

NEWS PARS AND PICTURES!

Grand New Feature Starts This Week.

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The Magnet

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EVERY SATURDAY.



THE BOUNDER COMES A CROPPER!

(A lively incident in this week's grand school story of the Chums of Greyfriars.)

News Pars and Pictures.

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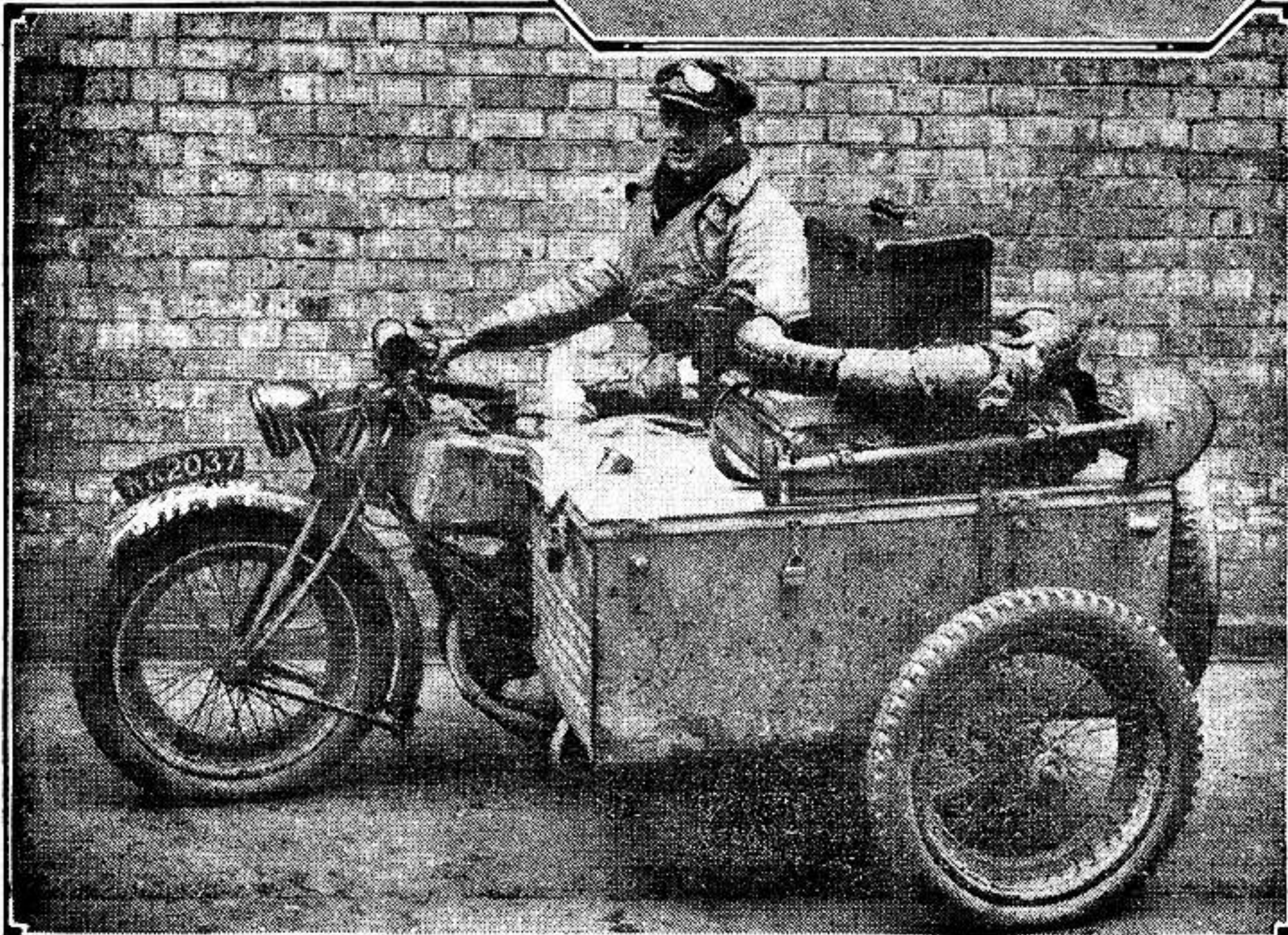
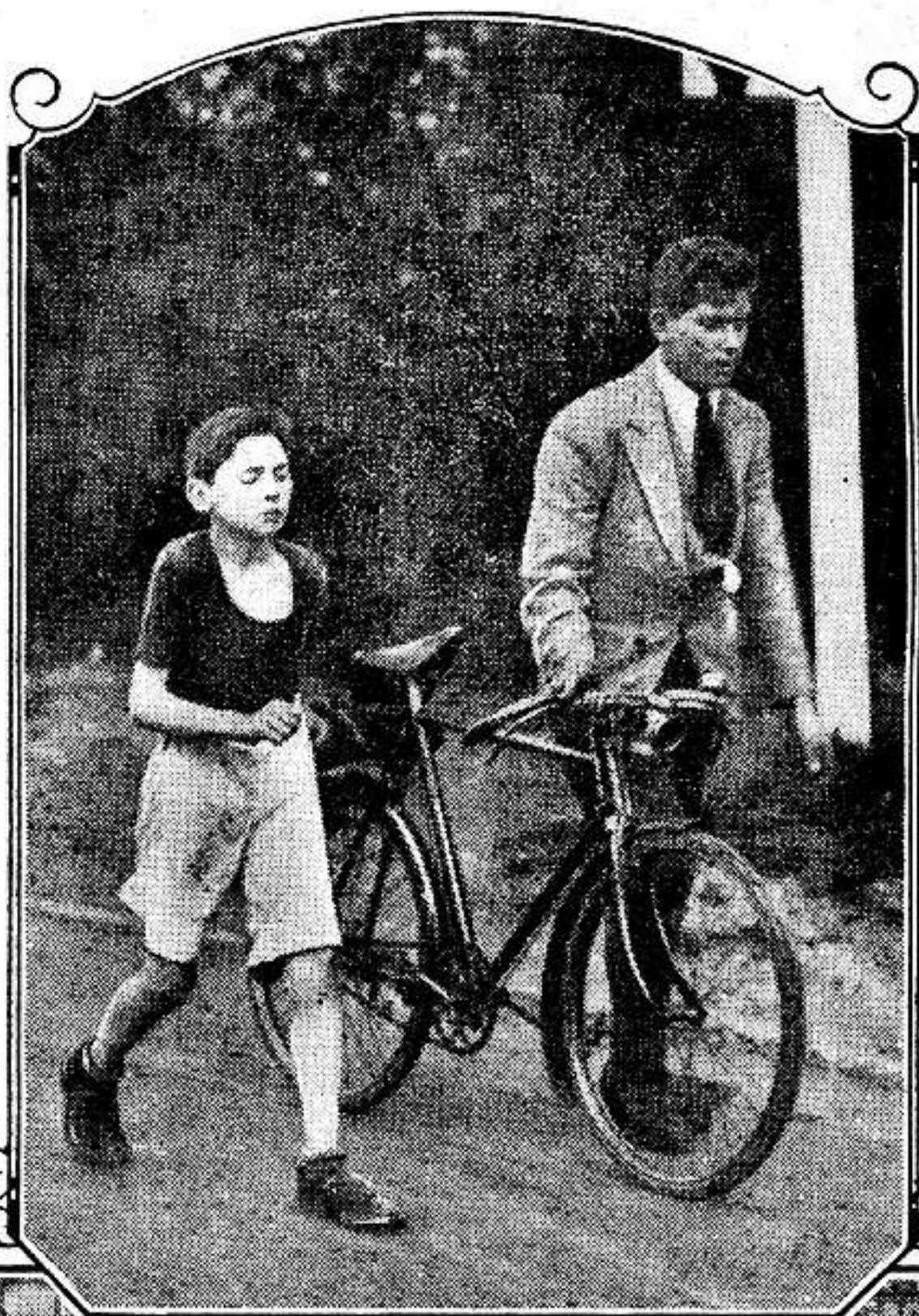
## BOY'S AMAZING "FEAT."

Walking from London to Brighton is a common enough occurrence amongst adults to-day, but for obvious reasons it doesn't make a great appeal to the younger generation. Yet Master George Edwards at the age of eleven didn't consider this strenuous task beyond his powers, for he did the journey in the astonishing time of 10 hours 58 mins. 36 4-5 secs. Bravo! Photo on right shows him stepping out with the will to win largely written on his youthful face.

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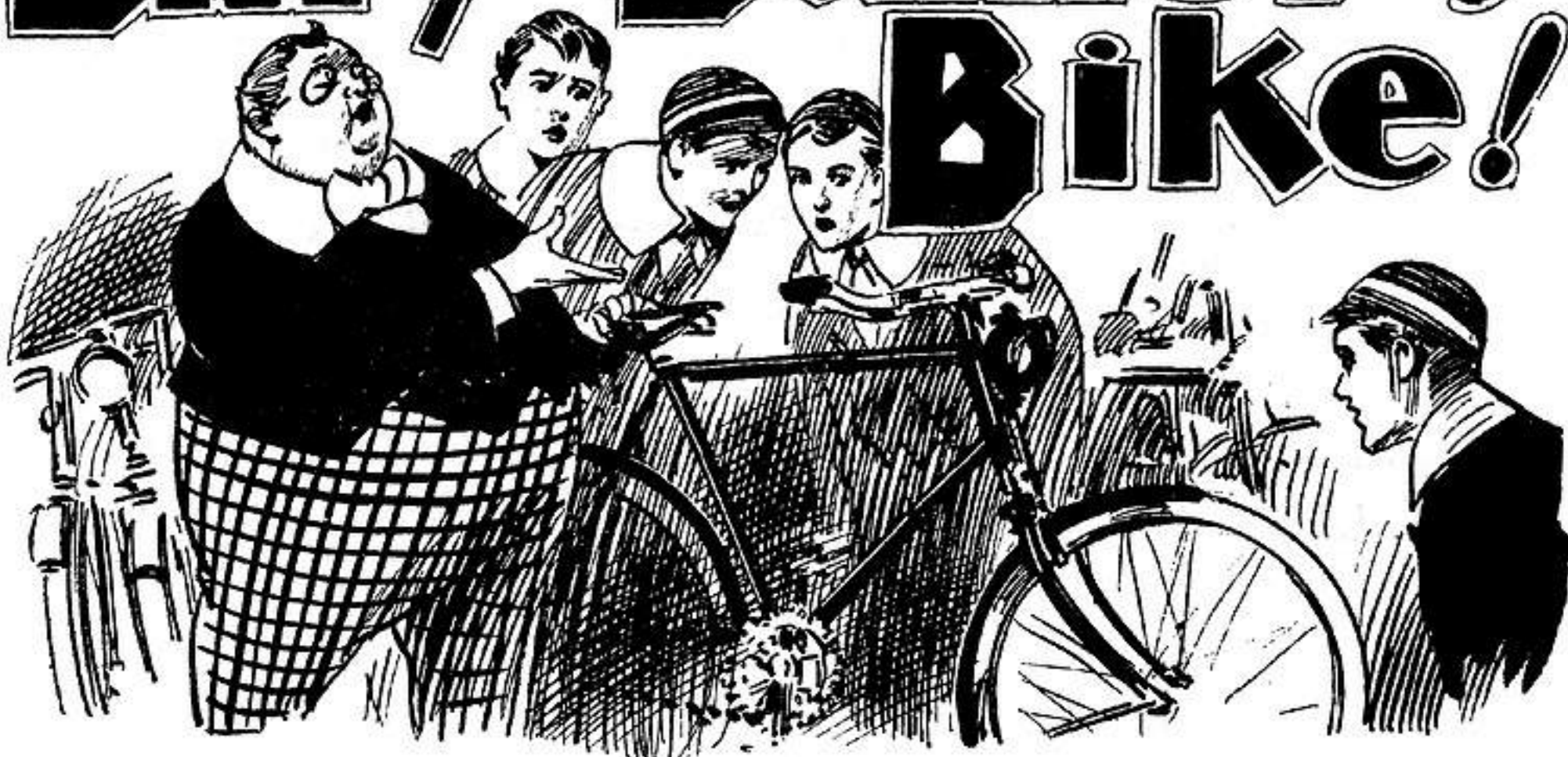
ROUND THE WORLD AWHEEL!

The photo below gives you a good idea of the "bus" which took S. T. Cranfield, the well-known racing motor-cyclist, on a world tour. He earned the distinction of being the first man to cross Australia alone, and he also managed to cross India in the short space of six days. His cheery expression indicates that he wouldn't mind doing another world-tour on his trusty machine!



BUNTER'S BARGAIN! A brand new twenty guinea bike for three pounds strikes William George Bunter as being a first rate bargain. But there's a history behind that bike, and a number of complications, for which the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove did NOT bargain!

Billy Bunter's Bike!



A Rattling Fine School Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, with William George Bunter, the funniest and fattest schoolboy in the world, well in the limelight. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Which?

"WHICH of you fellows is going—"
"All of us."
"I mean which is going—"

"We're all going, fathead!"

"I mean which—"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "He goes on for ever, like the little brook."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Ready, you men?" asked Bob, taking his bike from the stand in the bike-shed at Greyfriars. "Roll away, Bunter! You're in the way, old fat bean."

"Which of you fellows is going to lend me a bike?" roared Billy Bunter, getting it out at last.

No member of the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove replied to that question.

Apparently no member of the famous Co. was going to lend William George Bunter a bike.

As Harry Wharton & Co. were taking out their machines to ride over to Highcliffe School to visit their friends there, it really was not to be expected—by anybody but William George Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, you might answer a chap," said Bunter. "Which of you is going to lend me a bike?"

"Echo answers which!" chuckled Frank Nugent.

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remarked that the whichfulness was terrific.

"You'd better get out your own jigger, if you want a spin this afternoon, Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

"What's the good of getting out my own jigger?" demanded Bunter peevishly. "The tyres are punctured, and the chain's broken in two places, and there's something wrong with the speed gear, and —"

"Then you can have a happy afternoon mending it," suggested Johnny Bull.

"I've asked Bob Cherry to mend that bike for me a dozen times, at least," said Bunter reproachfully.

"You can make it two dozen," chuckled Bob, "and still the jigger will want mending."

"You jolly well mended Marjorie Hazeldene's bike, and took hours over it, and made yourself as black as a nigger," said Bunter. "Why couldn't you mend mine, then?"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Ass!"

Bob Cherry seemed to see some sort of distinction between mending Marjorie's bike and mending Bunter's bike. Possibly he found Marjorie rather nicer than Bunter.

"Well, I can't ride the jigger till it's mended," said Bunter. "They want two pounds ten at Stubbs', in Courtfield, for mending it. I wouldn't mind that, only they'd keep the bike till it was paid for, you know; so that wouldn't be any use. I say, you fellows, don't be selfish, you know. One of you lend me a bike."

"You cheerful idiot," said Harry Wharton. "How can we lend you a bike when we're just going out on our bikes? Are we to lend you a bike and walk ourselves?"

"Exactly," assented Bunter. "You always make out that you're a better walker than I am. It's not so jolly far to Highcliffe. Walk it, and don't be a slacker."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"But we're going out for a spin with Courtenay and the Caterpillar, when we've called for them," he said.

"Play cricket instead."

"Eh?"

"You make out that you're jolly keen on cricket—well, play cricket instead of going out for a spin."

"Well, my only hat!" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

"You see, I want a bike," explained Bunter. "Owing to Cherry's selfishness, mine is a crock—simply a crock. I can't ride it. I'd sell it, only nobody would give me anything for it. Fishy offered me five bob, but I'm not going to take five bob for a bike that cost my pater twenty guineas."

"Fisher T. Fish offered you five bob for it?" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes."

"Fishy is losing his eye for a bargain."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jump at the offer, Bunter, old bean. As soon as Fishy has really examined that bike, he will let you have it back for eighteenpence."

"That bike cost my pater twenty guineas!" roared Bunter. "It's a splendid machine, only a bit crocked. Still, the fact remains that I can't ride it to-day. If you like, I'll swap bikes with you, Cherry. Then you can mend it. Your old jigger never cost more than a tenner."

"Less!" grinned Bob.

"Well, there's a chance to swap it for a splendid bike that cost thirty guineas, and only needs a few repairs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Offer declined with thanks," said Bob Cherry. "Now, if you'll shift, Bunter, I'll wheel out my jigger."

"I haven't finished yet—"

"Your mistake; you have. Shift!"

Bob Cherry wheeled his machine towards the doorway. It was quite an ample doorway, but the figure of William George Bunter also was very ample. There really was not much room to pass Bunter. Fellows pretended that there was not room to pass him when he stood in the gateway of Greyfriars itself. But that was an exaggeration.

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"Shift! Bunk! Vanish! Disappear!" said Bob Cherry.

"But what about a bike?" asked Bunter. "I want a bike this afternoon, as I've said. If I borrow Smithy's, he will be bound to kick up a row; you know the Bunder's temper. Look here, Wharton, you borrow Smithy's, and lend me yours. You don't mind if he kicks up a row; you can lick him."

"Bunter's full of bright ideas this afternoon," said Johnny Bull admiringly. "You're to bag a fellow's bike, Wharton, and lick him if he objects, because Bunter's too jolly lazy to keep his jigger mended."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what about it?" asked Bunter. Bump!

Bob Cherry seemed to be getting impatient.

The question of a mount for William George Bunter that sunny afternoon seemed to be very important to Bunter. But it did not seem to the Famous Five sufficiently important to keep them away from their appointment at Highcliffe.

Bob Cherry wheeled out his bike. He had told Bunter to shift, bunk, vanish, and disappear. Bunter had not shifted, bunked, vanished, or disappeared. The inevitable result was that the bike collided with William George Bunter, with the further result that Bunter sat down quite suddenly, with a bump and a roar.

"Yaroooooh!"

"You fellows feel the earth shake?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on! We shall be late. Sorry we can't stop, Bunter, old man. Go and tell some other men your funny stories."

"Yow-ow! Beast!" roared Bunter, as five juniors wheeled their machines past him. "Yah! Rotter! Can't even stop to ask whether you've hurt a chap."

"That's all right. I know I have."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

And with that valediction ringing in their ears, Harry Wharton & Co. wheeled their machines away, mounted, and pedalled off cheerily to Highcliffe School, leaving Billy Bunter to waste the rest of his sweetness on the desert air.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Not for Bob!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Halt!" said Wharton.

The Famous Five were pedalling along the dusty road across Courtfield Common. They were pedalling in a leisurely way, strung out across the road, in a very bright and cheery mood that sunny afternoon. The Famous Five generally contrived to enjoy their half-holidays, and on this particular afternoon they were very merry and bright.

From a clump of hawthorns near the roadside a man stepped as the cyclists came jogging up. He stepped into the road, and held up his hand to the school-boys.

The man was a stranger to them, and the juniors did not particularly like his looks. He had a stubbly face and narrow, furtive eyes, and they noticed that he glanced quickly up and down the road as he signalled them to stop, as if to ascertain whether anyone else was in sight. No one was in sight in either direction on the long, dusty road.

The juniors slowed down.

The man did not look at all prepossessing; but it was possible that he had something to say—some warning

that the road was up, or something of the sort. He did not look the kind of man whom a fellow would have liked to meet alone on a dark night; but in broad daylight they could not suppose that he meant mischief. If he did, the five juniors were quite prepared to give him all the mischief he wanted.

They slowed down and stopped.

"Anything up?" asked Harry, eyeing the man. He stood in the road in front of the dismounted cyclists, and a closer view showed him more unprepossessing than ever. He was not only dusty, but he was dirty, and the red-spotted neckerchief he wore looked as if it had not had a wash since it was new—which must have been a long, long time since.

"No, sir," answered the man, civilly enough. "I'd jest like to speak a word to you, sir, seeing as you're cycling."

"Go ahead," said Harry, puzzled. The man looked a rather rowdy and tough customer, but the captain of the Remove had no desire to be uncivil.

"I've got a bike to sell, sir."

"A bike to sell?" repeated Harry.

"Yes, sir. A real good bike, and going cheap," said the man. "I'm forced to part with it owing to being hard up, and I thought one of you young gentlemen, being cyclists, might like to look at it."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Chance for Bunter, if he were here," grinned Bob Cherry. "He can do with a new bike."

"If a friend of yours wants a bike, sir," said the man in the spotted neckerchief, "he can't do better. I bought this 'ere bike cheap at a sale, thinking I'd make a profit on it. But I can't afford to keep it by me, being 'ard up, owing to losing my job."

"You can sell a bike at Stubbs', in Courtfield," said Harry. "They buy second-hand bikes there."

"I've tried 'em, sir," answered the man readily; "but they offer me too little. Four pun for a practically new Moonbeam bike, sir! I give five pun myself. It's worth more'n twice as much, sir."

Bob Cherry looked attentive.

The Cherry family were not overburdened with wealth, and Bob's bike had seen so much service that, had it been practicable—which it was not—Bob would have been glad to exchange it for a new one. Bob took great care of his machine, and it was always in a serviceable state; but it was not to be denied that it compared very unfavourably with some of the bikes at Greyfriars. So Bob was interested. A new Moonbeam bike was far beyond his means, but a bargain in Moonbeam bikes was just what Bob wanted.

"Let's have a look at it!" said Bob rather eagerly. "Look here, what do you want for it?"

"Eight pun, sir, and it's a sacrifice," said the man. "I could get more if I could afford to wait."

"Cheap, if it's a practically new Moonbeam," said Bob. "I'll jolly well look at it—the pater will help me out, if it's really a bargain. Is it far from here? We're going somewhere, you see."

"I've got it with me, sir," said the man. "Left it just beyond them bushes, sir."

"Right-ho! You fellows cut on, and I'll catch you up," said Bob. "It won't take long."

"My esteemed Bob—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hold on, Bob," said Harry Wharton quietly. "You don't want to take a bike from a man you've never seen before, without going into the matter a little, old chap." He looked at the

dusty man. "What's your name?" he asked.

"George Jobson, sir. They call me Honest George round about the part where I belong."

"Where's that?" asked Harry. "Near here?"

The man hesitated a second.

"Woodend, sir," he answered.

Woodend was a good five miles away. The juniors had cycled through that village, but knew very little about it or its inhabitants. But if the Woodend folk called this dusty man "Honest George," Wharton could not help thinking that the Woodenders were very easily satisfied in the matter of honesty. Without being unduly suspicious, Wharton thought that Honest George might more appropriately have been called Shifty George, or even Dishonest George.

"Look here!" said Bob, rather impatiently. "I want to see the bike, anyhow. Why not?"

"If you buy a bike, you want to make sure you're buying it from the owner, that's all," answered Wharton dryly.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob.

Honest George's narrow eyes glinted. "Meaning to say you think I've pinched that there bike?" exclaimed the furtive-eyed man hotly.

"Not at all," answered Harry coolly. "But you're a stranger to us, and only a duffer would buy a bike from a stranger without inquiry."

"If you say I've pinched that bike, I'll—"

"I know a good many bikes have been stolen around Courtfield," answered Harry. "This may be one of them, for all I know. You say you bought it cheap at a sale. Where was the sale held?"

Honest George did not answer that question.

His stubbly face grew darker with anger, and his ferrety eyes glinted at the captain of the Remove. Bob Cherry was the least suspicious fellow in the world, and had he been alone, it was possible that he might have bought that Moonbeam bike. Now Bob could see, as the others could see, that Honest George was very improbably the rightful owner of the bike he wished to sell. Obviously he did not intend to answer the most necessary questions.

"Well?" said Wharton sharply.

"Oh, git away with yer!" growled Honest George. "Making out a man's pinched a bike! Git away with yer!"

And George Jobson slouched back into the hawthorns from which he had emerged, and disappeared from view.

"No trade!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Let's get on."

"The ownfulness of that esteemed bike is terrifically doubtful," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bob Cherry hesitated a moment or two. But as his comrades remounted, Bob followed their example. Going along on his aged jigger, Bob could not help thinking how ripping it would have been to have been gliding along daintily on a practically new Moonbeam bike. Honest George might—or might not—be a doubtful character; but Bob was so taken with the idea of a new Moonbeam bike, that he was disposed to give Honest George the benefit of the doubt.

Wharton glanced at Bob's rather clouded face as the bunch of juniors pedalled into Courtfield.

"You're not sorr, you didn't take the bike, Bob?" he asked. "It's as good as a cert that the man pinched it."

"I don't see that," answered Bob rather obstinately. "A man might pick up a bike cheap, and have to part with



As the Famous Five approached the clump of hawthorns a man stepped into the road and held up his hand as a signal for them to stop. "Anything up?" asked Harry Wharton, eyeing the man. The mysterious-looking stranger glanced quickly up and down the road, as if to ascertain whether anyone else was in sight, before answering. (See Chapter 2.)

it, and he mightn't like being asked a lot of questions reflecting on his character."

"My dear chap—"

"A chap can be captain of the Remove without knowing everything, and a little over," said Bob.

Wharton compressed his lips a little.

"If that man had a bike with him, it was a stolen bike!" he said curtly.

"Well, I don't see it."

"I see it!" said Johnny Bull gruffly.

"Well, you're rather an ass."

"Look here, Bob—"

"Oh, rats!" said Bob crossly. "I don't say I'm certain about the matter—not so certain as you chaps fancy you are; but I don't see setting a man down as a rogue."

"He had 'rogue' written all over him," said Nugent.

"Perhaps your eyes are a lot sharper than mine," said Bob sarcastically. "I couldn't read what was written all over him. Blind, perhaps!"

"None so blind as those who won't see!" observed Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

"I'm going back to look at that bike," he said. "You fellows can have your own opinion—and I suppose I'm entitled to mine."

"My esteemed Bob, the pinchfulness was a execrable certainty," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, rot!"

It was not like Bob to be obstinate, but he was obstinate now. An unmusical clink from his old bike as it jogged over a stone made him more obstinate. That new Moonbeam bike was so desirable that it haunted Bob's thoughts.

"Hold on a minute, Bob!" said Wharton. "Here we are at Stubbs'." He jumped down outside the cycle shop in Courtfield High Street.

"I've nothing to do at Stubbs'."

"That man told us he'd offered the bike for sale at Stubbs'. If it was stolen, he didn't. They'd have spotted him and detained him for the police. Let's ask."

"Oh, rot!"

"Let's ask, anyhow," said Nugent.

Mr. Stubbs was in the doorway of his shop, and he saluted the juniors. Wharton called to him.

"Has a man tried to sell you a Moonbeam bike, Mr. Stubbs—a man named George Jobson?"

"Eh? No!"

"Sure of that?" asked Bob.

"Course I am," answered Mr. Stubbs. "Always glad to get hold of a Moonbeam bike if it's going cheap."

"Man told us you'd offered him four pounds for one."

"Well, I ain't," said Mr. Stubbs. "Mixed me up with somebody else, I expect."

The juniors remounted and rode on once more.

There was quite a curious expression on Bob Cherry's face, and the colour was deep in his cheeks.

Even Bob—desirable as a new Moonbeam bike seemed—could not doubt further that Honest George was a decidedly doubtful character. It was, in fact, plain that if Honest George had a bike to sell, that bike had not been honestly come by. The juniors pedalled out of the town along the road to Highcliffe. Highcliffe was in sight when Bob broke his uncomfortable silence.

"Sorr'y, Wharton!" he blurted out.

"You were right."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Although I don't know everything and a little over?" he asked

"I've said I'm sorry!" growled Bob.

"My dear old chap, all serene! What

does it matter?" said Harry. "Wash it all out."

Bob Cherry nodded, but he was still silent as the Famous Five pedalled on to Highcliffe.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Borrowing a Bike!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER frowned.

W. G. Bunter was displeased.

Bunter was in funds that afternoon. He had been expecting a postal-order—as usual. The postal-order had not come—also as usual. Nevertheless, W. G. Bunter was in possession of a whole pound-note. Lord Mauleverer of the Remove was the poorer by that amount, just as Bunter was the richer. Lord Mauleverer was so glad to part with Bunter that it counteracted any regret he might have felt at parting with a pound note.

Bunter had left his lordship, with the grateful reflection that fools and their money are soon parted! Mauly was now dismissed from Bunter's fat mind. He had a pound—a whole pound—and when Bunter had a pound Bunter's thoughts ran naturally to tuck to the exact value of twenty shillings.

At the bunshop in Courtfield a fellow could "do" himself handsomely for a pound—much more handsomely than he could "do" himself at the school shop. An odd shilling, or a half-crown, might be carelessly dropped on Mrs. Mumble's little counter; but when a fellow had a whole pound—on a half-holiday, too!—something in rather better style was wanted. Bunter had settled on the Courtfield bunshop as the scene of his intended gastronomic operations. But

a question of transport remained to be solved.

Many fellows would have walked across the common to Courtfield on a sunny afternoon and enjoyed the walk. Bunter did not even think of walking. The problem was—how was W. G. Bunter to be transported to the bunshop with the least possible effort on Bunter's part?

He thought of ringing up a taxi. But he was going alone; there would be no fellow-passenger to pay the fare—and Bunter objected strongly to paying it himself. A taxi fare would have made a very considerable hole in that pound note.

Biking it came next in his consideration. His own bike being in a state of wreckage—indeed, scarcely recognisable as a bicycle at all—the question was—whose bike?

Harry Wharton & Co.—with the selfishness to which Bunter was sadly accustomed—had refused to lend him a machine. Billy Bunter blinked sourly round at the other machines.

He preferred Smithy's. But Herbert Vernon-Smith had a very uncertain temper, especially in such matters as this. The Bounder had a very handsome jigger, and Bunter would have liked to borrow it; but he shook his head and dismissed the Bounder's jigger from his mind. A lift on that bike was not worth the lift on the Bounder's boot that would have followed inevitably.

"Of course, that beast Toddy had to go out on his bike this afternoon!" grunted Bunter.

Peter Todd being Bunter's study-mate in Study No. 7 in the Remove, Bunter felt entitled to borrow his bike and all things that were his. But, with the selfishness that Bunter found characteristic of all Remove fellows, Toddy had gone out on his bike himself.

Bunter finally stopped at Tom Redwing's machine.

It was a good machine, though not so expensive as Smithy's. It had the advantage of belonging to one of the best-tempered men in the Lower Fourth. Redwing might say things—probably would—but he was not likely to kick a fellow—whereas the Bounder might say little or nothing, but was absolutely certain to kick a fellow who bagged his bike without leave. Bunter was a reasonable fellow; he was prepared to let Redwing say what he liked—all he was particular about was not being kicked.

So he settled on Redwing's bike and lifted it from the stand and wheeled it out—looking this way and that way, like Moses of old. He blinked suspiciously at Russell of the Remove, who was lounging near the bike-shed; and Russell grinned.

"Whose bike?" he asked.

"Redwing lent it to me," answered Bunter.

"Does he know he has?" grinned Russell.

Bunter did not trouble to answer that frivolous question.

He wheeled the borrowed machine away and mounted it, and started cheerily for Courtfield. The problem of transport was solved now; it was not a case, as Bunter had feared it might be, of "solvitur ambulante"—Redwing's bike had saved the situation. If Redwing happened to want his machine that day, Bunter could not help that. A fellow could not think of everything. Bunter had to think of getting to Courtfield, and he had no time—or inclination—to think about what Tom Redwing might or might not want.

And so it came to pass that when the Bounder and Redwing walked down to the bike-shed for their machines a little later, the Bounder's was there, and Redwing's was conspicuous by its absence.

"Lent your bike, you fathead?" asked Smithy.

"Not that I know of," answered Redwing.

"It's not here."

Redwing had already observed that.

"Seen my bike?" he called out to Russell, who was watching the two with a rather entertained expression.

"Yes, rather!" answered Russell.

"Well, what's become of it?"

"You've lent it to Bunter."

"I haven't."

"You have, old bean!" said Russell, with a chuckle. "You may not know it, but you have. Fellows don't always know when they lend things to Bunter—till afterwards!"

The Bounder set his lips.

"How long has the fat rotter been gone, Russell?" he demanded.

"Five or six minutes."

"Which way?"

"Courtfield."

The Bounder grasped his machine.

"I'll get your bike back in a jiffy, Redwing," he said.

He rushed his bike away, Redwing following, with a rather uneasy expression on his face.

"Don't thump him, Smithy," he called out.

The Bounder laughed.

"All serene."

"Or anything else."

"I won't promise that—"

"Look here, Smithy—"

"You follow on," called back the Bounder, as he put his leg over his machine. "If I get out of sight, follow your ears. Bunter will be heard a mile when I get hold of him."

"Smithy, old chap—"

"Follow on."

The Bounder shot away like an arrow. Tom Redwing followed him, by the road across the common, with a rather anxious expression on his good-natured face. He was exasperated at finding his machine missing when he wanted it: but he did not want the Owl of the Remove to be strewn in small pieces over Courtfield Common.

But that was out of his hands now. Vernon-Smith was quickly out of his sight—and Redwing followed his ears, as the Bounder had suggested. And his ears proved a reliable guide: for in a short time the voice of William George Bunter came to his ears—in tones which indicated that William George was having the time of his life!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Way of the Transgressor!

"H, dear!"

Bunter uttered that ejaculation as he blinked round and found a cyclist in hot pursuit.

It was not Redwing: Bunter wouldn't have minded that so much. It was the Bounder: and Bunter minded that very much indeed.

Bunter's fat brain did not, as a rule, work quickly. But it flashed into his powerful intellect that Smithy was after Redwing's borrowed machine. As the two were pals, it was probable that they were going out together that sunny afternoon: and Bunter realised—rather late—that it would be just like that beast Smithy to go after a fellow who borrowed his chum's bike and got the machine back.

Bunter put on speed.

He had as much chance in a race with Smithy, as a particularly fat porker might have in a race with a hare. But a fellow could only do his best. Bunter pedalled for his life.

To be captured now meant not only a



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kicking, but a long walk. The problem of transport would be 'solved by walking' after all!

It was worth exertion on a bike, to escape exertion on foot—apart from the question of a probable kicking. Bunter ground at the pedals with terrific energy.

"Stop!" roared the Bounder, when he came within shouting range.

Bunter did not reply.

He needed all his breath for pedalling. Bunter never had much breath to spare: and now he had less than ever.

"Stop, you fat rotter!"

Bunter flew on.

The Bounder gave up shouting, and bent over his handle-bars, and fairly scorched. He had planned a long spin with Redwing for that afternoon; and he did not want to ride to Courtfield and back first. He went all out to overtake Bunter.

That ancient proverb "Festina lente" would have been useful to the Bounder. It was a case of more haste less speed. He flew like an arrow, scheduled to run Bunter down in about sixty seconds. But with his nose almost touching his handle-bars, Smithy did not observe a festive little bow-wow which nipped across the road just in time to establish contact with his front tyre.

Smithy indeed never saw that dog at all.

He saw the heavens revolving in a startling circle, and he found himself sitting by the roadside, and he saw his bike curled up near at hand. The dog vanished with a promptness that did him credit. Only a loud howl floated back from him—a loud, prolonged, indignant howl. For a full minute the Bounder sat and wondered what had happened to the universe, which had fallen to pieces round him in the most unexpected manner. He picked himself up at last, with more aches and pains about him than he could have counted: and the expression on his face betrayed the fact that his temper had suffered still more severely.

He lifted the bike—fortunately, it was still a going concern. Smithy remounted, gasping and grunting, and rode on again—this time looking where he rode.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter was a fat spot in the distance.

Bunter was going strong.

Had Smithy's bike been damaged as much as Smithy by that sudden collapse, Bunter would have won the race. But it was Smithy who had collected all the damages, or nearly all: the bike ran as well as ever. That was Bunter's undoing.

Yard by yard, the Bounder gained on him.

Billy Bunter was nearly opposite a thick clump of hawthorns by the roadside, when Vernon-Smith came level and shot past.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

The Bounder spun round in the road ahead, and pedalled back to Bunter. Bunter jammed on his brakes.

Bunter was short-sighted, but he could see the expression on Smithy's face, and it alarmed him.

He jumped off Redwing's machine, and let it spin away and roll in the road, and made a jump for the open common.

Legging it did not appeal to Bunter, as a rule. But circumstances, like carpenters, alter cases.

Bunter could only hope that Smithy would stop to pick up the recaptured bike, and be satisfied with that: leaving Bunter to sprint across the green common.

But the hope was faint. The expression on the Bounder's face showed how faint it was.

Vernon-Smith, leaving Redwing's bike unheeded in the road, turned his machine on to the grass, and flew after Bunter.

"Oh, lor'!" gasped the unhappy Owl of the Remove, as he heard the bike whirring behind.

"Stop!"

"Ow!"

Bunter flew on desperately. His fat little legs fairly twinkled as he flew.

But, as a poet would say, it booted not.

Vernon-Smith was level with him in a matter of seconds: he jumped down, let his bike run, and grasped Bunter.

"Yaroooooooh!"

Bunter roared in anticipation.

His anticipations were justified.

"You fat rotter!" gasped the Bounder.

"Yaroooh! Help! Murder! Fire!" yelled Bunter. "Help! Rescue! Pax! Yaroooooh! Yooooop!"

Bump! bump! bump! Bang!

"Yow-ow-ow! Grooooh! Ooooch!"

Vernon-Smith had grasped Billy Bunter by the ears. Being extensive, they gave him a good hold. Now he was banging Bunter's head on the cold, unsympathetic common. Bunter's head was hard. The common was harder.

Bump! bump! bang!

"Yaroooh! Help! Murder! Fire!"

"Take that! And that! And that!" yelled the Bounder.

Bunter took them.

It was not a matter of choice with Bunter: he had to take them. But he did not take them kindly. His wild roars awoke every echo of Courtfield common.

Tom Redwing—following the guidance of his ears—came along the road at a rapid trot. He was anxious to reach the scene before William George Bunter was reduced to a detached or semi-detached state. But as he came up to the spot where Bunter had halted and left his bike, he had to dismiss the Owl of the Remove from his mind for the moment. A man with narrow, furtive eyes and a red-spotted neckerchief was bending over the abandoned machine, and picking it up. The man had emerged, apparently, from nowhere: he had appeared quite suddenly on the scene. Redwing's eyes fell on him, as he was about to wheel the machine away into a clump of hawthorns.

"Here, hold on with that bike!" shouted Redwing.

He dashed up at a rapid run, and the man stared round at him.

"Only picking it up, sir," he said.

"Well, hand it over!" said Redwing.

"It's mine!"

The man eyed him.

From a little distance across the common came the wild yelling of Billy Bunter. The Bounder was busy. An ugly look came over the features of Honest George Jobson.

"You keep your distance!" he said.

"This 'ere bike was left 'ere by another young gent, and I'm looking after it for 'im—see?"

"It's mine!" repeated Redwing.

The man clenched a knuckly fist, and Redwing jumped back. Honest George drew the machine away.

"Smithy!" yelled Redwing.

"Yaroooh!" came from Billy Bunter. "Help! Yarooooop!"

"Smithy! Come and lend a hand! Here's a man trying to steal my bike!" roared Redwing.

And he rushed at the bicycle-thief and grasped him.

Fortunately, Vernon-Smith heard the shout and left Bunter, and came racing back to the road on his machine.

It was fortunate for Redwing, for alone he was not a match for Honest George, and he would have been booked for a severe handling.

"Hallo! What's this game?" exclaimed the Bounder.

And, without waiting for a reply, he

jumped off his bike and jumped at Honest George.

The honest one released Redwing immediately.

"'Old on!" he exclaimed. "'Old on! Let a bloke alone! No 'arm meant—only picking up the young gentleman's bike!"

"Hand it over, then!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Jobson handed it over, scowling.

"Come on, Reddy!"

"But, Bunter—"

"That's all right—I've licked him enough!"

"I was thinking that perhaps you'd licked him a little too much."

"Oh rats! Come on!"

Vernon-Smith mounted, and Redwing followed his example, and the two juniors rode back towards Greyfriars.

Honest George Jobson stood staring after them, scowling; while from Billy Bunter, at a little distance, came incessant sounds of woe:

"Ow, ow, ow! Yow, yow, yow! Yow! Wow-wow!"

Billy Bunter wished that he had not borrowed a bike that afternoon.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Caterpillar Takes it Calmly!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. walked cheerily in at Highcliffe School; only Bob Cherry's face was wearing a faint cloud. Leaving their machines at the porter's lodge, the Famous Five walked across to the House, rather surprised that Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar were not at the gates to meet them.

The chums of the Remove had arranged to pick up the two Highcliffe fellows there, to join in a spin, and it would have undoubtedly saved time had Courtenay and the Caterpillar been ready at the gates.

But they were not to be seen. A group of juniors near the House exchanged glances and grinned as the Famous Five came along, and from one or two of them came an audible chuckle. But the Greyfriars fellows were careful to take no heed of Ponsonby and his pals. They had come there to see their friends, not to rag with their foes, so they carefully avoided looking at the group of nuts as they passed.

That, however, did not seem to suit Cecil Ponsonby, for he made a movement towards the Greyfriars fellows as they came up, and saluted them politely.

"You fellows come over here to see Courtenay?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Wharton civilly.

Unless Ponsonby and Co. were bent on it, Wharton did not want a row under the windows of Highcliffe.

"Goin' for a spin—what?" asked Ponsonby.

"That's it."

"Too bad!" said Ponsonby, shaking his head. "I hardly think De Courcy will be able to come."

"The spinfulness is an esteemed arrangement and fixture," explained Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

Ponsonby grinned.

"The best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley," he remarked. "I'm really quite sorry!"

"Awf'ly sorry!" remarked Monson.

"Absolutely!" chuckled Vavasour.

"Anything happened?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Yes, a little."

"De Courcy under detention?"

"Oh, no! But I don't think he will come for a bike spin this afternoon. It's really too bad, but there it is."

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And without explaining further, Ponsonby rejoined his friends, and the whole group burst into a laugh.

The Famous Five felt their ears tingle as they walked on to the House. Evidently a joke of some sort was on that tickled Ponsonby & Co. immensely; though what it was the Greyfriars fellows could not guess. Johnny Bull paused for a moment.

"What price punching Pon?" he queried.

"Not here, ass! We haven't come here for a row," answered Harry.

"He's asking for it!"

"Let him ask!"

"The punchfulness is not the proper caper in the esteemed circumstances," remarked the nabob of Bhanipur, shaking his dusky head.

Johnny Bull grunted, and gave up the idea. He never saw Pon's head without wanting to punch it; but even Johnny realised that the present time and place were not suited to that performance.

In the doorway of the House the visitors encountered Smithson of the Fourth. Smithson was a member of Courtenay's cricket team, and on friendly terms with the Famous Five. So Wharton hailed him.

"Is Courtenay about, Smithson?"

"Down at the bike-shed," answered Smithson, and he grinned. "Heard about the Caterpillar?"

"No. What's happened?"

"His bike's pinched."

"Oh, my hat!"

The amusement of Ponsonby & Co. was explained now.

"Pinched this afternoon," said Smithson. "The ass left it out of gates while he was talking to a chap, and it had disappeared when he went for it. The Caterpillar's no end of an ass!"

"What rotten luck!" said Harry.

"Oh, the Caterpillar don't mind!" grinned Smithson. "He says it will save him the trouble of riding it!"

The Famous Five smiled; that point of view was very like Rupert de Courcy. They walked away from the House and headed for the bike shed, Ponsonby & Co. grinning after them with great enjoyment. Ponsonby & Co. at least found great entertainment in the fact that the Caterpillar's bike had been stolen when he was due to start on a ride with the Greyfriars fellows.

The drawling tones of the Caterpillar were audible as Harry Wharton & Co. reached the open doorway of the bicycle house.

"Can't be helped, dear man! What's the good of grousing? Look here, you can join up when those strenuous youths arrive from Greyfriars! I'll sit it out."

"You're coming," answered Courtenay's voice.

"Not on foot, old bean. Can't walk it while you fellows urge on your mettlesome steeds."

"You can borrow a bike."

"What about Shakespeare?"

"Blow Shakespeare!"

"But Shakespeare says 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be.' He was a knowin' old card, you know."

"You've lent your bike often enough."

"But never borrowed one. Don't turn me into a borrower, Franky! My character is in your hands, and if you deteriorate it—"

"Fathead!"

"That remark," said the Caterpillar, as he discerned the Famous Five in the doorway, "is not intended to apply to you men. Franky isn't expressin' his opinion of his honoured visitors. He was addressin' me."

"I endorse his remark," said Nugent.

"Hear, hear!"

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"We've just heard that your bike has been pinched, De Courcy," said the captain of the Remove.

"Hinc illæ lacrymæ!" said the Caterpillar seriously. "Hence the mournful cast of my countenance, and the compliment you just heard my pal pay me. I've been weepin' bitterly over the loss of that bike."

"Ass!" said Courtenay.

"Again, Franky's remark applies to me, not to any other gentleman present," said the Caterpillar urbanely. "I feel bound to explain that, to avoid any misunderstandin'. Franky is seriously cut up over the loss of that jigger. I'm really takin' it quite quietly. The bike thief seems to have taken it quietly, too, or I should have heard him." The Caterpillar smiled genially. "A little joke, my beloved 'earers. A poor thing, but my own."

"Was it a good bike?" asked Bob.

"I believe so."

"It was a new Moonbeam bike," said Courtenay crossly. "De Courcy's uncle gave it him this term; a first-class jigger. And the silly ass left it against a hedge to be stolen!"

"Not intentionally, old bean," protested the Caterpillar. "I had no intention whatever of corruptin' the honesty of the gent who passed and saw that bike standin' by the hedge. I would have preferred him to leave the bike where it was."

"Moonbeam bikes cost money!" said Johnny Bull.

"Luckily, mine cost nothin'," said the Caterpillar.

"Nothing!" exclaimed Bob.

"To me, personally, I mean. My personal loss is absolutely nothin'," the Caterpillar explained.

"Well, it cost your uncle something," said Johnny Bull.

"Admitted! But it cost him just as much whether it was stolen or not. He loses nothin' extra. I lose nothin' at all. I don't see that a lot of harm is done. That's why I'm takin' it so calmly, while Franky here is almost tearing his hair off."

"Well, of all the chumps—" said Johnny Bull.

"Franky or me?" asked the Caterpillar, with polite interest.

"You've done something about it?" asked Wharton.

"Catch De Courcy doing anything about anything!" grunted the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth. "But I've done something—I've given a description of the machine to the police, and they're looking for the man. I couldn't give the manufacturer's number, because that duffer never made a note of it."

"That's rather important, in identifying a bike," said Harry.

"I know! I've made him write to his uncle to inquire. It will be on the receipt for the bike, of course."

"And about our spin?" asked Nugent.

"You'll have to leave me behind," said the Caterpillar regretfully. "I've a moral objection to borrowin' a bike—so I'm sittin' this out. You men buzz off before you get tired of doin' nothin'."

"You're coming," said Courtenay decidedly. "Smithson will lend you his jigger!"

"Can't ask a man I'm not friendly with."

"You're friendly with Smithson!"

"Not a bit! I hate him!" said the Caterpillar solemnly. "Look at the way he wears his necktie. Smithson's necktie has worried me ever since I came to Highcliffe. I've restrained my feelin's for whole terms; but they've got the better of me at last. I loathe Smithson!"

"Why don't you want to come, De Courcy?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"I do want to! The spirit is willin'; but the flesh is weak. I was turnin' over in my mind all sorts of excuses for gettin' out of a strenuous afternoon, and couldn't think of one that would satisfy Franky. Then a bike thief comes along and pinches my jigger. Such a stroke of luck is not to be lightly rejected. So I'm sittin' this one out."

"Smithson!" shouted Courtenay, as Smithson of the Fourth came in sight at the doorway.

"Hallo!" Smithson glanced round.

"Using your bike this afternoon?"

"No; I'm going in a boat with Yates."

"Will you lend it to the Caterpillar?"

"Pleasure," answered Smithson, grinning cordially into the bicycle house. "You're more than welcome, Caterpillar!"

"I say, you should never lend a bike," urged the Caterpillar. "You never know what may happen to it."

"Oh, that's all right!"

"I'm the kind of fellow to get a bike stolen," said the Caterpillar. "It's happened once, and may happen again."

"I'll chance it. I'll jolly well make you pay for it if you lose it!" grinned Smithson.

"I might be in financial difficulties. I might repudiate responsibility. I might even punch your head for askin' me."

"Fathead!"

Smithson strolled away.

"Now the Caterpillar's said his piece, we may as well get going," suggested Johnny Bull, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Come on, Caterpillar!"

Still the Caterpillar did not move. Evidently he had been looking forward to a lazy slack that warm, sunny afternoon, and was not disposed to exert himself if it could be avoided. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had been silent, with a thoughtful expression on his dusky face. Now he spoke.

"My esteemed and ridiculous chums, if I may make a suggestive remark I—"

"Oh, do!" gasped the Caterpillar.

"Do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you mean a suggestion, fathead, make it!" said Wharton.

"The esteemed and ludicrous Caterpillar's bike was a Moonbeam," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Do you not rememberfully recall that that excellent rascal on Courtfield Common had a Moonbeam bike to sell? We conclusively opined that it was a stolen bike. Is it not terrifically probable that it was the esteemed Caterpillar's ridiculous jigger?"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Wharton.

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NEWS PARS
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PICTURES
NEXT WEEK!



Bob Cherry rushed through the hawthorn clump, stumbling over the recumbent form of Mr. Jobson, who lay on his back snoring. "Hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Here he is!" The snoring ceased suddenly. "Yow-ow-ow!" Mr. Jobson spluttered, scrambling up. "What the thunder—yoop!" (See Chapter 7.)

Johnny Bull thumped the nabob on the back.

"Good old Inky! Of course! What were we thinking of! That chap was the bike thief!"

Bob Cherry gave a gasp.

Now that the nabob drew attention to it, it seemed clear. A Moonbeam bike had been stolen that afternoon; and a little later a man, obviously a bike thief, had a Moonbeam bike to sell, not two miles away. The conclusion to be drawn was clear enough.

Bob Cherry became crimson.

The bike he had been tempted to buy, against the judgment of his chums, was a stolen machine—and belonged to the Caterpillar! It was quite clear to Bob now.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Bob. "Why, the scoundrel—the awful rotter—to try to land a fellow with a stolen bike—" Bob Cherry clenched his fists. It was fortunate for Honest George that he was not within hitting distance of Bob just then.

"What's this?" exclaimed Courtenay. "What are you fellows talking about? You've seen the bike?"

"Not the bike," answered Wharton. "But I'm pretty certain that we've seen the thief—and he must have had the bike with him, as he offered to sell it."

"Unfold the tale!" said the Caterpillar, with a faint interest.

Wharton hurriedly described the encounter with Honest George on the way over from Greyfriars.

"That's the man," said Courtenay, with conviction. "Of course, he'd be glad to get shut of the bike as quickly as he could—he might very likely be spotted clearing off with it; a man riding a boy's machine. We're on this. Come on, Caterpillar!"

The Caterpillar lifted down Smithson's bike. He was as keen as the others now, either because the excitement of the chase appealed to him, or because he really was glad of a chance

to get back the handsome jigger that had been purloined. He rushed Smithson's bike out, and called back to his chum.

"Buck up, Franky. Don't keep a man waitin', old slow-coach!"

In about two minutes, seven juniors were mounted and pedalling away rapidly to Courtfield Common. If Honest George was still there, looking for a customer for the stolen bike, Honest George was booked for serious trouble. And it was quite likely that he was still there. Evidently he was anxious to get rid of a schoolboy's machine as soon as he could; and hoped to "land" it at a give-away price on some stranger who was too thoughtless to realise that it had been stolen, or too greedy to care whether it had been stolen or not.

Harry Wharton & Co. fairly ground at their pedals, Courtenay grinding as hard as any of the Famous Five. But the Caterpillar, for once, was in a mood for exertion, and, rather to the surprise of the Greyfriars fellows, he kept level all the way. In a whizzing bunch the seven swept away from Highcliffe, and the road fairly flew under the whirling wheels.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Makes a Bargain!

"O H, dear! Ow! Oh! Beast!" Billy Bunter mumbled, and grumbled, and mumbled, in a mood of the deepest pessimism as he crawled dismally back to the road on the sunny common.

Bunter was feeling hurt.

The Bounder had banged his bullet head, not wisely, but too well. There was nothing in it, perhaps, in the intellectual line, to damage. But Billy Bunter rubbed his bullet head dolorously and mumbled, and grumbled, and felt that life was scarcely worth living

in a universe populated by such beasts as Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Carefully he had avoided borrowing the Bounder's bike, because Smithy was a beast; carefully he had selected Redwing's, because Redwing was not a beast—not such a beast, anyhow. But it had booted not; it was the Bounder who had pursued him and run him down. Worse could not have happened had he borrowed Smithy's bike, as he had first intended.

Bunter felt that he was very ill-used. Worst of all, he was about half-way across Courtfield Common, and booked for a walk. It was as far to walk back to Greyfriars and borrow another machine as it was to walk on to Courtfield. Bunter did not want to walk, and after his exertions to escape, and what had happened to him after capture, he felt less disposed than ever to walk.

He sat down on a stone by the roadside to rest and rubbed his head, and mumbled, and grumbled. Even the whole pound in his pocket and the thought of a spread at the bunshop did not tempt him to exertion. He had had exertion enough for the present, and a little over.

"Beast!" muttered Bunter. "Ow! Beast!"

He blinked along the dusty road through his big spectacles. Smithy and Redwing had long been out of sight.

Bunter had a faint hope that a market cart might happen along, in which he could beg, borrow, or steal a lift. But not a market cart appeared in sight on the sunny horizon. Bunter had felt that this was his lucky day when he secured a whole pound-note from Lord Mauleverer. But, with the exception of that, everything had gone wrong; and Bunter sat by the roadside and mumbled dismally.

"Skuse me, sir!"

The Owl of the Remove blinked round.

A man with narrow, furtive eyes, and

a red-spotted neckerchief, had appeared from nowhere.

Bunter blinked at him without interest. If the man wanted to beg Bunter had nothing to give him. Bunter did not believe in giving anything to mendicants—or to anybody else, for that matter.

"Lost your bike, sir?" said the man civilly.

Bunter nodded.

"Care to buy a bike, sir?"

Bunter blinked.

"I've got a machine to sell, sir," said Honest George. "If you'd care to look at it, sir—"

"What's the good of a man's bike to me?" grunted Bunter.

"It's a juvenile machine, sir," said Honest George. "A machine built specially for a young gentleman your size, sir—a young gent of jest your athletic figure, sir."

Bunter looked a little more amiable. Nobody at Greyfriars had ever noticed that Bunter had an athletic figure. This fellow, sly and dubious as he looked, was no fool, anyway.

"You see, sir," said Honest George, "this here machine was ordered special from the Moonbeam Company by a gentleman for his son—a handsome young feller like you, sir."

"A Moonbeam?" said Bunter, with interest.

Bunter did not know much about bikes, but he knew that the Moonbeam was a good make.

"Yessir; fust-class machine, sir," said Mr. Jobson. "The gentleman sold it to me cheap, sir, because his son fell ill, and had to be sent away to a—sannytorium. 'Take it away, my good man,' he says, 'it's no use to my pore boy now,' he says. And I took it away, sir, cheap. And I'm selling it cheap."

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

"How much?" he asked.

"Only five pun, sir."

"Nothing doing."

"The fact is, sir, I've been offered a job, sleep in, and I can't take the machine with me," said Honest George. "I got to get it off my 'ands afore I begin work. And I'm that anxious to begin work, sir, you can't think. I'll take four pun."

Billy Bunter breathed hard.

A Moonbeam bike for four pounds was a terrific bargain, if it was in anything like good condition. But as Bunter's financial resources were limited to one pound, the Moonbeam might as well have been four hundred, so far as he was concerned. Honest George was watching his face.

"Make it three, sir, and it's a trade," he said. "I got that bike cheap, and I can afford to sell it cheap. Three pun, and it's yours, sir."

"Where is it?" asked Bunter.

"Jest behind them bushes, sir," said Mr. Jobson. "Come and 'ave a look at it, and judge for yourself."

Bunter shook his head.

He was exceedingly keen on securing a Moonbeam bike at a bargain price, but he did not like the looks of Mr. Jobson. He did not want to go out of sight of the public road with him.

"Bring it out here and I'll look at it," he said.

Honest George hesitated.

As much as Bunter disliked the idea of going into the hawthorn thicket with Honest George did Honest George dislike the idea of bringing the stolen bike out into the light of day.

He looked searchingly up and down the road. A market cart, at last, appeared from the direction of Friardale, jogging slowly along. A little boy with

a hoop came trundling gaily from Courtfield. These, however, did not alarm Mr. Jobson. Had a policeman appeared on the horizon it would have been a different matter. Honest George made up his mind.

"Wait 'ere a tick, sir."

Mr. Jobson disappeared once more into the hawthorns and re-appeared in a few minutes wheeling a bicycle.

Bunter blinked at the machine, and almost gasped.

It was a handsome machine, and quite new. Its polished parts gleamed in the sun. Its beautiful saddle was a pleasure to look at. It was fitted with lamps that were worth almost as much as Mr. Jobson asked for the whole machine. Even the Owl of the Remove could see that it could not have been long since somebody had paid more than twenty pounds for that bicycle. It was such a bargain in bikes as a fellow might dream about, without ever seeing his dream come true.

And it was offered to Bunter for three pounds—and he had only one pound! If that mean, stingy beast, Mauleverer had given him three pounds, instead of one, that beautiful bike would have been Bunter's, on the spot. But Mauly hadn't.

"Well, sir, what do you say?" asked Honest George, with an uneasy glance over his shoulder in the direction of Courtfield.

"Tain't a bad bike," said Bunter. "Look here, if you'll sell it for a pound I'll take it. I've only got a pound."

Honest George hesitated.

He was anxious to be rid of the bike, and, considering the terms on which he had become the proprietor of it, a pound showed a handsome profit. But he hesitated. Bunter, after all, was not the only "mug" in the county of Kent. The afternoon was yet young, and other mugs might come along the country road if Honest George waited.

"Look here, make it a pound down and the other two pounds next week," said Bunter eagerly. "I can sell my old bike for something. And I'm expecting a postal-order, too. I'm a Greyfriars man; you can trust me with the machine. My name's Bunter—Bunter, of the Lower Fourth. I'll hand over the other two pounds next week."

Honest George reflected.

Once the machine was off his hands there was nothing to identify him as the bike thief; and a pound was a pound. He was too near the scene of the theft to feel easy with the stolen goods in his possession. And it was extremely risky for a man of Honest George's looks and garb to be seen wheeling or riding that machine away in the daylight. Any policeman who saw him with it would guess at once that he had "pinched" it; and Honest George knew, from long and painful experience, how very unpleasant the police could be to honest folk like himself. He decided to close with Bunter's offer.

"Look 'ere, sir, the bike's yours on them terms," he said. "You come along 'ere to this place next Wednesday afternoon, and pay over the two quids."

"Done!" said Bunter.

"Mind, if you don't turn up you'll 'ave me arter you!" said Honest George, with a threatening look. "I'll come arter that blooming bike fast enough if you don't square."

"I'll be here," said Bunter haughtily. "Two pounds isn't much to me."

"I s'pose it ain't, sir," agreed Honest George. "I'll trust you, sir. I know the school you belong to from your blooming cap; and you won't want me

dropping in for the money next Wednesday. It's a go, sir! 'And over the quid."

It cost Bunter a wrench to part with the pound note.

That glorious spread at the bunshop in Courtfield was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream.

On the other hand, it was more than a mile's walk to Courtfield; more than two miles back to the school afterwards. That item appeared on the credit side of the account, as it were.

And even a glorious spread was little enough to sacrifice for the possession of that beautiful bike. Indeed, Bunter was already reflecting that he could easily sell that Moonbeam for ten pounds any time, and have the necessary two "quids" for Honest George, and eight left for tuck. It was a wrench to let the bunshop spread go, but even a spread in hand was not worth an unlimited number of spreads in the bush.

So the pound note passed over to Mr. Jobson, and Billy Bunter grasped the bike and proceeded to lower the saddle to the lowest level possible, as the machine had evidently been intended for a fellow with longer legs than Bunter's.

Honest George regarded him thoughtfully.

The pleasant idea was in the honest man's mind—now that he had the pound—of taking away the bike as well, and knocking Bunter into the ditch if he objected—as probably he would!

But Mr. Jobson gave up that idea. He was anxious to be clear of the stolen goods, and he had two pounds to come. And the lumbering market-cart was drawing near along the road. It was difficult for Mr. Jobson to deal honourably, even to the extent of handing over a stolen bike. But he made an effort and did it.

"Afternoon, sir!" he said, and disappeared into the hawthorns again. The stolen goods disposed of, Honest George felt that he was entitled to take a rest in the shade after his exertions.

Billy Bunter gave him no further attention.

He blinked delightedly at his new possession; the thought of its being a stolen machine never even entering his obtuse, fat brain. Then he mounted and pedalled away cheerily towards Greyfriars. His fat face was wreathed in cheery smiles as he thought of the surprise and envy of the other fellows when he trundled that handsome bike into Greyfriars.

He was not, of course, going to tell the fellows how he had come by it—that he had secured it at a give-away price from some unknown person on the road. That would have been the truth; but Bunter and the truth had never been on familiar terms; in fact, they were barely nodding acquaintances. Bunter was already thinking of a much better story than that.

When the Remove fellows saw that beautiful, expensive bike they would have to admit that Bunter's rich relations were not figments of his fertile fancy. They would have to acknowledge that Bunter Court had a local habitation and a name.

That handsome present from his father, or his uncle, or General Bunter, or Sir Algernon Bunter—the Owl of the Remove had not yet decided which; a fellow could not think of everything at once—that handsome present from a rich Bunter relation, at any rate, would show that rich Bunter relations really existed. The most doubtful of doubting Thomases could not dispute the evidence of his own eyes. In all the Remove there was only one fellow who owned a

machine as good as this, and that was Lord Mauleverer.

Billy Bunter chuckled as he thought of it.

In his fat satisfaction at this happy prospect he hardly remembered even the spread at the bunshop which was the price of the bicycle. The fat mind of the Owl of the Remove was wholly filled for the present with one thought, and that thought was the thought of Bunter's bike.

It was his lucky day, after all!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

"THAT'S the place!"

Bob Cherry released one hand from its grip and pointed as the bunch of cyclists shot up the Courtfield road in a cloud of dust. Bob pointed to the clump of hawthorns, from which Mr. Jobson had emerged with the first news of the Moonbeam bike little more than an hour or so ago.

The juniors had lost no time, and they had every hope that the bike thief was still on the spot. If he was, it was probable that the stolen bike was still with him. In so short an interval as an hour, or an hour and a quarter, they hoped, at least, that he had not found a purchaser.

There was a jamming of brakes as the cyclists swept up to the spot, and Bob Cherry was the first man down. He jumped off, laid his bike in the grass by the side of the road, and ran into the hawthorns.

There was a whirring of bikes as they were piled together, and the rest of the party rushed after Bob Cherry.

The hawthorn clump was not more than a dozen yards in extent, so it was not a difficult task to search it from one end to the other.

As it happened, little search was required. Bob Cherry stumbled over a recumbent form in the shade.

The ferret-eyed man, with his red-spotted neckerchief now spread over his face, lay on his back, snoring. Flies buzzed over him as he snored, without disturbing him, however; the red-spotted muffler keeping them off his unprepossessing features. When Bob Cherry buzzed over him the matter was different; the dusty gentleman's snore ceased quite suddenly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!" roared Bob.

"Yow-ow-ow! What the blooming thunder—yooop!" spluttered the ferret-eyed man, scrambling to a sitting posture and glaring at Bob.

"Here he is."

"Oh—you!" grunted Mr. Jobson, recognising Bob now. "If you've come back for the bike, young feller-me-lad, you're too late. Now, leave a bloke alone to rest arter 'ard work."

"Where's the bike?" demanded Bob.

"Gorn, I tell you—sold! Leave a bloke alone."

"We'll leave you alone when there's a bobby to take care of you!" answered Bob wrathfully. His narrow escape of being "landed" with a stolen bike made the usually good-tempered Bob extremely crusty. He collared the ferret-eyed man and jerked him to his feet.

Honest George clenched his hands; but the rest of the party were round him now, and he unclenched them again. The odds were too heavily against Honest George for punching to serve his turn. And a very uneasy look came over his face as he discerned two Highcliffe caps among those belonging to Greyfriars. Possibly Honest George

recognised in the Caterpillar the owner of that Moonbeam bike.

Deep down in his honest heart, Honest George was honestly glad that he had parted with the machine. Had it been found with him, Honest George would have been booked for a cold and uncomfortable residence maintained out of the taxes, of which he had had more than one experience and which he did not like at all. At that moment he felt almost grateful to the fat fellow in spectacles who had taken the jigger off his hands.

The Caterpillar eyed Honest George with interest.

"I've seen this merchant before," he remarked. "He was hangin' roud near the school when I left my bike to talk to Langley of the Sixth. I noticed the colour scheme of his muffler at the time. I've an eye for colour, you know."

"Ain't seed you afore in my life, sir!" mumbled Mr. Jobson.

"Dear me! You look older than that," said the Caterpillar.

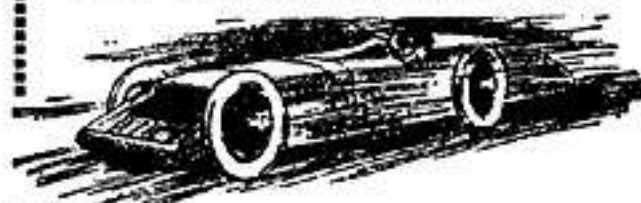
"Hey?"

"If you haven't seen me before in your life, dear boy, you can only have been born three hours ago," explained the Caterpillar; "and it was in a former state of existence that you saw

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me near the gates of Highcliffe. Accordin' to the psychological gents, such things are possible. What are your views on the theory of a former existence, my dear bike-pincher?"

Honest George stared at him blankly. Apparently he had no views on that abstruse subject. At all events, he did not state any.

"He's the thief, right enough," said Courtenay.

"I think so," assented the Caterpillar. "I'm sure he's more than three hours old, though I'm sorry to doubt any gentleman's word. In fact, I think his beard is three days old at least. It was in his present state of existence that he saw me near Highcliffe. It follows that he has been speakin' untruthfully. I'm sorry for this, my friend. Great is truth, and it must prevail. I could tell you that in Latin; but probably you would fail to grasp it. The trouble is that you did not fail to grasp my bike. Will you have the excessive kindness to hand it over?"

"Kick him till he does!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"A most excellent wheeze, and the same shall be an instruction," said the Caterpillar. "Perhaps Cherry will kick him for me, bein' a more hefty chap, and likelier to make the good man realise beyond doubt that he is bein' kicked."

"I'll kick him with pleasure," growled Bob.

"I hope the pleasure will be mutual," said the Caterpillar gracefully. "Will you turn round, my good fellow?"

"Look 'ere, you keep orf," said Honest George sulkily. "You let a bloke alone. I ain't touched any bike this 'ere blessed day, s'elp me!"

"Why, you offered to sell us one on this very road this very afternoon!" ejaculated Nugent.

"And you've just told me it's sold!" exclaimed Bob.

"A feller can 'ave his little joke, I s'pose?" said Mr. Jobson. "I was a-pulling of your leg."

"Why, you lying rascal," said Wharton hotly, "you had the bike hero in these bushes!"

"Did you see any bike along of me?" demanded Honest George.

"No; but you told us—"

"What I may 'ave told you ain't evidence," said Honest George stolidly. "If you'd 'eard lawyers tork in court, same as I 'ave, you'd 'ave 'eard them say that."

"I've naver been in the dock," said Wharton dryly.

"Well, p'raps I 'ave, and p'raps I ain't," said Honest George. "There ain't any justice in this country for a pore and honest man like me. Look at you young gents, picking on me and accusing me of stealing a bike, without any blinking evidence. I'd be ashamed, s'elp me!"

"Well, my hat!"

"You didn't actually see the bike, you chaps?" asked Courtenay.

"No; but he had one to sell, and he described it—a practically new Moonbeam machine," said Harry. "He had it, of course."

"Only a little joke, sir," said Mr. Jobson cheerfully. "Jest a-pulling of your leg. If you'd asked to see that there bike, I should jest 'ave larfed, and told you you'd been took in."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"May be hidden in these thickets all the time," suggested Johnny Bull. "Let's hunt for it."

"The huntfulness is the proper caper," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, a remark that drew a stare from Honest George.

The honest one did not seem to have encountered English like Hurree Singh's before.

"Yes, hunt around for it, dear man," said the Caterpillar. "I'll keep an eye on this gentleman, in case he bolts. He might."

"Very likely, I think," grunted Bob.

"I ain't bolting, I ain't," said Mr. Jobson. "I ain't done nothing. I'll eat all the blinking bikes you find 'idden in these 'ere bushes. A man can't say fairer than that."

Honest George was grinning now. No one had actually seen him steal the bike. No one nresent had seen it in his possession. Proof against him was absolutely lacking, though there was no doubt that he had stolen the bike.

Honest George felt that his position was legally safe. He could not be "run in" because a bunch of schoolboys thought he had pinched a bike. Honest George felt that he was entitled to grin, and he grinned—a most exasperating grin to the juniors, who had not the slightest doubt that the rascal had rid himself of the machine only a short time before their arrival.

As a matter of fact, Bunter had not been out of sight more than twenty minutes; it had been quite a narrow escape for Mr. Jobson. It had not crossed his mind, naturally, that the party of schoolboys to whom he had offered to sell the bike were going to Highcliffe, where he had stolen it.

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He realised that he had had a narrow escape, and he blessed Bunter and grinned.

The search of the hawthorn bushes was thorough, but it did not take long. Bob, with the skill of a Boy Scout, picked up the trace of a bike tyre in the earth; but that was all that remained of the machine. Like the Cheshire cat in Wonderland, who vanished leaving only a grin behind, the bike had disappeared, leaving only a faint trace of a tyre. It was proof that a bike had been there; that was all.

The juniors gathered round Honest George again.

He grinned at them impudently.

"Found any bike?" he inquired. "I'm ready to eat it, if you 'ave."

"We've found a mark where it was standing," said Bob.

Honest George only grinned more widely.

"I dessay some feller may have rested in these 'ere bushes, and stood his bike 'ere," he said. "Why not? I didn't 'appen to see any bike. I s'pose you young gents will apologise for calling a man a thief, and a few bob compensation would be the 'andsome thing."

"You are a thief, and you had the bike," said Harry Wharton. "You've got rid of it since we passed here."

"I'm willing to go to the pleece station with you, and 'ear you make the charge, sir," said Mr. Jobson. "I'll make you pay for taking away an honest man's character, too."

"Kick him!" said Johnny Bull.

"The kickfulness may produce information as to the present esteemed whereabouts of the jigger," suggested Hurree Singh.

"You lay a 'and on me, and I'll 'ave the law of yer," said Mr. Jobson. "I'll see what your 'eadmaster has to say about it, too—calling a man a thief and ill-using him."

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said the Caterpillar urbanely, "this gentleman is in a legally strong position. Our respective and respected beaks would want to know what proof we have against him, and we haven't any. I suggest letting him alone, particularly as he isn't very nice to touch. I should certainly want him to wash before I laid hands on him."

"Look here, he had the bike," growled Courtenay.

"Obviously," agreed the Caterpillar. "But the tense is the thing—he had it, but he hasn't it. But perhaps he will tell me, as a friend, where it is now. What about that, George?"

Honest George shook his head.

"Never even 'eard of the jigger, sir," he answered. "Not knowing, sir, can't say."

"Think it over, old bean," said the Caterpillar. "You've pinched the bike, so you owe me a good turn—what? Tell me who's got it, so that I can get after him. I'll leave you out of it."

"That won't do," said Wharton. "That's what lawyers call compounding a felony, or something. You can't agree to let him off in return for information about the bike."

"Not legally?" asked the Caterpillar, raising his eyebrows.

"No."

"Well, I'll try to manage it illegally, then. I agree with the gentleman in Dickens who stated that the law was an ass. What about it, George?"

Mr. Jobson shook his head. He had two pounds to come from Bunter—at least, he hoped so—and obviously he would not draw that further payment if the bike was recovered.

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"I'm sorry I can't tell you anything, sir," he replied. "I'd like to oblige a young gent like you, I would. But I can't tell you anything about your bike, sir, not knowing. I'm not a man to tell you anything but the truth. That's why my friends call me Honest George, sir. Honesty, that's my motto. I've lost by it many a time, sir; but I stick to it."

The Caterpillar regarded him admiringly.

"Only want of education keeps this chap out of Parliament," he said. "It's hard cheese on a chap to miss his vocation like that. Put him in a decent coat, and improve his English a little, and can't you see him standin' up to answer the Honourable Member opposite? I won't call you a liar, George; but you must allow me to say that I take your remarks in a Parliamentary sense."

"Look here, what about the bike?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Nothin' about the bike, old bean; it's gone. I've borrowed Smithson's jigger for nothin'. You won't tell us which way he went with it, George?"

Mr. Jobson grinned.

"Never even 'eard of it, sir."

"My esteemed chums, it cannot have been very long since this esteemed rascal parted with the ridiculous jigger," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Whoever rode it away did not go towards Courtfield, or we should have met him, and it is tetrifically unlikely that he rode across the grass; so the probability is that he went towards Greyfriars. If we proceed searchfully we may overtake him."

"Good old Inky! That's horse sense!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"Uncommon sense, expressed in uncommon language," said the Caterpillar. "Let's bank. Good-bye, George; pleased to have met you."

And, unwillingly leaving Honest George unkicked—the juniors remounted their machines and scoured away up the road towards Greyfriars.

They passed the school gates and went on towards Friardale. It naturally did not occur to any of them to turn in at the gates of Greyfriars in search of the Moonbeam bike.

They passed many cyclists before they reached Friardale; but not a single one on a Moonbeam.

At Friardale they halted to hold council.

"Chuck it, and let's get back to Highcliffe to tea?" suggested the Caterpillar.

"It's not near tea-time yet," answered Courtenay.

"What about an early tea? Early to bed, early to rise, is the way to be healthy, wealthy, and wise," urged the Caterpillar. "Early to tea may produce the same desirable results."

"Fathead!"

"We came out for a spin," said Bob Cherry. "Let's take a spin all round the show, looking for a chap on a Moonbeam bike."

"Good egg!" said Wharton.

"The goodfulness of the egg is terrific."

The Caterpillar suppressed a groan.

"First-rate wheeze," he said. "Let's!"

And it was so!

Tired and dusty juniors arrived at Greyfriars and Highcliffe respectively in time for lock-up, just in time, when the shades of night were falling fast. But neither party arrived with a Moonbeam bike. That bike had vanished as elusively as the moonbeam after which it was named.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's New Bike!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Some Remove men were in the Rag when Billy Bunter rolled in. Some of them glanced round at the Owl of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, it's come!" said Bunter.

"Your postal-order?" inquired Skinner, with a grin. "Any whiskers on it?"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"If Bunter's postal-order has come," remarked Squiff, "we ought to pass round the hat and raise the tin for a gilt frame to put it in. It certainly ought to be framed."

"Oh, really, Field—"

"You ought to claim compound interest from the post-office for keeping it back all this time," observed Ogilvy. "Five percent per annum on all the time you've been expecting it would amount to a lot—even if the postal-order was only for a bob."

"Pounds, at least," said Bolsover major.

"Hundreds of pounds," said Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! I wasn't speaking about my postal-order," said Bunter; "I was speaking about my new bike."

"First I've heard of that," said Skinner.

"I've mentioned a lot of times that I was going to get a new bike on my birthday," said Bunter. "Well, it's my birthday to-day, and the new bike has come. My pater's played up well this time."

"American machine, warranted to kill at forty rods?" asked Skinner.

"You silly ass! It's a Moonbeam bike."

"Gammon!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"You can't get a Moonbeam bike under twenty pounds," said Skinner. "Mean to say that your pater has drawn all his money out of the bank to buy you a birthday present?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, come and look at it!" snorted Bunter. "I suppose you know a Moonbeam bike when you see one?"

"When!" agreed Skinner. "But, as Inky would say, the whenfulness is terrific. I'll eat all the Moonbeam bikes your pater gives you."

"I've told you often enough that my people have plenty of money," said Bunter disdainfully.

"Too often!" agreed Skinner.

"My uncle, Colonel Bunter, is simply rolling in it," said the Owl of the Remove. "You've heard of him—he's the one who got the D.S.O. in the War. He captured a German trench single-handed."

"If you said a German tuckshop I'd believe you," yawned Skinner.

"So your uncle, the colonel, gave you the bike?" asked Peter Todd, staring blankly at the Owl of the Remove.

"Certainly. He can afford it."

"You said your pater a minute ago."

Bunter started.

It had often been borne in upon William George Bunter's fat mind that a certain class of persons—a class to which he belonged—should have good memories. But William George Bunter never could help getting mixed when he was following in the footsteps of Ananias and Munchausen and George Washington. Bunter's memory was not good, and a whole library of little grey books would never have made him remember all the fibs he told. The celebrated memory of Macaulay could not have carried such a load.

"Hyer, you fat clam!" called out Fisher T. Fish. "Don't go off on your ear, you galoot! I guess I'm talking business." "Rat!" replied Bunter. The American junior hurried after him. "I'll make it four for the bike. Spot cash! Hard cash! The genuine durocks!" And Fish cunningly displayed four pound notes in a bunch in his bony hand. (See Chapter 10.)



Moreover, Bunter had not fully decided yet which of his wealthy relatives had given him that bike. Bunter often left details like this to be settled on the spur of the moment. It would have been wiser to settle such details beforehand. But wisdom had not been included among William George Bunter's many gifts.

"I—I mean my pater!" he stammered. "Is there a bike at all?" grinned Snoop.

"Or a birthday?" asked Toddy. "You've had one birthday already this year, Bunter. Do they have two annually in the Bunter family?"

"Yes—I mean, no! Don't be an ass, Toddy. What I mean is this is my birthday and the other wasn't. As for the bike, it was sent me by my pater, but it was a present from my uncle. That's what I mean. I've just unpacked it in the bike-shed." Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at the grinning Removites. "Mean to say you don't believe I've got a new Moonbeam bike for my birthday?"

"Just that!" assented Squiff.

"Bet you ten to one in doughnuts that it's in the shed now, then," said Bunter triumphantly.

"No takers—you wouldn't square, old fat bean. But I'll tell you what. I'll come down to the bike-shed and kick you if the bike isn't there. What about that?"

"Done!" said Bunter unexpectedly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"You can kick me as hard as you jolly well like, if there isn't a new Moonbeam bike on my bike-stand!"

"Great pip!"

"I'm on this," said Bolsover major. "I claim the first free kick. Let's go and see."

And half a dozen Removites, quite

curious now, walked out of the Rag with Billy Bunter, who rolled ahead with a lofty strut.

The fellows were interested and puzzled. There was no doubt that Bunter would get the kick if he was pulling their leg, and there was no new bike to be seen. But if Bunter's people had "stood" him a new Moonbeam bike it was a surprise. It was true that Bunter told many a tale of the unexampled wealth of Bunter Court, where fivers and tenners grew almost like blackberries on the bushes. Those fivers and tenners, however, remained at Bunter Court, and never by any chance found their way to Greyfriars.

It was true that Bunter had stated, more than once, that he was going to have a new bike of the most expensive kind discoverable, as suited the resources of the Bunter family. But he had stated that he was going to have many things of the most costly kind, and these things had never actually materialised. The handsome gold watch, the expensive camera, the unequalled cricket-bat, the priceless wireless set, and other articles that Bunter was going to have, had not hitherto put in an appearance. So nobody had expected to see an expensive jigger arrive for Bunter. If one actually had arrived it was likely to be a nine days' wonder in the Greyfriars Remove.

William George Bunter rolled importantly into the bike-shed, and the Removites followed him in, with several more fellows who had heard the news and joined up en route. William George pointed a fat forefinger at a handsome Moonbeam bike on his stand—his ancient wreck of a bike having been removed to make place for it.

"What about that?" grinned Bunter.

"Great Scott!"

"Yours?" exclaimed Skinner.

"Whose do you think?" smiled Bunter.

"I say, that's a jolly good machine!" exclaimed Bolsover major. "Your pater must have put all Bunter Court up the spout to pay for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

Admiring glances were turned on that Moonbeam bike. There was no doubt that it was a handsome machine, that any fellow might have been proud to possess. Peter Todd eyed it, and eyed Bunter, puzzled and perplexed. Peter had heard much—too much—of the Bunter family, and had taken the liberty of doubting all that he had heard. It was quite possible that Mr. William Samuel Bunter had had a burst of generosity on the birthday of his elder son. But Peter did not even believe that it was Bunter's birthday at all. As Bunter had already had one birthday that year, it seemed, to Peter, improbable.

Bunter, in the matter of tuck, was no respecter of the rights of property; he seemed to have no idea whatever of the distinction between "meum" and "tuum." But it was impossible to suspect Bunter of "pinching" a bike! Bunter's limit was a wide one, but he had a limit; and Peter could not suppose that he had pinched that handsome machine. But if he had come by it honestly, why was he lying about it?

Peter was perplexed. He sensed a mystery surrounding that bike, and its acquisition by Billy Bunter.

He glanced round the bike-shed. "This bike came to-day, Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes, old chap."

(Continued on page 16.)

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A Barberous Affair

by Dicky Nugent



The first of another rollicking fine series of stories dealing with Jack Jolly, Merry and Bright, the cheery chums of St. Sam's.

"BROKE!" said Jack Jolly gloomily. "On the rox!" groaned Merry.

"Not a penny in the wide!" said Bright, turning out the pockets of his wide trowsis.

Our three heroes were in despair. Seated at their froogal tea—which consisted of stale sardeens and dog-biskits—they looked anything but Jolly and Merry and Bright.

Jack Jolly's study was usually a land flowing with milk and hunny, but fammin had fallen upon it now. For days past the three chums had been in the state known as stony. They had made frantick efforts to raise the wind, but without success.

"I can't think why my pater hasn't sent along a remittance," said Jack Jolly. "There's plenty of munny in the old oak chest at Jolly Towers."

"So there is at Merry Manner," said Merry. "But my pater's getting mean and niggerly in his old age. It's like having a tooth out for him to part with munny! What about your pater, Bright? Have you tackled him for a remittance?"

"Of corse! I sent him my usual weekly letter—'Dear Pater, please send me some munny, from your loving son BILLY'—but the pater ignored it. I believe he's saving up to become a bankrupt!"

"My hat!"

"It costs a good bit to become a bankrupt these days!" said Bright.

"Ratts!" said Jack Jolly. "All you've got to do is to buy a file for a few pence, and file your petition! Then you are declared a bankrupt, and you go off and have a big banquet to sellybrate it. After that your creditors can't touch you. It must be awfully jolly to be a bankrupt!"

"Yes; but it isn't jolly being broke!" said Merry, with a groan. "I wish to goodness we could think of some way of raising the wind!"

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Looking very thoughtful, Bright got up suddenly from the tea-table. He picked up an Indian club which was lying in the corner, and started to knock himself on the head with it.

Bright's chums blinked at him in alarm.

"What on earth are you doing, fat-head?" cried Jack Jolly.

"Cudgelling my brains!" eggsplained Bright. "I'm trying to think of a wheeze for getting rich quick! Ow—ow—ow!"

"Steady, or you'll be nocking all the sawdust out of your noddle!" cautioned Merry.

Bright continued to cudgel his brains for some minnits, yelping with anguish as he did so. Prezzently he gave a shout.

"I've got it, you fellows! The very thing! It never struck me till I struck myself! Why not start a toilet saloon at St. Sam's?"

"A—a toilet saloon?" gasped Jack Jolly.

"Yes; a barber's shop, you know. Why, it would be a regular gold-mine! We'll take over the woodshed for our premises, and the fellows will roll up in their thowsands to be shorn and shingled, and bobbed and bingled! They will be saved the fearful fag of going over to Muggleton for their hare-cuts. Besides, we shall do it cheaper. I tell you, it's a dandy wheeze!"

Jack Jolly and Merry seemed to think so, too; for they jumped to their feet and linked arms with Billy Bright, and waltzed him round the study.

"Bravvo, Billy boy!"

"What a giddy brain-wave!"

Bright nodded breathlessly.

"We'll get busy right away," he said.

"But I want you fellows to understand that I'm to be the barber-in-cheef. It's my wheeze, so it's only right that I should take the lion's share of the prophets. You two will be my assistants."

"All serene!" said Jack Jolly. "I rather fancy myself in the roll of a barber's assistant, trimming the Head's beard and curling Herr Guggenheimer's mistosh! Heigh-ho!"

"To shear and shave, and to curl and wave,
And to be a barber's boy-oy-oy-oy!
And to be a barber's boy!"

"If all goes well," said Bright, as the three chums hurried away to the woodshed to make their preparations, "we shall each of us be as rich as Crocus in a few days!"

"Rich beyond the dreams of avarris!" chortled Merry. "Hooray!"

Bright and his assistants spent a very busy evening converting the woodshed into a toilet saloon.

They were not handicapped at the start by lack of capital, bekawse, as Bright pointed out, you didn't need any capital to begin a barber's business.

"We'll pay a visit to the masters' bath-rooms, and take away all their shaving tackle!" said Bright brightly. "Then they'll simply have to come to us to be shaved, and we shall be well equipped with razors, and shaving-soap, and all the rest of it!"

"We shall want some wash-basins," said Jack Jolly.

"Of corse! We can borrow those from the dorm."

The three chums paid a syrriptitious visit to the bath-rooms while the masters

were in their studies, and made a clean sweep of all the razors—both naked and safety—and shaving-brushes, and shaving-soap, and other toilet requisites. They also borrowed a number of wash-basins, and some old armchairs from one of the lumber-rooms.

Very soon the woodshed was fitted up as an up-to-date toilet saloon. A painted broomstick, to represent a barber's poll, was stuck up outside, and the scale of charges was posted on to the door, as follows:

**"THE ST. SAM'S TOILET SALOON.
TARRIF.**

HARE-CUTTING (Eaten Crop,
Bobbing, Shingling, Bingling) - 6d.
SHAMPOOH (wet or dry) - 4d.
SHAVING - 2d.
SINGING (no larks!) - 2d.

Curling Gents' Mistoshes (by hand) 3d.
Trimming Gents' Beards (by the
foot) - 3d.
Cutting Corn (without any chaff!) - 6d.

FACE MASSIDGE - 1/-

Wash and Dust-up - 1d.

**FAMILIES WAITED ON GAILY!
BILLY BRIGHT, Proprietor."**

"Now we're all ready to start!" said Bright. "But p'raps we'd better put in some practiss first with the sissors. Squat in one of these chairs, Jack, and I'll give you an Eaten Crop!"

"You jolly well won't!" said Jack Jolly warmly. "I don't want to look like an excaped convict, or to have the tips of my ears cut off! If you want to eggperiment on somebody, try Merry! He hasn't had a hare-cut since he was a new kid!"

But Merry was not anxious to be eggperimented upon, either. So it began to look as if there would be no preliminary practiss for Bright and his assistants.

"I know!" said Jack Jolly suddenly. "Monsure Froggay, the French master, has got a French poodle. We can practiss on that! The beast badly needs trimming; it looks like an overgrown holly-bush at the moment. Let's find it and bring it to the slawter!"

Bright stepped to the door and gave a shrill wissle. There was a yelp in reply, and Monsure Froggay's French poodle came scampering on the seen.

The dog was promptly pounced upon by the eager eggspérimenters, who at once got busy with their sissors.

Jack Jolly trimmed the poodle's head, and Bright trimmed its tale; while Merry lopped off large tufts of hair from the creature's back.

The unforchunit poodle—which was Monsure Froggay's pride and joy—would soon have been reduced to a scraggy and hareless skellington had not his master happened on the seen at that moment.

Monsure Froggay could hardly believe his eyes. He stared, and he glared, and he looked as if he was going to throw a fit. Instead of which, he threw himself upon the juniors, cuffing them and sending them sprawling. Then he gathered up his precious pet in his arms.

"Mon cher puppee!" he cried. "These 'ongfongs terrible'—these Vandals—they haf mutilated you, ain't it? They haf stripped you of your foliage, and you will haf to start growing all over again! Mon Dew! They shall be caned severely for this outrage! Follow me, you young villains!"

A few minnits later sounds of steady awishing proseeded from Monsure

Froggay's study, punctuated by yells of angwish. And the youthful barbers of St. Sam's bitterly regretted their preliminary practiss on the French master's poodle!

II.

EARLY next morning the St. Sam's Toilet Saloon started business in real Ernest.

The first customer—or shall we say victim?—was Burleigh of the Sixth. Burleigh pawed outside the door of the saloon, and peroozed the scale of charges, with a broad grin on his hansom face. Then he stepped inside.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Bright, who was in his shirt-sleeves, ready for the fray. "What can we do you for? I mean, do for you? Eaten crop, sir? Face massidge? Or would you like your mistosh curled, sir?"

Burleigh flushed crimson. He had just the slightest suspishun of down on his upper lip; and it was this which Bright flatteringly alluded to as a mistosh.

"No cheek!" said Burleigh sharply. "I want just a plain hare-cut—not a convict-crop, mind!"

"Very good, sir! Take a pew!" Burleigh seated himself—a trifle too heavily—in one of the rickety arm-



Burleigh's twelve stone of solid flesh and mussle was too much for the armchair. There was a cracking and crashing, and the seat collapsed compleatly.

chairs. That armchair had been pensioned off long ago as unfit for serviss; and Burleigh's twelve stone of solid flesh and mussle was too much for it. There was a cracking and crashing, and the seat collapsed compleatly.

Burleigh sat down violently on the floor, with a bump and a yell. He was alarmed, as well as hurt, for he had just been reading the currant number of the "Sweeney Todd Library," which described how the Demon Barber of Fleet Street used to dispose of his victims by means of a trapdoor underneath the chair.

Was it possible that Bright of the Fourth was adopting the sinnister methods of the famus Sweeney Todd?

Burleigh was reassured the next minnit, as willing hands hoisted him to his feet.

"Awfully sorry, sir!" said Bright. "I had no idea that chair was so wonky. Try the next, and see if that will bare your wait."

Burleigh sat down very jinjerly in the next chair. It creaked and wobbled a bit, but it didn't collapse; and Bright, tucking a cloth into Burleigh's collar, set to work with the scissors.

"Yaroo!" roared Burleigh, suddenly. "That was my ear, you clumsy cuckoo! You've taken a chunk off the top! Yooop! What are you up to now?"

"Taking a peace off the other ear, to make it match!" said Bright coolly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jack Jolly and Merry.

Burleigh struggled and squirmed in the chair, but Bright's assistants held him down, while Bright continued to ply the sissors.

The hare-cut was quickly over, and the kaptin of St. Sam's strolled out of the saloon, looking like a convict fresh from a visit to the prison barber. Each of his ears was adorned with sticking-plaster. He would never have paid his sixpence if he knew what a guy he looked.

The day was Saturday, and therefore a holiday. And all the morning the schoolboy barbers were as busy as could be. Hare-cuts, and shampooos, and face massidges were the order of the day. Bright and his assistants had no rest; but there was a cue outside, eggstending half-way across the quadrangle.

The shillings, and sixpences, and twopences fairly poured into the till; and it really seemed as if Bright and his chums were well on the road to riches.

Most of the masters looked in during the morning for a shave. They were obliged to, for their own shaving materials had misteriously vannished. And they were given no chance to recognise their own razors in the toilet saloon, bekwase their eyes were smothered with soapy lather, and they were compelled to keep them closed.

There were several casualties in the ranks of the masters. This was unforchunit, but it couldn't be helped. As Bright said, such accidents will happen, even in the best-reggulated toilet saloons.

Mr. Lickham sustained a cut on his cheek. Herr Guggenheimer's dubblechin was lasserated by Jack Jolly's razor. Mr. Chas. Tyser lost the tip of his long nose; and it was no fault of Bright's that Mr. Swishingham's jugular vein was not severed. Bright did his best; and he left quite a nasty scratch on Mr. Swishingham's throat. The unforchunit master, fearful that it might turn sceptic, hurried off to the matron to have it disaffected.

When the masters assembled for dinner it was apparent to all St. Sam's that they had been in the wars. For chunks of strapping-plaster, of varying sizes, adorned their faces where they had been punctured; and Mr. Swishingham's throat was bandaged from 'ere to 'ere.

Dr. Birchmall's turn came after dinner. He had not seen the mishaps which had befallen the members of his staff, or he would have given the St. Sam's Toilet Saloon a wide birth. As it was, he strolled gaily into the woodshed, and Bright promptly ushered him into a chair.

"Hare-cut, sir?" he asked perlutely.

"Don't be rood, Bright!" said Dr. Birchmall. "You know very well my head is innoesent of hare. As a bald statement of fact, I want my beard trimmed."

"Very good, sir!" said Bright. "The charge is threepence per foot."

"Then I'll have an inch off," said the Head. "That will work out at a farthing."

"Mean old codger!" mermered Bright, under his breth.

Then, jerking back Dr. Birchmall's head, Bright started to trim his beard. First he took a little off one side, and then a little off the other, to make it nice and even.

If Bright had left it at that all might have been well. But he was not

(Continued on page 28.)

Billy Bunter's Bike!



(Continued from page 13.)

"You told us in the Rag that you'd just unpacked it."

"That's right."

"Where's the packing-case?"

"Eh?"

"It wasn't packed in brown paper, or silver foil, I suppose?" asked Toddy, sarcastically.

"Nunno."

"Well, where's the packing-case?"

"The—the packing-case?" stammered Bunter.

Again the Washington of the Remove was in difficulties. It had not even occurred to his fat mind that if the bike had just been unpacked, some sort of a packing-case should have been in evidence.

"Well, where is it?" asked Peter, gazing intently and curiously at Billy Bunter.

"I—I gave it to—to Gosling for fire-wood," said Bunter, recovering himself. "I didn't want to keep the packing-case, you know."

"What did Gosling do with it?"

"I—I think he took it to the wood-shed."

"I'll walk along to the wood-shed and look at that packing-case," remarked Peter. "I'm quite interested in that packing-case."

"I—I say, I—I think Gosling didn't put it in the wood-shed," stammered Bunter.

"Took it on to his lodge, perhaps?" asked Peter.

"Yes; exactly. I say, Peter, don't you go bothering Gosling; you know he gets ratty at fellows butting into his lodge."

All eyes were on Bunter now, instead of on the Moonbeam bike. It was obvious that Bunter was lying, though why he should tell untruths about a packing-case was a deep mystery.

"I'll chance Gossy getting ratty," said Peter. "I really want to see that packing-case—if any."

"The—the fact is, Peter——"

"Good! Let's have the fact!" said Toddy. "Cough up the fact, if you don't think it will give you a pain. You're not used to facts, you know."

"Oh, really, Toddy! The fact is, I unpacked the bike at the railway station, and—and left the packing-case there. I gave it to the porter."

"And you gave it to Gosling afterwards?"

"Nunno! I—I didn't give it to Gosling at all."

"Then why did you say you did?"

"You—you see, I really meant to say I gave it to the porter," explained Bunter. "I rode the bike home from the station. Gosling saw me. You can ask him if you doubt my word."

"I suppose this bike is yours, Bunter?" asked Peter, with an expression of deep doubt.

"Oh, really, you beast——"

"Even Bunter wouldn't pinch a bike!" said Bolsover major, shaking his head.

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "I've got the letter from Sir Algernon in my pocket now."

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"Sir which?" ejaculated Skinner.

"My uncle, Sir Algernon Bunter."

"Not the giddy colonel?" asked Peter.

"Oh! I—I mean—yes! Certainly! Colonel Sir Algernon Bunter, of the Guards!" explained Bunter.

"I know Bunter's got relations in the guards," remarked Skinner. "The black-guards."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

"Let's see the letter from the jolly old uncle?" suggested Snoop.

"Here it is," said Bunter, fumbling in his pockets.

Even Peter was staggered for a moment as Bunter searched in his pockets for the letter. If Bunter could produce a letter from his uncle, mentioning that handsome birthday present, obviously the matter was all O.K.—though it remained a mystery why Bunter had told whoppers about it. Perhaps that, however, was merely the force of habit.

But William George Bunter did not produce the letter from Colonel Sir Algernon Bunter, of the Guards.

His hands came out of his pockets empty.

"I—I must have dropped it on the way back from the station," he said. "After all, it doesn't matter. The bike's the thing."

"Look here, Bunter——"

"Oh, rats!" retorted Bunter. "If you can't take a fellow's word about trivial things, Toddy, I decline to discuss the matter with you at all. I know what's the matter with you—you're envious."

"What?" roared Peter.

"Your people can't afford to send you a bike like this on your birthday!" sneered Bunter. "You're envious, Peter. That's rather mean. I hope you don't mind my mentioning that I'm disgusted at you."

And William George Bunter rolled out of the bike-shed, leaving Peter Todd speechless.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bike for Sale!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. did not hear of Bunter's new bike until the following day.

They heard of it then from Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove joined the Famous Five when the Remove came out of the Form-room at morning break.

"I say, you fellows, seen my new bike?" inquired Bunter.

"Time you had a new one, though you'll jolly soon turn it into an old one," remarked Johnny Bull. "What make?"

"Moonbeam."

"Oh!"

The chums of the Remove could not help being struck by that answer. Moonbeam bikes were rather running in their minds, owing to the Caterpillar's loss, and the long, unsuccessful search for the missing machine, which had taken up the half-holiday the day before.

"Moonbeam, eh?" said Bob Cherry. "That's a good make."

"My pater wouldn't be likely to send me anything but the best," answered Bunter loftily.

"The bestfulness is suitable for the esteemed and excellent Bunter," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gravely.

"Exactly," assented Bunter. "Like to come and have a look at it, if you didn't notice it when you came in yesterday?"

"Let's!" assented Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five walked down to the bike-shed with the Owl of the Remove.

"Look!" smiled Bunter.

The juniors regarded the handsome new Moonbeam bike with due admiration. Certainly it did not occur to them—at the moment, at least—that it was the Caterpillar's bike.

"Ripping!" said Bob Cherry heartily. "Gratters, old fat bean! I'd like a jigger like that, and no mistake!"

"Well, your people couldn't afford it, could they?" remarked Bunter, in his pleasant way.

"You silly owl!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"What I like about Bunter," remarked Nugent, "is his pleasant, agreeable, gentlemanly way of expressing himself. In that line I think Bunter really takes the whole cake!"

Sarcasm was a sheer waste on William George Bunter.

"Glad you can see it," he assented.

"That's what comes of belonging to a really good family, you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But I'll tell you what," said Bunter confidentially. "It was awfully good of my Uncle George to send me this bike, of course; but, in point of fact, I'd rather have had the thirty guineas it cost."

"It didn't cost thirty guineas!" said Bob Cherry. "About twenty or twenty-two guineas, I should say."

"Fat lot you know about it!" said Bunter. "My uncle mentioned that it had cost thirty guineas!"

"Well, I dare say a Bunter would mention what it cost," agreed Bob. "But he was drawing the long bow, like his nephew, if he said it cost thirty guineas—because it certainly did not!"

"I suppose my father knows what he gave for that bike, Bob Cherry?"

"Your father?"

"He's got the receipt!" said Bunter.

"Your father's got the receipt for the bike that your Uncle George gave you?" ejaculated Bob.

"I—I mean—no—that is, yes—Uncle George handed him the receipt along with the bike when he asked him to send it on!" said Bunter hastily. "But, as I was saying, I'd rather have had the money! I hardly like the idea of selling a Christmas present——"

"A Christmas present?"

"I—I mean, birthday present! It was my birthday yesterday, you know, and the colonel sent me this bike on my birthday. I unpacked it at the station and rode it home. I hardly like the idea of selling a birthday present; but, after all, I needn't mention it to Sir Algernon, as far as that goes."

"To whom?" asked Harry.

"I mean, my Uncle George! Now, you'd like a bike like that, Cherry?"

"I would!" agreed Bob.

"As a pal, I'll let you have it for twenty-five pounds!" said Bunter.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"As I could buy one at Stubbs' for twenty guineas or so, I don't think I'll jump at that offer," he answered, "thanks all the same!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dash it all, say twenty!" said Bunter, with reckless generosity. "I never was mean about money! Twenty quid, and it's yours!"

Bob shook his head.

"Can't touch that figure," he answered. "I'm looking for a bargain in bikes, but I can't go near twenty pounds."

"Make it fifteen!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Fifteen quid, and it's yours!"

The Famous Five stared at Bunter.

A rapid fall in prices like this was enough to make any fellow stare.

"Rot!" said Wharton. "You don't want to sell it for fifteen pounds, Bunter. It's new, or nearly new."

"I suppose I know what I want to do with my own bike, Wharton! What about fifteen pounds for it, Cherry?"

"I'd give you fifteen pounds like a shot if I had it," said Bob; "only it would be robbing you, old fat man!"

"Rot!" answered Bunter. "I suppose I know my own business! The fact is, I can buy a cheaper bike that will do for me—or I can have my old one repaired for two pounds ten. I don't go in for cycling such a jolly lot, you know. Fifteen quid, and it's yours!"

Bob Cherry looked very thoughtful. Undoubtedly he was tempted by that munificent offer.

"My pater would help me out," he said slowly. "If you really mean you want to sell it at that figure, Bunter, I—"

"I do."

"Bunter's uncle might have guessed that Bunter would rather have had tuck!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Fifteen quids!" said Bob, examining the machine with a thoughtful eye. "Look here, Bunter, it's worth more; but if I could raise fifteen, that's the top figure I could go to."

"Done!" said Bunter immediately.

"Hold on!" said Bob, with a smile. "I should have to write to my father first and get his answer. I can't say for certain till I hear from my pater."

Bunter's fat face fell.

Having enjoyed the distinction of receiving an expensive bike for a birthday present, Bunter was now anxious to turn that present into cash. By this time the Owl of the Remove almost believed that he really had received that bike as a birthday present.

"Look here, I can't wait a long time!" said Bunter. "I want the tin! If you want that bike, Cherry, you'll have to buy it on the nail! I'll take fourteen pounds, spot cash! You see, I've still got two pounds to pay on it, and I want the money!"

The Famous Five jumped.

"You've got two pounds still to pay on a bike sent you for a birthday present!" ejaculated Nugent.

"Oh—I—I mean—"

"You silly ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "Mean to say you're getting that bike on the hire-purchase system, and trying to sell it before it's paid for! You frabjous chump, don't you know that's fraud?"

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter. "I mean—that is, I meant, you see—"

"Well, what did you mean?" asked Wharton.

"I—I mean, I—I've got two pounds to pay on the carriage by railway!" gasped Bunter. "See?"

"Your uncle sent you the bike carriage forward, do you mean?"

"Yes, exactly!"

"Well, that's a queer way of sending a fellow a birthday present. But the railway wouldn't charge two pounds. They stick you pretty steeply, but they don't charge two pounds for carrying a bike," said Bob. "You've got it wrong!"

"You see, it came a long way," said Bunter. "Passenger train, and insured, and all that!"

"Still, two pounds is too steep! There's some mistake! They can't be charging two pounds on the carriage of a bicycle by rail. I know I'd let them hear about it if they charged me that!"

"Oh, I'm not the fellow to make a

fuss about a pound or two!" said Bunter. "I don't care! Look here—"

"Can it, Bunter!" said the captain of the Remove quietly. "You've not got two pounds to pay on the carriage of that bike! That's rot! If you're being over-charged to that extent, it's a mistake, and the railway people will set it right. Where's the delivery note? Let's look at it!"

"The—the delivery note?"

"Yes. The paper that came along with it."

"There wasn't—I—I mean, I threw it away."

"Fathead! Still, we can get it set right at the station. Look here, I'll walk down to Friardale with you after classes, if you like, and see them about it."

"It—it didn't come to Friardale."

"Well, Courtfield, then."

"It—it didn't come to Courtfield."

"Where on earth did it come, then?"

"Lantham!" said Bunter, diplomatically selecting a station ten miles from Greyfriars, and out of reach of a walk after classes.

"Goods for Greyfriars consigned to Lantham!" exclaimed Wharton, with a stare. "What utter rot!"

"I—I think my Uncle William thought Lantham was the station for Greyfriars!" stammered Bunter. "He's rather old and doddering, you know!"

"Your Uncle William?"

"Yes. You see—"

"And suppose your Uncle William thought Lantham was the station for Greyfriars, what difference would that make to your Uncle George?"

"Oh! I—I—I mean, my Uncle George—that is, my Uncle William George, you know! I—I'm named after him! I—I call him sometimes Uncle William and sometimes Uncle George! I dare say Uncle William George thought Lantham was the station for Greyfriars. That's how it is."

"And he told your father so?"

"Eh?"

"You've said that your father sent the bike on!"

"I—I—I mean—"

"Oh, chuck it!" growled Bob Cherry. "Can't you see you've given it all away, you fat duffer? It's not a birthday present at all!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Hire-purchase bike, I suppose, with something still to be paid on it," said Bob. "And that fat idiot is trying to sell it before it's paid for. He will land in chokey some day."

"Look here," roared Bunter, "are you buying that bike or not?"

"Not!" grinned Bob. "I don't want to pay for it and have it taken back by the owners when you don't keep up the instalments."

"There aren't any instalments, you

chump!" howled Bunter. "It's not a hire-purchase bike! I dare say your people buy things on the hire-purchase system. Mine don't!"

"If it's not hire-purchase, how have you still got two pounds to pay on it?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"I—I haven't got—"

"You haven't!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"No!" gasped Bunter.

"You said you had."

"I didn't mean to—I mean that was only a figure of speech!" stuttered Bunter.

"Great pip!"

"I say, Bob, old chap, you can have the bike for ten pounds cash down. That will leave me eight when I've paid—I mean I haven't got anything to pay. Is it a go?"

"Not quite!" chuckled Bob.

And the Famous Five walked out of the bike-shed. Keen as he was to possess a Moonbeam, Bob Cherry did not entertain the idea of purchasing Bunter's new bike. The origin of that bike was wrapped up in too much mystery for him.

Billy Bunter blinked after them and blinked at the bike. It was a handsome bike—a thing of beauty and a joy for ever to a fellow keen on cycling. But Billy Bunter was not keen on cycling, and he wanted the cash value of that bike. Moreover, he was bound, somehow, to raise the further two pounds for Mr. Jobson during the week; he did not want Honest George calling at Greyfriars for the money.

"Beast!" grunted Bunter.

The bell rang for third lesson, and Billy Bunter rolled away disconsolately to the Remove room. The valuable instruction he received from Mr. Quelch in third lesson was entirely lost on Bunter. He was thinking of the Moonbeam bike—at least, of its cash value, and of the series of gorgeous spreads that its value represented. But those gorgeous spreads were still a vision of the future, and Bunter's new bike still reposed on its stand in the bike-shed—for sale, but unsold.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Fishy Makes it Five!

"**W**OW!" Billy Bunter uttered that ejaculation suddenly and involuntarily. A bony knuckle poked him in the ribs—a knuckle so sharp and bony that it almost punctured Bunter.

Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, grinned at him genially as he blinked angrily round.

That jab in the ribs was only Fishy's way of drawing the Owl's attention.

Bunter rubbed his almost punctured ribs and glared at the American junior.

"You silly chump!" he snapped. "Can't you keep your skeleton knuckles to yourself? You bony beast—"

"Can it, old man!" interrupted Fisher T. Fish briskly. "What about that bike?"

(Continued on next page.)



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Bunter "canned" it, as requested. If Fisher T. Fish wanted to buy a bicycle, Bunter was prepared to overlook a bony jab in his plump ribs.

"I hear you're selling that birthday present of yours," said Fisher T. Fish. "Is that O.K.?"

"Yes—going at a bargain," answered Bunter. "I don't mind letting you have it for fifteen pounds, Fishy—you being a pal."

"Treating me as a pal, what?"

"That's it, old fellow."

"I guess I'd rather not be treated as a pal, then!" grinned Fisher T. Fish. "Make it a business matter."

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"You've offered it to Skinner for ten pounds, and to Bolsover major for nine," said Fisher T. Fish. "You've been trying to sell it up and down the Remove all day. What's the genuine figure?"

"I'll take nine from you, Fishy."

"I guess you won't! What about three?"

"You cheeky idiot!" howled Bunter.

Billy Bunter had offered that handsome bike for sale quite cheap all through the livelong day without finding buyers. Bunter wanted cash down—and, naturally, there were few fellows in the Lower School at Greyfriars with nine or ten pounds at their disposal.

But that was not the only reason why the bike did not "go."

Suspicion attached to that bike.

The many and various statements Billy Bunter had made concerning that bike were more or less entertaining, but certainly they did not agree with one another.

The most plausible theory was that Bunter, or Bunter's people, had got that bike on the hire-purchase system, and that it was not yet completely paid for.

In that case, Bunter, of course, was not entitled to sell it, and nobody wanted to buy trouble.

That it was not, as he stated, a birthday present, all the Remove knew.

It was exceedingly improbable, to put it mildly, that a fellow would have two birthdays in the same year, and Bunter had had one already.

Moreover, his uncle might have been named George, or William, or both; he might have been Colonel Bunter, of the Guards, or he might have been Sir Algernon Bunter.

But he could scarcely have been all those personages at one and the same time.

The bike, therefore, was not a birthday present; and it did not come from Bunter's uncle. That was assured.

The alternative theory was that it was bought on hire-purchase—a fact which Bunter would never have admitted had it been true, and which, therefore, accounted for his romancing on the subject.

So, though that handsome Moonbeam jigger tempted many other fellows as well as Bob Cherry, nobody was keen to buy it, though there was no doubt that it was a tremendous bargain at nine pounds—the lowest figure yet named by Bunter.

"Nine pounds—and perhaps a dozen instalments to pay!" Skinner had remarked. "Not good enough!"

Fisher T. Fish had thought the matter over carefully. Fishy was always keen on a bargain. He lived, moved, and had his being in bargains. Any bargain that showed a profit was joy to Fishy; and if, in addition, it left the other fellow feeling sore and "done," then to Fishy it was undiluted joy. And Fishy had thought out the hire-purchase aspect of the matter. If instalments remained yet to be paid, that was up to

Bunter. If Fishy bought the bike—and sold it again fairly soon—he did not see how he could be "landed," even with a dozen instalments falling due one after another on the Moonbeam.

So the Transatlantic junior was after that bike. It was like him to offer three pounds for it. As it was worth at least five or six times as much, even Fishy could have given three pounds for it without feeling more than a passing pang.

But the cute American junior had rather overshot the mark. Billy Bunter had been lowering his price all day long. But he had not come anywhere near three pounds yet.

He gave Fisher T. Fish a glare of contempt through his big spectacles, turned on his heel, and walked away.

Fisher T. Fish stared after him.

"Hyer, you fat clam!" he called out. "Don't go off on your ear, you galoot! I guess I'm talking business."

"Rats!" was Bunter's reply over his fat shoulder.

Fisher T. Fish hurried after him.

"Four!" he exclaimed.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Spot cash!" said Fisher T. Fish temptingly. "Hard cash! The genuine durocks! Solid dust! What?"

And Fisher T. Fish cunningly displayed four pound notes in a bunch in his bony hand.

Bunter paused.

Money itself did not charm Bunter as it charmed Fisher T. Fish. Fishy heard the music of the spheres in the clink of metal and the rustle of banknotes. He could have listened in to that sweet sound for hours, as other fellows listened in to a wireless concert. Money, in any shape or form, was to Fisher Tarleton Fish a delightful thing in itself—a thing to be handled with pleasure and hoarded with glee. Bunter only thought of money's worth, chiefly in the form of tuck.

The four currency notes crumpled in Fishy's bony hand meant a gorgeous spread to Bunter—so far from hoarding them, or gloating over them, he would have got rid of them as fast as practicable—that is, as fast as the inner Bunter could stow away the proceeds.

He was strongly tempted.

"Spot cash!" urged Fisher T. Fish. "What?"

Bunter resisted the temptation.

"Eight!" he said.

"Now, look hyer, you clam—"

"Well, seven ten to a pal!" said Bunter.

"Four!"

"Seven-ten!"

"Four!"

"Beast!"

Bunter rolled away again, and this time he rolled unchecked. Parting with a pound was, to Fishy, like having a tooth drawn. Parting with seven pounds ten shillings was, therefore, like losing seven and a half teeth. Such a dental operation was too much for Fisher T. Fish. Transatlantic flesh and blood could not stand it.

Fisher T. Fish reflected deeply on the matter. After tea he scouted cautiously along Masters passage, and found that Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, had gone out. He dropped into Mr. Prout's study, and borrowed his telephone, and rang up Stubbs, in Courtfield.

He was soon through to Mr. Stubbs. He explained concisely that he had a new Moonbeam bike to sell—practically new.

"Have to see it before I make an offer," was Mr. Stubbs' reply.

"New—birthday present from a relative," said Fisher T. Fish. "You can

see that it comes up to the description when I bring it along. Just give me an idea of what you'd give in that case."

"Might go to seven quids," said Mr. Stubbs.

"It cost over twenty pounds a week ago."

"Very likely," assented Mr. Stubbs politely. "But I should 'ave to sell it again, and second-hand bikes are a drug in the market."

"Say seven, then," said Fisher T. Fish.

"I'd have to see it first."

"Right-ho!"

Fisher T. Fish rang off, and fortunately left the study before Mr. Prout returned. He could rely on seven pounds from Mr. Stubbs, if any other market failed. He sought out William George Bunter again.

"What about five?" he asked.

"I'll take six ten!" said Bunter.

Prices were still falling.

"Now, look hyer! Don't you be a silly fat clam," said Fisher T. Fish persuasively. "Nobody will take that bike off your hands. All the galoots think there's a lot to be paid on it yet."

"There isn't!" roared Bunter. "Only two pounds—I mean—nothing! It was a birthday present from my Uncle Herbert."

Fisher T. Fish chuckled. Once more Bunter's memory was failing him. Evidently Uncle Herbert was a new edition of Uncle George and Uncle William and Colonel Bunter and Sir Algernon.

"I guess I'll go to five-ten," said Fisher T. Fish. "Spot cash! That's the pesky limit! Take it or leave it!"

"I'll leave it, blow you!" growled Bunter.

But he hesitated long, and Fisher T. Fish walked away feeling satisfied. He had no doubt that Bunter, after further vain efforts to sell the bike, would come down to five pounds ten, and then Fisher T. Fish had simply to ride it down to Courtfield and sell it for seven pounds. Thirty shillings' profit on a bike ride was good enough even for an enterprising and worthy son of "Uncle Shylock." As for the further instalments, if any, Bunter could look after them when they happened. Fisher Tarleton Fish was content to wait, and he was confident that he would not have to wait long. Further instalments on the bike did not worry Fisher T. Fish, who did not care a continental red cent if Bunter was landed up to his fat neck in the most serious trouble.

Even the cute and sagacious Fishy did not suspect for a single moment the real origin of Bunter's bike. Certainly he would never have supposed that Billy Bunter was capable of securing such a bargain as a Moonbeam bike for three pounds—one down, and two to follow. Certainly, had he known of that bargain, he would have guessed that Honest George had not come by the machine honestly, and would not have touched it for ten cents. But Fisher T. Fish did not know all that. It was not the first time, by many a one, that Fisher T. Fish had over-reached himself with his own sagacity.

Half an hour later Billy Bunter's fat face and glimmering spectacles looked into Fisher T. Fish's study.

Fisher T. Fish was alone in the study, engaged in a happy occupation which filled up much of his leisure. He was calculating exactly how many dollars he had spent since he had come to Greyfriars, and exactly how many he had made out of his Form-fellows in the way of bargains.

The sum on the credit side was not so large as Fishy would have liked to see



"Have you sold the bicycle?" demanded Harry Wharton. "Answer me, Bunter—" "Shan't!" "If you've sold the bike you'll have to give the money back to the fellow who bought it. The machine belongs to a Highcliffe man." "Wha-a-a-t?" A jam tart stopped halfway to Bunter's capacious mouth as he blinked at the captain of the Remove. (See Chapter 11.)

it; for there was no doubt that many of his schemes went seriously wrong, and showed a loss instead of a profit. Still, there was something to the good, and even a cent gained for nothing gave Fishy a pleasant thrill of gladness. He did not look up as Bunter blinked in. It was his cue to appear indifferent as soon as the other party to the bargain came forward.

"I say, Fishy—

Fisher T. Fish waved his pen at the Owl of the Remove.

"Busy! Call another time!"

"About that bike—"

"Never mind the bike now. I'm busy."

"Look here! I'm taking your offer of five pounds ten!" hooted Bunter.

Fisher T. Fish winked one eye at his abstruse calculations. But he did not answer.

"Deaf?" hooted Bunter.

"Nope!"

"Well, where's the money?"

"I guess I've been thinking that over," answered Fisher T. Fish coolly. "I can't go beyond five."

"Why, you beast, you offered me—"

"I guess you should have accepted the offer when made," answered Fisher T. Fish coolly. "It's off now. Five if you like. But I can tell you I'm not keen on it anyhow. Call another time. I'm busy now."

"I'll take five!" growled Bunter.

Having made up his mind to take what he could get, and having already planned an extensive feed on the proceeds, Bunter was unwilling to leave

the matter over—as Fishy well knew he would be.

Fishy jumped up briskly enough now.

"Done!" he said. "Make out a bill—put the number of the bike on it, and all particulars. I'll come down to the bike-shed with you and help. You see, I may sell that bike again some time, and I've got to have it business-like. Come on, Fatty!"

A quarter of an hour later Fisher T. Fish was cycling down to Courtfield, and Billy Bunter was sitting on a high stool at Mrs. Mimble's counter in the tuckshop—both of them in a very happy frame of mind; which was not, alas! destined to continue!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

"MY esteemed chums!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh spoke with a thoughtful wrinkle in his dusky brow.

The Famous Five had had tea in Study No. 1, and were chatting about cricket matches; but the Nabob of Bhanipur had sat silent, hardly contributing a remark. His thoughts seemed to be elsewhere.

He spoke at last in so serious a tone that his comrades all looked at him, and cricket was dropped for the moment.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's worrying you, old black bean?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"I have been thoughtfully reflecting, my esteemed Bob. A remarkable and terrific coincidence has struck me."

"Did it hurt?" inquired Bob humorously.

The nabob smiled.

"The esteemed Bunter—"

"Oh, blow Bunter!" yawned Johnny Bull. "You don't mean to say that you've been thinking about Bunter?"

"The answer is in the esteemed affirmative."

"Well, what's the trouble, old chap?" asked Harry Wharton, looking curiously at the nabob. He could see that the dusky junior was in a grave and serious mood.

"The esteemed, fatheaded Bunter is the happy possessor of a new Moonbeam jigger," went on the nabob. "Is it not a remarkable and ludicrous coincidence that he came into happy possession, on the same esteemed day that the ridiculous Caterpillar lost a Moonbeam jigger?"

There was a general jump in Study No. 1.

The juniors stared at the nabob.

They had wondered about that bike. They had even remarked how odd it was that Bunter's new bike—howsoever it had been come by, as a birthday present or on the hire system—was the same expensive make as the one lost by the Caterpillar.

Yet it had not occurred to them that it was the same machine!

But only the suggestion was needed.

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The truth rushed into their minds at once.

"De Courcy's bike!" exclaimed Wharton.

"The Caterpillar's jigger!" yelled Johnny Bull. "Why, of course! That forret-eyed rotter who tried to sell it to us must have sold it to Bunter!"

"That's why he's telling lies about it," said Nugent, "making out it's a present instead of having been picked up for next to nothing!"

"That's why he's still got two pounds to pay on it!" said Bob Cherry. "However cheap he got it, he couldn't pay on the nail—he never has any money!"

"Of course, he didn't know it was stolen," said Harry.

"Then why did he think a man was selling a new bike for next to nothing?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, rats!" said Bob Cherry, reddening. "A fellow might be taken in. Man might have lots of reasons for selling."

Johnny Bull grinned.

"Sorry, old pipplin!" he said. "I forgot you nearly got landed with it. Of course, Bunter may have been spoofed, as you very nearly were. You've got more sense than Bunter!"

"Thanks!" said Bob sarcastically.

"Not at all. You have, really. Not much more, but some!"

"Look here——"

"My esteemed and ridiculous friends," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "if it is agreed that the esteemed bike belongs to the respected and absurd Caterpillar, the sooner it is returned to him the better!"

Wharton rose to his feet.

"Yes, rather!" he exclaimed. "A cad like Ponsonby would be capable of making out that a Greyfriars man had pinched the jigger if it turned out to be at Greyfriars. If that ass De Courcy had known the number of his machine we could prove it on the spot, one way or the other; but there's precious little doubt, anyhow."

"None at all," said Johnny Bull. "And De Courcy knows the number now; he will have heard from his people about it to-day. They won't be so jolly careless about losing a twenty-guinea jigger as he is. Let's go and get the truth out of Bunter first thing."

Bob Cherry smacked the nabob on the shoulder.

"There's a lot of sense in that old inky noddle of yours!" he said. "We might really have guessed this, but——"

"But we didn't," said Wharton, laughing, "though I think we should have tumbled sooner or later. The coincidence is rather striking, as Inky says. Let's hunt for Bunter; we may get the jigger back to Highcliffe to-day, and stop any jaw on the subject."

The Famous Five hurried out of the study.

Billy Bunter was not to be found in the House, and they hurried across to Mrs. Mimble's shop to look for him. If Bunter had any money, it was safe to look for him in the tuckshop at any time. There he was!

Mrs. Mimble was serving him, and had been serving him for some time. Mrs. Mimble was treating the Owl of the Remove with unusual respect.

Generally he was not a valued customer. Mrs. Mimble had no desire whatever to part with cakes and tarts on the security of a postal-order which, though long expected, had not actually arrived. But on this occasion Bunter was provided with cash—ample cash—plenty of cash! He had changed a pound note already and shown several more. Bunter, in these affluent circum-

stances, was a customer to be honoured, and the good dame was honouring him accordingly.

On another high stool close by William George was seated Sammy Bunter of the Second Form. Bunter minor also was having a good time. Brotherly love was not highly developed in the Bunter tribe, but when Billy Bunter was in great funds he remembered that he had a minor in the Second. Sammy, greatly astonished, but greatly delighted, was mopping up the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, as it were.

Two or three other fellows had joined Bunter. Bunter in funds was a generous Bunter. Skinner and Snoop were tucking away jam-tarts as if for a wager.

Billy Bunter blinked round at the Famous Five as they came in. He bestowed an affable nod on them and smiled a sticky smile.

"I say, you fellows, roll up! Have some of these tarts! Have a ginger-pop! My treat!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Rolling in it, old fat bean?" asked Bob Cherry, in surprise.

"Yes, old chap! I've had rather a decent remittance from a titled relation," explained Bunter. "You fellows treated me rather meanly yesterday. You refused to lend me a bike. But I'm not the man to owe a grudge. Come and have a whack in this spread!"

Wharton's face grew grave. He thought he could guess the source of Bunter's sudden affluence. All day long Bunter had been trying to sell a Moonbeam bike. It looked now as if he had sold it.

"Have you sold that bike, Bunter?" asked the captain of the Remove quietly.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Have you sold it?" demanded Harry.

"Mind your own business!" retorted Bunter independently. "It was my own bike, to do as I liked with, I suppose!"

"No need for you fellows to butt into Bunter's business that I can see!" remarked Skinner casually.

Wharton did not heed Skinner.

"Answer me, Bunter!"

"Shan't!"

"If you've sold the bike, you will have to give the money back to the fellow who bought it! The bike belongs to a Highcliffe man!"

"Wha-a-at!"

A jam-tart stopped half-way to Bunter's capacious mouth. He blinked through his big spectacles at the captain of the Remove, dumb.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Climax!

BILLY BUNTER gazed at Wharton.

Skinner and Snoop exchanged a grin.

There was a murmur from the other fellows in the school shop.

"Listen to me, Bunter," said Harry quietly. "Yesterday a Moonbeam bike was offered to us by a man on Courtfield Common, and we found that he had stolen it from a Highcliffe chap—De Courcy. Did you buy that bike from a man with a spotted neckerchief on Courtfield Common?"

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter, fidgeting his voice. "It was a birthday present from my Uncle Rupert——"

"You fat idiot!" roared the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Can't you see the matter's serious?"

That man was trying to sell a stolen bicycle. If you bought that one, you'll have to hand it back to the owner!"

"I didn't! I never went near Courtfield Common yesterday!" answered Bunter promptly.

"Gammon!" chuckled the Bounder, who was disposing of ginger-beer at Mrs. Mimble's counter. "I followed you there to get Redwing's bike back from you, you fat fraud!"

"Oh, I—I forgot that! I mean——"

"And I saw the man Wharton's speaking of, too," said the Bounder. "He was hanging about, and tried to pinch Redwing's bike. Man with eyes like a fox and a red-spotted muffler and three days' beard on his chin!"

"That's the merchant!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I wasn't there—I mean, the man wasn't there! I've never met a man named Jobson in my life!"

"Oh, crumbs!" chuckled Smithy. "Then how do you know the man's name was Jobson?"

"I—I don't, you know. He never told me his name. It's not on the receipt he gave me for the pound—I—I mean, I never paid him a pound! As for arranging to pay him anything more next Wednesday, that wasn't even suggested. I hope you fellows can take my word?"

The juniors gazed at Bunter. In the circumstances, they were not likely to take William George Bunter's word!

"That makes it all clear," said Bob. "The man gave us his name as Jobson. That's where Bunter got the bike! It's the Caterpillar's jigger right enough."

"The rightfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"Where is the bike now, Bunter?" asked Harry.

"I've sold it to Fishy," answered Bunter sulkily. "As for buying it from a man named Jobson, I may or I may not have. There's no law that I know of against buying a bike from a man named Jobson."

"Not if you didn't know it was stolen," said the Bounder.

"As if I'd buy a stolen bike!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "I bought it fair and square for cash. I paid the man Mauly's quid—I mean, I paid him a quid out of a remittance I'd had from my Uncle Herbert—and promised the other two next Wednesday. All fair and square. I don't believe he had stolen the bike. He looked honest enough—anyway, he was quite civil. If he stole it, that's not my bizney. Besides, he didn't! And, besides," added Bunter, as a brilliant afterthought, "I never bought the bike of him at all; it was a birthday present from my uncle, General Bunter, as I've told you fellows already."

"You'll have to give Fishy his money back."

Snort from Bunter.

"Catch me! Think that man Jobson will give me my money back?"

"I seem to discern a little doubt in that matter," remarked the Bounder, and there was a chuckle.

"You won't get your money back from Jobson," said Harry. "You ought to have had more sense than to buy a bike of a stranger, and you deserve to lose it. But Fishy will want his money back from you, when he has to give up the bike."

"He can want!" jeered Bunter.

"He will go to Quelchy about it, and Quelchy will make you hand it over, you fat idiot!"

Bunter's jaw dropped.

"I—I say, you fellows, Quelchy wouldn't be such a beast!" he gasped. "Make me hand over what I got for a

"FOR THE HONOUR OF GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

Give Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe a chance to score off their old rivals at Greyfriars and they seize it like a hungry dog does a bone. But Pon. and his shady cronies are not particular in their methods, neither are they particular whose good name is dragged in the dust, providing they wreak their petty spite against Harry Wharton & Co.

Yet Pon. in his latest venture doesn't have things all his own way, for even his own school-fellows think it high time they chipped in. Chief, and most energetic amongst them, strange to say, is the Caterpillar—the fellow who was born tired! The Caterpillar wakes up with a vengeance and, mainly thanks to him, the honour of Greyfriars is vindicated.



Don't miss this treat next week, boys!

bike my Uncle James sent me for a Christmas present—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's the bike now?" demanded Bob.

"I don't know. Fishy went out of gates on it. I suppose he's gone for a ride," answered Bunter. "You'll see him at lock-up, I suppose. You can settle it with him. You can mention to him that I want to hear nothing more about it—absolutely nothing!"

Harry Wharton & Co. left the tuck-shop. Had the Moonbeam bike been still in the shed the matter would have been simple; it could have been taken over to Highcliffe before lock-up and restored to its owner. But it had been sold to Fisher T. Fish, and Fisher T. Fish had gone out, apparently, for a ride on it. That complicated matters a little.

The juniors went out of the school gates, and looked up and down the road, in the hope of seeing Fisher T. Fish returning from his spin.

What Fisher T. Fish would think and say and feel, when the bike was taken from him, they did not know or care. What he might lose on the transaction was a matter of little moment, if any. Indeed, every man in the Remove was pleased when the sharp junior from "Noo Yark" netted a loss instead of a profit on his business transactions. Fishy did not matter a straw; but it was important to get that bike back to its owner. But the Transatlantic junior was not in sight.

The chums of the Remove went in again. There seemed to be nothing further to be done in the matter till Fisher T. Fish returned.

"Anyhow, we can let the Caterpillar know that his bike's found," remarked

Bob Cherry. "If we ring up Mobbs, his Form master, he will tell De Courcy."

"Good egg!" said Wharton. "We can do that. Quelch will let us use his phone if we ask him nicely."

The Famous Five went along Masters passage, and four of them waited while Wharton tapped at Mr. Quelch's door. His tap passed unheeded. Within the study a voice was audible—the voice of Henry Samuel Quelch, in startled tones. Mr. Quelch was apparently speaking on the telephone that Wharton intended to borrow.

"Impossible! A Greyfriars boy? There is some terrible mistake! Fish? Yes, there is a boy in my Form named Fish! Certainly, I am Mr. Quelch, master of the Remove here. Who is speaking? Stubbs—Stubbs. Yes, I know the name. I have passed your establishment many times. Impossible, I tell you! A Greyfriars boy in possession of a stolen bicycle! It is a fearful mistake!"

Wharton did not tap again.

The startled voice of the Remove master was clearly audible through the door. Mr. Quelch was evidently in a state of great agitation.

The captain of the Remove stood rooted to the passage floor.

"What—what? He states that he purchased it of another Greyfriars boy! How could he purchase a stolen bicycle of another Greyfriars boy? I—I am astounded! You have detained him for a constable to be called? Goodness gracious me! He has asked you to telephone me first? No doubt—no doubt! There is some terrible mistake! Pray let matters remain as they are until I come. I will come immediately. Bless my soul!"

Wharton heard the whir of a receiver jammed on the hooks.

He scudded back along the passage to rejoin his friends.

A moment later the study door opened, and Mr. Quelch came out, in a state of great agitation. He passed the group of juniors almost like a whirlwind, without even noticing them.

"What the thump—" ejaculated Bob Cherry, staring after his Form master, as Mr. Quelch disappeared round a corner, going strong.

"The fat's in the fire now!" said Harry in dismay. "They've phoned Quelch from Stubbs'. That born idiot Fishy has been trying to sell the bike there!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"They've got its description, of course, from the police; and that crass ass De Courcy has handed out the number of the machine by this time. They know it's the stolen Highcliffe bike, and Fishy's being detained for a bobby to be called in."

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"He's asked to phono Quelch. That's where Quelch's gone. Oh, my hat! What's going to happen now?"

"Three months' hard would be good for Fishy!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Fathead! A Greyfriars man detained for the police! What a frightful disgrace for the school if it gets out!"

"What a morsel for Ponsonby and his gang!" said Bob. "If they get hold of it, we shall never hear the end of it."

"We'll scalp Fishy!"

"And Bunter!"

From a window the Famous Five had a view of Henry Samuel Quelch scudding—actually scudding—down to the gates in coat and hat. Mr. Quelch was losing no time in getting down to Court-field. As a rule, Mr. Quelch navigated

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the surface of the earth in a calm, lofty, and serene manner, looking as if he would merely raise his eyebrows if the skies fell. That calm majesty was conspicuous by its absence now. He was fairly scudding; his long legs almost twinkled as he departed with speed. Fellows in the quad stared after him and blinked.

Harry Wharton & Co.—quite forgetting their intention of phoning Highcliffe—went out of the House silent and dismayed. The turn the affair had taken was dismaying enough. No doubt Mr. Quelch would be able to explain matters at Mr. Stubbs' shop, and bring off Fisher T. Fish unharmed. No doubt he would thrash Fisher T. Fish severely, which was so much to the good. But the whole affair was dismaying and disconcerting. What Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe would make out of it, if it came to their ears, the chums of the Remove knew only too well.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter, sticky and shiny and happy, rolled up to the Famous Five in the quadrangle. "I say, what's Quelch's rush off like that for? Is he potty?"

"He's gone to bail out Fishy!" answered Wharton grimly.

"Eh?"

"And when he comes back he will want you!"

"Oh!"

"Look out for squalls, you fat idiot!"

"I—I say, you fellows, I don't know anything about that bike!" exclaimed Bunter in alarm. "You fellows can bear me out in that. I'm prepared to swear that I've never seen it—"

"Never seen it!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Or heard of it," said Bunter. "You fellows back up, you know. Swear that I was with you all yesterday afternoon, and that we went up the river in a boat, you know, and none of us ever even saw a bike—what?"

Billy Bunter blinked hopefully at the Famous Five.

They did not answer him in words.

As if moved by the same spring, five juniors collared William George Bunter at the same moment.

Bump!

And the Co. walked on and left him to roar.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Thrashings for Three!

QUITE an army of fellows gathered to see Fisher T. Fish come in with Mr. Quelch.

News had spread like wildfire of the present parlous state of Fisher T. Fish's financial speculations in bikes.

Most of the fellows were grinning.

Certainly, it was unpleasant enough for a Greyfriars man to be detained in a shop on suspicion of having "pinched" a bike, and having attempted nefariously to dispose of the same. Still, the matter had its comic aspect. That Billy Bunter had been ass enough to part with good money in exchange for a stolen bicycle was not surprising—Bunter was well known to be ass enough for anything. But that Fishy—the business man of the Remove, the keen and cute galoot from "Noo Yark"—should have landed himself with it, was regarded by the Remove as funny.

Moreover, Bunter had bagged the bike for three pounds—one in hand and two in the bush—and Fishy had parted with five whole, real quids for a bike that brought him, in the way of profit, nothing but a suspicion of having stolen it! It was, to use Fishy's own language, **THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 1,056.**

the "goods" on Fishy! And Remove fellows, who were more than fed up with his Uncle Shylock methods at Greyfriars, were hugely entertained to see the "goods" on Fishy.

Fishy was cringing when he came into the House—almost crawling. Plainly, he had been through a hectic time.

Mr. Quelch stalked ahead, with fire in his eye and thunder in his brow. Fishy crawled behind, utterly dispirited, and looking as if he guessed that life was scarcely worth living in a pesky island where real cute business men from "Noo Yark" got landed like this.

Grinning faces regarded Fishy on all sides.

"Not taken to quod, Fishy?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The quodfulness would be the proper caper!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Fisher T. Fish dropped behind Mr. Quelch, who stalked on with Jovelike majesty and wrath.

"Where's that fat clam, Bunter?" hissed Fishy. "I'm going to scalp him! I'm going to strew him around in small pieces! I guess I'm going to chop him into leetle fragments! What's he done with my money?"

"Blowed it in the tuckshop!" chuckled Squiff.

Fisher T. Fish gave a deep, deep groan.

Anyone who had handed money to Fishy might have experienced difficulty in getting it back again. But at least he would have known that it was still there. But in Bunter's pocket money burned a hole. All the way back from Courtfield Fishy had been wondering, with anguish, how much was left of the fiver he had handed Bunter in exchange for a twenty-guinea bike—which was now to be restored to its owner! He could guess, calculate, and reckon that Bunter had lost no time in expending cash at the tuckshop. How much had Bunter expended, was the burning question—a torturing question to Fisher Tarleton Fish.

Mr. Quelch looked round.

"Fishy!"

"Ow! Yep!" groaned Fishy.

"Go into the Form-room. Wharton, see that the Remove are all in the Form-room in ten minutes. I desire the whole Form to witness a punishment that is about to take place."

"Oh! Yes, sir," answered the captain of the Remove.

All the Remove, with two exceptions, were keen to go into the Form-room. They wanted to see that punishment administered. If anybody sympathised with Bunter, as doubtless some did, nobody sympathised with Fishy. A fellow who had such a keen eye for bargains as Fisher T. Fish deserved all he got, and a little more, in the opinion of the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars.

Fisher T. Fish crawled into the Form-room, followed by a grinning mob. Billy Bunter rolled in reluctantly, with Peter Todd helping him. Bunter had an idea of hiding in the box-room until the affair blew over. Peter persuaded him to walk to the Form-room—with knuckles grinding into the back of his fat neck. Persuasion of that sort was not to be resisted. Bunter came.

Mr. Quelch swept in and found an attentive Form, gathered in their places to the last man.

"Fishy!" Mr. Quelch's voice was not loud, but deep. "Bunter! Stand forth!"

On a less serious occasion the Remove master would have bidden the delinquents "step out." When he ordered

them to "stand forth" matters were evidently grave.

Bunter and Fishy stood forth. They were not encouraged by the sight of a stout cane tucked under Mr. Quelch's arm.

"Fish! You have stated that you bought the machine, which you subsequently attempted to dispose of to Mr. Stubbs, from Bunter?"

"Yep!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "Five pounds, sir, spot cash."

"Mr. Stubbs has told me that the bicycle was a new machine, costing over twenty guineas. You must have taken unscrupulous advantage of Bunter's ignorance in obtaining it from him for so small a sum," said Mr. Quelch. "I have noted before that you are an unscrupulous boy, Fish. You have attempted to make a profit by dealings with your Form-fellows. You have had a narrow escape of being arrested on suspicion of stealing a bicycle. Fortunately, I have been able to arrange the matter, and the bicycle will now be handed to its rightful owner, on being identified by him." Mr. Quelch paused. "I shall cane you severely, Fish. Now, Bunter!"

"Ow!"

"I require to know how you obtained the bicycle you sold to Fish. It was a stolen machine. Did you steal it?"

"Yow-ow-ow! Oh, crikey!"

"Answer me, Bunter!"

"It—it was a present, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"A Christmas—I mean a birthday present, sir, from my Uncle Jobson—I mean General Uncle—that is—"

Bunter was growing confused.

"Tell me the truth, Bunter! If you cannot explain satisfactorily you will be expelled from Greyfriars for theft."

"Yaroooh! I—I bought it, sir. I thought it belonged to the man. I—I—I gave three pounds for it, sir," groaned Bunter. "I've still got two to pay. Oh, dear!"

"Tell me all the circumstances."

Bunter mumbled out the circumstances. Mr. Quelch's brow cleared a little. He really seemed to have entertained a suspicion that Bunter had been the original bike thief.

"Very well! You have acted stupidly, Bunter. You should not have bought a bicycle from a stranger. You are a crassly stupid boy. Return to Fish at once the money he paid you for the machine."

Fisher T. Fish brightened up. He was booked for a licking, but a licking was a trifle light as air in comparison with the loss of hard cash.

"I—I've spent some of it, sir!" mumbled Bunter.

"Place on this desk what remains."

"Oh, dear!"

Three pounds fifteen shillings were forthcoming.

"Take up that money, Fish."

Fisher T. Fish pounced upon it like a vulture upon carrion.

"There's another twenty-five shillings to come, sir," he gasped.

"You will lose that, Fish."

"Groooh!"

"Bunter, I positively forbid you to hand Fish any further repayment. The loss of that sum, Fish, will be a lesson to you—a lesson needed by a greedy, unscrupulous boy."

Fisher T. Fish groaned. In the whole history of the United States there had happened no calamity to equal this. Fisher T. Fish groaned aloud in anguish of spirit.

"Now!" said Mr. Quelch, slipping the cane down into his hand. "Both of you will bend over a desk."

What followed was painful.



Fed up with Fisher T. Fish's "Uncle Shylock" methods at Greyfriars Harry Wharton & Co. were hugely entertained when the Transatlantic junior came into the House cringing and crawling behind Mr. Quelch as though he had been through a hectic time. (See Chapter 13.)

Bunter had three whacks—which Mr. Quelch considered enough for him, and Bunter considered too much—much too much. Fisher T. Fish had six, well laid on. Fishy fairly wriggled under them, and while they lasted almost forgot the loss of his twenty-five shillings.

Mr. Quelch dismissed the Remove and whisked away, his cane under his arm, frowning portentously. Billy Bunter rolled out with the rest of the juniors. But Fishy did not follow. Fishy leaned over a desk, groaning. He was not groaning over the licking, though it had been a hefty one. He was groaning over the twenty-five shillings—gone from his gaze like twenty-five beautiful dreams. The next time Fishy made up his accounts there was a sum of twenty-five shillings to go down on the debit side. If that was not sufficient cause for a galoot to groan, no galoot ever had cause to groan.

Fisher T. Fish groaned and groaned again; and, like Rachel of ancient times, mourned for that which was lost, and found no comfort.

On the following Wednesday afternoon six juniors walked out of Greyfriars—the Famous Five and Billy Bunter. At the same time, two juniors walked out of Highcliffe—Courtenay and the Caterpillar.

They foregathered on the common, and Billy Bunter fared on alone to the clump of hawthorns, where he had an appointment with Honest George.

Honest George was there.

He appeared from the hawthorn clump, and Billy Bunter stopped. In view of what was about to happen to Mr. Jobson, Bunter did not want to get too near that honest gentleman.

"'Arternoon, sir!" said Mr. Jobson. "Got the two quid, I 'ope?"

Bunter did not answer.

There was no need for him to answer. He had drawn the game, and the hunters were at hand.

From all sides Greyfriars and Highcliffe juniors converged upon the spot at a rapid run, once Honest George was in sight, and they were sure of him.

Mr. Jobson stared round.

A very ugly expression came over his face. He made a stride towards Bunter. "I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter. "Help!"

Without waiting for help Billy Bunter spun round and bolted. He did not look back once to see what was happening to Honest George.

He went unheeded by the other fellows. They were done with Bunter, now that he had drawn the game from its covert.

Seven fellows closed in on Mr. Jobson.

"Look 'ere! What's this game?" demanded Mr. Jobson surlily.

"Good-afternoon, my honest friend!" said the Caterpillar gracefully. "So pleased to meet you again!"

"The pleasure is terrific, my esteemed scoundrel!" grinned the nabob of Bhanipur.

"You'll be no end pleased to hear that I have my bike back, dear man!" said the Caterpillar. "I'm sure you're pleased! Your looks do you an injustice, George. Who's got the fives bat?"

"Here it is!" said Bob Cherry eagerly.

"Would you do me the kindness of bendin' over in a suitable attitude, George?" asked the Caterpillar politely.

"Look 'ere—"

"Cut it short!" said Courtenay.

"You're going to be thrashed for stealing a bicycle, you rascal; and if you raise any objection, you'll be walked off to the police station!"

Honest George regretted that he had turned up to claim the further two pounds. But it was too late for regrets. He eyed the juniors savagely, and made a sudden rush to break through the ring and escape. The next moment he was grasped by many pairs of hands, rolled on the ground, and placed in a favourable attitude for a flogging.

Bob Cherry wielded the fives bat with vigour.

The yells of Honest George awoko almost all the echoes of Courtfield Common.

He wriggled and yelled and roared; but in vain did he wriggle and yell and roar.

Not till Bob's powerful arm was tired did the fives bat cease from troubling and let the wicked be at rest.

"That's a tip, George," said the Caterpillar. "Take the tip, and don't pinch any more bikes! It's a bad habit, George, and you can't break off a bad habit too early. Take the tip, George, and don't do it any more!"

Mr. Jobson's only reply was a dismal groan. The juniors walked away and left him to it. And that painful incident—painful to Honest George—closed the strange, eventful history of Bunter's Bike!

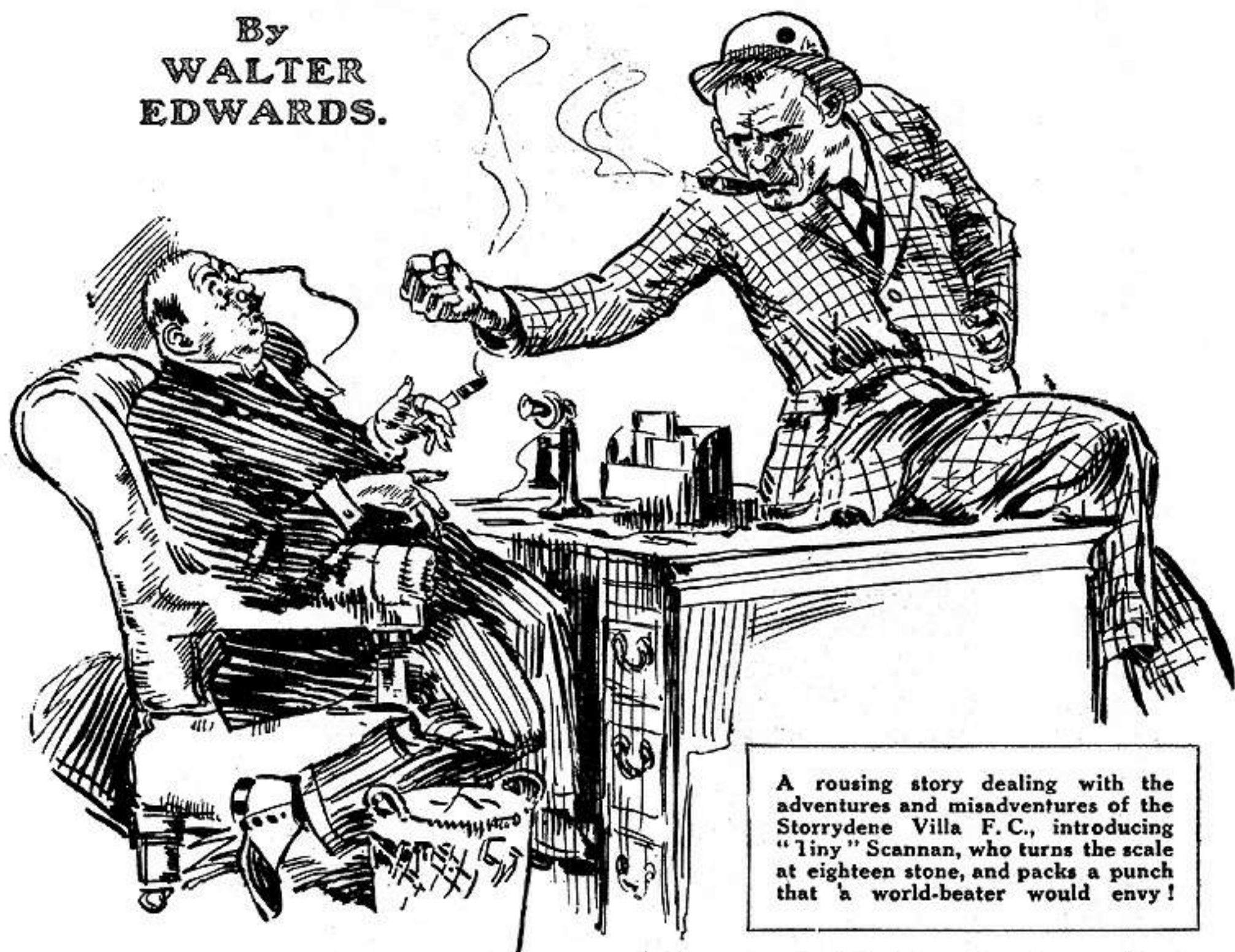
THE END.

(Now look out for next week's rollicking fine story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "FOR THE HONOUR OF GREYFRIARS!" It's a treat no Magnetite can afford to miss.)

A DIFFERENT "TINY"! Knowing Tiny Scannan as they do none of the Storrydene boys is prepared for any show of gratitude from him despite the fact that they have rendered him yeoman service. Yet, amazing as it seems, the Man of Iron, in a burst of gratitude, becomes the Man of Straw!

THE MAN OF IRON!

By
**WALTER
EDWARDS.**



A rousing story dealing with the adventures and misadventures of the Storrydene Villa F.C., introducing "tiny" Scannan, who turns the scale at eighteen stone, and packs a punch that a world-beater would envy!

A Puzzler for Scannan!

THE Man of Iron remained silent for some seconds, his close-set little eyes moving from one fellow to another. Then

"What's up with you?" he demanded, glaring down at Fred Noyle, the inside-left. "Why have you got your arm in a sling?"

"To keep the dust out of my eyes!" answered Noyle, without the vestige of a smile.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fell down and sprained my wrist rather badly," explained Noyle hastily, for he did not like the ugly light that leapt into Scannan's eyes. "I shall be as right as rain in a day or so!"

"And what about you?" demanded the Man of Iron, turning to Coyne. "What the dickens are you hobbling about for?"

"I got a kick on the knee——"

"Ugh!" grunted Scannan, in disgust. "You're like a bunch of simpering schoolgirls! What's up with your face, Sceptre?"

"I had a bit of a scrap——"

"Looks as though you did!" sneered the Man of Iron. "It's a pity some of you don't know how to look after yourselves!" He swung round upon Grace, whose head was swathed in a bandage. "Woodpecker been at your head?" he inquired, with an ugly grin.

"No," answered the full back, in his quiet way; "just an accident, you know!"

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The Man of Iron gazed round at the footballers, a cunning smile curling his thick lips.

"All I can say," he remarked meaningly, "is that it's mighty strange that you should all turn up with something the matter with you! What's the big idea?" he asked. "Do you think you're going to be excused duty, you chicken-hearted lot of malingerers? Chinks and niggers try to get away with that sort of stuff, but it never comes off with Tiny Scannan! Not on your life! You poor invalids will change into your playing rig at once, and if you aren't on the field inside five minutes there's going to be trouble!" His grin vanished as he glared at the tight-lipped players. "Anyone got anything to say to that?"

No one felt inclined to rise to the bait, so Scannan, disappointed, gripped little Battle by the shoulder.

"You ain't got a lot to say this morning," he growled, shaking the diminutive winger and lifting him bodily from the floor. "I——"

"Put me down, please," broke in Battle, his white face twitching with agony.

"I'll put you down all right," grinned Scannan, "but not until it suits me! As I was saying——"

"Please!" begged the little winger, in an appealing whisper.

Then his eyes closed, and he became a dead weight, and on being released he pitched to the floorboards in a huddled heap.

"What's up with the snivelling little worm?" growled the Man of Iron.

"He's shamming, of course, like the rest of you, and if he thinks he can bluff me——"

"Go for the doctor, some one!" ordered Terry Carson, who was on his knees beside Battle.

Hefty Hebble made for the door at once.

"Come back!" shouted the Man of Iron fiercely. "You will take your orders from me, not from——"

"Go and chew your chin!" snapped Hefty, breaking into a trot as he turned into the corridor.

Little Battle was still unconscious when Hefty returned with Bruce McKinnon, the club doctor.

"Was he crooked in Saturday's game against Bosworth?" asked the latter, making a swift examination.

"Course he wasn't!" growled the Man of Iron, a sneer in his throaty voice. "This bunch don't play hard enough to take risks, doc!"

Bruce McKinnon looked up and fixed the big fellow with a cold, inimical eye.

"Man," he said, "if there's one thing I object to it's being called 'Doc,' especially by people I dislike! I'm Dr. McKinnon to you, Scannan!" The snub took the wind out of Tiny's sails, and he was still speechless when McKinnon ran on: "H'm! Hah! So that's it! The poor, brave, silly young idiot!"

"What is it, doctor?" asked Terry Carson anxiously.

"Battle," answered Bruce McKinnon, "has been walking about with a couple of splintered ribs! P'shew! It makes

me go hot and cold when I think of it, for he must have suffered untold agony!"

"You say he's got two splintered ribs!" growled the Man of Iron. "Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure!" snapped McKinnon, testily.

"But how did he splinter 'em?" demanded Scannan. "He was all right at the end of the match, I know; so how—" He shook his bullet head in bewilderment. "It's a regular puzzler!" he declared. Then, looking round at the grave-faced players: "Do you lot know anything about it?" he asked, his gaze coming to rest upon Hefty Hebble.

Hefty shrugged his broad shoulders. "What should we know about it?" he asked evasively.

The Awakening!

TINY SCANNAN was still in a bad temper when he left the Bedwell Park ground later in the morning, and the fact that he came face to face with Uncle George outside the players' gate merely added to his ill-humour. He would have scowled and passed on, but the red-faced old fellow gripped him affectionately by the arm.

"Ah, Scannan, my boy!" cried Uncle George heartily. "I was just coming along to see how the boys are shaping for the last game of the season!"

The Man of Iron emitted a grunt. "Then all I can say is that you must be hard up for a job!" he growled. "They call themselves footballers, yet there's not a man-sized man amongst the whole lot of 'em! I'm used to dealing with he-men, not a bunch of whining ninnies who are afraid to take a hard knock or two!"

"Meaning, me boy?" queried Uncle George, his blue eyes twinkling.

"Meaning," snorted the Man of Iron, "that they're a lot of snivelling malingerers, who ask to go on the sick-list if they get a pain in their little toe! Take this morning, for instance. Most of 'em turned up with something the matter with 'em, and they seemed quite upset when I made 'em turn out for a bit of ball practice! Did you ever hear anything like it?" he asked, under the impression that he had found a sympathetic listener.

Uncle George looked extremely thoughtful as he stroked his middle chin.

"Got something the matter with 'em, had they?" he asked.

"So they said, but—"

"Has Hefty got a broken ear and a swelling under his jaw?" asked Uncle George, his shrewd old eyes fixed upon his companion's battered countenance.

"Yes, I think he has, now you come to mention it," returned the Man of Iron, a puzzled light in his close-set eyes. "But—"

"And what about Craye?" pressed Uncle George. "Has he got his shoulder strapped up?"

"He did say something about it," nodded Scannan, looking more puzzled than ever.

"And Coyne?" queried the old man.

"He's hobbling about with a stick, though I don't suppose there's anything really wrong with him!" Tiny Scannan's eyes narrowed in suspicious fashion as he looked down at Uncle George. "But what's the idea?" he asked.

"I'm coming to that, me lad!" beamed the old fellow. "Did you notice that Grace had his head bandaged up, and that Sceptre's face was cut and bruised?"

"Sure!" nodded the Man of Iron. "And Battle, the cheeky little rat, has got what he's been asking for for a long time—a couple of splintered ribs! Guess they'll keep him quiet for a week or so!"

"You don't know how the little chap got those injuries, I suppose?" asked Uncle George, his tone almost gentle.

"No, I don't!" answered Scannan. "What's more, I don't care! I suppose he was playing the fool!"

"Yes, I suppose he was!" agreed Uncle George. "In fact, I'm sure he was, Scannan! And young Terry Carson was foolish as well!"

"What's Carson got to do with it, anyway?" demanded Scannan, with a frown.

"Nothing much, me boy," answered Uncle George, "except that he and little Battle stood over your body and saved you from being lynched by the Smith Street gang! It was foolish of them, for you're not worth—"

"Say," broke in Tiny Scannan fiercely, "what are you driving at? Are you talking about Saturday evening, when the gang set about me?"

"I am, me boy!" answered Uncle George. "And I'm going to tell you that Hefty, Terry, Battle, and the rest of the lads turned up just as you went down for the count!"

"But what were they doing in Little Smith Street?"

"Looking after you, me boy!"

The Man of Iron pursed his lips and stared fixedly into space for some seconds. Then:

"D'you mean that they followed me from the ground after I'd chewed 'em up and told 'em that I could look after myself? Let me finish!" he said, lifting a protesting hand as Uncle George was about to say something. "So they came along and rescued me, did they, and got a bashing for their trouble?" He gave a bitter laugh. "Why they should trouble to save me—me, mark you—is a mystery, and I tell you straight that I can't understand it! It fair gets me guessing, an' that's a fact!"

"I've no doubt that it does, me boy," said Uncle George breezily. "I won't say that the boys have got any brotherly love for you, but their sense of sportsmanship and fair play wouldn't allow them to sit tight and do nothing, well knowing that there was every chance of the Smith Street gang stringing you up to the nearest lamp-post! Your trouble, Scannan, is that you've been dealing with natives all your life, so you can't appreciate decent white folk when you meet 'em! I've no doubt that you can scare the liver out of Chinks and niggers and heathen of that sort," continued the old man scathingly, "but

INTRODUCTION.

After a sequence of wins the boys of Storrydene Villa F.C. strike a bad patch and lose nine matches right off the reel. Dissatisfied with the state of affairs Sir Aubrey Ailen, a purse-proud baronet, and chairman of the club, engages "Tiny" Scannan to stop the rot which has set in. "Tiny"—a giant of a man—proves beyond doubt, that he's a bullying tyrant of the worst type. Maddened by Scannan's conduct, the rougher element of the Villa's supporters take matters into their own hands with the result that Scannan is waylaid on his way home and knocked unconscious. Scannan's life is in jeopardy when the boys of Storrydene, at great risk to themselves, rush in and put the ruffians to rout. Little knowing who his rescuers were, and bent on "taking it out" of the Villa players, "Tiny" barges into the dressing-room the following Monday morning and demands to know why his orders to turn up for practice at nine o'clock have not been obeyed.

"But you didn't give orders," growls Hefty Hebble, "so we turned up as usual!"
(Now read on.)

even you—big and ugly as you are—couldn't put the breeze up Terry Carson and little Battle!

"You see, your bluster and bullying leaves 'em stone cold, kids though they are! You've tried to rule the boys with a rod of iron, and if ever a fellow asked for mutiny you have; yet no sooner are you in danger than young Terry rouses the others to action and leads 'em against the toughest racecourse thugs in the country! And they run the risk of injury—or worse—to save your skin, Mister Man of Iron!"

A mantle of warm colour overspread Tiny Scannan's broad face; a new expression dawned in his close-set little eyes.

"I didn't understand," he muttered, shaking his close-cropped head—"I didn't understand!" Again he gave that bitter laugh. "They did this for me—me—and I said there wasn't a man-size man amongst the lot of 'em! Say," he exclaimed earnestly, looking straight into the old man's blue eyes, "I guess I ought to be kicked round the town!"

"You've said it!" agreed Uncle George. "Hi! Where are you going, Scannan?" he shouted, as the big fellow turned abruptly and disappeared through the players' gate.

But the Man of Iron made no reply.

The Man of Straw!

TERRY CARSON and the other fellows were on the point of leaving when Tiny Scannan burst into the dressing-room, and instinctively the footballers became tight-lipped and hard-eyed—on the defensive.

"I want to have a word with you fellers," said the Man of Iron, a new note in his throaty voice, "and I promise not to keep you for long!"

The players exchanged questioning glances, for this was a very different Scannan from the bully who had so recently swaggered out of the room with a threat upon his lips.

"Go ahead!" urged Hefty Hebble, with a significant glance at the clock. His damaged ear was throbbing painfully, and the sight of Scannan always put him in a bad temper. "Make it snappy!"

"In the first place," said the big fellow, "I want to tell you that I know all about what happened on Saturday night, and if there's anyone here who'd like to punch my head, they're welcome to do so! And there'll be no kick coming from me!"

He looked round at the startled players, but no one took advantage of his invitation.

"In the second place," he ran on, "I think you ought to know that I'm quitting—clearing out! Reckon that'll be the only decent thing I've done since I joined the Villa!"

Hefty and the other players gazed at him in a kind of wide-eyed stupefaction, for it seemed incredible that this self-effacing person could be Sir Aubrey Ailen's Man of Iron. Tiny Scannan's manner and voice had changed completely, and the general metamorphosis was almost staggering.

"The fellow's almost human!" thought Terry Carson, in amazement. "I'll bet there's a catch in it some where!"

"Before I go any further," continued Scannan, still in that quiet tone, "I want to thank you for saving me from a real rough house on Saturday! I hear that the Smith Street gang wanted to string me up, but I'm hanged if I understand why you went out of your

way to stop 'em! 'Cause I guess I ain't one o' the things that really matter in your life, being a big-fisted, bullying stiff who ought to have been beaten up long ago! That's me, boys—a big-fisted, bullying stiff! But I didn't know it until about ten minutes ago!" he added, with a crooked grin.

Hefty and two or three of the others began to look uncomfortable and embarrassed, for the Man of Iron in penitent mood took them completely by surprise. Besides, deep down in their hearts they found it difficult to believe that Tiny Scannan was in earnest. It was an unkind thought, perhaps, an uncharitable suspicion, yet they had ample reason for being a trifle dubious about the big fellow's meek and mild manner. The change from roaring lion to bleating lamb seemed to be altogether too sudden.

"That's all right, old man!" growled Hefty, not knowing what else to say. "Forget it!"

"But I can't forget it," said Scannan. "Why should you fellers tackle a cut-throat gang?"

"Because you're our skipper, of course!" put in Terry, as though that explained everything. "We always stick together!"

The Man of Iron shook his bullet head in almost comical bewilderment.

"And another thing that gets me stone cold is the fact that you didn't mention the matter this morning!" he said, hot blood flooding his cheeks. "Gee, wouldn't I have crowed if I'd been in your shoes! It seems to me, boys, that I'm a poor bonehead who's got a lot to learn, and I guess the best thing I can do is to go back East and boss niggers! Reckon that's all I'm fit for, somehow!"

"Rot!" growled Hefty Hebble. "It just happens that you and the boys didn't see eye to eye! Look here, Scannan," he said, stepping across to the Man of Iron, "let's shake hands and forget the past!"

Tiny Scannan stared down at the proffered hand in wide-eyed surprise.

"D-do you mean that, Hebble?" he asked, his voice low and husky.

"You bet I do, skipper! Put it there!"

Quick to follow Hefty's lead, Terry Carson stepped forward and gripped Scannan by the hand, and the big fellow's eyes became wistful and moist as he gazed down into the boyish face.

"Guess you're a pukka sahib, youngster," he said, emotion in his deep voice, "and if ever I can do anything for you, you've only got to say the word!"

"How truly touching!" declared a sneering voice. "It looks as though the Man of Iron has become the Man of Straw! I beg of you not to burst into tears, my dear Scannan!"

Standing in the doorway, a mocking smile upon his flabby countenance, was Sir Aubrey Ailen.

The Proposition!

AN ugly, reptilian glitter flashed into Tiny Scannan's close-set eyes as he swung round and glared across at the overdressed little man with the waxed moustache, and once more he looked like the threatening Man of Iron that they knew so well.

"What's biting you, Ailen?" snarled the big fellow, taking two giant strides across the floorboards and towering over the well-fed football magnate.

"Look here, Scannan," blustered Sir Aubrey, jamming his monocle into position, "how many more times must I tell you that you've got to treat me with respect? I'm your employer, and, as your employer, I insist upon getting what is due to me!"

Scannan nodded shortly, and placed his hands upon his hips.

"Sure, you're my employer at the moment," he said, "but perhaps I ought to mention that I'm clearing out before sundown!"

"Y-you're what!" gasped Ailen, in alarm. "Y-you can't possibly do that, my dear fellow, and at such short notice!"

"There's nothing I can't do when I put my mind to it!" grinned the Man of Iron. "It's up to me to leave Storrydene by the evening train! It's the only decent thing I can do!"

"Nonsense—utter nonsense!" snapped Sir Aubrey, emitting explosive noises as he inflated his flabby cheeks. "You've got the club to think of, Scannan!"

"I know I have," nodded the Man of Iron; "that's why I'm going!"

"You're mad—raving mad!" cried Ailen.

"Wrong again!" grinned Tiny Scannan. "As a matter of fact, I've only just become sane!"

Sir Aubrey shook his sleek head in bewilderment as he searched the big fellow's face for signs of insanity.

"I'm hanged if I know what's come over you, my dear fellow," he confessed, "but I tell you quite frankly that you won't be allowed to leave Storrydene to-night! I've got something of the greatest importance to say to you," he ran on hastily, as he saw the ugly glitter creep into Scannan's eyes, "so I shall be much obliged if you will follow me into my private room!"

Favouring the silent players with his usual pompous stare, Sir Aubrey swung round upon his heel and strutted out of the dressing-room; and Scannan, with a wink at the players, thrust his hands into his pockets and followed in the great man's wake.

"Look here, Tiny," said Ailen, as they neared his office, "what's all this rot about your clearing out?"

"Aw, I don't see that it matters," fenced Scannan. "We've practically finished the season, ain't we?"

"I know all about that," snapped Sir Aubrey, opening the door and passing into his comfortably-furnished office, "but there's no reason why you should leave Storrydene, is there?"

"I ain't so sure about that, Ailen," said the Man of Iron thoughtfully. "Anyway, I tell you that I'm clean through, so far as the Villa's concerned."

Sir Aubrey lifted an interrogative eyebrow.

"You have your reason, I suppose?" he asked.

"Sure!" nodded the Man of Iron. "Reason that you wouldn't understand."

"I don't understand your attitude at all, my dear fellow," said Ailen, "but I don't know that that matters in the least. The point is, are you ready to listen to a money-making proposition that I want to put to you?"

Tiny Scannan studied the unhealthy-looking face for some seconds. Then:

"Sure!" he said, perching himself upon the edge of the great man's desk. "But look here, Ailen," he added warningly, "you're dealing with the Man of Iron this journey, not the Man of Straw!"

Sir Aubrey nodded and went straight to the point.

"Can you fight, Tiny?" he asked. "I once killed a man."

The dark eyes of the football magnate lit up as he jammed his gold-rimmed monocle into position.

"You don't say so, my dear fellow—" he began.

And the words brought a grunt from the big-limbed giant on the other side of the desk.

"What d'you mean?" demanded the Man of Iron. "Don't I talk plain, or don't you believe me? I said I once killed a man."

"With a revolver, or—" "No," grunted Tiny Scannan, "with that!"

And he held a mighty fist within an inch of Sir Aubrey's flat nose.

"Dear me!" said the baronet. "How very interesting! And the other man—the man you killed—"

"He didn't find it most interesting, old man," grunted Scannan, a mirthless grin flitting across his strange collection of features.

"So you killed a man?" said the baronet. The words were a statement rather than a question. "How did it happen, my dear fellow?"

Tiny Scannan did not answer at once, and for twenty seconds he studied the fleshy face of the man seated on the opposite side of the desk. And he was satisfied with what he saw, apparently, for a slow grin twisted his lips.

"I reckon it's safe enough to tell you," he said, his words coming slowly.

"Of course it is, my dear fellow!" said Sir Aubrey. "I'm a man of honour, and I wouldn't breathe a word to—"

"That's right!" agreed Scannan. "You wouldn't. You see, I could snap your neck as I would a carrot. No, I don't think you'll breathe a word!" he chuckled, enjoying the other man's discomfort. "But to get back to the killing business. It happened out at South Africa. I suspected a big, tawny-bearded Swede of being mixed up in illicit diamond buying business. I happened to know that he'd got stones on him. I met him in the bar of an hotel and told him that he was asking for trouble, and the skunk felt for a gun. That was all. He just felt for it! And then I hit him—once! And he died." Tiny Scannan nodded and thrust out his jaw. "I left Kimberley that night," he finished.

"And they didn't catch you?"

"Not a bit of it!"

"Then you're still 'wanted' by the Cape police?"

Tiny shrugged his massive shoulders.

"I reckon so," he said. "But I don't know why they should make such a blamed fuss about a dirty, thieving Swede!"

The baronet smoked in silence for some seconds, his dark eyes half closed as they peered through the thick haze of cigar smoke.

"What's your weight, Tiny?" he asked abruptly.

"Just over eighteen stone," replied Scannan. "But what's the idea? Why did you ask me if I can fight?"

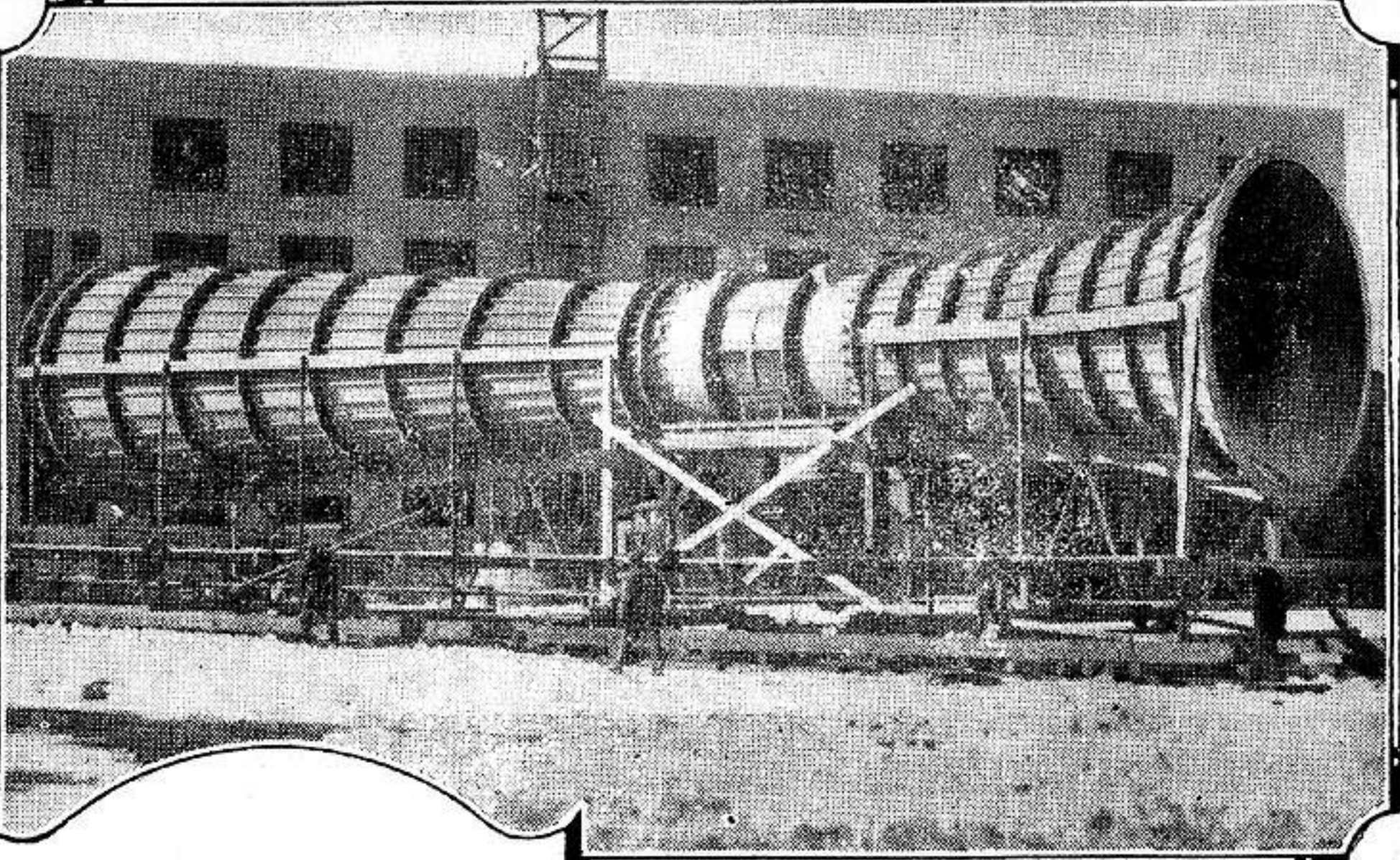
Ailen's pale features creased into a smile.

"I was thinking—" he began. And a deep chuckle broke from the other man.

"That's risky. You might break something," grinned the footballer.

And the familiar tone brought a hot flush to the baronet's smooth cheeks.

(Continued on page 28.)



PUTTING THE BREEZE UP 'EM!

The queer-looking gadget shown above is a wind tunnel, the latest apparatus in use for testing model aeroplanes as to their air-worthiness, wind resistance and stability. A propeller furnishes the "breeze" which can be regulated to attain a speed of ninety miles an hour. If anyone should be unwise enough to stand with his hat on in front of the tunnel mouth when the machinery is in operation "hats off" becomes the order of the day.

TAKING A CHANCE!

The life of a cameraman is fraught with great risk on occasions that seldom come to the knowledge of the general public. Our picture below shows a number of camera men recording the "take off" of an amphibian plane on a test flight. If anything went wrong with the engine of the new plane these intrepid cameramen wouldn't stand much chance of getting away with their skins intact. The photographer's life is not exactly a bed of roses after all—not just a matter of turning a handle as some people imagine!





(Continued
from page 26.)

Under-bred, pompous, and an incurable snob, he was not used to impertinence from the "lower orders."

"Really, my dear Scannan," he protested, "you seem to forget—"

"Yes, I seem to forget that I am a common professional footballer, and that you are the bloated millionaire who made a fortune out of 'Ratto, the Rodents' Death Knell!'" put in Tiny, greatly amused. "I've heard all that before. You're not talking to one of your players now, you know, for I've resigned. We're equals for the time being, for you think I can be useful to you. Isn't that so? Didn't you call me in here because you want to get something out of me? Come on, out with it!"

The baronet waved the remark aside. "I don't want anything out of you, my dear fellow," protested Ailen, "but I certainly have a proposition to put to you. But it's business—strictly business!"

Tiny Scannan nodded his square head. "Go on," he said, reaching for one of Sir Aubrey's choice cigars and proceeding to light up.

This was a liberty that displeased Ailen, and he coughed in an effort to stifle his annoyance.

"H'm! Ha!" he began, fidgeting the broad ribbon of his monocle. "It's like this, my dear Scannan. As you may have heard, I am not unknown in the boxing world, having staged a number of fights in the Olympus Hall, in Regent Street. Well, of late I have been travelling up and down the country in search of a promising heavy-weight, and I find that big men are as scarce as snakes in Iceland!"

"Who the blazes would go to Iceland looking for snakes?" demanded Tiny Scannan. "Still, what has all this got to do with me?"

"I'm coming to that in a minute," answered the baronet. "I searched Manchester, Cardiff, Liverpool, Plymouth, and a score of other towns for a likely lad, yet not once did I come across a combination of brains and brawn. I saw plenty of big, husky fellows, but there was not one of them who could have lived through one round with Pal Jordan!"

Tiny Scannan removed his big cigar. "Pal Jordan," he asked, "the American?"

Ailen nodded. "Yes. They call him the Pittsburgh Dentist, but he's never pulled a tooth in his life!"

"No, he hasn't got time to pull 'em!" grinned Tiny Scannan. "He's a bit of a man-eater, from what I hear about him!"

"You can't believe all the American papers say about a fighter," declared Sir Aubrey. "I've had private reports from the States, and I'm told that Pal Jordan is no more than a second-rater. A good man would eat Jordan, and that's where you come in!"

"Me?" said Scannan, his cigar dropping from his lips and rolling across the carpet.

"Yes," nodded Sir Aubrey easily, "you! Didn't you once kill a man?"

"Sure!" agreed Tiny.

"Then why shouldn't you try that sudden-death punch upon Jordan?" asked the baronet. "He's only human, and you've got a natural advantage in height, reach, weight—and brains! What is more, my dear fellow, there is a pile of money waiting for the man who can beat Pal."

Scannan looked thoughtful as he pursed his thin lips.

"That sounds all right," he said at length; "but is it likely that a well-known scrapper would agree to meet a nobody, a fellow the public has never even heard of? I've never fought in a ring in my life, yet I've done more fighting than most men of my age, including the pros."

(Do you think "Tiny" Scannan stands a chance of getting to grips with the Pittsburgh Dentist, boys? Next week's instalment will tell you.)

A BARBEROUS AFFAIR!

(Continued from page 15.)

satisfied with his handiwork, and he kept snipping off a bit here and a bit there, till Dr. Birchmell looked like leaving the saloon in a totally beard-less state.

Snip-snap! Snip-snap! went the sissors.

By the time Bright had finished the Head had the merest wisp of a beard—just a goatee, shorter than Monsuro Froggays.

"Have you finished, Bright?" asked the Head impatiently.

"Yessir! I—ahem!—found it necessary to take off a trifle more than an inch, sir—"

"Only a trifle!" gasped Jack Jolly.

Dr. Birchmell rose to his feet and groped higher and higher, till at last, with a shock of horror, he discovered the remnants of his magnificent beard—the short, stubbly growth which Bright's sissors had been mercifully spared.

Then the Head glanced down at the floor; and there, strewn at his feet, was the beard of which he had been so proud.

He gave Bright one deadly look.

"You—you unspeakable Vandal!" he hissed. "You shall pay dearly for this!"

And Bright did. He was birched black and blue by the furious Head, who ordered the St. Sam's Toilet Saloon to be closed down forthwith.

As if this were not enough, Dr. Birchmell coolly helped himself to the day's takings, as some slight compensation for the damage to his personal appearance. The munny was spent on a patent beard-grower, and for some weeks afterwards the Head never showed himself in public unless he could help it. Gradually, under the magic influence of the beard-grower, his beard sprouted again; but Dr. Birchmell is never likely to forgive Billy Bright for the part he played in that "barberous" affair!

THE END.

(There's another feast of fun in: "BRIGHT'S BRAVE-WAVE!" next week's topping tale of St. Sam's. Don't miss it, chums, whatever you do!)



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