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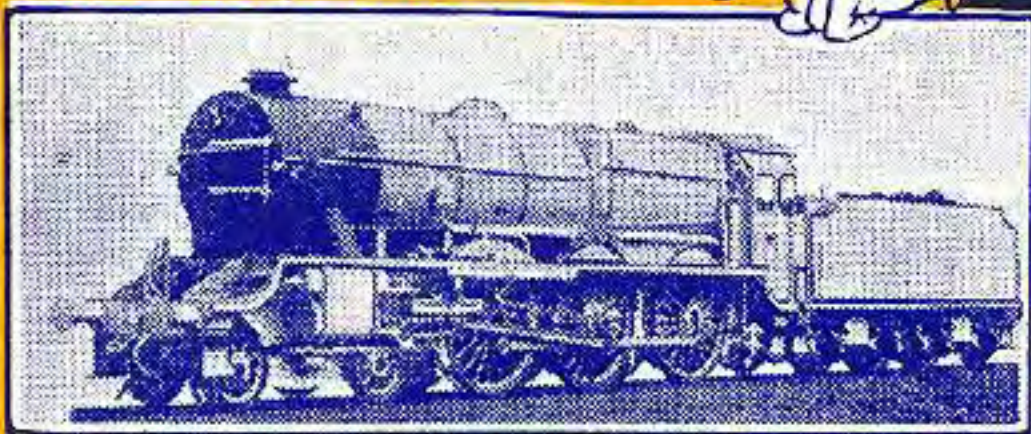
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Week Ending August 6th, 1927.

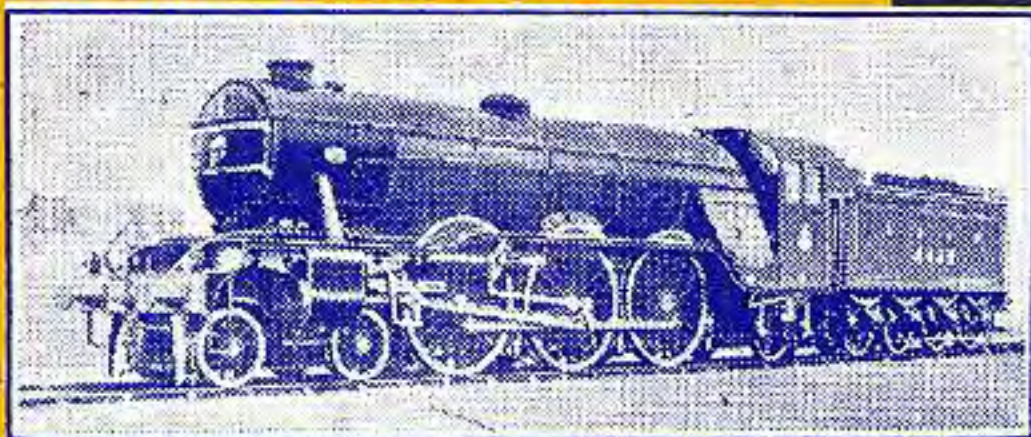
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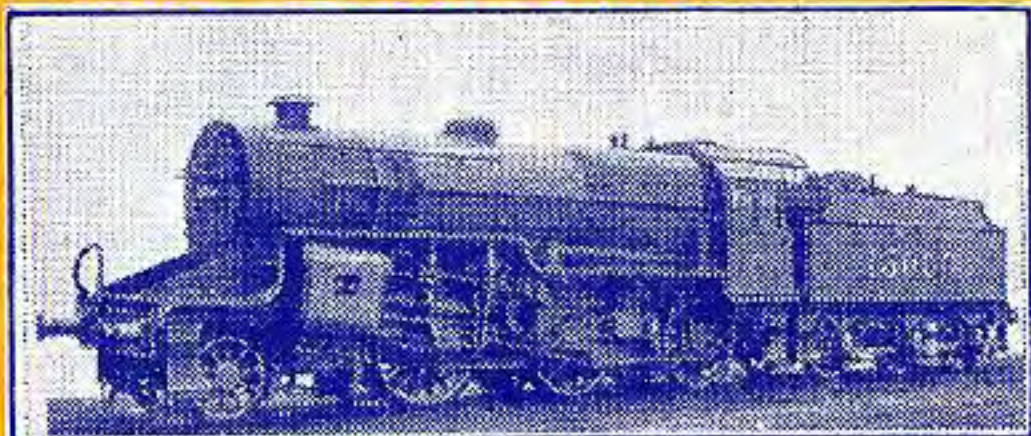
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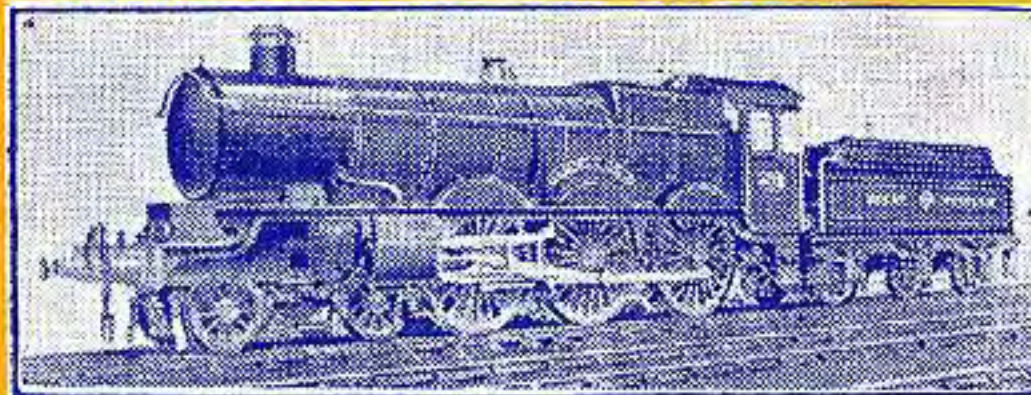
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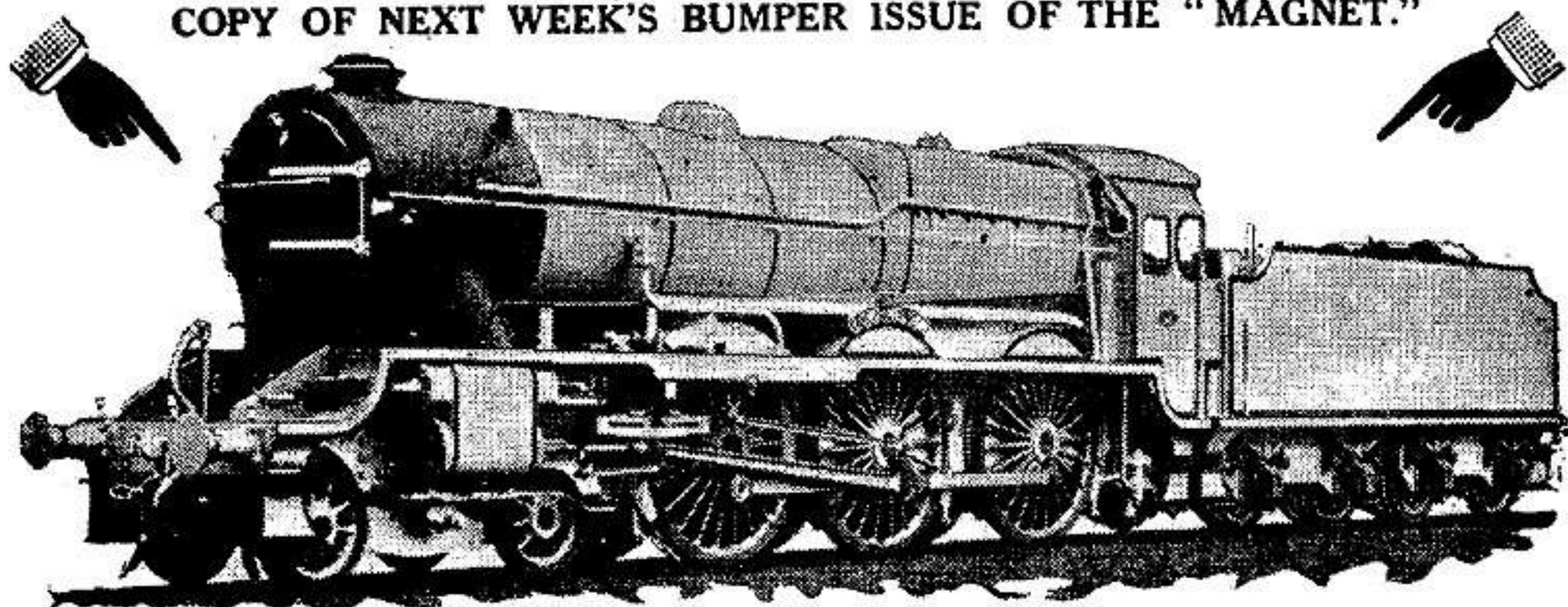


By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

This is the opening story of a grand series dealing with the holiday adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., the Cheery Chums of Greyfriars. A Trip to the South Seas . . . A Treasure Hunt . . . Dangerous Foes . . . But you'll read all about these things for yourselves. This remarkable series, remember, begins next week.



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SATURDAY, AUGUST 6th.

DOUBTING THOMASES! *Billy Bunter—in imagination—has rescued innumerable damsels in distress: he has fought scores of battles against tremendous odds and won through. But his Form fellows know their Bunter and just how funky he is. Thus his latest tale of how he snatched a child from the jaws of death is swallowed with several grains of salt. Yet for once Bunter, the funk, develops into Bunter the Hero!*



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

No Go!

"PETER, old chap"

Billy Bunter rolled into Study No. 7 in the Remove at Greyfriars, with great excitement in his fat face.

"I say, Peter—"

Peter Todd, seated at the study table with a pen in his hand, a stack of impot paper before him, and a volume of Virgil propped against the inkstand, did not heed.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and a blazing August afternoon; and nobody who could get out of doors wanted to remain in. Peter Todd had no choice in the matter.

He had a hundred lines to write for Mr. Quelch. Those lines had to be written before Peter could get out. Peter was turning them out at record speed; and he had no time to waste on William George Bunter. Russell and Ogilvy were waiting for him on the school raft, for Peter to join them in a boat; but Mr. Quelch had to be satisfied first. Boating up the Sark was a much more important matter than writing lines; but it would have been futile to explain that to the Remove master.

"Peter, old fellow!"

Only the scratch of Peter's rapid pen answered Bunter. He did not even look up.

"Look here, Peter—"

"Shurrup!"

"But I say—"

"Bunk!"

"It's important—"

"Scoot!"

"Look here, Peter—I say, old fellow—" urged Bunter.

Peter Todd ceased scribbling for a moment, to bestow a deadly glare on the Owl of the Remove.

"You fat frump! I've got to get these lines done before I go down to the river! Shut up! Clear! Bunk! Vanish!"

"Oh, really, Peter—"

Scratch! Scratch! Scratch!

"Look here, you dummy!" howled Bunter. "I tell you it's jolly important. It's a picnic!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"There isn't any time to waste," urged Bunter. "Those beasts may start any minute. They've locked the stuff up in the study cupboard—suspicious beasts, you know, just as if they think a fellow would touch it. When they come in for it, it will be too late! Chuck that rot for a minute, Peter, and listen to a chap!"

Peter "chucked" it for a minute, looking round him, apparently for a missile to hurl at Bunter.

"They've got no end of stuff," said Bunter, his eyes glistening behind his big spectacles, "I saw them doing the shopping. Ginger-beer, and cake, and tarts, and meringues, and biscuits, and nuts—"

Peter Todd picked up a ruler.

"Where will you have it?" he inquired.

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Buzz, you fat wasp!"

"I want you to back me up, old fellow," said Bunter, with a wary eye on the ruler, and prepared to dodge. "Those fellows have insulted you, Peter. I'm not having it, old chap, because you're my pal, you know. My idea is, to punish them by bagging the stuff before they start, see? You'd be just as keen as I am, if you heard what they've been saying about you."

Peter Todd gazed at Bunter.

"Wharton said you were a long-legged freak, old chap."

"What?"

"Bob Cherry said you were a potty scarecrow."

"Did he?" breathed Peter Todd.

"Yes; and Johnny Bull said you had a face like a Guy Fawkes mask."

"He did, did he?"

"And Nugent said you were a funk."

"Oh!"

"And Hurree Singh said you ought to be in a lunatic asylum," went on Bunter cheerily. "Made my blood boil, you know, to hear them talking about my pal like that."

An Amusing New Long Complete
Story of Harry Wharton & Co., and
Billy Bunter of Greyfriars.

By

FRANK RICHARDS.

Peter Todd continued to gaze at the fat face of the Owl of the Remove. He seemed to have forgotten even his lines.

"I'd jolly well have punched their heads, you know, for talking about you like that," said Bunter, "only—only— They're hardly worth a fellow soiling his hands on them, Peter."

"Oh!" gasped Peter.

"My idea is, to punish them by scoffing that feed in the cupboard in Study No. 1," rattled on Bunter. "After the way they insulted you, Peter, I think they deserve it. It will serve them right. Not that I care anything about the grub, you know."

"Oh!" gasped Peter again.

"Just to punish them for insulting you, old fellow! I forgot to mention that Wharton said you were a rank outsider."

"Oh!"

"And Bob Cherry said he couldn't understand why they sent you to Greyfriars instead of to a home for idiots."

The expression on Peter Todd's face was growing extraordinary.

"So you come with me, old fellow, and bust open that cupboard," said Bunter, "I'll keep watch in the passage while you do it. See? After the way they insulted you—"

Peter Todd rose from the table.

Billy Bunter grinned with satisfaction.

Apparently he had worked up Peter to the required warlike pitch. Certainly, the complimentary expressions that Bunter had recited, were sufficient to arouse the most peaceable fellow's ire.

"Come on!" chirruped Bunter.

"I'm coming!" gasped Peter Todd.

And he came.

He came round the study table with a rush. To Bunter's surprise, he grasped the fat junior by the collar with his left hand. Before Bunter quite knew what was happening, he was whirled face down over a chair. The ruler in Todd's right hand rose and fell.

Whack!

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"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. "Oh, my hat! Wharrer you at?"
Whack!
"Yow-ow-ow! Help!"
Whack!
"Whoooop! Help! Murder! Fire! Rescue!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!
"I say, Peter—oh, crikey—yoooooop! Leggo! Help!" yelled Bunter, wriggling frantically in Peter Todd's powerful grip. "I say—Beast! Leggo! Rescue! Oh, dear! Ow!"

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!
Peter Todd seemed to be under the impression that he was beating a carpet. The ruler rose and fell with great energy, and rang loudly on Billy Bunter's tight trousers.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter. "There," gasped Peter Todd, "I think that will do. I don't mind your telling lies, Bunter—I've got used to that! But I don't like you thinking I'm ass enough to swallow them. See? I object to that. Catch on?"

"Yaroooh!"
"There's one more for luck——"
"Yooooop!"
"Now travel!"

Billy Bunter was not a rapid traveller, as a rule. But when Peter Todd released his collar, he travelled for the Remove passage at lightning speed. Peter Todd kicked the door shut after him, and returned to his lines.

"Beast!" roared Bunter through the keyhole.

Peter grinned, and dipped his pen in the ink.

"Yah! Rotter!"
Scratch, scratch, scratch!

"Beast! You come out of that study and I'll mop up the passage with you!" yelled Bunter.

There was a sound in Study No. 7 of a chair being pushed back.

That was enough for Bunter.

On second thoughts—proverbially the best—he decided not to mop up the Remove passage with Peter Todd. He departed from the door of Study No. 7 at great speed, and by the time Peter looked out he had vanished. And Peter grinned and returned to his lines, uninterrupted further by William George Bunter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

CRACK!
It was a sound like a pistol-shot.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
Five juniors, arriving in the doorway of Study No. 1 in the Remove, were quite startled by that pistol-like crack in the study.

"What the thump——" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Bunter!" yelled Nugent.

Billy Bunter was standing before the study cupboard in Study No. 1 when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived. Bunter had a chisel in his fat hand, broken off short. Part of that chisel was embedded between the lock and the socket of the study cupboard.

Bunter jumped and swung round as he heard the voices of the juniors. He blinked at them with a startled blink through his big spectacles.

"I—I say, you fellows!" he stammered.

"You fat burglar!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"My hat! Burgling our study cupboard!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

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"Squash him!" roared Bob Cherry.
"I—I say, you fellows, don't be beasts, you know!" gasped Bunter.
"I hope you don't think I was trying to open that cupboard door?"

"What?"
"Nothing of the kind, you know. I hope I'm not the fellow to pry into a fellow's study cupboard."

"Oh crumbs!"

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter. When it came to telling "whoppers," Bunter beat Ananias easily, and even George Washington could not have held a candle to him. It was not surprising that Bunter should tell whoppers, that being the nature of the beast, so to speak. But it was really surprising that he should hope to be believed when he told them. But as the poet has remarked, hope springs eternal in the human breast.

"Well, my word!" said Nugent.
"And what were you doing, then?"

"N-n-nothing!"

"And you broke that chisel in the cupboard door doing nothing with it?" asked Johnny Bull, with deep sarcasm.

"Ye-es. Exactly, old fellow!"

"Squash him!"

"I say, you fellows, I—I was just—just testing this chisel. I—I rather thought you'd been done over it, Bob."

"Is that a chisel from my tool-chest?" gasped Bob.

"Yes, old chap. You're rather an ass, you know! You thought you were buying good Sheffield steel, and it's an American chisel after all. Look how it snapped! I—I thought I'd test it for you, old fellow, to—to save you a lot of trouble!"

"Collar him!"
Bunter dodged round the study table in alarm.

"I say, you fellows, I—I wasn't after your picnic. I wasn't going to touch any of the grub. I never saw you shopping, and I hadn't any idea that you'd locked the stuff up in that cupboard—not the faintest! Yaroooh! Beasts!"

Billy Bunter dodged frantically as several boots lunged at him. He reached the Remove passage on his fat hands and knees roaring.

Harry Wharton unlocked the study cupboard; and the good things within were transferred to several bags. The Famous Five had planned a picnic in the woods for that sunny half-holiday, and supplies had been laid in on a liberal scale. For once, cricket was not claiming the heroes of the Remove, and a picnic under the shady beeches and oaks of Friardale Wood seemed to them an excellent idea, especially as Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn of Cliff House School were to join up. Hazeldene of the Remove had already started for Cliff House to fetch his sister to the rendezvous.

Laden with excellent provender, the Famous Five left the study. Billy Bunter was leaning against the balustrade on the Remove landing, still gasping, when they came along to the stairs.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter.

"Let's give him some more!" suggested Johnny Bull. "Busting a cupboard lock is past the limit!"

"The rollfulness down the stairs is the proper caper!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I—I say, you fellows, no larks!" gasped Bunter. "I say, look here! I'm jolly well coming with you. I'm not thinking of the picnic. I never was a fellow to think much about grub! But Marjorie will expect to see me. It's rather unfeeling to disappoint a girl!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Marjorie will bear up, I think," said Harry Wharton.

"Still, you want your lady guests to enjoy themselves," argued Bunter. "Don't be selfish! I'm quite willing to give up my half-holiday to looking after the girls. I am, really!"

"But the girls wouldn't be willing," grinned Bob Cherry.

"I don't think you ought to be jealous, Bob Cherry, because Marjorie is rather sweet in my direction. That sort of jealousy of a good-looking fellow is rather sickening, you know!"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows!"

"Oh scat!" growled Bob.

"Nothing doing, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton, shaking his head.

"You see, the girls can't stand you, and it isn't fair to inflict you on anybody. Go and eat coke!"

And the Famous Five went down the Remove staircase.

"Yah! Think I want to come to your rotten picnic!" bawled Bunter over the balustrade. "I wouldn't be found dead at it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked cheerily out of the House and started for the gates. Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was lounging near the gates, and he glanced at them.

Harry Wharton paused.

"Coming along, Smithy?"

"What's on?" asked the Bounder.

"Picnic in Friardale Wood. The Cliff House girls are coming. Glad if you'll join up."

"The gladfulness will be terrific, my esteemed Smithy," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Bounder hesitated a moment, and then he shook his head.

"Thanks all the same, but I'm waitin' for Skinner. Have a good time."

"Right-ho!"

The Famous Five walked out of the gates. Herbert Vernon-Smith looked after them rather moodily.

"I say, Smithy!"

Billy Bunter rolled up from the House. The Bounder looked at him without speaking.

"I say, old chap, did those beasts pass you?" asked Bunter. "I say! They're going on a picnic; they've got lots of stuff. I'll tell you what, old fellow!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Look here! It would be no end of a lark to mop them up and collar the stuff," said Bunter eagerly. "You could get Skinner and Snoop and Stott and Bolsover major to help—they'd be on like anything! Desmond and Trevor would help, too. See? No end of a rag!"

"Fathead!"

"You're up against them, Smithy," said Bunter. "Look how you've been turned out of cricket. Look at the way Wharton walloped you! They haven't treated you well, Smithy!"

"You fat idiot!"

"The way they talk about you, too!" urged Bunter.

"What?"

"Calling you all sorts of names," said Bunter. "Fairly makes my blood boil, you know, you being a pal of mine."

The Bounder looked at him hard. Vernon-Smith was more receptive, as it were, than Peter Todd, and he gave Bunter more attention. The Bounder had a rather suspicious mind, and it was easier to make him believe ill than good of anyone.

"What do you mean, you dummy?" he grunted.

"Of course, I'm not the fellow to make trouble," said Bunter. "But



Crack! It was a sound like a pistol shot, and the Famous Five, arriving in the doorway of Study No. 1, were quite startled by it. "What the thump——" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Bunter!" yelled Nugent. Billy Bunter was standing by the study cupboard, and in his fat hand was a chisel, part of which was embedded between the lock and the socket of the cupboard. He jumped and swung round as he heard the voices of the juniors. (See Chapter 2.)

what I think is, it would serve them right to mop them up and get that tuck off them, you know. Leaving you out of the picnic—Wharton said he wouldn't have you along with them at any price."

"Eh?"

"And Bob Cherry said they could stand you in the Remove passage, but they jolly well weren't going to have you along with the Cliff House girls. Wharton said 'No; quite impossible.'"

The Bounder breathed hard.

It was quite possible that Bunter's mischief-making might have produced some effect on his suspicious mind. But it was rather discounted by the fact that, only a few minutes before, Wharton had asked the Bounder to join up for the picnic—a fact of which the Owl of the Remove was blissfully unaware.

"You see——" went on Bunter eagerly.

"I see!" assented the Bounder grimly.

He reached out and gripped Bunter by the collar.

Bang!

William George Bunter's bullet head smote the gate, and smote it hard. There was a yell that could have been heard on the other side of the quadrangle.

Bang, bang!

"Ow, ow! Yow! Whooooooooop!" roared Bunter.

"Anythin' more to tell me?" asked the Bounder sarcastically.

"Yaroooh!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith lounged away, leaving Bunter rubbing his head and roaring. Why the Bounder had cut up rusty like this Bunter couldn't guess; but Smithy had cut up very rusty indeed. It was not William George Bunter's lucky afternoon.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter on the Trail!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"What——"
"Bunter!"

Bob Cherry was glancing back from the stile in Friardale Lane. In the distance behind, a fat figure came plugging along the lane. William George Bunter was on the trail of the picnic.

Frank Nugent smiled, Wharton frowned, Johnny Bull snorted. Obviously the Owl of the Remove was not to be left out of that picnic if he could help it. But all the Famous Five were unanimous in the opinion that Billy Bunter was superfluous on this occasion. Bunter was convinced that he was a fascinating fellow, and that the whole affair would be spoiled for Marjorie and Clara if he was not present.

He was completely and totally blind to the fact that the Cliff House girls found it difficult to tolerate him with politeness. Bunter's attitude to the gentle sex varied from lofty contempt to odious familiarity, neither of which

recommended him to the persons concerned. Had the chums of the Remove been picnicking on their own, Bunter would have been allowed to butt in. But they declined emphatically to inflict him on the Cliff House girls.

"Wait for him to come up and jolly well squash him!" growled Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"He's not coming up," he said. "He knows better than that. He's trailing us down, and he's not going to show up till we've got the girls with us. The fat villain knows we won't squash him when they are present."

"Let's go back and burst him over the lane!"

"He's stopped!" grinned Nugent.

"He's only keeping us in sight!" Bunter had seen the juniors halt at the stile, and had halted himself. There was a sly grin on his fat face.

He was not coming into the danger-zone, but he was not to be shaken off. The Owl of the Remove had sagely worked it out in his fat mind that, once the Cliff House girls were present, the Famous Five would be on their best behaviour, and would not be at liberty to handle him as he deserved. So he was trailing them, intending to keep his distance till Marjorie and Clara had joined up.

He stood in the lane, blinking at the chums of the Remove, waiting for them to proceed.

"The fat idiot!" exclaimed Harry

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Wharton, half-laughing and half-vexed. "We'd let him come if the girls could stand him, but—"

"But they can't."

"No fear! It's not fair on them!" said the captain of the Remove, with a shake of the head.

"Sit down a bit," said Bob. "We've got plenty of time. I've got a wheeze."

The Famous Five sat in a row on the stile. Billy Bunter eyed them from a safe distance, edging a little nearer, and then a little nearer, till he came within hail, but still prepared to dodge and flee.

"I say, you fellows!" he called out.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"You'll be late for the picnic if you don't get on!"

"Oh, it's only a couple of miles to Pegg Green!" answered Bob.

"We're not—" began Nugent.

"Shush!"

"Oh!"

The row of juniors on the stile smiled. The picnic was to take place at the old priory in Friardale Wood. It was probable that Bunter would deduce from Bob Cherry's remark that it was to take place at Pegg Green, a rural spot in quite another direction, on the other side of the railway.

"Still, you don't want to waste time," urged Bunter. "I hope you don't think I'm following you?"

"Eh?"

"The fact is, I'm taking a walk to Friardale," said Bunter fatuously. "I was quite surprised to see you fellows again."

"Pass on, friend, and all's well!" grinned Bob Cherry. "It's straight on to Friardale!"

"I'm taking a little rest here."

"Now, look here, Bunter," said Bob Cherry impressively, "if we see you at Pegg Green we'll jolly well burst you!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"And if you follow on through the wood we'll wait for you and bash you against a tree!"

"Beast!"

"That's a tip!" said Bob. "Come on, you fellows!"

The juniors descended on the farther

side of the stile and walked on through the woodland path. They disappeared among the trees as Bunter reached the stile, leaned on it, and blinked after them.

Bunter grinned serenely.

It was quite possible that these beasts, who wanted to keep him away from the Cliff House girls because they were jealous of his good looks, might lay an ambush for him in the wood if he followed on. Bunter was prepared to risk that, if necessary. But it wasn't necessary—now that he knew the destination of the picnicers!

All he had to do was to take another route to Pegg Green and keep clear of them till the picnic was going on, with Marjorie and Clara present. Then he would roll up and join in as per programme.

The fat junior chuckled.

It was not necessary to keep the Famous Five in sight now at the risk of being collared and bumped. Billy Bunter rolled over the stile, followed the footpath for a short distance, and then turned into another footpath which led towards Pegg Green. Harry Wharton & Co. went on towards Cliff House.

Bunter rolled cheerily on his way. As the Co. had to call for the Cliff House girls, he was certain to be at Pegg Green first, having much less distance to cover. He would be there, waiting and watching. In quite a cheery mood the Owl of the Remove rolled onwards.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked back several times as they proceeded and smiled as they noted that there was no further sign of Bunter.

"The dear man's heading for Pegg Green!" said Bob. "I hope the walk will do him good! May bring down his fat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There are the girls!"

The juniors reached the end of the footpath, and came out into the road. In the distance the red roofs of Cliff House showed up against the blue of the sea. Hazeldene of the Remove was coming up the road from Cliff House,

with Marjorie and Clara on either side of him. There were cheery greetings as the two parties met.

"And now for the old priory!" said Harry Wharton.

Hazel glanced round.

"I thought you'd have that fat boulder hanging on," he said. "He was nosing after the picnic, I know."

"The hangfulness was terrific but temporary," grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Eh?"

"Bunter seems to have got the idea that the picnic was to be at Pegg Green," chuckled Bob Cherry. "Got the idea from something he heard us saying. Queer, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the picnicers started cheerily through the wood towards the old priory, and in the sunny ruins the picnic was soon going strong; what time William George Bunter, with perspiring face and weary, fat limbs, was still plugging on hopefully towards Pegg Green.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Not Nice!

"O H, dear!"

It was hot.

It was worth a tramp, even in an August sun, to bag a free seat at a picnic, in the opinion of William George Bunter. Nevertheless, it was hot, and it was dusty, and Bunter found neither the heat nor the dust grateful or comforting. He tramped on after he had left the wood behind him, by way of a narrow dusty lane between hawthorn hedges, which led directly to the level crossing on the railway, beyond which lay Pegg Green. Perspiration streamed down his fat face and ran in a little rivulet down his little fat nose. His collar was damp, and his cheeks were red, and his round eyes had a boiled look behind his big spectacles. But Bunter plugged on valiantly.

There was to be a picnic in the shade of old oaks at Pegg Green, with refreshing ginger-beer and lemonade, and tuck galore, at the end of that weary tramp. At least, Bunter supposed so. The prospect spurred him on. Like the enterprising youth who did the Swiss mountains with the motto of "Excelsior," Bunter refused to look back or to give in. His fat mind dwelt on a beatific vision of jam-tarts and ginger-beer. What he would have felt like had he suspected that the picnic was nowhere within two miles of Pegg Green, cannot be guessed. Fortunately he did not suspect that—yet.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter for about the fiftieth time as he dragged weary fat legs along the dusty lane.

"Buy a coconut, sir?"

Bunter paused and blinked round him.

On a patch of grass by the side of the lane a gipsy caravan was drawn up, and a bony horse was nibbling the grass along the hedge. A woman in a red shawl was nursing a far from clean baby on the step of the caravan, and a dark-skinned gipsy had been sitting against a tree smoking a dirty pipe when Bunter came along. There was a basket before him, filled with coconuts, apparently for vending along the road when the caravan was on the move. The gipsy sat up and hailed Bunter, and Bunter stopped.

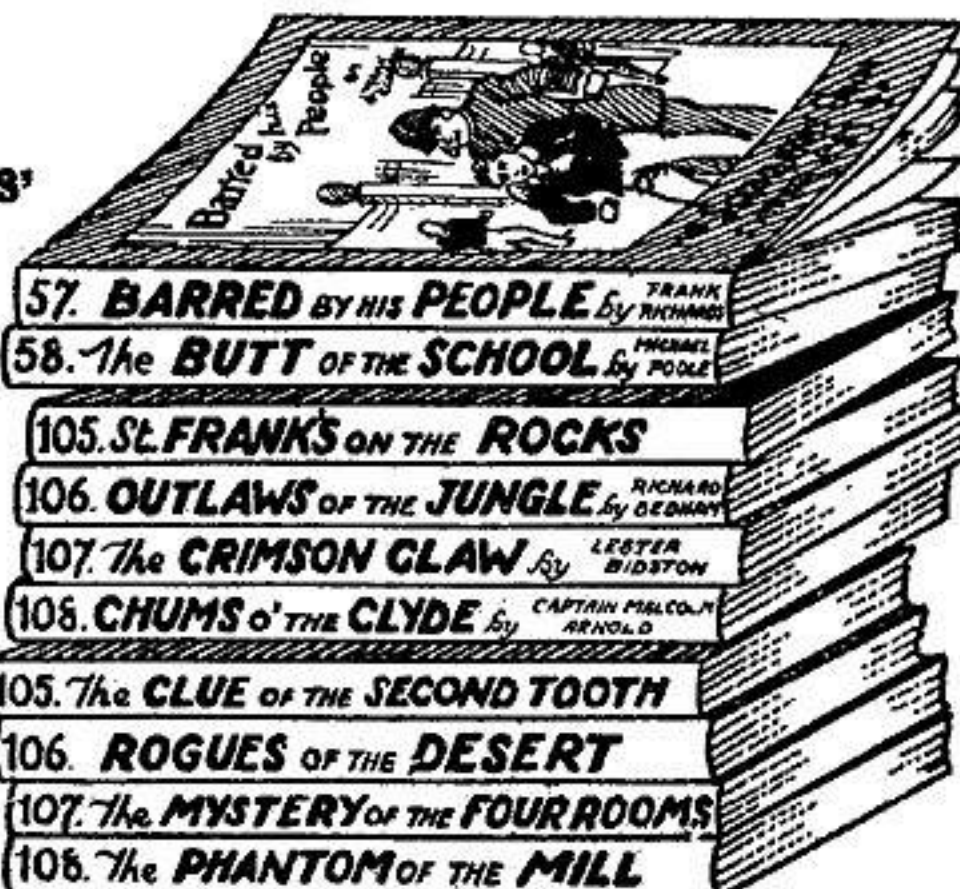
"Coconuts, sir, only sixpence," said the gipsy, taking his pipe out of his mouth.

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Bunter was thirsty, and the ginger-beer at Pegg Green was still far away—if it was there at all. The milk of a coconut would have been extremely welcome. Bunter eyed the coconuts through his big spectacles, and eyed the gipsy.

"Threepence," he said.

"Tanner a time, sir."

Bunter fumbled in his pockets.

Owing to the non-arrival of a postal-order, which the Owl of the Remove had been expecting for a very considerable time, he was suffering from a dearth of that useful article, cash. There were four pennies in Bunter's pocket; that was the sum total of his wealth.

"Make it fourpence," he suggested.

The gipsy grinned.

"Sixpence, sir."

"You see, I've left my money at home," explained Bunter. "I've been disappointed about a postal-order—I mean, I left my purse in my study with my banknotes in it. I've only got fourpence."

The gipsy looked at the four coppers in Bunter's fat palm, and nodded.

"I'll find you a fourpenny one, sir," he said obligingly.

He pawed over the basket of coconuts, selected a nut, and handed it to Bunter, and received the fourpence in exchange.

Bunter plugged on with the coconut under his arm, the gipsy looking after him with a grin.

A score of yards farther on was the level crossing, of which the gates were closed for the passing of the next train.

The little gate at the side of the big gate was, however, open. Bunter stopped in the little gateway, leaned on the post, and opened his pocket-knife to negotiate the nut. He jabbed the blade of the knife into the softest spot, excavated it, and placed the nut to his mouth, to allow the juice to flow into his thirsty and capacious mouth.

The next moment a gurgling howl rang out over the sunny countryside.

"Ooooooch!"

The coconut dropped from Bunter's hands, and crashed on the ground, cracking open with the concussion.

"Moooooooch!"

Bunter spluttered wildly, spitting out furiously the juice that had trickled into his mouth.

It was not nice.

It was, in fact, exceedingly nasty. The gipsy who had picked him out a "fourpenny one," had picked it out with care. The interior of the nut, now that it was burst open, could be seen to be quite black. And the taste of the milk was simply horrid.

"Groooooogh!"

Billy Bunter stuttered, and spluttered, and spat, going off almost like a squib.

"Moooooch! Oooooch! Gug-gug-gug—gerrooooh!"

"Oh dear! That awful rotter!" gasped Bunter. "A rotten coconut! The awful beast! Oh dear! Ow! Groooooogh!"

In great wrath, Bunter clutched up the two halves of the broken nut and plugged back to the gipsy camp.

The gipsy was smoking his pipe when Bunter returned, with a fat face blazing with wrath and indignation.

"Look at that!" roared Bunter, holding up the blackened coconut for inspection.

The gipsy looked.

"It's rotten!" bawled Bunter.

"You want a lot for fourpence, sir," said the gipsy cheerfully. "I've got

better 'uns than that for sixpence. Try a sixpenny one, sir."

"Look here, you give me another nut for this rotten one!" howled Bunter.

"I'm a poor man, sir. I can't afford to give nuts away."

"Give me my money back, then!"

"I don't think!" said the gipsy.

"You rotten swindler!" roared Bunter.

"Eh? What?"

"You thief! I'll give you in charge!" howled Bunter.

The gipsy scowled and rose to his feet. Like many persons whose dealings are unscrupulous, he did not like to hear those dealings described in plain and unadorned English.

"You 'ook it!" he said threateningly.

"You 'ook it afore you git 'urt! See?"

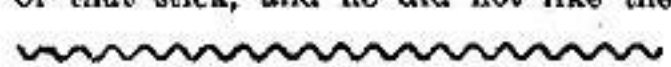
"Look here—" spluttered Bunter, backing away in alarm.

"'Ook it!"

"Give him another nut, Joseph," said the woman in the shawl, looking round from the caravan steps.

"You shut your mouth, Janeth."

The gipsy picked up a large and knobbly stick. Billy Bunter backed farther off. He did not like the look of that stick, and he did not like the





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threatening scowl on Joseph's unwashed face.

"You 'looking it?" inquired Joseph.

"Oh, you beast!" gasped Bunter.

Joseph made a stride towards him, twirling the stick. That was enough for William George Bunter. He took to his heels at once and scuttled away towards the level crossing again; and Joseph grinned and sat down to his pipe.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

He reached the level crossing and leaned on the little gate at the side of the crossing, gasping for breath. He was as thirsty as ever, and he had an extremely nasty taste in his mouth in addition, and he was feeling very ill-used and irritated. Somewhere in the distance sounded the din of an approaching train, and, though it was still out of sight round a curve, Bunter sagely decided to let it pass before he crossed the line. He wiped his perspiring face with his handkerchief and leaned on the gate to wait for the train to pass.

And then—

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Plucky I

BILLY BUNTER became aware of it all of a sudden.

It was seldom that Bunter forgot himself and his own troubles and grievances.

But at that moment Bunter, for probably the first time in his life, completely forgot his own worthy self.

His fat face became suddenly fixed with horror as he stared at the railway-line in front of him.

In the middle of the line, sitting on the metals, was a little girl of about four or five years.

Her tattered and rather gaudy attire as well as her dark, swarthy complexion showed that she belonged to the gipsies.

She had gathered flowers in her hands, and was making them up into a bunch, fastening them with grasses, evidently utterly oblivious of the peril of her position.

Bunter gasped.

The boom of the approaching train was in his ears; but it had not aroused the little gipsy, deeply engrossed in bunching her flowers.

The train was in sight now, sweeping on round the curve, and a whistle shrieked shrilly.

Still the child did not move.

And still Bunter, petrified with horror, was motionless. His little, round eyes almost started through his spectacles. To run on the line with the roaring train booming down upon him was unthinkable. And the alternative was to see the unconscious child dashed to pieces under his eyes.

William George Bunter was known at Greyfriars as a grub-raider, as a fat slacker, as a funk of the first water; a fabricator who left Ananias and Baron Munchausen in the shade. He was known as a fellow who never even thought of stirring a fat finger on account of any other inhabitant of the earth. He had been known to flee from the wrath of a Third Form fag. He had taken more kicks than he could ever have counted, though certainly not so many as he had deserved.

And yet—

Somewhere buried deep under Bunter's layers of fat there was a spark of genuine British pluck.

Probably he had never suspected its existence himself. Certainly nobody else ever had.

Yet it was there—it must have been there. For all of a sudden Billy Bunter, as if moved by a hidden spring over which he had no control, bounded out upon the railway-line.

He hardly knew what he was doing; he hardly knew that it was indeed he—William George Bunter, the Owl of the Remove—who was doing it. But he did it! Certainly he had not thought that he was going to do it. If he had stopped to think probably he would not have done it. As if moved by a volition that was not his own, he bounded forward and raced to the metals, with the terrible boom of the train deafening his fat ears.

He snatched up the child and staggered forward. Some instinct warned him that he had no time to turn back; he plunged on blindly, crossing the metals with the child in his arms, and staggered clear on the farther side, and fell headlong, the child still in his clutch.

A roar as of an earthquake almost stunned him—it was the passing train. The engine was dashing by over the metals Bunter had cleared only an instant before, followed by a clattering line of goods trucks. A white-faced engine-driver stared down at him for a flashing second and uttered something inarticulate. The train roared by.

"Oh! Ow!"

Bunter spluttered helplessly and breathlessly. There was a yell of affright from the little gipsy.

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"Owl! Oh dear! Wow!" spluttered Bunter.

Bunter staggered up.

The child, frightened and a little bruised, was screaming. Billy Bunter stood clear of the line, jammed his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked at her dazedly.

"Grooogh! It's all right, kid; nothing to yell about!" he gasped.

But the child yelled vigorously.

A shriek from the lane answered—a woman's shriek. The clattering train was still between Bunter and the gate he had left; that wild shriek rang across the clatter of the trucks. Bunter guessed that it was the child's mother—probably the woman in the shawl he had seen on the caravan steps. But he could not see her till the train had passed.

The last truck clattered by at last.

Then the gipsy woman came panting across the line. Her swarthy face was white and terrified, but she gave a cry of joy and relief as she saw the child safe. Bunter blinked at her as she caught the little swarthy girl up into her arms. He was still so dazed by what had happened that he hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels. He stood blinking dizzily and pumping in breath.

The gipsy woman hugged and soothed the child, babbling words in the Romany tongue. Suddenly she turned to Bunter and poured out a stream of words, still in the Romany dialect, and as incomprehensible to Bunter as Greek or Chinese.

"I say," gasped Bunter, "what the thump—Blessed if I can understand a word of all that! I say—"

"You saved her—my little Minna!"

"Oh! Yes! Oh dear! I've bruised my knees!" gasped Bunter. "I've torn my trousers! Oh dear!"

"You have saved her life!" The tears were streaming down Janeth's face. "You dear, brave boy! She would have been killed! I saw her from the caravan when I heard the train coming, and looked round to see it pass. I came—"

She panted and sobbed. The poor woman had run madly to the level crossing when she saw the child's peril, but the tragedy would have been over long before she could have reached the spot, but for Bunter.

Joseph, the gipsy, came slouching up. There was a startled look on his swarthy, unkempt face. The woman hurried back across the line with the child in her arms, still sobbing. The gipsy looked oddly at Bunter. Judging by appearances, Billy Bunter was about the last fellow in the world he would have expected to run so fearful a risk. But it had happened under his eyes; from the distance he had seen Bunter's desperate rush to save the child.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the gipsy very civilly. "You're a good 'un, you are, sir, and I'm sorry I was uncivil, sir."

"He saved our Minna!" sobbed the gipsy woman. "She would have been killed! That brave boy might have been killed!"

The gipsy nodded.

"You get the kid back to the van, and see she don't wander agin!" he said.

And the woman, with a look of tearful gratitude to Bunter, carried the child away.

"You're a good plucked 'un, you are, sir!" said the gipsy, still eyeing the gasping Owl of the Remove curiously. "I don't know 'ow to thank you for what you've done, sir."

Bunter had pulled himself together a little by this time. It dawned upon his

mind that he had done a very plucky thing. He had not had time to think of it before; but he realised now that it was plucky—very plucky—quite out of his line, as it were. He began to swell.

"Oh, that's all right!" he said airily. "That's nothing!"

"It was something to us, sir," said the gipsy. "Humble folk is jest as fond of their childer as their betters, sir."

"I mean it was nothing to me," said Bunter. "Of course, I wasn't going to see the kid hurt. It's all right, my man. Look here, if you feel so jolly thankful you can jolly well give me a good coconut. See?"

The man started a little.

"Certainly, sir. The 'ole basket, if you like, arter what you've done."

Billy Bunter walked cheerily back to the wayside camp with the gipsy. Joseph being so thankful and civil, Billy Bunter considered it judicious to put his thankfulness and civility to the best possible use. He selected three of the fattest nuts, as many as he could carry with comfort, the gipsy watching him very curiously. Probably it struck him that Bunter's present proceedings were rather out of keeping with his heroic rescue of little Minna. But certainly they were more in keeping with Bunter's usual character.

"As many as you like, sir," said the gipsy.

"Well, I can't carry more than three," said Bunter regretfully.

"Ever so much obliged to you, sir," said the man, as Bunter turned to go.

"That's all right," said Bunter, quite affably. "A mere nothing to me. Any fellow who knows me will tell you that I'm as brave as a lion."

"Oh!"

"The fact is, danger's nothing to me," said Bunter. "I rather enjoy it, in fact."

"Oh!"

And Bunter started once more for the level crossing, Joseph, the gipsy, staring after him very curiously.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Latest!

"BEASTS!"

William George Bunter made that remark not once, but many times.

He made it again and again.

He murmured it, he shouted it, he hissed it, he fairly snarled it.

What his vocabulary lacked in variety, it made up in emphasis.

"Beasts!"

Bunter had reached Pegg Green. He had haunted Pegg Green for several hours. During those hours, he had waited and watched for the Greyfriars picnicers. And they had not turned up.

Bunter had found some comfort in the coconuts. One after another he had devoured them. Three coconuts would have been considered a very considerable snack by any fellow. To William George Bunter they were as a speck of sand in the desert, or a drop of water in the ocean. Had he foreseen that there would be no picnicers at Pegg Green, certainly he would have contrived to carry off a larger share of the gipsy's stock-in-trade.

He had not foreseen it, however; he had not even suspected it. He had had not the slightest doubt on the subject. Finding Pegg Green bare of picnicers, he had supposed that the chums of the Remove were late. But after hanging about for two or three

hours, he could suppose no longer. The dreadful truth dawned upon him. His fat leg had been pulled; and the picnic was not taking place at Pegg Green at all.

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

He saw it all at last! Pegg Green had been specially mentioned in order to put him on a false scent. He saw that now.

All the while he was waiting about at Pegg Green, the picnic was going on, somewhere else—miles nearer to Greyfriars, in all probability. Quite near to Cliff House, as likely as not. It was too terribly clear now—and Bunter's feelings were almost too deep for words.

He had counted on that picnic. With Marjorie and Clara present, the chums of the Remove could not have booted him out—and any welcome, short of booting out, was good enough for Bunter. And the incident of the level crossing would have made such a splendid topic for conversation! Bunter had pictured himself relating the story, under the admiring gaze of the Cliff House girls! Their enthusiastic admiration of his remarkable pluck would have been very soothing and agreeable indeed, and the envy of the other fellows would have made it all the pleasanter.

Bunter had prepared to spread himself like a peacock and back in admiration. He was not the fellow to hide his light under a bushel, or let his uncommon qualities blush unseen. Even when he had nothing to boast of, he was given to boasting. And now he had something to boast of—the real goods, as it were. Sometimes he related, in the Remove, tales of derring do; descriptions of terrific combats that had taken place at rather uncertain dates and localities, which the Remove took the liberty of disbelieving from start to finish. Now he had a true and thrilling tale to tell, and there were no hearers! It was really too cruel!

"Beasts!"

Up and down and round about Pegg Green had Bunter rolled with weary fat limbs, hunting for the picnic that was not there.

He gave it up at last, and sat down to rest with a dismal, fat face, tired and dusty and infuriated.

"Beasts!" he groaned.

More than two miles lay between him and home, and the thought of that two miles' tramp—unrefreshed by a feed—made Bunter's podgy heart sink into the depths of despondency. But there was nothing else for it; he had to tramp home, with an aching void instead of the lion's share of a picnic inside him. There was one consolation, if he had thought of it. Had not Bob Cherry pulled his fat leg, and sent him on a wild-goose chase to Pegg Green, he would never have been at the level crossing when the little gipsy was in peril, and little Minna would not have been saved from the rushing train.

Bunter might have considered that a consolation, if he had thought of it. But he did not think of it. He was thinking of the picnic, of the ginger-beer, of the tuck, of the jam-tarts; of all the excellent things he had intended to scoff, and which were now never to be scoffed by William George Bunter. The picnic was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream. The Owl of the Remove had no time or inclination for thinking about anybody or anything but his important self. There was no balm in Gilead, so to speak, for William George Bunter.

He moved at last, and dragged tired, fat legs along on his return journey.



Bunter placed the nut to his mouth to allow the juice to flow into his thirsty and capacious mouth. The next moment a gurgling howl rang out over the sunny countryside. "Ooooooh!" he gasped. The coconut dropped from Bunter's hands and crashed to the ground, cracking open with the concussion. "Moooooooh!" The fat Owl spluttered wildly, spitting out furiously the juice that had trickled into his mouth. "It's bad!" he cried. "Ooooh!" (See Chapter 4.)

He made it a point, after passing the level crossing once more, to look for the gipsy camp. If Joseph, the gipsy, was still in a grateful mood, Bunter was prepared to raid his basket of coconuts to the full extent of Joseph's gratitude. He emitted a dismal groan when he came in sight of the spot where the caravan had been camped. The van was gone; Joseph was gone; Mrs. Joseph and the baby and the little girl, were gone. All these details did not matter; but the coconuts were, of course, gone also, and that was serious. Bunter blinked at the deserted spot, groaned, and walked on.

The sun was setting over the downs, but it was still very hot, and it was very dusty; and innumerable flies seemed to take a special fancy to Billy Bunter's perspiring fat face, and especially to his little pudgy nose. He waved his cap at them, and brandished his fists, and drove them off, but they restarted after the interval, so to speak, and gave Bunter no peace. Bunter was feeling absolutely fed-up, as, like the ploughman in the poem, he homeward plodded his weary way.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bunter stared and blinked round. He had reached the road that bordered Friardale Wood on the Cliff House side. Six Greyfriars juniors were coming cheerily along from the direction of Cliff House School.

Bunter stopped and blinked at them. They stopped, and grinned at Bunter.

"Find it warm, old fat bean?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh dear!"

"Had a nice walk?" asked Nugent.

"Beast!"

"Lovely scenery at Pegg Green," remarked Bob Cherry. "I hope you enjoyed it, Bunter?"

"He looks as if he were enjoying life," remarked Hazeldene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The enjoyfulness of the esteemed Bunter appears to be terrific," said Hurree Jarnset Ram Singh.

Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove in deep reproach.

"You awful rotters!" he gasped. "You never meant to go to Pegg Green for the picnic."

"Dear me," said Bob Cherry. "He's guessed that now! What a brain!"

"You were pulling my leg!" hooted Bunter.

"Right on the wicket!" chuckled Bob. "Your esteemed company was terrifically superfluous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you had the picnic, I suppose?" said Bunter, with a faint hope that there might be something left.

"Yes, thanks," grinned Wharton.

"Where are Marjorie and Clara?"

"Gone home; we've just walked back to Cliff House with them from the old priory."

"You—you had the picnic at the old priory?" gasped Bunter. "Oh, you rotters! All those miles for nothing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not that I wanted to come to your rotten picnic!" sneered Bunter. "You needn't think that for a minute."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blest if I see anything to cackle at! I certainly shan't ask you fellows to my spread when my postal-order comes!"

"Oh, do!" gasped Bob Cherry. "That will be just the time to ask us, old fat man. I shall be able to cash your postal-order out of my old-age pension."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

"But what have you been doing with yourself, old fat man?" asked Bob, surveying the Owl of the Remove curiously. "You've cut the knees of your bags and burst off a lot of buttons from your waistcoat. Been taking a tumble somewhere?"

Billy Bunter remembered that he was a hero. He had forgotten it for the moment.

"I fell down on the railway line," he said loftily. "Jolly narrow escape."

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Wharton. "Mean to say that you went over the level crossing when a train was coming?"

"You see, I had to."

"What rot!" said Johnny Bull. "Bunter wouldn't cross the line if there was a train within five miles."

"I might expect that from you!" sneered Bunter. "I dare say you would have let the kid be run over. Not my style."

The juniors stared at Bunter.

"Eh? What kid?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Gipsy kid," said Bunter. "She was on the metals, and the train was coming. I rushed forward just in time."

"Wha-a-at!"
"I seized her in my arms and bore her to safety," said Bunter. "The train rushed by—"
"Go it!"

"Just missing me," said Bunter. "I had barely time to get clear. I fell with the kid in my arms just out of reach of the train. You fellows wouldn't have done it!"

"Well, no," agreed Bob Cherry. "We haven't your imagination, old chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You silly ass it really happened, and—"

"I don't think."
"Why, you—you—you beast—" gasped Bunter.

"Tell us another funny story," suggested Johnny Bull.

"It happened!" yelled Bunter. "The train was rushing down on me, and I just jumped clear. The gipsies were awfully grateful."

"Go it!" said Nugent, laughing.

"I cut my bags and bruised my knees falling down, you know. I rescued that kid at the risk of my life."

"Hear, hear!"
"Pile it on!"

Billy Bunter glared at the laughing juniors in speechless wrath.

It had not occurred to him that, when he related the tale of his heroism, he would not be believed.

He was accustomed to disbelief when he "told the tale." But hitherto his tales had been entitled to disbelief. It was so seldom that Bunter told the truth that he had got used to scepticism.

But this time it was true, and, being true, it should have been believed at once. And Bunter had not foreseen that it would be regarded as one more of his yarns. He might really have foreseen it, but he hadn't. His fat face was crimson with indignation.

"Mean to say you don't believe me?" he gasped at last.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.
"Believe you!" sobbed Bob Cherry.
"Oh dear! Not quite!"

"The believableness is not terrific," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Draw it mild, my esteemed Bunter."

"You beasts!" roared Bunter. "It's true!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I rushed across in front of the train—"

"Bravo!"

"Seizing the kid in my arms, I dashed away with her, and the train rushed by just behind me. It was a goods train!" gasped Bunter. "Every one of those loaded trucks would have gone over me if I hadn't got clear. I risked my life—"

"Keep it up!"

"You can jolly well ask those gipsies if you don't believe me."

"Where are they?" grinned Nugent.

"Produce the gipsies."

"They were camped in the lane by the level crossing."

"What about walking round that way and asking the gipsies?" suggested Bob Cherry, with a wink at his comrades.

"They're gone now," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I rather fancied they would be gone if we walked round to have a look at them," agreed Bob.

"The gonefulness would be terrific!"

"You silly owls!" shrieked Bunter. "Do you think they'd stay on there for ever, just because I saved their kid from the train? They were awfully grateful. The man gave me some coconuts."

"He should have given you a cake," said Bob. "You take the cake, Bunter."

"Where's the giddy reward of valour?" asked Johnny Bull. "I don't see the coconuts."

"I've eaten them, you ass!"

"Well, that part sounds true," admitted Johnny Bull. "If there was anything eatable about, I'm ready to believe that you ate it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you—" bawled Bunter.

"Keep it till we get in," said Bob.

"We shall be late for call-over if we stay here listening to Bunter's fairy tales. Tell us again in the Rag this evening, Bunter, and you can think out a few more details by that time. This story isn't really up to your usual style."

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. resumed their way to Greyfriars, and Bunter rolled after them with a purple face, almost bursting with indignation.

For once he had done a plucky thing—a thing which Harry Wharton & Co. would have been the first to admire, if they had believed it. But they didn't—there was no doubt that they didn't. Bunter had told so many fibs that when he told the truth at last, there were no takers, as it were. Like the boy in the fable who cried "Wolf!" so often when there was no wolf, that he was not heeded when the wolf really came, Bunter was paying the penalty of untruthfulness. From the glories of Bunter Court to imaginary combats with ferocious barges, Bunter had told the tale many a time and oft, and he had told it not wisely but too well. Now, at long last, he was handing out the truth, and it was merely regarded as "Bunter's latest."

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Doubting Thomases!

"BUNTER!"

"Yes, sir."
Mr. Quelch met the juniors as they came into the House.

He stopped Bunter with a gesture, fixing his eyes severely upon the fat junior.

"Bunter, I have had occasion to speak to you many times for your slovenliness. I have had to reprimand you on many occasions. You are the most untidy and slovenly boy in my Form."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"How dare you!" resumed Mr. Quelch severely. "I say how dare you appear in public in such a state! Have you no regard whatever for the school to which you belong? You are dirty."

"I—I—"

"Your clothes are in a disgusting state—dusty and dirty. Your trousers are actually torn at the knees. Your aspect is revolting, Bunter."

Many grinning faces were turned towards Billy Bunter as the Remove master let himself go.

It was true that Bunter was the most slovenly fellow in all Greyfriars. It was true that Mr. Quelch had given him many a "jaw" on that subject. It was also true that he looked, at the present moment, more hopelessly

slovenly than he had ever looked before. His trousers always bagged at the knees, and generally looked as if he had been using them to mop up dust with. But it was rather a new departure, even for Bunter, to walk in the public eye with great rents in his garments.

"Is it your desire, Bunter, to disgrace your school by presenting a slovenly, a ragged, a tattered appearance in public?" snorted Mr. Quelch.

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Then how dare you do so?"

"You—you see, sir," stammered Bunter.

"I've had an accident."

"Indeed! What accident?" sniffed Mr. Quelch.

"I mean, not exactly an accident—" stammered Bunter.

"What do you mean, Bunter?"

"I mean I fell down, sir, under the train—"

"What?"

"That is, nearly under the train, sir," gasped Bunter. "It rushed by at a terrific speed, sir, and I hardly got clear."

"You utterly stupid boy," exclaimed Mr. Quelch, "do you mean to say that you have been so foolish as to venture upon a railway line?"

"The—the level crossing at Pegg, sir."

"The level crossing is out of bounds. Bunter. Have you been out of school bounds this afternoon?" demanded the Remove master.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Not at all, sir!"

"Then upon what railway have you trespassed—a more serious matter than breaking school bounds?"

"I—I mean—"

"I demand an explanation immediately, Bunter!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "If you have been out of bounds I shall cane you. If you have trespassed upon a railway line I shall cane you more severely. Now state immediately what you have done."

"N-n-nothing, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"You have said that you fell down on a railway line."

"I—I don't mean a railway line, sir. I—I meant a-a-another line, sir!" stammered the hapless Owl.

"What line?"

Bunter spluttered helplessly. Any line would have seemed good to him, if it would have got him off the caning. But Mr. Quelch was not likely to believe that he had fallen over a clothes-line or a telegraph line.

Bob Cherry came to the rescue.

"It was my fault, sir," he said meekly. "I pulled Bunter's leg, sir, and he thought there was going to be a picnic at Pegg Green. I forgot that the level crossing was out of bounds."

"You should not have forgotten, Cherry."

"Oh! No, sir!"

"You have caused this foolish and obtuse boy to go out of bounds," said Mr. Quelch. "Instead of punishing Bunter, therefore, I shall punish you, Cherry. You will take a hundred lines!"

"Yes, sir," murmured Bob.

"The fact is, sir—" began Bunter.

"You need say no more, Bunter."

But Bunter was keen to say more. If he was not going to be punished for breaking bounds, there was no reason why he should not acquaint Mr. Quelch with his heroic conduct of that afternoon.

"Yes, sir, but when I was at the level crossing—"

"That will do!"

"But, sir, it happened—"

"Enough!"

Mr. Quelch rustled away, leaving

Bunter with his tale untold. Bunter blinked after him indignantly. The least that Mr. Quelch could have done, in his opinion, was to listen to his story, and tell him that he was a credit to Greyfriars. But Mr. Quelch evidently hadn't the faintest suspicion that Billy Bunter was a credit to Greyfriars.

"I say, you fellows, a fellow's Form master might listen to a fellow," said Bunter bitterly. "I was going to tell him—"

"Not that yarn you told us?" ejaculated Nugent.

"Yes, you beast. It's the truth!"

"Not much good asking Quelch to believe that," chuckled Frank. "You see, he knows you."

"Oh, really, Nugent!"

"The knowfulness is too great, my esteemed Bunter."

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled away to change his trousers and to rub embrocation on his bruised knees. He had a good many marks left from his tumble at the level crossing, which really ought to have been evidence of the truth of his story. Certainly they were evidence that he had taken a tumble, but nobody at Greyfriars was likely to believe that they were evidence of anything more.

Billy Bunter rolled down to Hall for call-over in a bitter and pessimistic mood.

After roll-call he joined Peter Todd, whose grinning face showed that he had heard something of Bunter's latest.

"Tell us all about it, Bunter," said Peter at once. "I hear you've been doing heroic stunts. Just in your line, of course."

"You believe me, Peter, old chap?" said Bunter. "I say, those other cads—I mean those cads—wouldn't believe a word of it!"

"Not really?" said Peter sarcastically.

"Yes, really, old fellow, after I saved a kid's life at the risk of my own!" said Bunter. "Heedless of danger I rushed forward—"

"I can see you doing it!" agreed Peter.

"Yes, old chap, and I seized the child in my arms—"

"And bore her out of the burning house?" asked Peter. Bunter blinked at him.

"It wasn't a fire, you ass. It was at the level crossing!"

"Why not make it a fire?"

"You—your silly chump!" hooted Bunter.

"A fire sounds better," urged Peter. "Rushing into the burning house, you seized the beautiful girl in your arms and—"

"It wasn't a beautiful girl, you idiot! It was a little dirty gipsy kid!" snorted Bunter.

"Make it a beautiful girl," advised Peter. "It's always a beautiful girl in the magazines."

"You silly chump, do you think I'm telling you a yarn I read in a magazine?" shrieked Bunter.

"Well, aren't you?"

"Beast!"

"Only you've got such a rotten memory," said Peter, shaking his head. "You never can even remember that liars should have good memories. This yarn isn't up to your form, Bunter."

"I tell you—"

"Let me give you a tip. Make it a burning house and a beautiful girl. It sounds better and it's just as true. Why not tell a thumping good one, old bean? Seizing her in your arms, you leaped from the window of the burning house amid deafening cheers," suggested Peter. "Now, I put it to you, isn't that better than a silly tale about a gipsy kid on a level crossing?"

"But it's true!" wailed Bunter.

"Or what about a shipwreck?" suggested Peter. "You needn't glare at me like that, Bunter, when I'm trying to help you, like a pal. The boat capsized, and the beautiful girl was struggling in the water. 'Save me!' she shrieked in agony. 'I'm coming!' you shouted back, and, leaping into the raging waves, you seized her by her shingled mop and swam ashore with her."

"I didn't!" howled Bunter.

"I know you didn't. But the same applies to the level crossing tale. Make it a good story while you're about it."

"I've got my knees bruised and I cut my trousers on the metals."

"Dear man, you couldn't," said Peter. "The metals might bruise your knees, but they simply couldn't cut your trousers. You see, they're smooth. I suggest leaving that out."

"I—I mean—I thought it was the metals. I suppose it was on the stones," stammered Bunter. "You see, it all happened so quick."

"Oh, quite! But you might have bruised your knees clambering into the burning house."

"Look here—"

(Continued on next page.)



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Try 2d Marshmallows too.

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BRAVO, BUNTER!*(Continued from previous page.)*

"Or you might have banged them on the beautiful girl's chin when you collared her in the raging waves."

"Beast!"

"But what about a runaway motor-car?" suggested Peter brightly. "You hadn't thought of that, Bunter. It's ever so much better than a goods train at a level crossing. A car, driven by a beautiful girl, came rushing along, and you jumped—"

"Yah!"

Bunter rolled wrathfully away, leaving Peter Todd chuckling. Evidently Peter was to be numbered among the doubting Thomases.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.**No Glory for Bunter!**

"HA, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully round the Rag.

Prep was over in the Remove, and the juniors had mostly gathered in the Rag for the hour before dorm. Billy Bunter rolled in; and there was a burst of merriment the moment he appeared. It needed only the appearance of William George Bunter to set the Rag in a roar.

Obviously, the story of Bunter's "latest" had spread. It was not, certainly, a laughing matter. But all the Lower Fourth believed that it was a laughing matter, and they laughed.

"Here he is!" chortled Skinner. "Here's the giddy hero! Sing it over again to us, Bunter!"

"Let's hear it!" roared Bolsover major.

"Tell us your funny story, Bunter!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I suppose you've thought out a lot of fresh details by this time."

"I say, you fellows!"

"Silence for Bunter!" called out Peter Todd. "Give him a chance! You fellows will find the story rather improved. I've been helping Bunter with suggestions."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, do give us the full story, Bunter," said Johnny Bull. "You've had time now to put frills on it."

"I say, you fellows, it's true!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be so funny at the start!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"I say, you fellows, if you can't take my word—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'll tell you exactly how it happened, if you like," said Bunter. "It's a bit sickening for a fellow to have his word doubted like this. Not that I'm going to brag of what I did, you know. That's not my way. Any fellow would have done it—I mean, any fellow with my boundless pluck, of course."

"Ye gods!"

"This is how it was!" went on Bunter. "I was at the level crossing on the way to Pegg Green. I heard the train coming. I wasn't going to cross till the train was by. Then I saw the kid on the line. A little gipsy kid with a grubby face and a bunch of flowers."

"Not a beautiful girl?" asked Peter Todd, disappointed.

"No!" roared Bunter.

"I can't help thinking that's a mistake," said Peter. "Still, it's your story, not mine, and you can spoil it if you like. I should have made it a beautiful girl, as is usual in such cases."

"Yah! When I saw the kid on the

metals, and the train coming along, you could have knocked me down with a feather," said Bunter impressively. "I was frozen with horror; in fact, petrified with it. Then I rushed forward and seized the kid and carried her to safety."

"Just what Bunter would do!" commented Skinner; and there was a roar of laughter in the Rag.

"Can't you fellows see Bunter rushing in front of a train?" sobbed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I fell over!" said Bunter. "I cut my hags on something, and banged my knees and bruised them—my hands, too. I'm hurt. But the child was safe—and, of course, that's all I cared about!"

"That's all Bunter would care about!" commented Skinner, again, and there was another yell.

"The train rushed by with a noise like—like—like—"

"Like a railway train?" suggested Peter.

"Like Bob Cherry taking his boots off?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Like thunder!" said Bunter. "A noise absolutely like thunder. Deafening! Stunning! Passengers leaned out of the windows and cheered wildly."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"You could have heard them for a quarter of a mile!" said the Owl of the Remove impressively.

Bunter's besetting sin was finding him out again. Even when he was telling a true story, he never could let well alone; he was bound to draw upon his fertile imagination for convincing details. But Bunter's details never did convince his hearers. They generally had the opposite effect.

"I thought the yarn would improve with keeping!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It has, and no mistake! Rancey passengers cheering from the windows of a goods train!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He had forgotten, for the moment, that it was a goods train, and that he had mentioned that little circumstance in his first version.

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

"I—I—I mean—"

"Now, let's have this clear!" urged Bob. "Was it a goods train, with passengers cheering from the windows; or was it a passenger train, with goods cheering from the windows? We're ready to believe one quite as much as the other."

"Quite!" chuckled Wharton.

"The quiteness is terrific."

"I—I mean—it was a goods train—I told you fellows it was a goods train, you know!" stammered Bunter.

"And the trucks had windows, with passengers?" asked Bob.

"Nunno! I—I meant to say—there weren't any passengers, of course!" stammered Bunter.

"Then how did they cheer?"

"Perhaps there weren't any cheers?" suggested Peter.

"I—I meant to say, if it had been a passenger train, the—the passengers would have cheered!" gasped Bunter. "As—as it was a goods train, they—they didn't, of course."

"Then they couldn't have been heard for a quarter of a mile, what?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Nunno!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The woman shrieked as the train was going by," went on Bunter hastily—"the kid's mater, you know. Shrieked like—like anything. When the train was gone, she grabbed up the kid—I mean, she clasped the child in her arms."

"That's better."

"And thanked me with tears in her eyes for my wonderful courage and—boundless pluck."

"Hear, hear!"

"The gipsy man offered me his whole basket of coconuts. He was deeply grateful. I couldn't help thinking how lucky it was that I was there, you know, and not one of you fellows. Precious few fellows would have rushed across in front of the train."

"And you're not one of the few who would do it!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"But is that all?" asked Peter Todd.

"That's all!" hooted Bunter.

"Then I don't think much of it. You've had time to put flourishes on it," said Peter. "You're getting lazy, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I've been thinking of putting in for the Humane Society's medal for life-saving," said Bunter. "Of course, a fellow doesn't want to swank about a little thing like this. Still—"

"Poor, very poor!" said Skinner, shaking his head. "I could do better myself, though I don't claim to be anything like such a liar as Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Skinner! You jolly well wouldn't have done it, and chance it!" hooted Bunter.

"About as much as you would!" chuckled Skinner.

"The just-as-muchfulness is terrific!" chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, it's true!" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter glared round at the laughing faces in deep exasperation. Not a single, solitary fellow believed a word of it. It was just what Bunter might have expected, and really what he deserved. But he had not expected it; and he never liked getting what he deserved.

"Don't you fellows believe me?" asked Bunter, almost tearfully.

"Believe you! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I give you my word—honour bright."

"The brightness of your esteemed honour is not great, my worthy Bunter!"

"Well, I call it a rotten story," said Skinner. "Bunter generally does better than this. Didn't you knock the train out of the way with one blow of your clenched fist, Bunter?"

"No!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Chuck it, old man," yawned Bob Cherry. "You've said your piece, you know; and I must say it was a rotten performance, not at all what we had a right to expect from a fellow with an imagination like yours. Look here! Tell us again to-morrow, and let's have something really thrilling."

"And take my tip, and make it a beautiful girl in a burning house!" said Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

And Billy Bunter gave it up. It was said of old that a prophet is without honour in his own country, and certainly there was no glory for William George Bunter in his own Form.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.**Wanted—a Witness!**

BILLY BUNTER wore a morose expression the following day.

He had a grievance.

Bunter often had a grievance; but on the present occasion the grievance was a genuine one.



As the train came sweeping on round the curve, a whistle shrieked shrilly. But the little gipsy, deeply engrossed in bunching her flowers, did not move. Billy Bunter stood petrified with horror. To run on the line, with the roaring train booming down upon him, was unthinkable. Yet the only alternative was to see the unconscious child dashed to pieces under his eyes!

(See Chapter 5.)

Bunter really had, in actual fact, performed the deed he had described to his unbelieving Form-fellows. It was hard that a fellow who, almost for the first time, was telling the truth, should find no believers. Bunter felt that it was very hard indeed. Moreover, he wanted the glory that was his due. So little glory came his way, that he naturally did not want to lose the credit to which he was entitled.

There were fellows in the Greyfriars Remove who would have done what Bunter had done, and said no word about it afterwards. But that was not Bunter's style. He wanted to say a good many words about it. Having surprised himself by doing a really courageous thing, he wanted to surprise all Greyfriars, too. But the Remove fellows persisted in treating the matter as a jest. And, having tired of the jest, they told Bunter to chuck it.

Bunter was not disposed to chuck it. Had it been one of his usual tall stories, doubtless he would have chuckled it. In the circumstances, however, he declined to do so. He was entitled to credit, and credit was denied him. Bunter felt that it was unjust, and he cudgelled his fat brains for some means of proving the truth of his story. He realised bitterly that these suspicious fellows were not likely to take his bare word. The mere fact that Bunter said that he had done it, was a convincing proof to the Remove that it was not so. They would really have been more disposed to believe that he had done it if he had stated that he hadn't!

At tea in Study No. 7 Bunter tackled Peter Todd on the subject again. But Peter was fed-up.

"Now, look here, Bunter," said Peter. "Chuck it! I don't deny that it was funny; but you've worn it out as a joke. Give a fellow a rest."

"But it was true!" hooted Bunter.

"Cheese it!"

"You ought to be proud to have me in the study, Peter," said Bunter. "What I've done reflects credit on the study. You've often called me a funk. Don't deny it—you have!"

"I'm not going to deny it, old bean," chuckled Peter. "I've called you a funk lots of times, and I call you one now, so that there shan't be any misunderstanding. You're a fat, foozling, frabjous funk!"

"And now I've done a splendidly brave thing—"

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!"

"Well, I'm not the fellow to brag, of course—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But, don't you see, Peter, it ought to be proved, for the credit of the study. Fellows are setting me down as a liar."

"Naturally!"

"Beast! Look here, Peter, that gipsy chap would tell you exactly what happened, if you found him—"

"If!" grinned Peter.

"Most likely he's hanging about somewhere," urged Bunter. "Suppose you take the matter up, Peter, and—search for him? Then you'll know the truth."

"I know the truth now."

"You don't!" howled Bunter. "You don't believe that I rescued that kid at the level-crossing at all!"

"Fathead!"

"I swear—"

"Chuck it! If you swear in this study you'll get a boot. I'm shocked at you, Bunter!"

"I mean, I swear—"

"And I mean that you're not going to swear in this study. It's against the rules of the House!"

"You silly chump! I swear—"

Peter Todd picked up a ruler.

"Where will you have it?" he inquired.

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter drifted out of Study No. 7, after tea, and rolled along to Study No. 1. He found the Famous Five there, and five grinning faces turned on him as he blinked in at the doorway.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the giddy hero!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Let's hear the latest version, Bunter. You've had time to improve on it."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Give 'us a rest, Bunter," granted Johnny Bull. "I'm fed-up with your thumping whoppers, for one."

"It's the truth!" wailed Bunter.

"Can it!"

"I say, Wharton, I want you to take this up, as captain of the Form, you know," said Bunter, blinking at Harry Wharton. "It's up to you. As Form captain, you're bound to see justice done!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'm being called a liar," said Bunter sorrowfully.

"Go hon!"

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"After risking my life——"

"Chuck it, old fat man," said the captain of the Remove. "It's only a few weeks since you spun us a yarn about pulling a fellow out of the river. Even if you told the truth for once, how could a fellow guess?"

"This is different," urged Bunter. "This really happened!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it still a level crossing, and a gipsy kid?" asked Nugent.

"Yes, you beast!"

"Then don't tell us over again. We're fed-up on that story."

"The fed-upfulness is terrific!"

"If that gipsy chap could be found——" said Bunter.

"He would want some finding, I think," said Bob. "Blessed if I can make you out, Bunter! What are you sticking to this idiotic yarn for? Can't you see that it won't wash?"

"It's true!"

"Well, even if it's true, what are you worrying about? Heroes ought to be modest, you know. If you're bound to be a hero, can't you be one of the strong, silent kind, and shut up about it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm jolly well going to prove it!" howled Bunter. "Then you'll be sorry for doubting my word. I dare say witnesses can be found. Lots of people may have seen what happened."

"Well, trot 'em along," yawned Bob

Cherry. "But you'll want some jolly good witnesses to make us believe that you're anything but a fat, footling funk."

"It's up to me to prove it now!" said Bunter defiantly. "I'm not the fellow to brag about a thing like that. But my word's been doubted. I'm going to find a witness."

"Run away and find him now," suggested Nugent.

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled away from Study No. 1 more morose than ever. A chuckle followed him. Fellows not only did not believe him, but they were actually fed-up with the subject. No wonder the Owl of the Remove was feeling morose and embittered. But he was going to prove the truth of his story somehow, and then all the fellows who had doubted his word would be covered with confusion. It was quite possible that someone had witnessed the occurrence at the level-crossing, and if a witness could be found——

Billy Bunter gave that matter a great deal of thought.

The outcome of his reflections was a visit to the Second Form-room, where he looked for his minor, Sammy of the Second.

Bunter minor was there, sitting on a desk, with a fat countenance almost as morose as his major's.

A feast was going on, in the Second Form-room.

Gatty, Myers, Nugent minor, and several other fags of the Second Form were enjoying a spread; and Sammy Bunter was looking on, outside the magic circle, like a very podgy Peri at the gate of Paradise.

He blinked round dismally at his major.

Billy Bunter gave him an affectionate grin.

"Sammy, old chap——"

"Stony!" grunted Sammy.

"Old chap," accompanied by an affectionate grin, from his major, conveyed only one meaning to Sammy Bunter's mind. He took it for granted that William George wanted to borrow something.

"I've got a bob!" said Bunter.

Sammy brightened.

"Halves!" he said.

"That's why I looked in for you, kid," said Bunter affectionately.

"Come on!"

Sammy rolled off the desk with alacrity. If William George Bunter, in possession of a shilling, had looked in for his minor with the intention of whacking it out, Sammy was not the fellow to discourage him. It was surprising, in fact astonishing, not to say astounding. In the Bunter tribe, neither family affection nor generosity was strongly developed. But if William George was turning over a new leaf in this respect, Sammy was the man to give him every encouragement.

He rolled out of the Second Form-room after his major, and followed him out of the House. He expected Bunter to head for the school shop. But it was in another direction that Bunter turned.

"I say, let's go to the tuck-shop!" said Sammy.

"Afterwards," said Bunter mysteriously.

"After what?"

"I want you to do something for me, Sammy."

Bunter minor grunted.

"Might have guessed that!" he remarked.

"Look here, Sammy——"

"Well, give it a name!" grunted Sammy.

"We mustn't be heard," said Bunter, still mysteriously. "Let's get along to the wood-shed. Nobody will hear us there. It's a secret!"

"Oh, rot!" said Sammy.

(Continued on next page.)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

NOVEL FREE GIFT IN OUR NEXT ISSUE!

HURRAH! I can hear you fellows shouting—in imagination, of course—as you read the above headline, for we all like to hear good news. And good news it is. As I mentioned last week, in addition to a splendid programme of stories the next issue of the good old MAGNET will contain a topping metal cut-out model of the famous Southern Railway Express Engine

"LORD NELSON."

This steel monster of the track is the first of a brand new type of locomotive—a fact that makes our Free Gift of double interest. The metal model is accurate in detail, the colouring being identical with that of its giant parent, and another point of interest is that it will stand up anywhere. Magnetites will agree, I feel sure, that they have been well served in the Free Gift line, for there's nothing to touch these metal models. I said these, you will note, for there's a series of four of these Free Gifts coming to you, each one as good and as accurate as number one. You will tell your pals about this good news, I know, and that prompts me to remind you to get your copy of the MAGNET early. It would be an awful pity if some other chap nipped in and bagged your Free Gift. Here's another titbit of news which should be kept in mind. Next week's MAGNET will be on sale at all newsagents

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8th

Instead of Monday the 8th. You fellows in the know will take advantage of this I hope,

and jump in quick with your twopences. Then when you've seen for yourselves what a topper our Free Gift is you'll be mighty anxious to give a regular order for the MAGNET, so as to make certain of bagging the complete series of gifts. Another point of interest is that in our next issue a railway expert has written specially for Magnetites a nutshell history of the Lord Nelson, and believe me his contribution contains some amazing facts. You'd never guess the weight of the Lord Nelson, would you? It's—but I'll leave our expert to tell you all about next week's Free Gift in his own way. Don't be casual, boys. Don't say I'll get that Free Gift to-morrow, and then put it off until another to-morrow, because that sort of thing will lead to disappointment. There will come the time, assuredly, when the newsagent will have to say "Sorry, sold out!" And I don't want you to be the unlucky one. Don't forget—the issue of your favourite paper containing Free Gift number one will be on sale everywhere **SATURDAY, AUGUST 6th.** Got that? Good!

SPECIAL GREYFRIARS SERIES!

Here's more good news, chums! Mr. Frank Richards has weighed in with a topping series of holiday stories, featuring, of course, Harry Wharton & Co. and Tom Redwing! It's a trip to the South Seas you're having this year—a trip full of adventure and unknown perils. If you fellows don't write in at the end of it and say that Mr. Richards has given us of his very best, then I shall be mighty surprised. But enough of the end—let us return to the beginning. And the beginning of the series is hot stuff. The title alone—

"THE MAN FROM THE SOUTH SEAS!"

will whet your appetites, I know. It brings in our old friend Tom Redwing, the sailorman's

son, and Herbert Vernon-Smith, who with all his hardness of character is really deeply attached to his one-time studymate. I won't spoil the story by telling you too much about it here, for it's one of those things that improve with keeping. But don't miss it, whatever you do!

GRAND NEW SERIAL!

You've all heard or read about a gold rush some time or another and, doubtless, have wished that you could take part in one and try your luck. Well, this new serial deals with a thrilling gold rush to the land of the midnight sun, and the author has handled his subject so well that one is carried away by it. The reader is there amongst a motley crowd of gold seekers. He's roughing it, plodding on, hoping like the next man that he will strike the pay dirt and make his fortune. One reason why this story lives is that the author, Mr. Stanton Hope, has been there, so to speak. He's tried his luck in real earnest, and his experiences are passed on to you in a narrative that will make history.

"GOLD FOR THE GETTING!"

is the title, then, that will strike your eye in next week's MAGNET. And if you don't like this yarn; if you don't think it's all I've said about it, I shall begin to think that it's time I gave up the job of running your favourite paper and took to training rabbits to talk! Next week, then, you will be able to judge for yourselves. Before I wind up I must mention, too, that Dicky Nugent has obliged with a new series of "shockers." The first, "A Pest from the Past," is quite up to standard. You'll like it, I feel sure. A final word of advice: Give an order for the MAGNET TO-DAY, then you'll be sure of that splendid Free Gift. Cheerio, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

"Look here——"
"Br-r-r! I'll come!"
And Sammy Bunter followed his major to the wood-shed.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Some Scheme!

"**H**USH!" whispered Skinner. Snoop and Stott did not need the warning.

All three of the black sheep of the Remove had heard the sound of approaching footsteps.

Skinner & Co., after tea, had retired to a quiet and secluded spot, behind the woodshed, to smoke cigarettes. It was one of the charming little ways of Skinner & Co.; and they had always, hitherto, found themselves secure from observation in that secluded spot. Three cigarettes were going strong, and three young rascals were feeling a little sickly, but keeping up a great appearance of enjoying themselves. And then there was a sound of footsteps coming along.

The cigarettes disappeared as if by magic. Skinner & Co. sat listening anxiously. If the newcomer was Gosling, going to the wood-shed, he would not come round the building, and they were safe. But if it was a Sixth-form prefect in a suspicious mood, it behoved Skinner & Co. to be on their guard. More than once, as they knew, the eye of Wingate of the Sixth had dwelt suspiciously upon them.

The footsteps came nearer; and they were coming round the little building. So the newcomer was not Gosling.

Skinner & Co. rose silently to their feet, and backed round a corner of the wood-shed, with great caution; and disappeared round one side of the building, as the newcomers appeared from the other side.

They were out of sight just in time; and they stopped close to the wall, hardly breathing in their anxiety.

Behind the wood-shed, only a few yards from the alarmed trio, the footsteps halted.

Skinner & Co., in puzzled silence, listened. Some person or persons unknown had stopped behind the wood-shed, and they wondered whether it was another smoking-party. Then a fat voice came to their ears.

"Safe enough here, Sammy!"

Grunt!

"Mind, it's a dead secret, Sammy! Not a word to anybody else, especially in the Remove."

Skinner & Co. grinned at one another.

It was Billy Bunter's voice, and evidently he was addressing his minor, Sammy of the Second. He had led the fat gag to that secluded spot to impart some dead secret to his fat ears. Skinner & Co. grinned, and made no sound. Whatever that dead secret was, it was going to be imparted to other ears as well as Sammy's, though Bunter was not aware of the fact.

"Get on with it, Billy," grunted Bunter minor.

"I want you to back me up, Sammy."

Grunt!

"I want you to be a witness!"

"Eh?"

"And I'll lend you a bob if you back me up, old chap," said Bunter. "You've simply got to bear witness to something that happened yesterday."

"Blessed if I catch on!" said Sammy.

"Well, I'm going to explain! I dare say you've heard how I rescued a kid on the level crossing yesterday!"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you little beast?"

"He, he, he! I heard some Remove fellows talking about it," chuckled Sammy. "Laughing like anything. He, he, he!"

"It was true, Sammy——"

"Go it!"

"Every word of it," said Bunter impressively. "I suppose you believe me, Sammy, when I tell you it was true from beginning to end!"

"I don't think!"

"You know what a brave fellow I am——"

"I do—exactly! He, he, he!"

"You cheeky little beast——"

"Oh, come off," said Sammy. "Look here, what's the good of giving me this stuff, Billy? Don't I know you?"

Billy Bunter breathed hard. Even his own near relative declined to believe a word of his story. Perhaps that was not really surprising, as the members of the Bunter clan knew one another so well.

"I tell you it's true, you disbelieving



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little rotter," hissed Bunter; "I rushed forward at the risk of my life——"

"He, he, he!"

"The fellows won't believe it!" said Bunter.

"Did you expect them to?" asked Sammy incredulously.

"Shut up! Look here, if a fellow had witnessed what happened, that would make it all right. I only need a witness. Suppose you had been taking a walk along to Pegg yesterday afternoon, Sammy."

"But I didn't!"

"What does that matter?" growled Bunter. "Nobody knows you didn't, I suppose. You were taking a walk along the Pegg road, and had stopped to rest, see? From the distance, you saw a gipsy kid on the railway line."

"Oh, my aunt!"

"You saw me suddenly rush forward and pick the kid up, and rush across in front of the express——"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at?" howled Bunter.

"It was a goods train last time I heard about it!"

"Oh! I—I mean, a—a—goods train, of course," stammered Bunter. "Not an express! A goods train!"

"Better stick to the same story,

when you're telling whoppers," said Sammy sagely. "The trouble with you, Billy, is that you always get mixed."

"It's true this time——"

"He, he, he!"

"Well, you saw me rush across in front of the goods train," resumed Bunter. "You were horror-struck, and so on, thinking that I should be killed. Then the train passed, and you saw I was safe. See?"

"Too thick!" said Sammy.

"Of course, you didn't exactly see it, as you weren't there," said Bunter. "But you might have seen it if you'd been there, as it really happened."

"He, he, he!"

"If you don't stop cackling, Sammy, I'll jolly well hang your head on the wood-shed!" howled Bunter.

"Keep your temper, old man!" chuckled Sammy. "I don't mind backing you up. But don't try to spoof me, you know. You see, I know you!"

"Now, I'm not going to call you as a witness," went on Bunter astutely. "You see, the fellows may wonder why I never mentioned before that you were there. The idea is that I didn't know you saw it at all. You weigh in just by chance, as it were, and mention what you saw."

"What I saw! Oh, my hat!"

"You come along to my study after prep, and ask me, in a casual sort of way, whether I feel all right after what I went through. See?"

"Phew!"

"Then it will go down all right," urged Bunter. "All I need is a witness, and you're the witness. I feel justified, under the circumstances, you know, as it's really true."

"He, he, he!"

"And I'll stand you a bob, and I'll do the next letter home, though it's your turn," said Bunter. "There!"

"Done!" said Sammy.

"Mind, not a word!" said Bunter impressively. "If the fellows knew I had fixed it up with you, they wouldn't believe a word of it, of course. Keep it dark."

"Awfully dark," agreed Sammy, holding out a fat hand. "Where's that bob?"

"Mind you keep it dark——"

"You bet!"

And the two Bunters departed the way they had come; and Skinner & Co., on the other side of the wood-shed, grinned at one another. The footsteps of Bunter major and Bunter minor died away.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Skinner. "Bunter's some lad, isn't he? This will make the fellows chortle!"

"The fat rotter!" said Stott. "Fixing up a witness to what never happened! My word!"

Skinner grinned gleefully.

"We'll tell all the fellows, and tell them to keep it dark till Bunter minor rolls in with his yarn," he said. "Bunter's face will be worth watching, I think."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Skinner & Co., forgetful of cigarettes now, strolled back to the House. The joke was too good to keep.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Justice for Bunter!

PETER TODD eyed his fat study-mate rather curiously when Bunter came into Study No. 7 for prep that evening. Several fellows had grinned at Bunter as he came up the Remove passage; but he had not

noticed it specially. The Owl of the Remove was far from guessing the joke that was on.

Bunter was looking less morose now. Matters were about to be set right, and Bunter was to come into his own, as it were.

The unfortunate circumstance that his heroism had not been witnessed was about to be rectified. Bunter was feeling quite satisfied as he sat down to prep in Study No. 7.

Toddy regarded him quite curiously several times. He had thought that he knew his Bunter pretty thoroughly; but in the matter of duplicity there was always something new to be learned about William George.

After prep Sammy Bunter was to stroll casually into Study No. 7, and say his piece, so to speak; so immediately prep was finished, Peter rose from the table as if with the intention of going down to the Rag at once, for the purpose of "drawing" Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was promptly drawn.

"I say, Peter, don't go down yet!" he exclaimed hastily.

Peter smiled.

"Why not, old fat man?"

"Well, wait a bit till I've finished," said Bunter. "Be pally, you know! I—I like your company, Peter."

"I'd say the same of yours, old top, only I'm such a stickler for the truth," said Peter.

"Oh, really, Peter——"

"Still, I'll wait!" smiled Peter, seating himself on the edge of the study table. "Buck up, fatty!"

Billy Bunter did not buck up. He dawdled. It was necessary to keep Peter there till Bunter's minor arrived, if the thing was to go off as per programme.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Bob Cherry looked with a smiling face into the study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Trot in!" said Peter Todd. "I'm waiting for Bunter. He's so fond of my company that he doesn't want me to go down. It's the first time on record that he's felt like that, so I'm giving him his head."

Bob Cherry chuckled and came in. Hurree Janset Ram Singh followed him into Study No. 7. A few minutes later Johnny Bull glanced in at the doorway.

"Trickle in," said Toddy.

Johnny Bull trickled in.

Billy Bunter blinked at them in some surprise. But he was very glad to see the fellows gathering in the study. They would hear what Sammy had to say when he came, and without any contrivance on Bunter's part. Nothing could have suited him better, in fact.

Just as if the Remove fellows were trying to please Bunter, two more came along to Study No. 7. They were Wharton and Nugent.

"Looking for you fellows!" said the captain of the Remove. "Holding a meeting in Toddy's study, or what?"

"I'm waiting for Bunter, and these chaps are waiting for me," explained Peter gravely. "You can wait for them, if you like."

Wharton and Nugent sat down in the window-seat, smiling. Billy Bunter blinked at them, and then blinked at the doorway. It was time for Sammy to roll in now; but the fat fag did not seem to be in a hurry. Bunter felt a faint misgiving.

The bribe had been handed over in advance; Sammy had insisted on that. Without that it would have been a case

of "nothing doing." Undoubtedly the bribe had long since been expended at the tuckshop. What if Sammy failed him, after all? But Bunter remembered that he had undertaken to do the letter home that week as a further inducement to Sammy. His minor still had that reward in store.

Footsteps were heard in the passage again. This time it was Skinner & Co., and they stopped at Study No. 7. Three grinning faces looked in, rather perplexing Bunter. He could not see what there was to grin at specially. Skinner & Co. lounged in the doorway, as if they had come to stop.

Hazel and Tom Brown came up the passage a minute or two later, and then Bolsover major, and they stopped to chat with Skinner & Co. Squiff and Newland and Ogilvy and Russell joined them.

Bunter was surprised, but he was quite pleased. Toddy's study was seldom the centre of such a gathering of the Lower Fourth. But it was just exactly what Bunter would have arranged, if he could. There would be plenty of ears to hear Sammy now when he strolled in casually to ask William George how he felt after his dangerous adventure on the previous day.

"Hallo! What's that coming up the passage?" asked Skinner. "Looks like a particularly fat slug!"

"Oh, really, Skinner!" Bunter guessed that Skinner's remark was called forth by the arrival of his minor.

Sammy Bunter rolled along the passage to Study No. 7. Quite a number of Remove men looked out of their study doorways, and grinned as he passed. It did not occur to Sammy that his arrival was expected and looked for. He rolled on cheerfully to Study No. 7, and rolled in, and blinked in surprise through his spectacles at the sight of so many fellows in the study. Behind him more and more Remove men gathered in the passage till the vicinity of Study No. 7 was almost swarming.

"Hallo, Sammy!" said Bunter casually.

"Hallo, Billy! Feeling all right today, old bird?" asked Sammy Bunter. "I meant to look in before, old chap. You didn't see me yesterday near Pegg level crossing, did you?"

"No," said Bunter. "Were you there, Sammy?"

"I was taking a walk round by Pegg, and I stopped to rest quite near the level-crossing," said Sammy, repeating his lesson faithfully. "That's how I came to see you, Billy. I was horror-struck, you know, when I saw you rush across in front of the train. Thinking you would be killed, you know. Have you done the letter home?"

"Never mind that now," said Bunter, hastily.

"But you said——"

"Shut up, you ass! I say, you fellows," said Bunter, blinking round at the numerous company. "did you hear that? It seems that Sammy saw me yesterday at the level crossing."

There was a gurgle of merriment in the Remove passage, where most of the Lower Fourth had gathered by this time.

"Jolly lucky, as it turns out—what?" went on Bunter. "I hope you fellows will apologise now for doubting my word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

Sammy Bunter blinked round the study a little uneasily. He was not, perhaps, quite so obtuse as his major,

and he fancied that there was something wrong somewhere. But William George rattled on cheerfully.

"As it happens, my brother saw me at the time. I suppose you fellows can believe an eye-witness?"

"An eye-witness!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Oh, my hat!"

"So there was a witness, after all," said Peter Todd blandly. "That alters the case, of course. Bunter hasn't had justice, you fellows."

"I'm glad you can see that now, Toddy!" said the Owl of the Remove loftily.

"Bunter must have justice," said Peter solemnly. "He's asked for it, and he ought to have it."

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, really, Peter——"

"Let's hear exactly what you saw, Bunter mi. You were taking a walk round by Pegg yesterday afternoon——"

"Ye-e-es."

"You stopped to rest near the level crossing——"

"Ye-e-e-es."

"You saw Bunter rush in front of the train——"

"That's it!"

"And you were horror-struck——"

"Ye-es."

"And all for a shilling?" said Peter Todd. "Cheap, I call it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sammy Bunter started, and Billy Bunter's jaw dropped. There was a roar of laughter from the Removes. Sammy Bunter made a strategic move towards the door. But the doorway and the passage outside were crammed with Removes, and there was no escape for Sammy.

"I—I say, you fellows," stammered Bunter, "if—if you think I fixed this up with Sammy, you're making a mistake! I don't know what you mean about a shilling, Toddy! As for doing the letter home, that was not even mentioned!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat idiot!" roared Bob Cherry. "Three fellows heard you talking it over with Sammy behind the woodshed!"

"Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, what have you got to say, you fat fraud?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"I—I—I——" stuttered Bunter.

"Bunter hasn't had justice," said Peter Todd. "But he's asked for it, and he's going to get it! Collar him!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows——"

Billy Bunter dodged round the study table. Sammy gave a longing glance at the door.

"I—I say, you fellows, keep off!" yelled Bunter. "It—it's all a mistake! Can't you believe an eye-witness? Sammy was on the spot—you've heard him say so. He saw me rush across the woodshed—I mean the railway-line——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sammy's going to be kicked for coming here and telling whoppers!" said Peter Todd. "We've had enough Bunter fibs in the Remove without a lot more from the Second. Kick that fag out, you chaps!"

"Here, you keep off!" yelled Sammy. "It was only a j-joke! You silly ass, Billy! I told you it was too thick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mind, you'll have to do the letter home all the same!" howled Sammy.

"A bargain's a bargain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sammy Bunter was hurled forth from Study No. 7, and innumerable boots helped him along the Remove passage



"Here he is!" chorled Skinner. "Here's the giddy hero! Sing it over to us again, Bunter!" "Yes, tell us your funny story," chuckled Bob Cherry. "I suppose you've thought out a lot of fresh details by this time?" "I say, you fellows—" "Silence for Bunter!" called out Peter Todd. "Give him a chance! You fellows will find the story rather improved. I've been helping Bunter with suggestions." "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 8.)

to the stairs. He fled down the Remove staircase at top speed, a sadder, if not a wiser Sammy.

"I—I say, you fellows," gasped the Owl of the Remove, "I—I think the matter had better drop. I—I decline to discuss it with you any further! If you can't take a fellow's word—"

"Bump him!"

"Yaroooh! Leggo!"

"You've asked for justice, old fat bean, and you're going to get it!" said Peter Todd. "Bump him!"

Bump!

William George Bunter smote the carpet in Study No. 7 with a mighty smite. There was a roar from William George that was heard far beyond the precincts of the Remove.

"Whooooop!"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yarooooooooooooop!"

"And another!"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow! Wooooooooooooop! Help! Murder! Fire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors, chorling, streamed out of Study No. 7, leaving the Owl of the Remove roaring. Not for the first time, it was borne in upon Billy Bunter's fat mind that honesty was the best policy. If there had been the slightest chance of any Greyfriars fellow believing a word of Bunter's story, that chance was gone now. Bunter's remarkable methods of proving its truth had demonstrated, to the satisfaction of all the Remove, that there was not a word of truth in it.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Form Walk!

"I SUPPOSE a fellow couldn't plead sick?"

Bob Cherry made that remark thoughtfully on Saturday.

His chums smiled.

Judging by appearances, it would not have been of much use for Robert Cherry of the Remove to plead sick.

"'Fraid not!" said Wharton, laughing. "We're for it!"

Saturday was a half-holiday at Greyfriars. Generally, the Famous Five of the Remove contrived to enjoy their half-holidays. But there were exceptions. This Saturday was one of them.

Three or four times in the term the Remove had to go for a Form walk. On those occasions the whole Form walked out with their Form master. A half-holiday was devoted to the purpose, and the juniors all put on their cleanest collars and their silk hats, and lined up in the quad for Mr. Quelch to lead them forth.

It was a long, long time since Mr. Henry Samuel Quelch had been a school-boy himself. No doubt that accounted for the fact that he was utterly and totally ignorant of the feelings with which his boys regarded a Form walk.

There were few of them who did not loathe it. To be dressed up bright and tidy and taken out by their Form master was not the treat that Mr. Quelch supposed it was. Mr. Quelch rather enjoyed those walks himself. The Remove looked their best on such occasions; Mr. Quelch saw to that. If a fellow turned up in a soiled collar or

with a grubby face, Mrs. Quelch would keep the whole Form waiting while that fellow went in and put himself to rights. The Remove had to be spick and span; and if, in the course of their peregrinations, they met the vicar or some other important person, Mr. Quelch had the happy feeling that his Form did him credit.

The walk would generally occupy a couple of hours, and Mr. Quelch would call a halt at places of local interest and impart valuable information to his flock, who might have picked up a great deal of knowledge of local history and topography had they been that way inclined—which they were not.

There was hardly a fellow in the Remove who would not have preferred detention, with a Latin task, to a Form walk under the shepherding of the Form master. Indeed, fellows would probably have got themselves detained to escape it, but on these occasions there were no detentions. Unless a fellow was ill, he had to line up with the rest, and walk abroad under his Form master's eye, in his best bib and tucker, as Bob Cherry described it.

Sometimes rude little boys would gather to watch the juniors on these solemn walks, and would make grimaces at them, and even put their fingers and thumbs to their noses—unseemly demonstrations which Mr. Quelch loftily disregarded, but which his Form would have liked to avenge drastically on the spot. But it was impossible to break the ranks to take vengeance on mocking urchins who thus derided the hapless juniors.

Best behaviour was the order of the day on a Form walk.

"I was hoping it would rain!" sighed Nugent. "What a climate! It would rain right enough if we had a cricket match on."

"Not a drop!" said Bob Cherry, with a despairing glance at the blazing August sky. "Not that Quelchy would let us off, unless it was a regular thunderstorm."

"We're for it!" said Harry Wharton philosophically. "After all, it's only two or three times in the term!"

"The two-or-threefulness is two or three too much, my esteemed chum!" remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter rolled up to the Famous Five in the quad. Bob Cherry waved him away.

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Unless you've thought of a wheeze for getting out of the Form walk," added Bob. "In that case, come to my arms."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's just it," said Bunter. "I think I ought to be let off. What do you fellows think? You see, my legs are injured, and I'm not really fit for a long walk. That's how it is. I'd like you to mention it to Quelchy, Wharton, as head boy of the Remove, you know. Quelchy would take your word."

"Fathead!"

"He mightn't believe me," urged Bunter. "You know what a suspicious beast Quelchy is. It wouldn't be the first time he's doubted my word. The fact is, Quelchy's no gentleman."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blest if I see anything to cackle at! My legs ain't really fit for the strain, you know," said Bunter.

"What on earth's the matter with them?" asked Bob. "I know you're rather weak at the other end. But what's the matter with your legs?"

"I injured them on Wednesday, you know, falling on the railway line, when I rescued that kid at the level crossing—"

"Ring off!" roared the Famous Five, with one voice.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"You footling ass!" howled Johnny Bull. "If you begin that again you'll get bumped! Give it a rest."

"Look here, Wharton, are you going to tell Quelchy—"

The captain of the Remove chuckled.

"If you want any crammers told to Quelchy, Bunter, you must tell them yourself. But I shouldn't try it on. Quelchy's a downy bird."

"I'm not going fagging for a long tramp in this blinking sun when my legs are practically broken," said Bunter warmly. "You see, I had a fearful fall. I came down on the stones beside the metals, holding that gipsy kid in my arms—"

"Cheese it!"

"And I cut my trousers and—and injured my knees. I don't think I ought to have to join up for this rotten walk after that," argued Bunter. "If you put it to Quelchy, Wharton, he would let me off at once. You can tell him you've seen the marks of the injuries on my knees."

"But I haven't, you silly owl!"

"I wish you'd keep to the point, Wharton. Look here—"

"Here comes Quelchy!" murmured Bob Cherry. "He's going to tell us it's time to get ready for that nice, pleasant walk. Who's going to tell him just how nice and pleasant we think it is?"

The juniors chuckled. Nobody was likely to confide his real opinion of the Form walk to Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master stopped to speak to the group of juniors, with a genial smile. Mr. Quelch was a very learned gentleman and his knowledge was extensive on many subjects. But there were some things he did not know, or even suspect, and one of them was his Form's opinion of a Form walk.

"Well, my boys, we shall be starting soon," said Mr. Quelch. "Three o'clock exactly. We must be punctual, my boys."

"The esteemed punctuality is the stitch in time that saves the cracked pitcher from going longest to the well, honoured sahib," said Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh gravely.

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"If—if you please, sir—" stammered Bunter.

The Remove master's glance turned on him.

"Bunter, you will change your collar!" he said sharply.

"My—my collar, sir?"

"Yes, and brush your jacket carefully. Your jacket presents a most slovenly appearance, Bunter."

"D-d-does it, sir?"

"It does, Bunter. I am shocked to observe also that there are traces of your latest meal on your waistcoat," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "This will not do, Bunter, when you are about to take a walk abroad in the company of your Form master."

"I—I was going to—to speak to you about that, sir," stammered Bunter.

"My legs, sir—"

"What!"

"My legs, sir," said Bunter. "I've injured my legs, sir. I—I hope you'll excuse me this afternoon, sir, owing to these fearful injuries. I—I want very much to come for a walk, sir; I always enjoy it so. But my legs are so horribly injured—"

"Bless my soul! What does the boy mean?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "How have you injured your legs, Bunter?"

"Falling on the railway line, sir, and—"

"What!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Only last Wednesday I spoke to you severely

upon this subject, Bunter. Do you mean to say that you have again trespassed on a railway track, in spite of what I said to you on that occasion?"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter, in a great hurry. "Not at all, sir. Nothing of the sort, sir."

"Then what do you mean?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"It was the same injury, sir—last Wednesday afternoon, sir. I—I haven't recovered, sir!" stuttered Bunter. "I came down wallop—"

"What! You came down what?"

"Wallop, sir!"

"Cannot you speak English, Bunter?" snorted Mr. Quelch. "How dare you use so absurd an expression! Do you mean that you fell with a concussion?"

"Yes, sir; I came down wallop with a concussion—an awful concussion, sir! My knees were practically broken, sir. The injury was—was awful, sir, and—and I can hardly walk, sir. They're black and blue, sir—covered with horrible bruises!" said Bunter pathetically.

"If your knees are seriously bruised, Bunter, you certainly are not in a fit state for a long walk."

"That's it, sir," said Bunter, brightening up wonderfully. "I knew you'd understand, sir. You're so—so sympathetic, sir."

"But I must first be assured," said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice, "that your knees are in the state you describe, Bunter."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. listened in silence, trying not to smile. The Ananias of the Remove had put his foot in it again.

"You will follow me to my study, Bunter, and I will see these injuries you speak of—"

"The—the fact is, sir—"

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch, in a voice like the rumble of distant thunder.

"I—I mean to say, sir," gasped the unhappy Bunter, "my knees ain't black and blue now, sir. They were, but they've got over it. That's what I meant to say, sir. The—the marks are gone, but—but I've still got a fearful pain. A pain in each knee, sir, like—like a burning dagger."

"How dare you tell me such untruths, Bunter!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Your idleness and slackness pass all patience, Bunter. If you were allowed you would even avoid the slightest exertion necessary for a most enjoyable walk."

"Oh!" stuttered Bunter.

"I shall cane you, Bunter!"

"Oh lor!"

"Follow me to my study!"

"Ow!"

William George Bunter trailed into the House after his Form master, who was no longer looking genial.

"Poor old Bunter!" sighed Bob Cherry. "Jevver see such a fellow for asking for it?"

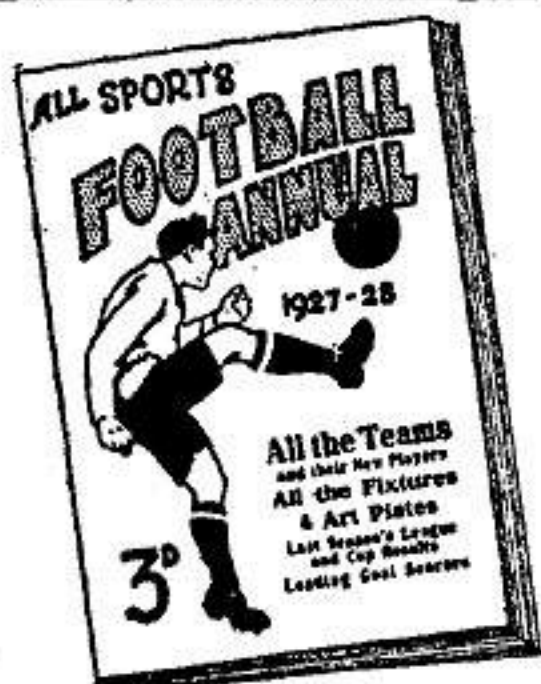
From Mr. Quelch's open study window came a loud yell.

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter, evidently, was getting what he had asked for.

And when the Remove lined up for the Form walk at three o'clock, Billy Bunter lined up dismally with the Form. There was no rest for the wicked!

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THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

At Last!

BOB CHERRY removed his shining silk hat, wiped his forehead, and replaced the topper.

It was warm.

The Removites all looked very nice, there was no doubt about that. Even Billy Bunter looked clean and trim. But their expressions did not indicate that they were enjoying life. Only when Mr. Quelch glanced along the ranks some of the fellows summoned up a feeble smile.

Nicely dressed, very neat and clean and trim, in beautiful order, the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars marched out of gates, and began that enjoyable walk—as Mr. Quelch regarded it.

Unseen by Mr. Quelch, Bolsover major shook a fist at the Form master's back. Billy Bunter gave him deadly blinks when he was not looking.

Bunter was in a melting mood.

The Owl of the Remove had an unusual amount of weight to carry. He streamed with perspiration. Indeed, Skinner whispered that it was his belief that Bunter was running into tallow. There was a subdued chuckle after Skinner's remark; and Mr. Quelch glanced round severely. Chuckles were out of place on these occasions. Solemnity was the order of the day when Henry Samuel Quelch took his Form on a personally-conducted tour of the vicinity of Greyfriars.

The Remove walked in solemn order through the old High Street of Friar-dale. Old ladies who observed them thought what nicely-dressed, well-behaved boys they were. Little village boys made faces at them. Half a dozen little urchins who had nothing better to do that summer afternoon formed up in imitation of the Remove's orderly march and marched along with them, grinning. The Removites gave them ferocious looks. Only Mr. Quelch's presence kept them from breaking ranks and taking summary vengeance on these mockers.

Beyond the village, fortunately, this unpleasant escort was dropped. Then they came on Linky. Linky was a tattered youth, a well-known character in the neighbourhood who had had many a trouble with the juniors. Linky, in the Form master's presence, could be as cheeky as he liked, without fear of consequences.

"My!" exclaimed Linky, gazing at the Remove array in derisive admiration. "My! Ain't we smart?"

The Remove blushed and marched on.

"Ain't we got 'em on?" said Linky.

Bob Cherry paused, but marched on again. Linky's cheeky nose had a very narrow escape.

"Fat Jack of the Bonehouse!" said Linky as Bunter passed him. "What price tallow?"

Some of the Removites grinned. Billy Bunter frowned ferociously. Linky was left behind; but, as a parting salute, he picked up a clod from the roadside and hurled it after the Remove.

"Ooooooh!" howled Bunter.

Bunter's silk hat caught the clod. It sailed away, and Bunter emitted a startled howl.

Mr. Quelch swung round impatiently.

"Bunter! What—"

"That beast has bunged something at me and knocked my tile off!" howled Bunter.

"Silence! Pick up your hat!"

Mr. Quelch gave a stern glare in the direction of the grinning Linky. Linky, with unexampled audacity, put his thumb to his nose and extended the fingers of his right hand. Then he

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put the thumb of his left hand to the little finger of his right and extended all his fingers.

Mr. Quelch gazed at him transfixed. There was a subdued chortle in the ranks of the Remove.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Quelch.

"Shall I go back and—and speak to him, sir?" ventured Bob Cherry.

"Certainly not, Cherry!"

"It—it wouldn't take me a minute, sir."

"Silence! Proceed!"

The Remove proceeded. But Bob as he passed the clod that had knocked Bunter's hat off stooped and picked it up, turned, and hurled it back at Linky with a sudden and deadly aim.

Crash!

"Warrrrrooooo!" roared Linky, as the clod landed on his unwashed face. He sat down suddenly in the dusty road.

Mr. Quelch glared round.

"What—what—"

Bob Cherry was in his place again in a twinkling, looking as innocent as he could. Mr. Quelch gazed at the collapsed Linky and then glanced at his Form. Then a faint smile twitched his features, and he walked on again without comment.

The Remove wound along the country

road like a very long centipede. Suddenly, from a leafy lane, a caravan turned into the high road; a bony horse led by a gipsy on one side, with a woman in a red shawl carrying a baby on the other and a little dusky girl sitting on the van amid a clatter of pots and pans.

The caravan, as it emerged, almost blocked the road ahead of the march, and the Remove wriggled and slowed down.

"Cheek!" grunted Bunter.

The gipsy pulled his horse round to the side of the road. He stared at the schoolboys, halted his horse, and lifted a basket of coconuts from the side of the van.

"Coconuts, young gentlemen?" he asked.

Mr. Quelch answered for the young gentlemen with a wave of the hand. He was not disposed to march with an array of juniors bearing coconuts under their arms.

"Thank you! No!"

"Ripe coconuts, sir," said the gipsy.

"Only a tanner a time, sir!"

There was a gasp from Bunter.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Quelch.

"But, sir," howled Bunter excitedly, "it's the man, sir!"

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"What do you mean, Bunter? Be silent!"

The gipsy glanced at Bunter, whom he had not noticed for the moment in the Remove army.

The expression on his swarthy face changed, and he took off his battered hat with deep respect.

"You, sir!" he exclaimed. "You like a coconut, sir? I ain't charging you anything, sir!"

Billy Bunter's little round eyes danced behind his big spectacles. It was Joseph, the gipsy.

"I say, you fellows, it's him!" yelled Bunter excitedly and ungrammatically.

"Him! He! Who?" asked Bob Cherry.

"The gipsy!" yelled Bunter.

The woman in the red shawl looked at Bunter and recognised him at once. People who saw Bunter once always recognised him again. Bunter put it down to his distinguished look. He might have attributed it more justly to his uncommon circumference.

"You, sir!" exclaimed Janeth; and she ran to the Remove array. "Oh, sir, I am glad to see you again! I never properly thanked you, sir, for what you did. Blessings on you, sir!"

"What the merry thump—" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"What the dickens—"

"Bunter—"

"What—"

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in testy astonishment. "Do you know these people, Bunter? What does it all mean?"

The Removites stared on blankly. What it all meant was a mystery to them as well as to their Form master.

Billy Bunter looked very bright.

From the bottom of his fat heart he was thankful that he had not succeeded in dodging the Form walk that afternoon. The encounter could not have been more fortunate from Bunter's point of view. The Owl of the Remove was to be justified at last.

"God bless you, sir!" said Janeth; and the Remove fellows thought, for a moment, that she was going to kiss Bunter.

"Tell me what this means, Bunter!" rapped out Mr. Quelch angrily. "Who are these people, and what have you had to do with them?"

"It's the gipsy, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I should have told you about it, sir—"

"About what?"

"About saving the kid's life, sir—"

"What?"

"Only you wouldn't have believed it, sir, any more than these fellows— I—I—I mean, I didn't mention it, sir, because—because I'm not the fellow to brag about a little thing like that—"

"Is the boy insane?" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"You see, sir—" gasped Bunter.

"There it is on the van, sir—I mean, there she is—the kid, sir—the kid whose life I saved—"

"What nonsense are you talking, Bunter?"

"At the level crossing, sir, last Wednesday—when those beasts spoofed me into going to Pegg Green—I—I mean—"

"Kindly explain to me what this means, my man!" said Mr. Quelch, with a rather grim look at Joseph the gipsy. "Are you acquainted in any way with this boy of my Form?"

Joseph touched his hat.

"I seen him, sir, last Wednesday afternoon," he answered. "He run in front of the train, he did, sir, and saved my little girl, sir, who

would have been run over at the level crossing."

"What? Bless my soul! This boy—Bunter—" stuttered Mr. Quelch, in great amazement.

The Removites simply gasped.

It was borne in upon their minds that Bunter's wondrous tale was true. It was a sensation for the Greyfriars Remove. Bunter had really done a plucky thing; that was surprising enough. And Bunter had been telling the truth—that was more surprising still.

"I never knowed his name, sir," said Joseph. "I know he's a good plucked 'un, sir. That little kid, Minna, sir, on the van there, she had gone gathering flowers, and got on the railway line. My missus, sir, see her too late, jest when the train was nearly on her. She would 'ave been smashed, sir, only this bloke—I mean this young gentleman, sir, run on the line in front of the train and got her clear."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch faintly.

"My 'art was in me mouth when I see him do it, sir," said Joseph, with more eloquence than elegance. "'Struth, sir, I thought he was killed along with the kid, and my missus screaming fit to wake the dead, sir, and running towards the railway like a mad thing, sir. And we couldn't see they was safe till the train had passed. If you're his schoolmaster, sir, you ought to be proud of that young gentleman, begging your pardon, sir."

"Bless my soul!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

He gazed at Bunter.

Bunter smirked.

"It's true, then!" said Bob Cherry dazedly.

"It really happened!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"The happenfulness was really terrific!" stuttered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Who'd have thought it!" said Vernon-Smith, with a stare of utter wonder at the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Bunter really d-d-d-d-did it!" stuttered Johnny Bull. "Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia! Oh, my hat!"

"I heard nothing of this," said Mr. Quelch, recovering his voice at last. "This—this is news to me. You should have told me of this, Bunter. My good man, is it actually the case that this

boy, Bunter, risked his life to save your child at the level crossing?"

"You bet he did, sir," said Joseph. "It was touch and go, sir, and till the train had passed I thought they was both killed. 'Ow he jumped so quick, him being so fat, sir, beats me 'oller!"

Some of the juniors grinned.

"But he did it, sir, and it was jest arter I had sold him a bad coconut, too," said Joseph remorsefully. "I took his money for a bad coconut, sir, and then jest afterwards he did it, sir. That little kid on the van, sir. A poor man can't give nothing but his thanks, sir, but this young gentleman has a poor man's thanks, true and hearty."

"And a poor woman's gratitude, sir," said Janeth, with tears in her eyes. "The dear, brave, noble boy!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter smiled expansively.

At that moment he was feeling like the ancient classical gentleman, as if he were striking the stars with his sublime head.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch. "You appear to have acted very courageously, Bunter—very nobly indeed. All the more so because you have said nothing about this gallant deed." The Removites gasped a little at this. "I am very glad, my good man, that a Greyfriars boy—was on the spot when your little girl was in peril—very glad indeed. I am very glad that it has come to my knowledge. We will now proceed, my boys."

Joseph stepped back, taking off his hat to Bunter as the fat junior moved on. Janeth gave him a look of admiration and gratitude which was more eloquent than words. The Remove fellows could scarcely believe their eyes. Bunter—Bunter the fibber—Bunter the grub-raider, Bunter the funk—was a hero in the eyes of these poor people. Mr. Quelch was astonished—the Remove were amazed—and they finished that Form walk in a state of astonishment from which it really seemed that they were never likely to recover.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bravo, Bunter!

"BUNTER!"

"Who'd have thought it?"

"Great pip!"

"Bunter—that fat, foozling, footling funk! My hat!"

The Removites were home after the Form walk, and they were discussing the astounding discovery. They simply couldn't get used to it.

But there it was!

Mr. Quelch, before all the Form, had praised Bunter for his courage. He had also commended him for his modesty in making no mention of his brave deed—being under a slight misapprehension on that point. Under the eyes of all the Remove, Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, came into the Rag, looked round for Bunter, and shook hands with him.

"I've heard about it from your Form master, Bunter," he said. "Bravo, kid! Well done!"

Bunter beamed.

He was getting the glory at last which had so long been his due. Other fellows heard about it, and came along to tell Bunter what they thought. Coker of the Fifth sought him out to tell him that he was a plucky kid. Finally, he was sent for to the Head's study. Dr. Locke, desiring to receive his description of what had happened on that eventful Wednesday afternoon.

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Skinner & Co. grinned and made no sound. Whatever Billy Bunter's dead secret was, it was going to be imparted to other ears as well as his minor's, though Bunter was not aware of the fact. "I—I'll lend you a bob, Sammy, if you back me up, old chap," the fat Owl was saying. "You've simply got to bear witness to something that happened yesterday."
(See Chapter 10.)

Bunter came back into the Rag with his fat little nose high in the air. Evidently his interview with the Head had been an agreeable one, unlike most of his interviews with his headmaster.

"Bravo, Bunter!" sang out Bob Cherry, as the Owl of the Remove rolled in.

Bunter smirked.

"Good old Bunter!" said Johnny Bull. "Blessed if I understand it. But—good old Bunter!"

"The understandfulness is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "There must be some small portion of hitherto unsuspected courage in the terrifically fat carcass of the esteemed and ludicrous Bunter."

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"I can't get on to it yet," said Peter Todd. "If Bunter's got any pluck why hasn't he let on about it before?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"It's true, you know," said Harry Wharton. "That's what beats me! Bunter was telling the truth all the time——"

"And somebody said that the age of miracles was past!" remarked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows, I told you so, you know," said Bunter loftily. "I told you exactly how it happened——"

"You did," agreed Peter Todd. "You

did, old fat bean. That's what made us think it hadn't happened, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You jolly well owe me an apology all round," said Bunter warmly. "Look at it! A fellow does a splendid, plucky thing——"

"Oh!"

"Displays wonderful courage, and brings credit on his school——"

"Phew!"

"And all you fellows can do is to carp and jeer," said Bunter. "I'm jolly well ashamed of you, if you don't mind my mentioning it."

"Well, you're such a fearful fibber," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You've never told the truth before. I don't suppose you ever will again."

"Oh, really, Wharton, in the circumstances I think there ought to be a celebration," said Bunter.

"To celebrate your telling the truth for once?" asked Peter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, you silly ass!" roared Bunter. "To celebrate my splendid deed——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"To show that you can appreciate having such a fellow in the Form—a fellow you all ought to be proud of."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Modesty, thy name is Bunter!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said

Bob Cherry. "Bunter's right! There ought to be a celebration. Bunter has done two surprising things—he's shown pluck and he's told the truth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Both of them for the first time in his life," said Bob. "Bunter ought to be encouraged, and he may do one or the other again some day——"

"It is a day worthy to be marked with a white stone!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hear, hear!"

And it was so! William George Bunter had come into his own at last, as it were! There was a great celebration in the Rag, which took the practical form of a spread—a testimonial that Bunter could appreciate. Bunter, already distinguished, distinguished himself still more as a trencherman. He beamed upon the Removites with a fat face that was shiny, and happy, and sticky. For once William George Bunter basked in the sunshine of popularity, and for the first time in history his fat ears heard, with great enjoyment, the shout of: "Bravo, Bunter!"

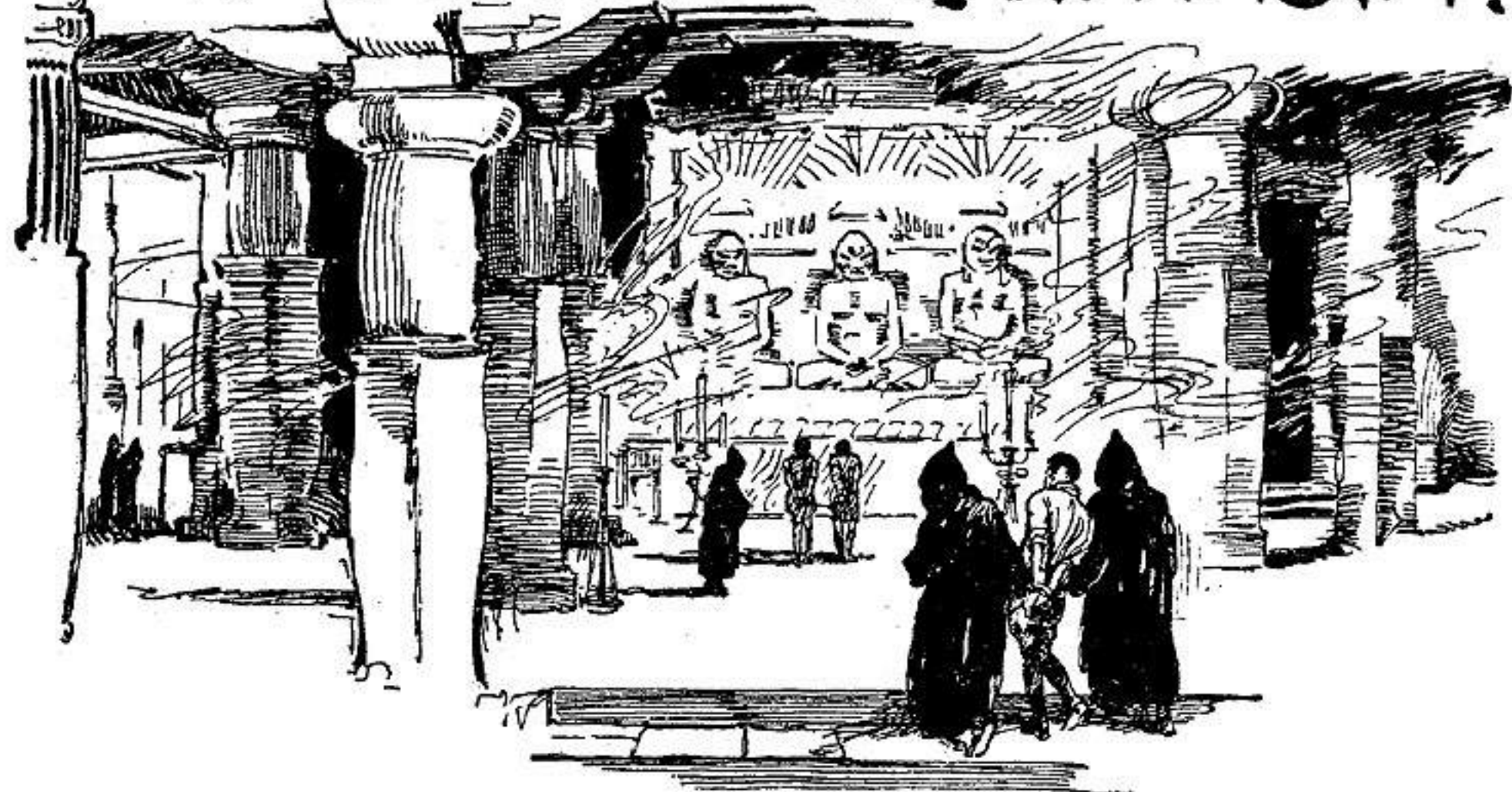
THE END.

(Don't miss the first of a splendid new holiday series: "THE MAN FROM THE SOUTH SEAS!" which will appear in next week's BUMPER FREE GIFT NUMBER of the MAGNET.)

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THE LAST LAUGH! Just when Kang Pu is congratulating himself that he has seen the last of his formidable enemy, Ferrers Locke, the unexpected happens . . . and the last laugh goes to Ferrers Locke!

THE CURSE OF LHASA!



The concluding chapters of this popular detective and adventure story.

The Meeting!

AND as the abbot ceased speaking, the voices of the monks rose and fell in a dirge-like chant. For them, it was the passing of Kang Pu, the passing of those dreams of war, the passing of the vision of holy Lhasa once more the fairest city of the earth. All that was gone. There remained only the endless, soul-drugging routine of the daily services to Buddha.

The chant ended, and silence fell on the vast temple. Then came the voice from the god.

"It is but fitting that I, Kang Pu, the Chosen One of Buddha, should perform one act of mercy before I depart to sojourn with the spirits of our fathers! An act that which will but serve to perpetuate my memory when I am gone! Hark then, to my words, to the words of Kang Pu! Let the message be spread throughout this land that all prisoners and miserable ones who languish in the countless monasteries, be released from their bonds and be allowed to depart, as free men, to the bosom of their families! Hark also to this! The curse of holy Lhasa, which hangs heavily over many in this fair land is lifted, and none are accursed, none are outcast! Carry the word of peace to all the servants of Buddha, and he who turns a deaf ear to thy message will assuredly die the death!"

He paused, then went on.

"As for the three white men who stand now in chains before this altar, hark well to this! I, Kang Pu, the Chosen One, am about to send to them a man, who will guide them home to their distant England! And that thou shalt know this man, he will be clad in the vestments of a lesser abbot. See to it that a bodyguard of priestly soldiers ride with the white men as far as the frontiers of this land, even to the Jelap la! Let no man think to raise a hand against them, or he will die the death! Those are my words, and now I say to thee, farewell!"

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With that, the voice ceased, and silence fell again on the vast temple. But in the eyes of the three white men, there had dawned a new hope. Truly they had trod the path which led through the valley of death, but now—

"I—I'm not dreaming?" muttered Carstairs huskily.

As he ceased speaking Ferrers Locke lost no time in getting to work. He dismantled the tubing and microphone which magnified the voice through the lips of the god. Then, with an iron retort-stand, he beat them out of all semblance of shape. Retorts, test-tubes, jars of chemicals, glass measuring cylinders, he destroyed, and what the priests below thought of the faint crashings which came to their ears none but themselves could have said. But Ferrers Locke knew that Kang Pu was still at large. He was not going to leave anything by which that sinister priest could

produce further phenomena, should he win a way back to the head of the giant Buddha.

Drawing his robes about him, the detective descended the narrow, winding staircase and passed through the room in which he had first come face to face with Kang Pu. Pushing aside the network of chain, he stepped into full view of the priests.

They stared at him in silence as he strode to the front of the altar. Raising one hand above his head, he cried:

"Hark ye, priests! I am the messenger from Kang Pu, sent to guide the three white men whom ye hold prisoners to the frontiers of this country."

His other hand was beneath his robes, the fingers clenched tight on his automatic. But the priests were too bewildered, too shaken with the events of the night, to look on him with aught save awe and respect. Here was a man who had been sent by Kang Pu, the chosen one of Buddha!

At a gesture from Ferrers Locke, the chains and manacles of the prisoners were knocked off.

"Hark ye, priests," went on Ferrers Locke, when all the prisoners had been released, "I have a message for these white men from our master, Kang Pu! See ye that a suitable escort is provided to ride from here with the coming of the dawn. Get ye now to your cells and let those who carry the message of peace prepare to depart without delay!"

Beckoning to Major Beverley, Carstairs, and Heyward, the detective turned and led the way beyond the chain curtain to the room where he had met Kang Pu. Waiting till the three men had entered, he quietly closed the door, then turned and faced them.

There was a long moment of silence. The three men stared at Ferrers Locke, waiting for him to speak.

"Well, gentlemen?" he said.

And at the words Major Beverley sprang forward, an exclamation on his lips. Grasping Ferrers Locke by the shoulders, he peered into his face.

"Who—who are you?" he demanded

THE STORY IN BRIEF.

Prompted by the murderous activities of the all-powerful

KANG PU, the self-styled Chosen of Buddha and fanatic who, to satisfy his own monstrous ambitions, would set the whole world ablaze with war.

FERRERS LOCKE, the famous Baker Street detective, accompanied by his plucky young assistant,

JACK DRAKE, leaves England for Tibet, determined to discover the fate of an expedition led by

MAJOR BEVERLEY, which is believed to have fallen into Kang Pu's clutches.

After a series of exciting adventures Ferrers Locke gains an entry into the Salai Monastery, the stronghold of Kang Pu, where he discovers the arch-criminal about to sacrifice Major Beverley and his companions to the glory of Buddha. The knives of the executioners don't strike, however, for Ferrers Locke, having got the better of Kang Pu, enters the giant idol and from its mouth bids the fanatics stay their hands. Next he commands them, in the name of Buddha, to send messages throughout Tibet, preaching the word of peace.

"It shall be as thou sayest," replies the abbot, "and we, thine unworthy servants, shall render unceasing honour to thy name."

(Now Read On.)

hoarsely. "What does all this mean?"

"It means that unless something unforeseen happens you are free!" replied Ferrers Locke.

"But who are you, man? How did you get here?"

"I am Ferrers Locke, of Baker Street, London," replied the detective quietly. "Doctor Lamonte won through and told me of your plight. How I got here is a long story, and must wait till some other time."

"But I don't understand. Where is that fiend, Kang Pu?"

"That was Kang Pu who dashed out in front of the god," replied Ferrers Locke. "Fortunately, none of the priests knew him. His secretiveness proved his own undoing."

"Then who, by all that's wonderful, was in the head of the Buddha?"

"I was. It was the only way to sway these priests."

Major Beverley released his grip and stepped back.

"Have you come through Tibet alone?" he asked, his eyes on the detective's face and wonderment in his voice.

"No; I had my assistant with me. At the moment he is riding for help to the camp of a friendly hillman north of Lhasa. I had no assurance that my plans would meet with success, and I had to be prepared for any contingencies. We are not out of danger even yet, for Kang Pu is still at large, and he will not allow you to ride out of Tibet without an effort to prevent your going."

"That fiend!" Major Beverley's voice was hoarse. "I would give anything to meet him face to face! He is a fiend incarnate, and the tortures we have seen done in his name—"

He broke off, and, thrusting out his hand, said, in a low voice:

"My friend, there are times when men's feelings are too deep to be expressed in words. Any words of thanks from we three for what you have done would be pitifully futile and inadequate. But you have rescued us from a living tomb and certain death this night. We will not forget."

Carstairs and Heyward echoed their leader's words. They could scarcely realise even yet that they were free men.

"Let us discuss our plan of campaign," said the detective briskly. "As long as my bluff holds good we are tolerably safe. But if Kang Pu can get any following, then we will have to walk warily indeed. You ride from here at dawn. We will make a detour in order to connect with my assistant, Jack Drake. If by that time Kang Pu has not shown up, then I will leave you, as I do not quit Tibet whilst that menace to civilisation lives."

"Then we stay with you," said Major Beverley slowly. "We also have an account to settle with that priest. He claims immortality, but we'll see if there's any truth in his words. I—"

He broke off, clutching at his throat, his breath rasping hoarsely.

"I—I—choking!" he gasped, then pitched face downwards to the floor. So suddenly had come his collapse that Carstairs and Heyward were rooted to the spot with astonishment.

Enlightenment came to Ferrers Locke. "Poison gas!" he shouted. "Quick, the door!"

He sprang to the door to open it and allow the fresh air to drift in. But it was fast, and would not open. There was a dryness at the back of his throat and a feeling of numbness in his nostrils. He turned from the door and saw Carstairs go to the ground in a slithering heap. One chance remained. The heavy curtain which shrouded the staircase.

Heyward was lurching towards it. He clutched at it with his hand, then fell heavily, his clenched fingers still holding the thick material. Reeling and swaying like a drunken man, Ferrers Locke essayed to reach the curtain. But the odourless gas, which by some hidden means was being injected into the room was of a deadly potency.

It was the work of Kang Pu. The priest had returned!

That thought was uppermost in Ferrers Locke's mind as he strove to keep his reeling senses. Then suddenly a wave of blackness enveloped him. There came a roaring in his ears. He felt himself slipping, slipping. So this was the end. Next instant he pitched to the floor and lay inert.

Nothing stirred in the chamber. Then a slab swung back in the wall. Framed in the opening stood Kang Pu, a mirthless smile on his thin, bloodless lips.

"So," he murmured, "you English dogs! You thought you'd drawn my claws, Ferrers Locke. Oh, you fool!"

He laughed silently, but there was nothing of mirth in his eyes.

At the Mercy of Kang Pu!

FERRERS LOCKE came round to find himself lying, tied hand and foot, on the stone floor of a large cell. By the light of an oil-lamp, with which the cell was illuminated, he saw the bound forms of Beverley, Heyward, and Carstairs. He struggled to rise, and a soft voice broke the silence.

"So, my friend, you are awake."

Screwing his head round Ferrers Locke saw the form of Kang Pu standing in the shadows by the wall. Slowly the priest approached and stood looking down on the bound form of the detective.

"You played your cards well, Ferrers Locke," he said harshly, "and at one time you had almost won. But I returned, I who know the secret passages which abound within these walls. Since first you crossed the frontiers of this land you have thwarted me and worked to bring my plans to nought."

"And I have succeeded!" cut in the detective crisply.

Kang Pu raised a clenched fist as though to strike.

"You have succeeded," he snarled, "in that you have undone the work of years. For that you shall pay. But you have only succeeded in postponing the inevitable end. I shall regain ascendancy over these cursed priests, and I swear a sacred oath that war shall come!"

His voice shook with passion as he almost screamed the words.

"Shut up, you drivelling imbecile!" snapped the voice of Beverley. "Show yourself to these priests of Salai and they'll tear you limb from limb. The only Kang Pu they believe in now has gone to sojourn with the spirits of his fathers, and that's where you'll go if I can only get my hands around your scraggy throat."

Kang Pu whirled on him.

"Silence, you dog!" he shouted. "I kept you alive that you might be sacrificed on the very eve of war. But it was your companion, that cursed Lamonte, who set this man, Ferrers Locke, against me. I stand to-night amidst the downfall of my plans and dreams, and you, who have brought about that downfall, shall pay in agony and in blood!"

He was shaking with passion and his lips were flecked with foam.

"But I can build again." He broke

off, then resumed more quietly. "Here, deep down in the bowels of this monastery of Salai, none can penetrate to you. Some amongst my bodyguard were not slain and have remained faithful to me. The escort will wait for you in vain when the dawn comes, for the priests of Salai suspect not where you are. And here you will die by my own hand. Slowly, day by day, you shall die! And at last, when death comes as a happy release, then I shall ascend from this cell and shall regain, in time, the faith of the priests of holy Lhasa and Tibet."

"An extremely interesting programme, you murderous old fraud!" drawled Beverley. "If I could get my hands loose I'd give you something which you'd remember for the rest of your miserable life."

"I will stop that insolent tongue of yours," snarled Kang Pu. "I go now to the Potala, and, in my absence, you may find some pleasure in conjuring up visions of what awaits you when I return."

He clapped his hands sharply. A door in the shadows was opened by one of the survivors of his bodyguard. A blaze of light from an inner chamber streamed through into the cell, and the eyes of the captives saw that the inner chamber contained row upon row of instruments of torture!

"Many have died there," went on Kang Pu harshly, "but none so horribly as you white men will die."

He turned on his heel and stalked from the cell. The door of the torture chamber was closed. Two mailed monks, faithful still to Kang Pu, came into the cell and mounted guard over the prisoners.

"I wonder how many of his bodyguard are left?" murmured Beverley.

"Don't know," grunted Carstairs. "It will make precious little difference to us, bound as we are and also unarmed."

Ferrers Locke lay in silence, turning over in his mind this new turn in Fortune's wheel. Truly the position of himself and his companions seemed hopeless enough. It was obvious that this cell in which they lay was a secret one, known only to Kang Pu and his intimate servants. Even should Jack reach the monastery with the hillmen before Ferrers Locke and his companions were done to death, it would be almost impossible for the boy to find the passage which led to this secret cell. Impossible. There was just one chance of finding it. A thin chance indeed, and Ferrers Locke wondered grimly if it would occur to Jack.

Long hours dragged by. The captives conversed in low tones as they lay in their bonds. Twice their guards brought them food, and, despite their position, they ate with relish. But of Kang Pu there was no sign.

"I wonder where the yellow fiend is!" growled Carstairs once. "And how long he intends to keep us here?"

"He has gone to the Potala," replied the detective. "He undoubtedly is seeking an interview with the Dalai Lama. If the latter will espouse his cause again, then much might be done to rectify the set-back which Kang Pu has suffered."

At times the captives slept, fitfully, and in short snatches. And thus passed another twenty-four hours. From the corridors and temples of the monastery above their heads there came no sound. All was silent as the very tomb itself, and Ferrers Locke knew that they must indeed be deep down in the very bowels of the monastery, beneath the crypts and vaults.

He was lying awake, his mind running on the quest which had brought him and Jack from Baker Street to Salai, when he saw the door of the cell swing slowly open and the gaunt form of Kang Pu step into the cell.

The priest paused to speak a few words to the guards, then crossed to where the detective lay, and stood looking down on him.

"Well, you dog," he purred. "And none have yet found where you lie?"

He paused, his burning eyes fixed on the detective's upturned face.

"I regret exceedingly, Ferrers Locke," he continued, "that my plans are such that they brook not of my tarrying long here. Willingly would I have stayed and with my own hands have put you to the torture. But within an hour you will be dead, and that your passing may be made more bitter lend your ears to this."

He thrust forward his face, as though to give emphasis to his words.

"All is not lost, you dog! The Dalai Lama and his priests are behind me to a man. It will take some few years to again plant the seeds of war which you have trampled underfoot, but replanted they will be. This act of yours in the monastery of Salai will soon be forgotten, and the East shall rise against the West as surely as the dawn follows the night."

"And in that you lie, Kang Pu!" replied Ferrers Locke steadily. "Your power in Tibet has received a setback from which it will never recover. The seeds of doubt as to your omnipotence have been planted in the minds of your people. What manner of leader is this, they will say, who one day preaches war, the next day peace, and the next day war? They are not fools, these peoples of Tibet, and they think now that you sojourn with the spirits of your fathers. If you return, then your very inconsistency will make your priests and peoples doubt you, and doubt the truth of your words."

"You talk like the fool you are," snarled Kang Pu. "Look at me, you dog! Can I not sway these ignorant peoples as the wind sways and bends the grass of the plains? Can I not strike awe to the very hearts of these priests of Buddha? The mask is off, Ferrers Locke. No priest or chosen one of Buddha am I, as you well know. But I am one who, it is written, will attain world power. Whence I came no man will ever know, but I am immortal, and that I swear to you. The day will come when the peoples of the East will rule the world, and I shall rule the peoples of the East. I am lord of the occult, and I talk and walk with the dead!"

He turned to one of the guards and rapped out an order. Beverley, Heyward, and Carstairs were watching him curiously, for there was a terrible earnestness about him which riveted the attention, and which betokened that he believed what he said.

The guard shuffled forward, the oil lamp in his hand. Kang Pu snatched it from him and thrust his hand into the naked flame.

"What think you of that, Ferrers Locke?" he taunted. "Why does not this flame shrivel my very skin to the bone?"

"A clever conjuring trick, I do not doubt," replied the detective dryly. "A trick worthy of the cheap sorcerer which you are!"

Contrary to the expectations of the other three Englishmen, Kang Pu took

the remark quietly enough. Instead of flying into a towering passion he stared steadily at Ferrers Locke for a moment, then said, in a curiously quiet voice:

"You are near to death, Ferrers Locke, but I have a mind to show you before you die that no sorcerer am I. There are things of which your western world knows naught. But here, in Central Asia, where the peoples of the world were cradled, there exists a civilisation millions of years older than yours of the west. And much knowledge has come to us through the ages which are now dead. The past is an open book to us who can read, and the future is easily foretold."

Whilst he had been talking Ferrers Locke had become conscious of a peculiar, stifling odour, which seemed to be slowly permeating the cell. It was sweet and cloying to the senses, like heavy, pungent fumes of incense. The detective felt it taking possession of his brain, and he brought to bear every atom of his willpower to fight against it. The eyes of Kang Pu were fixed upon him, and as he lay looking upwards the eyes seemed to grow larger and more red. Huge, cruel, burning eyes.

Then slowly the burning eyes faded, and there floated into the detective's vision a busy thoroughfare, flanked with tall buildings. And from far, far away came the voice of Kang Pu.

"No sorcerer am I, Ferrers Locke, but one whose powers are not to be measured by the standards of the West. For the last time in your life, Ferrers Locke, look on Baker Street, in the heart of your mighty London!"

Slowly the vision faded. Ferrers Locke struggled to rise, but a great weight seemed to be pressing him down. He felt himself sinking, as though through the floor, there came a roaring in his ears, and a wave of blackness engulfed him.

The Call of Death!

FERRERS LOCKE slowly recovered consciousness. He instinctively attempted to raise a hand to his aching, throbbing head, then realised with surprise that his hands were no longer pinioned.

He felt deathly sick, but struggled to a sitting posture. He was no longer in the cell which he and his companions had previously occupied. The cell in which he now found himself was about twelve feet square. It was dimly lit by an illuminated globe high up in the roof. In the centre of the floor was a circular hole about five feet in diameter. Then, as the mists cleared from his brain, he became aware that a subdued but continuous roaring filled the cell.

On the floor near him lay the prone forms of Beverley, Carstairs, and Heyward. Rising groggily to his feet, the detective bent over Beverley, and, as he did so, the major moved uneasily and his eyes flickered open.

He stared up at Ferrers Locke uncomprehendingly for a moment, then struggled to an upright position.

"Where—where are we?" he groaned. "My head!"

He put a shaking hand to his brow and glanced wearily round the cell.

"What the dickens is that hole for?" he demanded, as fuller consciousness returned to him.

"For us, I think," replied Ferrers Locke grimly, but did not explain further at the moment.

Heyward and Carstairs stirred into life, and, sitting up, took stock of their positions.

"And now what?" inquired Carstairs, glancing round the cell.

Ferrers Locke was silent for a moment. When he spoke his voice was very grave.

"Gentlemen," he said, "there is little point in keeping from you what you must discover within a very short space of time."

"And that is?" grunted Beverley.

"That this is the death cell, and, unless we are rescued, here we shall die!"

"How?"

The word came from Carstairs, but there was nothing of fear in it; rather a mild sort of curiosity.

"Can you notice anything about the temperature?" inquired Ferrers Locke, without directly answering the question.

"Yes," replied Heyward, "it's frightfully warm in here."

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"It is a well known fact," he said, "that many of the old Spanish Inquisition tortures were founded on those in existence in Asia. In Spain I have seen such a cell as this, which, tradition has it, was built by an Asiatic who had taken service with the Spaniards. The walls, you will notice, are of metal."

The other three nodded and waited for him to continue.

"These walls will gradually become red-hot. They are heated by furnaces on the outer side. Then, when sufficiently heated, they will slowly close in on us till the cell becomes a parallelogram in shape."

"And we will be forced to drop into that hole?" said Beverley hoarsely.

"Yes. If you listen you can hear a subdued roaring coming upwards. I do not doubt that at the bottom we will find some swiftly-flowing underground river, and we will—"

He paused, but Carstairs finished the sentence.

"Drown like rats!"

"Yes, that, I think, is the idea."

There was a long minute of silence. Each man had his thoughts. None doubted but what the detective spoke the truth. But it was a horrible death, and one from which there seemed to be no escape.

A sudden thought seemed to strike Major Beverley. Turning to Ferrers Locke, he said:

"You spoke of this being the death-cell unless we were rescued?"

There was a question in the words, and Ferrers Locke replied, slowly:

"Yes, there is the faintest of faint chances of rescue. My assistant has ridden for help, but it would perhaps be building false hopes to rely too much on rescue."

"There can be little chance of your assistant finding his way down here," remarked Carstairs simply. "That priest, Kang Pu, seems to be the only one who knows the secret passages."

"I do not want to buoy up false hopes," replied Ferrers Locke. "but there is just one way in which Jack might discover our whereabouts."

"And that is?"

"Through a prisoner whom we hold in the hills, a priest called Kala Dului. He is Kang Pu's intimate, and he, if anyone, will know the means of reaching these cells. It is a chance, and if Drake, my assistant, brings him along, then the truth might be forced out of him!"

"If it occurs to the rescue party to



The peal of mocking laughter ended in a stifled scream as, from above, the figure of a man, clad in robes which streamed wildly as he fell, hurtled downwards into the depths of the pit! (See this page.)

question him," remarked Heyward, and the detective nodded.

"Yes, if it occurs to them," he assented.

Again there was silence in the cell, a silence which was broken by a hoarse mutter from Carstairs.

"Phew! But it's getting hot!"

It was getting hot, and the air in the cell was becoming stifling. Ferrers Locke stretched out a finger and touched the wall nearest him. The heat almost blistered the tip of the finger, despite the fact that the detective quickly withdrew his hand.

"Well, it'll soon be over," murmured Heyward fatalistically. "My only regret is that we're not taking that villainous Kang Pu with us."

The heat in the cell was becoming almost intolerable now.

"I suppose suffocation will come before the walls close in and force us into the pit?" remarked Carstairs, after an interval in which the four men had drawn as far away from the walls as they could. "This heat is bound to absorb all the oxygen in the air. I think I would prefer that sort of death to drowning like a rat somewhere in the bowels of the earth."

Ferrers Locke shook his head.

"There is a certain amount of air coming up from the depths of this hole," he said. "It is acting, in some part, as a ventilation shaft, and is supplying enough oxygen to keep us alive till the walls force us to drop down into the water."

The minutes dragged by and the walls of the cell began to glow redly across their entire surface. The four men divested themselves of their clothes till

they were naked to the waist. It was the only means of getting any relief from the stifling, exhausting heat.

Their mouths were parched and dry and it was with difficulty that they could swallow.

Suddenly there came a hoarse shout from Heyward.

"They're coming! They're coming!"

Ferrers Locke looked over his shoulder. The cell was no longer square. It had taken on the form of a parallelogram. He turned his head and looked straight ahead. The wall in front of him was slowly moving inwards.

This then was the end, and Kang Pu lived.

"I—I say!" Major Beverley's voice was a croak. "Good-bye—ghastly luck this! I—"

He held out a shaking hand. Ferrers Locke took it in a last farewell. The walls were closer now, and the heat so great that only the draught from the shaft kept the lungs of the captives functioning.

From somewhere in the high roof of the cell there came a shrill voice:

"Farewell! Farewell, Ferrers Locke! This is the end—the materialisation of the curse of holy Lhasa!"

The detective recognised the voice of Kang Pu. He lifted his bloodshot, streaming eyes towards the spot from whence the voice emanated. As he did so, there came a peal of mocking laughter. Then suddenly, without warning, the peal ended in a stifled scream. The next instant there hurtled downwards from above the figure of a man clad in robes which streamed wildly as he fell. Downwards into the depths of the pit

he hurtled. There came to the detective's ears a sullen splash. At the same moment a gust of cold air swept downwards from above, and a voice called:

"Hold on, guv'nor! We're here!"

Across the Jelap La!

AN hour later Ferrers Locke, Jack Drake, and the three white men whom they had rescued sat at their ease around a table in the refectory of the Salai Monastery.

The remains of a good repast littered the table, and with them sat the leader of the hillmen, together with a half-dozen of his lieutenants. At other tables, feasting heartily, were fifty armed hillmen, but their great swords stood by the wall, and they were waited upon by the monks of Salai.

Jack's story was soon told. He and the guide had ridden as hard as they could for the camp, leaving the pack mule tethered in the valley. The leader of the hillmen had not hesitated an instant on receiving Jack's message. Fifty of his finest fighting-men had leaped to the saddle, and the race for Salai Monastery had begun.

They had arrived before the scheduled time, and Jack and the leader had crept near the monastery to reconnoitre and see how the land lay. To their surprise, the main gates of the monastery garden were wide open, and monks were passing in and out with a hastiness which betokened that something unusual was afoot. Fearing the worst, Jack and the leader had

withdrawn to their main body, and, after a hurried consultation, had decided to force the issue. So, looking well to their weapons, they had ridden boldly up to the monastery.

To their astonishment, the monks had shown no signs of hostility, and, demanding to see the head abbot, Jack and the leader had been informed that Kang Pu had left a message of peace. The abbot told the whole story, and Jack read between the lines. But the white men who were to be escorted to the frontier were missing. So was the guide who was to conduct them.

Jack, knowing full well who the guide was, put two and two together. He knew Ferrers Locke would never slip away from the monastery without establishing contact with the relieving party. Therefore, somehow, and by some means, Ferrers Locke and his three companions were being detained. Not by the priests of Salai, that was evident. The abbot's anxiety was too genuine to doubt. Who could, therefore, be responsible for the disappearance of Ferrers Locke? Only one man—Kang Pu.

It was then that Jack had bethought himself of Kala Dului. That particular priest had been brought along with the relieving party, for the leader swore he would not let him out of his sight.

Kala Dului, questioned, swore he knew nothing. But, with the leader's knife at his throat, and ten seconds in which to think again about whether he knew anything, he gave in and led the way through a labyrinth of passages to the cells underground.

Here the search-party was stumped, for there was no sign of Kang Pu or his prisoners. Then, when it seemed that they were on a wrong trail, there had come to their ears the taunting voice of Kang Pu.

Guided by the voice, they had burst into a small chamber situated in the roof of the cell where Ferrers Locke and his companions were lying.

Kang Pu was on his knees, looking down through a trap-door. The leader of the hillmen had been quick to act. Pouncing on the kneeling form, he had brought his sword down with deadly force on the back of the priest's skull. Kang Pu had screamed once before that blow descended, then had hurtled down, dead, to the depths below.

Jack, grasping the position in an instant, had released the brake of a huge fan which was driven by pulleys which were operated by the stream below the cell. This fan had sent the life-giving air swirling into the cell below.

A search for the furnaces resulted in their being raked out, and the prisoners released, after the mechanism which operated the walls had been smashed.

Heyward was unconscious when they got him out, but soon recovered under the expert ministrations of the priests of Salai, who were fearful of the wrath of Buddha at this treatment of those to whom Buddha had given free passage.

They never doubted that Kang Pu, who had gone to his death, was an impostor, and that the real Kang Pu had returned to sojourn with the spirits of his fathers as he had said.

The priests were friendly, and the next day at dawn the five white men rode out of Salai en route for the frontier. With them, part of the way, rode the hillmen. At last came the leave-taking, and, after mutual salutations, the leader turned with his men and rode back towards his lair in the hills north of Lhasa.

It was some days later when Ferrers Locke and his companions halted their ponies on the summit of the Jelap La, and, turning in their saddles, looked back across the rugged land of mystery in which they had met with perils and adventures.

Grim and sinister it looked in the rays of the setting sun.

"Well," said Major Beverley grimly, "he is dead, and with his death has come the safety of the English-speaking peoples!"

"Yes," replied Ferrers Locke quietly. "Kang Pu is dead! Soon, I hope, the trade caravans will be rumbling across the Jelap La, heading towards Lhasa and the East!"

There was silence for a moment. The sun sank behind a bank of distant cloud and the mists commenced to creep up out of the valleys.

"And now for England," said Carstairs, with a short laugh, jogging his pony into action. "Dear old England and—civilisation!"

THE END.

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"SO this is the trezzure!" The Head's voice was horse with rage. He felt that he had been made to look an ass. For Jack Jolly & Co. had been playing the goat. The "trezzure" had proved a white elephant.

The first grey glimmer of dawn came stealing into the old Smugglers' Cave at Winklesea.

Doctor Birchmell had been there nearly all night, digging feverishly for the trezzure which was supposed to have been buried there by the old-time smugglers. He had dug and dug until his arms ached; and at long last he had brought to the surface an old oak chest.

After much toil and trouble, the Head had managed to prize open the lid with his pickaxe, only to find that the chest contained, not Spanish dubloons and pieces of 8, but a lot of worthless rubble which had been collected from the seashore!

No wonder the Head was looking savidge. No wonder his eyes were starting from their sockets as he glared down at the trezzure. No wonder he vowed dire vengeance on Jack Jolly & Co. for having spoofed him!

The heroes of the Fourth had pretended to find a musty old parchment relating to the trezzure. They had cunningly contrived that the Head should get hold of the parchment, and go and look for the trezzure.

It was quite clear to Doctor Birchmell now, as he stood fretting and fuming in the Smugglers' Cave, that the musty old parchment was a fake. It had been written by one of the juniors, and treated with dirt to make it look like a genuine old document.

"Dished, diddled, and done!" cried the Head. "My hat! I'll make it warm for those young rascals, when I get back to camp! Meanwhile, it wouldn't be a bad idea to berry this chest deep in the sand again. Somebody else might come along to dig for it, and they'll be sucked in eggsactly as I was!"

This thought gave the Head some consolation, in his bitter disappointment. Grunting and gasping, he lowered the old oak chest into the deep cavity he had dug; then he proceeded to wedge it in with sand.

No sooner had the Head completed his task, than he heard the sound of footmarks approaching the cave.

Chuckling softly, he threw himself down in a corner, and pretended to be asleep. But it was only a cunning faint on his part.

Softly, stealthily, the footmarks drew nearer. Suddenly a stream of light flooded the half-darkness of the cave. The Head, opening one eye over so cautiously, saw that the intruder was Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth. Instantly the Head shut his eye again, and pretended to be sound.

Mr. Lickham carried a spade in one



Luckily for Jack Jolly & Co., Doctor Birchmell tripped over a tent-peg and went sprawling, flattening his nose in the turf!

hand, and a trowel in the other; while from the other hand hung a blazing lantern.

The Form master gave a start when he caught sight of the Head's sprawling figger. But he was relieved to see that the Head seemed to be asleep.

"Bless my sole!" mormered Mr. Lickham, sotto vocoy. "It appears that old Birchmell is after the trezzure, as well! But the walk to the cave seems to have eggshasted him, and he is taking forty winks before starting to dig. I must set to work quietly, so as not to wake him. If I have any luck, I shall discover the trezzure, and take it away without the Head's nollidge!"

So saying, Mr. Lickham peeled off his coat, and started to dig.

Showers of sand flew in every direckshun, and some of it settled on the Head's recumbent form, covering him as with a garment. He muttered a fierce adjective in his sleep, but did not stir.

Mr. Lickham went on stirring, however. He stirred up the sand at an amazing rate, feverishly anxious to find the berried trezzure.

Prezzantly he had to paws in his operations, for some of the sand had got into his eyes and was choking him; and a lot more went down his throat and made him blink. He coughed loudly; and then gave a sneeze like a soda-water siphon in action.

"Atishoooo!" Mr. Lickham darted a nervous glance at the Head, fearing the sound would wake him. But Doctor Birchmell's eyes were tightly closed, and he was snoring pleasantly. Little did Mr. Lickham dream that the old scamp was fainting, and not sleeping.

He returned to his task. Deeper and deeper he dug, until he had made quite a man-hole in the floor of the cave. His arms began to ache, and the inspiration streamered from him like a shower-bath.

At the end of an hour's digging, a joyful cry burst from the lips of Mr. Lickham.

"Hooray! My spade struck something solid! It must be the trezzure!"

The Head sniggered in his sleep, but Mr. Lickham was too eggssited to heed him. Eagerly he scooped at the sand, until the old oak chest lay revealed.

Dropping on all fours, the Form master scooped the chest by the handle, and heaved it to the surface. His greedy eyes were gleaming with eggssitement.

"Mine!" he cried joyfully. "All mine!"

The Head had fastened down the lid



of the chest before berrying it; and it took Mr. Lickham some little time to raise it. But at last he succeeded, and prepared to feast his eyes on the spectacle of Spanish dubloons and pieces of 8, and trinkets of joolery, and valuable spoils of Spain.

Instead of which, Mr. Lickham feasted his eyes on a collection of worthless stones and brix.

His jaw dropped, and his eyes fairly goggled out of his head. The look of dismay on the Form master's face was trooly commiclie!

And then a loud, mocking larf suddenly shattered the silence of the cave.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! Ever been had, my dear Lickham!"

The dismayed Mr. Lickham glared around, to find the Head sitting bolt upright, regarding him with a mocking leer.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" gasped Mr. Lickham. "I—I thought you were asleep, sir!"

The Head chuckled. "I was only shamming," he said. "I've been watching you out of the corner of my eye all the time. And the expression on your face, when you discovered the trezzure, was worlli a ginny a box!"

Mr. Lickham's eyes blazed angrily.

"You—you awful rotter!" he cried, forgetting for the moment the respect due to his chief. "You mean to say you have watched me put in an hour's hard labour, knowing all the time that the trezzure was a spoof?"

The Head nodded.

"I fell into the same trap myself, Lickham. I dug for hours and hours on end, only to find that the trezzure was a frawd. So I thought it would be some little consolation to see somebody else make an ass of himself!"

Mr. Lickham looked daggers at the Head.

"I call that downright despicable!" he eggssclaimed. "But for the fact that you are my headmaster, I'd take you by the scurf of your neck and chuck you into this hole!"

The Head grinned.

"That would be suicide, my dear Lickham; and the law does not permit suicide. Much as you would like to berry me alive, you durstn't do it! It's no use being ratty with me. We have got to thank Jack Jolly and his friends for this. They spoofed us with their fake parchment. I vote we go back to the camp, and give them the flogging of their lives!"

Mr. Lickham nodded grimly.

"Come, sir!" he said impatiently. And he sezzed Doctor Birchmell by the arm, and dragged him out into the sunlight. And together they set fourth on their mission of venjeance.

A FORTUNE FOR FOUR!



This week's tixic laugh from the prolific pen of Dicky Nugent, the genius of the Greysfriars Second Form.

stoical fortytude. Their howls for mersy were not nearly so loud as usual; and their schoolfellows, looking on, were lost in admiration for their pluck.

The Head was quite limp by the time the flogging was over, though not quite so limp as the victims!

All the birchrods, save one, had been broken to splinters, and the Head tucked the solitary survivor under his arm and went off to his tent, happy in the nollidge that justiss had been done. As for Jack Jolly & Co., they considered that justiss had been very much overdone! The heroes of the Fourth were obliged to take their breakfast standing up. But they all agreed that the jape on Doctor Birchmell had been well worth the flogging.

The morning passed plezzantly enuff, for there were no lessons in Camp.

After dinner the Head tucked himself down to sleep in his tent, for he was fagged out after his all-night eggssertions.

He was on the point of dozing off when there was a sudden rustling of canvas, and an eggssited face peered into the tent. It was the face of Jack Jolly. Behind Jack came his three chums, all looking very flushed and eggssited.

The Head sat up in his sleeping-bag and glared.

"Go away!" he roared. "How dare you disturb my afternoon nap, Jolly?"

"Sorry, sir," said Jack Jolly breathlessly, "but we've just found something important—awfully, fearfully important!"

"Oh, if it's a five-pound note, Jolly, that would be mine. I lost it in Camp early this morning."

"It isn't a five-pound note, sir—" "Then what have you found, you young rascal?"

"A parchment, sir—a musty old parchment, relating to a trezzure which is berried in the Smugglers' Cave!"

"What!" The Head gave a roar like an angry bull. He could scarcely believe his ears. Was there no limit to the nerve of these young rascals? They had spoofed their headmaster once with a trumped-up story of a berried trezzure, and now they had the brazen ordassity

to try and repeat their spoof! Evidently the severe flogging they had reseved that morning had failed to teach them a lesson.

The eggsspression on the Head's face was trooly terrifying. His hand strayed towards his birch. Jolly Jack backed away a step.

"It isn't spoof this time, sir," he eggssclaimed. "It's a genuine old parchment. We came across it in an old vollume. It says that there's a vast trezzure hidden in the Smugglers' Cave, and we thought it only right to let you know first, sir, so that you could go and dig for the trezzure."

"That's so, sir!" chimed in Jack Jolly's chums.

The Head scrambled to his feet, his face purple with pashun.

"You—you dare to come to me with this cock-and-bull story!" he roared. "You dare to add insult to injury! My hat! I—I'll jolly well—"

"Would you like to have a look at the parchment, sir?" asked Jack Jolly meekly.

"No, I would not, you young villain! I am not to be caught napping twice in succession! You faked that parchment, like you did the other!"

"Indeed, we didn't, sir! This is a genuine parchment, relating to a genuine trezzure. If you will get your spade and pickaxe, sir—"

The Head gave a roar like a volcano in action. Snatching up his birchrod, he scrambled to his feet and rushed at Jack Jolly.

Swish! Swish! Swish! The juniors turned pale and ran for their lives, with the Head pounding after them, lashing out right and left with his birch.

Luckily for the juniors, the Head tripped over a tent-peg and went sprawling, flattening his nose in the turf. By the time he had recovered Jack Jolly & Co. were safely out of range.

"The silly old buffer!" panted Frank Fearless. "He thought we were trying to spoof him again. Wouldn't even look at the parchment we found."

"Well, we gave him the first chance to go and dig for the trezzure," said Jack Jolly. "He wouldn't take it, so we'll go and do the trezzure-hunting ourselves."

"Yes, rather!"

Grately eggssited, the little party armed themselves with spades and set off for the caves. They were hoping to find the smugglers' horde, which had lain berried for a hundred years. If they suxxceeded they would no longer be as poor as church mice, but as rich as Crocus.

Eagerly they swarmed into the Smugglers' Cave—so eagerly, in fact, that Frank Fearless nearly tumbled headlong into the yawning hole which Mr. Lickham had dug. His chums pulled him back in the nick of time.

Jack Jolly took the musty old parchment from his pocket and insulted it carefully.

"Listen, you chaps!" he said. "This tells you eggssactly where the trezzure is hidden."

"Ere ye digge with maine and myghte, Take six paces to ye ryghte. Straight ahead then take six strydes, A dozen to ye left besydes. Then six paces to ye reare, Ye trezzure-trove is berried heare."

"Sounds like a Chinese puzzle to me!" growled Merry.

"Ratts! It's quite easy to follow the direckshuns," retorted Jack Jolly.

From the entrance to the cave he took six paces to the right; then six straight

ahead; then a dozen to the left; and, finally, six to the rear.

"This is the spot!" he eggssclaimed.

And the next instant four spades were churning up the sand with grate vigger.

Many hands made light work, and at the end of a few minutes the trezzure was discovered.

And what a trezzure! No worthless rubble this time, but a goodly horde of Spanish gold, and dubloons, and pieces of 8, and rubies, and perls beyond price.

At the sight of those glittering spoils the juniors gave a loud whoop of delight. They bathed their hands in the yellow gold; they picked up the dazzling jools one by one, and gazed at them as in a dream.

"I say! Won't the Head have a fit when we carry the trezzure into Camp!" chortled Frank Fearless.

As a matter of fact, the Head had about a duzzen fits rolled into one when the juniors turned up with their trezzure-trove. At first he tried to make out that the gold was spurious and the trinkets worthless, and the jools paste. But when an old-iron merchant was sent for to come and value the trezzure the Head piped to another tune. For the



Dr. Birchmell did great execution upon Jack Jolly, while Mr. Justiss kept the score. When the Head reached three figures Mr. Justiss urged him to desist.

spoils were valued at no less than a thousand and fifty pounds!

"I'll take the thousand!" said the greedy old Head. "And you boys can whack out the odd fifty between you. That's what I call real jennernus."

But the Head's queer ideas of generosity were not shared by Jack Jolly & Co. They pointed out that if he had believed them in the first place the trezzure would now be his, which made the Head fairly nash his teeth with rage and mortification.

Finally, at a special meeting in Jack Jolly's tent, the juniors agreed to give the Head the odd fifty pounds, just to keep him quiet, and to share the remaining thousand between them.

Unfortunately, the Government stepped in—as Governments do in these cases—and claimed ninety-nine per cent of the loot. But this still left the juniors with enuff pocket-munny to last them during their stay in Camp. They would not be rolling in riches for the rest of their lives, as Jack Jolly had predicted. Still, they were well satisfied with the result of their eggssiting trezzure-hunt!

(Look out for: "A PEST FROM THE PAST!"—next week's "shocker" by Dicky Nugent.)