

BUNTER, THE VENTRILOQUIST, FAIRLY MAKES THE FUR FLY THIS WEEK!

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GOSLING SQUARES UP TO SIR HILTON POPPER!

(An amusing incident from the grand school tale inside.)



Notes of interest—concerning MANCHESTER UNITED

the proud possessors of as up-to-date a football ground as any club in the country.

THE toast is: "The ladies." That seems a strange way of starting to talk about a football club. But there is excuse for it so far as Manchester United are concerned. Somebody there has had a new idea for the present season, and the idea is to look after the ladies.

The officials of the club with its home at Old Trafford—that's next door to the Lancashire county cricket ground—are the first to provide special accommodation for their lady supporters. They have set apart a special "pen," admission to which is gained by a special entrance, and it is for the exclusive use of the members of the fair sex.

I don't know whether the two things had anything in common, but it is a fact that Manchester United, encouraged by the applause of the ladies, won their

First Three Matches

of the present season. If these fair supporters of Manchester United can so encourage the players to win the championship, then we shall be able to revise a very old saw, and say that the "ladies' pen" is mightier than the sword.

Of course, a ladies' pen is not the only thing notable about the Manchester United ground at Old Trafford. It is as up to date as any in the country, capable of holding up to eighty thousand spectators, and so arranged as to exits that the biggest crowd fades away in double quick time at the finish of a match. The United moved to the new ground in 1910. Previously they played at Clayton—and that was a good name for it, because it was, indeed, a heavy affair when there was any rain about—and there is usually rain about. However, I am not going to say anything else about Manchester and rain. Enough has been said already.

The club has passed through

Many Stormy Periods.

They went down into the Second Division, for instance, at the end of the 1921-22 season, and spent three seasons there before coming back to the place where they rightly belong—the top class.

They haven't set the Ship Canal on fire since they got to the upper story again, but they have some very fine players. The officials had another idea at the start of the season. For years and years the men of Manchester—very much United—played in white shirts with a big red "V" down the chest. The white has now vanished, and so the opponents only "see red."

One thing which has affected
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the club's results so far this season has been the long absence of the skipper, Frank Barson. He is also the centre-half, and the sort of player whose shoes are not at all easy to fill. It is an amazing thing that Barson should have been so repeatedly passed over by the selectors of England teams, because practically every footballer declares him to be

The Most Effective Centre-Half

of modern times. Of course, he has played for England and he also played for Aston Villa when they won the Cup in 1920. He "made" the Villa team that year when he joined them from that fine nursery, Barnsley.

There is another Frank in the half-back line, too—Mann. Manchester is surely the only place where Mann ought to play, but actually he joined the club from Huddersfield. Indeed, he was an opponent of Frank Barson's when the Villa won the Cup by beating Huddersfield Town in the aforementioned year. Mann has grown bald in the game, but he is a great and most consistent worker.

The strange ways in which good footballers are found is illustrated by the experience of another half-back, Clarence Hilditch. Away back in 1919 the then manager of Manchester United went to Altrincham to watch a player of whom nice things were being said. The game had not been long in progress ere the man who was the object of the journey was forgotten, and the manager's eyes were on Hilditch. To Manchester he went in due course, and, first as a for-

ward, then as a half-back, and meantime as a temporary manager, Hilditch has been a great discovery. Defence has been the strongest part of the Manchester United team for some years back. Even now they are better in the rear than in the front. Goalkeeper Alf Steward is a Manchester-born fellow, who was found while playing at Stalybridge, and brought back home. I know of no goalkeeper who gets down to low balls with such accuracy as Steward.

Charles Moore, the right full-back, is another player who has been with the club for several seasons, and a rare sticker, too. When his boot gets to the ball it travels a bit, and he can hold his own in a tackle, too. Other full-backs who share the next to the last line of defence with Moore are Silcock and Jones. The latter is only in the youthful stage yet, but full of promise, but Silcock has definitely arrived. He is one of the men who can show you an International cap in his cupboard. He played for England, while Raymond Bennion has played for Wales, and for no other first-class club than Manchester United.

At Manchester they have a liking for making forwards into half-backs. I have mentioned Mann and Hilditch, both of whom have been thus switched; and another is Jack Wilson, a good stand-by half-back now, though he was a forward when he played with Newcastle United, Durham, and Stockport County.

It was hinted above that the United are not as strong as they might be in the attacking sense, and this has

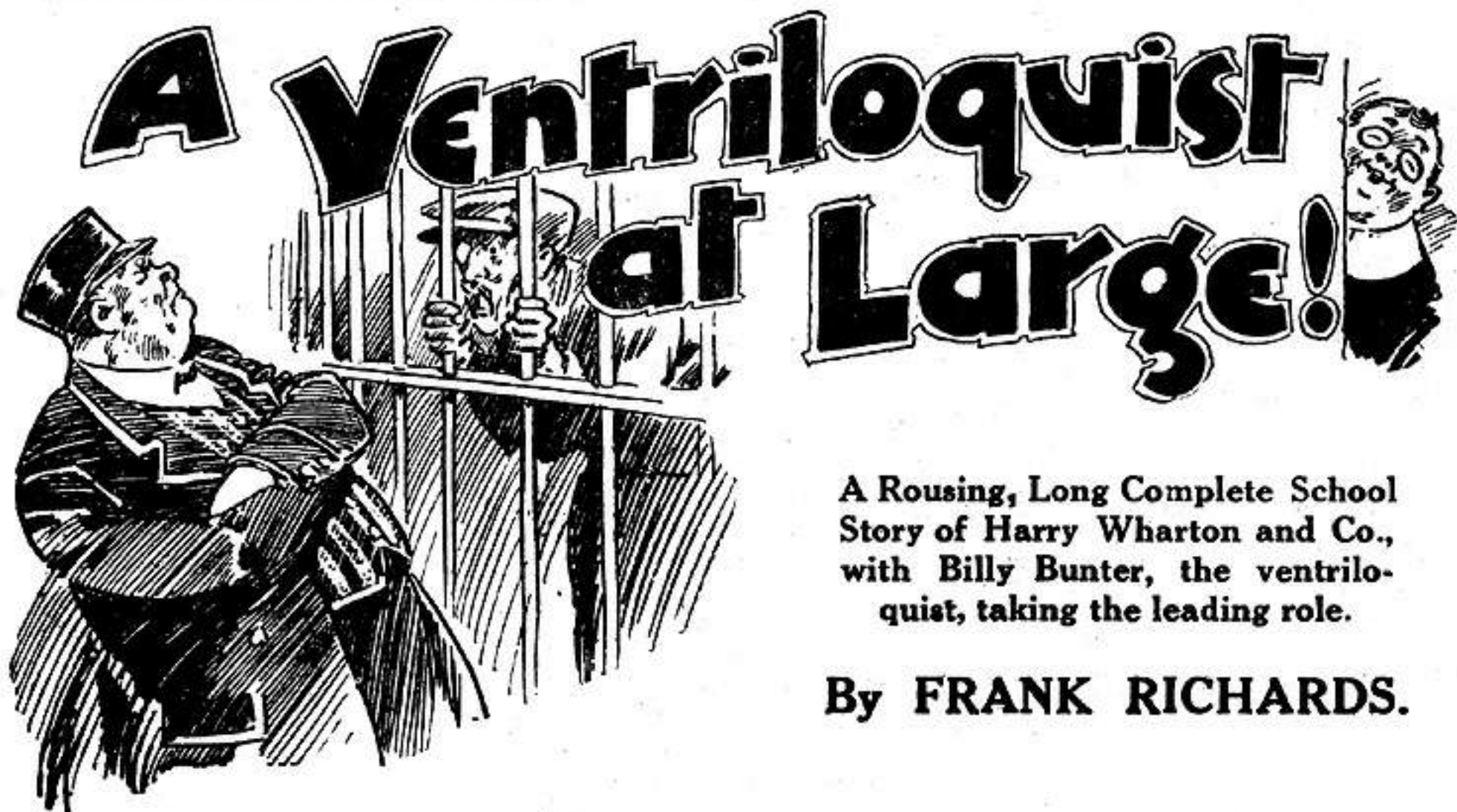
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MANCHESTER UNITED'S MEN OF VALOUR!



Reading from left to right (back row) photo shows: Jones, Hilditch, Silcock, Steward, Bennison, Moore, Mr. Bamlett (manager), Wilson. Front row: Chapman, Hanson, Spence, Partridge, McPherson, Barson (capt.).

AN AMAZING GIFT! Though a duffer at lessons and a nonentity at sports it's a well-known fact that William George Bunter, as a ventriloquist, has no equal—at Greyfriars, at any rate! But his latest ventriloquial spasm is destined to bring about some astonishing results!



A Rousing, Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton and Co., with Billy Bunter, the ventriloquist, taking the leading role.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Tricky Bunter!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Bunter!" Bob Cherry's voice was cheery enough—as usual—but there was not overmuch joy or satisfaction in his exclamation for all that.

The sight of Billy Bunter never aroused much enthusiasm among the fellows at Greyfriars—quite the reverse, in fact.

In one fellow's opinion, Billy Bunter was a charming fellow with a fascinating character; needless to say, that fellow was William George Bunter himself. Nobody else shared that opinion.

The fellows were unanimous in agreeing that Billy Bunter was as lazy as he was fat, untruthful as he was unscrupulous, odious as he was snobbish, funky as he was boastful, and inquisitive as he was greedy—qualities quite unlikely to make any fellow's society sought after.

Nor was it. But unfortunately it was very difficult indeed to get away from William George Bunter. Bunter's hide was exceedingly thick, and he never could—or would—see that his society was not desired. Bunter disregarded all hints to that effect, and refused to be shaken off—especially when he had reason to suppose that a free feed would reward his hanging on!

So it was on this occasion. Bunter, on coming out of afternoon class, had been "nabbed" by Loder of the Sixth and sent to the Friardale Post Office with a telegram. Bunter had not wanted to go, but Loder's boot and the promise of his ashplant—for Loder was a prefect—had persuaded him. And he was just leaving the post office, tired, hungry, and very cross, when he sighted the Famous Five just going into "Uncle" Clegg's bunshop.

That was enough for William George! Being very hungry and quite without funds, Bunter had there and then decided to inflict his charming society upon Harry Wharton & Co. He had entered Uncle Clegg's shop, where Uncle Clegg himself was busy serving a

customer, and it was as he passed through the curtained doorway into the refreshment-room behind the shop that Bob Cherry made the exclamation.

The Famous Five were just seating themselves at one of the marble-topped tables. They had walked to Friardale to do a little shopping, and had called in at Uncle Clegg's for ginger-beer and cakes—to give them an appetite for tea, as Bob Cherry put it. And as they had already sighted Bunter emerging from the post office, they were not at all surprised at him following them in—knowing Bunter's little ways of old.

"I knew it wouldn't be long before Bunter arrived!" said Harry Wharton, with a chuckle. "Wander away, old fat man! No free feeds this afternoon, old scout!"

"Oh, really, Wharton," said Bunter, coming into the little room. "That's rather a rotten thing to say to a fellow!"

"Not to a fellow like you," said Bob Cherry. "Fade away, fair youth! We see enough of you at Greyfriars!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—I say, I know you're only joking," said Bunter, drawing up a chair. "I'll join you fellows if you don't mind. My treat, of course! What are you fellows having—ginger-pop and cakes, what?"

Bob Cherry pretended to fall back in a faint, while Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh stared in wonder at the fat junior.

"You—you're standing treat, Bunter?" said Harry Wharton faintly.

"Yes; I insist!" said Bunter, waving a lordly hand.

"Well, my hat!"

"Who says that the age of miracles is past?" said Bob Cherry.

"If Bunter's in funds, then it is a miracle," said Johnny Bull suspiciously. "Why, he tried to spring me for a tanner only this morning."

"He tried me for a bob," grinned Harry Wharton. "Has your postal order come, Billy?"

"Not at all," said Bunter calmly. "The fact is—"

"Now for a whopper!" murmured Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry, you beast! The

fact is, you fellows, the pater's just sent me a quid."

"I knew it was going to be a whopper," said Bob Cherry. "There was no letter for you by the twelve o'clock post, you fat fibber!"

"I didn't say there was," said Billy Bunter. "You see, the pater wired it on—I've just been to the post office to collect the quid now."

"Well, we did see Bunter coming out of the post office," said Harry Wharton, nodding. "But—"

"The butfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Singh, in his wonderful English. "I wisely suggest that Bunter shows us the pound note before we accept his esteemed hospitality, my chums."

"In any case, he ought to pay us what he owes us first out of the quid," said Bob Cherry. "He's owed me five bob for two terms."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Let's see the quid!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull, don't be so beastly suspicious," said Bunter indignantly. "I must say, I don't admire the manners of you fellows. Still, if you insist on seeing my quid—"

And Bunter broke off and inserted two fat fingers into his waistcoat pocket—apparently to take out the treasury note.

"You needn't show it, Bunter," laughed Harry Wharton. After all, Bunter had been known to stand treat, and it seemed rather mean to suspect a fellow who wished to be generous. "Chuck it, you fellows. If Bunter likes to stand a treat for once, we'll let him."

Bunter ceased to fumble in his waistcoat pocket on the instant—glad of the chance. As he had no pound note either there or elsewhere on his fat person, he would have found it extremely difficult to produce one. He had intended to explain that he had lost it; but he was saved the trouble now. And just then Uncle Clegg came into the back room.

Bunter blinked at him reprovingly. "Oh, here you are," he said loftily. "Keeping six gentlemen waiting while you serve a blessed village kid with

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toffee, eh? Got any decent cakes? We don't want any that you've had in the window for weeks, mind."

Uncle Clegg looked at him none too amiably. He knew Bunter, and had Bunter been alone he would have asked to see his money first. But the smiling faces of the Famous Five reassured him.

"We have plenty of nice cakes, Master Bunter," he grunted, "freshly baked this morning."

"Oh, good! Let's have some—plenty! And bring some ginger-beer. Any of you fellows like lemonade as well?" asked Bunter, looking at the other juniors.

"Ginger-beer will do for me," laughed Harry.

"Same here!"

"Oh, all right—just as you like," said Bunter. "But I shall want a couple to go on with, though. Buck up!"

"Very well, Master Bunter!"

Uncle Clegg ambled away, presently returning with two heaped plates of cakes, a ginger-beer each for the Famous Five, and two ginger-beers for "Master Bunter."

"Pile in, you fellows," said Billy Bunter cheerily. "Eat as many as you like—you won't find me mean, I can tell you."

And Bunter set a good example by piling in himself with a right good will. Before the other juniors had scarcely started, he had disposed of three cakes and one bottle of ginger-beer. By the time Harry Wharton & Co. had managed a cake and their ginger-beer, Bunter had cleared the rest, leaving only crumbs on the two big plates.

"Not bad cakes," he mumbled. "Old Clegg knows I'm not the fellow to put up with any old thing—what? Have some more, you men."

And Bunter reached for the bell.

"No thanks!" grinned Harry Wharton. "We're having a bit of a spread when we get back home, Bunter. If—if you like," added Harry, eyeing his chums dubiously, "you—you can join us."

"Good. I—I will!" said Bunter, strangely enough just as hesitating as the captain of the Remove. "But do have some more now."

"No, thanks—only spoil our giddy appetites for tea, Bunter."

"Do!" urged Bunter, who wasn't at all afraid of spoiling his appetite for tea. "Have some chocs, then—I could do with some."

"Might as well," grinned Bob Cherry. "Make the most of a great chance like this. It isn't often we're stood a feed by Bunter, chaps."

"A day worthy to be marked by a white stone, this!" agreed Frank Nugent. "Let's!"

"All right!" laughed Harry. "Go ahead, Bunter!"

"Right-ho!"

Bunter reached for the bell, and then he paused. After the feast was the reckoning, and Bunter didn't intend to face the reckoning at all.

"Hold on," he said. "I'll choose the chocs myself, you fellows. Old Clegg's rather a fraud, you know, and needs watching."

And laying down his half-eaten cake—the last one—Bunter left them and passed through the curtained doorway to choose the chocolates. Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled as he went. As a general rule they felt that Bunter also needed "watching"; but they did not think of watching him now. The very fact that he had left a cake half-eaten was enough to reassure them had they had any suspicions whatever.

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But they had none—at least, not of the truth!

"Dear old fat man!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Even Bunter can be generous at times, you see! There's good in the worst of us!"

"Shan't we have something to tell when we get to Greyfriars?" chuckled Nugent. "Fancy Bunter standing treat, without being asked, too!"

"It's rather queer, though," said Johnny Bull. "He—he can't have some game on, surely? Unless it's a sprat to catch a whale sort of wheeze!"

"I hope it's his own quid note, anyway," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat!" said Harry.

He had never thought of that. Certainly it did seem queer that Bunter senior had wired the cash! Only if the case was very urgent might Billy Bunter's pater be inclined to do that—if at all. For Mr. Samuel Bunter was not accustomed to sending his hopeful sons pound notes as tips; it was usually shillings or half-crowns at most.

And yet—

Harry was beginning to feel rather uneasy. He had heard Bunter speak to Uncle Clegg on reaching the shop, and even now he could hear a mumble of voices.

"We'll tackle the fat ass about the quid, anyway," said Harry, frowning a little. "I don't quite like it myself, chaps."

"Rather not."

The juniors waited for Bunter to return with the selection of chocolates. After three or four minutes they tired of waiting—indeed, they were more than tired, they were beginning to be very suspicious.

Bob Cherry suddenly jumped up, and crossing to the heavy curtain, he dragged it aside.

Then he jumped.

Save for Uncle Clegg and an old lady, who was just leaving, the shop was empty. Billy Bunter—usually a very conspicuous person—was conspicuous only by his absence.

"What—what the thump—" Bob Cherry stared in amazement.

"What's the matter?"

"He's—gone!" gasped Bob. "The—fat villain's gone!"

"Wha-at?"

"Gone!" roared Bob, in great excitement and wrath. "The fat fraud's done us again!"

"But—but—"

"Can't you see?" howled Bob. "The fat rascal never had a quid at all; he was taking us in! He's had a free feed, and now he's bolted!"

"The fat spoofer!"

"My hat!"

The juniors looked at each other eloquently.

They understood now—very, very clearly. Indeed, they wondered rather helplessly, how on earth they could have been taken in so easily—now. But they had been taken in—knowing Bunter as they did they could not doubt it. Bunter had spoofed them—as he had spoofed them many times and oft.

"He—he may have gone to get the pound note changed!" suggested Harry Wharton lamely.

It was a very forlorn hope, and Harry appealed to Uncle Clegg for information. That gentleman was looking very grim indeed. The juniors' excited wrath was enough to tell him that something was wrong.

"No, Master Bunter hasn't gone for change," he said. "He just said he had to catch a train, and that he'd

left the money with you, Master Wharton, to pay for what you'd had—and for the chocolate."

"The—the chocolate?"

"Yes, young gentlemen. He's took three shilling packets, to eat in the train, he said. Have you finished all the cakes and drinks, Master Wharton?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then that will be—let me see—seven-and-eightpence, Master Wharton, if you please," said Uncle Clegg, with deadly politeness.

And Uncle Clegg, looking very grim and determined, waited—obviously for the seven-and-eightpence.

"Well, my word!" breathed Harry.

"The—the fat rotter!"

"Done in the eye!" panted Bob Cherry, red with wrath. "Done again by that fat villain!"

"Didn't Master Bunter leave the money?" asked Uncle Clegg. "If he didn't I'm afraid I shall have to ask you young gentlemen to settle the bill."

"You shouldn't have believed the fat rotter!" snorted Bob Cherry. "You know what a spoofer he is, Uncle Clegg—"

"We know, and we were taken in," said Harry, breaking suddenly into a rueful laugh. "It's no good, Bob—we may as well shell out, and go after Bunter, instead of gassing here about it. With luck we'll catch him up and get the blessed chocolate from him before the fat worm scoffs it."

"My hat, yes!"

It would be some measure of consolation to get the chocolate back at all events—the juniors all saw that. Moreover, they were very eager indeed to see Billy Bunter at the earliest possible moment. They certainly couldn't blame Uncle Clegg for being taken in when they had been taken in themselves. They know how very easy it was to be taken in by Billy Bunter's crafty wiles.

Silently the juniors searched their pockets and eventually the seven-and-eightpence was duly made up and handed over to Uncle Clegg. Then Harry led the way out of the village tuckshop with a rush.

At full tilt they dashed along the High Street, knowing Bunter would make tracks for the school either by the lane or the field path. And they wanted to catch him up before he reached either.

"And we'll smash him when we get him!" panted Bob Cherry, wrathfully. "The—the cheeky fat cad! He's got the blessed nerve of a regiment. It's a bit thick even for Bunter."

"Yes, rather!"

All agreed that it was. And after that they saved their breath for running. Billy Bunter had certainly overdone it this time, and from the expressions on the faces of Harry Wharton & Co. it was very clear that they intended to point this fact out to William George Bunter in no uncertain manner. Billy Bunter had had his feast, and now it looked as if the reckoning was at hand.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

More Trickery!

"OH crumbs! I've done it now!" Thus Billy Bunter as he rolled along Friardale Lane towards Greyfriars.

When Billy Bunter had left Uncle Clegg's shop in great haste, his fat features had worn a fat, triumphant

grin. His little dodge had worked beautifully—his desperate hunger had been appeased at somebody else's expense.

But now the fat and fatuous Owl was beginning to look ahead and count the possible cost in other ways than financial, to himself.

Billy Bunter was one of those fellows who never looked ahead, being content to live in the present and to make the most of it. It was a little failing that very often got him into trouble. But now his desperate hunger was appeased he had the time to think of other things. And as he rolled along the lane he could not help thinking of the immediate future. All good things usually have to be paid for, and Bunter realised that the feed he had just had would have to be paid for—not

groaned as he sighted five figures in the distance behind him.

"Oh dear!"

Bunter plugged away valiantly, though he was not feeling up to much running by now. He would possibly have run much better had he not taken frequent bites at the slab of chocolate. At all events, the five figures overhauled him rapidly—their running footsteps were audible to him now. Then came a faint shout in Bob Cherry's familiar tones.

"Stop, you fat villain!"

Billy Bunter did not stop. He spurted desperately, his fat little legs going like clockwork. His jaws were still busy on the chocolate. He was determined to make sure of one of the packets at all events.

Cherry's heavy hand fastened on his shoulder. The next instant Bob's chums dashed up breathlessly, and surrounded Billy Bunter.

The reckoning was at hand!

Billy Bunter panted and trembled as he blinked at the wrathful faces of Harry Wharton & Co.

"Ow! Oh dear!" he panted. "I—I say, you fellows—"

With two packets of chocolate in his fat hand Billy Bunter made a jump for the nearest hedge. He struggled a yard up the bank, and then he slithered down again in the slippery clay. As he did so Bob Cherry's heavy hand fastened on his shoulder. "Got him!" he panted.

(See Chapter 2.)



perhaps in cash, but in pain and tribulations.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter, hastening his steps after a glance behind him. "Those beasts are bound to be waxy—especially when they know about the chocolate! They won't understand how jolly hungry I was, and it's no good telling 'em I did pay old Clegg—he's such an old beast, and he'd kick up a frightful fuss! I'd better make sure of this chocolate before they do come after me, anyway."

And Bunter made a start on the first packet of chocolate, devouring it hurriedly as he hastened along the lane. After a few more seconds he again glanced behind him, and he

"Stop, you podgy burglar!"

Bob Cherry's bellow almost made the fat junior leap from his skin, so close was it. And the rest of the Famous Five were close now—scarcely a dozen yards behind. It was a case of the tortoise and the hare—though the hare won this time hands down.

Escape was evidently hopeless, and Bunter pulled up and jumped for the nearest hedge. The bank was high, and with a piece of chocolate in one fat hand and the two unopened packets in the other, Bunter found it a difficult matter to scramble up it.

He struggled a yard up the bank, and then slithered down again in the slippery clay. As he did so, Bob

"Got him!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Hold the fat rotter, Bob!"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Bob breathlessly. "We'll teach the fat spoofer to try his games on us!"

"Ow! Leggo!" roared Bunter, as Bob Cherry shook him and then snatched the two packets of chocolate from his hand. "Leggo! Here gimme my chocolate back, you beast!"

"Not much! We've paid for that, you fat swindler!" said Bob. "Now, what shall we do with the fat worm, chaps?"

"Give him a good ragging, and then roll him in the ditch," suggested Frank Nugent. "Then dribble him back to Greyfriars."

"Good wheeze!"

But it didn't seem a good "wheeze" to the hapless Owl of the Remove. He gave a startled howl.

"Leggo! Oh dear! I say, you fellows, it's all right! I never meant to let you fellows pay for that feed—honour bright!"

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"What?"

"It—it was like this," said Billy Bunter, his brain working overtime. "When I left you fellows I—I suddenly remembered I'd forgotten to send off a telegram for Loder. So—so I rushed out without speaking to old Clegg! Then—then when I'd sent off Loder's wire I completely forgot you fellows—honour bright!"

"Well, my hat!"

"That's how it was!" said Bunter, eyeing the juniors hopefully. "My memory often serves me tricks like that, you know. It—it's in the family. My Uncle James once lost his memory—"

"You—you awful fibber—"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"You fat rotter—"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I hope you don't doubt a fellow's word!" said Bunter feebly. "But in any case, it's all right—quite all right! I wouldn't dream of leaving you fellows to pay for a feed that I was standing. I shall insist upon paying old Clegg as a matter of course."

"Come along, then!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Not now—some other time, I mean!" gasped Bunter. "You—you see, when I was leaving the post office some foot-pads—fearful brutes they were—attacked me, and robbed me—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I lost the pound note!" gasped Bunter. "Must have dropped it in the High Street, you know. But it's all right—right as rain! Did you have to pay that old beast Clegg?"

"Of course we did, you fat rotter! Seven-and-eightpence—"

"Right! Just leggo of me and I'll make a note of that right away. I insist upon paying, of course—out of my next postal-order, when it comes. So that will be all right, what?"

The juniors stared at him, and then with one accord they grabbed him and sat him down hard on the muddy road.

"Whooooooooop!"

A second howl—somewhat muffled—came from the Owl of the Remove, as Bob Cherry rammed the sticky mess of chocolate in Bunter's fat fist into his fat face, rubbing it well in.

Bunter sat and spluttered and roared, his features smothered in sticky cream chocolate.

"Now bump the fat rotter and roll him in the ditch!" said Johnny Bull wrathfully.

But Bunter didn't want to be bumped, or rolled in the ditch, or dribbled back to Greyfriars.

He leaped to his feet like a jack-in-a-box. And as he did so his eye suddenly caught sight of something—a silvery gleam through the trees beyond the hedge.

It was the River Sark, which ran quite close to the lane at that spot, with just the narrow belt of trees in between. And the sight brought sudden inspiration to the crafty mind of Billy Bunter.

The next instant, from the direction of that silvery stream of water, came a sudden faint cry.

"Help!"

"What the thump—"

"Help! Oh help! Help!"

Under the dusky trees from the shining river came the appealing cry for help, faint but clear enough, and for a single instant the juniors stood motionless, eyeing each other in sudden alarm.

Harry Wharton's face paled, and he gave a gasp.

"The river—somebody in the river! Quick, you fellows!"

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"Yes, rather!" panted Bob Cherry, his cheery features suddenly grave. "Come on!"

Harry Wharton scrambled up the steep and slippery bank and dived through a gap in the hedge; and Bob Cherry, flinging the two packets of chocolate away, was after him a second later. Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh released Bunter instantly and went after them—Bunter and the chocolate alike forgotten in that moment.

Just within the hedge, under the dusky trees, a notice-board showed white—a notice-board stating that trespassers would be prosecuted. The land there was an outlying part of the Popper Court estates, and was strictly out of bounds to Greyfriars fellows.

But the juniors did not think of that; in any ordinary way notice-boards had few terrors for the Famous Five, and under the present circumstances this one had none; indeed, they did not give it a thought.

They crashed through ferns and thick undergrowth recklessly, and soon emerged on the banks of the glimmering Sark, murmuring past sullenly in the dim dusk.

Harry scanned the waters anxiously and swiftly.

But he scanned them in vain for any sign of a drowning person. His chums joined him breathlessly, and five pairs of eyes searched the flowing Sark without result. Out in mid-stream a fish broke water with a flop and vanished again—that was all. The river was silent and deserted.

"Well my hat!" gasped Harry. "I heard a cry for help—certain of it."

"I did, too," said Johnny Bull in a low voice.

"Perhaps gone under!" breathed Frank Nugent.

In silence the scared juniors scanned the water, waiting anxiously, ready to fling off coats and dive in on the instant if necessary. But no struggling figure broke the surface of the gleaming river.

"Either we're too late, or he's been carried down-stream," said Harry Wharton in a strained voice. "We'd better try round the bend; the current's pretty strong, you know."

"My hat! Yes!"

The juniors followed Harry instantly, their eyes never leaving the sullen surface of the Sark as they hurried along the bank. They reached the bend, and looked along the silvery ribbon of water beyond it.

Not a break or object showed on the stretch of rippling river.

"Jolly queer!" said Harry Wharton. "The poor chap, whoever he was, must have sunk like a stone after calling. I'm certain it came from the river."

"Absolutely!" said Bob Cherry. "But it's queer we can see no signs—Oh!"

"What's the matter, Bob?"

Bob Cherry did not answer for a moment; he seemed to be struggling for breath, whilst a strange expression came over his ruddy features.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh, great pip!"

"What—what—"

"Bunter!" choked Bob, going crimson in the face. "Bunter, the—the crafty cad!"

"Eh? What on earth—"

"Bunter!" yelled Bob, getting his breath at last. "Bunter, the fat villain! He's done us again!"

"Bob—"

"Can't you see?" shrieked Bob Cherry. "He worked that with his rotten ventriloquism! It was him calling for help; he was ventriloquising to save his fat skin."

"Oh!"

"Oh, mum-my hat!"

For one stunned instant the juniors stared at Bob Cherry, and then they remembered and understood!

Bunter's ventriloquism!

In a blinding flash they saw it now, as Bob Cherry had seen it a moment before.

Once again Billy Bunter had used his amazing gift of ventriloquism in order to save his fat skin. They saw that fact very clearly now. It was no wonder they could not see any sight of a drowning person now, or hear any sound, either.

There hadn't been a drowning person at all. It was just Billy Bunter, exercising his powers in a desperate attempt to save himself from the vengeance of the juniors.

It was not the first time he had done such a thing by any manner of means. But they could scarcely be blamed for being taken in, for all that. When Bunter did use his gift it had usually been in order to get other fellows into trouble; and it had invariably led to trouble for the ventriloquist. In fact, so much trouble had Bunter caused at Greyfriars by the reckless and mischievous use of his precious gift that it was now almost as much as his fat life was worth to use it at all. It was, indeed, such a long time since Bunter had exercised it that the juniors could be forgiven for forgetting that he owned such a gift.

But they remembered it now!

"Well, the—the fat rotter!" stuttered Harry Wharton in great wrath. "That's it, of course! The awful little cad!"

"Done us brown!" growled Johnny Bull. "My hat! We'll smash the little sweep for this!"

"Yes, rather! Come on; let's go after him!"

The juniors hurried away; they saw no humour in the situation, and their one desire was to get their hands on the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

But they were not fated to leave the Popper Court estate without further incident.

As they started away Bob Cherry suddenly halted with a startled exclamation.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! 'Ware keepers!"

"And jolly old Sir Hilton!" murmured Frank Nugent. "Better bolt."

"Bolt it is!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "Put it on, chaps!"

And they put it on. The sight of Sir Hilton with a keeper was enough. An angry shout followed them.

"Stop! Stop, you young rascals! I order you to stop!"

It was Sir Hilton Popper's voice—an arrogant, domineering voice only too well known to Greyfriars fellows.

"Rats!" answered Bob Cherry. "Rats, old bean!"

They were much nearer to the lane than the keeper and Sir Hilton were to them, and the cheery, cheeky Bob felt he was risking nothing in answering the crusty old baronet like that. Bob had no respect whatever for Sir Hilton Popper, Bart; nor had any of the fellows at Greyfriars for that matter. Sir Hilton was on the school board of governors, and was a big landowner in the district, and a very big "gun" indeed, especially in his own important estimation.

But the fellows at Greyfriars neither respected nor loved him; indeed, they cordially detested him. And for good reason. Scarcely a week went by in which Sir Hilton did not come to Greyfriars to lay a complaint before the Head regarding the conduct—alleged

trespassing and the like—of Greyfriars fellows. It was doubtful, indeed, whether the Head himself respected Sir Hilton on that account. He certainly did not love him.

Bob Cherry's disrespectful reply almost made Sir Hilton foam at the mouth with scandalised wrath.

"Stop!" he bellowed. "Stop, you insolent young villains! Johnson, after them, fool! After them!"

Johnson broke into a run, as did Sir Hilton himself, though Johnson, at all events, had no hope whatever of catching any of the juniors.

Scarcely had Harry Wharton covered many yards, however, when he tripped over a jutting root, and went headlong with a thud that shook him up from head to foot.

But he was up again almost on the instant; the heavy thud of the keeper's number nines, perilously close, made him do that, dazed as he was.

Gasping for breath, he jumped up and tore after his pelting chums through the trees for the lane.

Luckily it was scarcely twenty yards away by this, and as Johnson made a desperate clutch at him, Harry dived through the thin hedge and fairly sprawled in the lane beyond.

Then he jumped up again and fled for his life after his fleeing chums, Sir Hilton's raging voice dying away behind him.

Luckily—for Harry Wharton was about "whacked"—the keeper saw no reason why he should follow along the public highway, and he did not follow. And a minute later Harry joined his chums as they pulled up and waited for him farther along the lane.

"Ow!" panted Harry. "Oh, my only hat! That was a near thing!"

"Thought you were caught," gasped Bob. "Good man!"

"A narrow shave," said Harry, panting for breath. "I came a cropper and winded myself. Oh crumbs! I'm whacked!"

"This means another giddy complaint from the old hunks in the morning," grinned Bob.

"Doesn't matter," said Harry, grinning ruefully. "He couldn't have spotted any of us; too dark under the trees for that. We're safe enough."

"Hallo, Bunter's gone!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

Bunter undoubtedly had gone. So had the two packets of chocolate. The lane was deserted save for themselves.

"Never mind," breathed Harry Wharton, looking down at his muddy clothes. "My hat! Won't we just make it warm for the fat fraud!"

"My hat! Yes!"

And with this thought to console them the Famous Five started back for Greyfriars. William George Bunter had escaped the reckoning for the moment—but only for the moment. And by doing so he had added still more to the debt. Harry Wharton was covered from head to foot in mud, and he was in no mood to be lenient with Billy Bunter. And his chums were equally determined to put the trickster of the Remove "through it."

On arrival at Greyfriars the Famous Five postponed tea in order to look for Bunter. It proved to be a long hunt, for Bunter had made himself scarce, and the juniors had to give it up at last and go to their study for a belated tea. After tea they felt better, but not more kindly disposed to William George Bunter. Their wrath had, indeed, improved with keeping.

Once again they went hunting for Bunter. And this time they found him.

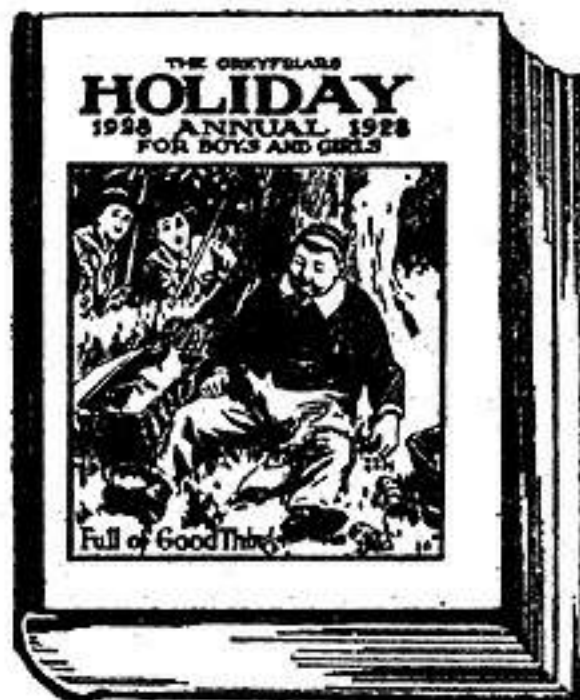
Bunter, though he had had the chocolate, and the cakes, and the ginger-beer, was very soon hungry again, and he was forced by hunger to visit his study to see what Peter Todd had left in the study cupboard.

He was there when the Famous Five arrived, and though he took refuge under the table, the wrathful juniors found him and hauled him out, ignoring his howls.

Then they dealt with the Greyfriars ventriloquist, and long before they had finished with him Billy Bunter regretted having "bilked" the Famous Five for that tea at Uncle Clegg's, and that he had practised ventriloquism upon them. The Famous Five streamed from the study at last, a trifle exhausted but quite satisfied. Billy Bunter was certainly exhausted, though hardly satisfied.

And there Harry Wharton & Co. imagined the matter ended. Even Bunter imagined—and fondly hoped—

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that it was ended. But it wasn't. It was only the beginning of trouble, both for the Famous Five and for the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Licked!

"I SAY, you fellows, here's old Popper again. He, he, he!" And Bunter chortled gleefully.

When old Popper—otherwise Sir Hilton Popper, Bart., J.P.—visited Greyfriars it generally meant trouble for someone. That explained Bunter's cheerfulness. Bunter knew that he himself had not transgressed by upsetting the august serenity of Sir Hilton, and so, being safe himself, Bunter chortled on principle. Bunter was a fellow who found heaps of entertainment in the troubles of other people.

It was during morning break the following day, and the juniors had just come out for a stroll in the Close.

Bunter had quite forgotten—and apparently forgiven—his record ragging the previous evening. As a matter of fact, Bunter lived amid a whirl of trouble and excitement, and raggings were frequent and free, and therefore soon forgotten by Bunter. And the Famous Five were ready to forget, too, if not to forgive.

"Eh, what's that?" said Harry Wharton, halting in some alarm. "Old Popper's here, you say, Bunter?"

"Yes. He, he, he! Somebody's for it!" grinned Bunter. "There he goes! Look at his chivvy!"

And Bunter pointed across to a tall, angular gentleman who was crossing the Close towards the School House.

It was Sir Hilton Popper, and from his looks Sir Hilton was not in a very amiable mood that bright morning.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Harry. "That looks as if he did spot some of us last night, you chaps!"

"Phew!"

The Famous Five eyed each other dismally. It seemed scarcely likely that the baronet would come over in person to complain unless he knew the names of the culprits; if he had, indeed, come to complain at all, which the juniors did not doubt.

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, is he after you? If he is, you'd better put some exercise-books in your bags! That's a tip."

"And here's another," said Bob Cherry, landing out with his boot. "The tip of my boot, Bunter. Take it and go!"

"Whooooop! Yow!"

Bunter departed, roaring, not wanting any more of Cherry's painful "tips."

"Oh, blow!" said Harry. "I can't see how old Popper can have spotted any of us under the trees. But he may suspect. You shouldn't have yelled at him, Bob. He's heard your lovely voice before. You had a row with him only last week on the towpath!"

"Once heard never forgotten!" grinned Frank Nugent. "We'd better take Bunter's valuable tip, and shove some books in our bags while we've got the chance."

Harry grinned, but his face grew thoughtful. It seemed pretty certain that the old gentleman had come about the previous evening's affair. Harry could not help wishing Bob had not spoken so disrespectfully to the irascible old martinet. That would add greatly to the crime in the Head's view.

Three minutes later Harry Wharton looked still more thoughtful as Wingate of the Sixth came across to him in the Close.

"Wharton! Wanted in the Head's study—sharp!"

"Oh dear! Right, Wingate!"

Wingate walked away, and with a rueful look at his chums, Harry followed him. It never paid to keep the Head waiting, if it could be helped.

But it was queer. Harry was certain that neither Sir Hilton nor the keeper had "spotted" his face. Apparently, as he only had been sent for, they had not spotted anyone else, and Harry felt thankful for that.

Harry soon knew the reason for things.

"This is the boy without a doubt!" snorted Sir Hilton, when the junior marched into the study. "Ha! Trespassing and using insulting language to me, begad!"

And Sir Hilton glared at Harry. Harry ignored him, and waited respectfully for Dr. Locke to speak.

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"Wharton!" exclaimed the Head. "Were you trespassing on Sir Hilton Popper's estate last evening?"

It was the question direct. Harry Wharton said nothing. He had no intention of denying it, and he wasn't going to admit it until he knew Sir Hilton had indeed "spotted" him.

His doubts were quickly dispelled, however.

After waiting for a moment Dr. Locke quietly laid on the table a small pocket notebook. Harry recognised it at once. It was his own—a notebook in which he entered up footer matters he wished to remember. As he stared at it Harry made a mental vow never to write his name in a notebook again. He saw the why and wherefore of it all now.

"Last evening," said the Head quietly, "Sir Hilton Popper discovered several boys trespassing on his property. He called to them to stop, and they refused and ran away. One boy, however, fell, and in falling he apparently dropped this notebook from his pocket."

"Oh!" gasped Harry, colouring.

"The notebook has your name on it," said the Head sternly. "Were you the boy who dropped it, Wharton?"

Harry did not deny the soft impeachment; it was quite useless in the circumstances to deny it.

"Ye-es, sir."

"Very well. Who were your companions?"

Harry Wharton remained silent.

"How dare you refuse to answer your headmaster!" boomed Sir Hilton, glowering. "Answer him at once, and give the names of your rascally accomplices, boy!"

The Head raised his hand, frowning.

"Kindly leave me to deal with the boy, Sir Hilton," he said tartly. "Wharton, what were you doing on Sir Hilton Popper's property last evening?"

The good old Head had purposely declined to insist upon Harry answering his other question—and Harry felt thankful and grateful for that, at all events.

"We—I thought I heard a call for help from the river, sir," he stammered. "We were walking along the lane, and—and then we heard a shout for help. We ran through the trees to the river at once—any fellow would have done the same, trespassing or not, sir."

"What? Bless my soul!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" snorted Sir Hilton. "Balderdash, begad!"

"It's quite true, sir," said Harry respectfully. "There was nobody in the river, though—it must have been somebody pulling our leg—I mean, playing a trick on us. We were just going back to the lane when Sir Hilton and the keeper turned up. That's the truth, sir."

"You went there for no other reason?" asked the Head, plainly amazed at the story.

"No, sir. We were on his property scarcely five minutes," said Harry.

"What utter rubbish!" hooted Sir Hilton. "The boy is obviously inventing this absurd story, doctor!"

"I do not think so," said the Head, eyeing Harry keenly. "Wharton is not the boy to attempt to excuse his fault by a lie. Have you any reason to suppose that anyone would play such an absurd trick on you, Wharton?"

"Y-yes, sir. We know a fellow did, sir. We—we only guessed it afterwards, when we'd discovered nobody was in need of help in the river."

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"Who was likely to play such a trick, Wharton?"

Harry said nothing, shifting uncomfortably from one leg to another. Much as Bunter deserved it, Harry had no intention of giving him away.

"Very well," said the Head grimly at last. "I will accept your story, Wharton, strange as it seems, for I believe you are shielding someone. There is, however, the matter of using insulting language to Sir Hilton Popper. I cannot overlook that. Sir Hilton states that the boy who fell—yourself, Wharton—was the boy who answered him so disgracefully and disrespectfully. I regard that as a very serious matter. Do you deny it, Wharton?"

It was on the tip of Harry's tongue to deny it. But a denial would only result in Bob Cherry's name being dragged into the matter; for the Head would insist upon knowing the real culprit.

He remained silent from a loyal desire to save his chum.

The Head waited a full minute, and then he rose and picked up his cane.

"Very well, Wharton. Your silence speaks for itself. I am surprised that you, the head boy of your Form, should so far forget yourself as to use such terms to a gentleman of Sir Hilton Popper's position. Hold out your hand!"

Harry held out his hand.

Swish!

"Now the other!"

Swish!

"Now you may go!"

"Ow! Yes, sir!" gasped Harry.

He left the room, squirming. He had expected more than two; but he had found that two quite enough. He found his chums waiting outside in the corridor.

"Had it bad?" said Bob. "What happened?"

"Only a licking!" groaned Harry. "Ow! The old chap can lay it on, and no mistake!"

"Were you spotted, then?"

"Ow! No! I dropped my pocket notebook when I fell last night. The dashed thing had my name in it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The old rotter looked like a Hun!" exclaimed Harry, rubbing his hands together. "It's a wonder he didn't insist on a flogging. Ow!"

"What's up?" asked Skinner, lounging up with a grin. "Old Popper got you a licking?"

"Ow! Yes! Blow the old brute!"

"My hat! Fancy his Magnificence breaking bounds, you fellows!" said Skinner, addressing his grinning companions. "Naughty, naughty! Is that what you call setting us bad lads a good example, may I ask, Wharton? I'm asking you as captain of the Form."

"I'll give you my boot if you don't jolly well shut up, Skinner!" snorted Harry warningly.

"Hark to him!" said Skinner, casting his eyes skywards. "Won't allow us common mortals to ask him a civil question now. As skipper of the Form he ought to—Yooooop!"

Skinner jumped away with a yelp as Harry's boot caught him in the rear. Harry wasn't in the mood for Skinner's misplaced humour.

"He, he, he!" grinned Billy Bunter. "I say, here's old Popper now!"

Sir Hilton Popper came striding out of the School House. He was looking angrier than ever. In Sir Hilton's view Harry should have been flogged, and Sir Hilton had pointed his view

out in no uncertain words to the Head. The Head, in polite terms, had as good as told Sir Hilton to mind his own business, and Sir Hilton had not liked it—hence his angry face now.

"I say, Wharton," grinned Billy Bunter, "chuck a turf at the old beast! I would!"

"I've a jolly good mind to!" grunted Harry, glaring towards the baronet, who had stopped to speak to Mr. Quelch on the School House steps. "The old cad—"

"Go on, then!" grinned Bunter. "He'll never know who did it. He, he, he! I dare you to, Wharton!"

"Oh, shut up, you silly fat ass!"

"Yah! Funk!" jeered Bunter. "I would in a minute, I can tell you! Catch me funking biffing the old beast! Shall I do it for you?"

"Yes, do, Bunter!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Hallo! There he goes! Now's your chance, Bunter!"

"Right!" said Bunter.

And, stooping swiftly, Bunter grabbed a loose chunk of turf left on one of the flower borders by the gardener. The next moment it left his fat hand—and by a miracle it went whizzing in Sir Hilton Popper's direction.

Whizz!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

GUILTY!

"BUNTER—" gasped Harry.

But he was too late. The turf had already left Bunter's hand, and it whizzed towards Sir Hilton Popper, and smote him full in the side of his hard face.

Thud!

Bump!

Sir Hilton bellowed and sat down hard.

There was a gasp—a gasp of utter, stupified amazement.

That Billy Bunter, the fattest, laziest, and biggest funk in all Greyfriars had done this thing seemed utterly incredible.

Yet he had!

Sir Hilton Popper, baronet, landowner, and school governor, sat in the Close with a muddy face, struck down by the hand of Billy Bunter!

"Oh, my hat!"

But Bunter himself was the most amazed of all.

Not for one moment had he intended to do this daring thing. He had not dreamed of doing it. Even now he could scarcely believe that he had done it.

But he had. In a moment of mental aberration—by a sudden, unaccountable impulse—he had done it. It seemed to the suddenly terrified Bunter that something outside himself had impelled him to do this deed.

Yet he had done it; there was no doubting that. Sir Hilton sat in the Close and gasped as he gouged mud from his eyes and features.

It was a sudden gasp from Bob Cherry that brought the sad fact home to Billy Bunter.

"Oh, my hat! Run for it!" gurgled Bob. "Run for it, Bunter!"

"Oh, dear!"

Only a single instant longer the stupified Billy Bunter hesitated, and then he vanished round the corner, his little fat legs going like clockwork, his fat, scared face white as a sheet.

The rest followed his example—with the exception of Harry Wharton.

The captain of the Remove stood rooted to the earth in amazement and sheer alarm. Bunter's amazing

Whizz! The turf flew from the hand of Billy Bunter and Sir Hilton Popper sat down hard, gouging the mud from his crimson features. "My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Run for it!" Billy Bunter vanished round the corner, his fat little legs going like clockwork. The rest followed his example—with the exception of Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove stood rooted to the ground in amazement and alarm. (See Chapter 4.)



not had simply taken his breath away. The sight of Sir Hilton Popper, sitting there in the Close, gouging mud from his crimson features, seemed to fascinate Harry. Then he started forward, impelled by a kindly desire to aid the old gentleman. Harry was good-natured and considerate, even to his enemies.

It was very often a mistake—and it was so now, as Harry was doomed to discover.

As he ran forward towards Sir Hilton Mr. Quelch came down the School House steps hurriedly, drawn to the spot by Sir Hilton Popper's roar.

He reached Sir Hilton first, and he helped the old gentleman to his feet.

Harry stopped, wishing now that he had bolted, like the others. He wished it more and more the next few moments.

"Hold him!" spluttered Sir Hilton, pointing a shaking and muddy forefinger at Harry. "That is the young scoundrel, Quelch! Hold him! Do not allow him to escape!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Harry.

"Wharton, stand where you are!" cried Mr. Quelch sternly. "Sir Hilton—bless my soul! What has happened? Has this boy—"

"Of course he has!" hooted Sir Hilton, almost beside himself with rage. "He flung a turf at me! It took me by surprise, and caused me to fall heavily. I am hurt—injured! Good gad! The young villain! The—the brutal young ruffian shall suffer dearly

for this outrage, Quelch! Bring him to the Head—at once!"

"Bless my soul! Sir Hilton—my dear sir, are you sure—"

"Bring the young ruffian!" hooted Sir Hilton, in a rage. "Good gad, don't I speak plain enough? Bring him—bring the young hooligan before his headmaster. It is an act of revenge—revenge for the caning he received from Dr. Locke, for which I was responsible!"

And Sir Hilton stormed away indoors again, fairly shaking with outraged wrath. Mr. Quelch eyed Harry Wharton in amazement, and then he nodded to him.

"Come with me, Wharton!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Harry.

He followed, scarcely realising that Sir Hilton had actually charged him with the outrage. With the irate baronet limping ahead, they wended their way to the headmaster's study. Harry Wharton had scarcely expected to be going there so soon again, and he could not help feeling inward qualms.

Obviously, Sir Hilton believed that he had done it—out of revenge for the caning!

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Harry inwardly.

The prospect of another interview with the Head was dismaying. Certainly, it was rather awkward! Though a score of fellows had seen the tragedy, only Harry Wharton had been "idiot" enough to wait for developments. Harry

himself wished from the bottom of his heart that he had not done so now. He himself had a clean conscience on the subject, but he knew he could not give Billy Bunter away.

Harry was feeling quite sorry for Bunter just then. He knew only too well that the fat junior had done it in a moment of madness, and had scarcely realised that he was doing it. If the truth came to light William George was in for a very hot time indeed. Harry Wharton was resolved that it should not come out through him, at all events.

Harry had come to that resolve when the door of the Head's study was reached, and without waiting to knock, Sir Hilton barged inside, Mr. Quelch and Harry following at his heels.

Dr. Locke looked up from his desk in no little exasperation. But his exasperation gave place to amazed alarm as he sighted Sir Hilton's muddy, furious features.

"Good gracious! Sir Hilton—your face! What ever has happened? My dear sir—"

Sir Hilton jammed his monocle into place, and then he pointed a quivering forefinger at Harry Wharton.

"That boy!" he gasped. "That young hooligan has added still further to his misdeeds by assaulting me—me, begad! He has just flung a turf—a filthy turf—at me, begad!"

"Sir Hilton! Impossible!"

"It is not impossible, Locke!" hooted

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the baronet. "Allow me to tell you, sir, that it has actually happened. Look—look at me! Look at my face! A sodden turf! It struck me violently in the face and caused me to fall heavily. I am hurt—exceedingly hurt! That—that—young villain—"

The baronet fairly spluttered with wrath, and fairly spluttered in his effort to continue. Dr. Locke eyed him blankly, and then he looked at Wharton.

"Wharton!" he gasped. "Is it possible that you have dared to do as Sir Hilton Popper has stated? Did you throw a turf at Sir Hilton? Answer me, boy!"

"No, sir."

Harry Wharton spoke calmly.

"The boy is—lying!" roared the angry baronet. Sir Hilton was a gentleman who neither kept his temper nor minced his words. "He cannot—dare not—deny it! There was no other boy in sight, and his motive—that of revenge—is clear enough."

"Bless my soul! This is very serious indeed!" said the Head. His kind old face had assumed a stern expression. Little as the Head enjoyed Sir Hilton's troublesome visits, the Head was bound to take up a matter of this kind.

He bent a grave look upon Wharton.

"Wharton," he said. "You have heard what Sir Hilton has stated. Do you still deny knowledge of this outrage?"

"I didn't throw the turf, sir," said Harry steadily.

"Mr. Quelch," said the Head, turning to the Remove master, "there were doubtless witnesses of the assault. Will you kindly make inquiries—try to discover who were in the Close at the time?"

"Very good, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "I myself saw quite a number of boys in the Close only a few seconds before-hand."

Mr. Quelch went out, intending to visit the quad and Close. In the Hall he came upon three Removites, who were standing chatting there—Skinner, Stott, and Snoop.

Skinner nudged his chums as he sighted the Remove master and turned his back. Skinner had not forgotten Harry Wharton's kick, and he now saw a chance to repay it with interest.

"It must have been Wharton," said Skinner, apparently ignorant of Mr. Quelch approaching. "Didn't he say something about chucking the turf just before?"

"Yes, he did," said Snoop, with one eye on Mr. Quelch.

"I heard him, too," said Stott, nodding. "Rather thick of Wharton!"

"That's just it. Wharton ought to have known better than to— Oh!"

Skinner broke off, with a clever pretence of being startled as Mr. Quelch halted by them.

Mr. Quelch was looking very stern.

"Skinner," he said sharply. "I accidentally overheard what you were saying when I came along. I do not usually take notice of things accidentally overheard. In this case the matter is too serious to ignore. You stated that Wharton spoke of throwing a turf at Sir Hilton Popper?"

"Oh, sir!" said Skinner. "If you don't mind, sir, I'd rather not say anything, sir!"

"I order you, Skinner!" said Mr. Quelch, more sharply.

"If—if you really order me to speak, sir—"

"I do. Did you witness the assault upon Sir Hilton Popper, Skinner?"

Skinner had done so; but Skinner's

grudge was against Harry Wharton, not Billy Bunter, and the cad of the Remove did not hesitate.

"Oh, no, sir. I had just walked away when it must have happened, sir. But I—"

"Did either of you boys witness it?" demanded the Remove master, turning to Stott and Snoop.

"Oh, no, sir. We were with Skinner."

"But you heard Wharton speak of throwing the turf?"

"If—if you insist, sir—"

"I do!" said Mr. Quelch angrily.

"What did Wharton say?"

"He—he said he'd a jolly good mind to chuck a turf at Sir Hilton, sir," said Skinner hesitatingly.

"That was it, sir," said Stott and Snoop together.

"Very well. Kindly do not leave the House, boys, as you will possibly be required as witnesses in this matter."

And Mr. Quelch turned and rustled back to the Head's study. In his view there was no need to investigate further. Fortunately—for Skinner & Co.—he did not see their winks as he walked away, nor did he hear their quiet chuckles.

He gave Harry Wharton a very grim look as he entered the Head's study and closed the door.

"Well, Mr. Quelch?"

"I have discovered something that will, I believe, do away with the necessity for further investigation, sir," reported Mr. Quelch. "I have just learned that Wharton spoke of throwing the turf at Sir Hilton Popper just before the act took place."

"Oh, indeed!" said Dr. Locke, turning a grim glance on Harry. "You hear that, Wharton? Did you speak as Mr. Quelch suggests?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"What words did you use?"

"I—I said that I'd a jolly good mind to chuck a turf at Sir Hilton," said Harry, flushing crimson. "But—but I didn't actually do it, sir. I wouldn't have done it. It—it was only silly talk, sir."

"If you had the desire to do such a thing," said Dr. Locke sternly, "then it was only a step to doing the act itself. In view of this, I am afraid that I cannot accept your word that you did not do it, Wharton. You had just been caned, and doubtless you were feeling revengeful against Sir Hilton. The motive is there."

"I didn't do it, sir," said Harry earnestly, beginning to be seriously alarmed now. "I give you my word, sir."

"Rubbish!" hooted Sir Hilton, his fierce eyes gleaming with triumph now. "How dare you deny it, you young ruffian? Why, I myself saw you throw the turf!"

"You—you saw Wharton throw the turf, Sir Hilton?" said Dr. Locke. "Bless my soul! You did not say—"

"I am quite certain now that this was the boy," said the baronet, with heat. "I have a recollection of seeing a boy with his arm raised just before the turf struck me. I am quite certain that it was this young rascal—indeed, I recognised his face at the moment."

"Oh!"

Harry Wharton looked staggered at that. It was quite possible that Sir Hilton really believed his statement, though it was more possible that he was allowing himself to believe it in view of the motive and evidence. It was scarcely credible that a man of his position would like just to get a junior into trouble.

But he had said it, and the Head pursed his lips.

"Then that alters the case entirely,

Sir Hilton," he said. "The matter is now clear, and you may rest assured that Wharton will be punished very severely indeed."

"But I'm innocent, sir," said Harry desperately. "Sir Hilton is not speaking—I mean, is making a mistake."

"Silence! How dare you, Wharton!" thundered the Head. "Sir Hilton has stated that he recognised you as the culprit, and it is impossible for me to doubt his word in the matter. Moreover, the motive and evidence is quite sufficient. As I have already caned you this morning, I shall not repeat that punishment. You will, however, be gated for one month, and your half-holidays will be spent in your Form-room. Mr. Quelch will set you work to occupy your time. You may go."

Harry Wharton stood overcome with dismay. The sentence was far worse than a flogging.

"But I didn't do it, sir," he protested. "Listen to me, sir—"

"That will do!" snapped Dr. Locke, raising his hand and pointing to the door.

"But, sir—"

"Not another word! Go!"

And Harry went, his face showing his utter dismay and bewilderment, and the door closed upon him. The interview was ended.

In silence, for his feelings were too deep for words, Harry Wharton made his way to the Remove Form-room.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

After Bunter!

"WHAT the thump—" "My hat! What's the matter, Harry?"

Harry's chums surrounded him as he came out at the end of lessons. The rumour had gone round that Wharton had been taken before the Head, and Harry's chums had soon heard of it.

They stared as they saw the look on Harry's face as he came out and joined them.

"Matter?" gasped Harry, passing his hand dazedly over his forehead. "I'm blessed if I quite grasp it yet, you chaps."

"Why, you look—"

"I'm absolutely bowled over," said Harry dazedly. "I'm gated for a month—all halves spent slogging at lines in a blessed Form-room!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Head's sentence!" said Harry through his teeth. "A licking—first, and then this on top of it—all for nothing! All through Bunter! I—I'll make mince-meat of that fat worm for this!"

"But what for?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"For chucking that turf at old Popper."

"What?"

"But you didn't do it!" yelled Bob.

"I know. But the Head says I did, and Popper says I did, and Quelch says I did," said Harry, with a bitter laugh. "And I'm blessed if I know how I'm going to prove I didn't."

"But Bunter did it!" gasped Frank Nugent. "Oh, you awful ass, Harry! Didn't you tell 'em Bunter did it?"

"Couldn't sneak," said Harry firmly. "That fat ass didn't know what he was doing, and a fellow had to shield him. Though if I'd known—"

"But—but—but—"

Bob Cherry stared at him blankly, unbelievably.

"But it's—it's too thick for words!" he stuttered at last.

"I know it is."

"But you can't put up with it," said Bob, in great exasperation. "Are you potty? Never mind saving that fat worm's skin—what about your own?"

"I think I would have told had I known what it would mean," groaned Harry. "But it was too late afterwards. In any case, I don't think it would have mattered. That old cad told the Head he saw me do it."

"What?"

Harry's chums were startled.

"It's a fact. I suppose old Popper really thinks he did recognise me. Anyway, the Head isn't likely to doubt his word, or take it before mine."

"But—but—"

"That isn't all," said Harry, his face setting hard. "Some howling cad has told Quelch—or let him overhear somehow—that I said I'd like to chuck the turf at the old brute. That did me, of course; I couldn't deny it. Then there was the motive—I'd just been licked through old Popper. It looks just as if I did do it out of revenge."

"But you didn't!" howled Bob Cherry. "Why don't you tell 'em that fat fool Bunter did it? If you don't, I jolly well will!"

Harry shook his head.

"No good doing that, especially now," he said briefly. "It would only make matters worse for me. The Head would think I was trying to put the blame on that fat idiot. Bunter's bound to deny it point-blank; he couldn't do anything else if he tried. And only Skinner and his pals saw it done besides you fellows. They'd either swear I did it, or say they didn't see who did it. They'd just delight in making trouble for me. I believe it was one of those cads who let Quelch know what I said—it must have been!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Now Harry put the matter in that light his chums grew suddenly grave. It was more than possible that Harry was right. Bunter would deny it point-blank, without a shadow of doubt, and Skinner & Co. would not lift a finger to save Harry—quite the reverse, in fact. And the Head would, more likely than not, ignore their evidence, knowing they were Harry's chums. And the most damning evidence against Harry was undoubtedly his rather foolish words just before it happened. And, of course, Sir Hilton Popper's valuable word would never be doubted by the Head—would certainly be taken before theirs.

That much was certain. Much as the Head personally disliked the autocratic and domineering baronet, he would not dream of believing him capable of lying for the purpose of getting an innocent fellow proved guilty. A baronet, who was also a landowner, a magistrate, and a school governor, couldn't do such a thing.

Their evidence, valuable as it seemed in their eyes, would go for naught against the rest.

The juniors realised that Harry was right, and that it might only make matters worse. If the Head believed Harry was trying to save himself by shoving the blame on someone else—especially on a fatuous, obtuse idiot like Billy Bunter, whom nobody would believe capable of such a daring, reckless act—he would only be disgusted and increase the punishment.

"But—but something must be done," said Bob earnestly, his good-humoured face flushed with wrath and indignation now. "Why, it's a shame, Harry! And what about the footer?"

"That's what I'm thinking about," said Harry glumly. "There's no match on this afternoon, so to-day doesn't matter so much. But for the next few halves we've got our hands full with stiff matches. There's Rookwood, and St. Jim's, and Courtfield, and the Abbotsford match, not counting Highcliffe!"

"We can't do without you, Harry!" snorted Frank Nugent.

"We're not jolly well going to stand this!" said Johnny Bull indignantly.

"I wouldn't have minded even a flogging," said Harry. "I could stand that better than that poor fool Bunter! But this—"

He paused and groaned.

"We're not jolly well standing it," hooted Bob in sudden rage. "Where's Bunter? Where's that fat cad? We'll collar him and make him own up!"

"Phew! That's it!"

"Here, hold on—" Harry was beginning, but his chums ignored him for once.

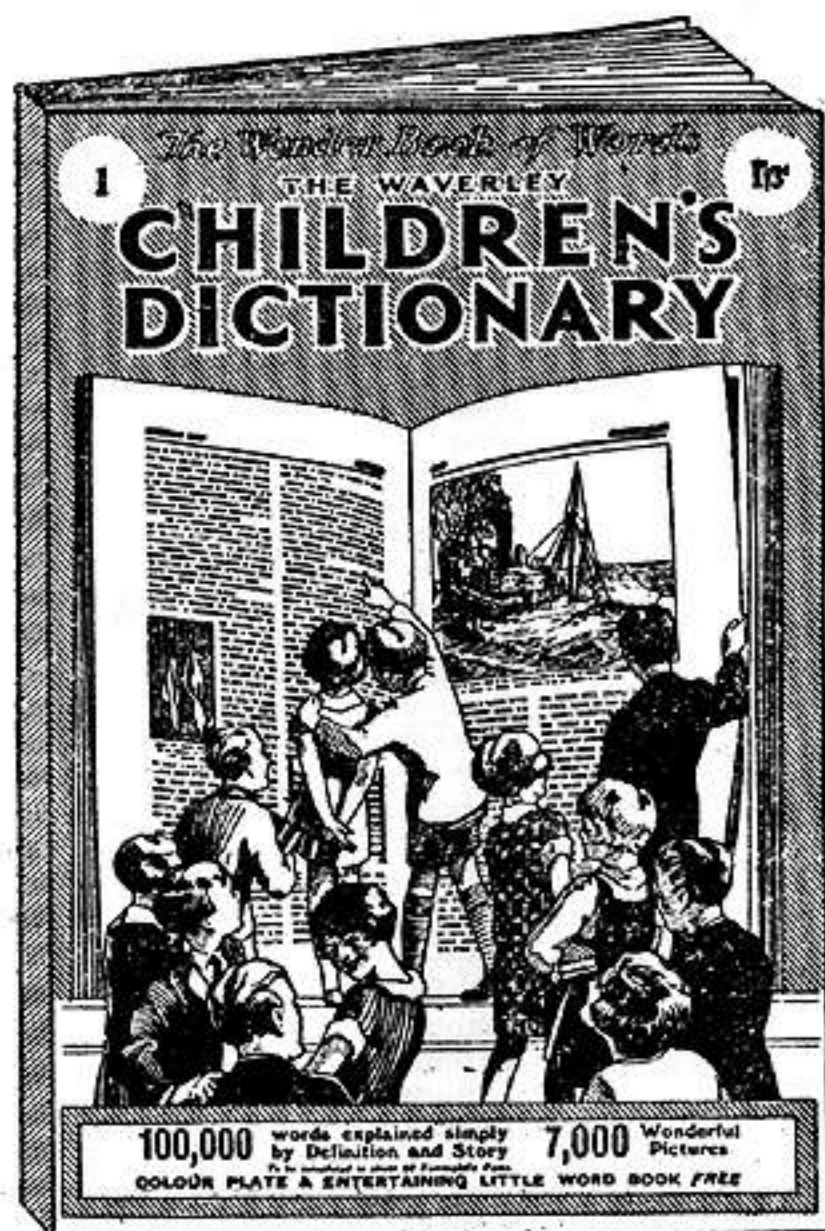
Harry might be disposed to feel sorry for Billy Bunter, but they were not. And, leaving Harry standing there, they rushed off instantly in search of the fat junior. Bob's suggestion was the only one they could think of just then, or troubled to think of. They just wanted to get hold of Bunter.

As they stampeded up the stairs and came on to the Remove-passage a fat junior emerged from Study No. 7. It was Billy Bunter, and Bunter's fat face wore a curiously scared and hunted look. Bunter was living in mortal dread just then of a call from the Head.

Certainly he had heard that Wharton had been hauled before the "beak," but, being quite unscrupulous in such matters himself, Bunter naturally expected

(Continued on page 12.)

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A VENTRILOQUIST AT LARGE!

(Continued from previous page.)

Harry to "split," and give him away as the culprit.

Which explained the apprehensive face of Billy Bunter just then.

"Bunter!" yelled Bob.

There was great wrath in Bob's voice, and the look on the faces of the four juniors was quite enough for Bunter. He turned on the instant and bolted, his fat little legs working in great style.

"After him!" bawled Bob.

"Yes, rather!"

Bunter vanished round the corner of the passage, and almost instantly afterwards came the sounds of a collision, followed by Peter Todd's voice raised in wrath.

"You fat ass! Where the thump are you rushing to?"

"Leggo! I say, Toddy, some fellows are after me! Oh, hero they are—Leggo!"

Bunter roared in apprehension as Bob Cherry, Bull, Nugent, and Hurree Singh pelted round the corner. But Peter Todd did not "leggo." Peter knew Bunter.

"Hold on!" he said, holding Bunter in one hand as he raised another hand to keep the wrathful juniors back. "Bunter's under my judicial care now. Let's hear what he's been up to first, you men! Grub-raiding?"

"No. Stand aside, Toddy!" roared Bob Cherry. "It was that fat owl who chucked that turf at old Popper!"

"Wha-at?"

"And now Wharton's blamed for it!" continued Bob Cherry, thoroughly aroused. "Old Popper, the awful fibber, said he saw Harry do it, and he's been gated for a month—mucked the blessed footer up, and everything, unless Bunter owns up! We're going to make Bunter own up!"

"Yes, rather! Hand him over, Toddy!"

"Well, my hat! Bunter did that? I heard about it just now. But, Bunter—"

"It wasn't me!" howled Bunter, wriggling in Toddy's grasp. "I wasn't even there!"

"What?" howled Bob.

"Skinner will tell you I wasn't!" gasped Bunter. "He says he will, anyway!"

"Eh?"

"I mean, I know he will!" gasped Bunter desperately. "Anyway, I know nothing at all about it, Toddy. I'm innocent as a new-born babe, in fact! Leggo! I tell you—Yarroooooogh!"

Bunter howled and made a sudden tug as Bob Cherry made a step towards him, and this time he succeeded in dragging himself free, and he fairly flew.

"After him!" yelled Bob.

The astounded Peter Todd went crashing against the wall as the wrathful four shoved him unceremoniously aside and tore in pursuit.

Bunter vanished round the next corner.

When the chums of the Remove turned the corner, on to the Sixth Form passage, the fat junior had disappeared.

"He can't have gone on!" gasped Frank Nugent. "Must be hiding in one of the studies. My hat, here we are!"

A study door stood ajar—the only open door in the long passage—and, obviously, as there had been no time for Bunter to disappear round the next corner, he must be hiding somewhere.

It was Loder's study, not the study

any juniors would willingly choose for a hiding-place; but the chums decided that must be where Bunter was, as it was open and not occupied by Gerald Loder.

The wrathful juniors rushed inside and looked round.

The room was empty—or appeared to be empty. Bob rushed to the table, lifted the cloth and looked under. Bunter wasn't there. He was just about to look behind the couch when a step sounded outside, and Loder entered.

Loder, the bullying prefect of the Sixth, never looked very amiable at any time. Just then his temper was even worse than usual.

He fairly jumped as he sighted the juniors.

Loder was a very suspicious fellow indeed. And as on more than one occasion the juniors had "ragged" his study, he immediately jumped to the conclusion that they were up to the same sort of mischief now. And certainly it looked like it. Bob was just stooping by the couch while Johnny Bull was just opening his big cupboard to look inside. Moreover, the flushed, excited faces of the Removes added to his suspicions.

"Oh!" he said, looking grim, his eyes glinting. "So I've caught you this time in the dashed act, you little sweeps!"

"Look here, Loder—" gasped Bob.

"I want no lies!" shouted Loder. "I know just what you're here for, you little rotters! You were just going to rag my room!"

"Liar!"

"What?"

"Liar! Bullying cad! Gambling sweep! Stuck-up, smoky rotter! Go and eat coke, Loder!"

"Wha-a-at?"

Loder was dumbfounded—as well he might be! Loder had been called many such names by the juniors, but they had taken good care to call him such names behind his back, and not to his face. It was far too dangerous to do that.

Loder was a prefect, for one thing, and, for another, he was a bully of the first water.

Yet—apparently—Bob Cherry had called him those names now to his face, for the voice seemed to come from Bob—though Bob was looking quite bewildered. He had not spoken.

"You—you little sweep!" hissed Loder. "You—you dare to—to call me names like that? Why, I—I—"

"Oh, my hat! I didn't—" Bob was beginning, when Johnny Bull chipped in—or appeared to chip in:

"Oh, cheese it, Bob! You did say it, and I don't blame you! Loder is a howling cad—a bullying, card-playing, betting sweep of the first water!"

"Hear, hear!" came from Frank Nugent, in Frank's voice. "That's right! You're a howling brute, Loder, and we don't care twopence for you. You ought to have been sacked from the school long ago!"

"What—what—" spluttered Loder. "Why, I—I'll—"

"I didn't say that!" gasped Johnny Bull. "Loder— Oh, my hat! Look out!"

Frank ended in a yell of warning as Loder grabbed a walking-stick from a corner and made a blind rush.

Lash, lash, lash, lash!

"Whoooooop!"

"Oh— Yarroooooogh!"

"Look out! Yoooooop!"

Lash, lash, lash, lash!

Loder was going great guns. Bob Cherry took one lash across his shoulders, decided it was enough, and

leaped madly for the door. Hurree Singh took the second on his arm, and followed like a streak of lightning.

But Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull were less lucky. Frank darted one way round the table to avoid the whirling stick, and as Johnny darted the other way round the table with exactly the same intention, they collided.

Before they managed to reach the door at last, Loder's walking-stick did great execution as the furious senior laid it about their shoulders with a will.

But they got out at last, roaring with anguish. And they did not stop running until they reached the comparative shelter of the Remove-passage.

Then they stopped and rubbed their many smarts and aches, and eyed each other with blank and amazed looks.

"This—this beats the band!" gasped Frank Nugent, at last. "I didn't call that brute Loder those names; it wasn't me at all!"

"Nor did I!" panted Johnny Bull. "This beats me hollow, and I can't think— Oh! Oh, great Scott!"

"What—"

"Bunter again!" stuttered Johnny, a great light breaking in on him. "Bunter and his confounded ventriloquism again!"

"Oh!"

"Oh—oh, my hat!"

"That's it! Well, I'm blowed!"

Once again Harry Wharton & Co. wondered how on earth they could have forgotten Bunter's great gift, and how on earth they had failed to "tumble" until now.

But they had!

"Oh dear!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Loder's a Hun! He nearly cut me in two with that swipe! But—but it was Bunter! He must have been hidden behind the couch, after all, and we ought to know by now that the fat cad can imitate our voices!"

Bob's chums groaned and agreed to that. Bunter undoubtedly was a wonder at ventriloquism—he would have earned a fortune on the stage. But his great gift did not appeal at Greyfriars.

"Oh, the—the sweep!" gasped Bob, almost dancing with rage. "It was that fat rotter, of course! He made us call Loder those names and got us this! We'll smash him to little bits for this!"

"Come on!" snorted Johnny Bull. "Let's go after him again!"

"No good now!" said Bob. "The fat idiot may be hidden in Loder's room still, for all we know. Let's go in to dinner now. We'll hunt him out afterwards, never fear!"

"Oh, all right!"

And the chums went in to dinner in Hall. They were not feeling equal to dealing with William George Bunter just then.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Caught!

"O H, dear!"

Bunter groaned.

But he groaned inwardly, for Billy Bunter was crouching behind the couch in Loder's study, and Loder was sitting reading a pink newspaper in the armchair scarcely a yard from him.

So Bunter knew better than to make his presence known by groans or anything else.

A few minutes ago Billy Bunter had been on the point of exploding with inward laughter at the way Bob Cherry & Co. had been put to rout and chased by Gerald Loder from the study. Despite the danger of his own position,



"You're a howling cad, Loder!" said Johnny Bull. "Hear, hear!" came from Frank Nugent. "You ought to have been sacked from the school long ago!" "You—you little sweeps!" spluttered Loder. "Why, I—I'll—" He grabbed a walking-stick and rushed at the juniors. Lash, lash, lash! "Look out!" cried Bull. "Yooooop!" (See Chapter 5.)

Billy Bunter had quite enjoyed the entertainment. Not only had he got the fellows who were after him a whacking with Loder's ashplant, but he had been able to enjoy the delightful treat of calling a prefect names without danger to himself, and with trouble for other people, all of which Bunter enjoyed.

Bunter was beginning to feel that there was a great deal of pleasure to be got out of being a ventriloquist. He wondered why he had allowed his great gift to "rust" unused for so long—though from recent successes he knew the gift had not "ruined," speaking literally. It was as good as ever. His imitations of the voices of Cherry & Co. were masterpieces, and his skill at throwing his voice was at its best.

He determined to make better use of it in future. The fellows seemed to have quite forgotten that he was a ventriloquist.

Bunter thought of this while he crouched behind the couch waiting for Loder to go out again. It was close on dinner-time, and Bunter expected him to depart any second.

But evidently Loder was in no hurry for dinner; apparently the contents of the sporting paper he was perusing was of more interest to him than beefsteak and apple-dumplings.

It was most exasperating to Billy Bunter, for Billy Bunter was exceedingly hungry as usual. He wanted his

dinner. And Bunter was sure the dinner-bell must have gone ere this.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Bunter inwardly once again. "Why doesn't the beast go?"

Bunter was beginning to feel that the risk of Loder's ashplant was to be preferred to being late for dinner, when another brainwave struck the fat junior. Here was a chance to use his great gift again.

The next instant a deep voice sounded from beyond the closed door.

"Loder! Come here this moment!"

It was the Head's deep, stern voice, and Loder leaped to his feet with a gasp as he heard it. He was about to dash the crumpled pink paper into his table drawer when again came the voice—more stern and authoritative:

"Do you hear me, Loder? Come here at once, and bring that abominable paper with you!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" panted Loder. "Coming, sir!"

Loder fairly shook. Bunter had added that last about the paper from a pleasant desire to make Loder "sit up." Bunter knew quite well—as did Loder—what would happen if Loder was caught reading a racing paper. And Bunter had a good many scores to settle with Loder.

"You hear me, Loder?"

"Oh! Oh, yes, sir! Coming, sir!" gasped Loder faintly.

He stood thunderstruck, his face suddenly white. Was it possible that the headmaster of Greyfriars had been spying on him through the keyhole?

How else—

With a sudden movement Loder jumped to the fireplace and crammed the pink paper far back under the grate among the cinders. Then he grabbed another newspaper—the "Daily Mail" this time—from the bookshelves and sprang to the door. Whether the Head had seen the paper or not, Loder was prepared to swear that he had been reading the "Daily Mail."

He opened the door, even then wondering rather dazedly why the Head hadn't entered the room instead of calling.

Then he jumped. The passage outside was deserted.

But just then Bunter got to work with his ventriloquism again.

"You hear me, Loder? Come here this instant! Come with me to my study at once!"

"Yes, sir! Certainly, sir!" called Loder, amazed and bewildered.

He hurried along the passage, evidently believing the Head was just round the corner. As a matter of fact, Loder was beginning to wonder if he was dreaming it all.

Bunter emerged swiftly from his hiding-place, and with a fat chuckle

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(Continued from page 13.)

tip-toed to the door and peered out. He watched until he saw Loder reach the corner of the passage, and then he darted out in the opposite direction, and ran full-tilt into Wingate, who was just leaving his study two doors away.

"Oh!"
"Ow!"

The collision was terrific, and Wingate gasped wrathfully, and then he grabbed Bunter just as that fat youth was on the rebound, as it were.

"You—you clumsy young idiot!" gasped Wingate. "What— Oh, I see! You've been up to something in there, eh? Here, hold on!"

He held the quaking Bunter until Loder, who had found the farther passage deserted, and was coming back, joined them.

"Here you are, Loder," said Wingate grimly. "I caught this young scamp just coming out of your study—been up to something, I fancy. I should give him a couple with your ashplant."

And with that bit of advice, Wingate handed Bunter over and walked off in the direction of the Hall.

Loder looked at Bunter. It was a terrifying look.

"I—I say, Loder," gasped Bunter, trembling. "Had—hadn't you better go? The—the Head will be waxy if you—you keep him waiting, you know!"

And to improve the shining hour, Bunter "threw" his voice again.

"Loder, how dare you keep me waiting like this? Come here at once!"

But this time Loder merely grinned unpleasantly. The mystery had suddenly become no mystery at all. There were few at Greyfriars who were not aware that Bunter was a ventriloquist. And Loder remembered it now. Moreover, though it was a fair imitation of the Head's voice, this time it was very wobbly indeed—simply because Bunter was very wobbly himself and could not control it.

"Dud—did you hear, Loder?" gasped Bunter, eyeing the prefect hopefully. "Hadn't you better g-gug-go?"

"No," said Loder pleasantly. "But you had better come, my clever ventriloquist."

"Oh! Oh, dud-dear!"

"In you go!" said Loder, throwing wide the door. "I'll teach you to try your dashed ventriloquial tricks on me, you little sweep!"

"Oh, really, Lod— Yoooooop!"

Bunter fairly flew into the study, helped by Loder's boot. Loder followed him in and closed the door.

"Now, you young fool!" he said, showing his teeth in an unpleasant grin. "I see it now. You were hiding in here, and to get me out you imitated the Head's voice. You're going to pay for that, Bunter! But first of all, what the thunder were you doing in here?"

"Ow! Nothing—nothing at all!" groaned Bunter, blinking fearfully at him. "I was up to nothing—honour bright! I—I just hid in here because those beasts, Bob Cherry and the others were after me!"

"What?"

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"Oh, dear! I mean, because they weren't after me," said Bunter hurriedly. "If you think it was me made them call you names, it wasn't! Nothing of the kind! I—I like you too much, Loder! I—I always thought you a—a splendid fellow Loder! I—I don't really think you're such an outsider as the chaps make out just because you smoke, and play cards, and all that. I—I'm a regular goer myself if it comes to that. So—so you see—"

Bunter tailed off feebly, quite alarmed by the look on Loder's face. Loder was eyeing him like a wolf.

"So—so that's it!" gasped the prefect. "You—you young rotter! So it was you who made those kids call me names like that—you with your rotten ventriloquism! Right! I licked them, but it was nothing, my pippin, to what you're going to get! Got across that chair!"

"Oh dear! I—I say, Loder! Lemme off, and I'll make that beast Wingate call the Head names! How—how's that? You hate the beast, and I bet you'll enjoy seeing him get it hot from the Head. I'm a splendid ventriloquist, and can— Yoooooop! Leggo, you beast!"

But Loder didn't let go. Bunter's sporting offer did not appeal to the sporting prefect just then. He grabbed his ashplant and he grabbed Billy Bunter, and, putting Billy Bunter across the chair, got busy with his ashplant.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yoooooooooooooop!"

Bunter's howls awakened the echoes as the ashplant rose and fell with terrific vim and speed. Loder never did believe in sparing the rod and spoiling the child. But there was nobody to hear Bunter's fearful howls; all the fellows excepting themselves were at dinner by this time.

So Loder fairly let himself go, and Bunter also let himself go. The whacks and howls rang through the study. Once again Bunter had had his little joke and was paying for it. And he paid heavily.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Loder seemed tireless.

But he finished at last, though Bunter was much more tired of the business when he did finish than was Loder. Flinging the ashplant from him, Loder placed a hefty boot behind the fat youth and fairly lifted him out of the study.

Bunter picked himself up instantly, tired as he was, and flew.

He was crawling, however when he came into the dining-hall fully ten minutes late, and the fifty lines awarded him by Mr. Quelch for being late did not add to Bunter's comfort.

And he found little comfort during the meal. From Mr. Quelch he got another fifty lines for wriggling in his seat, and not daring to explain matters to Mr. Quelch he was obliged to accept the lines and bear up in silence.

Altogether it was a very comfortless and dismal meal for Bunter. His dinner was cold, also, but that did not prevent him eating it for Bunter was desperately hungry. Even his aches and pains did not affect his appetite. But he finished at last, and by that time he was the last in the dining-room.

He came out to find—to his great alarm—that the Famous Five were waiting for him.

Bunter had quite forgotten them. But they had not forgotten him. And though they wondered what had been happening to him, they did not trouble to ask.

"Here's the fat villain!" said Bob Cherry, grabbing the fat youth before he could think of escaping. "Hold him!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh dear!" Bunter fairly groaned. "I say, you fellows, lemme alone! I've had an awful lamming from that beast Loder!"

"Did he catch you in his study, then?" said Frank Nugent grimly. "I thought that must have happened. Good! I hope he laid it on hard."

"Looks as if he did," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "I spotted how he couldn't sit still in Hall. Well, we needn't lick him for that ventriloquial trick, then."

"Oh, really, Cherry!" stammered Bunter. "If you think it was me made you call Loder names—"

"That's enough," said Bull. "He's admitted it! Bump the fat villain!"

"He's had enough, I think," said Harry Wharton. "And I fancy he knows just why we want him now. Bunter, you're going to the Head!"

Bunter jumped.

"The—the Head?"

"Yes, you fat rotter! You've got to own up that it was you who chucked that turf at old Popper! Understand?"

"Oh dear!" Bunter's fat knees fairly shook under him. "I say, you fellows, it wasn't me at all. It—it must have been Skinner!"

"What? Why, we saw you do it, you fat idiot!"

"Nothing of the kind!" gasped Bunter. "Oh dear! I say, you fellows, don't be beasts, you know! If you're going to sneak—I mean, it wasn't me at all. I know nothing about it!"

"You're coming to own up to the Head, anyway," said Harry. "I'm blamed for it, Bunter, and I've been gated for a month. For the sake of the footer I'm not going to stand it. I won't give you away, but we're jolly well going to see that you own up. Collar him, chaps, and come on! We'll take him to the Head's study and shove him inside."

"Ow! Leggo!" roared Bunter in great alarm. "I tell you I won't go! It wasn't me!"

"Then we'll carry you there, my pippin!" And the Famous Five surrounded Billy Bunter and grasped him. "Hold on!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'll own up, you beasts!"

"Right!"

"Oh, good!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Alternative!

THE Famous Five released the fat junior with murmurs of relief. Much as they disliked getting the fatuous Bunter into serious trouble, they felt it was the only course in view of the approaching footer fixtures. Moreover, Bunter had done it, and it was only bare justice that he should suffer for it. Certainly Harry's chums were not prepared to allow Bunter to escape scot-free while Harry suffered for his guilt.

And it would be much better for Bunter to own up on his own account than for him to do it under compulsion. Indeed, as Harry had already pointed out, if it meant compulsion, then Bunter would never actually own up. Even by carrying him to the Head's study they could not make Bunter own up if he did not want to. But they were hopeful that he would, out of fear of consequences from themselves.

They meant to try it, anyway.

"You'll do it?" snapped Bob Cherry.

"Ow! Oh dear! I say, you fellows, I daren't own up to the Head!" groaned Bunter.

"Collar him!" said Bob briefly. "To the Head with him!"

"Oh dear! Leggo! I say, you fellows, it's all right." Bunter's fat brain worked overtime to discover a way out of his predicament. "I—I say, I'll tell you what."

"Well?"

"I—I'll own up to old Popper!" gasped Bunter. "Lemme go now, and I'll own up to old Popper instead of the Head. Perhaps the old beast will be decent and get the Head to lemme off."

"Oh!"

The juniors looked at each other. They were amazed at Bunter's alternative. In their view, Sir Hilton was likely to give Bunter a hiding with his hunting-crop. But apparently Bunter had not thought of that; apparently Bunter had an idea that Sir Hilton possessed more of the milk of human kindness than did Dr. Locke; or possibly Bunter hoped that his charming manner and engaging personality would overcome Sir Hilton's wrath.

"You—you fat ass!" gasped Harry. "Do you really mean that, Bunter?"

"Yes!" gasped Bunter. "Exactly! Absolutely! I—I think I can talk the old beast round, you know! I—I'll go and see him to-morrow."

"You'll jolly well go to-day," said Johnny Bull. "That is if you're not jolly well spoofing, you fat clam! I believe you are. Yank him along to the Head, you fellows!"

"Hold on!" said Harry.

Harry Wharton frowned reflectively.

After all, possibly it would be as well to allow Bunter to own up to Sir Hilton himself. Harry knew full well that once face to face with the Head, Bunter's courage would fail him in any case, and he would be bound to deny it; which would put an end to their hopes. They could take a horse to the water, but they couldn't make him drink. And Wharton dreaded the thought that the Head might believe he was trying to throw the burden of guilt on to Bunter's shoulders.

On the other hand, Sir Hilton Popper claimed to have seen Harry throw the turf; he was making a mistake, though doubtless he had seen Bunter with his arm raised ready to throw. In that case, he might easily recognise Bunter as the fellow who had actually done it. Harry could not think that Sir Hilton, cross-grained old gentleman that he was, could descend to falsehood to throw the blame on an innocent fellow's shoulders. He had made a mistake in the identity of the boy he had glimpsed, and if he saw Bunter again he might easily remember him as the boy he had glimpsed.

It was far more worth trying than risking Bunter before the Head.

Drawing Bob Cherry aside, Harry whispered his views on the subject, and Bob grinned and agreed.

"Right," said Bob Cherry. "We'll take you to old Popper then, Bunter. Come along, and no tricks, mind!"

"Oh dear! Oh, all right!"

Bunter's eyes gleamed, and he nodded. He had not the slightest intention of visiting Sir Hilton to own up—if he could help it. Bunter had merely made the suggestion to gain time. And there was plenty of time to give his captors the slip before arriving at Popper Court.

"All right, then!" he grunted. "I'll come! Leggo, and I'll come!"

"Not much. We're sticking tight to you, my pippin!"

But Bunter did not seem to mind that much. Harry Wharton gave a gloomy parting greeting to his chums, and went indoors to report to Mr.

Quelch—booked to spend his half-holiday in the Form-room grinding out lines. His chums started off, with Bunter in their midst, for the gates. As they passed underneath the window of Mr. Quelch's room a deep, commanding voice appeared to come from the open window.

"Cherry, Bull, Nugent, Hurree Singh—release that boy at once, and come to my study without an instant's delay! Do you hear?"

Bob Cherry & Co. did hear. As Bob himself could see Mr. Quelch standing by the Cloisters in the distance, talking with Mr. Prout of the Fifth, he was scarcely likely to believe that it was Mr. Quelch's voice coming from the window, much as it resembled Mr. Quelch's voice.

Moreover, recent events were too fresh yet for them to forget that Bunter was a wonderful ventriloquist.

"Bump him!" said Bob. "Bump the fat Owl every time he tries his ventriloquial dodges. Harder every time!"

"Ha, ha, ha! What-ho!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! You beast! Yarooooop!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter descended with what might aptly be termed a "sickening thud" on the gravel path. Bob's chums had been startled by that voice at first, but they quickly grasped the fact that the voice was Bunter's, and that he was practising ventriloquism again.

"That's to start with, Bunter," said Bob grimly. "A bump for every trick this afternoon."

"Beasts!"

The juniors dragged him up and they departed towards the gates, Bunter really alarmed now. Wingate was chatting by the gates with Gwynne, and

Bunter's eyes shone as he sighted them. To call for aid from Wingate would, Bunter feared, bring the whole story out. But Bunter had no intention of doing that. And though he had only just been warned, Bunter determined to try his luck with ventriloquism again. He was desperate, and he thought he saw a way of doing it—one which would give him a good chance of escaping.

As they reached the gates a voice rang out, remarkably like Bob Cherry's boisterous tones:

"Yah! Go and eat coke, Wingate! Jevver see such a rotten skipper as Wingate? Yah!"

"Good gad!" gasped Wingate.

"Rats to you, too, Gwynne!" went on Bunter, putting his words into Frank Nugent's mouth this time, as it were. "Yah! Irish rotter! Who thinks he can play footer? Gwynne's a footling fumbler!"

"Bedad!" ejaculated Gwynne.

As Gwynne stood staring open-mouthed at such amazing "cheek" from a junior, Wingate came over, his face set grimly. Bunter chuckled and got ready to run. Either his captors would leave him and bolt for their lives, or else they would stay and be licked by Wingate and Gwynne. Meanwhile he would make himself scarce.

But it didn't work out like that.

"You—you cheeky little villain!" gasped Wingate. "You—you impudent little sweep!"

And he made a grab—not at Bob Cherry or Frank Nugent, but at Bunter himself.

Bunter fairly yelped in surprise and dismay as Wingate's heavy hand closed on his collar.

"Leggo!" he roared. "It wasn't me, Wingate!"

"But I know it was!" said Wingate grimly. "I'll teach you to try those games on with me, Bunter. Gwynne has just been telling me how you tricked Loder before dinner. Take that!"

"Yooooop!"

Wingate's boot landed behind Bunter, and Bunter jumped, only to get another as he came down again.

"That's to be going on with, Bunter!" gasped Wingate wrathfully. "I'll teach you to try your ventriloquial tricks on me. You'll come to me at six o'clock, and I'll also give you a taste of my ashplant. Apparently what Loder gave you hasn't done you any good!"

"Yow! Yow-wow!" groaned Bunter.

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

Wingate joined Gwynne again, who was grinning, and they resumed their
(Continued on next page.)

What did Temme eat on his channel swim?

Here are his own words: "Throughout my Channel Swim I partook liberally of Cadbury's Milk Chocolate. This sustained me wonderfully for the big effort I had to make during the last six hours of the swim. As a 'stand by' and a creator of fresh energy and resource I consider Cadbury's Milk Chocolate to be peerless."

Cadbury's

milk chocolate

—Temme knew he could trust Cadbury's to sustain him mile after mile. He had proved it time after time on previous long swims. And you too—though you may never swim—will find Cadbury's Milk Chocolate just as useful in lesser emergencies.

See the name 'Cadbury' on every piece of chocolate.

chat. The juniors grabbed Bunter again and marched him through the gates, Bunter being too staggered and hurt just then to think of resisting.

"Now march!" said Bob Cherry. "And any more trickery, and you're for it!"

"Oh dear! Beasts! You're all beasts!"

But he marched. Bunter did not want to sample the boots of Bob Cherry as well. He knew only too well that they were more than eager to give him a sample, knowing he had tried to get them "booted" by Wingate and Gwynne.

In this wise they marched along the lane to the stile leading to the field-path—a short cut to Friardale and also Popper Court.

"Over you go!" ordered Bob. "Help him with your boots, chaps!"

"Beasts!"

Bunter, who had intended to make a desperate stand there, did not make it. He crossed the stile with a groan, and the chums went with him, taking care that he did not attempt to bolt. They were quite certain now that Bunter had never intended to own up to Sir Hilton Popper at all.

They were determined that he should do so, however.

That walk to the Popper Court estate was not at all a pleasant one for Billy Bunter.

Despite his non-success, so far, with the art of ventriloquism, Bunter tried it on again twice on the way—it was all he had left to try on, not being in a position either to escape or overpower his captors.

First of all he imitated a ferocious dog, making it seem to be tearing through the wood towards them, barking furiously. It was really a magnificent effort, and did Bunter's ventriloquism credit.

But it left Bob Cherry & Co. cold, so to speak. They ignored the snarling sounds of an approaching dog, and then they bumped Bunter as they had promised. The snarls suddenly ceased as Bunter awoke the echoes of the woodland glade with his howls instead.

Later, hoping they had forgotten, the Owl of the Remove made a most blood-curdling scream echo through the woods, followed by most pitiful and heartrending cries for help.

Bob Cherry & Co. ignored them, and then they solemnly bumped Bunter soundly, until Bunter's heart-rending yells of anguish took the place of the screams and cries for help.

Bunter didn't try it on again.

He saw that ventriloquism could be overdone on the same audience, and that there was nothing doing.

They reached the grounds of Popper Court at last, and Bunter had to be helped by main force up the drive towards the house.

But they had no necessity to go up to the house at all, for just then Sir Hilton Popper himself sighted the juniors. He was speaking to one of his gardeners on the lawn beyond the white rails lining the drive, but he immediately left the man, opened a small gate, and approached the juniors.

He eyed them fixedly

"Well," he growled, "what's this? Greyfriars boys again, hey? Begad! What—what—"

He stared in amazement as a desperate attempt to bolt on Bunter's part was frustrated by Bob Cherry, who neatly tripped the fat junior up. Bunter sprawled with a howl at the astonished baronet's feet.

"What—what the deuce—"

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"It—it's about what happened this morning, sir!" gasped Bob, feeling like turning tail and bolting himself. "Bunter here has something to tell you about it, sir!"

Bob was determined not to give Bunter away, but to make him own up himself.

Sir Hilton glowered. Bunter scrambled up, breathless and in a state of mingled fright and wrath. But he saw there was no help for it. He knew now that Bob Cherry & Co. were in deadly earnest, and that somehow he had to get Wharton cleared. And Billy Bunter gasped and gasped and worked his fat brain in a terrific effort to wangle a story that would meet the case without getting William George Bunter into trouble.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Old Robinson!

"WELL?" Sir Hilton fairly barked out the word.

"Oh dear! It—it's like this, sir. I—I know the fellow who pitched that turf at you, sir!" gasped Bunter as a start.

It was not a promising start. Sir Hilton gave a snort.

"Good gad! Have you young villains come here to tell me what I already know?" he hooted. "Be off! Go, before I lay this whip about you!"

"Ow! I—I say, Bob Cherry, you beast, let's go!" groaned Bunter, backing away.

Bob's reply was a push.

"Go on, you fat idiot!" he muttered. "Go on, or it will be the worse for you!"

"What—what—"

Sir Hilton was getting obviously impatient.

Bunter suddenly got a brain-wave.

"It—it's like this, sir!" he gasped. "It wasn't Wharton at all who chucked that turf at you!"

"What? Rubbish! If—"

"It—it was Robinson, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Robinson of the Remove! He—he's sorry for it now, sir, and he's full of remorse for his—his dastardly and wicked act, and he wants to save Wharton from being an innocent sufferer. So—so he's sent us to explain before he goes."

"What?"

"Before he—goes!" gasped Bunter, looking hopefully at Sir Hilton. "You—you see, sir, he's leaving this morning. He'll be in the train now, bound for his home in—London, sir. He's left Greyfriars for good, and he's sent us to explain. You—you sus-see, sir," gasped Bunter, not liking the way the baronet was looking at all. "He said—he said to me that he hated the thought of leaving Greyfriars—the dear old school—with that guilty secret on his conscience. He felt he couldn't bear to think, as the—the years passed, that his last act at Greyfriars was to get another fellow into trouble for a wicked thing he'd done himself. That's how it was, sir. I—I hope you'll explain to the Head that it wasn't Wharton, and ask him to let him off."

"Well, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. It was all he could say.

Bunter waited hopefully for the baronet's reply. He sincerely hoped it would be a favourable one. It was a vain hope.

"You—you young rascal!" gasped Sir Hilton.

"Oh, sus-sir!"

"I do not believe a word of your absurd story!" thundered Sir Hilton, in

a voice that made Bunter leap. "Good gad! Now I come to look at you, I am inclined to believe that you yourself are the young scoundrel who threw it, and not that other young rascal. I have a vague recollection of seeing a boy who was disgustingly fat."

"Oh, dear! I say, sir, it wasn't me—certainly not! I was in the—the gym. Besides, I saw Jackson—I mean Robinson—do it. I—I was standing just by him, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Jackson—I mean Wilkinson—that is to say, Robinson—will tell you so, if you ask him, sir. Shall I go back to Greyfriars and ask him to come here, sir?"

Like Brutus, Billy Bunter paused for a reply.

The juniors eyed him in wondering admiration—not for his ability as a "fibber," but as a fellow with a wonderful imagination, to think of such a yarn, and the imagination to expect anyone to believe it. There was no fellow named Robinson in the Remove. Robinson existed only in the fertile imagination of Billy Bunter. And, in any case, Sir Hilton would very soon learn that there was no fellow of that name at Greyfriars, or just leaving Greyfriars.

But Sir Hilton did not believe it.

"You—you young rascal!" he spluttered. "No, you will not bring the fellow here! I do not believe there is such an individual at Greyfriars. This—this is a rascally plot to save your companion from his just punishment. But I shall make it my business to drive over to Dr. Locke without delay and expose your impudent visit to me."

"Oh dear!"

"Go!" bellowed Sir Hilton, waving his hunting-crop. "Be off, before I lay my whip about you!"

"Oh, really, sir— Yooooop!"

Bunter yelled and jumped back as the irate baronet took a stride towards him. Then Bunter turned tail and bolted, and Bob Cherry and the rest did not attempt to stop him. They just bolted after him, not wishing to feel Sir Hilton's hunting-crop.

They stopped at the end of the drive—Bunter because he was quite done up, and Bob Cherry & Co. because they were nearly helpless with laughter. Though their visit had been a rank failure, they could not help laughing at the result of it. Billy Bunter certainly was entertaining! How he could have expected Sir Hilton to be influenced by such a yarn was quite beyond them.

"Oh, you—you fat idiot!" choked Bob.

"Ow! Oh, dear!" panted Billy Bunter, looking at the laughing juniors in hopeless dismay. "Isn't he an awful beast, you fellows? Fancy him not believing a fellow! Suspicious old beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's nothing to laugh at!" hooted Bunter, almost on the verge of tears. "What about me, now? That old beast will go to the Head and tell him what I've told him. I shall be flogged, or something!"

"Good! You deserve it, if anyone does, Bunter."

"Beasts! This is all your fault!" wailed Bunter. "That old rotter will go to the Head, and it's no good me telling him that Sir Hilton's telling lies, and that I haven't been near Popper Court this afternoon. He'll believe that old beast before me, I know!"

"Go hon!"

"I'm not going to be flogged, anyway!" said Bunter.

"You fat idiot!" said Bob Cherry wiping his eyes. "Even if old Popper



"Never have I been so insulted—never have I been treated with such abominable disrespect, Dr. Locke! Never——" Sir Hilton broke off as Wingate dragged a wriggling fat form into view. "One moment, sir," said the Greyfriars captain grimly. "I think Bunter can clear up this affair!" (See Chapter 10.)

had been taken in by the yarn, it would have come out when he reported it to the Head. The Head knows there isn't a fellow named Robinson in the Remove."

"Or Wilkinson, or Jackson," grinned Frank Nugent.

"Oh! Oh, dear! I never thought of that!" mumbled Bunter. "Oh, dear! Look here, you beasts. I'm going back to Greyfriars. I'm going to stop that old beast telling the Head about this."

And, with a furious glare at the grinning juniors, Bunter rolled off at top speed.

"Let him go!" grinned Bob Cherry, as the others seemed about to go after him. "There's no need now for us to make Bunter own up, I fancy."

"Why?"

"Simply because Sir Hilton's bound to describe him, even if he doesn't know Bunter's name. The Head will then send for Bunter, and—well, you know what Bunter is under cross-examination. He'll give himself away, for an absolute cert!"

"Phew! My hat, yes."

"He'll give himself away and own up, before the Head even asks him," said Bob grimly. "It's a little way he has, and he can't help himself."

And, now they understood Bob's meaning, the others agreed with him. Bunter's remarkable ways of defending himself under cross-examination were well known, and if Sir Hilton did visit the Head to report their visit,

then there was no further need to attempt to force Bunter to own up. He would do that himself, whether he wanted to or not.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Ventriloquial Entertainment!

"BEASTS!"

Many times and oft did Billy Bunter make that remark as he panted and puffed his way back to Greyfriars.

"Beasts!" mumbled the fat youth indignantly. "Fancy the beasts letting me in for this! Oh, the awful cads! Oh, dear!"

What he intended doing when he did get back, Bunter had no clear idea as yet. But he was resolved to stop Sir Hilton Popper from seeing the Head somehow—a determination that only Billy Bunter would believe possible. Not only would he be licked for cheek and telling falsehoods, but it might even come out who had really thrown that turf at Sir Hilton Popper.

Which thought made Bunter shiver in his shoes.

It also made him feel very indignant indeed against the juniors who had brought such a happening into the realms of possibility. In Bunter's view, the matter had been closed, and should remain closed. It was much better—for Bunter—that Harry Wharton should

suffer in his stead. It was awful cheek for Harry Wharton and his chums to expect him to own up—especially now the incident had ended so satisfactorily to himself. It was really too thick—just when he had congratulated himself that he was saved from a very awkward position. In any case, he hadn't intended to do it; even now Bunter could not understand what had made him do it.

But he had done it, and William George Bunter had no intention of paying the piper if he could help it—not if all Greyfriars was gated for the whole term!

"Beasts!" he murmured. "Oh dear! I hope that old cad hasn't got there already!"

It was quite possible. The gates of Greyfriars were in sight by this time, and Sir Hilton, had he ridden over, could easily have reached there even by having to go by road while Bunter had taken the short cut.

But Sir Hilton had not arrived yet. Gosling, the school porter and general handyman, was brushing the steps of the School House when Bunter panted up, and from him the fat junior got that information.

"No, Master Bunter!" grunted Gosling, pausing from his labours. "Which I ain't seed him come, anyhow! What I sez is, whatcher want to know for, you young rip?"

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Bunter declined to answer that question. His eyes were gleaming behind his big glasses now. An idea had occurred to him—another brainwave!

It was a half-holiday, and usually the Head was either out in his car, or strolling round his private garden now—if he hadn't gone to play his weekly round of golf.

Bunter, being desperate, was determined to chance it, anyway!

Watching his chance he strolled carelessly along the wall of the School House, and then he scuttled into hiding amid the bushes under the Head's window.

There he waited with one eye on the gates, and the other on Gosling, the porter, by the School House steps.

But suddenly hearing the sound of wheels in the distant lane, Bunter abruptly changed his plans somewhat.

The next moment a voice floated out from the Head's open window—or so it seemed to Gosling, at all events.

"Gosling!"

"Oh, yes sir!"

Gosling wheeled round, recognising the Head's voice—or believing he did.

"Gosling!" came the deep voice. "Kindly go and close and lock the gates. I am expecting that old fool Popper to come at any moment. You are not to admit him under any circumstances. You understand?"

"Oh!" gasped Gosling. "Oh, yes sir!"

Gosling understood all right. But he was naturally astounded at the order. He knew the Head disliked Sir Hilton—a dislike in which Gosling, the porter, humbly yet devoutly shared—but he had scarcely expected the reverend Head to refer to Sir Hilton in his hearing as an "old fool." Nor had he expected the Head to decline to admit him within the gates of Greyfriars—Sir Hilton being a very important member of the Governing Board of Greyfriars.

Really, Gosling was quite shocked.

But he was very glad to obey for all that. He really hoped Sir Hilton would come along while he was locking the gates. He was quite ready to enjoy seeing Sir Hilton Popper's face on having the gates locked before his eyes. He was looking forward to the pleasure of refusing Sir Hilton admittance—surprised as he was at the order.

Without waiting for further orders, Gosling, the porter, ambled away, dropping his brush, and made for the gates. He had not seen Dr. Locke at the window, but he supposed he was seated at his desk and did not wish to trouble to rise. But the Head's voice had been enough for Gosling.

As he departed for the gates, Billy Bunter emerged from hiding, his fat features wearing a broad, satisfied grin.

"It's working!" he chuckled. "My hat! I'll do that old beast down yet!"

With that the Greyfriars ventriloquist hurried after Gosling, determined to improve, if necessary, on his former successful attempt at preventing Sir Hilton entering Greyfriars.

As he expected, the sound of wheels he had heard stopped at the gates. Sir Hilton Popper had arrived in his pony-trap.

Hiding among the bushes under the old elms, Bunter watched him climb heavily from the trap, glaring fixedly at Gosling, who was just closing the gates, a look of grim obstinacy on his gnarled old face.

"Hi!" shouted the baronet. "Open those gates, my man! How dare you

close them in my face? Are you blind, confound you?"

As he spoke, Sir Hilton secured the reins and stepped up to the gates, glowering through the bars at Gosling.

"Which I'm honly carryin' out horders!" said Gosling, with less respectfulness than was his wont. "Which I've 'ad horders from the 'Ead not to hadmit you under no circumstances!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Take yer boiled beetroot of a face away and bury it!"

It was Billy Bunter who added that last—though the voice was remarkably like Gosling's and even Gosling started on hearing it.

Sir Hilton nearly had a fit.

"What? What? Fellow! You—you scoundrel!" he hooted. "How dare you refer to me in such terms—how dare you, I say?"

"Which I never did!" gasped Gosling.

"Enough! I will insist upon you being discharged at a moment's notice, you insolent fellow!" roared Sir Hilton, shaking his fists through the bars of the gates. "You have been drinking—I have suspected that you were in the habit of drinking for a long time—indeed, I have spoken to Dr. Locke on the subject. But this—this is too much! Open these gates, you scoundrel!"

"Which I've 'ad my horders, and I'm goin' to stand by 'em, sir!" said the somewhat dazed Gosling. "And as for me being drunk, that ain't the truth, sir. I ain't 'ad nothin' stronger than tea sin' a week larst Saturday, when me married sister's 'usband sent me a bottle of gin what he'd won in a raffle, him being a teetotaler, like! You're a silly old fool and a rotten liar!"

Again this last bit was added by the Greyfriars ventriloquist. Bunter was warming up to the job. Though possibly he would have liked to do so, Gosling certainly hadn't the nerve to call Sir Hilton an old fool and a liar.

"You—you scoundrel!" spluttered Sir Hilton, in a towering rage now. "You—you drunken rascal! You dare to—"

"'Ere, hold on, sir!" growled Gosling doggedly. "I ain't a-goin' to be called names like that when I ain't 'ad a drop to drink to-day. Here, don't you—Whooop!"

Gosling ended with a howl.

To answer the baronet, Gosling had delayed locking the gates, and, finding them not quite closed, Sir Hilton gave them a sudden push in his rage.

Gosling wasn't expecting it, and the edge of the iron gate struck him on the nose. It was not a very hard blow, but Gosling yelped, staggered back, and sat down hard.

At that moment Bob Cherry and his three chums came in at the gates and stared in at the disturbance. Several other fellows had already appeared on the scene attracted by the angry voices. Sir Hilton gave a satisfied grunt, and, pushing the gates wider, he stalked in, his angular features crimson with outraged wrath.

"Now!" he said. "We will see if you will prevent my entry, my fine fellow. Good gad! I will get you discharged instantly for this. I do not believe for one moment that Dr. Locke has given instructions to refuse me admittance. Monstrous!"

And, ignoring Gosling, the infuriated baronet was striding away.

But he hadn't counted on Gosling.

That individual was hurt, and he was in as big a rage as Sir Hilton

now. Gosling was given at times to being very independent—indeed, he had been known to cherish strong socialistic tendencies at times. That blow on the nose had roused them now, and Gosling was determined to carry out orders in any case. He didn't care for no barrynet, as he was heard to exclaim as he staggered to his feet.

As Sir Hilton started to stride away, Gosling ambled after him and grabbed his aristocratic arm.

"'Old on!" he snorted. "Barrynet or no barrynet, you ain't coming in 'ere if I knows it. Hout you goes, old Popper!"

Sir Hilton, trembling with rage, raised his hunting-crop.

"Unhand me, scoundrel!" he gasped. "Good heavens, the man is mad!"

"Hout you goes!" gasped Gosling. "You ain't a-going near that there School House! Horders is horders, and you're going hout these here gates again! If you won't go you'll be chucked-hout!"

And Gosling spat on his hands and squared up before the astounded and stupified Sir Hilton. That scandalised gentleman staggered back before Gosling's sudden show of defiance and threatening action.

Whether Sir Hilton would have gone on was extremely doubtful—and whether Gosling would have used force to evict the baronet was less doubtful, for Gosling had had his orders, and he deemed it his duty to see them carried out literally. Indeed, the old porter was in the mood to do it.

But just then Wingate rushed up, his face showing his amazed alarm.

"Gosling!" he gasped. "Gosling, are you mad? Stop, you fool!"

"I've 'ad my horders, and this 'ere gent 'as got to go hout!" roared Gosling, fairly roused now. "I don't care who 'e his; he's going hout, Master Wingate!"

And Gosling squared up again before Sir Hilton; and Sir Hilton stepped back, not at all liking the look of things now. Sir Hilton was not very brave, for all his haughty arrogance. And just then Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, came hurrying across to the gates.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER, from his hiding-place, saw him coming, and he groaned. It looked as if it was all up now—his great effort was going to fail.

Then Bunter grinned and got down to work again.

As Mr. Quelch came hurrying up he called out sharply—or he appeared to do so to all but Bunter and Bob Cherry & Co., who had already guessed something of the truth:

"That's right, Gosling! Throw Sir Hilton out! He must not be allowed to enter Greyfriars! Throw him out!"

"Mum-my hat!"

Wingate fairly gasped. Bunter was not in sight, and Wingate did not think of him for one moment; he had forgotten Bunter's ventriloquism, or he might have understood. And he was amazed beyond measure at Mr. Quelch's words.

But it was quite enough for the gallant, dutiful Gosling.

The Head had ordered him to refuse to admit Sir Hilton, and now Mr. Quelch had ordered him to throw the baronet out.

The ancient porter spat on his hands and grabbed Sir Hilton, and the next

moment the two were waltzing together, Sir Hilton almost beside himself.

"Gosling! Man! Are you mad? How dare you!"

It was Mr. Quelch in reality this time—not the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

With a scandalised face Mr. Quelch dashed up, and, grasping the porter, he dragged him back. It was not a time for half-measures in the astounded Remove master's view.

Gosling was astounded and very indignant. He glared at Mr. Quelch.

"Here, 'old on!" he gasped warmly. "Didn't you just tell me to chuck him out, sir? The Head—"

"I certainly did not dream of saying anything of the kind, Gosling!" shouted Mr. Quelch. "Someone—some wretched miscreant certainly did imitate my voice, but—"

"Quelch," gasped Sir Hilton, "you shall suffer for this! You—you dared to order this scoundrel to—to throw me out! Don't attempt to deny it, sir! I heard you as you came up! This—this is an outrage—an outrage that will cost you dear! I—I am not the man to be insulted with impunity by a school-master! Allow me to tell you that, sir!"

"Sir," stuttered Mr. Quelch, "I—I—I—"

The Remove master seemed to have difficulty in going on. But just then Billy Bunter took a hand—or, rather, voice—to help him.

"I—I will not be called names by an old, stuck-up fool like you!" he seemed to continue heatedly. "You are a bullying, bad-tempered old fossil, sir! Because you own the land round here you think you own the earth! You're a blessed magistrate, but you ought to be in quod yourself, you silly old mug-wump! You ought to be bashed on the head with one of your notice-boards, you mean old rotter! Kick him out, Gosling—kick the foxy-faced, swivel-eyed old beast out! Wingate, help Gosling to kick old Popper out!"

There was a silence—a dread silence! Even Billy Bunter, safe as he felt himself, regretted having gone so far now he saw the effect of his remarks. Mr. Quelch was thunderstruck; he looked this way and that way, as if in search of the voice—the voice that seemed to be his, but was not his. Even Bob Cherry and his chums were scared at Bunter's recklessness.

"Oh, the awful fool!" breathed Bob, looking about him. "The fat fool is hiding somewhere about, of course. It must be him!"

"Now for fireworks!" murmured Frank Nugent. "Look at his giddy Highness—as near a fit as ever he was!"

Sir Hilton was certainly bordering on a fit. He fairly swelled and swelled with the towering rage that consumed him. He simply danced with wrath.

"You—you scoundrel!" he hooted, shaking his fist in Mr. Quelch's astounded face. "You—you dare to—to insult me in public—to—to insult me—Sir Hilton Popper! Very well, my fine fellow—very well! You appear to forget that I am a member of the governing body of this school! You will have cause to remember it in the near future, sir! Where is Dr. Locke?" he hooted, glaring about him. "I insist upon seeing Dr. Locke this very instant! Gad! I—I—I—"

"Bless my soul! Good—good heavens! What is the matter? Mr. Quelch—Sir Hilton—What—what—"

It was the Head—at last! Possibly he had heard the raised voices from his garden and had come to investigate. At all events, here he was, and he stared

at the scene in great astonishment and alarm.

"Sir Hilton!" he went on, as Sir Hilton started to dance again. "My dear, dear sir, pray calm yourself! What is the matter?"

"Matter?" bellowed the baronet. "You shall hear this instant what is the matter, Dr. Locke! Never have I been so grossly insulted! Never have I been treated with such abominable disrespect and contumely! Never—"

Sir Hilton broke off at that point, for just then a terrified howl rang out from the shrubbery. It was Billy Bunter's voice—his own well-known voice this time.

The next moment Wingate came out from the shrubbery, dragging a wriggling, fat form into view.

It was Billy Bunter! From the moment Mr. Quelch had mentioned that his voice had been imitated Wingate had seen it all; had

the limelight, with scores of startled eyes fixed upon him.

"What—what—Wingate—"

"One moment, sir," said Wingate grimly. "I think Bunter can clear up this affair!"

"Bunter?" exclaimed the Head in amazement.

"Bunter!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch, a great light breaking in upon him. "Is it possible, Wingate, that Bunter is responsible for this amazing affair?"

"I fancy so, sir!" said Wingate. "Bunter is a ventriloquist, you remember, sir. He has played tricks like this before. I think he is responsible for this, sir."

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch, his brow darkening. "I—I believe you are right, Wingate. I certainly did not call Sir Hilton Popper those outrageous names, nor did I dream of ordering Gosling to—to eject Sir Hilton! Bunter—"

"Ow!"

Bunter shook.

"Good gad!" stuttered Sir Hilton. "A deuced ventriloquist you say, Quelch?"

"Yes, Sir Hilton! Gosling, who told you to refuse Sir Hilton Popper admittance, and who ordered you to close the gates?"

"The Head did, sir!" mumbled old Gosling, scarcely knowing whether he was on his head or his heels. "Which the Head called to me through the winder of 'is study, and he sez, 'Gosling—'"

"Good gracious!" interrupted Dr. Locke. "I certainly did nothing of the kind, Gosling, you foolish man! I have not been in my study since noon. I have just come here from my garden. This—this is amazing!—I do not understand why Gosling should—should—"

"Excuse me, sir," said Wingate quietly, "but will you allow me to explain?"

"Very well, Wingate!"

"I think it was Bunter, sir. He evidently had some reason to stop Sir Hilton coming here! He imitated your voice, sir, and ordered Gosling to close the gates and refuse Sir Hilton admittance—just as he imitated Mr. Quelch's voice and ordered Gosling to throw Sir Hilton out! I caught the young rascal hiding in the bushes under the elms there; I think that alone is proof enough that he was up to mischief."

"Good gad!" Sir Hilton suddenly exploded. "Good gad! That's it, Wingate! The young villain visited me this afternoon with a cock-and-bull story—an absurd fabrication that I disbelieved at once, and I told him I should come over this very afternoon and report his visit to you. He has done this abominable business in order to prevent me seeing you and thus exposing him. Ha! I see it all now!"

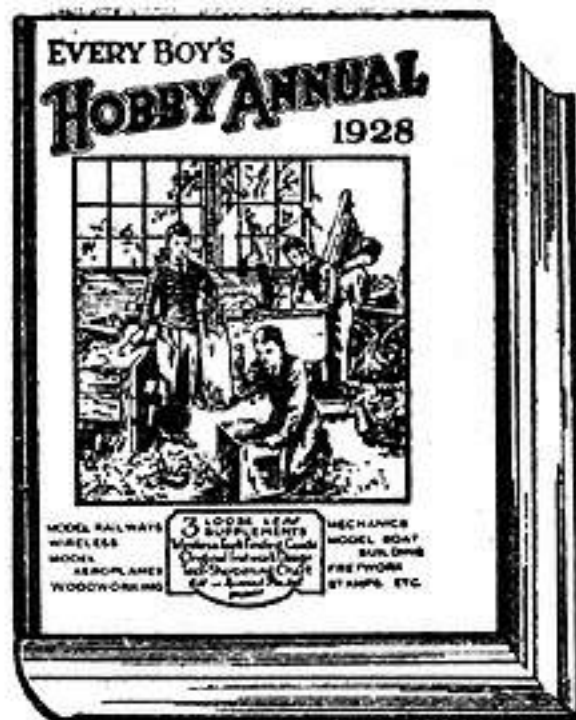
"Good—good heavens!" stuttered the Head, giving the shivering Bunter a look that almost shrivelled him up. "It is almost incredible that any boy should dare—should have the astounding audacity and wickedness to attempt such a rascally trick. Bunter!"

"Ow!"

"Follow me, boy! Sir Hilton, I am exceedingly sorry—more sorry than I can say to know that you have been subjected to such scandalous insults and annoyances! Rest assured, however, that this wretched boy will suffer dearly for his wicked behaviour. I have had occasion before to punish him most severely for practising that—dangerous gift, ventriloquism. That lesson was evidently lost upon him."

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remembered the Greyfriars ventriloquist. And while the wrangling was going on he had quietly slipped away to hunt round for Bunter.

And he had found him. Bunter was bowled out!

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob Cherry. "That's done it! Here's where the curtain rings down on the first act of the drama!"

"It's the end of the ventriloquial entertainment, anyway!" said Frank Nugent, with a grim chuckle. "Poor old Bunter! Look at his knees wobbling under him!"

Bunter's knees were wobbling under him woefully!

Never had Billy Bunter felt so sorry for himself as he did at that moment. Never had the Owl of the Remove so much regretted the fact that he was an accomplished ventriloquist. Once again he had had his joke, and once again he found himself face to face with the reckoning.

With the startled eyes of all upon him, Billy Bunter was dragged forward into

added the Head meaningly. "I will endeavour to make the next more impressive."

"Ow! I sus-say, sir! It—it wasn't me," gasped Bunter, blinking round in terror at the ring of faces. "It's all a mistake, sir."

"What?"

"I'm not a ventriloquist at all, sir! Besides, I wouldn't dream of making anyone insult people like that, sir! I—I've only just come through the gates, sir. Can—I go now, sir?"

"Silence! No, you cannot go, Bunter, but you will go to my study at once. Wingate, kindly escort that—that boy to my study and do not leave him. Sir Hilton, if you will be kind enough to come this way——"

"Good gad! I will, Locke! Quelch, you will now understand——"

"Oh, quite, quite!" said Mr. Quelch hurriedly. "Pray do not say more, Sir Hilton. And allow me to say how much I regret——"

The two gentlemen followed the stately Head indoors, both apologising to each other. Gosling tottered back to his lodge, scratching his head, to try and get a little solace from a certain bottle which reposed on the second shelf in his pantry. Billy Bunter, in charge of Wingate, had already rolled indoors like a badly-punctured balloon. The crowd broke up, too scared to laugh now.

"Well," said Bob Cherry. "I shouldn't like to be in Bunter's boots now! I used to think I'd like to be a giddy ventriloquist. But I wouldn't now. It's too tempting—and too dangerous. A fellow who can imitate voices is a danger to himself and the giddy community. Poor old Bunter! He's for it!"

And that was the general view. Bunter undoubtedly was for it. And Bob Cherry and his chums hurried indoors to tell the sad tale to Harry Wharton, who was grinding out lines in the Form-room. And though the news filled Harry with hope for his own troubles, he also agreed that Bunter was "for it," and couldn't help feeling sorry for the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

To Be Flogged!

"BUNTER!"

There was a grinding note in the Head's voice.

Bunter groaned.

"Ow! Ye-es, sir!"

Bunter tried to pull himself together. But it was a difficult task, under the glowering eyes of Dr. Locke, Sir Hilton Popper, and Mr. Quelch. Bunter had a terrible feeling that he was in the middle of a dark forest, surrounded by horrid tigers who wanted to devour him.

Before those terribly stern gentlemen Billy Bunter had a dreadful fear that "whoppers"—however well-devised and told—would not save him. It was useless to tell them that he had been fast asleep in his study all the time, or that he had been mugging up Horace in the Form-room, or that he didn't even know what a ventriloquist was!

He had been practically caught in the act, and he was known to be an exponent of the gentle art of ventriloquism, and he was known to have a reason for not wishing Sir Hilton to see the Head, and he was known to be untruthful—his very reputation was against him.

Bunter shivered.

"Ow! Oh, yes, sir!"

"Bunter!" said the Head. "I have now heard the full story of the disgraceful happenings this afternoon—both of your visit to Popper Court and of what followed at the school here. I am quite satisfied in my mind that Wingate's suggested theory—that you, Bunter, were the cause of those outrageous happenings—is the truth. There can be no doubting it, I am afraid. Nevertheless, I will hear here and now what you have to say, and I warn you to speak nothing but the truth if you wish to save yourself from expulsion."

"Oh dear!"

"I am waiting, Bunter!"

"Ow! Oh, ye-es, sir! It—it's all a mistake, sir," gasped Bunter. "I'm innocent, sir. You can ask Toddy, sir—I mean Peter Todd in my study, sir. He knows I've got a fearful cold and couldn't ventriloquise if I tried."

"What?"

"That's it, sir! I know nothing about it," said Bunter hopefully. "Besides, sir, I was down on Little Side at the time. I—I was giving my minor Sammy tips on cricket—I mean football."

"Bunter!"

"I really ought to be in the sanny, sir—with this awful headache—I mean, cold, sir!" gasped Bunter. "And I never did ventriloquise at all. Wingate is quite mistaken, sir. Those voices must have been spiritist voices."

"What?" ejaculated the Head.

"Spiritist voices," said Bunter, feeling he hadn't quite got the right expression. "Voices you can only hear but not see—I mean—that is——"

"Silence! That is quite enough, Bunter! You utterly absurd boy!" thundered the Head, his mouth twitching slightly. "It is perfectly obvious that you are attempting to save yourself by absurd and wicked untruths, Bunter."

"Oh dear! Really, sir, I never did it!" groaned Bunter. "Besides, I only did it for a lark, and I never expected old Gosling to really chuck old—I mean, Sir Hilton Popper out! Honour bright, sir! If you'll ask my minor he'll tell you I was with him in Friar-dale at the time, too! So you see it couldn't have been me. Can—I go now, sir?"

"Good gad!" gasped Sir Hilton Popper; and he stood transfixed at Bunter's still hopeful face.

"No, you cannot go, Bunter," said the Head, calming himself with an effort. "Cannot you see, you utterly obtuse boy, that you have admitted your guilt? Bless my soul! I—I really do not know what to say to you, Bunter. It is quite useless to expect a truthful statement from you. It is now quite clear, however," went on the Head, his voice taking a sterner note, "that you were entirely responsible for this disgraceful happening. There is, however, one thing I do not understand, Bunter. What was your motive in going to Sir Hilton at all with such a ridiculous story in regard to the throwing of that turf at Sir Hilton—a crime for which Wharton of your Form has already been proved guilty. And who were your companions?"

"Ow! I didn't want to go, sir!" groaned Bunter. "It was that beast Cherry, and Bull, and Nugent, and Singh! They made me go—fairly dragged me there, sir. It was their fault, sir."

"They made you go to Sir Hilton with that ridiculous story of a fictitious character named Robinson whom you claimed to have thrown the turf, Bunter?" said the Head.

"Yes, sir—that's it, sir. It wasn't my fault at all!"

"Very well, then. We had better have those four boys here to be questioned," said Dr. Locke.

"Ow! Oh dear! I—I say, sir!" gasped Bunter in sudden alarm. "I hope you won't believe what those fellows will tell you, sir. They're fearful fibbers, sir! If they tell you it was me that chucked that turf don't you believe them, sir."

"Oh!"

Both the Head and Mr. Quelch looked at each other at that. The same thought seemingly had occurred to both masters.

"I think it very advisable indeed to have those boys here, sir," agreed Mr. Quelch grimly. "I must confess that during the afternoon I have been much disturbed by doubts as to Wharton's guilt. I think, sir——"

"Quite so, Mr. Quelch. Kindly bring Cherry and the others here without delay!"

Mr. Quelch left the room, and Bunter's face went almost green as he waited, with the Head's keen eyes upon him. Mr. Quelch came in at last, with Bob Cherry, Nugent, Bull, and Hurree Singh at his heels.

"Cherry," said the Head, as they ranged up before his desk, "I wish you to tell me why you forced Bunter—if you did force him—to accompany you to Popper Court this afternoon in order to tell Sir Hilton Popper an absurd story regarding a fictitious person of the name of Robinson, whom Bunter claimed had thrown that turf at Sir Hilton."

"We forced him to go, sir," said Bob. "But—but we didn't force him to tell Sir Hilton Popper that—that yarn, sir. He told that on his own account, sir."

"Why?"

Bob shifted uncomfortably. But he saw it was quite useless to attempt to shield Bunter now.

"The—the fact is, sir," he gasped, "that it wasn't Wharton who pitched the turf at Sir Hilton at all. It was Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Silence, Bunter!" thundered the Head. "Go on, Cherry!"

"We saw him do it, sir," said Bob. "Though I don't believe he really knew what he was doing. But Wharton wouldn't give him away, and so we thought we'd make Bunter own up because of the footer."

"Footer?"

"Yes, sir. You see, we can't do without Wharton in the matches, and he was gated for a month. We were determined to make Bunter own up if only for that. But Bunter refused to own up to you, and at last he said he'd own up to Sir Hilton himself. We yanked—I mean, took him to Popper Court; but instead of telling Sir Hilton the truth Bunter told him that—that yarn about Robinson."

Bob finished. It was really not necessary to say any more.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, more in sorrow than in anger. "What a lot of whoppers, Bob Cherry! You know jolly well I didn't do it, and, besides, Harry Wharton as good as told me to do it—you know he did. You can't deny that. And Skinner said he'd tell everybody it wasn't me, and you can ask him. Besides——"

"Enough!" gasped the Head. "Silence, Bunter! You utterly stupid and wicked boy! Silence! There is no need to waste further time going into this matter."

He arose and picked up a cane from the table before him. Bunter eyed him apprehensively. Somehow Bunter felt certain the Head meant it for him.

"Now, Bunter," said the Head in a deadly voice, "I want the truth from you. At the first indication of an untruth I shall cane you, and I shall go on caning you until you do speak the truth."

Bunter looked at the Head and he looked at the cane, and then he collapsed.

He told the truth.

"Very well, Bunter," said the Head quietly as the Owl of the Remove finished with a deep groan. "I am glad the truth has come to light at last. Wharton must be released at once, and his punishments cancelled. Mr. Quelch, Bunter."

"Ow! Y-es, sir."

"Mr. Quelch will take you to the punishment-room, until the school can be assembled, when you will be publicly flogged for your abominable conduct. And you may be deeply thankful that I do not feel disposed, in view of your utter stupidity, to expel you from this school—a punishment you have richly deserved."

"Oh dear! I—I say, sir, would you mind expelling me instead?" gasped Bunter. "It—it will save an awful lot of bother, sir."

"What?"

"Up—upsetting the whole school routine—and all that, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Besides, it—it will make your arm awfully tired, sir. I should—shouldn't like to think I'd caused you so much trouble, sir."

"Good gracious!"

"Especially as you suffer from—from rheumatism, sir!" gasped Bunter feebly. "You—you ought to be careful at your age, sir, about over-exerting yourself, sir. Besides—"

"Silence!" gasped the Head. "Mr. Quelch, kindly take Bunter without further delay to the punishment-room. That will do. Sir Hilton—"

Bunter did not hear any more, for Mr. Quelch fairly rushed him out of the room—he could see that Dr. Locke could not stand much more of Billy Bunter. And three minutes later Billy Bunter was in the punishment-room staring blankly at a closed and locked door. His sins had found him out, and once again he was fated to discover that the way of the transgressor is sure to be under any circumstances very hard.

At least, it began to look like it—though William George Bunter wasn't quite flogged yet!

Mr. Quelch's footsteps died away, and scarcely had they done so when other footsteps reached the hapless Bunter—hurrying footsteps, whilst a bell began to ring somewhere.

It was the bell for the general assembly—the assembly to witness the flogging of Billy Bunter of the Remove.

Bunter fairly shook with fear as he heard it, and realised to the full what was before him.

In Bunter's view being sacked was a mere flea-bite in comparison with a flogging, and especially a public flog-

was the footstep of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. And he knew that Mr. Prout was just returning from the golf-links at Courtfield, and was very unlikely to have heard anything about the recent happenings.

And he had already discovered, by peeping through the keyhole, that the key was in the lock—apparently Mr. Quelch had forgotten to take it away after locking the door.

The next moment, as he was passing the door, Mr. Prout was very surprised indeed to hear Dr. Locke's voice—or he supposed it was Dr. Locke's voice—coming from the other side of the detention-room door.



"Bless my soul!" came the voice of Dr. Locke. "Who has dared to lock me in this room? Open this door!" "Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Prout. "One moment, sir!" Mr. Prout dropped his golf-bag with a thump and a rattle, turned the key in the lock, and flung wide the door. As he did so Billy Bunter fairly bounded out and sent the astounded Fifth Form master reeling. (See Chapter 11.)

ging. It took a great deal to touch Bunter's pride or his sense of shame, but it took very little indeed to touch his sense of pain, as it were.

Billy Bunter hated pain of any kind; the very thought of a flogging filled him with sheer fright.

"Oh dear!" he groaned in deep bitterness of spirit. "It's too awful for words! But I'm not jolly well going to be flogged, whatever happens. I jolly well won't, if I have to kick old Locke's shins! I'm not—"

Bunter paused as a heavy, ponderous footstep sounded outside. And as he heard it a wild and desperate idea came to him.

He knew that ponderous footstep; it

In fact, Mr. Prout was so surprised that he leaped nearly a foot into the air.

"Open this door!" came the voice in angry tones. "Bless my soul! Who has dared to lock me in this room? Is that Mr. Quelch or Mr. Prout?"

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Prout. "What—what—Dr. Locke, are you inside this detention-room? Is it possible that—"

"Of course I am inside, Prout!" was the testy reply. "Kindly release me without delay, Prout. Don't stand there staring, Prout. You will find the key in the lock. Some miscreant—"

"Good heavens! One moment, sir."

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Mr. Prout dropped his golf-bag with a thump and a rattle. Then he turned the key in the lock and flung wide the door. And, as he did so Billy Bunter fairly bounded out.

He sent the astounded and flabbergasted Fifth Form master reeling against the opposite wall, and then he went along the passage at a terrific turn of speed—for Billy Bunter. Along the passage he went and down the stairs, taking them two at a time, and luck favoured him, for though a couple of seniors and several juniors made clutches at him, he dodged them easily, taking them by surprise, and he reached the quad in a matter of moments.

Then he tore for the gates, hatless, and not caring whither he went or why. Billy Bunter was always an opportunist and a fellow of sudden impulse—when a flogging was looming on the horizon. Gosling might possibly have been at the gates in the ordinary way, but Gosling was still seeking solace from the bottle he kept on the second shelf in the pantry, and he didn't even see Bunter go.

But Bunter had gone. Bunter, the ventriloquist, had become Bunter, the runaway! He was not fated to run far, however! Bunter's luck was a byword at Greyfriars.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

To Really Good Account!

"O H dear! What shall I do?"

Thus Billy Bunter.

The hapless runaway sat on a log in the depths of the woods and groaned. It was a deep and hopeless groan. He had dodged the flogging for the time being. He had escaped from solitary confinement, and was now as free as the birds in the trees above him.

But how long was it going to last?

Bunter thought of home and shuddered.

There would be no welcome for him there. Bunter senior would doubtless bring the family strap into play, and then he would bundle the wanderer back to Greyfriars by the next available train.

Besides, he had no money. And the worst of it all was he had no grub, and no hopes of getting any, unless he returned for the flogging.

The flogging, doubtless, would soon be over, whereas hunger was likely to go on indefinitely. Nevertheless, brief or not, Bunter was not disposed to face it. He was even more disposed to face hunger.

"Oh dear!" he groaned again. "This is all that beast Wharton's fault! I hope he'll feel sorry when he knows what it's brought me to. He made me chuck that turf—he suggested it, anyway. I hope he'll be full of bitter remorse when he hears I've been found stiff and cold, starved to death from want and—exposure, lying under a mantle of white snow!"

And Bunter almost wept at the pathos of his own imagined picture of what might happen to him. Certainly there was little chance of it yet awhile. Like the camel, Bunter had many layers of fat on him to use up before he starved to death from want of food, at all events, and there was not likely to be any spow about for a long time yet. But Bunter added that touching bit to improve the picture. It quite moved him. He fairly revelled in the scene his vivid imagination conjured up. The seniors—he could see the sad, anxious look on Wingate's face—would come searching through the bare trees with lanterns, and then somebody would stumble over his prostrate, unconscious form, and then he would be borne tenderly back to the sanny at Greyfriars. Then everybody would be sorry they'd treated him so badly and—

Bunter's pathetic reflections were interrupted by the sound of a footstep on the woodland path behind him.

With remarkable celerity Billy Bunter dived down behind the big fallen trunk and peeped out anxiously. If the seniors were after him already—

But it wasn't a party of seniors hunting him; it was none other than Sir Hilton Popper, Bart, J.P.!

Sir Hilton came striding along the woodland path, slashing at bare boughs and dead leaves with his riding-whip. He was evidently not in a very good temper still.

Bunter stared, wondering why he was walking back home when he had turned up at Greyfriars in the trap.

Then Bunter remembered that once before Sir Hilton had arrived at Greyfriars by trap and had walked back, simply because his pony had got tired of waiting for him and had calmly trotted home without him. Sir Hilton hated cars because he considered them a danger to his precious self; and he also kept only very tame horseflesh for the very same reason.

At all events, Bunter guessed that the same thing had happened again, and this was why Sir Hilton looked in a seething rage, as was actually the fact.

Sir Hilton was in a rage. The fact that his pony had gone home without him had been the last straw for the irascible old gentleman.

For the moment Bunter felt sorely tempted to give another exhibition of his ability as a ventriloquist by giving Sir Hilton a fright; but he resisted the temptation, realising it was scarcely wise under the circumstances.

And the next moment he felt glad he had resisted it, though he found an opportunity of exercising his remarkable gift soon enough, nevertheless.

For just then Bunter saw that Sir Hilton was not alone on the path. Behind him was a skulking figure—that of a rough-looking man in home-made, rusty gaiters—a village lounge and a poacher Bunter deemed him, rightly, as it happened.

The fellow had passed Bunter five minutes ago on the path, and Bunter had been very relieved indeed that he had passed him.

But evidently the fellow was more interested in Sir Hilton than he had been in Billy Bunter. He trod stealthily behind the unconscious baronet, his face full of bitter hate, his eyes glinting in a manner that made Bunter shudder.

As Sir Hilton came opposite to Bunter the fat junior trembled, for just then the man raised aloft a thick, ugly-looking cudgel—and his intention was terribly obvious.

"Oh, dear!" breathed Bunter, licking suddenly dry lips.

And then, in that terrible moment, another brainwave came to Bunter—an idea that quite swept away his terror.

The next second—even as the cudgel swung aloft over the baronet's defenceless head—a wild yell rang out:

"Rescue! Down him, you men!"

"Altogether! Catch the scoundrel!"

"Stop, you villain!"

"At him, men! We've got him!"

"Hurrah!"

Following that first yell, a perfect chorus of yells rang out—yells that seemed to come, one after another, from every side.

For a single moment the ruffian stood motionless, startled out of his wits, almost. The next he had flung his cudgel away, and was bounding and crashing away through the trees—though not before the astounded Sir Hilton had glimpsed his bristly face

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over his shoulder as he wheeled in alarm.

Bunter, excited and delighted at the success of his latest ventriloquial effort, jumped to his feet—just in time to catch the business end of the flying cudgel under his fat chin. Another yell rang through the dark trees—a yell of pain this time.

"Oh!" gasped Sir Hilton, sighting the dancing Bunter. "What—what tho—"

"Yow! It's all right, sir!" gasped Bunter, too excited to take much notice of the pain, for once. "I did the brute down!"

"But—but—"

Sir Hilton gazed round him blankly. "It's all right, sir!" grinned Bunter, very pleased with himself. "I did it—frightened the brute off with my ventriloquism."

"Oh!" Sir Hilton understood in a flash then. "Oh, my—my brave boy!" he panted, his face still white and shaken. "That man—that scoundrel—would have murdered me! In my capacity as a magistrate I was instrumental in getting the villain a long sentence for poaching. At the time he swore to be revenged on me. I remember it well, and I remember the villain's face well. Boy, you—you have done me a great—a very great—service!"

"That's all right, sir!" said Bunter, swelling like the frog in the fable and wondering how to make the best of the situation. "It's lucky I was along here just now, wasn't it, sir? It's lucky I ran away to escape that flogging."

"I—I heard, just as I was leaving Greyfriars, that you had vanished, Bunter," said Sir Hilton shakily, but eyeing him curiously. "But—but come with me back to Greyfriars now, my boy."

"Oh, really, sir!" said Bunter. "That means a flogging. I think you ought to admit that a fellow like me oughtn't to be flogged. What would have happened to you, sir, if I hadn't—"

"You shall not be flogged, Bunter," said Sir Hilton, his voice trembling with something approaching genuine gratitude. "You have amply earned pardon for what you did—by what you have just done. Few boys of your age would have dared—would have risked the failure of such a plan. You have undoubtedly saved my life, boy, and I will see to it that Dr. Locke will not overlook the fact. Come with me!"

"Oh, certainly, sir!" smirked Billy Bunter. "Now you put it like that, I will."

And he did.

Nobody had dreamed that Bunter had gone out of gates, and a score of seniors were hunting high and low over the School House for the fat youth when Sir Hilton escorted him in. Harry Wharton & Co. happened to be in the Hall, and they stared and stared as Bunter rolled in cheerily, with the baronet's hand resting kindly on his fat shoulder.

Indeed, they all but fell down in sheer amazement at the strange sight.

Billy Bunter gave them a cheery nod and the two vanished towards the Head's study.

Harry Wharton & Co. and several other thunderstruck juniors followed up and waited outside for developments.

Ten minutes passed, and then Billy Bunter came out alone. He was wearing a fat, satisfied grin.

"Hallo! What are you fellows hanging about here for?" he asked, giving the juniors rather a lofty blink.

The RETURN of ERNEST LEVISON!

If there's a caddish action to be done, Edgar Bright, the new boy in the Remove, is the one to do it.

Nobody likes him at Greyfriars—that goes without saying. But that doesn't worry the "Toad," as Bright is called. He's at Greyfriars for a special purpose.

What that purpose is you will learn when you read

"THE TOAD OF THE REMOVE!"

By

FRANK RICHARDS

next Saturday's brilliant story of the boys of Greyfriars, which deals with the return of Ernest Levison to his old school.

ORDER YOUR MAGNET IN ADVANCE, BOYS!



"For you," said Harry Wharton, eyeing him in wonder. "What's happened? Aren't you to be flogged, Bunter?"

"Eh? Me flogged?" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "Well, I like that! Fancy expecting the Head to flog a fellow who's just, by sheer pluck and resourcefulness, saved the life of a school governor, and a baronet, and goodness knows what else. Talk sense!"

"But—but—what the thump—" "You'll know soon enough," grinned Bunter. "The giddy flogging's off, you men! I saved old Popper's life, you know. A fearful ruffian was attacking him when I rushed up and knocked him senseless with a fearful blow under the chin that would have felled an ox."

"Oh, my hat!" "It's a fact!" said Bunter, with a lofty smirk. "You should have seen the burly ruffian run!"

"After you'd knocked him senseless or before?" inquired Bob Cherry, with heavy sarcasm.

"You needn't sneer," said Bunter, with dignity. "You'll see!"

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull. "It's all bunkum, of course!"

"Yes, but—" Harry Wharton was beginning, when Mr. Quelch just then emerged from the Head's room.

To their utter amazement he stepped up to Bunter and shook his hand warmly.

"Well done, Bunter!" he said quite genially. "I am proud of you, my boy. You showed undoubted pluck, and you have, for once, made good use of your wonderful powers. I am not surprised that Sir Hilton has insisted so strongly and pleaded so earnestly on your behalf, and I am very glad that the Head has decided to pardon you."

With that, Mr. Quelch rustled away, bestowing a pleasant parting smile on William George Bunter.

"Well?" said Bunter. "What do you fellows say to that? I shall expect a public apology from you fellows in the Common-room this evening for doubting my word. I can't stop now, as I want to see if that beast, Toddy, has left me any tea. I was very nearly accepting my friend Sir Hilton's invitation to dine with him this evening, only—"

"Only he didn't ask you!"

"Rats! You can go and eat coke," said Bunter, with another lofty sniff. "You've heard Mr. Quelch praise me for my splendid pluck—"

"Your swallowing tuck!"

"No," roared Bunter. "My splendid pluck and resourcefulness. Yah! You jealous rotters! Go and eat coke!"

And with that William George Bunter rolled away, with his fat little nose high in the air.

"Well, upon my word!" gasped Harry. "It—it can't be true, and yet it—"

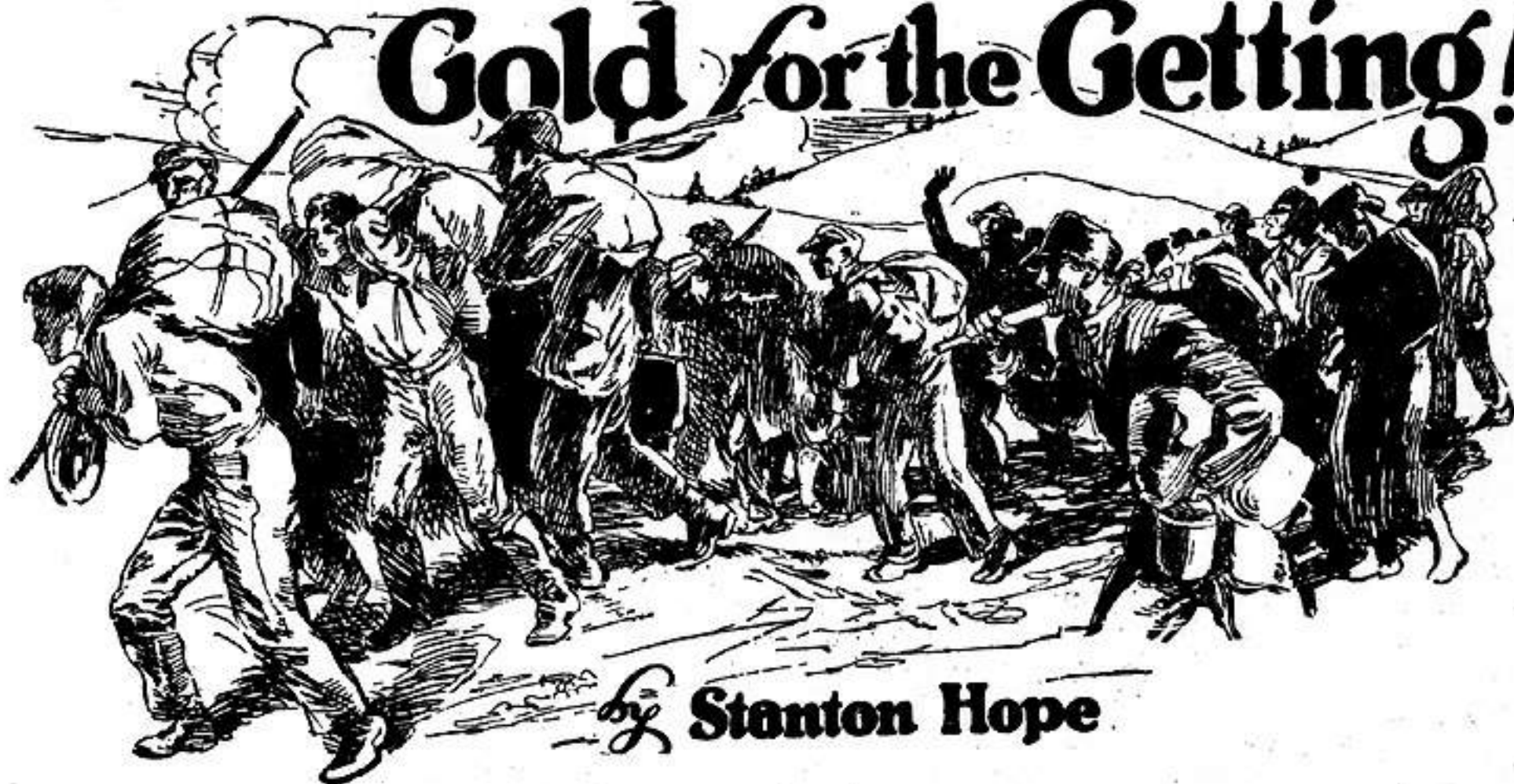
"It must be true!" breathed Bob Cherry. "My hat! Fancy Bunter saving anybody's life—a giddy hero! This wants getting used to!"

And it certainly did. And they certainly did get used to it—Billy Bunter saw to that! In practically no time the story was all round the school, and in the Rag that evening Bunter spread himself and told the story again and again, each time adding little, vivid details from his own vivid imagination, until nobody was quite certain whether Bunter had saved Sir Hilton Popper from drowning, fire, footpads, or in any other way. They soon got heartily sick of the subject; and, in any case, they all agreed, whatever he had done, for the present the school had had quite enough of the peculiar talents of the Greyfriars Ventriloquist.

THE END.

The Story of a Thrilling Gold Rush to the Land of the Midnight Sun!

Gold for the Getting!



by Stanton Hope

INTRODUCTION.

JACK ORCHARD arrives in San Francisco to find his uncle, **DAVE ORCHARD**, missing, having apparently absconded with a bag of gold entrusted to him. Later Jack falls in with **TERRY O'HARA**, a cheery Irish boy, and **CLEM HARDY**, an old prospector. The trio join forces in a gold rush to the Yukon and make a good strike. At intervals the three partners have trouble with **BULL MORGAN** and **LEFTY SIMONS**, a pair of shady camp followers and, on one occasion Jack sees suspended round the neck of Morgan a nugget of gold—shaped like a bear's claw—that Dave Orchard is supposed to have stolen. Whilst journeying to Dawson to deposit their gold at the bank, Jack gets the shock of his life for Clem Hardy is arrested, it being proved that he is none other than Jack's uncle, Dave Orchard, the man who is wanted for theft. "Uncle Clem," however, escapes from gaol. Jack and Terry then invest their gold in a team of huskies after which they stake further claims at Kettle Creek. Failing in an attempt to jump these claims, the crafty Bull Morgan suggests a race back to the record office. Jack accepts the challenge, agreeing to fight in a boxing gala at a sporting club run by Morgan and Simons should his team lose.

(Now read on.)

The Avalanche!

FOR a couple of miles there were not fifty yards separating the dog teams. Other dog-drivers and prospectors on snow-shoes, heading for Kettle Creek, paused and yelled encouragement.

"Phwat about taking the direct route back, me bhoys?" cried Terry.

"Across Discovery Hill, d'you mean?" demanded Jack. "No, old chap; it might be a case of more haste, less speed."

Suddenly he noticed that Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons were swinging over toward the left.

"Hi!" yelled Jack. "It isn't safe across the hill!"

Only a laugh came in response. Always alert to take any advantage that presented itself, Morgan and Simons had seen that the way across the shoulder of Discovery Hill was the short cut back to Dawson. By taking the higher route, and so cutting out the long detour round the base of the hill, they believed they could gain a good half-mile on their young rivals.

Neither of them had any real snow-craft. To them all snow was just snow—stuff which fell from the skies and necessitated warm mocassins and stout rubber boots. That there were as many different qualities of snow, as of gold, was undreamt of in their philosophy. Thus, still laughing at Jack's warning shouts, they headed their dogs up the long slope of Discovery Hill,

"Begorra, 'tis their own funeral," muttered Terry; "though I'm thinking they've stolen a march on us, me bhoys."

Jack urged on the team at a slightly faster pace round the base of the long hill. Several more laggards in the great stampede for Kettle Creek passed them. High above up the slope of the hill, Morgan, Lefty, and their dogs pushed onward parallel to them. As yet they had gained nothing, but the way they were taking would cut off a good deal of distance in the long run.

"Faith! That snow doesn't look safe up there!" Terry exclaimed. "See! There's a great ledge of it, Jack, a bit farther on, wid a crack yards wide just below."

It was a sure sign that the snow was ready to fall, and again Jack sent a warning cry aloft on the wintry air. Some of the other prospectors who had passed on noted the folly of Morgan and his companion in cutting that snow on the hill, and commented pungently among themselves on it.

"We'll wait for you in Dawson, kids!" bellowed Morgan, from above, to Jack and Terry. "I'll tell 'em at the Record Office that you're a-coming."

Hardly had he spoken than the shelving bank of snow beneath the sledge began slowly to move. At first the movement was almost imperceptible, but the dogs felt it and howled in unison. Then suddenly Morgan and Simons bellowed with fear.

"Drive on, Jack!" yelled Terry

frantically. "'Tis right in the path of that snowslide we are!"

The avalanche which had been started by Morgan's folly in cutting the dangerous snow on the steep hillside was fast beginning to gather speed. A curious rumbling noise like distant thunder rent the air, and a breath of cold wind that increased in volume swept down to the lower land where Jack and Terry were passing.

"Mush! Mush!" roared Jack.

The lash of his whip cracked smartly over the heads of the straining dogs, and now even the laziest dog in the team pulled his full weight. The sledge fairly raced through the snow, while Jack and Terry plodded swiftly along beside it.

Once Jack took a swift glance backwards. The slide on the hill was about thirty yards wide, and the snow was piling down in tons, throwing up great white clouds and leaving bare rocks in its wake. And mixed up in a crazy jumble with the snow were Bull Morgan, Simons, the frantic dogs, and the overturned sledge.

Down swept the avalanche with its victims, and for a few breathless moments Jack and Terry believed that they themselves would be buried beneath it. In the nick of time they raced clear, while the snow piled up in great banks in their tracks.

While the snow clouds still filled the air, Jack wheeled the dogs right about and headed back for the scene of the catastrophe.

As the white clouds dispersed, he saw that by a lucky chance the rival sledge and dogs were struggling at the surface of the snow hillock which had been formed by the avalanche at the foot of the hill. Yapping and struggling madly, the dogs scraped themselves free. All strove to get away in different directions, and then, by force of habit, they took the direction of the leader, and, with the sledge bumping after them, went streaking away back toward Dawson.

Of Morgan and Simons the boys could see nothing. Grabbing a shovel, Jack plunged up the snow hillock to the place where he had seen the dogs, and within a few yards of the spot saw a hand sticking up through the snow. Frantically Jack dug away with the shovel, while

Terry, despite his crooked left arm, rendered yeoman service in getting away the snow.

The hand belonged to Lefty Simons, and the boys were glad to find him both alive and uninjured when they got free the upper part of his body. The fear of death was in his eyes, though, and his face was the colour of dead leaves against the snow. So shaken was he indeed that he was quite unable to speak, and his teeth chattered together.

"Drag him out!" panted Jack. "Good for you, Terry, my hearty! Now for his pard."

Finding Morgan was a more difficult job, but the two chums succeeded after a brief search, and, working rapidly, dug their old enemy out of the smothering snow.

He was quite unconscious, and it was all that Jack and Terry could do to drag him down to the sledge, for Simons did not lift a finger to help. Yet they knew that every minute was precious, for there was a good deal more snow higher up the slope which looked as though it might come down at any moment.

"Bedad!" yelled Terry suddenly. "Get those dogs going, Jack! Here's another packet of snow coming!"

A hasty glance upward showed Jack that another slide had begun. It started with sinister slowness, but gathered speed with every yard it advanced.

Frantically Jack cracked the long whip-thong above the ears of the huskies. Away went the sledge with its human burden, and Jack and Terry plodding swiftly along at its side. And down the hill came thundering a fresh avalanche of snow like bursting ocean surf, threatening to engulf them!

Lone Bear Tries it On!

CRACKING the whip over the ears of his flying huskies, Jack urged them on at a good clip round the base of Discovery Hill.

"Faster—faster, me bhoy!" yelled Terry.

Bull Morgan, one of the two rogues whom the chums had dug out of the first fall of snow, was unconscious on the sledge. But his pard, Lefty Simons, knelt beside him, his head averted and whining with fear at that thundering white avalanche charging down the hillside.

"Slash the brutes!" howled Simons, referring to the dogs. "Whip the hides off 'em! D'you want me to be killed?"

Jack threw a glance of contempt at the shivering coward on the sledge and yelled for him to get off and run. But Lefty Simons had reached the stage of being almost paralysed with funk, and he remained where he was with the fear of death in his craven heart.

Down thundered the avalanche. A great gust of icy air from it almost hurled the boys from their legs. A mighty burst of powdered snow enveloped them, the dogs, and the sledge; the icy powder filled their eyes, ears, and nostrils. They were half blinded, half choked by it, but they staggered on as though in some fantastic nightmare.

Then the air cleared, and they found themselves safe and with the second great snow-slide piled up some distance behind them.

They next were aware of several prospectors, who had been on the way to Kettle Creek, running towards them.

"Gee, that was a narrow shave, youngsters!" panted the first. "We sure thought that you were for it that time."

Terry grinned.

"Shure there wasn't much toime to stop and admire the scenery, bedad!" he remarked. "And now to attend to these spalpeens."

Assisted by the miners, the chums revived both Morgan and the chicken-hearted Simons.

When Bull Morgan came to and learned how his life had been saved, he showed no spark of gratitude to his rescuers. Instead, he turned like a savage bear upon his quaking pard.

"You crazy dub!" he exploded. "So much for your boneheaded suggestion. You might have done me in."

Not a word of gratitude was given by either of the rogues to the boys whose promptness had saved their lives. On the contrary, their feelings seemed to be that Jack and Terry were to blame indirectly for the accident which had occurred.

Apart from the loss of their dog team, which had gone streaking in the direction of Dawson, they inwardly writhed that they had lost the race. Now Jack would be in his right to scratch his name from the forthcoming boxing tournament.

It looked for some while as though Morgan and Simons were going to settle their differences with their fists, and the miners who had congregated urged them on.

Suddenly the attention of Jack was attracted from the spectacle of the quarrelling rogues by a savage snarl from Skookum. He swung round in time to see an Indian who was acting as a packer, hastily edge away from the sledge. The Indian was none other than Lone Bear himself, who was on the way to Kettle Creek, in company with a young American greenhorn.

What had happened was obvious. Lone Bear, while everyone else was interested in the row between Morgan and Simons, had attempted to help himself to something from Jack's sledge. Widely alert, Skookum had risen in the snow and launched himself at the fellow, dragging two or three of the other dogs to their feet.

Furious at the dog's intervention, Lone Bear uttered a guttural grunt, and snatching up a whip which had fallen in the snow close to hand, he brought the thong with a vicious crack across the husky's ears.

"You beastly brute!" yelled Jack.

Swiftly he plodded across the short intervening space of snow to Lone Bear, dodging the whip lash that came crackling down at him. Another step forward and his trusty left shot out like a piston-rod, connecting with a resounding thwack with the Indian's hooked nose.

"Urgh!" grunted Lone Bear, and spread-eagled backwards into the snow.

This new matter of interest quickly drew the attention of everyone from Morgan and Simons.

"A foight!" cried Terry gleefully. "Go to it, Jack, me bhoy! Paste the dirty spalpeen good and proper!"

Lone Bear sat up and hastily dabbed a couple of mitt-fulls of snow to his damaged nose. He rose with his dark eyes gleaming balefully, and a good deal of snow still adhering to his features, while one of his fur-covered hands fumbled at his belt for his keen-bladed hunting-knife.

"No, you don't, darky!" grunted an old sourdough, gripping Lone Bear's wrist and wrenching the knife from him. "You've got the reputation o' being a crack boxer, and you can jest settle this matter with your mitts. Are you game, boy?"

The question was addressed to Jack, who nodded briskly.

"He slashed Skookum and tried to steal from me and my pard," he said. "That's enough for me, and I'm game to try and give him a licking."

"Arrah!" whooped Terry. "Knock seven bells out of him, me darlint!"

Plainly Lone Bear, in spite of his reputation, did not like this hard-as-nails young Briton. He faltered as Jack advanced, and Bull Morgan, leaving Simons, seized the chance of barging in between the pair.

"Cut it out!" he bellowed. "Quit, d'ye hear? Ain't I matched you boys to fight in Dawson?"

"That's off!" retorted Jack. "I agreed to fight only if you beat us back to the Record Office, and you're not likely to do that now your dog team have deserted."

"Aw, never mind the race!" returned Bull impatiently. "You can't fight out here in snowshoes. Why not go to it properly on the gala night? You can keep your bad blood till then. D'you agree, Injun?"

Lone Bear grunted "Urgh!" and this Bull Morgan interpreted as an expression of assent.

"The Bear agrees," he announced, "and I guess, then, young Orchard, you ain't skeered to meet him in Dawson."

"No, I'm not scared, but—"

"Then the fight's on," Morgan interposed. "Nothing like a bit o' bad blood to lend an interest to these affairs, y'know."

The claim-seekers began to disperse, moving off in the direction of Kettle Creek, and Jack and Terry hit the trail again with their dog team.

Behind them followed Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons, plodding along the white trail. And as they went they patched up their own quarrel and fell to talking about the revenge they hoped soon to take against the two redoubtable chums.

According to law, all mining claims must be worked within a specified time, or the claims are deemed abandoned and revert to the Government. Some of those who had staked on Kettle Creek returned there after recording; most took advantage of the period of grace and remained for a time in the comparative comfort of Dawson City.

Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons, who, by the way, had recovered their dogs on their return to town, made use of this breathing space to complete the arrangements for their postponed boxing gala.

Posing as lovers of sport, they fixed up several matches, and incidentally, on the quiet, made a number of "sure thing" bets for the purpose of refilling their pockets. Rightly guessing that there was a keen love for the fighting game among the men who had streamed into the Yukon on the latest great gold rush, they did not hesitate to charge fancy prices for seats in the Big Moose Hall which they engaged for the occasion.

Jack and Terry, who had been staying at the Wigwam, set out early on the night of the big gala. And both were blissfully unaware that Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons had secretly laid heavy odds on Jack's opponent with a number of men who firmly believed that the English boy could lick the Indian.

(Don't miss next Saturday's thrilling instalment of this amazing story, boys—it's better than ever!)

WACKED TO THE WIDE!

(Continued from page 15.)

We ought to wipe up the ground with this feeble set of duffers."

"And we will, too!" cried Jack Jolly. "On the ball!"

The Head and the masters had turned out to see the match. They were keenly interested, for they had to meet the winners in the Final.

Doctor Birchmell cheered the Sixth at first, urging them on with yells and cat-calls; but as soon as they were a couple of goals down the Head changed his tune and backed up the Fourth.

"Go it, ye cripples! On the ball!" And Jack Jolly & Co. "went it"—for all they were worth. The Fourth played an inspired game. The backs were as steady as rox; the halves tackled like terriers; and the forwards were much too nippy and slippery for their big and clumsy opponents.

The Fourth were three goals up at half-time, and in the second half they fairly ran riot. The Sixth were run off their feet. Not one of them could raise a gallop. And Jack Jolly & Co. piled up the merry goals, and ran out easy winners by ten to nill. It might easily have been twenty, but the sporty juniors didn't want to show up the Sixth too badly!

"Well played, my pippins!" cried Doctor Birchmell, going up to greet the winners. "You have now qualified to meet my eleven in the Final. I trust it will be a good match; but you are on no account to try and win—do you understand? It would savor of impertinence

for a junior eleven to beat a team of masters. Besides, it would be awfully bad form."

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Jack Jolly. "Surely you are not asking us to square the match, sir?"

"I am asking you nothing," said the Head tartly. "I am simply telling you that, if you are misguided enough to beat us, there will be a birching all round!"

Jack Jolly and his chums exchanged grim glances. And their looks said as plainly as words:

"We'll lick the Master's Eleven, and risk the birching!"

THE END.

(Don't miss the final yarn in this amusing series: "MASTERS versus THE FOURTH!" It will send you into fits of laughter.)

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& CO. IN AFRICA!

Don't miss the Topping Series of Stories featuring the Greyfriars Chums abroad—now running in

THE POPULAR

Every Tuesday.

FAMOUS FOOTER CLUBS!

(Continued from page 2.)

rendered it necessary for experiments to be made with the forwards. The star—and a very bright one—is Joseph Waters Spence. He has played for England at outside-right. Now he plays for Manchester United at centre-forward, and might play for England there if fellows like Dixie Dean and George Camsell weren't so prominent. He can hit them as hard as any player I know.

Most of the Manchester players have been discovered near home, and one of them is James Hanson, a canny inside-left. He has also played at centre-forward. Manchester is his home town; and he can weave fancy patterns with the ball as skilfully as some Lancashire folk can weave them with cotton.

Yet another player—Frank MacPherson, now the outside-left—has been a centre-forward. This Frank comes from Barrow. Teddy Partridge, his partner, is said to be the speediest player in football. He can go like the wind, and take the ball with him, too. Just recently the United signed a new outside-right in Williams, from the Wednesday.

Altogether, we have a go-ahead side, managed now by Mr. Herbert Bamlett, the man who was in charge at Middlesbrough last season, and who built up that record-making side. What Mr. Bamlett did for the Teeside club he may yet do for the Old Trafford organisation. Anyway, he is not afraid of making experiments.

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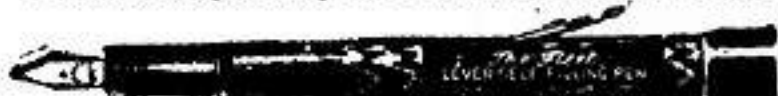
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THE SENSATION OF THE SEASON! With backs as steady as rocks; halves tackling like terrors; and forwards too nippy and slippery for their big and clumsy opponents, Jack Jolly & Co. fairly make a public laughing-stock of the Sixth!



Slacked to the Wide!

DICKY
NUGENT

An amusing and amazing story of the Heroes of St. Sam's.

"WE are in clover, gentlemen!" said Doctor Birchmell, beaming all over his face. "Fortune has smiled upon the Masters' Football Eleven; in fact, one may say that Fortune has fairly guffawed! He, ha, ha!"

And the Head broke into a guffaw himself. He was strolling in the sunny quadrangle, with Mr. Justiss leaning affectionately upon one arm, and Mr. Lickham upon the other.

"Some people say there's no such thing as luck," Doctor Birchmell went on, "but that's all tommy-rot! Look at our luck in the football tournament. We have entered a Masters' team, to compete for the Governors' Gold Cup; and we have reached the final without playing a single match—without so much as kicking a ball! In the first round we drew a bye. In the second round we drew a bye. And now, with only three teams left in the tournament—the Sixth, the Fourth, and our noble selves—but me if we haven't gone and drawn a bye again! If that isn't luck, I'll eat my Sunday topper!"

Mr. Justiss grinned.

"I shouldn't call it luck myself," he said. "I should call it witful and skilful wrangling on the part of a gentleman who shall be nameless! What say you, Licky?"

Mr. Lickham winked across at his college.

"The nameless gentleman knows how to wrangle these things," he said. "Personally, I don't believe the Masters' Eleven ever went into the hat!"

"What!" cried the Head, his beard bristling with anger. "Do you dare to jest with me, Lickham, that you Headmaster has been guilty of sharp practices?"

"Well, I know what an artful old scamp you are, sir!" chuckled Mr. Lickham. "I can't believe that we should have drawn a bye three times running, if the draw had been fairly conducted. That's the way it goes, sir!"

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"Here, here!" cried Mr. Justiss and Mr. Lickham, draining their glasses.

"Of course," said the Head, "I shall choose the fifty quids in preference to the Cup. And that handsome sum will be wadded out as follows. Twenty-five quids to me, because I'm the skipper and the star player; and the other twenty-five equally divided between the rest of you. Is that fair does, gentlemen?"

"Oh—or—absolutely!" stut-tered Mr. Justiss.

"A most generous arrangement, sir!" said Mr. Lickham. But the two masters exchanged grimaces behind the Head's back. They regarded the arrangement as anything but "fair does," but they could hardly tell the Head so to his face.

"Come, gentlemen!" said Doctor Birchmell, linking arms with the two masters, and frisking gaily out of the tuckshop. "Sit!" cried the tuckshop dame, in tones of alarm. "Doctor Birchmell! Which you haven't paid for your refreshment!"

"Chalk it up, ma'am," said the Head casually. "Put it on the slate!"

"My terms are spot cash, sir," said the Dame, firmly. "This is a tuckshop, not a tickshop! I do not permit credit."

"I can hardly credit it," said the Head, over his shoulder. "But you will have to permit credit on this occasion, because I cannot 'spot cash' in my purse!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mr. Justiss and Mr. Lickham.

The tuckshop dame came round from behind the counter and appeared red and wrathful in the doorway.

"Doctor Birchmell! I demand my just dues which are just due!" she egged.

"Pay up like a gentleman!"

"I will give you a check, if you wish, ma'am."

"No, thank you, sir! The last check you gave me was returned by the bank, marked 'R.D.'—which means a Rascally Dodger!"

"It duzzent—it means Rich Doctor," said the Head. "But I'm not going to stand here arguing the toss with you, ma'am. Your little account shall be paid as soon as ever we win the Cup Final—and the fifty quids which go with the winning of it!"

"But supposing you lose, sir?" queried the tuckshop dame.

But that was a contingency which the Head refused to take into his calculations. He was quite certain, and convinced, and cocksure, that his team of masters, which he had coached to the pitch of perfection, would emerge from the Cup Final victorious, happy, and glorious!

Mr. Justiss and Mr. Lickham were equally certain, and convinced, and cocksure; and the trio were walking on air as well as on the flagstones, as they waddled their way merrily across the quadrangle.

II.

BURLEIGH of the Sixth tapped on the door of Jack Jolly's study and entered.

Four cheery faces glanced up from the tea-table at the burleigh skipper of St. Sam's.

"Trot right in, Burleigh, and take a pew!" said Jack Jolly, who was at tea with Merry and Bright and Frank Fearless. Burleigh shook his head.

"I just dropped in to see you kids about the football," he explained. "As you know, the Sixth are due to play against the Fourth on Saturday, in the Cup tournament; and the winners are to meet the Masters' Eleven."

"True, O King!" said Jack Jolly. "Have you come to tell us that the Sixth have decided to scratch, Burleigh?"

"Certainly not!" said Burleigh, indignantly. "The Sixth never scratch or bite, or fowl their opponents in any way. We always play a clean game—even when the ground's a mud-heap!"

"I didn't mean that," said Jack Jolly. "What I meant was, have you decided to cry off, rather than suffer the shame and humiliation of being licked by the Fourth?"

Burleigh stared speechlessly at Jack Jolly for a minute; then he burst out laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha! That's altogether too rich!" he guffawed. "The Sixth cry off? Not likely! As for your team of

restlessness of crying off, and they told Burleigh so—with more emphasis than peritiveness. "We shouldn't dream of it!" said Jack Jolly. "We've made up our minds to meet you and beat you, and beat you, and beat you, and when we've beaten you, we'll meet and beat the Head's team of old fogies, and win the Gold Cup!"

"Here, here!" cried Frank Fearless. "We fear no foe in shining armor!"

Burleigh gave a snort.

"You cheeky young cubs! Fancy thinking you stand an earthly against the giants of the Sixth! Well, we've given you a chance to cry off, but you won't take it, so your blood be upon your own heads!"

So saying, Burleigh flung out of the study. And the juniors flung out of the study after him. They flung out four cushions, hurled with deadly aim, to speed the parting guest.

When Burleigh had gone, the juniors became as sullen as boiled ovals.

"Of course," said Jack Jolly, "we were only bluffing old Burleigh. The truth is, we haven't a hope against the Sixth. They're twice our size, and they all belong to the first eleven. It's like a little tin pot village team playing Aston Villa! We shall be eaten whole on Saturday. But we're not going to back out of the match because of that. We'll put up the best fight we know, like sportsmen of true British metal!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Lots of things may happen between now and Saturday," said Frank Fearless. "For instance, there might be an epidemic of flu in the Sixth, and Burleigh and his pals might find themselves in the sunny with dubble ammunum. Not that we wish them any harm!" added Frank Fearless hastily. "Still, it would be a bit of luck for us."

"We shall need all the luck that's going, if we are to have a chance of licking the Sixth," said Merry.

And the juniors resumed their tea with glum faces.

Now, some orphans are always exaggerating in their stories. They pull the legs of their readers by stretching the long arm of coincidence. They make absurd and impossible things happen, so that their heroes shall come up smiling at the finish. If they were writing this story, they would describe how the Fourth met the Sixth—the cream of the St. Sam's footballers—and licked them roundly and soundly to the tune of a dozen goals to nil.

Speaking for myself, I never exaggerate in my stories, or interpose anything far-fetched or ridiculous. My yarns are always plausible and true to life, and that is why they are so popular.

But to resume our narrative.

That evening, when seeing lights out, poor old Burleigh tumbled down two flights of stairs and busted his collar-bone. This was a severe blow to Burleigh, and also to the Sixth; for he was their star player, and now he would be unable to



Talloy's way of checking an opponent was to fasten his fangs into the back of his fellow's jersey.

turn out on Saturday. It was a cruel piece of luck for the Sixth, and a wonderful slice of luck for the Fourth.

But there was more to come. It never rains but it pours, and the luck of the Sixth was out while the luck of the Fourth was in with a vengeance!

Talloy of the Sixth was the next victim. He was invited to tea by the Head, and he broke a couple of teeth in trying to chew one of his host's rock cakes.

In the ordinary way, the loss of a couple of teeth would not have prevented a fellow playing football. But Talloy relied on his teeth. His way of checking an opponent was to fasten his fangs into the back of the fellow's jersey—when the referee wasn't looking, of course!

Without the services of his front teeth Talloy was helpless; so the Sixth found themselves without the services of Talloy-boy.

Later in the day, Swotter of the Sixth had an urgent telegram summoning him to the bedside of a sick aunt. It was frightful luck, more so for Swotter than for the Sixth; but he had to go.

Then Bounder of the Sixth contracted a cold, and was obliged to go to the sunny. But before he went he jeeringly gave the germ to his two pals, Blade and Ucer, and they had to go, too.

One by one the members of the First Eleven met with some mishap. It was the story of the ten little nigger-boys over again.

By the time Saturday dawned there was only one fellow who had escaped. And he got an attack of "cold foot" at the last minute and was unable to turn out.

The result of this chapter of accidents was that the Sixth had to field a reserve eleven. And the reserves were wots and scratch lads. Most of them were wots and bookworms, hopelessly out of practice, and some of them couldn't tell a goal-post from a mutton over.

Jack Jolly led his team on to the field in high spirits. "I said that a lot of things might happen before Saturday," said Frank Fearless, "and I've proved myself a true prophet!"

(Continued on page 28.)

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