

"BILLY BUNTER'S LEGACY!"

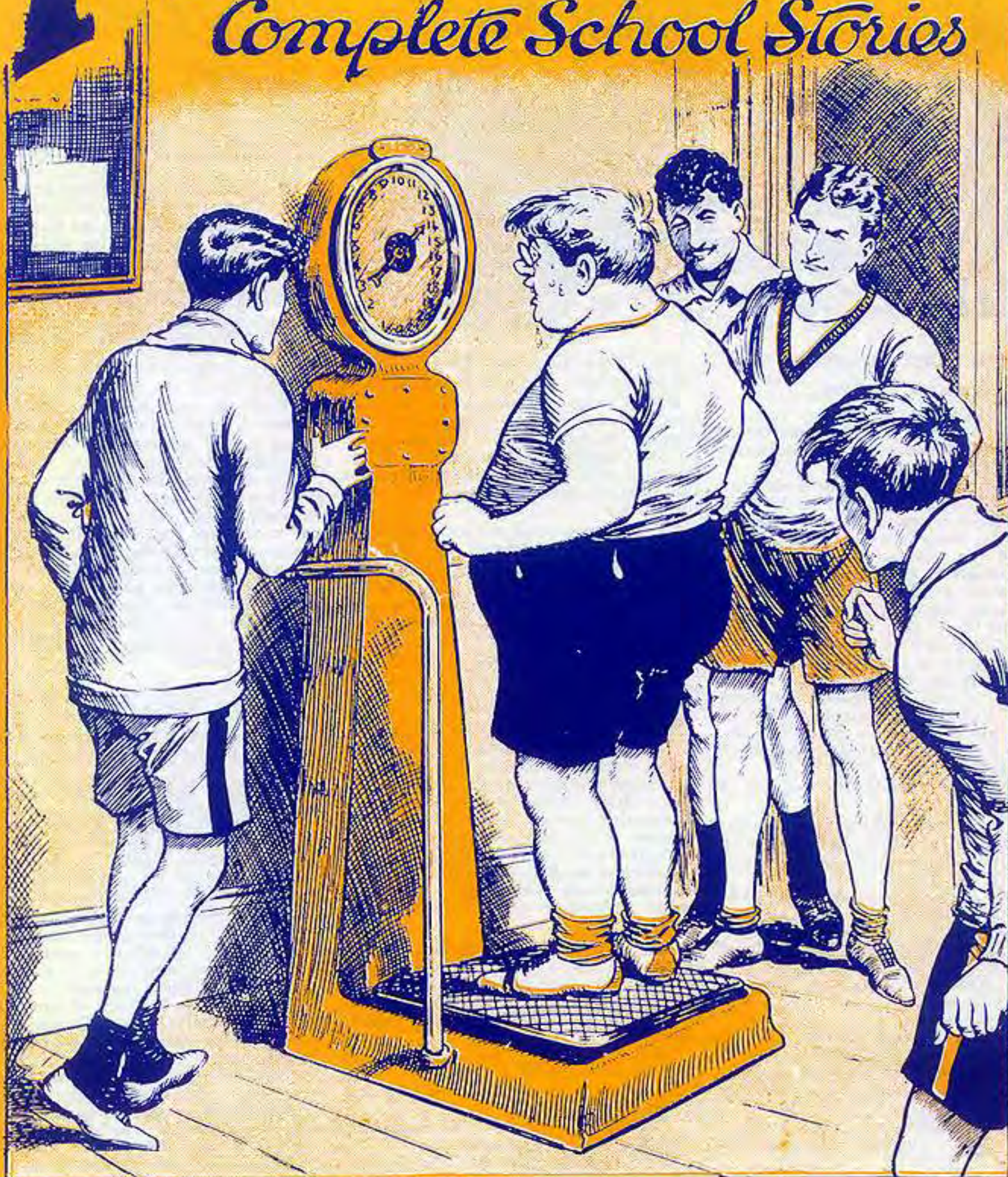
A screamingly funny story of the Chums of Greyfriars inside.

Week Ending February 20th, 1926. No. 941. Vol. XXIX.

The Magnet 2^d Library of

EVERY MONDAY.

Complete School Stories



HARD LINES ON THE WEIGHING-MACHINE!

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HARD LINES! Billy Bunter's stories about his wealthy, titled relations and the fabulous sums of money that will one day pass to him have always been taken with a grain of salt. But, strange as it may seem, his Aunt Eliza does actually bequeath something to him in her will—on conditions! And those conditions put Bunter in danger of having to make his own will!



Billy Bunter's Legacy!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars, with Billy Bunter well to the fore.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter is Bereaved!

"BUNTER!"

Thus Mr. Quelch, master of the Remove Form at Greyfriars.

His eyes were fixed with a basilisk stare on the corpulent form of William George Bunter, the fat and spectacled Owl of the Remove. But Bunter did not heed him, or hear him.

The Form was engaged in Latin construe, never a pleasant or agreeable diversion to the Owl.

"Bunter!"

"Ow! Yes, sir?"

Bunter came to himself with a start, and gazed at his Form master.

"Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, in stern tones. "You do not seem to realise it, but you are sent to this school for the purpose of being educated. You were not attending."

"Yes, sir. That is to say, no, sir. I mean—"

"You will cease making those ridiculous remarks at once, and take a hundred lines for inattention!"

"Really, sir, I—"

"That will do!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"You are apparently not aware of it, I say, but we are endeavouring to construe Latin. I asked you to let me have your version of the phrase 'Satis verborum.' You have done your preparation, I assume?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Billy Bunter smiled sweetly.

"Very well, then, construe."

The Owl goggled at his book as hopefully as if it had been a crib. But it was not a crib.

"Er—satis—satis—"

"Yes, yes," snapped Mr. Quelch irritably. "Go on!"

"Satis verborum," repeated Billy Bunter, with a rush. "Er—sat in his library."

"What!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"I mean, 'satisfied with his library,'" amended Bunter hastily, while the rest of the Form tried to subdue its titters.

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"Boy," exclaimed Mr. Quelch, "come out to the front of the class at once!"

Bunter came. He raised his ponderous bulk and rolled down the steps at the side of the desks, and stood beside his almost stupefied Form master. There he stood blinking in his fat surprise at the rows of grinning faces that confronted him.

Mr. Quelch gripped his podgy shoulder and shook him slightly.

"Here is a boy," he said, "who tells us that 'satis verborum' means 'satisfied with his library.' Bunter, you will now tell the Form how you reach that remarkable conclusion."

"Er—really, sir, what I meant was 'fed-up with his library.' That is, 'had had enough of his library.' Satis, you know—er—satisfied."

He turned his beaming spectacles upon Mr. Quelch and smiled an oily smile. He took a step to go back to his place, but the master's hand went out and detained him. Billy Bunter's sleek wiles were apparently lost on the master of the Remove at this inopportune moment.

"Verborum!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Does that word convey nothing to you? Verbum—verb—verbiage—verbose—verbal! 'Verbum—the word.' Words—words!"

"Oh, yes, sir! Verborum—a dictionary. That's what I was going to say—'Fed-up with his dictionary.'"

Mr. Quelch's hand dropped from the Owl's shoulder, and he almost shuddered.

"Linley," he said, "construe the passage for this—this—for Bunter."

Mark Linley straightened his face and got up in his place.

"Enough of words," he construed.

"Sufficient has been said."

"Near enough," conceded Mr. Quelch.

"Bunter, in addition to writing the hundred lines I have given you for inattention, you will write that phrase a hundred times, in order that it may possibly be fixed in your memory should you want it in future. You will bring both the impositions to me by six o'clock to-night. Go to your place!"

Bunter rolled away, and Mr. Quelch continued with the lesson.

"Redwing, you will take the next passage. 'Oderint dum—' Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove turned again and faced his Form master. He had nearly reached his desk, but did not seem to be in any hurry to do so. Instead, he had yanked out a large and not over-clean handkerchief, and, with his spectacles in one podgy hand, was mopping his eyes with the other.

"Y-yes, sir?" he blubbed.

"What is the meaning of 'this?'" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"Gug-gug-grief, sir. Sudden, overwhelming grief."

"Grief?"

William George nodded, crocodile tears hopping off his fat cheeks.

"Do you mean to assert that a well-merited imposition causes you grief, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir. That is, no, sir. I mean, it brought it on."

"Explain yourself! Unless you are able to account for this—this childishness in a satisfactory manner I shall regard this outburst as an impertinence, and your imposition will be doubled."

"I am suffering grief, sir," answered the Owl, in muffled tones through the handkerchief. "All the morning, sir. A death in the family."

"A death? Bless my soul!"

The faces of Bunter's Form-fellows became suddenly grave. This was news to them. Several of them relaxed next instant, however, including that of Skinner, who was now wearing a malicious smile. Everybody was "wise" to the ways of William George Bunter, not even excepting Mr. Quelch.

"A death, Bunter?"

"Y-yes, sir. One of my titled—I mean, one of my relations. The funeral will be next Tuesday, and if you could give me an exeat to go—"

Mr. Quelch's lips tightened, and his eyes glinted.

"Are you telling me the truth, Bunter?" he demanded.

"Really, sir—"

"That will do! I insist on an answer."
"Of course, sir. My Aunt Sarah—"
Bunter gave another sob.
"You imply that your Aunt Sarah has—er—passed away?"
"Yes, sir. On the 12th inst."
"On the what?"
"On the twelfth of this month, sir."
Bunter mopped up a stray tear and blinked at his Form master patiently.
"Try to control yourself, my lad," said Mr. Quelch, his tone softening a little. "You seriously inform me that you have heard of the death of your Aunt Sarah?"
"Yes, sir. She passed away peacefully, lamented by all who knew her," replied the Owl solemnly, as if he were quoting something he had read in a book.

Mr. Quelch looked at him fixedly, the hard look returning to his eyes.
"Bunter," he said grimly, "I hope, for your sake, you can convince me of the truth of what you are saying. I have a recollection of a former occasion when you stated that a relative was dead, and asked for an exeat to go to the funeral."

"Fully believing your story, I granted you the exeat, only to find afterwards that you had been lying, and that you wanted the exeat for the sole purpose of attending a theatrical performance at Courtfield, to which you hoped to be admitted on a ticket which you had misappropriated—I will not use a harsher term—from Coker of the Fifth Form."

"Pause and think before you plunge into further deceit, Bunter, for if you do you will assuredly be most severely punished!"

"Oh, sir, I would not tell a lie!" wailed the Owl, blinking his fat, tear-filled eyes. "Can't you take a fellow's word, sir? That Courtfield bizney—er—that Courtfield stunt was a misunderstanding, sir. My grief this time—I only heard this morning—I was my Aunt Hannah's favourite niece. I mean, she was my favourite aunt—"

"Enough!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "What did you say that her name was?"
"Hannah, sir. My Aunt Hannah Bunter."

"But you said Sarah at first!"
Bunter blinked and thought for a moment.

"Yes, sir. Sarah Hannah Bunter. Sometimes we call her Auntie Sarah—when we were young, of course, sir—and sometimes Auntie Hannah."

There was a sudden outburst of giggles among the Remove.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "This is no occasion for unseemly levity. Bunter, stop glaring at Cherry, and put that handkerchief away!"

"Really, sir, when a fellow is overcome with grief—"

The master silenced him sharply.

"We shall see; we shall see," he said. "Now, Bunter, I have no wish to be hard with you, especially if you have actually suffered a bereavement, but after having been once deceived in you, I intend to make sure. I must ask you to show me satisfactory evidence that your Aunt Sarah Hannah—"

"Boo-hoo!" hooted Bunter again, breaking out afresh at the sound of that beloved name, now gone beyond recall. He reached for his handkerchief and dabbed it on his fat face.

Mr. Quelch gazed at him in silence, sorely perplexed.

Even in cases of this nature it was not usual for his pupils to give way to unrestrained tears. He had not lived and moved and had his being in the same building for whole terms with the artful Owl without learning something

of his capabilities at prevarication, of course, so this sudden outburst did not entirely convince him, though in another fellow such grief would have been embarrassing.

"Control yourself!" said Mr. Quelch again, though a trifle more sharply than before. "If you can offer me any proof of the death of your Aunt Hannah Sarah—er, of your aunt—I will condone your inattention. Your imposition will be waived. In fact, you may be excused from class for the remainder of the morning, for if your tale is indeed true, you are obviously in no fit state to study."

"Thank you, sir!" said Bunter, brightening up marvellously, and starting down the aisle at the side of the desks, on his way to the door. "And if you will please let me have an exeat for the funeral—"

"Your proof!" demanded the Form master sternly. "Where is your proof? Have you not received a letter?"

"Yes, sir. That is, not yet, sir. But I can prove it, really. I have a paper. In my study."

Mr. Quelch looked at his fat visage doubtfully.

"Fetch it here at once, Bunter!" he boomed portentously. "And if I find you are trying to deceive me—"

But Billy Bunter had scuttled for the door.

"What a giddy nerve!" whispered Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, to Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh. "He'll come back and say the cat's eaten it, or something!"

"The nervefulness is terrific," agreed the Nabob of Bhanipur, who was "Inky" to his familiars. "You can drivefully drive a horse to the water, but you cannot make him bring back the stitch in timefulness."

Harry Wharton grinned at this wonderful English proverb. Inky prided himself on his pure English, and the aptness of his quotations especially.

The whole Form was a buzz of whispered remarks and smothered titters during Bunter's cross-examination. Nobody was trying to hide his enjoyment of this really refreshing interlude. Mingled with the pleasure of the Owl's free entertainment, however, was a trace of puzzlement.

The Ananias of the Remove was notoriously not lost for "neck," but he usually had the sense not to go too far in class, and previously none of the juniors had even heard of the lamentable demise of Aunt Sarah—or was it Aunt Hannah?

None of them, that is, except Harold Skinner. The smile on the face of the cad of the Remove seemed to be rather more knowing. He seemed to be waiting expectantly to see how Mr. Quelch might regard the "paper" which Bunter had mentioned. Perhaps Mr. Quelch might not admit it to be proof at all, in which case there would be disaster for the prevaricating Owl—a prospect at the thought of which Skinner's smile deepened.

"Silence!"

Mr. Quelch turned round from the door sharply and rapped out the command.

"We will proceed from the point at which we were interrupted. Redwing—construe!"

Redwing stood up and took his turn at grappling with the classics, a task for which he was rather more fitted than the egregious Owl, apart from the scholarship attainments which had won him a place at Greyfriars School.

The lesson continued on its implacable way for the space of five minutes—

then ten. Eyes began to roam from desks to doorway. Bunter was taking his time. Naturally, he was putting off the evil day.

Even the Form master himself turned at last as the door-handle rattled and William George Bunter opened the portal and rolled in.

His fat little eyes blinked behind his spectacles as he glimmered at the class and then at Mr. Quelch. His grief appeared to have been forgotten for the moment, and he did not seem to be expecting a licking, either.

Under his arm was tucked a bulky newspaper.

"Well?" snapped Mr. Quelch. He had noted how quickly Bunter had recovered from his tears.

"This is the paper, sir," said the Owl, in a manner that implied he was willing to return good for evil. "The 'Times,' sir."

He pushed a fat forefinger at a certain place on the folded page and handed the paper to his Form master.

Mr. Quelch read where he pointed, in the "Deaths" column.

"BUNTER, Eliza Judith, at her residence, 127, Cumberstoke Hill, Hampstead, on the 12th inst. Funeral at 11 a.m., Tuesday next. No flowers, by request. Deeply lamented by all who knew her."

"Bless my soul!" muttered Mr. Quelch. "How sad!"

The Remove master clicked his tongue sorrowfully, and then something seemed to strike his attention.

"Bunter!" he rapped.

Billy Bunter had been looking the other way when Mr. Quelch had turned towards him, making faces at Skinner, who was returning the compliment in the same manner.

The Owl jumped.

"Yes, sir?" he said, becoming properly sad at once.

"What was the Christian name of your deceased aunt?"

"Eliza, sir. But sometimes we called her Aunt Judy."

"But you told me her name was Sarah Hannah!"

Billy Bunter goggled.

"Yes, sir. So I did. I— What I meant to say was—"

"Be careful, Bunter! I shall punish severely any deceit on your part!"

"What I meant to say was that they—they were twins, sir. Got mixed up coming home from the christening, you know," gasped Bunter. "Changed over, somebody, you know, sir. Nobody could ever tell which was which afterwards all their lives; they were so much alike. But one of 'em's dead, and it must be Aunt Eliza. So if you could give me an exeat—"

Mr. Quelch glared at him. Bunter's ready invention had rather taken the wind out of his sails.

"Have you had a letter from your father about this?" he demanded, tapping the newspaper.

"Nunno, sir."

"Then you do not know whether this refers to your aunt, or merely to a namesake? A coincidence of names, perhaps?"

"A lot of my titled— A lot of my relations live at Hampstead, sir."

"That may be so, Bunter. I do not wish to doubt your word, especially in a matter of this kind. Nor do I wish to add to your grief, if real, by disbelieving you. But after past experiences, I must satisfy myself fully

before allowing you to leave the school for a day to attend the funeral. I suppose you did not cause this advertisement to be inserted on your own initiative, Bunter?" he added suddenly.

The Owl's fortitude broke down again at this. His fat eyes blinked, and he reached for his handkerchief.

"Boo-hoo!" he sobbed.

"Do not give way!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch hastily. "You are excused further classes for this morning; you are unfit to concentrate your mind on study at present. Your imposition is suspended in the meantime, and I will telephone to your father later in the day to obtain confirmation of this news. If it is true, you shall be allowed an exeat; if it is not, I shall severely cane you, and your imposition will be doubled. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

And Bunter rolled away triumphantly, bestowing a fat wink on the door as he turned the handle and vanished into the passage.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Bit of Spade-work!

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"Roll on, porpoise!"
"Amble away, old puff-ball!"
"Buzz off, Bunter!"

There was a mournful and woe-begone look on the face of the Owl of the Remove as he rolled to a stop by the group at the letter-rack. The afternoon post had just come in, and a lot of the fellows had turned up here straight from the Form-rooms, to see whether their luck might be in.

"Really, Bob Cherry," complained Bunter, in an aggrieved voice. "You aren't the only one entitled to look at the letter-rack, you know. I am expecting a post—"

"The same old postal-order!" murmured Bob Cherry, grinning.

"Beast! I was going to say I am expecting a postcard at least, from my—"

"From your titled relations?"

"From my pater. He might at least send me a card to tell me my aunt is dead. He ought to realise how this suspense tells on one of my delicate constitution."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removes did not seem to be highly impressed with the reality of Bunter's aunt, or with the reality of his sorrow, either. There was a grin on all their faces as they watched the Owl working hard to produce a flow of grief.

A bereavement is no laughing matter, but really the fellows were not to be blamed over-much for their unbelief. Bunter, on the strength of the name in the newspaper, had managed to impress Mr. Quelch sufficiently to be excused morning classes, but somehow the shocking news had not in the least impaired his appetite for dinner in Hall.

The Owl had, in fact, wolfed up three large helpings of rabbit-pie to such purpose as nearly to clean up the crack in the plate as well.

Afternoon classes had seen a return of his melancholy, for he had hoped to repeat his success of the morning and get the whole day off. Mr. Quelch, however, had refused to rise to the bait a second time. He, too, had not been unobservant in Hall.

At first he had been undecided, but when Bunter had let out a groan as a

feeler, he had pulled him up sharply and ordered him to keep his sorrow in control. Moreover, he had informed him that he had telephoned to his father, but unsuccessfully, for Mr. Samuel Bunter was away from his office.

But the porpoise of Greyfriars had not yet given up hope of that exeat for Tuesday.

"My pup-pup-poor aunt!" he wailed, ostentatiously going through the motions of wiping away an imaginary tear.

"If she's poor, I can't imagine why you are so cut-up about her," suggested Vernon-Smith heartlessly. "Now if she were rich—"

"You're a rotten, unfeeling beast, Vernon-Smith!" howled Bunter. "She is rich, of course. All my relations are. But if she didn't have thousands and thousands of pounds it'd be all the same to me. I don't value wealth for its own sake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

This was too much for the Remove fellows—coming from Bunter.

"What are you beasts cackling at?" hooted the Owl. "Can't you see I'm prostrated with grief? I can't help blubbing a bit, even though I am left in her will. Any of you low rotters would be jumping for joy if you'd been left what I have!"

"Are you going to get that postal-order at last, then?"

"It may interest you to know, Vernon-Smith," replied the Owl haughtily, forgetting his grief and blinking at the Bounder severely. "It may interest you to know that I was her favourite son and heir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Er—I mean her favourite nephew, I'm in her will for a huge sum, you know. The lawyers wouldn't tell me the exact amount, but it's not less than ten thousand."

"Where do I come in, then—eh?"

Billy Bunter turned round as the question was asked behind him, and nearly knocked over Harold Skinner. He had just come up. A smile flickered over the crafty countenance of the cad of the Remove, like unto that on the face of the tiger in the limerick—the tiger who had assimilated the lady of Riga.

"Oh, it's you, Skinner! You always were a low cadger," said Bunter loftily. "I don't encourage cadgers as a rule, but considering it was you who first broke the good news—I mean the sad news—to me, I don't mind dropping you fifty quid or so—when it arrives."

It was Harold Skinner who had first noticed the announcement in the "Times" of that same morning, when he had been prowling round Mr. Quelch's room during that master's temporary absence. His eye had fastened on the Owl's name displayed in capitals on the front page, and he had "borrowed" the paper and later handed it to Bunter.

His reason for this had been two-fold. First, he had put the fatuous Owl up to trying to get some advantage out of it; and, second, he had hoped that when the paper was produced as evidence, Mr. Quelch would remember that his own copy was missing from his study, and draw the obvious conclusion. In which case, Bunter's ill-advised enterprise would have brought the vials of wrath down upon his head—a spectacle which would have vastly amused the artful Skinner, and which he was confidently expecting from the moment that William George set the ball rolling.

This delightful programme miscarried, however. Mr. Quelch was so surprised at Bunter's news that he forgot about his missing "Times"; or,

perhaps, he did not know that it was missing. Moreover, on the other hand, Bunter had "got away with it" to the extent of being excused from morning classes; and it was this fact that convinced the mind of Skinner that he was due for some reward, anyhow.

"Fifty pounds!" he exclaimed, unimpressed by the magnificence of Billy Bunter's offer. "I'd rather have a bob now than fifty quid when it arrives, porpoise."

"You're an unbelieving beast, Skinner! I've a good mind to wash out my generous offer altogether. But to show you I don't bear you any malice in the hour of my affliction, I'll give you your bob now."

"Halves!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Bunter—Bunter!"

The voice of Johnny Bull echoed from the next passage, roaring like his namesake of Bashan.

The Owl looked behind him, seeking a way of retreat. Fellows who went about yelling for Bunter usually had some urgent reason for so doing, and the results, when they found him, were mostly unpleasant for Bunter.

The fat junior forgot the matter of his offered shilling in the panic of the moment, and was about to scud off into safety when Johnny Bull himself appeared round the corner.

"Oh, here you are, old fat barrel!" he greeted. "Been looking for you all over the place. Cut along to Quelch; he wants you!"

"The unfair beast!" hooted the Owl. "He let me off that impot. You all heard him say so. It's not fair to a chap stricken with grief—"

"Cut along, Tubby!" advised Bull. "You'll be stricken with a cane if you don't!"

"I expect it's to tell me he's phoned to the pater. He's heard that my aunt Eliza is really dead," said Bunter, more brightly. "You chaps'll be jolly sorry you haven't been more kind to me in the hour of my grief when you see the huge cheque I'm going to get from my lawyers!"

"Bowl, barrel, bowl!" said Vernon-Smith, giving him a playful shove with his boot.

And Bunter bowled.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Result is Unsatisfactory!

"COME in!"

Mr. Quelch's deep tones came through the woodwork of his study door as William George Bunter gingerly tapped thereon.

The Owl hesitated for a moment. The voice was muffled a bit, and he could not make out whether it sounded grimmer than usual, or not. Mr. Quelch had certainly given him an imposition, but it was not yet six o'clock, so he could hardly be expecting it to be done. Besides which, he had suspended sentence till he could find out the truth about Bunter's aunt.

The voice of the Remove master certainly did sound a bit grim. Perhaps he had phoned Mr. Bunter, and the denial of any death in the family had had the result of producing this grimness.

Best not to let Quelch see he expected anything of the kind, though, decided the Owl. It wouldn't do to go in as if he were expecting a licking. Better put a good face on the matter.

"COME IN!"

Mr. Quelch's voice was certainly impatient now, if nothing more.

Bunter opened the door and pushed his fat face, and then his fat body, into

the study. He blinked cheerfully, putting on his best smile to disarm the Form master's wrath.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Y-you sent for me, sir?"

"I did, Bunter," remarked Mr. Quelch. "You were a long time responding to my injunction to come in."

"Y-yes, sir," stuttered Bunter. "I—I was blub-blubbing, sir. I didn't want you to see my tut-tut-tears, sir! I was wiping my eyes, you know. My aunt—"

"Your present facial expression is a very strange one for a person in the throes of grief," observed the Form master. "You came into this study smiling in a way that I can only describe as fatuous and imbecile. Indeed, you are still smiling!"

Billy Bunter's face immediately contorted itself into what he hoped was a sad expression—sadness mixed with fortitude.

"Yes, sir. I—I've been trying to bear up under my affliction; to keep a smiling face to the world, you know, as the poet says, like—like—"

"Indeed!"

Mr. Quelch looked at him searchingly. He did not quite know what to make of Bunter just at present. The beaming smile with which he had first entered seemed to be genuine enough, even if only conciliatory, and there appeared to be traces of vanished tears, from the black smudges encircling his fat eyes.

"I have telephoned to your father, Bunter," went on the Remove master, after an interval.

"Y-yes, sir?"

"But the result is unsatisfactory."

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter let out a little gasp, and his eyes strayed to the cane that lay handy to Mr. Quelch's reach.

"Why do you glance at the cane, Bunter?"

"I—I— Oh, nothing, sir! It merely caught my eye, you know."

"I sincerely hope that it will catch nothing more painful," remarked Mr. Quelch dryly.

"Yes, sir," agreed William George, with a snigger. "Of course, sir, you can't really blame me for thinking it was my aunt, you know. The same name, sir. Bunter is not a common name—not like Smith, or Quelch."

"Eh?"

"I mean, sir, if you saw your name in the paper, you'd naturally think it was your aunt. And, after all, it wasn't me who bagged your beastly old 'Times.' Really, sir, I told Skinner he was a silly idiot to risk it, you know!"

It was Billy Bunter's eye that had previously strayed towards the cane; now it was Mr. Quelch's hand.

"Bunter, what do you mean?" he said ominously.

"Nun-nothing, sir. I wasn't thinking. This grief, you know—it unnerves a fellow!" said Bunter hastily. "But even in the midst of a bereavement like mine I can't help sticking to the truth. I always act up to the standard of William Tell, sir, and I would scorn to tell a lie. You remember, sir, when they asked him who cut down the apple-tree—"

"Cease this irrelevant prattle!" thundered the Form master. "Do you imply that it was Harold Skinner who misappropriated my 'Times' this morning? Bless my soul!" he added to himself. "I hadn't even missed it!"

"I told him you might miss it, sir," replied Bunter innocently.



Billy Bunter mopped up a stray tear and blinked at his Form-master patiently. "Try to control yourself," said Mr. Quelch. "You seriously inform me that you have heard of the death of your aunt Sarah?" "Yes, sir. She passed away peacefully, lamented by all who knew her," replied the Owl, as if he were quoting something he had read in a book. (See Chapter 1.)

"You may send Skinner to me," exclaimed Mr. Quelch; and Bunter turned to go, much relieved.

"After I have finished with you!" concluded Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

"In the ordinary course of events," went on the Remove master, "I should not hesitate to administer a severe caning to you, Bunter, at this juncture."

"Really, sir—"

"But in view of the doubt—I say the doubt—which exists as to this alleged bereavement, I shall hold my hand. Your answers seem fatuous and contradictory—this is quite usual—but in spite of that there is just a possibility that what you say is correct. If it is not your aunt who is dead, however—if you are merely trying to deceive me by means of an accidental similarity of names into granting you an exeat—your punishment shall be such as to make you deeply regret making the attempt."

"Y-yes, sir!"

Bunter blinked cheerfully. He was relieved for the moment, anyhow.

"I have again telephoned to your father's office," went on Mr. Quelch,

"but I find that he has been absent from business all day. I was told he was unexpectedly called away yesterday afternoon."

"To my dear aunt's bedside," murmured Bunter.

That aunt would continue to be a reality to him until, like the Mrs. Harris, of Sairey Gamp's imagination, it was proved there was "no such a person."

"I have also telephoned to his private house," pursued the Form master, "but can get no reply. It seems that there is nobody in residence. That is all I have discovered at the moment, Bunter; but in order to take no risks if there is actually some substratum of truth in your contradictory statements, and so that you shall not be deprived of an opportunity to attend the funeral, I have written a letter to your father. It must be posted so as to catch this evening's collection."

Bunter held out his hand for the letter which lay in front of Mr. Quelch.

"That'll be all right, sir," he said.

"I'll—I'll post it for you, sir!"

The master was about to give it to him, but on second thoughts his hand drew back. Perhaps he remembered the unreliability of William George where posting letters was concerned—especially the posting of those which might bring unpleasant results on himself.

"You need not trouble, Bunter," he remarked coldly. "Skinner shall post it—after I have punished him. Send him to me at once."

Bunter turned and rolled out of the study, feeling, on the whole, rather relieved.

He found Harold Skinner in Study No. 11, bending over the fire toasting a slice of bread in preparation for tea.

"I say, you fellows," he began, beaming through his spectacles at the appetising scene, "that toast smells all right, you know! I expect you've been looking all over the place to invite me to tea, but I've been having a chat with old Quelch. He isn't such a beast, after all—in fact, he's jolly decent sometimes, especially when a chap is prostrated with grief. He—"

"You'll be prostrated with a toasting-fork in a minute, you fat hippopotamus!" snorted Skinner. "Fado away!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Absquatulate!" yelled the nasal voice of Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, who had been asked to tea. "I guess you take this study for a broad-line, like they have in Noo Yark. No free meals served here!"

"Bah! Beasts! I came on business. Quelch wants you, Skinner," went on the Owl. "He's in a frightful wax! You needn't think I told him you bagged his copy of the 'Times' when he licks you, because I didn't. I tried to shield you, in fact!"

"You sneaking rotter!" howled Skinner. "I'll shield you!"

Bang! Crack!

Harold Skinner's knuckly fist collided violently with Bunter's fat jaw as the cad of the Remove dropped his toasting-fork and leaped after the Owl, who had hurriedly retreated out into the passage again.

"Yaroooh! Owch! Groooh!" groaned William George, as his head rat-tatted sharply against the opposite wall.

"Does he really want me, or are you spoofing?" demanded Skinner, shaking his fist in the Owl's face so that he had to squint down his podgy nose at it.

"Y-yes, of course, he does!" stammered Bunter. "I've been a long time finding you. He'll be waxy!"

Harold Skinner glared at him for a moment doubtfully, and then presented the spectacled Owl with a jab on his fat equator on general principles. Then, breathing threats and slaughter, he moved off reluctantly towards Mr. Quelch's study.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "You've forgotten to stuff some exercise-books in your bags, Skinner!"

"Rush him!"

The voice of Fisher T. Fish floated from the open door of Study No. 11, and he emerged, followed by Stott and Snoop, who had until now been too busy to take much notice of what had been going on.

But Bunter was already executing what is known in military circles as a strategical retreat. He had jumped violently at Fish's first bark, and was now hurtling along the Remove passage, his fat little legs going like clockwork under him.

Fisher T. Fish and the study-mates of the unfortunate Skinner did not follow him. They had other attractions

besides taking it out of Bunter just then, and with a laugh went back to their interrupted preparations for tea.

The Owl slowed down when he heard the door close behind them, and turned round, blinking angrily down the passage.

"Beasts!" he roared. "Yah!"

The row of study doors stretched before him—all closed. Behind them the fellows were all making or having tea. The prospect of being a guest—even an uninvited guest—at one of those tea-tables attracted Bunter for a time.

He paused and struggled with himself. The temptation to go and barge in somewhere for a free feed was strong within him. But stern, relentless necessity won. Bunter had important business elsewhere.

With a sigh like unto a Westinghouse air-brake he turned from temptation, and followed in the wake of Harold Skinner towards the sanctum of their respected Form master.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Skinner is Wrathful!

SWISH!

A fat smile lit up the face of William George Bunter as he bent a little lower outside the door of Mr. Quelch's study.

Swish!

The sound was repeated, this time followed by a howl of anguish.

"Wow!"

Skinner was getting it hot!

Two more swishes, and two more howls that blended at the finish into one sustained wail, announced that vengeance had at last overtaken the purloiner of Mr. Quelch's newspaper.

The swishing stopped. There was a pause, during which the Owl could not distinguish anything except the dying yelps of Harold Skinner, and a thunderous bark on the part of the Form master that eventually produced silence.

"Giving him the letter to post," muttered Bunter.

He judged it time to be gone. He did not want the door to open suddenly and disclose his fat presence there in the act of eavesdropping. Bunter had no hesitation about listening-in on moral grounds, but he was a great respecter of the law which says: "Thou shalt not get found out."

He straightened up and scuttled along the corridor, where he took up his position round the first corner. Mr. Quelch's door opened and Skinner came out.

"Never enter my study again without express permission!" boomed the tones of the Remove master, and Bunter grinned in glee.

There was no audible reply. Perhaps Harold Skinner's feelings were too deep for words. Next came the sound of the closing door, and in a few more seconds Skinner himself came face to face with the Owl.

Each of his hands was tucked below the opposite armpit, and expressions of agony chased each other across the face of the cad of the Remove. In one hand, however, his tingling fingers held a letter; and it was the letter, rather than Skinner's sufferings, that Bunter was more interested in just then.

"Poor old Skinner!" he said, with a smirk. "I say, isn't old Quelch a beast! How many did he give you, Skinny?"

"Y-you rotten sneak!" yelped the cad of the Remove. "You told him about that paper!"

"It is false!" replied Bunter loftily. "I would scorn to do such a thing. It is not my way to sneak on a pal, Skinner. You have been my friend long enough to know that!"

"Friend!" hooted Skinner.

"Well, of course, I wouldn't like it to be generally known," went on the Owl, in his fatuous way. "A fellow in my position has to be careful, you know. These things get about, and if it got round to any of my titled relations they would disapprove, naturally. Still, between ourselves—"

Skinner made a dash at him, but without removing his hands from the comfortable position they occupied under his armpits. Bunter backed a pace or two in alarm.

"Don't get ratty, Skinner, old chap," he said soothingly. "I don't see why you should suspect me of sneaking on you. Quelch asked me whether it was you who sneaked his 'Times,' and I simply denied it, straight from the shoulder. I said it was lying—"

"It's you who are lying!" snorted Skinner.

"I merely said it was lying in your study. It might have been Stott, or Fish, or Snoop, or anybody. You see, I was trying to shield you. Of course, he wormed it out of me that you showed me that bit about my aunt. You know what a one he is for worming things out of a chap."

"I know what a worm you are!"

"Really, Skinner—"

"You wait till I can use my hands again!"

"He, he! They're pretty sore, aren't they?" grinned Bunter. "I say, old Quelch can be a brute sometimes, although he's nice as pie to a fellow he takes a liking to—me, for instance. Now I've been bereaved he's like a father to me. He's phoned to my pater and found out it's true about my aunt, and I've got an exeat for Tuesday to go up to London for the funeral. He said he was going to write a letter to him, confirming it in writing. He's going to look up the times of trains for me, and all that."

Skinner glared at him malevolently.

Bunter apparently seemed to be having all the luck! Excused morning classes, and now a whole day in London, just because some old aunt or other had kicked the bucket. That was the amiable way Harold Skinner looked at it, and he saw no reason to doubt even the Owl's words, either.

All the facts, as he knew them, tallied with the usually unveracious Owl's statements.

"Yes," continued Billy Bunter; "he started to write it as I left the study, and told me to go back for it after he'd finished caning you, so that I could take it to the post. I say, is that the letter you've got there?"

"Go and eat cokel!" was Skinner's ungracious suggestion.

"I'm sorry you've had four—or was it six?" chuckled Bunter. "But it wasn't my fault, you know. I did my best, really. Still, to make up for it, I'll give you the fifty quid I promised you as soon as I touch my legacy. And I'll post that letter for you, too. Hand it over, old fellow; I'd do anything to oblige one of my oldest friends."

Bunter held out his fat hand invitingly.

Harold Skinner was not having any, however. He squirmed away, and the letter just slipped between Bunter's fingers as they grabbed for it.

"You fat burglar!" he yelled. "You don't touch this letter if I know it!"

"But I can see my pater's name on it!" hooted the Owl.

"You're good at seeing things not intended for you, you fat beast!" retorted the cad of the Remove. "You had your ear at Quelch's keyhole; didn't you hear him tell me to post it myself, and not let you touch it on any account?"

"That was only his little joke," explained Bunter glibly. "What he meant was that a fellow of my class could not be expected to run about posting letters, you know. It's different with you, of course; it doesn't matter, treating you as an errand-boy, because you're not in the same high social position. But that's all right, Skinny, old man; nobody can accuse me of being snobbish. Gimme the letter."

"You fat, puffed-up toad!" roared Skinner. "What do you want to do with it—prise it open to see if there's a postal-order inside?"

"Really, Skinner—"

"Roll out of the way, lard-barrel! I wouldn't trust you with a blank post-card, let alone a letter. You'd pinch your own pater's postal-orders!"

Harold Skinner shoved the Owl out of his path, and proceeded on his way along the passage. Bunter trailed along behind, using his most persuasive efforts to make Mr. Quelch's victim part up with the precious letter.

A worried look flitted across his fat visage between the intervals of his coaxing. The egregious Owl realised that his father would certainly be very surprised to note its contents—to hear of his son's grief and his claim to be the nephew of the lady mentioned in the newspaper notice.

The fact that somebody named Bunter had expired was, of course, indisputable, and when Harold Skinner had shown him the newspaper the imagination of William George had without the slightest difficulty convinced him that she was his aunt—his rich aunt. He had made use of the incident while the going was good, and it had seemed that a day's exeat might easily be "worked"; but Quelch had been suspicious, and the Owl was beginning to have his doubts. To keep the thing up might be too risky.

Bunter was a fool in many ways, but there were times when he knew when to stop. This was one of them. It was lucky that his pater had been away from the office all that day, and even more so that the phone at home was somehow out of order. Mr. Quelch had been unable to get in touch with him so far, and the Owl meant to see to it that they should remain out of touch if he could manage it.

All he needed to do, of course, was to get hold of the letter and refrain from posting it. If no reply turned up, Mr. Quelch would naturally think that his father had ignored the matter, or did not wish his sons to attend the funeral, and then the whole thing would blow over.

At least, that was the way William George Bunter reasoned.

All the way to the postbox outside he followed the vengeful cad of the Remove, lavishing on him his best flattery. But somehow Bunter's flattery seemed to have the opposite effect from what it should have had. Skinner seemed to become insulted rather than soothed.

Promises of tempting shares in the coming legacy were of no more avail than downright threats to give Skinner a good hiding then and there. Skinner appeared to be merely amused at either prospect.

Skinner was adamant, and they arrived together at the postbox with the cad gloating over his imminent revenge, and Bunter more desperate than ever, but still baffled.

"Watch carefully, porpoise!" said Skinner, inserting the letter in the slit and guarding against a rush from Bunter. "No deception; the quickness of the hand deceives the eye. Presto! Go!"

He jerked his hand, and the letter disappeared into the safe interior of the box. The Owl made a grab, but just too late.

"Ow! You beast, Skinner! You may consider that fifty quid washed out, so far as you are concerned—definitely!"

But Harold Skinner was already on the way back. Something seemed to have cheered him up, and the sting of Mr. Quelch's cane to have been forgotten. He was whistling a jolly tune.

"Rotter!" muttered Bunter. "I hope he won't be able to hold a toasting-fork for a week!"

The fat Owl of the Remove stood and blinked short-sightedly in the gathering dusk at the letter-box. The incriminating missive to his father was as safe in there, he knew, as it would have been in the vaults of the Bank of England.

It would not be the slightest use his waiting for the postman when he came round to collect, and asking for the letter back on account of an alleged mistake in the address, or something like that. It was against regulations.

Bunter knew this as well as the postman. He had tried the same dodge before.

With a groan, William George gave a last long look at the grave of all his hopes, and rolled moodily away.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Unexpected Happens!

"**R**OTTEN!"

Billy Bunter uttered that word and groaned.

The bell was ringing for classes on the morning after the Owl's unsuccessful attempt to induce Harold Skinner to listen to his blandishments at the pillar-box just outside the gates, and its brazen clanging reminded that fat

and fatuous youth that his presence was required in the Remove Form-room.

The rest of the fellows were making across the quad for the school buildings, and Billy Bunter rolled glumly along in the same direction as much in the rear as he dared.

"Rotten!" he groaned again. "It isn't fair! Quelch's a beast! A chap who is weighed down with grief like I am oughtn't to be expected to study. It's too much to expect of flesh and blood!"

There was plenty of flesh and blood about Bunter, certainly, and as yet none of it had dwindled away as the result of his carking care, so far as was visible to the naked eye.

Now that the letter had gone off to his father and the die was cast, the Owl had fallen back on his usual attitude of making hay while the sun shone. If there was one thing more than another that his fat mind did not exercise itself in, that thing was to worry about consequences.

The Remove master's unexpected action in writing the letter had given Billy Bunter a jolt, but now that the thing was off his mind for the time being his imagination had steadied down on an even keel again. Had he been able to regain possession of it before Skinner posted it he would have forgotten his deceased aunt forthwith, but as he hadn't he naturally followed the course of trying to make capital out of her.

The previous evening, when he should have been doing his prep, the fatuous Owl had spent in trying to raise a loan ostensibly to cover the cost of a wreath and the price of a railway ticket to London.

He had tried the Famous Five first of all, but had drawn blank. Even when he promised them a thumping share of his huge legacy—when he got it—nobody was having any.

"The shy dog once bit gathers no moss," as Hurrec Singh had remarked.

Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, and a fellow with enough resources to satisfy even Bunter, had he been inclined to, would not rise to the bait; and the tale was the same from one end of the Remove passage to the other.

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Billy Bunter's fat face had smirked, and his round spectacles had glimmered, into every study, but he had not even gained sympathy, let alone coin of the realm. The only bright spot on the evening was when he had almost touched the heart of the easy-going Lord Mauleverer, but was booted out of Study No. 12 by Mauly's study-mate, Sir Jimmy Vivian, before he could lead up to the question of cash.

"Stingy beasts!" mumbled Bunter, rolling along a trifle more quickly as he saw that all the other fellows had vanished inside the building.

He gained his place a trifle late, but luckily did not run into Mr. Quelch, who was late himself. He had been delayed by talking to Mr. Lascelles, who was to have taken the maths. class, but who had a cold and a sore throat, and a temporary alteration in the time-table had been arranged. Mr. Quelch had agreed to take that class in his stead, and to take it first.

Bunter seemed dreamy and dozy—absorbed in solemn thoughts. In the presence of Mr. Quelch he was keeping up a proper grief.

The Owl was blinking through his large round glasses when the master's voice at last aroused him. He was being asked the answer to an equation, and the problem had formed part of the preparation which he was supposed to have done the previous evening. Bunter was hearing of it now, however, for the first time.

"A horse eats a bushels, and a donkey 5 bushels of corn in a week," boomed the voice of the Remove master. "How many bushels will they together consume in 2 weeks?—Bunter!"

The Owl jumped an inch or two off the form.

"Y-yes, sir."

"You heard the question," rapped Mr. Quelch. "What is the answer?"

"Tut-tut-ten thousand pounds!" stut-tered Bunter.

"W-what?"

"Ten thousand pounds, sir."

Billy Bunter's eyes blinked solemnly. The rest of the Remove chuckled audibly.

"Silence!" thundered the Form master. "The pitiable state of this boy's mental faculties is no occasion for mirth. What do you mean, Bunter?"

"Mum-mean, sir?"

"You heard what I said. What connection is there between bushels of corn and ten thousand pounds?"

"Bub-bub-bushels of corn, sir?"

"Don't keep repeating after me like a parrot!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Otherwise I shall cane you severely. I am making great allowances for you just now, but I refuse to indulge you too far! What did you mean by your absurd answer? What has ten thousand pounds to do with this equation? Unless you can immediately explain to my satisfaction, I shall regard this as an impertinence, and punish you accordingly."

"I—I was thinking of my poor aunt, sir. Ten thousand pounds; that's what she's left me in her will, sir," replied the Owl.

His face brightened up considerably at the thought of this comfortable inheritance—a purely imaginary one, of course.

"So you are more concerned with the money that you believe is coming to you, rather than with sorrow at the loss of a relative?" asked Mr. Quelch grimly.

"Really, sir—" protested Bunter. "Not at all, sir. I'm really prostrated with grief. Been going off my feed,

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sir. Haggard, sir; that's what I'm getting."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You will take a hundred lines, Cherry, for laughter in class!" rapped the Form master.

Bob Cherry's face became meek. Mr. Quelch's glare wiped the grins off the faces of the rest of the Form, too, as it swept round the class. Everybody was willing to enjoy the Owl's funny turn as an oasis in the dreary desert of maths., but not at the price of a hundred lines a time.

"Bunter," continued the master severely, "I am giving you the benefit of the doubt. Until I have heard from your father direct that this intelligence is well founded, and that you have indeed lost an aunt, I am refraining from punishing you as I believe you deserve. But if the letter I expect to receive proves that you have been deceiving me, your punishment will be more than severe. I shall take into consideration your foolish answers in class, and your general inattention as well. Bunter, you may sit down."

"Y-yes, sir."

Bunter sat down—with a thump that made the form creak.

His face became even more solemn than before. Mr. Quelch's remarks had given him something to think about—but not about maths.

Even his fatuous mind realised quite well that his father had a businesslike habit of answering letters, and usually promptly. When Bunter senior wrote to deny all knowledge of a death in the family there would be trouble—big trouble!

To-day was Friday, he speculated. The letter had gone off by the previous evening's post. Even if his pater replied immediately he received it, the answer could not arrive at Greyfriars until Saturday morning at the earliest.

Probably it would not arrive on Saturday at all, and as there was no delivery of letters on Sunday, disaster could not befall till Monday morning. Even then it need not be disaster. Bunter blinked as he gazed at his Euclid—open at the wrong place—and thought it all out in advance. He decided to stuff Quelch when the time came with a convincing yarn about having a real aunt of the same name. Quelch was a suspicious brute, but he couldn't disprove that, anyway. And as for the address at Hampstead given in the paper—well, he couldn't be expected to remember where all his relations hung out. It was enough to do to keep in mind the titled ones, and so—

"As I was saying, Bunter—"

The voice of Mr. Quelch again broke in on his meditations.

The Owl jumped a second time.

"What is the matter with you, boy?" demanded the Form master. "You are still inattentive. If you will kindly favour us with your attention, the class will endeavour to go on with these equations."

Tap-tap!

Mr. Quelch frowned, and turned his sarcastic glance on the Form-room door.

He was distinctly annoyed. Bunter's answer to the horse and donkey problem had not altogether soothed his nerves, and he did not like being interrupted in class at any time.

"Come in!" he snapped.

The door opened. A youth in the uniform of the telegraph messenger service entered.

"Mr. Quelch?" he asked.

"I am he!" said the Remove master portentously.

"Telegram for you, sir."

Mr. Quelch took the telegram. He opened the envelope impatiently, and focused his gimlet eyes on the words written on the paper inside.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured.

He turned to the telegraph boy.

"There is no answer," he said.

The boy passed out through the door. Mr. Quelch read the telegram again, as if unable to believe his eyes the first time. The Remove looked on, wondering.

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Quelch, as he took in the sense of the message:

"News unhappily true. Lady mentioned in letter is my son's great-aunt. Inconvenient for either William or Samuel to attend funeral."

"BUNTER."

Mr. Quelch's eyes rose from the telegram and strayed to the Owl, who sat blinking fatuously. The expression on the Form master's face was less harsh than it had been when he had looked that way before.

William George seemed to be taking a great interest in the telegram. His fat eyes goggled behind his glasses as if he were trying to read it from that distance. Bunter's curiosity in matters that usually did not concern him, was as much a byword as his economy with the truth, but the other Remove fellows were hardly less interested in the message that had interrupted morning classes and made such an obvious impression on the master.

Mr. Quelch was about to speak, but he stopped himself. He seemed suddenly to think of something—to become suspicious.

He looked at the telegram once more—at the post-office entry which showed where it had been despatched.

Hampstead!

That was the word he saw.

It perhaps accounted for Mr. Bunter having been absent from his office and from his home when Mr. Quelch had telephoned. Mr. Bunter did not live at Hampstead. It looked as though he had been called from his office and gone straight to the residence of the deceased lady to take charge of affairs there.

Mr. Quelch, like David of old, had said in his haste that all men were liars. At least, he thought it applied with particular force to William George Bunter. But he realised that he had been guilty of a hasty conclusion in this matter—a wrongful suspicion.

He had imagined that his fat pupil himself might have found opportunity to send the telegram off in his father's name. But to do that he could not have gone far. He might conceivably have got to Courtfield in the short interval between the sending of the letter and this, the next morning.

But there was the official entry—Hampstead! It was genuine, after all.

"Bunter," he said magnanimously, "I must apologise to you. I have wrongfully doubted your word. I have here a telegram from your father which confirms your statement. I am sorry to tell you that it is indeed your aunt—or, rather, your great-aunt—who has passed away."

"Mum-mum-my aunt, sir?"

The Owl seemed more amazed than his Form master.

"Your great-aunt," corrected Mr. Quelch patiently.

"Bub-but, sir—" stammered Bunter.

"Did you not say you had been—cr—"

bereaved?" demanded the master curiously.

"Y-yes, sir. Of course, sir. But really—"

"Why do you seem astonished, Bunter?"

"It's the—the shock, sir."

"Shock? I really do not know what to make of you, Bunter! But you are obviously not in a fit state to attend to your studies now. I will excuse you further classes for the day, and if you will come to my study after morning classes I will acquaint you with your father's wishes about the funeral. You may go now."

Mr. Quelch's first impulse had been to inform him as to these wishes, but he saw that his pupil was confused and surprised, and he decided to refrain from giving Bunter what he imagined must be a disappointment until the first shock of the official news had worn off somewhat.

In spite of his grief, Billy Bunter got up with alacrity. He was still looking a little dazed at what his Form master had told him, but with the prospect of cutting classes he got up with alacrity.

"Er—Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch's voice stopped him just as he was reaching for the door-knob.

"Y-yes, sir?"

"Does your minor know of this sad news?"

"Nunno, sir."

"No?"

"I didn't believe it, sir. That is, I thought he wouldn't believe it, I didn't want to break his heart, sir. Too young, you know. Besides, the little beast—er—my little brother wouldn't have wanted to barge into the funeral as well. You needn't think that, sir."

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured. "I hardly know what to think! You are a very curious boy, Bunter. You may go."

And Bunter went.



THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Great Day Passes!

"TIME to get up, Bunter!"

Harry Wharton grasped the mountainous pile of bedclothes which represented the recumbent William George Bunter, and shook vigorously.

"Grooh! Gerraway!"

"Time to get up, Fatty, if you're going to catch the first train to London!" said Wharton, more emphatically.

But the somnolent Owl did not seem inclined to get up. He merely snorted in a sleepy way, and withdrew his head beneath the sheets like a tortoise retreating into its shell.

"Doan-wanner-gerrup!" came the muffled protest. "'Tisn't time! Not rising bell yet. G'way, Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove glared at the heap of bedclothes wrathfully. It almost seemed, for a moment, that he was about to wrench them from off the fat form lying there. A gentle snore filtered through the blankets, and Wharton's face relaxed. With a wry grin, he made his way back along the dormitory and got into his own bed.

"That's all the thanks one gets!" he murmured.

Certainly it was not getting-up time yet. Rising-bell would not clang out for fully another half-hour, so that, on the face of it, the Owl was justified in resenting any attempt to turn him out before he was compelled.

Skinner jerked his hand, and the letter Billy Bunter coveted disappeared into the safe interior of the post box. Bunter made a grab for it but he was just too late. "Ow! You beast, Skinner!" he roared. (See Chapter 4.)

What altered the case entirely was that this was the all-important Tuesday—the day on which, according to Bunter, that youth was due in London to attend the obsequies of his deceased great-aunt at 11 a.m.

With this fact in mind Harry Wharton had climbed out of bed into the chilly morning air of the Remove dormitory. At some discomfort to himself he had tried to awaken the slumbering porpoise, but in vain. At least, he believed it to be a fact that it had been arranged that Bunter should go to London; it was not till afterwards that he found that he was labouring under a delusion, as were the remainder of the Owl's Form-fellows.

When the fat and fatuous Bunter had first published his desolating loss, he had met with unbelief, and even with derision. His sadness and crocodilian tears were, with the Remove, chickens that would not fight.

The Owl had been sad on other occasions, and aunts had died on other occasions, too. Bunter had a remarkable knack of becoming sad when need demanded, and an equally remarkable knack of acquiring deceased relations. Even when the newspaper cutting was produced there were some who were not above hinting that the scheming William George had himself caused it to be inserted.

But the telegram which Mr. Quelch had received effectually settled that question. The news was proved to be true; it had been officially confirmed in the very Form-room, in the presence of them all.

Until now Bunter's deceased relations had been mythical. He had invented them as required. They had had no more solid existence in the flesh than those others he so often referred to—the titled ones.

But this time it was true!

That had been four days ago, on the preceding Friday. In the interval the optimistic Owl had done his level best to raise the wind on the ground that he wished to buy a wreath.

He had been successful to the extent that the sympathetic Lord Mauleverer had parted up with a ten-shilling note for that laudable, but quite fictitious, purpose. But when the porpoise of Greyfriars was discovered immediately afterwards gorging himself at Mrs. Mumble's counter, and that all that was left of the note was the memory of it, the rest of the Remove froze up the fountains of compassion, and the well of sympathy grew dry.

All the more decent fellows were sorry for him in his bereavement, but the general verdict was that if William

George lacked the price of a railway-ticket up to London, he would have to walk; or that if he wanted a wreath he would have to save up for it. They knew Bunter!

So, like Rachael of old, the Owl mourned and would not be comforted—at least, so far as cash was concerned. Curiously enough, he appeared to mourn about the bereavement itself not at all. At times, when he forgot himself, he was almost jolly.

Harry Wharton lay thinking of these things as he waited for the sound of the rising-bell, for he had awakened fresh and was in no mood to emulate the Owl's sluggardly slumber.

When at last the bell rang out he tried once more to induce the fat sleeper to the need for hurry. But, somehow, Bunter showed no signs of wishing to catch the first, or any, train to London that day. The thing seemed inexplicable: but the juniors would not have wondered, and Harry Wharton would not have left his bed so early could they have seen the telegram Mr. Quelch had received.

Mr. Bunter had said nothing about catching trains.

Billy Bunter had gone to the Form master's study after morning classes, as instructed, to be acquainted with his father's wishes in the matter. He had gone there fully expecting to be told what arrangements were to be made about his journey to town. He had been told instead that his presence, and that of his minor, were inconvenient.

That statement had come as rather more of a shock to the Owl than the original news.

He had been building on that exeat. He had been thinking of it with glee from the moment when he was released from the Form-room till the time he interviewed Mr. Quelch. A funeral wasn't a very jolly function, of course, but it was better than maths or the Aeneid—and it was certain there would be plenty of tuck about.

To all his grieving protestations Mr. Quelch had been firm. He had pointed out to William George Bunter that he could not, in any case, ignore the explicit wishes of Bunter senior. There was no doubt about the Owl being disappointed. He had even hinted that he didn't really believe his father could have said such a thing; or if he had that he could not have meant it.

At any other time his disbelief would have gained him a further introduction to Mr. Quelch's cane. But Mr. Quelch was patient, and showed him the telegram instead. In fact, he gave it to him to show his minor.

But the fat mind of William George had known better than to show the document to Sammy. Sammy might have wanted to raise the wind amongst his pals of the Second on his own account, or to barge in on his major's plans in some way or other. Probably he would have revealed to some of Billy's Form-fellows that there was no possible chance of an exeat for either of them on Tuesday. It was just the sort of thing he would have done, Bunter reflected.

Therefore, being in the separate watertight compartment of the Second Form, and not coming much into contact with fellows of the Remove, Sammy Bunter was still in ignorance of the tragic event in his family.

The fat Owl ambled leisurely through his dressing, but made up speed with his breakfast, which he demolished in record time. Grief and Bunter seemed

far apart, for though the fat junior looked round eagerly for more, his eyes blinked placidly through his large round spectacles.

"What about the jolly old funeral?" asked Skinner, with a malicious grin, as the bell for first classes went, and he and Bunter were on their way to the Form-room.

"I have decided not to go," replied Bunter somewhat pcevishly. "I have never met such a lot of mean-spirited fellows in my life. There isn't one chap in this rotten place who will advance a slight loan to tide me over till I get my huge legacy. Not one! There is nobody who will take pity on a fellow who is crushed down with grief and suffering and lend him a few measly bob for a train-fare!"

"What about your rich relations?"

"My pater was to have sent me a postal-order," groaned Bunter, "but he must have forgotten it! Can't be wondered at at a time like this, really. The shock must have been terrible, to say nothing of the gigantic financial operations he had been engaged in. So I've got to stop here swotting over rotten Latin verbs or something while my pup-pup-poor aunt—"

"Do you want an onion?" asked Skinner solicitously. "To work up some tears with, you know. Quelchy might let you off classes again."

Bunter looked up from the ground and blinked. It was an idea, certainly, but the trouble was that there was no time to get an onion.

"Never mind!" he said, thinking of his troubles. "In a few days from now I'll be rolling in wealth. My legacy will be ten thousand pounds at least."

He beamed brightly.

"How much do you want for it?" asked Skinner.

"Eh?"

"How much do you want for it now? Cash down. I'll give you fourpence!"

The Owl drew himself up haughtily, and then thawed a bit.

"Well, Skinny, old chap," he said. "I don't mind your joking a bit. I shouldn't sell my legacy outright for fourpence, of course, but if you'll lend me that for a few days I'll give you a—*a shilling.*"

"Skinner! Bunter! Why are you dawdling? The bell is ringing for classes!"

Mr. Quelch appeared suddenly from behind a corner, and his voice rasped sharply as if he were on the warpath. The two juniors scuttled along at an increased pace, leaving the discussing of the selling-price of Bunter's ten thousand for a more fitting opportunity.

The fatuous Owl tried one or two of his tricks in class, with the object of bringing to Mr. Quelch's notice the fact that this was the day of the funeral. Mr. Quelch, however, was not having any. He recalled that it was the fateful day without any difficulty, but intimated to Bunter that he would be far better occupied with his lessons than with mooning and moping on his bereavement outside. He stated definitely that Bunter need not expect to be excused any more classes.

One thing which appeared to be strange until the Remove fellows began to realise that the Owl had been spoofing them was that Mr. Quelch made no mention at all of his fat pupil's exeat. There was no suggestion that he was to have been up in London that day.

So Tuesday passed. Bunter's grief wore off. There was no purpose now in keeping it up, so far as he could

see. His deceased aunt had been useful while she lasted, as it were, but her usefulness was now at an end.

The following day brought nothing to remind him of her save a few jeers from Skinner about his offer in exchange for the legacy, and by the evening Bunter had practically forgotten that such a place as Hampstead existed, or that aunts and other wearisome people lived there.

But on Thursday something happened to bring it all back.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Astonishing!

"HERE, Bunter, here's your postal-order come at last!"

Tom Redwing took an envelope from the letter-rack and tossed it across to the Owl of the Remove, who promptly fumbled it and dropped it.

Bunter sniggered self-consciously as he saw his name on the envelope. He had come there as soon as he had heard that the post had arrived, not in any great hopes of there being anything for him, but more to discover what other fellows were lucky in the way of receiving remittances. Knowledge of this sort was very acceptable to one of William George Bunter's borrowing temperament.

"You're wrong, Redwing!" sniggered Harold Skinner. "It's a summons or a writ or something like that. There's the name of a firm of lawyers on the back."

Evidently Harold Skinner had already well scrutinised the envelope and got from it all the information he could, short of opening it.

Bunter sniffed disdainfully as he picked up the letter.

"You can't put the wind up me like that, you rotter!" he announced. "This is the sort of envelope my titled relations always use."

In spite of that statement, something impelled the unvarnished Owl to turn the envelope over. For once Harold Skinner was speaking the truth. Bunter glimmered surprisedly at the neat device embossed on the flap, and read the words thereon.

"Sprowle, Sprowle, Sprowle & Gabbitts, Solicitors, Scriveners' Inn, W.C."

That was what Bunter saw; and his face went suddenly white. What past sins he might have committed he could not think. His mind was confused. He thought of writs, policemen, and prison cells. The words "Bunter Court" flashed into his fat and turgid mind. He had had a narrow escape in the matter of defrauding tradesmen during his escapade during the summer vac, when he had posed as the owner of a palatial mansion and lived in it rent free for weeks, changing the name of the place to Bunter Court, and running up gigantic bills all round.

He thought that that matter had blown over, but it seemed that it hadn't! In the state of mental upheaval he was going through then he could think of nothing else big enough to warrant such an ominous letter from a firm of solicitors.

"Ow!" he groaned. "Oh dear!"

Skinner moved forward, as if to help him read the letter when he should summon up courage to open it.

But William George forestalled the artful design of that youth. He whisked the letter out of sight into his pocket, and rolled away in search of a quiet place to read it.

There were not many fellows under the elms at that time, and Billy Bunter found a secluded bench.

"Oh dear!" he moaned again, as he collapsed on it.

He drew out the letter again and blinked at it confusedly, not yet daring to open the envelope. In all the Owl's fatuous escapades it was his habit to plunge ahead blindly, hoping that everything would come out all right in the end, and that the consequences of his actions would not, like the celebrated Marley's ghost, turn up to trouble him. "Sufficient unto the day" was a good working maxim, and Bunter never troubled trouble till trouble troubled him.

But now, it seemed, one of his sins had come home to roost!

At last, with a fresh groan, he opened the flap and pulled out the enclosure. It was a letter, and ran thus:

"To Master William George Bunter,
"Greyfriars School, Kent.

"Dear Sir,—In re Eliza Judith Bunter, decd. We have the honour to advise you that your name appears as one of the beneficiaries under the last will and testament of our late client, as above. The provisions of this will were made known to interested parties, legatees, and others, at the reading thereof after the funeral which took place on Tuesday last, but at which we believe you were not able to be present.

"We have to apprise you that our late client has devised and bequeathed to you the sum of £50, to be applied in specified ways and subject to certain simple conditions. Further particulars will be notified you as soon as the necessary steps have been taken and probate obtained, when we shall be glad to have your esteemed instructions.

"We are,

"Yr obdt svts,

"PP SPROWLE, SPROWLE, SPROWLE &
GABBITAS,

"(Signed) JNO. GABBITAS."

"Gug-gug-good gracious!" stuttered Bunter, when he had slowly spelt through this legal jargon. "I—I—Then she left me something, after all!"

There was no mistake. The legacy was meant for him. There was his name in full, and the name of Greyfriars School. And this from an aunt he could barely remember, if he remembered her at all! The pater's aunt, really—one of a previous generation. Fifty golden, clinking quids! Half a hundred pounds!

Visions of tuck inexhaustible floated before the enraptured mind of the Owl.

There was a footstep on the gravel. He looked up. Skinner was approaching, and there was a crafty smile on his thin countenance.

"What-ho, old fat man!" he greeted, with an attempt at joviality. "What are they going to run you in for this time? Burgling the tuckshop, or merely forging postal-orders?" Harold Skinner was determined to gloat over trouble wherever he found it.

William George rose with dignity. He was a moneyed man now; he could afford to be dignified, and patronising, too.

"It's my legacy," he said briefly, and blinked haughtily.

"Ha, ha, ha! What about that fourpence I offered you? It's still going begging!"

"You rotter!" snorted Bunter. "If you don't believe the word of an honest chap who has never told a lie in his life—then look at this!"



"I guess we'll get this straight," snapped Fisher T. Fish. "You allow me to offer a hundred per cent interest on any loans I can raise from the galoots hyer on your behalf?" "Of course," said Bunter airily. "Money is nothing to a fellow in my position, you know." (See Chapter 8.)

With a condescending flourish he dragged the letter out of his jacket-pocket where he had thrust it, and then he hurriedly put it back. Skinner's face fell. A sight of that letter was what he had been working for, in his crafty, roundabout way, and he was disappointed in the moment of victory, as it were.

"I—I— It's private, you know," explained Bunter unconvincingly. "There's no reason why I should show it to cads like you, anyway."

A jeering laugh followed the Owl of the Remove as he turned his back on Harold Skinner and headed towards the House. But Bunter didn't mind that; he had just been seized with a brilliant idea.

He rolled along to the Remove studies and opened the door of No. 7, which he shared with Tom Dutton, Peter and Alonzo Todd. The study was empty. Bunter blinked excitedly, and, on some strange impulse, tiptoed into the vacant study and carefully locked the door after him.

He crossed to the cupboard and took out an inkpot and the pen with which he usually pretended to struggle with his prep.

"He, he he!" he chortled, as he produced the solicitors' letter again and opened it out on the table. "This'll make 'em sit up!"

The hand that had written the neat legal phrases had perhaps paid more attention to copperplate calligraphy than to any possible schemes which the recipient might get up to. Had that lawyer's clerk known William George Bunter, he would doubtless have been a little more careful.

The figure £50 came at the end of a line, and there was a convenient space

after it. This space, to the Owl's fatuous mind, would be vastly improved by being occupied. So, imitating the lawyer's fist with a fair amount of skill, he carefully drew in two noughts, and placed a comma after the 5.

"He, he!" he chortled again. Bunter held out the letter at arm's length and surveyed his handiwork. "Five thousand. That looks better!"

It was a really creditable bit of forgery, and many a professional in that unhonoured calling could hardly have improved on it. The Owl did not look on it in that light, however. He was not a knave in the rather despicable sense that the caddish Skinner was a knave; this tampering with the document in the vague hope of being able to profit by the tampering merely seemed to be the obvious thing to do, so far as Billy Bunter was concerned. Therefore he did it.

He put the letter down so that the ink could dry, and blinked at his handiwork as if it were the greatest piece of art ever achieved by the hand of mortal man.

The visions which the reality of the original £50 conjured up were as nothing to the magnificent daydreams which the magnificent total of the fictitious five thousand flooded his fat and fatuous mind.

No need in future to excuse himself for the non-arrival of his historic postal-order. He would run a bank account—scatter cheques right and left.

He would have a car, of course; perhaps two. One small runabout, and one limousine complete with chauffeur—equipment that was really much more suited to his social position, and which

undeserved poverty had hitherto denied him.

From now on Mrs. Mumble would fawn upon him. He would have a standing account there, and have tuck sent to his study daily. A really decent easy-chair in the study wouldn't come amiss, either. One could take a nap in the present one at a pinch, but it wasn't what could be called luxurious.

Bunter's face beamed as he thought of all these wonderful things.

Fifty pounds would not secure them, of course; but five thousand—that was a different matter.

The fact that the latter figure was his own inspiration somehow escaped the Owl. The mere act of writing it into the lawyers' letter seemed to convince him that all that money was actually to be his. He did not even realise that he could not touch so much as the fifty pounds as yet, because of the aggravating nuisance about obtaining probate—whatever that was.

But the lawyers' delay didn't worry William George Bunter. All that the fat Owl cared about was that he would certainly be able to borrow huge amounts on the mere production of this letter. It was the finest security he had ever been able to offer.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

'Bunter's Bombshell'!

"I SAY, Harry, old fellow!"

"Eh?"

Harry Wharton stopped dead in his surprise as that remark was made to him. The remainder of the Famous Five stopped, too. The captain of the Greyfriars Remove, together with Inky, Johnny Bull, Cherry, and Frank Nugent, had just returned from kicking a footer about in the quad, and were coming along the Remove passage, making for Study No. 1 and tea.

The remark itself was ordinary enough. It wasn't that which had caused their surprise; it was the condescending tone in which it was uttered and the person who uttered it.

"I say, Harry, old fellow," repeated Bunter patronisingly, glancing at the football Wharton was carrying, "I hope you've been having a nice game. Healthy, you know. I always like to see you chaps enjoying yourselves; it does me good!"

"What on earth's the fat chump burbling about?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The fat and ludicrous Bunter seems to be madfully off his esteemed rocker," purred Hurree Singh.

The Owl drew his podgy body up to its full height, and glanced at the Co. haughtily. His manner certainly seemed strange. As Johnny Bull remarked, one would have thought that he had just bought Greyfriars School and everybody in it. Quite unlike the normal Bunter, who was conciliatory or mildly indignant by turns, according to the treatment he was getting. But the hauteur of his mild indignation was as nothing compared to his present patronising aloofness.

"What's the idea?" demanded Harry Wharton. "I'm usually 'Harry, old fellow,' to my friends—not to every bloated borrower in the Remove!"

"I thought that perhaps you would care to be my friend," replied Bunter calmly. "You ought to think it's an honour. It's condescending on my part, really."

"What?"

"I expect he's leading up to a slight loan," said Nugent, grinning.

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"Owing to non-arrival of a postal-order," added Bob Cherry. "Go ahead, old lard-barrel!"

"Really, Cherry, you misjudge me! I certainly was about to mention the question of a small loan to carry me over, but the circumstances are not what you think. A fiver would see me through for a day or two, if any of you happen to have any small change on you. What about you, Inky? You've generally got lots of tin, for a nigger."

The Nabob of Bhanipur grinned. He took no offence at the fat junior's diplomatic remark; he was used to Bunter.

"I sorrowfully regret, my esteemed fat toad," he said, "that I cannot sparefully part with fivepence," he said.

"A fiver I said," corrected the Owl patiently. "Five quid, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter at the idea of accommodating William George Bunter to the tune of five pounds. He might just as well have asked for a thousand!

"You can cackle, you rotten paupers!" hooted the Owl, suddenly forgetting his haughtiness. "You'll all be fawning round me in a day or two, like everybody else, now I'm rich. You'll see what a chance you've missed when I offered you my friendship."

"Rich!" howled Bob Cherry, doubling up with mirth.

"Friendship!" gasped Wharton.

"This is too rich!"

But Bunter had already withdrawn his offer, and was rolling away with stiff dignity. He turned and blinked over his shoulder as he went.

"You're a lot of rotters!" he said. "But you can look on the notice-board, if you don't believe me."

The Famous Five grinned again at his retreating back, and resumed their way to Study No. 1. The Owl's mysterious hint about the notice-board was no sooner uttered than forgotten. They were familiar with Bunter's bluff. They would have thought no more of it had they not met Vernon-Smith as they were about to enter the study.

"Say, you chaps," said the Bounder, "seen the notice-board? Bunter, you know—Bunter's latest?"

"Eh?"

"What the thump—"

"What's the idea, Smithy?"

"The notice-board," repeated Vernon-Smith cryptically. "Go and have a look at it."

The Bounder did not stop to explain. He merely grinned, and before any of the chums could ask him for details he had vanished round the corner of the Remove passage.

"Must be something in it," said Nugent. "Let's go and have a look!"

"Something on it, anyway," amended Bob Cherry. "Yes, let's!"

There certainly did seem to be an extraordinary interest in the notice-board, for as the Famous Five approached it they saw it was hemmed in by a crowd of excited juniors.

"I guess that this hyer beats the band!" came the nasal tones of Fisher T. Fish, the American member of the Remove. "I reckon it's up to me to get back that half-dollar I lent the fat galoot the term before last!"

Harry Wharton pushed forward and gazed between the swaying heads of the fellows in front. The first thing he was able to distinguish was the neat note-heading of the lawyers in Scrivener's Court, and then he began to decipher the round, copperplate handwriting beneath.

"I say, you chaps!" he said at last, in tones of surprise, turning to his four

chums just behind him. "Five thousand! The fat chump wasn't bluffing, after all!"

William George Bunter, by way of broadcasting his good fortune, had conceived the brilliant notion of posting up on the notice-board the letter he had received. It was an idea that he realised would save him a lot of laborious explanation and disbelief. He had indulged in a fat chuckle when he had crept along and placed it there while nobody was about. It would have been a good scheme to back up the request for a loan—strictly temporary—with the casual production of the letter as security; but this was a better way—far better! Moreover, the sensation it would cause would be as balm and sweetness to a nervous system injured to jeers and jibes.

"Five thousand?" asked Johnny Bull gruffly. "Five thousand what?"

Bull had been unable to get a sight of the letter, and was accordingly mystified at the cause of all the excitement.

"Bunter's legacy," explained Wharton. "Been left him by his aunt. Don't you remember the announcement in 'The Times' the other day?"

"It's an ill wind that blows the gift horse in the mouth!" observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Perhaps in future the ludicrous Bunter will stopfully cease from the borrowing caper."

The group around the board had by now become thinner, and the Famous Five re-read the astonishing letter more at their ease. Most of the fellows had stayed only to confirm with their own eyes the incredible intelligence they had received, and which had caused them to come there, and then they had sped away to impart the news to others who were as yet in darkness. For really it was quite understandable that the impoverished Bunter being the proprietor of five thousand pounds should cause a sensation.

Harry Wharton & Co. lingered only to scan the letter a second time, and then returned to their own study on their own immediate concerns. They were glad to hear of the Owl's good fortune, and resolved to congratulate him on the first opportunity; but there were others to whom the news meant something more personal.

The crowd had dwindled to three in a few minutes—Fisher T. Fish, Snoop, and Harold Skinner. The cad of the Remove had, of course, been incredulous when Bunter had told him the letter had announced his legacy, but now he saw for himself that the fat Owl had been speaking the truth for once.

"Chance for us—eh, Snoopey, old man?" he suggested to his bosom pal, with a sly grin. "This seems genuine, anyway. What about a bit for us?"

"I kinder guess there's going to be a bit for me, anyway!" opined Fisher Tarleton Fish. "I'm going to make a list of what that pesky fat clam owes me."

At that moment a pair of large round spectacles glimmered round the corner of the wall behind them, and a pair of fat eyes blinked as they surveyed the scene.

"I say, you fellows—"

The trio turned at the sound of that familiar voice.

"Hallo, Bunter, old chap!" greeted Skinner ingratiatingly.

William George Bunter rolled forward, with a glance of disdain for the affable Skinner.

"I say, you fellows," he repeated, "have you seen my chauffeur about?"

"I guess I've seen a debt-collector about," declared the transatlantic junior.

(Continued on page 17.)

Special Cup-Tie Number!



Harry Wharton's Football Supplement

No. 4 (New Series). Vol. 1.

February 20th, 1926.

I have managed to secure the services of some of the finest football experts in the country as contributors to our new Supplement. MAGNET readers who follow it regularly can be sure of getting the very latest and most exclusive news, interesting gossip, and information.—H. Wharton, Ed.

Flag-Kicks and Penalties

PARS ABOUT FOOTBALL MEN AND MATTERS.

By The Man in the Street.

ASKED why he had been warned, a first-class player was recently told by the referee that he had retaliated. "That's all right," replied the player; "but you must remember he retaliated first!"

A lot of young referees were up for examination, and one after another this poser was put to them: "What would you do if the ball stuck on the crossbar?" Right down the line went the question without a single answer being forthcoming until the last in the "class" was reached. "I should call everybody round to prove that the age of miracles has not passed!"

Of all clubs Liverpool have the reputation for being either at the top or the bottom. They certainly don't seem likely to be at the top this season. There I must leave it.

There is no prize offered, but I am eagerly awaiting news of the football clubs whose players are distinguished for the fact that they don't play golf as a part of their Cup-tie training.

Jack Hill, the famous centre-half, has started a gents' outfitters business in Burnley, where he plays. But it should not be assumed that this is the reason why some of Burnley's games have ended in a tie.

Perhaps you didn't know that there is a Referees' and Linesmen's Insurance Corporation; but having seen how these gentlemen get on in big football, you won't be surprised to learn that the premiums are said to be a bit high.

When I saw a newspaper heading the other day, "West Ham Require Another £300,000," I thought it was the football club which desired the money to buy a couple of players or so. Further investigation proved that it was the Board of Guardians which wanted the money.

Everton are the only club among the original members of the First Division who have neither dropped into the Second League nor had to apply for re-admission to the First Division. Evidently they know how to stick to their toffee.

Professionalism was legalised in English football in the summer of 1885, but it is hinted that quite a lot of Scottish players had been paid for their services before that time.

In all International matches goalkeepers must wear a shirt of deep yellow colour. This rule, however, has not prevented several English goalkeepers from going into deep mourning after matches against Scotland.

The biggest crowd which has ever attended any football match assembled at Wembley for the Cup Final of 1923. As many as 90,520 people passed through the turnstiles, and something like that number did not take the trouble to go through this formality.

In the course of his football career Steve Bloomer scored 352 goals. No wonder the goalkeepers of his time could never understand why he was called Bloomer.

Pity the Poor Goalie!

HOW A BAD JOB HAS BEEN MADE WORSE BY THE ALTERATION OF THE OFF-SIDE RULE.

ONE of the things I can never understand about football is why in the world there should be an impression that any fool can keep goal. Yet it is a fact that there is such an impression. Let any lads' team turn up for a match short of a player, and I guarantee that when the eleventh lad is found he will be put into goal, regardless of whether he has had any experience of "guarding the fort" or not.

Yet, on the face of it, the goalkeeper has a most important job. When he lets one soft one go through it means that his forwards have to score twice in order to win the match. Thank goodness that, so far as big football is concerned, there are signs at long last that the real worth of a star goalkeeper is being recognised! Just recently the Arsenal paid five thousand pounds—at least—for the services of goalkeeper William Harper. And when it becomes obvious that the big clubs realise that the fellow who stops the scoring shots is worth at least as much as the man who scores goals, then the junior organisations will perhaps follow suit.

This new state of things—this recognition of goalkeepers who have gone far too long unhonoured and unsung—is being brought about by the new football which has followed the change in the offside rule.

Get out your handkerchiefs, and we will do a quiet little weep with the poor unfortunate fellows who are so misguided as to become goalkeepers. Think of him on the day when those instruments which are used by the clerk of the weather are registering umpteen degrees of frost. The goalkeeper may have the biggest difficulty in the world in keeping himself warm, one shot perhaps every quarter of an hour, which finds his hands so cold that he doesn't even know when he has made a save. Then there are the muddy days, when the goalkeeper is given, almost without exception, the place where the mud is thickest.

A few weeks ago I saw a goalkeeper completely stuck in the mud and absolutely helpless to get across to a shot. The next morning he was severely slated in the newspapers for not making any attempt to reach the ball.

These have been among the worries of the goalkeeper all along the line. Now take a glance at the job as he now knows it under the new offside rule. The favourite attacking scheme in these days is for the ball to be pushed through for the centre-forward to dash between the backs, and time after time in this new game the poor goalkeeper sees the centre-forward coming tearing towards him like a tornado. What shall the man between the sticks do? There are two alternatives—he can either stop in his position and be beaten, or he can take his chance and come out.

Think of the rottenness of his position and the consequences. If he stays under the bar and the ball is flashed past him into the net, he is told by the spectators that he should have gone out; if he goes out and is still beaten, then he is told that he should have stayed at home. Personally, when the goalkeeper is in the "last hope" position he should always come out, and Elisha Scott, the Liverpool goalkeeper, who is perhaps the best in the world, agrees with this verdict. "I have had to come out three times as much this season as last," he told me not so long ago, when we were shedding a tear together over the poor goalkeeper.

Alas! the goalkeeper who does come out and try to get the ball from the toes of the tornado centre-forward is almost literally taking his life in his hands. Sometimes he is compelled to fling himself right at the foot of the forward in the effort to get the ball, and sometimes, too, he gets a lovely boot on his shoulder or in his chest. These are the risks the goalkeeper runs.

However, having shed our tears with the goalkeeper, let us just say this for him: If, by dashing, adventurous play, he saves his side, then the credit is always given to him. He is on his own, and that is why so many fellows love to keep goal.

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Youngsters Who Will Go Far

Romance behind the rapid rise of some of the promising lads of to-day.

By "OLD 'UN."

TALKING about young lads who are likely to rise to the top of the football tree is very much like skating on thin ice—you never can tell when you will be let down. If every promising lad introduced to the game fulfilled his promise to the hilt there would be more good footballers than could possibly be used by the big clubs. Some fail to advance because they are not possessed of the right temperament; some are spoilt by success, and others are worried by early failures when they secure promotion.

Most important of all, however, is the fact that, right down at the bottom, the advancement of a player to a height above his colleagues depends on the player himself. I have seen managers puff out their chests and pat themselves on the back over a young player who has made good, and the suggestion of these managers is that they have made the genius. Now, coaching can do something; training can also help, and good advice given and accepted will prove useful to the boy player. But the last yard—that something which makes the genius in football as in every game or walk in life—is in the person himself. It cannot be put there.

Having said that—by way of apology, if you like to put it that way—we now go on to talk about the promising lads in current football, and when we do consider them it is easy to realise how careful are the managers in watching youngsters right from their schoolboy days. Harry Gooney has only just passed his fifteenth birthday, but he is actually on the staff of the Sheffield United club, present holders of the Cup. Only last year he was captain of the England schoolboy team which beat Wales on the ground of the West Ham club, and his play was such on that day that the Sheffield United officials thought they had better take time by the forelock before some other club took this Sheffield boy from their doorstep. One of these days Gooney may play for England in a real International. Anyway, here's luck to him!

Mention of West Ham reminds me that no club has been more energetic getting youngsters right from the schools, and at the present moment the Hammers have in Barrett the youngest centre-half in Big football at the present time. He is only nineteen years of age, but has shown form good enough to keep such a fine captain and pivot as George Kay out of the team. Another young centre-half on whom I am keeping an eye is Harry Skitt, of Tottenham Hotspur. But perhaps I may whisper a word in his ear. He must not forget that even under the new offside rule it is still necessary for the centre-half to be an attacker. He is spoiling his game, in my opinion, by staying too much among the backs.

Centre-forwards are always in demand, and seldom giving satisfaction. Though Sunderland have Halliday, an expensive Scot, at the moment in their first team, they are not forgetting the requirements of the future, and with this end in view have signed on a seventeen-year-old boy in Robert Gurney. He comes from Bishop Auckland, and I happen to know that such a good judge as Charlie Buchan thinks a lot of him. Young Gurney scored nine goals in one match for the Sunderland Reserves.

It is clear from the experience of another promising lad—Tommy Mordue—that one of the lessons my ambitious readers have to learn is to take disappointments. Young Tommy—a nephew of the former Sunderland outside-right of the same name—is nineteen, and recently got into the Newcastle first team after getting a lot of goals for the reserves. He did well in the first team, too, but just then Newcastle signed on Hugh Gallacher at a tremendous fee, and back to the reserves young Mordue had to go. However, he needn't worry. His turn will come, and he won't be any the worse for waiting a little longer.

Everton have a young left half-back in

Virr, of whom great things are expected. He told me that as a lad he once played on the Everton ground, but little dreamt then that he would eventually be in the League team of the same club. His rise has been rapid, and so has that of young George Cammell, centre-forward of Middlesbrough. He, strange to relate, tells me that he never played football at all as a schoolboy, and that it was only four years ago that he first became at all interested in the sport. Another Northern centre-forward who must be watched is Jimmy Loughlin, who is also a paid player for the Newcastle United club. His rise has been the sort of which many lads dream.

A year ago Loughlin was playing for a Sunday-school team in Durham, and immediately began to attract attention by his goal-scoring exploits. Newcastle signed him on, and early in the present season he was put in the first team for the match against Leicester City. And in that very first match in the best company he scored all the three goals which went to his side. That's the sort of start you read about when the fiction writers get busy, and there's only one thing wrong with a kick-off like that—it takes a frightful lot of living up to. But the lad above all who had the fiction writers beaten was young Fred Howard, who stepped out of obscurity to fame a year or two before the War. He was signed on by Manchester City on the Friday from a local club at Walkden. On the Saturday he played in the first team, and within a quarter of an hour he had scored three goals, while he added another one before the end of the game. Talk about setting 'em alight!

To get back to the young players of the present day—lads who ought to play for their country in due course if they have the luck and keep a cool head on their shoulders. I have not the space to give details of them all. But here is a little list of which my readers can make a note: Thain, Chelsea's inside-right; Leonard Langford, Notts Forest goalkeeper; Jackson, Leeds United outside-left; George Armitage, Charlton Athletic centre-half; James Sullivan, centre-forward, and George Taylor, outside-right, both of Notts County. James Brain, of the Arsenal, is a centre-forward to be watched; and whenever Elisha Scott ceases to keep goal for Liverpool they have a young South African in Arthur Riley who may turn out just as good. Others, too, could be mentioned; so here's wishing success to all the lads who want to get on and who are worthy of progress!

LIGHTNING SKETCHES OF FOOTER CELEBRITIES.



Jimmy Seed, the famous International forward of Tottenham Hotspur, gives us a vigorous impression of E. VIZARD, the well-known Welsh International outside left of Bolton Wanderers.

TRAINING FOR FOOTBALL

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE FORWARD.

By PERCY LONGHURST.

YOU, chum, are a forward, and you'll say that, as you have all the running about to do, all the training exercise you need will be provided by the weekly slow runs that you take. Well, so far so good. But a forward, especially if on the wing, needs speed as well as staying power. Therefore, I am recommending to you, when taking your weekly runs, to sandwich in a few bursts at high speed—just short sprints, thirty or forty yards. One of these in each quarter-mile will be enough. They improve your pace; and if you can practise them without making it necessary to get a standing start, just quickening your pace without checking the slow trot, your ability to start a quick run promptly when called upon to do so on the actual field of play will be increased. Moreover, you are at times a sprinter, so don't forget what I have mentioned before about sprinters and skipping.

I'm quite alive to the fact that your leisure time for training is going to be somewhat limited; so, highly as I think of the weekly slow trots, I think that occasionally it would do you and the other forwards good if, instead of one of these, when it is light enough for any training practice to take place on the footer field, you should all gather there and spend twenty minutes, or so in dribbling and passing practice. You'd thus get a fair amount of actual running, and you would raise the standard of your passing, etc., by a 100 per cent. Too often what I see going on during field practice is most of the side scattered about in front of goal taking haphazard shots.

Well, shooting at goal is all right—the fellow who can be depended upon as a shooter is valuable—but don't forget that in a match, before the shooting can take place, the ball has to be taken to the place from which the shot is made. This can only be done by a combination of dribbling and passing. But training in these two important directions I very rarely see. Suppose you give others a lead. You and the others line up right across the ground, the ball with the centre-forward. He starts with a dribble, passes right or left, and the player who receives dribbles a bit, and then passes, and so proceed right down the length of the field and back again, taking care that every chap has a share in the work. Try to make as few stoppages as possible. That is the way in which old-time professional teams used to improve their dribbling and passing, and the value of these is not much less to-day than ever it was.

And now let me conclude with a few general hints that will be useful. Whatever training you mean doing, don't attempt it on a full stomach. Two hours after a square meal is a safe time for any vigorous running about. Don't eat sweets or fruit between meals. Eat fruit by all means, but only as part of your regular meals. Don't drink more than is necessary to quench thirst. It makes one lazy, and is bad for the wind. Don't smoke at all, if possible; for without appearing to be old-fashioned, I say that it is not good for anyone under eighteen to smoke. The nerves, heart, lungs, and digestion are affected. For you chaps over eighteen, don't smoke at all on a match day, or, what is even worse, stroll down to the ground with a fag between your lips. And, above all, don't inhale. Most men do, never thinking of the harm they are doing to their lungs.

I'm not meaning to preach at you, chum: I'm telling you exactly what knowledge and experience has taught me is good for the footballer and what is bad. And inhaling tobacco smoke is bad. Where is the sense in taking useful training in one way if you're going to spoil the effect of it by indulgence in something that does no good at all?

Beecham, the young goalkeeper of Fulham, who recently had the experience of being carried shoulder-high from the ground at Craven Cottage, is rather small for a goalkeeper. But, nevertheless, he manages to reach 'em.



(Continued from page 12.)

"Really, Fish, I am not concerned with debt-collectors," said the Owl loftily. "I arranged with a man to come here about a job as my chauffeur. I am buying a limousine, and I must have somebody to drive it about for me, you know. Now that I have come into my fortune—"

"Now that you have come into this hyer fortune," interposed Fisher T. Fish, "I reckon you've got enough durocks to pay me that half-dollar!"

"Really, Fishy," said Bunter, "can't you wait a day or two? I'm expecting a huge cheque from my bankers. In the meantime, I was going to ask you if you would lend me a couple of bob."

"What!" shrieked Fish. "I'll tell the world—"

"I may have come into a fortune," said Bunter peevishly, "but it'll be a day or two before I get it. The lawyers, you know—they've got to settle up the estate, or something. Until then I must rely on my old friends; I expect them to rally round, you know."

"I guess I'll rally round, all right!" declared Fisher T. Fish. "I'll rally round with my boot. What about that half—"

"You're too hasty, Fishy," put in Harold Skinner. "If Bunter requires temporary accommodation, he need not look any farther than his old friends for it. Anything up to ten bob—"

Billy Bunter blinked at the cad of the Remove in some surprise. He hardly expected this voluntary offer from that quarter—but he had overlooked Harold Skinner's crafty little ways. His face had worn what he intended to be an affable smile, and his elbow had gently nudged his crony Snoop, but he was quite serious in his offer.

There was now no doubt of it; there was the documentary proof on the notice-board. Bunter was rich at last—and anybody who was rich was, in the calculating eyes of Harold Skinner, distinctly worth cultivating. He regarded any loan he might make the suddenly affluent Owl of the Remove as the bread mentioned in the Scriptures which, cast upon the waters, would return after many days.

"Thanks, Skinny," responded Bunter, after his recovery from the astonishment of this offer. "I don't mind accepting your loan. Can't you manage more than a measly ten bob, though? I really need about twenty quid, you know. Strictly temporary, of course. I'll give I O U's, and pay back double when I get my tin from the lawyers."

"A hundred per cent interest?" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish, the business man of the Remove.

"Certainly," agreed the Owl. "Money is nothing to a fellow in my position. Even when I was poor I was famous for my generosity." He blinked loftily at the three juniors.

"I guess we'll get this thing straight," snapped the transatlantic apostle of business "pep" and hustle. "You allow to stand for one hundred per cent interest on any loans you can get from the galoots hyer, payable immediately your coin comes through?"

"Sure!" said Bunter. "Er—I mean, yes!"

"And will you allow me a commission of ten per cent on all the durocks I can collect for you? I guess that's a square deal, eh? I raise the dough, and you sign the I O U's, and my commission note. I reckon to use your lawyer's letter as authority. I kinder reckon you won't get better terms in this hyer school. It's the genuine goods, Bunter. What-say to the idea?"

"He, he! Jolly good wheeze," chortled Bunter. "It's beneath the dignity of a chap of my high social position to go round borrowing from the fellows like a pauper, you know."

"I guess it's a cinch!" declared Fisher T. Fish. He stepped to the notice-board and took down the letter which was to be the means—plus his persuasive American salesmanship—of extracting coin of the realm from fellows who liked the idea of their bread returning to them after many days, increased one hundred per cent.

"I guess we'll buzz along to my study, fatty," he said, "and you can sign the agreement."

Harold Skinner and Sidney Snoop watched them go, with mingled feelings. The business acumen of the American junior had rather cut the ground from under the feet of the cad of the Remove, and there was a malicious sneer on his face as he thought of the scheme.

But it was an arrangement that, in the businesslike hands of Fisher Tarleton Fish, was going to get results.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Weighty Matter!

"WOT I sez is this 'ere, Master Bunter; it's remarkable 'eavy, and wot to do with it I dunno! Which I sez to the carrier when 'e delivered it at my gate—"

Gosling, the Greyfriars gatekeeper and porter, paused for breath and drew his sleeve across his forehead.

"Are you sure it's addressed to me?" asked Billy Bunter.

"Which I reckons as I can read, even admittin' I 'aven't 'ad the advantage of the eddification wot you young gents 'as," declared Gosling. "And if you don't believe as 'ow it's addressed to you, all I've got to say is this 'ere: Come and look at it for yourself. That's wot I says!"

With those words Gosling turned and shuffled off in the direction of his lodge, and Bunter rolled along thoughtfully beside him.

It was the interval after morning school on the day following the Owl's business arrangement with Fisher T. Fish, and the school porter had run the fat form of Bunter to earth under the elms, where he was sneaking about in the vicinity of Mrs. Mible's tuck-shop with the object of trying to get someone to stand him a feed preparatory to dinner, on the strength of his new wealth.

When they reached the gates Bunter saw that, just outside on the road, the carrier's cart was standing, and that a big packing-case higher than himself was propped on a hand-trolley at the tail of the cart.

"Wh-what is it, Gosling?" he stammered, peering at the thing short-sightedly.

"Five 'und'd-weight chunks o' lead, by the feel of it," suggested Gosling.

The Owl blinked more closely at the label. There was his name, without doubt. It was certainly directed to him

plainly enough. But what could it be, and who could have sent such a colossal parcel? Bunter thought of tuck, but then he realised that eatables could hardly weigh so much as Gosling had suggested.

"We'd better open it!" he suggested. The porter was quite agreeable to this, for he was no less curious than Bunter. He vanished inside the lodge and returned in a moment with a hammer and a hatchet. Several lusty blows split off a plank or two, and then the side of the packing-case was knocked away.

There stood disclosed a big weighing-machine, such as is seen on railway-station platforms. The mystery of the contents was solved, at any rate, but when the remainder of the casing was removed there was no note or letter of any sort to say who had sent it, or why.

The flustered Owl could think of no better place for it than the Rag, and the carrier and Gosling wheeled it there between them on the carrier's trolley.

When at last it was in position, after much perspiration and effort, the carter intimated that it had been a thirsty job, and looked around for the owner in expectation of a handsome tip. But Bunter had anticipated this, and had discreetly vanished. The carrier departed muttering various uncomplimentary things about the modern schoolboy, and "fat young pigs" in particular.

Already the thing had caused some comment, and when William George cautiously returned to view his surprising acquisition, he found it surrounded by a crowd of Removites, who were struggling together on the platform of the machine, trying to get a chance to test their weights.

"Where did this thing come from?" asked Peter Todd, of nobody in particular. "What the thump's the idea, anyway? Who does it belong to?"

"It's mine!" announced the Owl, blinking.

"Yours? Ha, ha! That's a new one. I say, you chaps, Bunter's had a weighing-machine sent him, so's he can take an interest in his fat carcase and keep his avoirdupois down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Several of the juniors left the struggling throng and gathered round at Peter Todd's announcement.

"Did your aunt leave it to you with the five thousand?" inquired Tom Brown.

"Nunno. I bought it," replied the Owl. "A whim, you know. Rich fellows often indulge in whims. I don't suppose I shall use it now I've got it, but what does that matter? One has to do something with one's money."

"Get off that thing, chaps!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "Let the owner come aboard; let's see if it'll go bust when Bunter steps on it!"

Todd winked to Hazeldene, who was standing by, and between them they rushed the fat junior on to the machine. The needle quivered and gave a wild jerk round the dial, finally hovering around the fourteen-stone mark.

"I say, you fellows!" expostulated the Owl, putting his glasses straight on his podgy nose. "That isn't fair, you know. I bought it for your benefit, not—"

"Bunter—Bunter!"

The face of Harold Skinner appeared round the door of the Rag, and he was yelling that name as if he were the satisfied bearer of bad tidings for the owner of it, for his characteristically crafty grin was on his thin features.

The grin vanished when he caught sight of the weighing machine, and for a moment curiosity took its place. But he had seen Bunter, too, and he came forward.

"There's a chap waiting outside for you, barrel," he announced.

"Is—is it the carrier?" stuttered the Owl, blinking at the door.

Bunter's conscience was not easy about the tip he might have bestowed.

"Dunno about the carrier," answered Skinner. "He said something about being a driver."

"Dud—driver?" echoed Bunter. He seemed dismayed for a second, but he pulled himself together. The dignity of his newly-acquired five thousand pounds—which he believed in even more firmly than the fellows who had been taken in by his bit of forgery—came to his rescue, and he blinked impressively.

"Oh, yes," he said. "I forgot! I ordered him to attend me here to-day. It's my chauffeur—the man who is going to drive my new limousine. That's what he meant by driver, Skinny. He, he! Where did you say he was?"

"I showed him up to your study. Roll away, old puff-ball! He looks as if he's going to touch you for his first week's wages in advance."

Harold Skinner sniggered unpleasantly, and turned his attention to the novel sight of the new and shining weighing-machine, while Billy Bunter rolled away with stately dignity, rather alarmed, nevertheless, as to who this man could be and what he wanted of him.

When the fat junior opened the door of Study No. 7 and cautiously glimpsed through his spectacles round the edge he beheld a lean, cadaverous young man sitting in the easy-chair by the fireplace. He turned his head as Bunter entered, and stood up.

"Master Bunter?" he inquired.

"Y-yes, sir," said Bunter, abashed. There was something about this stranger that made the "sir" slip out. He recollected his wealth the next moment, though, and added: "I was told that a driver was waiting to see me. If you—"

"My name is Driver," corrected the man—"Joshua Driver. I am the managing clerk to Messrs. Sprowle, Sprowle, Sprowle, &—"

"Oh, the lawyers!" chimed in the Owl, before he could recite the names of all the partners in that multitudinous firm. Bunter beamed brightly; now he was getting down to business at last. The inheritance had merely existed on paper up to now, but the appearance of this lawyer's clerk seemed to be the prelude to hard cash.

"Yes, the lawyers," agreed the man. "You have doubtless already received the letter advising you of the bequest on the part of your aunt, and your gateporter told me that the weighing-machine arrived this morning."

"The w-w-weighing-machine?"

"Yes—but I will come to that in a moment. You will remember that our letter spoke of certain conditions governing the legacy, and of certain specified ways in which the fifty pounds was to be applied."

"Fuf-fifty?" stammered the Owl faintly.

"That was the figure," said Mr. Driver, looking at him doubtfully.

Billy Bunter goggled, but nodded his agreement. The far more satisfying total of five thousand had become so real to his fatuous mind that the mention of the meagre but real one of fifty came as a sudden shock.

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"I have come to inform you," went on the visitor, "of the terms and conditions our late clients made in connection with the bequest." He groped in his breast-pocket and produced a sheaf of papers fastened together with a rubber band. Selecting one, he began to read:

"... the sum of fifty pounds to my great-nephew, William George Bunter, of Greyfriars School, Kent, subject to the performance of the conditions hereinafter set forth, failing which my executors shall divert the said money to the funds of the Amalgamated Pork-pie Designers' Benevolent Fund—"

"I—I say, Mr. Driver—" interrupted the Owl.

"Driver!" corrected the man of law, looking up irritably.

"No matter," said Bunter airily. "But about this—this fifty pounds. You needn't read out all that stuff about hereafter, and all that. Can't you tell it to me in your own words? Simpler, you know. He, he! Of course, a fellow of my intelligence understands it all right, but I thought, perhaps, you might find it easier."

Mr. Driver seemed about to express his doubts, but he refrained.

"Certainly, Master Bunter. What your great-aunt has instructed us, as her—ahem!—legal advisers, is this: You are to receive the sum of fifty pounds from her estate, payable any time up to six months after your acceptance of these conditions, provided that you reduce your—er—weight to the figure more nearly approximating the normal weight for a boy of your age, namely—"

Mr. Driver paused and looked at his papers again. "Namely, seven stones."

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter groaned. "Furthermore," continued the man, "should there be any attempt at trickery or deception—you will forgive me, Master Bunter, for suggesting this, but I am quoting the words of your—er—estimable aunt—should there be any attempt at deception, we are empowered to transfer the amount of the legacy to the—ahem!—worthy cause she has named. We, as executors, are, moreover, instructed to satisfy ourselves that you do not weigh more than the required seven stones, and I shall be pleased to visit you here at this school, when necessary, for that purpose. Do you accept these conditions, Master Bunter?"

"Of course, fathea—of course, Mr. Driver. If you'll let me have the money now I'll sign the receipt."

"The money is not payable until you can satisfy us that you do not weigh more than seven stones. I believe your great-aunt, Master Bunter, had a strong dislike to—er—stoutness, especially in schoolboys, for she was somewhat thin and—shall I say?—angular herself. I should imagine that you weigh rather more than that, Master Bunter. Do you still accept these conditions?"

"Ow! Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter groaned again. He had a momentary vision of the weighing-machine needle quivering over the mark indicating fourteen stones. Seven stones was a lot of flesh to lose; but fifty pounds was a lot of money to lose, too. Like throwing money down a drain to refuse.

"Everything has been made easy for you," continued the man from the lawyers. "Your relative has thoughtfully provided a weighing-machine so that you can ascertain exactly how near you are to the required weight."

"Y-yes, I suppose I'd better try it on," decided the Owl, blinking furiously.

He reckoned that he may as well be in the running for the legacy, even if he couldn't train down sufficiently to claim it. Better not hand it over to the pork-pie designers without a struggle. Besides which, Bunter's artful fat mind began to play with several ideas by which he might be able to get the money without the disagreeable necessity of reducing himself to a skeleton for it.

Mr. Driver at once produced a legal-looking paper, and invited Billy Bunter to affix his signature thereto. The Owl saw that it was a statement that he had understood the conditions of the bequest and undertook to abide by them.

"Sign here," said Mr. Driver, producing a fountain-pen.

Bunter's podgy fingers traced his signature, rather blottily, and the legal man regained his pen just as the forgetful Owl was absently placing it in his pocket.

"Er—I say, you know," asked Bunter, "when do I get the money?"

"As soon as you have satisfied us with regard to your weight," replied Mr. Driver. "But, strictly speaking, you yourself will not actually handle it at all. It is to be used for the purposes of your education—providing school books, and so on."

"What?" hooted Bunter indignantly. "Then I refuse! Gimme back my signature!"

"I am sorry, I cannot do that," said the man of law, with a grim smile. "This document is your written acceptance. I am afraid I must ask you to adhere to it."

Bunter goggled at him wrathfully. There was a look in Mr. Driver's eye which denoted that Mr. Driver was rather taken with the idea of this fat youth training himself down to seven stone. Perhaps he, too, did not like stoutness in schoolboys.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Bunter Training Committee!

"I WON'T do it!"

Billy Bunter blinked disgustedly through his large, round spectacles at the door which had just closed after the grim and astute Mr. Driver. He was alone in the study now, and the retreating footsteps had died away down the Remove passage into silence.

"Rotten, beastly sharper!" he muttered. "I don't want his measly fifty quid. Education! Just as if I need education—a fellow of my ability! He may have my signature, but I'm not going to get my weight down for him. I'll jolly well tell old Gosling to kick him out if he shows his nose here again! It's trickery, that's what it is—getting me to sign away my rights!"

Billy Bunter's wild accusation was not strictly accurate, but, on the other hand, the lawyer's clerk should have known sufficient of the law to allow the legatee to withdraw his consent if he wished. Probably he guessed that a fellow who was so obviously anxious to touch the money as the Owl had shown himself to be would, after all, not really wish to refuse. And, also, of course, he rather relished the idea of such a fat and greedy-looking youth becoming slimmer and more sightly.

"He, he!" laughed the fat and fatuous Owl to himself, a bright idea striking him. "He can't make me get my weight down, and if he's going to rob me of my fifty quid for that, I can sell

his rotten weighing-machine! I'll try an advertisement in the Courtfield paper—"

Before William George could outline his plan for this move against the enemy the door of Study No. 7 suddenly swung open.

"I guess it's all serene—O.K., in fact! I reckon I'm the genuine goods all right—the real slick business gink of this hyer outfit!"

It was the voice of Fisher T. Fish, the hustling junior from Noo Yark—at least, that was the way he pronounced the name of his native city.

Fisher Tarleton Fish held in his hand two pieces of paper, which he slapped down with a flourish on the study table.

"I guess all you've got to do, old fatty, is to trust to a real live galoot like me, and sign on the dotted line."

Bunter blinked doubtfully at the two slips of paper.

"I—I'm not going to sign any more beastly papers," he said peevishly. "I've already signed away my rights to my fifty quid—"

"Waal, I swow!" exclaimed the transatlantic junior. "You've signed away your legacy? I guess I saw a pesky galoot goin' along the passage, and—"

"Nunno. Not at all. I merely signed away fifty quid of it—legal expenses, you know," said Bunter hastily. "A mere nothing, of course, out of five thousand. My lawyer—the man who's just gone out—says I shall have the money inside a month."

"I calculate it's a cinch, sure!" snapped Fish in a businesslike tone. "Twenty-one dollars—that's what I've raised already, and I guess I'm not started yet. Two dollars and ten cents my commission—"

"What are you cackling about, fat-head?" demanded Bunter irritably. "I can't understand your idiotic dollars. Say what you mean in real money."

"Waal, of all the galoots! I reckon the dollar system is real horse-sense—better'n your whiskery old pounds and shillings. That's it, sure—whiskery! Anyway, I've raised five guineas, I guess. My ten per cent. commish comes to ha'f a guinea—plus ha'f a dollar you diddled me out of last term; that brings the total up to thirteen shillings, I reckon. Sign these IO U's, old fat man, and the durocks are yours. You're due to pay ten pounds ten shillings when you touch your capital—which, I guess, is just one hundred per cent. on the loan I have raised herewith. Gee whiz! I reckon this place wants livening up some—latest methods from Noo Yark. I'm the only gink on this hyer outfit that ain't solid bone from the neck up."

Fisher T. Fish pushed forward the two IO U's and handed over a fountain-pen.

"Bu-but where's the money?" stuttered the Owl doubtfully. He gathered that the sum of four pounds twelve was available for him, allowing for his agent's deductions from the five guineas that had been borrowed. It seemed rather too good to be true, even though the transatlantic junior had used the authority of the solicitor's letter. If Fisher T. Fish had indeed raised that sum, he was certainly what he claimed to be—a hustling business man.

"Where did you get all that?" demanded Bunter. "Who lent it to you?"

"I guess that's my bizney," retorted the Yankee junior. "Sign your name at the bottom of those papers, and I'll part up. I managed to get these two galoots to shell out the dough before getting this hyer pair of documents, but



"You are to receive the sum of fifty pounds from your aunt's estate," droned Mr. Driver, "providing that you reduce your—er—weight to the figure more nearly approximating the normal weight for a boy of your age, namely, seven stones!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Billy Bunter. (See Chapter 9.)

I've got to hustle back with 'em, I guess."

There seemed to be real money about, and accordingly Bunter signed, glancing closely at what was written on the papers, however, to see that he was not committing himself. There was only the bald statement that he owed the sum of five pounds to one person unnamed, and five shillings to another, each sum to be repaid at one hundred per cent interest on the receipt of his legacy money.

Fisher T. Fish watched him with a businesslike smile. The reasons he had for refusing to divulge the names were businesslike, too, and quite normal, but he conveniently omitted to mention the methods by which his contributions had been obtained.

Lord Mauleverer had been one of the parties. He had stood the nasal drone of the Remove business man for ten minutes or more before he yielded, and then he had languidly detached a fiver from the wad in his wallet and handed it over, more intent on getting peace and quietness than on one hundred per cent interest.

Alonzo Todd had been the other victim, but with him Fish's procedure had been rather different. He had held out no bait of big interest, but had roused the charitable impulses of the gentle Alonzo by appealing to his better nature and the thoughts of Alonzo's Uncle Benjamin. The pretext was that Bunter was overcome with grief, and unable to make known on his own behalf the fact that he wished to send a wreath

as a token of respect to his deceased aunt's memory.

Fisher T. Fish prided himself on his knowledge of psychology, and in this case it worked to the extent of five shillings. He had prudently changed Mauly's note, and now had the exact amount due to the Owl ready to hand over.

"There you are, Fishy," said Billy Bunter. "Now gimme the money."

Fisher Tarleton Fish scrutinised the two specimens of Bunter's smudgy signature, and produced the sum of four pounds twelve shillings.

The Owl's piggy little eyes blinked behind his spectacles, and his fat face puckered up into a satisfied grin.

"That'll do for a start, Fishy," he said patronisingly. "Go ahead like that, you know, and I'll sign any number of IO U's. He, he! I suppose it'll be dinner-bell before I can get round to Mrs. Mumble's. Ne'mind, plenty of time to go there afterwards and get a bit of something to eat. They don't give us half enough grub at this measly school to keep body and soul together."

"Don't bust yourself, you fat frog," advised Fisher T. Fish as he departed from the study. "I guess I want to get a bit more commission out of your little swindling stunt yet."

"Swindling!" hooted Bunter indignantly. But his protest fell on the empty air. The American junior had hustled away.

In a moment the door had opened again, and he was back.

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"You thieving, fat galoot!" he yelled. "I guess you won't try any of your low-down tricks on a guy from Noo Yark. I reckon I've had my eye-teeth cut. You didn't gimme back my fountain-pen!"

"Fuf-fountain-pen?" echoed Bunter, patting his podgy waistcoat with a fat hand. "He, he! Sorry, Fishy, old man. Absent-minded, you know—force of habit, and all that. I didn't mean to keep it, of course. I forgot I put it there. I meant to give it back to you some time—at once, in fact."

Fisher Tarleton Fish grunted, grabbed his pen, and—to use his own expression—vamoosed. He was a busy man. He had no time to waste on fat robbers—except to get ten per cent commission in raising loans for them.

His pursuit of the almighty dollar was destined to slacken speed somewhat, however. His enthusiasm for the raising of cash was, like the breath of the morning described by the poet, to vanish away. Or, to be more precise, an obstacle was to arise which would make the raising of cash so difficult that even the enthusiasm of Fisher T. Fish would be dampened.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that isn't the giddy limit!"

"The rotten fat spoofer."

Those were the remarks that greeted the American junior's car as he approached Study No. 12 in search of Lord Mauleverer and to hand the signed I O U to his lordship. They came from a group of fellows some little distance farther along the Remove passage, and the group seemed to be centred around Peter Todd.

Peter was holding a piece of notepaper in his hand—a letter. Fisher T. Fish never neglected chances. He continued past Mauly's study and hovered on the fringe of the crowd. "Fat spoofer" meant William George Bunter, and, if he was spoofing, Fisher T. Fish was decidedly interested.

"Read out that bit again, Toddy," said Vernon-Smith. "We didn't all hear it."

"On the ball!" said Bob Cherry. "Shoot, Toddy!"

"Right-ho!" said Peter Todd. "Don't shove! 'Dear Peter,' he began, reading from the letter he had received a few minutes before from his father, who was a solicitor. "'Dear Peter, I am glad to hear that you—' Oh, that bit's private. Here we are: 'You will be interested to know of a little coincidence that happened the other day in connection with one of your schoolfellows. I believe the name is Hunter, or Gunter. At any rate, I was told he is one of the Greyfriars boys, so you will probably know the name—'"

"I know it, anyway—it's Porpoise!" put in Hazeldene.

"Shut up, Hazel!"

"I learned the news from a friend of mine, a brother solicitor, with whom I was lunching, and it appears that this boy has been left a legacy of £50 by a relative under rather unusual conditions. I gather that the boy in question is rather stout—"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!" murmured the voice of Hurree Singh.

"Rather stout," continued Peter, "and that the relative who left him the money was greatly adverse to stoutness in other people, having been on the thin side herself. Mr. Gabbitas—that is the name of my solicitor friend—said that she was particularly so in the case of boys. She has therefore left him this sum of money on the condition that he gets his weight down to that of the

normal boy of his age in a couple of months, or some such period."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The cream of the joke, so I am informed, is that the lady expressly stipulated that, even should Hunter—or Gunter—train down to the reduced weight, he should not be able to touch the money himself in case he used it to buy food and thus increase his weight again. The fifty pounds will, in that case, be devoted to the purchase of school books and other educational objects."

"But I expect this will not be news to you, Peter, as probably your school-fellow himself will by this time have heard the facts and have told you the joke against himself, otherwise I should hardly have mentioned the matter. It was not exactly told to me in confidence, and that is why I venture to speak of it now, in case you have not already heard it direct from the boy concerned."

"Oh, hold me up, somebody!" laughed Bob Cherry. "Bunter's latest! Fancy him training down to seven stone! He's more like fourteen."

"He's over fourteen, anyway," said Peter Todd. "I shoved him on his own weighing machine and saw that for myself."

"Waal, I swow!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish, edging forward. "What did you say that figure was, Toddy? Fifty pounds?"

"Yes, fifty," agreed the solicitor's son. "What's biting you, Fishy?"

The transatlantic junior was looking strangely concerned. He dived his hand into his pocket and produced another letter. It was the document from Bunter's solicitors with which the Owl had entrusted him.

"See here!" he yelled. "Something's wrong somewhere. Just give this the once over. I guess it says five thousand here, not fifty. If any of you galoots—"

Peter Todd took the letter and looked at it closely, while the other juniors crowded round to get a sight of it also.

"The ink's not the same!" said Todd, after a lengthy inspection. "I say, you chaps, there's been two noughts added to this original figure. Fifty has been altered to five thousand!"

"The fat, spoofing villain!" growled Hazeldene.

There was a chorus of indignation. Some were for rushing along to Study No. 7 and dragging out the artful Owl, but there was a diversion.

"I say, Fishy, what have you got there?"

Bob Cherry asked the question, and glared meaningly at the two pieces of paper the American junior still held. For Bob Cherry had glimpsed the smudgy signature of William George on one of them—and what concerned Bunter was everybody's business just now.

"I guess that's no bizney of yours, Cherry!" howled Fisher T. Fish, backing away. "I reckon I'm a business man, with business methods. In Noo Yark—Hyer, keep your pesky hands off me, Bob Cherry!"

The live wire of the Remove did not finish what he might have said about New York. He was more intent on getting away and keeping the secret of Bunter's I O U's. Even now that this obstacle to fresh business has arisen, there might still be time to raise a further loan or two before the news became general—and to raise further commission, too. Fisher T. Fish was not very much concerned with whether Bunter was going to be able to pay out his creditors or not.

But Bob Cherry had something to say about that. The American junior had hardly broken through the crowd before Bob was on him and the papers were his.

"I say, you chaps," he said grinning, "what d'ye think of this? Bunter's I O U's—one for five quid, and the other for five shillings. Borrowing on the strength of the fifty he's never going to handle!"

"Hyer, gimme those papers!" panted Fisher T. Fish, springing up.

Bob Cherry grabbed him by the shoulder and fended him off.

"Fish's writing; Bunter's signature," he said, waving the I O U's. "I've got it—you've been acting as his agent, raising money," he added to the baffled business man. "That's so, Fishy, isn't it?"

"I guess—"

"Don't guess; get on with the washing!"

"I calculate—"

"No calculations, by request. The simple truth. Out with it!"

"See hyer, you mugwump—"

Fisher T. Fish squirmed out of Bob Cherry's grasp, and was straightway grabbed by Vernon-Smith, Hazeldene, and Hurree Singh, and bumped—hard. Evidently the truth was not to be forthcoming. Finally he was dribbled a few yards along the Remove passage, when he jumped up, yelping vengeance, and scudded out of sight round the corner.

"I say," said Peter Todd, coming up and scrutinising the I O U's over Bob's shoulder. "There are no names on 'em." Peter's legal mind had noticed this fact at once.

"The fat frog's obviously got five guineas of somebody's money," said Bob Cherry.

"And they'll never get it, even if Bunter gets his weight down and qualifies for the legacy," put in the Bounder. "It's up to us to see justice done."

"Justice?" echoed Peter Todd. "You don't mean we're to sub round and raise the amount to pay off that fat swindler's debts?"

"Nunno!" said Vernon-Smith, with a grin. "But we can see to it that Bunter works for the money, even if he can't pay it back. I mean, if we can make him qualify for the fifty quid, it'll be the next best thing to him actually paying his debts. The cash is supposed to be for educational purposes, according to your pater, Toddy, but there's just a chance that his solicitors might allow him to pay his creditors. Anyway, if that fat toad gets his weight down, he'll have done his best to pay up—even if we have to make him."

"You mean—" began Bob Cherry.

"You've got it! We haven't done our good turn for the day; let's take on the job of getting the fat barrel's weight down to seven stone. We'll get him in strict training—running, exercises in the gym, and all that."

"The Bunter Training Committee!" chuckled Bob.

"Good wheeze, Smithy!"

"Yes, let's!"

"I'm on!" said Peter Todd. "But, I say, we ought to come and talk this over somewhere. I can't ask you into my study, because the fat porpoise—"

"Come along to Study No. 1," said Bob Cherry. "We'll get Wharton and the others in on this, too."

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hard Work for Bunter!

"WAKE up, fatty!" The hand of Harry Wharton gently turned back the coverlet of Billy Bunter's bed in the Remove dormitory and shook the podgy shoulder that rose like a miniature mountain as the Owl lay on his side and snored.

It was the morning after the visit of Mr. Joshua Driver to Greyfriars, and, though it would be fully an hour before the rising-bell roused the school to another day, four juniors were gathered round the bed of William George Bunter, already dressed. Their attire was not the usual rig of long trousers and short jackets, however. Their Etons would not be required till the official rising-hour, and their present costume of shorts, sweaters and running shoes denoted an immediate purpose far from the purely scholastic.

The four were: Harry Wharton, Peter Todd, Hurree Singh, and the Bounder of Greyfriars, Vernon-Smith, and they represented half of the members of the self-elected Bunter Training Committee. The remaining four were Johnny Bull, Nugent, Hazeldene, and Bob Cherry. The eight members, meeting in committee on the previous afternoon, had decided that four at a time were ample for the Owl's training, and that they should divide themselves into two parties and relieve each other in their voluntary duties, devoting all their spare time to the job.

The training of Bunter was to be intensive. It had to be, to get any noticeable results, and so it was decided to use every spare moment of the day. The first day of the Owl's training was now beginning; but as yet he was not aware of that fact.

"Wake up, fatty!" said Wharton again.

"Er-r-r! Grooooh! Gerraway!" murmured the sleepy porpoise.

A gurgling snore indicated that William George Bunter was not yet ready to wake up.

"Yank him out!" suggested Vernon-Smith.

"The yankfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed chums," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a grin. "The hand that rockfully pushes the cradle does not let the sleepful dogs lie."

"Sleepful hog!" put in Peter Todd. "That's more like it. Hark at the row he's making! Come on, chaps, all together!"

Four pairs of hands gripped the side rail of the bed and slowly elevated it. The fat Owl, still snoring, gently slipped over the other side, and fell in a tangle of bedclothes on the dormitory floor with a sound like a sack of mashed potatoes falling on a bass drum.

"Yaroooh! Ow!" yelped Bunter, rubbing his eyes with his fat knuckles. "You beasts! Wasser time? 'Tain't rising-bell yet. Where's my glasses?"

He sat on the floor, blinking short-sightedly at the four grinning juniors. Slowly their unusual costume dawned on his fatuous mind.

"He, he! I say, you fellows, what's the game? Of course, I can stand a joke as well as anybody, even if I am one of the richest fellows in Greyfriars, but—"

"Here's your glasses," said Harry Wharton, clapping the Owl's big round spectacles on his fat little nose. "Stand up, old fat man; we're going to give you a bit of exercise."



Four pairs of hands gripped the side rail of the bed and slowly elevated it. The fat Owl, still snoring, gently slipped over the other side and fell in a tangle of bedclothes. "Yaroooh! Ow!" howled Bunter. "You beasts! Wasser-time? 'Tain't rising-bell yet!" (See Chapter 11.)

"Ex-exercise?" stuttered Bunter. "Really, you fellows—"

"There's no charge," announced Vernon-Smith, with a grin.

"Yes, exercise—running," added Wharton. "It might get your weight down, you know."

The fat Owl blinked at the captain of the Remove. The word "weight" seemed to recall something to his mental faculties. He was still a bit sleepy, but Harry Wharton's mention of that word, together with his grim tone, roused him somewhat.

Billy Bunter struggled to his feet and regarded the four juniors with lofty condescension.

"Really, you fellows, you can't expect me to go on honouring you with my friendship if you play these vulgar jokes, you know," he said with a hint of peevishness. "I'm a generous, good-natured chap, as you know, but—"

"The most generous thing about you, Fatty, is your figure," said Harry Wharton. "And we're going to have a shot at reducing that for you. It's worth the effort, to get your weight down to seven stone, and your bank balance up to fifty pounds. You can pay your debts, perhaps, if you get that legacy."

"L-leg—" stuttered Bunter. It began to dawn upon his fatuous mind that these fellows knew more than he thought they did. But how—

"Stop talking about your leg, and shove it into these fat bags," chimed in Peter Todd. He held up a pair of voluminous running shorts—Bunter's—

which had been ravaged from the Owl's possessions while he yet slept.

Billy Bunter's feeble struggles availed him nothing as the four got to work. In two more minutes his pyjamas were off, and the shorts, singlet, and running shoes were on. The Bounder tipped out water in a basin, and the fat face of the Porpoise, spluttering and protesting, was ducked into it by way of livening him up.

"This way, the Training Committee!" exclaimed Peter Todd. And, followed by the grins and unfeeling remarks of most of the other Remove juniors who had been awakened by the noise, Billy Bunter was propelled out of the dormitory.

Had there been anybody in the Quad at that early hour they would have seen a very entertaining sight. They would have been reminded of a line of football forwards dribbling the ball towards a distant goal, Harry Wharton and his three chums being the forwards, and Billy Bunter the ball.

It was really inconsiderate of William George not to respond to the free and voluntary service that was being done him, but somehow he did not. On the contrary, it seemed to be the last thing he wished to do on this crisply cold and bracing morning, to practise a little running exercise. But four well-shod feet, backing him up as it were, had a wonderful effect upon him.

"Keep it up, Porpoise!" said Vernon-Smith, grinning, as the fat junior puffed and wheezed along a yard in front.

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"I—I—I say, Smithy—Ow! You beast, Toddy! I—"

"Sixth time round," said Wharton. "Give him a breather when we've done the seventh."

The Owl tottered forward afresh, snorting and blowing like a grampus. He groaned at Harry Wharton's words. Only six times round the Quad, and it seemed like sixty. He felt as if he had been running all night. The promise of a respite was the only thing that carried him round the last lap, and when at last he came to the end of it he stopped dead, and the others cannoned into him.

"It'll be rising-bell soon," remarked Harry Wharton. "That's enough for a start. We'll get along to the Rag and try his weight."

The fat Owl, too breathless for any protest, was dragged speechless to where his new and shining weighing machine stood in the Rag, and hoisted on the platform.

"Fourteen stone two pounds!" announced Peter Todd. "No improvement on yesterday yet. We've got a long way to go."

"Practice makes perfect the moss on the rolling stone," said Hurree Singh sagely.

"There goes the bell!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. And Billy Bunter was hauled off the machine and hustled away upstairs to change. Could he have had his own way he would just have subsided where he was and had a refreshing sleep.

The Training Committee had considered the question of reducing the Owl's portions at meals, but this was turned down as being out of the question. It was quite possible, however, to keep him from stuffing himself between whiles, and when he furtively headed for Mrs. Mumble's tuckshop immediately after breakfast, to invest a further instalment of his five guineas in doughnuts and jam-farts, he was headed off by the second contingent of the committee and escorted to the gym, to go through another bout of exercise—this time with a pair of dumb-bells.

Morning school—even the diabolical ordeal of Latin conjugations and the agony of Euclid—came as a haven of refuge to Billy Bunter. Not only had he lost a good hour of what the poetaster, in his exuberant fancy, terms "tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," but he had been compelled to indulge in a lot of violent physical exercise, and deprived of legitimate refreshment after breakfast at Mrs. Mumble's. The double outrage was really too bad. The Owl was now in consequence afflicted with an aching void in the region of his equator, and "that tired feeling." He could do nothing to appease the void, but he decided to indulge the tired feeling. So he gently dropped off to sleep while Mr. Quelch was expounding the twelfth axiom of Euclid and the proof of theorems on parallel lines.

A sudden snore drew everybody's attention to him, including the Form master's. Mr. Quelch then proceeded to produce a few parallel lines on the fat shoulders of William George Bunter, with the result that he was remarkably attentive for the rest of the lesson.

The Training Committee let him off lightly during the morning break, and only administered walking exercise, but it was at a pace that far exceeded what the Owl considered a dignified one.

Thus the first day of the fat junior's intensive training dragged on. At least, it seemed to him to drag on. It did not appear to pass half as quickly as normal

days, when there was no escort for his spare time, and no censor to watch every mouthful he ate.

There was no lessening in his weight when he was prodded on to the scales just before prep that night, but on the next day the committee let out a whoop of enjoyment. Billy Bunter now registered two and a half pounds less than he had done when they started on him. This was distinctly encouraging. The fat junior of Greyfriars would be a thin junior if they could progress at this rate, and he would earn his legacy, after all.

To the sufferer himself this meant nothing. His one consolation was of a very different nature. For, unseen during the French class the previous day, he had managed to write out an advertisement offering a brand new weighing machine for sale. And, together with a postal-order—one he had had to buy himself with a part of the residue of his borrowed money—he had managed, later in the day, to slip out and post it to the office of the Courtfield newspaper.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Far from Happy Ending!

"WHERE'S Bunter? Anybody seen Bunter?"

Harry Wharton voiced those question in a loud tone as he put his head in at the door of the Rag. The faces of Hurree Singh, Peter Todd, and Bob Cherry appeared behind him as the few fellows inside turned at the sound.

"What-ho the Training Committee!" exclaimed Tom Redwing.

"Has he got so thin that you can't find him?" asked Squiff, who had paused in a brisk scuffle with Tom Brown in the further corner.

"Don't rot, you fellows," said the captain of the Remove. "This is the first half-holiday since we've had him under our wing, and the fat puff-ball's dodged away when we weren't looking."

"He has fadelessly done the vanishing trick," chimed in Hurree Singh in an aggrieved voice. "Sufficient for the dayfulness is the opinion of the bird in the bushfulness. But it is never too late to mendfully repair the lossfulness."

Billy Bunter was assuredly not in the Rag. He could hardly have hidden there, and the juniors present would have gladly yielded him up if he had. Bunter's weight was an enjoyable topic nowadays in the Remove. So Harry Wharton and the other members of the Training Committee wandered away to search elsewhere, firmly resolved to make up for lost time when at last they should find the fatuous and evasive Owl. There would certainly be enough for the task, for the whole eight of them were going to devote the afternoon to W. G. B., there being no really important footer matches to distract their attention from him.

The only reminder they had had of him so far was the sight of his weighing-machine in the Rag. And, if they could but have known it, the missing owner's present whereabouts were not altogether unconnected with that piece of ironmongery.

Moreover, had they chanced to visit that spot only a matter of five minutes before, they would have seen a stumpy, rather grimy-looking man regarding the machine, peering at it from all points of view, and testing it by standing on the platform. And his presence may possibly have given them a clue to the individual they sought.

However, at the moment the Training Committee were strolling away from the

Rag, William George himself was standing outside Gosling's lodge, in earnest conversation with the same stumpy stranger.

"Well, now you've seen it, what do you think of it?" demanded Bunter, blinking at the man, who, according to his own introduction of himself, rejoiced in the name of Gabriel Hemstetter. He was, by the same token, a marine store dealer of Courtfield, and he was the first of the fish who had nibbled at Bunter's bait.

"Well, young gent, maybe I thinks a bit this way, and a bit that way. It looks all right; I'll say that much. But do it work orl right?"

"Work! Why, it works like—like a house on fire," assured the Owl.

"What'll you gimme for it—cash?"

"That ain't the way I doos business," countered Mr. Hemstetter. "You name yer price, young feller, and I'll tell yer whether it soots me."

"T-ten quid," replied the Owl, blinking again.

"What?"

"Well, nine-pound-fifteen, then."

"A couple o' quid's my limit. Even then my kids'll have to starve for a fortnight."

"What about me, then?" said Bunter. "Don't be hard, you know. I—I haven't had anything to eat for days. A mob of rotten beasts here are systematically robbing me of nourishment. And I've just had a terrible grief, too. My only relation's just pegged out—er—died, you know, and I haven't had a postal-order for months. I'm expecting one from my other relations, the titled ones,—that is—er—I mean, my uncles. Dukes and earls, you know. He, he! But they're away now, in Spain for the skating season. I meant, my poor aunt was my only female relation, and now she's gone I'm the poorest fellow in this school. If I had my rights—"

Billy Bunter pulled out a grubby handkerchief, and wiped away a pious tear.

"I don't wanner stan' 'ere all day listening to yer fambly 'istry," remarked Mr. Hemstetter. "Take me couple o' quid, and I'll take the machine orf yer 'ands straight away. Me cart's outside these 'ere gates at the present minnit, and I've got a receipt ready, wot's more."

"Which I say this 'ere, Master Bunter. You'd better look out. Them chaps is coming down the drive now."

Billy Bunter turned swiftly, and his eyes goggled as the face of Gosling appeared round the angle of the Lodge wall. He had faithfully reported the approach of Harry Wharton & Co., as Bunter had—with the aid of a begrudged sixpence—arranged.

"Quick, then, you rotten fraud! Gimme the two pounds."

"Fraud yerself!" retorted the indignant marine store dealer, who was getting a fifteen-pound weighing-machine for a mere fraction of its value.

But he realised he would have had to pay much more had it not been for this fat schoolboy's obvious panic. He produced two very dirty Treasury notes, a stamped receipt for the money, and a fountain-pen. It almost seemed as if he were used to driving such sudden bargains, judging by his readiness to conclude the deal.

Bunter signed, with hurried glances over his shoulder, and pocketed the two notes. The man then went out to his cart and returned pushing a trolley. He passed the Training Committee with it on his way up to the Rag to collect the

machine at the same moment that they arrived at the gates.

"Here you are, then, Porpoise?" demanded Bob Cherry in a thunderous voice. "Been having a game of hide-and-seek, eh?"

"Really, Cherry—"

"I say, chaps, what's that he's got in his hand?" said Wharton suddenly. "Another I O U, by the look of it!"

He jumped forward. The Owl jumped backwards. But he was not quick enough. The paper was now in Harry Wharton's hand.

"A receipt!" he exclaimed, seeing the Owl's rambling signature across the twopenny stamp. "A receipt for—for a weighing-machine. No for two pounds for a weighing-machine. I say—"

"He's sold the machine! The fat swindler!"

The juniors crowded round.

"He deserves an extra run for this!" said Johnny Bull gruffly.

"I suppose I can sell my own property if I like, can't I?" hooted Bunter. "It belongs to me, doesn't it? I suppose even a lot of beastly rotters like you won't deny that, will you?"

"Perhaps not; but I will!"

The voice came from behind the fat and indignant Owl, and once again he turned hastily. At his rear, having just entered the school gates, was the lawyers' clerk from London.

"Mr. Diver!" ejaculated Bunter. "W-what—"

"Mr. Driver," corrected the new arrival. "What have I come down for you were going to ask? I have journeyed down to Greyfriars to see whether you have commenced any effort to reduce your weight, according to your lamented aunt's wishes, and, if not, why not? Or, alternatively, if you have, whether you have made any progress."

The juniors grinned at this precise legal statement of the case.

"He is—he has!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Or, rather, we've commenced it for him. He's a couple of pounds-odd lighter since you saw him, Mr. Driver."

"Indeed? I am glad to know that that is the case. But"—here the legal ambassador of the Sprowles pointed a gaunt finger up the drive—"what is the meaning of this?"

Approaching them was the unlovely form of Mr. Gabriel Hemstetter, shoving a trolley on which reposed the glittering new weighing-machine.

"I—I've sold it!" stuttered Billy Bunter. "He, he! Tired of it, you know."

"Oh! Is that so?" uttered Mr. Driver. "Then allow me to inform you that you have done a foolish thing!"

He dipped into his pocket and produced, with a dramatic flourish, the paper which the Owl had signed—the paper which stated that he would be willing to abide by the written conditions. He opened it, and tapped a paragraph with his knucky forefinger.

"Clause four," he read. "I also hereby undertake, as a condition of this legacy, not to sell, destroy, hire, let, or otherwise part with possession of the weighing-machine which shall be provided. Failing which I agree that my entire claims on the above-mentioned estate shall be null and void."

"That means," said Mr. Driver, "just what it says. From what I overheard I understood you to say that you had sold the machine to—to this person." He stepped nimbly aside as Mr. Hemstetter, with the loaded trolley, rumbled past. "In that case, Master Bunter, you have no further interest in the estate. I shall write you later confirming that, when I have conferred with my principals. I

"MAGNET" PORTRAIT GALLERY.

No. 24—Dicky Nugent (of the Second Form).



The recognised leader of the Second Form, Dicky Nugent, is a typical schoolboy of the younger grade, full of high spirits and mischief. All the same for that, Dicky has his head screwed on right, being a bit above the average in Form work and a good all-round sportsman to boot. Always ready to champion anyone in distress, Dicky has fought for and earned the respect and popularity of his Form fellows. Perhaps his greatest pal is Gatty, although, as is usual in junior Forms, friends of to-day are often at logger-heads to-morrow. A boy who will make his mark at Greyfriars, Dicky Nugent is a true, sturdy product of old England. Has a major in the Remove.

have the honour to wish you good-day."

And the man of law, replacing the document in his pocket with a flourish, turned round and strode out of the gates.

"But—but I say—" wailed Bunter, running after him for a pace or two.

"Nothing doing, Fatty," said Vernon-Smith. "Your fat legs'll never catch up with his thin and spidery ones."

"The legacy'll go west now," added Johnny Bull.

"To the Pork-pie Designers!" hooted Bunter. He had never hated pork-pies so much in his life as he did at that moment.

"Come and have a cross-country gallop to take your mind off it," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Nunno," said Bunter, with emphasis.

"I've got the idea!" exclaimed Wharton. "You're in funds now, barrel. You can either pay up your creditors in full, or go on with the training. Which do you prefer?"

"Neither," said the Owl, clutching the notes in his pocket. "I—"

"One or the other! And now, you fat frog, we're going to bump you while you make up your mind!"

"Ow! Ouch! Yarcoogh!" howled the fat junior of the Remove.

"Let him down, you chaps!" commanded Wharton. "And I'll search him."

Billy Bunter's pockets yielded a rich harvest—for him. Enough to pay all his debts, on the strength of the two pounds, for he had been kept from Mrs. Mumble's tuckshop while the committee had had him under their care. His creditors would not get their promised hundred per cent., of course, but even mere repayment was something where William George Bunter was concerned.

"Yah! Beasts! Rotters!" hooted Bunter peevishly as he stared after the retreating Training Committee. But even these epithets brought him little solace.

There would certainly be no more training, but he had lost his chance of the fifty pounds, and what little money he had possessed was now filched from him.

A tragic ending indeed to the magnificent prospects opened up by Billy Bunter's Legacy!

THE END.

(Billy Bunter shows to great advantage in next week's rousing story of the Greyfriars' chums, entitled: "The Mystery of the Head's Study!" Mind you read it!)
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THE APPAREL OFT PROCLAIMS THE MAN! When Lionel Speedlow turns out for the Wanderers spick and span in new footer fogs, shin-guards, and with his hair very carefully brushed, the crowd sits up and takes notice. But when it gets a glimpse of Speedlow's monocle—that does it!



The CASE of THE LANGSDALE WANDERERS



Introduction on
page 25.

A Powerful New Football and Detective Story, featuring Ferrers Locke, the private investigator, and his clever boy assistant, Jack Drake.

An Unexpected Visitor!

WE'RE coming, Dunstan," called out Strang. "Hold on—don't beat it without saying good-bye, old chap!"

The Langsdale players grabbed their hats and coats. Strang was the first one out. He had to pass Speedlow on the way, and he could not restrain the impulse to say something to him.

"Fool! You fool!" he hissed.

It became a procession after that, for every member of the two teams followed Strang's example. Here are the principal ingredients of that wordy departure:

"You dressed-up pinny!"

"You one-eyed swanker!"

"Mamma's darling—go home!"

"We don't want you in Langsdale!"

"Mind the Zoological Society doesn't get to know that you're here!"

"Out of my way, winderpane!"

And so on. Never had Speedlow collected such a string of honest opinions. But the one amazing part of Speedlow was his nerve. Another man would have trembled at the havoc he had wrought. Not so Lionel Speedlow. He smiled.

"Well, I am popular!" he muttered good-temperedly.

Curly Taylor was the last to pass him.

"You've done it now, Speedlow," said Curly. "But if you break up Langsdale footer I'll break you, you hear?"

"Who couldn't," smiled Speedlow. "Your voice would compare favourably with a foghorn. But I am detainin' you. Your friends"—he grimaced, as he mouthed the last word—"are doubtless waitin' for you!"

Curly passed out without another word. He saw the footballers talking to Dunstan at the gateway, but he had no wish to be brought into any discussion of rebellion, and so he skirted the gateway and walked out through one of the turnstiles.

Like a lost sheep he felt as he reached the Rookery, for everything in it belonged to his cousin. And that night he knew Lionel was entertaining a "gang" of his swell friends from Oxford.

When Lionel came in there was a radiant smile on his face. He was look-

ing forward to seeing his old pals from Oxford. Quantities of wine and champagne had been brought up from the cellars, and he had selected the menu himself. He grinned still more when he saw the gloomy frown on his cousin's features.

"I must ask you to keep out of my way to-night," he said, and there was an unpleasant ring in his voice. "My friends from Oxford are rather particular, you know."

Curly felt all the old longing surge through him to punch that dissipated face, but Speedlow these days knew just how far to go with his taunts without inviting blows.

"Don't worry. I wouldn't be anywhere near your pals if they are anything like you!" was Curly's retort.

"Then we shall both be satisfied," said Speedlow. "I—Hullo! What do you want?" he growled, as Turville stood in the doorway.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," said the servant.

For a moment Speedlow thought that one of his guests had arrived, and his face brightened up, but a scowl quickly settled on his features as he read the inscription on the card the servant handed to him.

"Ferrers Locke," he muttered, pawing his chin nervously. "What the thump does he want here?"

Curly started as he heard his cousin voice the name of the man who had come to his rescue a few days ago.

"Ferrers Locke?" he exclaimed in delight. "Did you say Ferrers Locke?"

Lionel Speedlow smiled in a superior fashion.

"Mind your own business!" he snapped. "Show him in, Turville."

The servant bowed and withdrew, to re-enter the room a moment or so later with the stalwart figure of Ferrers Locke.

The keen eyes of the world-famous detective embraced that apartment in a quick survey that would only be noticeable to one in his profession. The next moment he was smiling at Curly.

"Hullo, Mr. Taylor!" he said warmly.

"Ah, I beg your pardon, Mr. Speed-

low," he remarked easily. "But I am authorised by the signatories of this document"—here he produced a blue paper signed by the Home Secretary and the Chief Commissioner at Scotland Yard—"to investigate the strange disappearance of the body of your late uncle. It is necessary, therefore, for me to interrogate the servant Turville and Mr. Taylor here. You, of course, will have no objections? It must be a great shock to you that the body of your uncle has never been found—"

There was a faint suspicion of sarcasm in the last phrase that Speedlow did not fail to observe. But for the look of the thing he must submit graciously to the intrusion of this celebrated detective.

"A great shock," he admitted, and Curly marvelled at his hypocrisy. "A great shock indeed. By all means, Mr. Locke interrogate—er—er—Taylor and the servant. There is little to learn, I fear, but you detectives have a happy knack of makin' somethin' out of nothin'. Perhaps you'll find out somethin'."

Ferrers Locke voiced his thanks and turned to Curly. From that youth he drew the facts concerning the end of Marchant Taylor, winding up with the finding of the mysterious missive that seemed to prophesy his death. And this later portion of the evidence was corroborated by Turville, the servant, whom Locke called in.

Meantime, Speedlow looked on with a supercilious smile, wondering why a man should waste his time yarning with people when all the facts had been printed in the newspapers time and time again.

While Locke was cross-questioning Turville he drew from his pocket the piece of paper which bore the now well-known words:

"TO-DAY AT FIVE-THIRTY WE STRIKE."

"Now look at this paper," said Ferrers Locke, smoothing out the sheet for the benefit of Turville. "Would you swear that the writing was not that of your master—Marchant Taylor?"

The old servant looked amazed.

"Of course I would!" he exclaimed. "Anyway the words are printed in block letters."

"I know that," replied Ferrers Locke. "But from investigations in other quarters it appears that Mr. Marchant Taylor was often given to writing messages and instructions in block letters to avoid any possible mistakes in their interpretation."

"Well, that's so," admitted Turville. "Still, Mr. Taylor wrote a thin hand, if I might use the term, sir. And these letters are bold and broad."

"Quite right," agreed Ferrers Locke. "Now, Turville, are you absolutely certain the envelope that contained this message was destroyed?"

The old servant nodded his head vigorously.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "The master threw the envelope and the letters he had no further need of into the waste-paper basket, which I emptied into the incinerator."

"And yet he threw this particular message into the fireplace," muttered Ferrers Locke thoughtfully.

"Yes," said Turville. "I picked it up from the fireplace after the master had gone out of the room."

"Thank you, Turville," said Locke. "That will be all."

The servant vacated the room, wondering what all this cross-questioning led to, especially as he had recounted the same story a score of times.

Speedlow rose from the armchair and walked over to Ferrers Locke.

"Have you discovered anything?" he asked rather scornfully.

But the detective was paying no attention to Speedlow. His eyes had become riveted on an escritoire at the far end of the room. He crossed over to it, and picked up what had arrested his attention.

It was a quill pen. Next his eyes swept the blotting-pad on the flap of the escritoire. Curly, who was watching these actions in genuine admiration not, it must be recorded, unmixed with wonderment, saw a gleam come to the eyes of the celebrated detective as he peered closely at the blotting-paper.

Then Ferrers Locke turned round.

"I must ask your permission to take away this top sheet of blotting-paper, Mr. Speedlow," he remarked, in an unemotional voice; "also this quill pen. In due course I will return them both."

"Take them by all means," said Speedlow. "Have you discovered anything?"

"I have not yet made somethin' out of nothin'," said Locke, in a perfect imitation of Speedlow's own voice; "if that is what you mean."

"Oh!" Speedlow bit his lip and then shrugged his shoulders.

Pocketing the quill and the piece of blotting-paper, Ferrers Locke turned to Curly.

"Now what about that little dinner we spoke of the other day?" he said smilingly. "Feel up to it to-night?"

Curly's eyes gleamed.

"Rather!" he exclaimed.

"Well, get your hat and coat and come along in the car. You can amuse Drake at the hotel for half an hour while I attend to a little correspondence. Good-evening, Mr. Speedlow," he added, turning to the young master of the Rookery. "And many thanks."

Speedlow, from the dining-room window, watched his cousin and the stalwart figure of the detective vanish into the dusk.

"Wonder what that fellow came meddlin' here for?" he muttered. "And what the deuce does he want that blotting-paper and the quill pen for?"

Little did Speedlow know what significance Locke attached to those two ordinary articles. But if he could have brought his beady eyes to bear upon that "little correspondence" the detective had spoken of he would have enjoyed with less enthusiasm the whirl of gaiety and dissipation the evening was to bring him, for the great detective was wiring a report to the Home Secretary. And the information it contained was startling in the extreme.

Asking For Trouble!

"COME on, Wanderers!"

That single shout echoing out from the sixpenny enclosure of the spacious ground at Langsdale was like unto the application of a match to a bundle of straw, for on the instant it was taken up by twenty thousand throats and hurled hither and thither across the marked-out playing-pitch.

"Come on, Wanderers!"

There was an ominous note in the cry that caused the local police inspector,

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

At the close of a match between the Wanderers and the Treadwell F.C., the home eleven, upon entering their dressing-room, discover the body of Marchant Taylor, the founder and managing-director of the Wanderers, stretched out on the floor in an apparently lifeless heap. Over him they see Sanky Badger, the trainer, kneeling, a smoking revolver in his hand. Sanky is accused of murdering the old man, but he stoutly denies the charge, and then, seizing an opportune moment, bolts from the dressing-room. The team give chase, but Sanky eludes them.

On returning to the dressing-room the Wanderers find that the body of old man Taylor has mysteriously disappeared. A visit to the Rookery by a police-inspector elicits the startling information that Marchant Taylor received an anonymous letter on the day of his death couched in the following terms: **"TO-DAY AT FIVE-THIRTY WE STRIKE."** The police theory is that Taylor was assassinated by a member of a secret society, and the Home Secretary, who has sworn to exterminate secret societies, engages Ferrers Locke to track down the murderous gang.

After a deal of legal argument Marchant Taylor's will is admitted to probate. It is then discovered that the old man's entire fortune has been left to his eldest nephew, Lionel Speedlow. Curly Taylor receives ten pounds a week from his cousin, on the understanding that he continues to play for the Langsdale Wanderers. Speedlow loses no time in showing himself in his true colours, for, after hiring a ruffian to "out" young Curly, and acting the part of the eaves-dropper at his first board meeting, the new managing-director creates a sensation by criticising the team and its management. And his scathing remarks are not without effect, for at the next practice match—after Speedlow has suspended two of the team's most valued players—Dunstan, the new trainer, resenting the insults thrown out at him, tenders his resignation, and strides out of the dressing-room.

(Now read on.)

who had charge of a handful of constables spaced out at ridiculous intervals around that gigantic enclosure, to paw his moustache in a nervous fashion. He felt instinctively that trouble was brewing.

And yet the fifty thousand spectators who had paid their entrance money to the ground to see the match between Langsdale Wanderers and Peterham Rangers had just cause to feel annoyed. The game was billed to start at two-thirty sharp. So far, however, the only promise of a start rested with the visiting players, who had turned out to time and were now idly punting a muddled ball about and cursing their opponents and the referee under their breath by way of variation.

It was now a minute to three, and still the home side had failed to show up from their dressing-room. Really, it was exasperating.

The Langsdale crowd around the touchlines were not generally given to shouting and booing before a match, but on this particular occasion the booing, once started, seemed in danger of going on indefinitely.

And while all this rumpus was going on outside the dressing-room the Langsdale Wanderers were indulging in a rumpus on their own. The team, despite the individual declarations from its members that no one was going to turn out "on Saturday," had changed to a man. Only, where one expected to see but eleven players, the observant onlooker would now see twelve.

And the twelfth man was Lionel Speedlow!

He was decked out in the royal blue jersey of the Langsdale Wanderers; his delicate feet were encased in brand-new footer boots, his delicate shins were encased in brand-new shin-guards, and his hair was carefully oiled and brushed. Even his monocle was suspended from a ribbon round his neck. Really, but for his face, which was now flaming with passion, Lionel Speedlow would have done credit to a pushing firm of sports outfitters. Certainly, his appearance gave small promise of his doing credit to the club whose colours he was now wearing.

Grouped around him were the "real" members of the team, and the referee—a mild-looking gentleman whose proper place undoubtedly ought to have been in the outfitters' shop showing off such a "finished model" as Lionel Speedlow now presented, rather than in that dressing-room. He listened to the snatches of conversation like a salesman humouring a customer, when he should really have been exercising his authority and ordering the belated team on to the playing-field.

"I tell you, you are not going to play, Woodward!" shrieked Lionel Speedlow, for about the twentieth time. "Neither are you, Abbot. You have both been shifted to the Reserves."

"Oh, cut that out!" snapped Strang, the inside-right. "We told you that we wouldn't turn out the day before yesterday, but we've changed our minds. And you've jolly well got to change yours, my young cocksparrow! You're not playing! I don't care—none of us do—whether you are managing-director or the Prime Minister himself—you're not going to muck up Langsdale footer. Woodward and Abbot are playing—or else we don't! See?"

"Hear, hear!" The rest of the team were in support of that rebellious statement.

"You see," continued Strang. "we

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don't care what happens after the match. But we are not going to play you against the Rangers."

"You—you—" spluttered Speedlow. "Gentlemen, gentlemen," began the referee, fingering his watch nervously. "The match ought to have started half an hour ago. I beg of you— Hum!"

Nobody seemed to take any notice of the ref. All eyes were focused on Speedlow. He was in a towering rage. His fingers clenched and unclenched spasmodically, his dissipated face worked convulsively.

"I'll not consent," he ground out at last. "You will do what you are told. Woodward and Abbot will stay in the dressing-room. The rest of you I order on to the ground at once."

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Strang. "We'll all stay in the dressing-room. You go out and show your silly phiz to the crowd. Hear them?" he added, jerking his thumb in the direction of the door, as a prolonged outburst of cat-calls, booing, and whistling sounded through the heavy oak panels.

Speedlow heard them all right, but he was in no mood to take notice of that ugly temper spreading around the ground.

"All right," he declared at last. "I'll go out to them. I'll tell them what a crowd of fellows you are. I'll tell—"

But the players had turned their backs on him and were now sauntering to the far end of the dressing-room, chatting amongst themselves. With a muttered imprecation falling from his lips, Lionel Speedlow strode towards the door of the dressing-room and passed along the narrow gangway that approached the playing-pitch.

At his appearance a deep silence settled on the vast concourse. The thousands of Langsdale fans, who were used to seeing the same faces in the team week in and week out, stared and rubbed their eyes as Lionel Speedlow dawned upon them.

He walked out on to the short turf outside touch and fumbled for his monocle. That did it! Even a crowd impatient over a delay of thirty-odd minutes saw something funny in that monocle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho!"

"What is it?"

"Gentlemen—" began Speedlow; but his voice was lost in the wave of laughter that rose on all sides.

"Ain't it rich?"

"Is 'e goin' to collect for a charity?"

No one in the crowd for one moment imagined that Lionel Speedlow had donned footer garb with the intention of playing for the Wanderers. They had that to learn yet.

"Gentlemen—" shrieked Speedlow, waving his arms about like those of a windmill.

But he called upon that vast crowd for fully seven minutes before the laughter died down sufficiently for him to make himself heard.

"I am Lionel Speedlow," he began. And there was a fresh roar of merriment. "I am the new managing-director of the Wanderers—"

"Oh!"

The laughter that seemed to be breaking out afresh was killed on the instant. Now a hush had settled on that great crowd. Everyone present was eager to catch Speedlow's next words.

"I am sorry over the delay," bawled

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Speedlow, cupping his hands trumpet fashion. "But the team is in revolt. They refuse to turn out because I have moved two of the players into the Reserves. I ask you, gentlemen, is that playin' the game with a newcomer to Langsdale?"

"No!" The answer came in a booming roar. Langsdale prided itself on its sportsmanship, and this certainly wasn't sporting.

Speedlow beamed upon that section of the spectators nearest him.

Then came one of those awkward questions that bring trouble in their wake.

"Who 'ave you suspended, guv'nor?" Lionel Speedlow flashed round in the direction of the speaker.

"Two players who never should have been in the first eleven," he said.

"Who are they?" persisted the inquisitive gentleman.

And the crowd, or, rather, that section of it which could catch Speedlow's words, waited expectantly for the reply.

"Their names are Woodward and Abbot—" began Speedlow, but the terrific cry of indignation that suddenly boomed out made him quail.

Quickly those two names were passed around the stands. Bad news travels quickly, and in less than five minutes every member of that fifty thousand crowd knew what had happened. Immediately the ground was in an uproar.

"You rotter!"

"Woodward and Abbot—Woodward!"

"The man's mad!"

Speedlow stood there unnerved and dismayed at the storm he had brought about his head. And the crowd, eyeing this newcomer, this fop wearing the Langsdale colours, wanted to show at closer quarters its opinion of the man who dared to suspend Tiny Abbot and Woodward, of all players.

From all parts of the ground the spectators began to swarm over the barriers like flies. In a terrifying circle they closed in on Lionel Speedlow, eyeing his spotless clothes, his supercilious face—although at the moment no superciliousness rested there—and every portion of him with rank disfavour. The few policemen on duty did their best. But what can a handful of police do with a crowd running fifty thousand strong?

Even at that dangerous moment Speedlow might have staved off that angry mob, but he tried to "boss" them. And for a stranger in Langsdale, who had suspended two of its favourite players, and who tried to come the "heavy" stuff with a crowd that had been kept waiting over half an hour, the result was only to be expected.

Someone gave Speedlow a shove in the back.

"You low fellow!" exclaimed Speedlow savagely. "You—"

"You low fellah!" mimicked the "shover." "Go home and get your mummy to put you to bed. What are you doing in those clothes—eh? Suppose you thought you were going to play instead of Woodward—eh?"

"Im play? Why, 'e couldn't play bubbles without getting 'is feet wet!"

"Ha, ha! Go 'ome, Gussy!"

"Set him off, boys!"

The "boys" set him off. Speedlow found a heavy boot planted on his spotless knickers. Several other boots followed suit, and Speedlow had nothing to do but find a way out of that angry circle. But that was easier thought of than done. It took him quite a quarter of an hour to break free from those Langsdale folk, and during that fifteen minutes Langsdale left its mark upon him. When Speedlow at last broke through the circle his clothes were covered in mud; his hair was all awry; his monocle ribbon was twisted round his neck; his jersey torn up the back.

The crowd had played with him more than assaulted him; but, for all that, Speedlow had repented him of striding on to that pitch, and he now seemed in a fearful hurry to put it at a safe distance behind him.

"Chase him off!"

As Speedlow streaked for the turnstiles the spectators gave chase. A tuft of grass, caked in mud, caught him fair and square on his prominent nose as he turned to see how near or how far were his pursuers. After that Speedlow kept his face turned to the turnstiles. He passed through them like a hunted hare, and dashed out into the main road, cries of derision and roars of laughter being hurled after him.

Then, having seen Speedlow safely off the premises, as it were, the Langsdale footer fans turned their attention to exhorting the Wanderers to "come on."

The Wanderers came on. Indeed, they were sprinting on to the pitch even as Speedlow was sprinting out into the main road.

A roar of welcome greeted them.

The whole scene had no precedent in football history, and the Langsdale people made the most of it. They cheered the team—every man-jack of it—separately. They even cheered the ref, although he, poor fellow, was wondering what the Association would have to say of the affair when it came to their ears.

The cheering died down at last, and the two skippers—Woodward naturally taking that position with the Wanderers—tossed for choice of ends.

And inside five seconds from the time the toss was made the game broke into life, to the accompaniment of a storm of cheers.

Making Up for Lost Time!

THE visitors were the first to make a breakaway from the scrum that ensued in the region of the half-way line. Their skipper, a bow-legged, stocky little fellow, saw his opportunity as the ball jostled out of a heap of struggling players and landed on his toe.

A mighty kick and the leather had been swung out to the right-winger, whose nickname, apparently, was Streaky. He was a trifle on the thin side, but his fine turn of speed left the spectators gasping. Down the line he flashed, the Wanderers' left-half hard on his track.

"Go it, Streaky!"

Streaky wanted no injunctions on that score. He was going—going it far too much, in the opinion of the Wanderers' left-half, who had seen the gap between him and the speedy winger gradually widen.

And as Streaky drew nearer the corner-flag his forwards moved in a machine-like fashion in line with him. It was a pretty sight, and it boded ill for the home team's goal. But then, just as

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When Speedlow at last broke from the crowd, his clothes were covered in mud, his hair was all awry, his monocle ribbon was twisted round his neck, and his jersey was torn up the back. A roar of derision greeted his appearance.
"Chase him off!"

Streaky steadied himself preparatory to centring the sphere, he slipped on a sloppy piece of turf.

The full-back, who had dodged and fretted a yard or so in front of the winger, not knowing whether to advance upon him or retreat with him, now saw his opportunity. In a flash his long leg shot out, his large size in boots caught the leather fair and square, and away sailed the ball up into the enemy half.

"Cleared, sir!"

The relief of the home partisans was obvious, and their faces now wore superior smiles as Woodward, getting his head to the ball, deflected its passage to his centre-forward. Curly Taylor was into his stride before the ball bounced once, and, showing delightful control, he zigzagged a passage up the field, beating the opposing centre-half and his companion. A clever pass put Woodward, who had moved up, in possession. He beat the right-half with an ease that drew a roar of appreciation from that vast audience around the touchlines.

And this was the man that fool Speedlow was trying to put into the Reserves! This was the man who was pretty certain to get his cap in the next International match.

In the Reserves! The Langsdale spectators ground their teeth at the thought.

It was only fitting with the humour of the crowd that Woodward should be responsible for the first goal. It was a beauty from about fifteen yards out. The goalkeeper saw the muddy leather speeding in his direction, thought he knew exactly where it would pass him, and dived headlong accordingly.

But there was a peculiar rising twist to that simple-looking ball, and while the goalie prostrated himself in the mud almost parallel with the goal-line, the leather shot over his wildly-clutching fingers with a foot or more to spare.

"Goal!"

How they shouted! Langsdale had good lungs, and, by Jove, they were using them to advantage that memorable afternoon! First blood to the home team. Long after the restart the spectators were calling Woodward all manner of affectionate names.

And up in the stand sat old Silas Chisholm, rubbing his lean hands together with satisfaction. He it was who had persuaded Woodward to reconsider his decision on the subject of resignation from the club—he it was, too, who had prevailed upon the rest of the team to stand by that afternoon. But certainly he had never expected Lionel Speedlow to make such a hopeless fool of himself.

It mattered little to Silas now, however, that Speedlow had got more than he bargained for in addressing the crowd as he had done. Langsdale footer was not to be spoiled if Silas could help it.

He watched his "boys" playing up like Trojans with that goal lead in their favour.

But the Peterham Rangers were out for blood, too, in a manner of speaking. Their play was clean and finished to a degree and fifty thousand pairs of eyes saw plenty of thrilling and clever football during the next ten minutes. A trifle heavier than their opponents, the Wanderers seemed to boast more stamina, but for sheer "slipperiness" the Rangers were all round them.

Their combination, however, fell all to pieces of a sudden, and as their forward line was broken, the curly head of young Taylor was seen to great advantage. It was wonderful how Curly controlled the ball with that well-shaped head of his. And there is nothing prettier to watch in football than clever head work. His partners on the left wing worked in complete understanding with him, and these three Wanderers moved for their objective in such grim

fashion that the opposing right-back and the right-half closed in on them, whilst the centre-half hovered in the near vicinity.

Curly saw the danger as these heavy Rangers closed in on him, for he was by a stone and a half easily the lightest weight on the field. But he dallied with the ball as long as suited his plan. It was disastrous for him, for he received a couple of heavy charges and was sent sprawling in the mud, but he had drawn the attention of the opposing halves and the full-back upon himself. The ball, however, left his foot at just the right second, and Curly had the satisfaction of seeing—while he himself lay stretched out on the short grass—the lithe figure of the outside-left gather up the ball in his stride and go speeding down the touchline like a greyhound.

"Played, sir!"

MacStennes, the left-winger, judged his pass to a nicety. He, too, waited until he had drawn the major portion of the defence upon him before he swung the ball to Curly at centre. True, he was sent spinning over the line for his trouble, but Taylor made it worth while.

Boomp!

The sound of boot meeting leather sounded dully over the field, and for the second time the custodian of the Rangers was called upon to save his citadel. This time his eager fingers touched the ball—more than that, they fumbled with it.

And while the goalie fumbled, Woodward, rushing up, swiftly dispossessed him of the sphere and practically walked it into the net.

"Goal!"

(The Wanderers are playing well—two goals up in twenty-five minutes! But they are not going to have things all their own way! Be sure you read next week's thrilling instalment of this magnificent footer serial, chums.)

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TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR.

WONDERFUL COLOUR BOOK.

THE CHILDREN'S COLOUR BOOK OF LANDS AND PEOPLES, Part 1 of which is Now On Sale at all newsagents, will be the most wonderful picture book that has ever been known. When complete, it will contain nearly 700 full page colour plates. It will tell the fascinating story of the strange people who live in distant lands; their costumes, their habits, how they fight and hunt, and the strange weapons they use. There will be many hundreds of pictures in this marvellous book, all of which will be from real photographs. As you read each part it will be just like an actual journey round the world.

The price of the fortnightly parts will be 1s. 3d. only, and orders for Part 1 should be placed without delay.

WORTH NOTING!

Attention should be drawn to the topping 15,000 word complete footer stories now running in the "Boys' Friend," and the simple weekly competition offering Two "Cymrex" 7-jewel Lever Watches and Six Match footballs. Get a copy of our splendid companion paper to-day and see for yourselves.

For Next Monday.

"THE MYSTERY OF THE HEAD'S STUDY!"

By Frank Richards.

Look out, chums, for another topping story of the heroes of Greyfriars, featur-

ing William George Bunter. If you've got the blues just dip into the adventures of the fattest and funniest schoolboy alive, and I'll guarantee you'll have to smile.

FOOTBALL SUPPLEMENT.

There will be another handy supplement dealing with the grand winter game, which must not be missed on any account. Nuff said!

THE CASE OF THE LANGSDALE WANDERERS.

And a further long instalment of this powerful footer and detective serial will be on the programme—that goes without saying. Mind you read it.

Cheerio, chums,
YOUR EDITOR.

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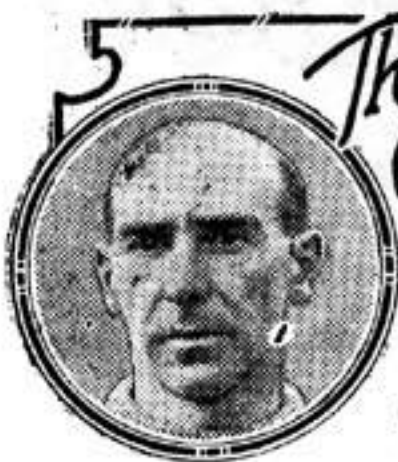
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The GENIUS of GILLESPIE!

HOW AN IRISH GENTLEMAN BECAME CAPTAIN OF BOTH HIS CLUB AND HIS COUNTRY.

By REFEREE.

"YOU cannot have hair and brains!" some wise wag once told me. Similarly, "You cannot have youth and no hair!" a wiser wag has said.

Now, both are—well, to be quite the little gentleman, story-tellers. It is no purpose of mine in this little article to start a controversy, but I most definitely assert that you can have hair and brains, and also that you can have youth and no hair. Look at Charlie Buchan. He has hair, and nobody will dispute that he has brains. And look at Walker and Clay and Halliday! Why, I could fill this Supplement with the names of men who have both hair and brains.

And, again, you can have youth and no hair. How so? Because a thinness of the thatch does not mean a thickening of the years. Take half a dozen footballers you know with heads that are bald, and I'll bet that the average of their ages doesn't work out to much above thirty. An outstanding case which is a telling answer to both points is that of William Gillespie, the Irish International skipper of Sheffield United.

Now, William—or "Billy"—is thirty-four. That is not exactly a youthful age as footballers go, I know. But half a minute! Undoubtedly William—or Billy—is bald, but that baldness is not the result of wear. In 1914-15 Gillespie had as rich a head of hair as Hurree Singh; it was the War that made the difference. In 1918 he was as bald as you see him to-day, and 1918 is eight years back. Therefore, Billy was bald at twenty-six. And you couldn't call that old, could you?

I should think I am right when I say that Gillespie has won nearly every honour that the game has to give. We know, at least, that he has the principal ones; for, in addition to winning an F.A. Cup medal last season, he has appeared eighteen times for his country, and earned an Irish Junior International cap in his youth.

Well, then, Billy was born at Londonderry, and it was there that the buds of the football genius that were in him first sprouted. His first club in that town was one which belonged to a minor league called Derry Distillery. He stayed with this club just a season, after which he joined another Derry club—the Institute—of that town, which occupied a prominent position in the Irish Junior League. It was while in his second season with Derry Institute that Gillespie, who was not then quite eighteen, was selected to play for the Irish Juniors against the Scottish Juniors at Glasgow. The match—the first of its kind in which young William had ever figured—was a decided triumph for him; for, though Ireland only managed to draw (2-2), it was Gillespie who kicked both his country's goals.

Now, y'know, youngsters can't play in those sort of matches without having the eyes of the senior football world upon them, and this match was no exception. Linfield, whom you may probably have heard of as a very famous Irish senior club, had their representative at Glasgow, and, if the sequel is anything to judge by, this representative was very impressed by young William's display. Anyway, to "dock" a long "tale"—forgive the pun, you fellows!—Billy was asked by this club if he'd like to turn pro and sign on for 'em.

You can guess the effect of such an invitation as that to a lad who had football in his blood and who had just emerged with honours in his first International game. Did

he hesitate? He did not. He said "Yes," and as a result was given a trial.

The trial was a Belfast Charity Cup game, and young Billy played really well. But he wasn't signed on—oh, no! Why? Because Linfield dilly-dallied over the business, and because somebody else besides their representative had been impressed with the young Irishman's achievement in the Glasgow match. That someone was Mr. Scott Walford, the then manager of Leeds City, who, travelling to Erin in search of talent, took the opportunity to persuade William to join the playing strength of his club.

And so Gillespie's career in English League football began. On September 3rd, 1910, he made his first appearance with the Leeds City club against Blackpool as a centre-forward, and lived long enough in Leeds to play in twenty-four matches and score ten goals. Towards Christmas, 1911, however, Sheffield United were successful in their application for his transfer, and thus Gillespie became a "Blade."

And with the United Billy's career can be said fairly to have begun. From then until the beginning of the 1914-5 season he rendered both the League and the reserve teams of the United yeoman service, and won golden opinions from all his intimates. At the beginning of 1914-15, however, he had the misfortune to break a leg in the United's game with Sunderland, and when that was fairly healed and he was fit again, the call to arms was sounding through the country, for the Empire was at war.

So Billy, never a shirker, joined the Army. As a recruit in Kitchener's Army, he had, as I believe I have mentioned, a rich head of black hair. As a discharged veteran in 1919 he was almost bald, and the hand of war had laid the impression of age across his once ruddy and youthful features. But this did not prevent him once more returning to the pursuit of the game he loved, and so, in the October of 1919, it is not surprising to learn that he had once more joined the ranks of his old club.

Need I say much more? I think not. His International record appended speaks too loudly of itself to call for comment here.

That Gillespie is a genius there can be no gainsaying. That he is still the brains of the Sheffield United club is beyond dispute, for it is admitted that, without Gillespie, the United would never have won the Cup last season. That he is the finest inside-left Ireland has ever produced is a statement no one will question, and that he is a football general of the first water is eloquently borne out by the fact that he is the captain of his own club, and, whenever he plays for Ireland, of the International team also. Off the field he is a quiet-spoken, unassuming gentleman whose chief hobbies are golf and bowls.

HIS RECORD.

JUNIOR INTERNATIONAL.

1910.—For Ireland v. Scotland.

INTERNATIONALS.

1913-14-21-22-23-24-25. — For Ireland v. England.

1913-20-22-23-24-25.—For Ireland v. Scotland.

1914-20-22-23-24.—For Ireland v. Wales.

When the England team tours in Canada next summer, no fewer than thirteen nights will have to be spent in trains travelling from one place to another. This may well be considered a new form of special training.

"YOU should come to this ground every week," said Sam Wadsworth, the best left-back in the world, as I strolled on to their ground at Leeds Road. When I asked him why, he replied, with a twinkle in his eye: "Well, it's rather nice playing here, you know, because after every game, you can go round and shake hands with both the spectators."

Sam—he of the curly locks, the Owen Nares of football as he has been called—was merely alluding in his playful way to the fact that of all the clubs in the First Division, Huddersfield get the smallest gates on the average. That being so, it is really amazing that the team should, at this moment, be in the running for a unique football honour—that of winning the championship of the First Division for the third season in succession. They think they can do it, too, especially as Ted Taylor, the goalkeeper, has got back to his best form. Ted ought to know everything about the rise or fall of things, because he is on the Stock Exchange. And he told me of a rather strange experience he had not so long ago.

Taylor, who as you know, has played for England as well as Huddersfield, lives at Liverpool, and there is nothing he loves better than a bit of goalkeeping practice during the week. Not so long ago he saw some lads playing on a piece of spare ground near to his home, so he slipped on his football boots and went out, volunteering to be the "Aunt Sally" while the lads sent the ball in. For half an hour they peppered him, and Ted fisted them out left and right. At the end of that time one of the lads came up to him. "Are you playing for anybody on Saturday?" he said. "I am afraid I am," replied Taylor. "Why?"

"Oh, we've got a match on and I thought if you weren't engaged we might give you a trial in a real game!" I went over to the dressing-room to see my old friend Charlie Wilson. It struck me that he wasn't showing his gold tooth quite so much as usual. For two seasons he has been their demon goal-scorer, but this season has been under a bit of a cloud. He started off with an injury, and has never completely recovered.

"The trouble is," he said, "I lost my lucky bit of coal—had to burn it last winter when it was a very cold night." Charlie is nothing if not superstitious, and he was referring to the time when he was with Tottenham Hotspur, and the landlady of his home gave him a piece of coal to put in his pocket—for luck—when he was going to play in a big Cup-tie for Cardiff. He scored the only goal of the game, too.

Of course, I wanted to see Alec Jackson; he's the world's wonder outside-right, so I am told, but I couldn't find him.

"I expect he's wandering as usual," said the trainer, which was an allusion to the fact that the Scottish International doesn't believe in keeping to his position on the field. But nobody blames him, because he wanders to good purpose. When I did find Jackson he told me that though there may be no place like home, there is one place

WITH THE "BOYS" OF HUDDERSFIELD TOWN

By "PAUL" PRY.

(Our Travelling Correspondent.)

I, the man who scored the goal by which Huddersfield beat Preston North End in the Cup Final of 1922, and when I reminded him of the incident, he said it was the Aladdin's lamp which caused him to do it. You see, Smith is as superstitious as Charlie Wilson. That lamp—it is only a stage property affair—adorns the director's room, and just before the players went on to the field to play in their final tie, they formed up in a solemn queue, and every man in the team touched it as he passed out on to the arena at Stamford Bridge.

I missed the smiling face of Manager Herbert Chapman, at Huddersfield, but Mr. Potter can smile, too. I hope he won't have the same experience as he had at Derby, for when he was manager of the County they just missed Second Division honours two seasons running by the skin of their teeth.

"But we are going to give him a treat at the end of this season," said the hop o' my thumb of the team—little Williams. When I expressed a bit of doubt, Williams gave me this parting word.

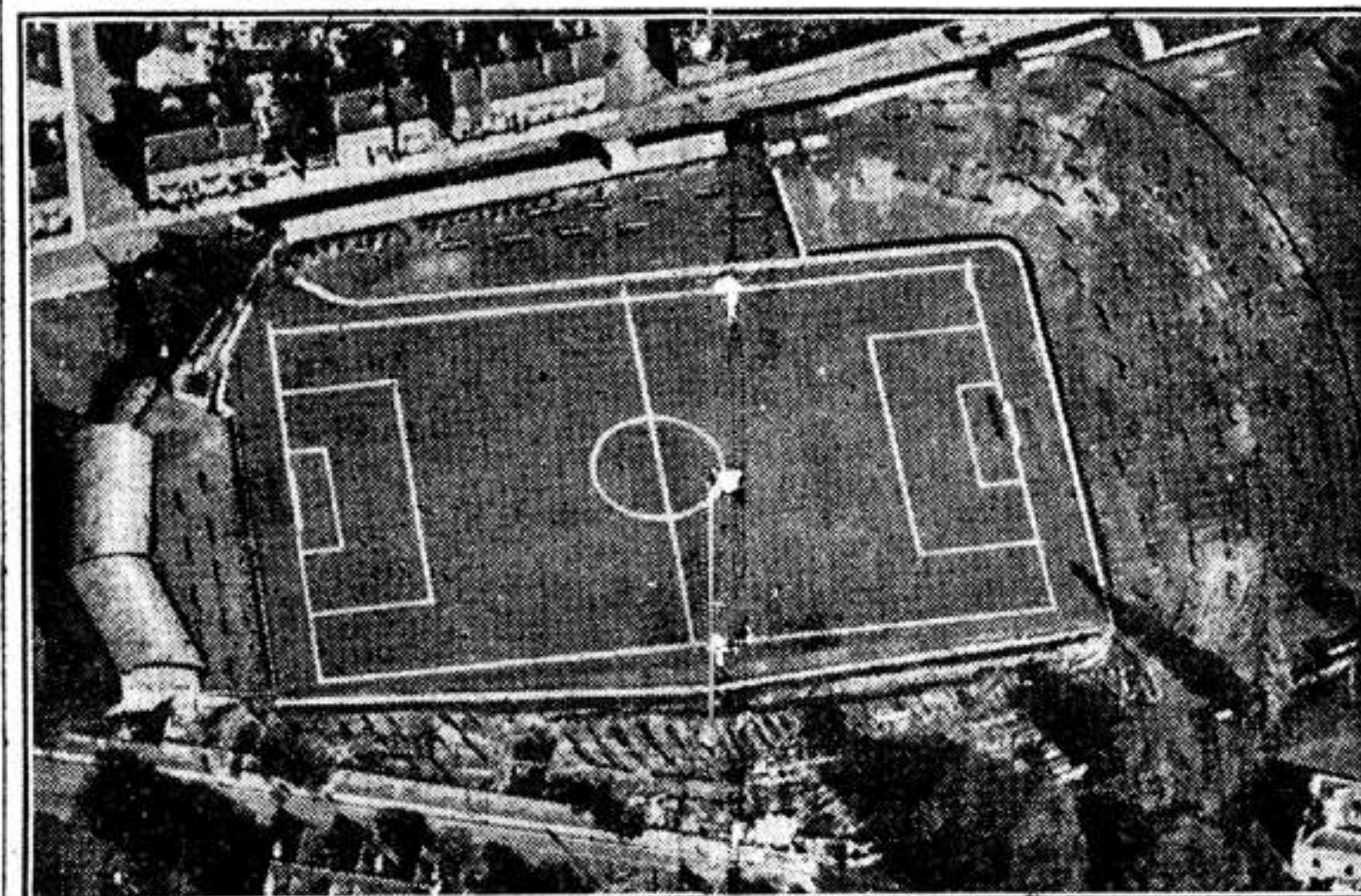
"You simply have to believe it, because it is the word of a prophet."

All the way back to the station I was wondering what Williams meant, but just as my train came in, I "rumbled" him, for his Christian name is JOSHUA.

If the reporters of our football matches care to introduce novelties into their reports they should make a habit of studying the American papers. Here is a choice description of the scoring of a goal which I noticed the other day in an American paper: "The ball was tipped over the patroller's dome and into the draperies." The patroller as a name for the goalkeeper is good, but it is surely stretching a point to call the net "drapery."

There has been much comment this season over the fact that the Millwall pitch has improved tremendously. Moore, the groundsman, declares that this improvement is due to the fact that he introduced hundreds of thousands of worms. With this example before them the Millwall players certainly ought to be able to turn, but we have not heard yet that the worms have appealed to the referees to have the studs on the players' boots examined.

WHAT WOLVERHAMPTON'S GROUND LOOKS LIKE FROM ABOVE.



(Reproduced by permission of Aeroflms Limited.)

which is very much like it—Huddersfield!

Tom Wilson used to be the captain of the side—big Tom, who never plays a bad game—but a change was made because he didn't talk enough. Now Clem Stephenson has the captain's job, and he talks even less. But the old Aston Villa man does things, and if Billy Smith, the outside-left, isn't so young as he used to be, he can still use those subtle passes from Clem like a master. Billy

BREATHLESS CUP-TIES!



A SYMPOSIUM RECALLING SOME OF THE MOST THRILLING GAMES OF HISTORY.

By S. C. Puddefoot, F. C. Keenor, Dick Pym, Fred Tunstall, Harry Chambers and Tom Magee.

CUP-TIES and excitement are inevitably associated because of the life-and-death nature of the competition. Just as the spectators get wound up to a high pitch, so do the players; and one famous footballer, recently asked to recall his most amazing Cup-tie, replied: "The last one always seems to me the most exciting, because it is the one about which I remember most." However, despite the difficulty which some players experience of fixing on any particular Cup-tie as the outstanding one of their careers, some specially thrilling contests are recalled by the opinions of famous men given below.

S. C. PUDEFOOT (Blackburn's famous forward).

Certainly the most amazing Cup-tie in which I have ever taken part was that in which West Ham played Bury in February, 1920. The first half was fairly even, and neither side had scored a goal before the interval, so nobody could have anticipated that we should eventually win the match by six goals to nothing. Yet such was the case. Especially do I remember the game because it is the only one in which I have been called upon to take three penalty-kicks. But the Bury defenders, driven almost to their wits' end by the sudden streak of good form on the part of the Hammers' forwards, were driven to desperation. After I had scored three times there came yet another penalty-kick to us, given against the goalkeeper. He was rather upset about this decision, and for a little while refused to stand between the posts while it was taken. Eventually his captain prevailed upon him to do so; but the situation was strained, and I thought it good policy to miss scoring deliberately, and everything passed off all right afterwards. As a rule, one does not get Cup-ties in which opportunities can be thrown to the winds. Hence the remarkable part of this match.

FRED O. KEENOR (Cardiff City).

It is not easy for me to decide on my most amazing Cup-tie, because I have played in rather a lot during my thirteen years' association with Cardiff City. But for some things I shall never forget our Third Round game of 1921 against Southampton at the Dell. It was a strange mixture of good and bad luck, that Cup-tie. We got a goal in the first half, but later three of our men were hurt, and two had to be carried off the field, to take no further part in the contest. During the second half the remainder of the players, without exception, turned themselves into backs, and the forwards of the Saints struggled and struggled without avail to break down our defence. Even though many of our men played inspired football in keeping the Saints out right to the end, I think we had some good luck, for the Southampton forwards had enough chances to win the game.

DICK PYM (Bolton Wanderers).

I would single out our away match against Huddersfield in the Third Round of 1923 as the most exciting and, in some ways, the most trying Cup-tie in which I have ever played. You will remember that the Yorkshiremen were warm favourites at the time, and they were also the holders of the trophy. The ground was in a terrible condition following heavy rain, and this was

supposed to make our chances of getting through even more remote. But our fellows showed that they could do a little mud-larking, too, and early in the first half David Jack gave us the lead. This was held against many storming attacks until twenty minutes of the second half had gone. Then Walter Rowley, our right back, had the misfortune to be ordered off the field; and, as Huddersfield quickly equalised, we had for the remainder of the game, to carry on an unequal duel against the Town attacks. What anxious moments we went through before the final whistle sounded! But we forced a replay, and from that moment I felt that we had overcome the biggest hurdle on the way to Wembley. So events proved.

FRED TUNSTALL (Sheffield United).

I have little hesitation in describing our Semi-Final game against Bolton Wanderers in the season of 1923 as the most amazing Cup-tie in which I have ever taken part. Personally, I sent in during that match two of the best shots which have ever left my boot, and on each occasion, as I hit the ball true, I said to myself: "That's a goal!" But I was wrong, because Dick Pym, in the Wanderers goal, somehow managed to prevent the ball from going into the net each time. More amazing goalkeeping I don't think I have witnessed. We played under a big handicap, too, for after a quarter of an hour, Plant, our left-half, was hurt, and we were handicapped for the rest of the match. Bolton got a goal—rather fortunately, I thought—but we stuck to our job. However, all the scheming of our captain, all the shots which were banged towards the Bolton net, failed to bring us the equaliser. As we struggled, the crowd, often over the touch-line, became more excited than any before which I have played. Believe me, it was hard for us to lose that game, because we had fought through to the Semi-Final, in spite of the fact that we had four times been drawn away from home. However, the Cup would not be the competition it is if luck did not play its part.

TOM MAGEE (West Bromwich Albion).

Looking back on my Cup-ties, the game which I recall most frequently was the Second Round contest at the Hawthorns in 1923 between the Albion and Sunderland. People often talk about Cup football as if these games were nothing but kick and rush, but that particular contest was about the finest exhibition of scientific football in which I have taken part. And three goals were scored, of which we got two after failing with a penalty, while Charlie Buchan got one of the type only possible to a player of his genius. There were many times in the later stages of the game when I thought the Sunderland men would force a replay, but we held out.

HARRY CHAMBERS (Liverpool).

The most exciting match I remember of the knock-out series was the one we played against Southampton in the Third Round of 1924. There were two minutes to go, and no goal had been scored. A few seconds from time Dominy, the Saints forward, sent in a fine shot from twenty-five yards which made us hold our breaths. Fortunately, it rose inches above the crossbar.

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