Locke and his companions therefore set themselves the task of unravelling the mystery. After a series of thrilling hand-to-hand encounters with the Wolves, Locke & Co. learn that the Green Spider—an emerald ring resembling in shape a spider—holds the secret of the whereabouts of a vast hoard of treasure, and that it is this ring and the treasure it will lead to that the Wolves are seeking. This ring is given into Travers' keeping by Armitage, the butler, who knew of its hiding-place.

The Wolves, however, eventually kidnap Travers, and, with the coveted Green Spider in their possession, endeavour to throw Ferrers Locke off the trail. But, thanks to the deadly skill of the wizard detective, they are unsuccessful, for in an incredibly short space of time Ferrers Locke and Drake are hard on their heels—a trail which leads them across land and water. Aboard the *Marian*, a trim little yacht, the twain are fast overhauling the Wolves' craft, when, to their amazement, the latter noses round suddenly and charges them amidships. Powerless to resist, Locke and Drake are taken prisoners aboard the River Ghost, and calmly await their fate. Securely bound, and with a heavy block of lead tied to his ankles, Ferrers Locke is carried up on deck and pushed overboard by Scaramanga. But hardly has the arch-villain carried out his vile act when the cutwater of a great steamer, groping its way out of the fog, crashes across the bows of the River Ghost.

(Now read on.)

The weight of his burden was almost dragging him down again. He felt the strength ebbing from him as he fought on doggedly to hold Locke's head above the surface.

He stared round wildly. Of the River Ghost there was no sign. She had sunk like a stone, the water pouring in through her torn bows. But for a moment Jack fancied he saw the dim shape of an overturned dinghy away to the right, with vague shapes clinging to it. Then, if he had really seen it, the shapes were swallowed in the fog.

"Help! Help!"

He sent the quavering call over the water, but his voice was husky and weak.

A wave washed over his head, choking him. He tried to lift Locke's head higher above the surface, but failed. And then, as he kicked off his shoes, Jack suddenly remembered the clasp-knife in his pocket, and a desperate scheme came into his head.

"If I could only do it!"

With one hand he fumbled for his knife, supporting Locke with the other. He found it, and took it in his teeth while he wriggled from his coat. The garment went drifting away into the darkness.

"That's better!" he told himself, with chattering teeth.

With his teeth and hand he succeeded in opening the big blade of the knife. It was, he knew, sharp as a razor—he always saw to that.

He took the knife in his right hand, kicking out with his legs to keep himself afloat. His arms were aching now with the weight of this unconscious burden. The hand with the knife groped downward. And suddenly he dived.

If he could cut away the lead weight that was fixed to Locke's ankles it might make all the difference between life and death for both of them!

Oddly enough, it was while he was hacking at the rope that held the weight that Jack first thought of Tom Travers. Where was he?

The youngster was sinking again;

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Locke doubled over on top of him, twisting in the water as they sank. And then suddenly the great weight seemed to disappear, and a strong kick sent them up to the surface again. The knife had severed the rope, and the lead had gone swinging down through the blackness to the mud of the river-bed. Then to sever the cords that bound Ferrers Locke was the work of a moment.

Jack found himself swimming fairly easily on his back, his hands under Locke's armpits. Again he sent a despairing shout for help into the surrounding mists.

But where was Travers?

Had he been one of those shadowy figures he had seemed to see clinging to the yacht's overturned dinghy? He remembered that Tom's hands had been tied; but Travers', he recalled with a thankful thrill, had been tied in front of him, not behind his back. It would be possible for the footballer to keep himself afloat.

The tide was carrying them in the direction in which the steamship had vanished, and suddenly Jack cried out breathlessly to see the great dim shape of it looming up through the mist.

Those on the ship had seen them, then, ground down under her bows, and had stopped!

Again Jack shouted with all his strength. Yet the husky cry seemed to him to be lost over the waste of waters.

"They'll never find us—never find us—not in this fog! Never find us—"

Red splashes of light seemed to be dancing before his eyes. He felt his senses slipping, and fought to keep his brain clear. His head went under, and the water rushed into his lungs as he choked and struggled upward.

He felt that the game was up—that hope had gone. Locke seemed like a dead weight in his arms, pulling him under. Yet never for a moment did the youngster dream of letting go his hold. If Ferrers Locke sank, Jack Drake would sink with him.

"Help—help! Help—"

It was only a faint croak, the ghost of his own voice. The youngster's eyes were closed, and his brain was reeling. He was going under—down—down—

Jack Drake opened his eyes slowly. The first thing he saw was the face

of Tom Travers, watching him—Tom's cheery smile.

"Cheerio, Jack! Feeling better, old son?"

The youngster smiled weakly, and passed a hand over his eyes.

"Where—where are we, Tom?" he muttered.

Jack had never thought to open his eyes in this world again. But even in his present dazedness it was clear enough that his surroundings were far too solid for it to be anywhere else!

"On board the Vancouver seven-thousand-ton oil-tanker, crawling into Easterouch through this infernal fog, Jack," laughed Tom.

The youngster struggled into a sitting posture, and stared about him.

He was seated in a narrow bunk, in a pair of violently striped pyjamas. A stove near at hand filled the little cabin with a pleasant warmth. Tom Travers, wearing a seaman's blue jersey and a pair of trousers about three times too wide for him, was standing by the stove. And in an opposite bunk lay Ferrers Locke, smiling across at Jack, though his face was still white and haggard.

Jack rubbed his eyes.

"Crumbs!" he gasped. "So they picked us up? I thought we were all done for!"

"I should have been, anyway, but for you, young 'un!" said Locke. "So they tell me!"

"Oh, rot, guv'nor! We had to sink or swim together, of course."

"There would have been more sinking than swimming for me, I fancy!" murmured Locke. "Still, I won't start the grateful thanks business—no need. I know it's all in the day's work to you, Jack!"

The youngster flushed. There was a look in Locke's eyes that was worth all the thanks in the world to him.

"But what happened to you, Tom?" he asked, lying back with a sigh of contentment on the pillow. He felt dog-tired and horribly stiff.

"I? Oh, I was all right!" answered Travers. "I was hanging on to a chunk of the old River Ghost that got smashed off in the little argument with the bows of this blessed ship! They picked me up quick enough, but I thought we should never find you. They lowered a boat, you see."

"And Silva?" muttered Jack. "What's happened to Silva & Co.? Have they been picked up, too?"

But Tom Travers shook his head.

"No," he said shortly. "They've not been picked up. There was no sign of them."

Jack nodded thoughtfully. He was thinking of that shadowy shape he had seen after the wreck, as of an overturned dinghy with vague figures clinging to it, that had been swallowed by the mist.

The door of the cabin opened, and a short, tubby little sea-captain entered. It was the skipper of the Vancouver, come to see how they were getting on. But he did not stay long—in the fog, groping up the estuary to Easterouch, he would not trust the bridge long to the care of his officers.

When he had gone again, Ferrers Locke frowned thoughtfully.

"What's up, guv'nor?" asked Jack.

"I was thinking about the green spider," Locke answered.

Travers whistled.

"By Jove, I'd forgotten that thing!" he cried. "Silva had it, of course! If Silva's drowned—"

Ferrers Locke shook his head.

"Silva won't be drowned," he said. "Men like Silva have more lives than a cat! And, anyway, Silva hadn't got the green spider on him when the smash came."

"Then where was it?" cried Jack Drake.

"When Silva was waiting for Scaramanga to come down to the cabin again, to carry me up on deck," said Locke. "Silva put that ring away in one of the cupboards of the cabin. He left it there."

"What!" cried Travers. "Then you mean—"

"Just this," murmured Ferrers Locke. "The green spider went to the bottom with the wreck of the River Ghost!"

The Man who Vanished!

JACK DRAKE sat up with a jerk in the narrow bunk.

"What's that, guv'nor?" exclaimed the youngster, his voice startled. "The green spider's gone to the bottom with the yacht?"

Locke nodded.

"It has."

"Good heavens!" muttered Tom Travers. "But—but it's gone for good, then?"

"Not at all," said Ferrers Locke, smiling coolly. "Someone's got to go down to the wreck of the River Ghost to fetch it up again, that's all there is to it!"

"A professional diver?" asked Tom quickly.

"We shall have to employ a professional," agreed the detective. "But he won't go down alone. That ring is far too valuable to trust to the tender mercies of any outsider, however honest. Besides, I know just where the ring is in the yacht's cabin. I shall go down myself, too."

"But shall we ever find the wreck?" exclaimed Jack.

"Unless luck is very much against us we shall, young 'un. I have already asked the skipper of this vessel for the exact position in the estuary that the River Ghost went down. He has been able to mark the point on a chart, which he is going to let me have. Of course, the wreck may have drifted quite a bit, but we shall find her before we've done. We can't afford not to!"

The big oil-tanker was off Easterouch now. Her engines ceased to throb, and the three in the little cabin heard the shouted orders on the deck above, heard the rattle and the roar of the anchor-chain. The wind was increasing, whirling before it the thick mist it had

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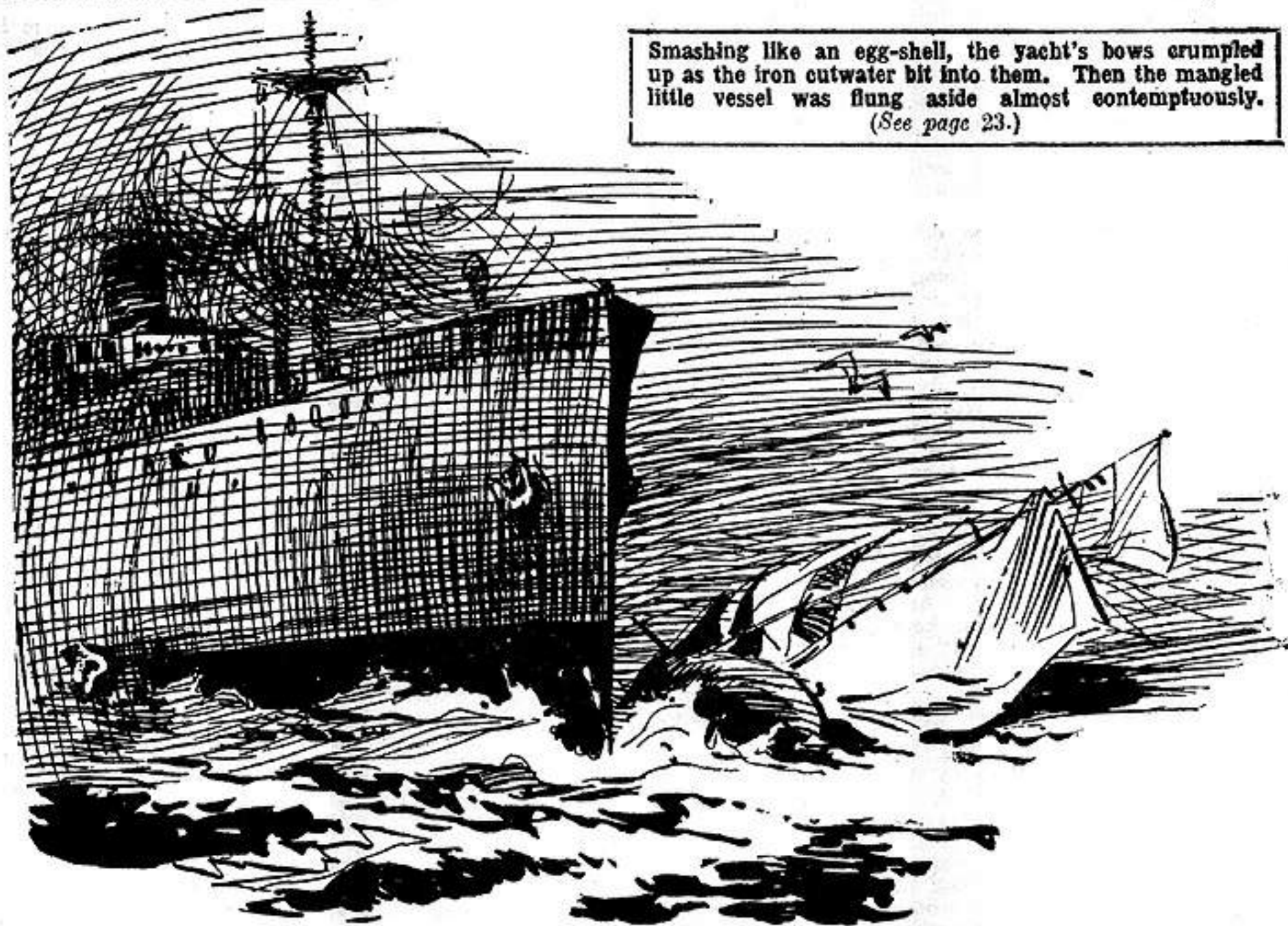
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Smashing like an egg-shell, the yacht's bows crumpled up as the iron cutwater bit into them. Then the mangled little vessel was flung aside almost contemptuously.
(See page 23.)



carried up the river from the sea. Before long the fog had disappeared, and the twinkling lights of the town on the southern bank could be seen winking over the water.

By now Jack Drake had almost completely recovered from his terrible experience. His glowing health had won through, where many another would have been down with pneumonia or rheumatic fever. Travers, however, was anything but fit.

The footballer had been through too much since the cowardly "accident" at White Hart Lane—so cleverly planned by the Wolves, and carried out for them by one of the Larkham City players. Tom looked white and ill. The reaction was beginning to set in.

"Who do you think it was, the fellow who knocked you out on the field?" asked Jack.

"Goodness knows! There'd been a corner kick, you remember—a regular tussle in the goal-mouth. I went down, felt as though I'd been tripped, and then a boot crashed on to my napper, I suppose, for I didn't remember anything else till I woke up to find myself in some sort of a car, in the hands of Silva & Co."

Tom Travers shrugged his shoulders. "Might have been almost anybody," he went on. Then his face clouded. "Though between you an' me an' the lamp-post, Jack, I've half a mind it was probably Caine, our left-back. He's a bad egg, as I've thought before, and I know he's never cottoned on to me. Just the chap to lend himself to a job like that! But if I can ever prove it, I'm sorry for him!"

"You don't look as though you'll be fit to play next Saturday," said Locke.

"I feel pretty groggy, I own," said the young footballer, with a rueful laugh. "But I must do my best, if they've not already decided to kick me out for breaking my training contract!"

"Oh, rot!" said Ferrers Locke. "They

won't do that, Tom. It's not your fault this has happened—you were carried off against your will, obviously. But I can't see you playing next Saturday. What's the fixture?"

"Sheffield United."

"Well," laughed Locke, "I can't see Billy Gillespie having the interesting job of trying to get the leather past Tom Travers next week-end! It won't do, Tom. Your trainer will see that you lie up for a bit, if he doesn't want to see Larkham City drop a place or two down the League table!"

The detective himself had pulled round amazingly. Locke's astounding stamina seemed capable of any feat of recuperation. His face was still paler than usual, and he now wore a bandage over the graze on his temple, but otherwise he was already practically his old self.

Shortly afterwards they were landed at Easterouch, the detective carrying with him the chart on which the skipper of the oil-tanker had marked the spot where the River Ghost had gone down. Morning was already breaking, grey over the estuary. Their first visit was to a chemist, who gave them the stiff tonic each needed.

All three were dog-tired still. Ferrers Locke engaged a couple of rooms at the Anchor Hotel, near the water-front—luckily he had a case of notes with him—and Tom and Jack turned in at once, leaving Locke smoking a pipe by the window, staring out between the opposite houses at the shipping, brow furrowed in a thoughtful frown.

"Not turning in for a spell, guv'nor?" asked Jack.

"Not yet, young 'un."

Jack Drake did not awake till after two in the afternoon, but when he did open his eyes he felt wonderfully refreshed. He jumped out of bed, and went into the next room. Locke was pacing to and fro by the window.

"Jack," he said abruptly, "I've seen Scaramanga, here in Easterouch!"

The youngster whistled.

"So he's not drowned, guv'nor! He deserved to be! Did he see you?"

"Yes, and sheered off at once. I shadowed him for a while, but the beggar twigged I was on his tracks, and took a taxi. I took another, but my driver was a perfect fathead, and we lost Scaramanga. Still, it doesn't matter."

"You've been out, then—about the diver?"

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Yes. I've found a reliable chap, I fancy. He lives not far from here—fellow named Betts. But he wasn't at home when I called this morning—won't be in till this evening. I'm going round again at six."

"And in the meantime," grinned Jack, "I feel peckish enough to eat that giddy table! I think a bit of grub is indicated for yours truly!"

By the time the meal was brought to their room, Tom Travers was awake, too. He looked haggard and worn, though his spirits were cheerful enough. But Locke insisted upon his seeing a doctor. The medical man told Travers the best thing he could do was to lie quiet in Easterouch for a few days before returning to Larkham. So on the doctor's authority, the young footballer was able to wire to his management to that effect.

At six o'clock the three went round to the little house near the hotel where Betts, the diver, lived.

He was a short, grizzled man, who gave the impression that he knew his job inside-out, and Locke came to an agreement with him easily enough. When the detective expressed his intention of going down to the wreck with him, Betts looked very doubtful.

"Best leave it to me an' my mate, Jim

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Walters, sir. Diving's none such child's play as—"

Locke broke in with a laugh.

"Don't worry! This won't be the first time, I can tell you! I've been twelve fathoms down in my time."

The diver's face cleared.

"Oh, in that case," he said heartily, "I'm willing! I'll fix ye up with the suit all O K, sir."

There was of necessity some delay while Locke arranged the formalities with the authorities—rather a complicated business in the circumstances, since the wrecked yacht was not his own. But his name went a long way towards obtaining the necessary sanction, and in a few days all was ready.

Locke had communicated with the Eastcrouch police, who had been searching the town for Scaramanga, as well as for Silva, Kyushu, and the fourth member of the Wolves, in case they, too, were at hand. It was clear enough that Scaramanga, at any rate, had managed to right the overturned dinghy and get ashore that night. But the man seemed to have disappeared utterly. And though a close watch had been kept over the estuary in the neighbourhood of the sunken yacht, there had been no attempt to reach it.

A couple of days later all was ready. Locke had commissioned a large motor-launch, and the time for the descent had been fixed by Betts, according to the tide. At ten o'clock in the morning, Ferrers Locke, Jack Drake, and Travers were round at his house. The launch was ready waiting at one of the piers.

Locke knocked on the door, and at once it was opened by a woman whose face was oddly white—the diver's wife, they knew.

"Mr. Locke?" she cried.

Locke nodded. Something in the woman's face had startled him. She put out an unsteady hand.

"Oh, sir! My husband—he went out last night, to be back nice an' early, so he said, sir. But he's never come back!"

In the Sunken Yacht!

FERRERS LOCKE'S teeth came together.

"What?" he jerked out. "Not come back? He knew, though,



Jack Drake severed the rope, and the great weight sank to the river-bed. Then, with strong kicking the detective and Jack Drake shot up to the surface again.

(See page 24.)

that I was engaging him for this morning?"

The diver's wife nodded.

"That he did! Oh, I don't like it at all—I'm scared! I dunno what the job was you was wantin' him for, but I know there's something queer about it, though he did keep it to himself what you'd told him, as he'd promised. But I know there's something queer—an' I'm scared—"

Locke's face was grim.

He, too, did not like the look of things.

Could it be possible that the Wolves, having learnt in some way of Locke's plans, had put Betts out of the way for the time being, to delay the recovery of the green spider?

But the detective's jaw was set. His plans were not going to be knocked on the head so easily if he could help it.

"Your husband's mate, Walters—where does he live?" he asked quickly.

The woman gave him the address. Locke did his best to soothe her agitation, and then they hurried off to interview the other diver, Walters.

He was not at home when they arrived, but they found him down by the wharves—a big, swarthy fellow with tattooed hands and a clay pipe clenched between his teeth. Briefly Ferrers Locke gave him an idea of the situation. Walters puffed a cloud of smoke from the corner of his mouth and nodded.

"Ay, ay!" he said thoughtfully. "I understand ye. Well, I'm willin' to put this job through for my mate. It's a most uncommon rush job, but there—"

He broke off. "Ye say ye wants to come down yesel'?"

The detective nodded.

"Yes. But you know well enough what it is like—probably the wreck has been silted up a bit by now, and it will need two of us, this job. Anyway, I want to have an expert at hand in case of any unexpected developments."

"Quite," nodded Walters. "I'll be ready in ten minutes!"

And a very short while later the launch was drawing away from the pier, through the anchored shipping, heading down the estuary.

The launch was a big, wide vessel, well suited to the work on hand. The two diving-suits were in the bows, and the air-pump amidships. In addition to Walters, Locke, Jack Drake, and Tom Travers, there were a couple of men to tend the life-lines, a couple more to pump, and another at the helm.

With the helmsman, Ferrers Locke was examining the chart on which the position of the sunken yacht was marked with a small cross.

"I see," said the helmsman. "She went down just at the nor'-west corner o' the Moriknock Sands. We shall be out there half an hour before slack-water."

The morning was cold, with a fresh wind cutting over the water. But the sky was cloudless and the sun was sparkling on the waves. Jack Drake stared out to the broad horizon, dotted with the river traffic. The youngster's face was very thoughtful.

Was Betts' disappearance simply the result of some accident that could be explained to them? Or did there lie behind it the sinister scheming of the Wolves?

They found that the River Ghost was

lying in about five fathoms. She had drifted scarcely at all from the spot where she went down.

Without delay Walters and Ferrers Locke gave the diving gear a final overhaul, testing the helmet-valves and the pump. In a short while both men were having their back and breast plates screwed home, and finally the great helmets were set on their shoulders and fastened into place.

"Cheerio, guv'nor!" yelled Jack Drake, peering in through the glass at Ferrers Locke.

The detective smiled in answer, though he could hear nothing.

Awkward, ungainly, like weird monsters of rubber and brass, with their lead-shod feet, and hands gloved against the icy cold that they would meet below, the two figures went over the side together, while the pumps turned. Jack and Tom leaned over the side of the launch, watching those great circular domes of metal vanish beneath the surface.

Locke and the professional had gone over from either end of the launch to avoid risk of their life-lines and air-tubes entangling.

Presently the signal came—tugged on the ropes—that both men had reached the bottom.

To Ferrers Locke, a comparative novice despite his previous experiences of the diver's job, it was with a strange feeling of novelty that he felt himself sinking through the softly shadowy water. Gradually the light grew less. He could see the silvery air-bubbles rushing up past the glass of his helmet. Then at last his feet came to rest lightly on the bottom.

A little distance in front of him he could see the dim outline of the sunken yacht.

The River Ghost was lying on the mud with a steep list to starboard. Her foresail had been torn away when the oil-tanker had run her down, and in her bows was a hole big enough to have sunk a thousand-tonner. The mast was snapped, and was lying with the main-sail wrapped around it, already half-swallowed by the mud.

Swaying and sprawling, arms and legs working together, Locke made his way slowly through the water towards the wreck. And a little ahead of him the professional diver was making towards it.

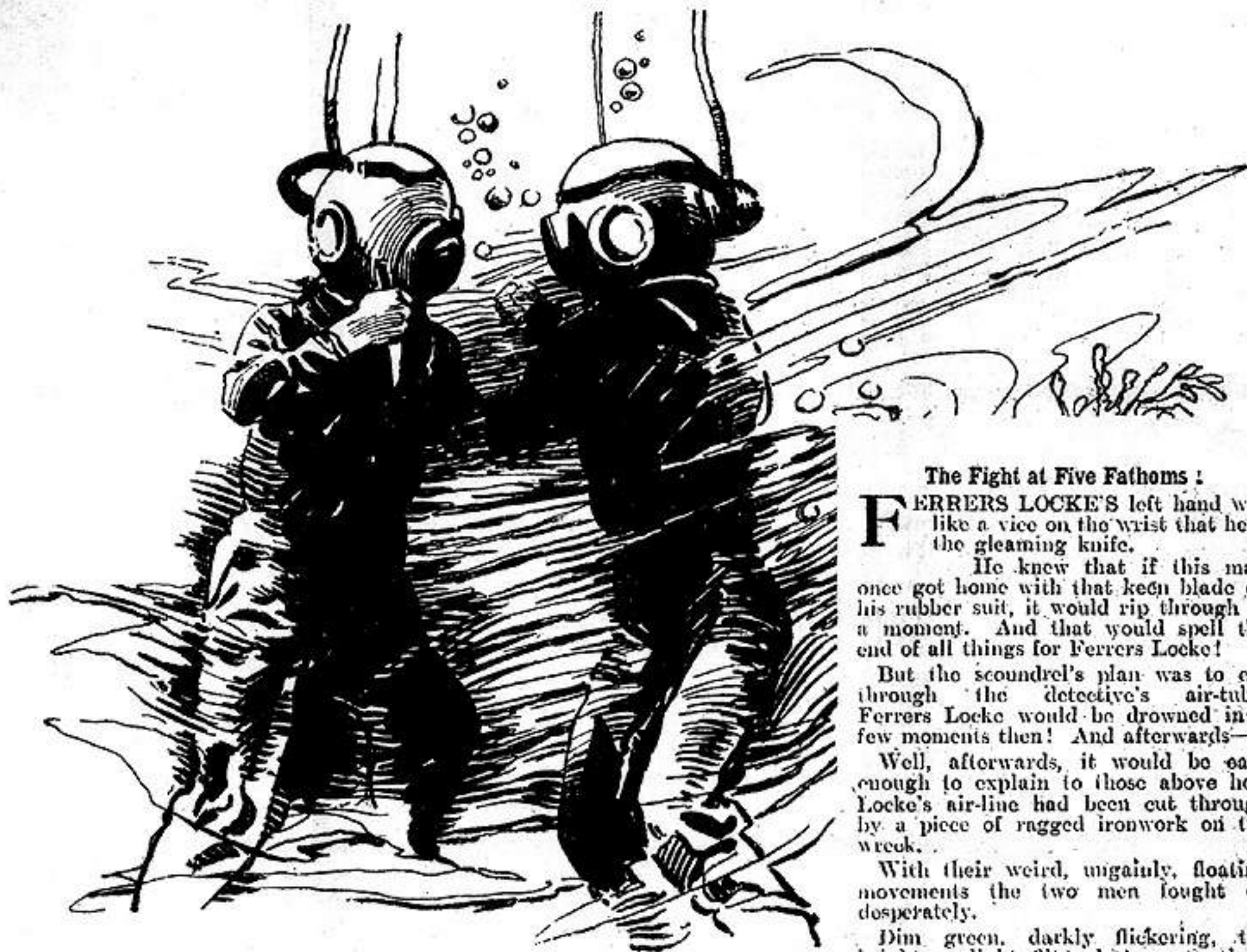
It was easy enough to clamber on to the sloping deck of the sunken vessel, and Locke was glad the mast had gone; the risk of fouled lines was considerably lessened.

Side by side Locke and Walters clambered slowly, awkwardly along the deck. The detective had explained to the diver that the object they were after was in the cabin, and it had been agreed that Walters should enter first.

With a last pull upon their lines to make sure that they were clear, the two men clambered down into the darkness.

Each had a powerful electric lamp fixed to his chest, and these were wanted now. But, despite the beams of wavering light, it was no easy task to make their way into the cabin where, only a few nights ago, Silva and Scaramanga had been taunting their prisoners as the now wrecked yacht had gone slipping through the fog to its doom.

But they were in the cabin at last, and Locke peered round, steadying himself against the table clamped to the floor.



The man had pulled out his knife and was raising it above his head to slash at Ferrers Locke's air-pipe. Realising his peril, the detective seized the traitor's wrist. (See this page.)

It is the experience of but few men to find themselves in the cabin of a vessel that lies fathoms below the surface of the water, and Ferrers Locke, as he stood now at Walters' side, felt that it was not a pleasant experience. With the keen fondness he had for any trim sailing-vessel, he hated to see the wreck of one, smashed and helpless, either above water or below.

He groped his way along the cabin wall to where the cupboard was in which Silva had put the precious, mysterious ring; he went cautiously, ensuring at every step that his lines were in no danger of becoming fouled. By the door the second ungainly figure stood watching him.

Locke found the door of the cupboard and opened it; his rubber-gloved hands went groping into the black recess, and, with a murmur of satisfaction, the detective stepped back a minute later with the green spider in his hand.

The great emerald gleamed deep green through the faintly stirring water as he held it in the light of his lamp.

There was a grim smile on the face of Ferrers Locke.

"Who knows?" he reflected. "Strange that this thing should have taken us from Lone Manor to the depths of this estuary! Who knows where it will take us yet?"

He slipped the ring into the little bag that was slung at his waist, and, turning, groped his way back to the door of the cabin.

It was with a feeling of relief that

the detective found himself out on the deck again, climbing down the sloping boards to the mudbank beyond.

But as he made to clamber over the edge Locke felt something grip his shoulder.

He turned his head, to find Walters' hand upon his shoulder, dragging him sideways. And then, with a sharp intake of breath, the detective saw something that told him the truth in a flash.

The man had pulled out his knife, was raising it above his head to slash at the detective's air-pipe!

Ferrers Locke, every movement seemingly slow and lazy in the depth of the water, dragged himself away and seized the man's wrist.

So the man was a traitor! Locke realised now the trap into which he had fallen.

This was not Betts' mate at all; this was some scoundrel in the pay of the Wolves—possibly an actual member of the gang! Betts had been kidnapped by the Wolves in order that when Locke descended and had found the green spider for his enemies he should be in the company of this man, whose instructions were, not only to get possession of the ring, but to see that Ferrers Locke never ascended to the surface again!

The detective's teeth were tight-locked, his eyes ablaze.

Together on the deck of the sunken yacht the two men reeled and struggled and gripped at one another in that grim, under-water fight for life or death.

The Fight at Five Fathoms:

FERRERS LOCKE'S left hand was like a vice on the wrist that held the gleaming knife.

He knew that if this man once got home with that keen blade on his rubber suit, it would rip through in a moment. And that would spell the end of all things for Ferrers Locke!

But the scoundrel's plan was to cut through the detective's air-tube. Ferrers Locke would be drowned in a few moments then! And afterwards—

Well, afterwards, it would be easy enough to explain to those above how Locke's air-line had been cut through by a piece of ragged ironwork on the wreck.

With their weird, ungainly, floating movements the two men fought on desperately.

Dim green, darkly flickering, the bright sunlight filtered down to them faintly. The bottom of the launch could not be seen—it was as though the drifting lines streamed down from nowhere to the metal catches of their helmets, like tortuous white eels. In the dim emerald twilight Locke grappled with his foe.

The man who had posed as Walters was a powerful fellow, and try as he would, Locke could not twist back the other's wrist so as to make him drop the knife. The flickering streak of steel wavered above them as they swayed together, the mud rising in smoky clouds around their slowly trampling feet.

Locke's ears were drumming painfully. Little accustomed as he was to diving, the pressure was beginning to tell. He felt as though a large cold hand was on his lungs, squeezing them.

He could not spare a hand to tug the signal "I want to come up!" on the lifeline. His antagonist would have seized that chance in a moment.

On the sloping deck of the wreck it was none too easy to keep their balance, as both men were finding. The silted mud that covered the lower half of it was slimy, slippery. And suddenly Locke felt himself falling, sliding, right arm twined round the diver's waist, the other hand still grasped around the upraised wrist that flourished the knife.

With his leaden soles scraping on the mud and the boards in a vain attempt to regain his balance, Ferrers Locke reeled over, swaying and half-floating, dragging the other man with him. They struggled as they fell, to find themselves lying on the ooze a couple of yards from the yacht's side, and the man with the knife was on top!

The mud rose slowly around them as they wrestled in the dimness, staining the water black. A shoal of scared fish

(Ferrers Locke is in a tight corner now, resourceful as he is! Read how he gets out of it in next Monday's thrilling instalment.)



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