

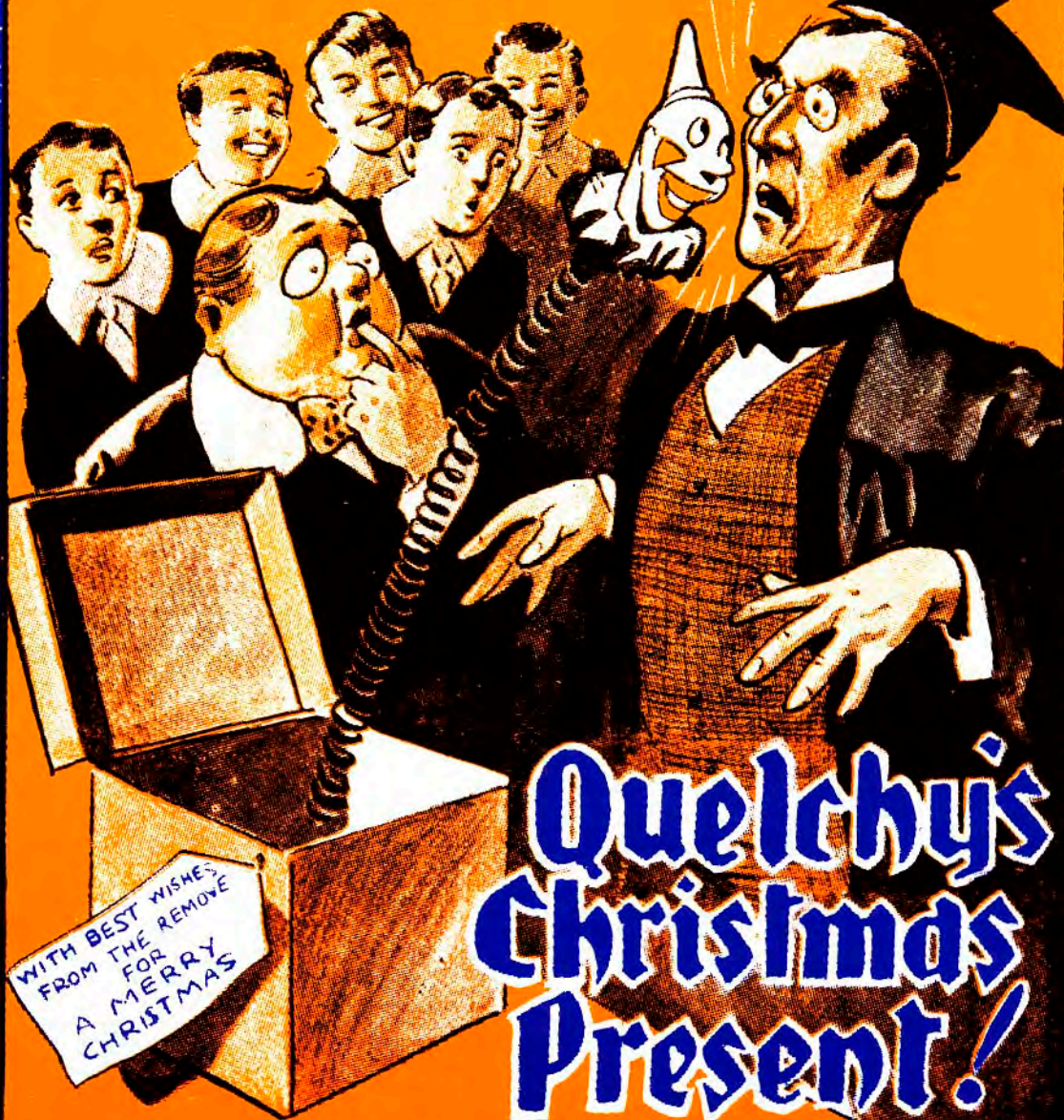
Grand Enlarged Xmas Number!

# The MAGNET

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No. 1,139. Vol. XXXVI. Week Ending December 14th, 1929.

EVERY SATURDAY.



POCKET WALLETS and PENKNIVES OFFERED TO READERS!

# Come Into the Office Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: *The Editor, the "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London E.C.4.*

NOTE.—All jokes and Limericks should be sent to c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

I FEEL very much like starting off this chat with: "Here we are again!" as the clowns in the Christmas pantomimes say! For here we are again at our special Christmas issue—and when you've glanced through it, I'm sure you'll agree that it really is a bumper Christmas issue, and just the kind of number which you will enjoy reading while you are sitting over the fire, with the wind howling outside, and the snow—I sincerely hope we'll get plenty of snow this Christmas—whirling around the countryside and making the hills just right for tobogganing or sledging in the morning!

Christmas without snow and ice is like strawberry jam without strawberries! So here's to it, chums, and here is my wish to each and every one of you this Yuletide:

**A Very Merry Christmas and a Prosperous and Happy New Year!**

It's an old wish—but it's a genuine one, chums, and I don't think I can say anything better than that!

What's more, I'm not the only one who wants to wish you all the best this week, for I have some good wishes and kind regards to pass on to you. Here's the first—and it comes from Frank Richards, who will certainly add to the merriment of your Christmas with his first-rate yarns of the chums of Greyfriars.

Frank writes:

"May I take this opportunity of wishing all my readers the oldest and truest of wishes?

May their Christmas be all they wish it to be! May they have heaps of good things, and every enjoyment that it is possible to have. And in the New Year—well, I'll try to do my bit to see that they don't lack yarns that I hope they will enjoy!"

Frank's hopes will be realised. We—that means you and I—have been acquainted with Frank Richards long enough to know that he won't let us down! His best is good enough for us—and he has never yet given us anything that wasn't his best!

Let me take another dip into my post-bag. This time it is John Brearley who wants to extend to you what our American cousins call "the glad hand." Here is his letter:

"I'm a newcomer to you MAGNET fellows, but I hope we're going to be the best of pals. The Editor tells me you like my yarn—well, that's the best thing an author could hear! I want to wish you all the best of good things, and to hope that the friendships I am making now will be ones that will last a lifetime. The best of luck to you all!"

And,  
**SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF YOU FELLOWS,**

I can assure John that we heartily  
**THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,139.**

reciprocate his good wishes as much as we appreciate his rattling line serial. It's Harry Wharton's turn now. Listen in to him:

"Chums! I don't know you 'all, of course, but I think you know me and the rest of us at Greyfriars. I am not only speaking for myself, but for the whole bunch of us—including Coker and William George! May

you have as good a time this Christmas as we hope to have. Bunter asks me to add a special message from him. He says he hopes that all your festive boards will be groaning under the weight of all sorts of good things.

Next, please?

**DICKY NUGENT—FORWARD!**

Here is his "effusion":

"Deer readers and gentlemen!—With my hand on my hart I wish to express my hopes that you'll all have plenty of tuck this Christmas. I wish I could stand you all a jolly good blow-out, but, unfortunately funds are low as it leaves me at

boys' periodicals. We've got four extra pages this week, and you'll notice that I have commenced a new feature dealing in verse with prominent Greyfriars characters. I think you'll like this new feature, and you'll also like the other things which I have got up my sleeve for you. Make no mistake about it, chums, the MAGNET has been the finest boys' paper on the market ever since it appeared—and it's going to be even finer in the future!

I haven't any room this week for any of "Mr. X's Explanations," but you won't miss those, because you'll find an interesting article on tricks elsewhere in this issue. I've got space for one reply however and here it is:

**WHAT IS A "PRAIRIE OYSTER"?**

Tom Hogg, of Whitstable, wants to know. Whitstable is famous for its oysters, but Tom says it doesn't provide the "prairie" variety. Well, here's the yarn about this particular form of nourishment:

Many years ago, three men were on the prairie, hundreds of miles from the seacoast, and one of them fell very ill and, in his delirium asked for oysters. His partners knew that if they could supply oysters, there was a good chance of him getting better, but the question was how to provide them in the middle of the prairie! Then one had a brain-wave!

He procured some prairie hen's eggs and put the yolks into a glass, sprinkled them with salt and pepper, and added a little vinegar. Those he gave to the sick man, who accepted them as oysters and immediately began to get better. Since then "prairie oysters" have been well-known as a restorative.

Time for a joke? Yes. Well, here's one for which Guy Embleton, of 41, Nutbrown Road, Dagenham, Essex, has been awarded one of this week's useful pocket knives:

Private Seroggins was getting into hot water on parade because of his untidy appearance.

"And look at your face, man!" snapped the sergeant. "You haven't even shaved!"

"I have, sir," answered Seroggins. "I shaved this morning."

"Nonsense!" growled the sergeant. "You've a growth of about three days."

"Well, sir," answered the private, "I lathered myself, but as there were six of us using the same mirror it's quite likely I shaved another man's face!"

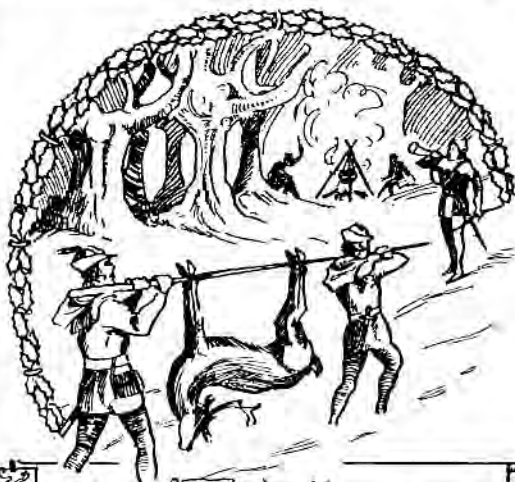
Naturally you can't all be winners—but while you are drawing up your list of New Year resolutions, it wouldn't be a bad idea to resolve to get one of these prizes. They are worth having; and you all know the old saying: "If at first you don't succeed—"

Harry Pannett, of 3, Edmund Street, Droylsden, Manchester, wins a useful prize, too—a leather pocket wallet, for the following clever Greyfriars limerick:

**There's a master, Paul Pontifex Prout,  
Who is very obese, there's no doubt.  
His ample proportions  
Write and twist in contortions  
With spells of rheumatics and gout.**

Sorry, boys, I haven't any room this week to deal with all the queries I have received, but will do my best to answer them next week.

**YOUR EDITOR.**



**The Editor  
sends  
Christmas  
Greetings  
TO ALL HIS READERS**

present. So here's hoping that you'll all have as much pocket money as I hoap to wangle out of the pater this Christmas."

I reckon those are as many greetings as I need to pass on to you, but I would just like to add that all our authors and artists and the whole of my staff, too, wish to associate themselves with the above, and to thank all readers at home and abroad for their loyal support during 1929, and to express the hope that during the coming year the MAGNET will go on from triumph to triumph, and that you chaps will keep the jolly old flag flying!

**A** GLANCE through the pages of this issue will show you that we intend to

**START THE NEW YEAR WELL**  
and give you the best possible value of all

HERE'S A CHRISTMAS "STORY CRACKER" WITH A SNAPPY BIG BANG!

# QUELCHY'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT!



A Humorous, Fine Long Complete Christmas Story, featuring Harry Wharton & Co., the Cheery Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Looking for a Pal!

"BUNTER looks bucked!" remarked Bob Cherry. Harry Wharton & Co. smiled.

The Famous Five, of the Greyfriars Remove, were in the quad, in break that morning, when Billy Bunter rolled out of the House.

There was an expansive grin on Bunter's fat face.

The grin extended almost from ear to ear; and behind his big round spectacles his little round eyes twinkled.

Undoubtedly Bunter looked bucked— uncommonly bucked.

Something out of the usual had happened to cause that happy satisfaction to dawn in the fat visage of the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter blinked round him, spotted the Famous Five, and rolled across to them.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "What's the jolly old news? Has your postal-order come at last?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Somebody asked you for Christmas?" asked Frank Nugent, with a chuckle.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, Nugent! A dozen fellows at least have asked me for Christmas; my only difficulty is that I hardly know how to make a selection from such a crowd of invitations."

Whereat the Famous Five smiled again. For some time past quite a number of Remove fellows had been carefully leaving themselves out of Billy Bunter's arrangements for the Christmas vacation.

"It's not that," said Bunter. "The fact is I'm in luck!"

"The luckfulness must be terrific, to judge by the griffulness on your preposterous countenance!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"There's maths this afternoon, with Lascelles; French with Mossoo; and beastly English literature with Quelchy!" grinned Bunter. "Well, I'm cutting the whole lot."

"Quelchy let you off classes?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And I'm looking for a pal," said Bunter.

"A pal?"

"Yes, I've got leave—and leave to take a friend."

"Oh!"

The Famous Five regarded William George Bunter with renewed interest. Had Bunter started discussing the Christmas holidays, and his arrangements for the same, probably the chums of the Remove would have stood not upon the order of their going, but gone at once. But this was a much more interesting matter. A fellow who had

**They all thought Quelchy's present was a Christmas pudding: And so it was until some practical joker changed it for a . . . ?**

leave from classes, with permission to take a friend, was—as it were—a fellow to be encouraged.

There were studious fellows in the Greyfriars Remove—fellows who realised that they were at school to learn things. But there were few who were really keen on mathematics with Lascelles, French with Mossoo, and even English literature with Quelchy. Few—very few of the Remove would have refused an opportunity of giving a clean miss to maths, French, and literature for the day.

"But how?" asked Wharton.

"My Uncle George is ill," explained Bunter, beaming.

"Eh?"

"And I'm going to see him. Bit of luck, what?"

"For you or Uncle George?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

The Famous Five chuckled. Evidently Billy Bunter was thinking more of his leave from classes than of the malady of his unfortunate Uncle George. From Bunter's point of view apparently, Uncle George's illness was a sheer stroke of good fortune.

"Couldn't have happened better," went on Bunter cheerily. "It's going to be beastly in class this afternoon—putrid, in fact. I get out of the lot. Ripping, what?"

"Grattars!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The gratterfulness is terrific!"

"But what's the matter with your uncle?" asked Nugent.

"Eh? I don't know—he's ill—got something or other," said Bunter vaguely. Evidently Bunter was not about what was the matter with his avuncular relative.

"He's staying at Folkestone now for his health, and I'm going over to see him. I get the whole afternoon. The pater fixed it up with Quelchy. I've got leave to go—and take a friend. Quelchy's just told me. Now I'm looking for a pal. I can take any chap I like."

The Famous Five exchanged smiling glances.

Billy Bunter, as a rule, was not a sought-after fellow in the Remove. But there was likely to be a run on Bunter as soon as this news got out.

"Now, I've always been pally with you fellows," went on Bunter, blinking at the Famous Five.

"Have you?" murmured Johnny Bull.

But nobody denied the soft impeachment. A trip to Folkestone, instead of maths, French, and literature, was attractive—even in the company of William George Bunter. On this occasion most Remove fellows would have been willing to be claimed as pals by

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Billy Bunter—positively for one occasion only, so to speak.

"I thought of you, Harry, old chap," said Bunter affectionately.

"Good man!" said Wharton.

"You'd like to come?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, one good turn deserves another," said Bunter generously, "and as I'm coming home with you for the Christmas holidays—"

"Eh?"

"Eh?" asked Bunter. "I said, 'as I'm coming home with you for the Christmas holidays—'"

"But you're not!" objected Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"N.O.T.—not!" added the captain of the Remove, in order that there should be no misapprehension on the subject.

"You can ring off, Wharton—I'm not taking you to Folkestone with me this afternoon," said Bunter coldly. "You needn't try to push in—I'm simply not taking you. As a matter of fact, my uncle's staying at a rather high-class place on the Leas, and I shall have to be rather particular whom I take. On second thoughts, you would hardly do."

"Pathead!"

"That's enough! You're crossed off the list," said Bunter decidedly. "Franky's about the most decent of this lot, and I think I'll take him. As I'm coming with you for Christmas, Nugent—"

Nugent chuckled.

"But you're not!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can go and eat coke, Nugent! The lot of you can go and eat coke!" said Bunter, with a disdainful blink at the grinning five. "I've got plenty of fellows in the Remove—plenty of fellows who'll jump at a chance like this. You lot can swot at maths, and French, and literature, this afternoon, and be blown to you."

And with that, and a sniff, William George Bunter rolled away, leaving the Famous Five chuckling.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Puzzle—Find the Pal!

"TODDY, old fellow!"

"Stony!" said Peter Todd laconically.

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Nothing to lend!" said Peter Todd, shaking his head.

"I don't want to borrow anything of you, you silly ass!" hooted Bunter.

"You don't!" ejaculated Toddy.

"No, you chump!"

"Then why did you call me old fellow?" asked Toddy.

"Look here, don't be a silly ass!" said Bunter peevishly. "I've had a wonderful stroke of luck, Toddy! My Uncle George is ill at Folkestone."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I've got leave to go and see him this afternoon, and take a friend with me. I thought of you at once; came to look for you to ask you the very first, old chap!" said Bunter affectionately. "You being in my study, you know, and my best pal, I thought of you first thing."

Peter Todd regarded Bunter with surprise. He could have understood Bunter's effusive friendship if Bunter had wanted to borrow something. But if Bunter did not want to borrow anything, why the effusive friendship? That was rather a mystery.

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"Your uncle's ill, is he?" asked Toddy.

"Yes—laid up."

"And he wants to see you?" asked Toddy, more and more surprised. "Has he consulted his medical man about it?"

"Eh?"

"I mean, isn't it likely to make him worse?" asked Toddy.

"Look here," roared Bunter, "do you want to come, or don't you? You get out of maths and French and English literature if you come."

"My dear man, I'll come with both feet!" said Peter. "A trip to Folkestone beats classes hollow—even with a Bunter along, and another Bunter at the end."

"Well, the pater's fixed it up with Quelch," said Bunter. "Uncle George is anxious to see me, you know. You can understand that."

"Blessed if I can!" said Toddy.

"Of course, he's frightfully fond of me," said Bunter. "He's going abroad for the winter, and the pater wants me to see him before he goes. Nobody knows where Uncle George is going to leave his money; and the pater doesn't want him to forget his nephew. I—I mean—what I mean is that Uncle George being ill, it will be a comfort to him to see me, and that's why the pater thought of it. See?"

"I see," assented Peter. "I see the whole thing, in fact."

"We shall get a jolly good spread at Folkestone," went on Bunter. "Uncle George has pots of money, and he's sure to do us well. He may be a little surprised at first; but, of course, it will be a pleasant surprise."

"Surprised?" repeated Toddy. "Doesn't your uncle know you're coming?"

Bunter coughed.

"Well, you see, Uncle George is a bit grumpy; and if the pater had put it to him he might have kicked," he explained. "The idea is that his fond nephew hears that he's ill and putting in a few days at Folkestone before he goes abroad, and rushes over to see him. See? You have to be a bit tactful with an uncle who's got money."

"I see!" chuckled Peter.

"The pater thinks it may turn out well," said Bunter. "Anyhow, it will keep me in Uncle George's mind. They have lots of accidents on French railways; and if Uncle George got smashed up in an accident, it would be awful if—"

"It would!" assented Peter.

"I mean if he hadn't made his will in the proper way, you know."

"Oh!" gasped Peter.

"So I'm going to give him this pleasant surprise," said Bunter. "It's bound to please him. The pater thinks so and I agree with him. The pater's fixed it up with Quelch. But there's one thing he's overlooked."

"Ah!" said Peter. He was beginning to see light.

"He never mentioned anything about the railway fare," said Bunter. "It was a bit thoughtless of him."

"Or a bit thoughtful!" remarked Peter blandly.

"It's rather a steep fare first-class from here to Folkestone," said Bunter. "My idea is that if I take a pal on this topping trip, he can lend me the fare. One good turn deserves another, you know."

"I know!" agreed Peter.

"That's why I thought of you, old chap—"

"Because you wanted me to pay the fare?"

"Nunno! Because you're my dear old pal," said Bunter. "I say, I'm getting a lift as far as Courtfield Station in a car—the Head's car. Quelch's going to Courtfield this afternoon, after lunch, and he's using the Head's car—he often does, you know. So he said he would give me a lift to the station. Rather decent of Quelch, what? Well, you'll get the lift along with me if you come, Peter."

"I'll come in a jiffy—"

"Good!"

"If they'll give us a free pass on the railway—"

"Eh?"

"My financial resources," said Peter solemnly, "are limited, owing to a temporary tightness in the money market. Can we get to Folkestone for fourpence-halfpenny, the two of us?"

"Of course not, you silly ass!"

"Then I'm afraid it's no go," said Toddy regretfully. "It was rather an oversight on your pater's part, Bunt, to forget to mention the fare. It will prevent you from taking your best pal with you in this affectionate visit to a loving uncle. Hard on you, and hard on him—but such is life!" added Peter, with a sad shake of the head.

Billy Bunter gave an angry sniff.

"You silly ass! Go and eat coke!" he snapped.

"Here, Smithy!" shouted Peter Todd, as the Bounder of Greyfriars came in sight on the path under the elms, sauntering with Tom Redwing. "Here, old bean, here's a chance for you!"

"Eh, what?" asked Vernon-Smith, coming up.

"Bunter's looking for a pal—"

"He will have to look a little farther," grunted the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"You don't catch on," said Peter. "Bunter's had a stroke of luck; his uncle's ill—"

"What?" ejaculated Redwing.

"These occurrences are regarded as strokes of luck in the Bunter family," explained Peter. "You see, it gets Bunter off classes, as he's going to see his uncle and cheer him up with a glimpse of his affectionate and fascinating countenance. His pater has forgotten to send the railway fare—but has remembered to stipulate that Bunter may take a pal with him. Verb sap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was Bunter's best pal a few minutes ago," continued Peter. "But since he has learned that I have only fourpence-halfpenny we are scarcely on nodding terms. Chance for you, Smithy, as you're rolling in filthy lucre. You get a lift in the Head's car to the station, a happy journey in Bunter's company, a meeting with another Bunter at the end, and you cut maths this afternoon."

"I say, Smithy, old chap, I'd be glad if you'd come," said Bunter, blinking at the Bounder. "The fact is I was looking for you to ask you first."

The Bounder grinned.

"Thanks—I prefer maths!" he answered.

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled away, still in search of a pal.

During the remainder of morning break Bunter was rather busy. All the Remove heard of what was on for the afternoon, and there was no doubt that Billy Bunter was "persona grata" to an unusual extent in his Form.

Fellows who would have walked half a mile to avoid half an hour of Bunter's



company now realised that Bunter was not, after all, such a bad fellow—when he had leave to take a friend away with him for three whole lessons.

But there was, so to speak, a fly in the ointment.

Friends almost rained on Bunter; but every fellow, when he learned of that unaccountable oversight of Mr. Bunter's in forgetting to provide the railway fare, moderated his transports at once.

When the Remove went back to their Form-room for third school Billy Bunter had not yet found the pal he wanted.

Fellows who felt that they could have stood Bunter for the sake of an extra holiday did not feel that they could stand two first-class return tickets. That was too much of a good thing.

It looked as if that afternoon's leave was going begging—indeed, it looked as if William George Bunter himself might

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

No Lift!

"**D**EAR old chap—" "Eh?" "Do come, Harry, dear old fellow."

Harry Wharton laughed. When the Remove came out after dinner that day the Owl of Greyfriars hooked on to the captain of the Form at once.

His affectionate mode of address, and the anxious blink that he bestowed on the captain of the Remove, showed that Bunter was in sore straits for a pal.

No pal, in fact, was of much use to Bunter, unless he was provided with the sinews of war.

That great chance of cutting classes for the afternoon had

really, Mr. Bunter ought to have made some arrangement about the railway fare. That was left to William George himself, and W. G. was in his usual state of impecuniosity. Thoughtfully, Mr. Bunter had stipulated that William should be allowed to take a friend with him. No doubt he supposed that among William's many friends there existed one who would be able and willing to shell out. If so, Bunter had not found him yet.

That was why he hooked on to the

"How awful it would be, Todd, if my uncle got smashed up in an accident before making his will in the proper way!" said Bunter.



not be able to take advantage of it, and that his uncle at Folkestone might be deprived of the pleasure—or otherwise—of that happy surprise visit from William George.

The expansive grin had faded from Bunter's fat face. The Owl of the Remove no longer looked so wonderfully bucked. He looked worried, and in third school he gave even less attention than usual to Mr. Quelch and the valuable instruction imparted by that gentleman.

But Mr. Quelch was very easy with Bunter in that class. He attributed Bunter's troubled looks to concern for his ill uncle—which showed that even a "downy bird" like Quelch was not quite a thought-reader. Bunter, all unconsciously, rose in his Form master's estimation that morning.

been fairly hawked up and down the Lower Fourth, and had found no takers.

Two first-class return tickets, Courtfield to Folkestone, cost money, more money than most of the fellows were disposed to expend on a trip in Billy Bunter's fascinating company.

Fellows who would have been prepared to stand their own fare, jibbed at standing Bunter's, too. Railway fares were high, and funds, in most cases, were low.

No doubt it was quite a bright idea of Mr. Bunter's to send his son to visit Uncle George while that ill gentleman was at Folkestone, and keep the avuncular relative in mind of his nephew, especially with a view to the proper making of wills and possible accidents on French railways. But,

captain of the Remove so affectionately. Wharton was in possession of the necessary cash. True, he was a beast. Bunter had to admit that. But, then, all the fellows were beasts, except Bunter.

"You see," explained Bunter, "you're the fellow I want. Immediately Quelch told me I had leave I thought of you. I thought at once how you'd enjoy it, old chap. Lovely trip, beautiful sea air, splendid feed when we get to my uncle's. Fine, you know. You'll come?"

Wharton hesitated.

He was quite willing to cut classes, willing to forego the joys of maths, French, and English literature. But he—

"As for the Christmas holidays," said

Bunter, with dignity, "I'm sorry I shan't be able to come to Wharton Lodge. I'm going home with Mauly. Sorry I shan't be able to see you over the hols, old chap, and all that, but I shall have a better time at Mauleverer Towers. And, after all, a fellow's bound to think of himself sometimes. Never mind that. Look here, will you come to Folkestone this afternoon? About the railway fares. I'll settle up out of my very next postcard-order."

Wharton chuckled.  
"Blest if I see anything to cackle at! I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow—"

"Oh, I'll come!" said Harry good-naturedly.

"Good!" said Bunter in great relief. At two o'clock, when the Head's car came round for Mr. Quelch, Billy Bunter was waiting on the House steps. Harry Wharton came out and joined him. Barnes, the chauffeur, stood by the car, waiting for the Remove master to emerge.

Bunter blinked round into the House. Mr. Quelch was not yet in sight.

"I say, we don't want to lose the train," said Bunter anxiously. "We

don't get much time at Folkestone, anyhow. I really think Quelch might buck up."

"He knows the time of your train," said Harry. "It will be all right. It was jolly decent of Quelch to offer you a lift."

"That's all very well, but he oughtn't to keep a chap waiting!" grumbled Bunter. "Quelch's rather a beast."

Wharton coloured uncomfortably.

Bunter was expressing his opinion of Quelch, quite regardless of the fact that the chauffeur was within hearing.

"Do shut up, old bean!" murmured Wharton.

Sniff! from Bunter.

"What does it matter if a blinking chauffeur hears me?" he answered.

Barnes, who was a well-trained young man, did not move a muscle as he heard himself described as a blinking chauffeur. But Wharton felt extremely uncomfortable.

"If you don't shut up—" he breathed.

"Rats!" said Bunter. "I'll say what I jolly well choose, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, Wharton! I'm taking you on this trip, and you can't come the Form captain over

me, I can tell you. Shut up yourself!"

"I'll jolly well—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter. "Look here, Barnes!"

"Sir," said Barnes.

"How long will it take you to get to Courtfield Station in the car?"

"That depends on the speed, sir," said Barnes gravely.

"Eh? I know that, you ass!"

"And the speed depends on Mr. Quelch, sir, who will give me my instructions."

"I don't want any cheek from you, Barnes," said Bunter, frowning.

"Oh, sir!"

"You should be respectful when you are speaking to a gentleman, Barnes."

"Thank you, sir! I will remember that when I am speaking to a gentleman," said Barnes, with a slight stress on the last word.

Bunter frowned.

"These chauffeurs are a cheeky lot," he said to the captain of the Remove.

"If I were the Head I'd sack that chap."

"Do dry up, Bunter."

"Shan't! I'm not the fellow to take cheek from persons in employment,"

(Continued on next page.)

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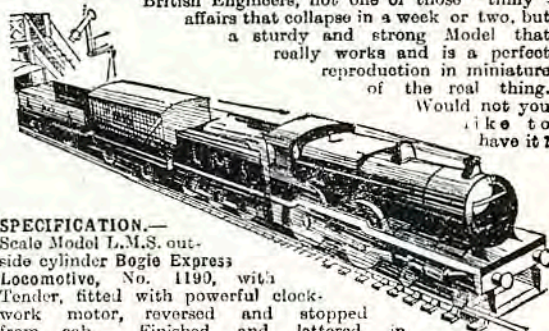
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said Bunter loftily. "The way the lower classes carry on these days is something sickening. Rotten, I call it! I shall certainly speak to the Head about this fellow's manners."

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Oh, dry up!" exclaimed Wharton impatiently.

"Shan't! When is that ass, Quelch, coming out?" growled Bunter. "Like his cheek to keep a fellow waiting like this."

A sudden grin dawned upon the hitherto impassive face of Barnes.

It was caused by a view of Mr. Quelch in the House doorway and the expression on the Remove master's face as he heard Bunter's words.

As the two juniors had their backs to the doorway they did not, for the moment, observe Mr. Quelch. But Bunter observed Barnes' grin, and it irritated him.

"Look here, my man, what are you grinning at?" he demanded.

"Was I grinning, sir?" asked Barnes, grave again at once.

"Yes, you were!" snapped Bunter.

"And I can tell you that I'm not standing any cheek from a blinking chauffeur, Barnes. Any more of it, and I'll speak to the Head and ask him to sack you."

"Indeed, sir."

"Yes, indeed!" snapped Bunter, and he turned away from the chauffeur with a disdainful sniff. "Look here, Wharton, we shall lose the train at this rate! Suppose you cut in and hurry up that old ass, Quelch."

"Bunter!"

"Eh?"

Billy Bunter jumped almost clear of the step.

"Bunter! How dare you!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter blinked at his Form master in dismay and horror as Mr. Quelch, in hat and coat, came down the steps. The expression on Henry Samuel Quelch's face was almost blood-curdling.

"Bunter, you dared to say—"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't! I—I wasn't! I—I mean—"

"I will deal with you later for this, Bunter. I have no time now. But I shall certainly not allow you to enter the car, Bunter, after your unexampled insolence and impertinence."

"Oh, really, sir! I—I didn't—wasn't—never—" stammered Bunter incoherently.

"Enough!"

Mr. Quelch stepped into the car. Barnes closed the door on him and drove away.

Bunter stood blinking after the car. "Oh crumbs!" he gasped.

"Well, you've done it now, you silly chump!" said Harry.

"That—that—that beast isn't giving us a lift!" gasped Bunter. "Oh dear! Better telephone for a taxi, Wharton, quick!"

"My dear man, you're taking me on this trip, as you've just said! The taxi is in your department."

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Fathead! We shall have to walk," said Harry. "I can't afford taxicabs to the station, and I jolly well know you can't. Come on."

"I can't walk!" howled Bunter.

"It's two miles by the short cut."

"We'll cut round by Hogben Grange, and save a bit," said Harry. "That's the shortest way. Better start, if we're going at all."

"We shall lose the train—"

"You've lost it already, fathead, by cheeking Quelch. Look here, are we going or not?" demanded Wharton impatiently. He was more than half-repentant by this time that he had

agreed to share that trip to Folkestone. Even maths were rather preferable to W. G. Bunter.

"I'm not going to walk!" growled Bunter. "If you won't stand a taxi to the station, Wharton, I jolly well won't take you, so there."

"Done!" said the captain of the Remove promptly; and he turned away. Bunter blinked after him.

## GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES!

Here's the first of a series of poems dealing with the popular schoolboy characters at Greyfriars.

### No. 1.—HARRY WHARTON.



THE praise of Wharton I proclaim  
To all the British nation;  
Who has not heard of Harry's name

And brilliant reputation?  
A splendid type of schoolboy he,  
Faithful to all his vows, and,  
As MAGNET readers will agree,  
A fellow in a thousand!

First of the Famous Five is he,  
By virtue of his qualities;  
He lacks Bob Cherry's bubbling glee  
And love of japes and jollities.  
But then, you see, he is beset  
By cares and duties numberless;  
Were I in Wharton's shoes, I'll bet  
My nights would all be slumberless!

Upon his shoulders falls the job  
Of keeping law and order,  
So that the wild and wayward mob  
Shan't overstep the border.  
Skinner and Sidney Snoop and Stott,  
And cads of that variety,  
Are down on Wharton quite a lot,  
And taunt him for his piety.

Upon the spacious playing fields  
He proves a very giant;  
His dauntless spirit never yields,  
He's dashing and defiant.  
His forward play is keen and clean  
(Spectators cheer like thunder!),  
He shows the dash of "Dixie" Dean,  
The Evertonian wonder!

In Amateur Dramatics, too,  
This enterprising fellow  
Finds lots of skillful work to do—  
He sometimes plays "Othello."  
Or else will take a leading part  
In "home-made" plays by Penfold;  
As samples of the playwright's art,  
They beat old Shakespeare's tenfold!

Here's to our Harry! All admire  
This lion-hearted leader,  
Whose exploits never fail to fire  
The soul of every reader.  
We love him, for he plays the game  
With pluck and capability,  
And "Magnetites" will cheer his name  
In chorus—with agility!

"I say, Harry, old chap, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you! I say, I'll walk to the station, of course! It will be a pleasure to walk with you, old fellow."

"Look here—" said Harry restively.

"Come on, old fellow, we're wasting time if we're going to catch the next train," said Bunter. "Do come, dear old chap."

And the dear old chap, feeling that he was for it, came!

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Not Hospitable!

DECEMBER as it was, and approaching Christmas, the weather was fine, and there was a glimmer of sunshine on the windows of the train that ran southward from Courtfield Junction to Folkestone. The journey was not a long one as the crow flies, but railways in the beautiful county of Kent do not imitate the flight of the crow. There was what Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had described as terrific round-aboutfulness in those railways, so, although the distance was not great, the ground covered was extensive, and the time taken was very considerable. It was cold, but bright, and Harry Wharton would have liked the trip well enough in more exhilarating company. Bunter's company could not be called exhilarating.

The Owl of the Remove groused most of the way. He was tired from walking to the station, and Wharton had taken third-class tickets—two deep grievances for Bunter. Wharton explained that it wouldn't run to first-class, to which Bunter retorted peevishly that he could have borrowed it from his friends, and added that he might have borrowed a little extra while he was about it, to provide some refreshment on the journey. To which Wharton's rejoinder had been the ancient and classic monosyllable "Rats!"

Fortunately, Bunter fell asleep after a time, and his deep snore formed an unmusical accompaniment to the rattle of the train. Wharton watched the landscape from the window, and then read a newspaper he had bought at Courtfield. It was the "Courtfield Gazette," and there was news in it—which seldom happened. Of late there had been a series of mysterious and remarkably successful burglaries in the neighbourhood, among them an attempt on Greyfriars School, the only one that had been a failure. Since then, the mysterious cracksmen who had chosen that spot as the scene of his activities, had been at work again.

This time it was Chunkley's Emporium, at Courtfield, that had been entered in the night and mysteriously plundered. As an item of local news it was of some interest to Harry, and he read through the long account that was given of the affair.

That it was the same cracksmen who had robbed Popper Court and several other places, and attempted to rob Greyfriars was fairly clear. If he had left any clues behind him, they were not good enough for Inspector Grimes and the local police. The paper stated that an experienced detective from Scotland Yard was called in to the aid of the local police, and Wharton hoped that he would have good luck.

Evidently, as the paper stated, the mysterious cracksmen was living somewhere in the vicinity; his depredations had now extended over several months, at irregular intervals, and it was plain that he was a man who knew the neighbourhood well, and had had opportunities for studying it closely.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,139.

It was rather interesting to Wharton, for some of the Greyfriars fellows surmised that the mysterious marauder, who had failed in his attempt on the school, might come back some dark night and try again.

Having read through all that the "Courtfield Gazette" had to say on the subject of the enterprising burglar, Wharton laid down the paper and resumed looking from the train window, till the train at last ran into Folkestone Central.

Then he shook Billy Bunter by the shoulder to awaken him.

"Wake up, fatty!"

"Owl! Leggo!" mumbled Bunter. "Tain't rising bell! Lemme alone."

"Folkestone, fathead."

"Oh!" grunted Bunter. "All right! You needn't shake a fellow like that, you beast! I wasn't asleep!"

Bunter rubbed his eyes and jammed his spectacles on his fat little nose, and followed Wharton from the train.

"Call a taxi, old chap," he said, as they left the station.

"Fathead!"

"Look here, it's getting dark already, and we've got no time to waste," said Bunter peevishly.

"Then the sooner you leave off using your chin and start using your legs the better."

"Peast!"

And they walked.

Leaving the train at Courtfield had made the juniors late, added to the "round-aboutfulness" of the railway and the slowness of the trains. The winter dusk was already falling on Folkestone. Lights were glimmering in the town and on the Leas.

Bunter announced that he was hungry. Wharton was ready for his tea, too, though that was a minor matter. But the prospect of a gorgeous spread at his uncle's residence cheered the Owl of the Remove.

"Uncle George is sure to do us pretty well," he told Wharton, as they walked to the Leas. "He's rolling in money, you know! Tons of it! Bags of it! And he's sure to be glad to see me, what?"

"I suppose so, as he's asked you to come all this way to see him," answered Harry.

"Eh? He doesn't know I'm coming," answered Bunter.

"D-doesn't he?"

"No; it's a surprise visit," explained Bunter.

"Oh!"

This was the first Wharton had heard of that trifling detail.

"You see, the pater thought of it," explained Bunter. "But Uncle George is bound to be pleased at his nephew rushing over to see him when he's ill, ain't he? The pater thought so."

"But your pater might have told Uncle George you were coming," said Harry.

Bunter chuckled.

"Uncle George is a bit grumpy," he explained. "More likely than not he'd have sat on it if he'd known."

"Oh!"

"You see, it's a surprise visit—a pleasant surprise for him," said Bunter. "I shall say, 'Dear Uncle George, I heard that you were ill, and rushed over to see how you were.' That will touch him, won't it?"

"Hem!"

"Well, it's bound to," argued Bunter. The fat junior seemed to be a little troubled with doubts himself as they drew nearer to the residence of Mr. George Bunter.

"He's sure to be pleased—a loving nephew coming all this way, regardless of expense, you

know. The least he can do is to stand us a jolly good tea. The pater thinks that if Uncle George saw more of me he would be certain to put me down in his will for something decent. He could hardly help liking me if he saw much of me, could he?"

Wharton did not state his opinion on that point.

"Here's the place," said Bunter at last. "The Limes! Come on! Look here, after tea we can get a trot along the front and go to the pictures—we can get back as late as we like—we can easily spin Quelch a yarn about losing a train or something, see? I dare say you never thought of that."

"I certainly never did," agreed Harry.

"You wouldn't," said Bunter. "You haven't much brains, old chap. We might have had a jolly afternoon here

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"Show us up," said Bunter.

"But he does not feel well enough to see a visitor!"

"Eh?"

"And he advises you—"

"What?"

"To return to your school without delay!"

"Oh!"

"As it is so late. That is all, sir," said the hall-porter politely.

Bunter blinked at him.

"But—" he gasped.

"That is Mr. Bunter's message, sir."

"Look here!" gasped Bunter. "You go back and tell him—"

"I am sorry, sir—"

"You go and tell him that—"

"Mr. Bunter has forbidden me to take any further message, sir."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

The hall-porter opened the door.

Harry Wharton stepped out. Bunter followed him slowly. The door of the Limes closed on them.

Not a word was spoken till they were on the Leas again. Then Billy Bunter gave a deep groan.

"Ow, I'm frightfully hungry!"

Harry Wharton smiled. That surprise visit to Mr. George Bunter had not been a success. Perhaps Mr. George Bunter was aware of the exact value of his nephew's affection for him, or perhaps dyspepsia had had a deteriorating effect on his temper and his manners. At all events, there was evidently nothing doing.

"Owl!" groaned Bunter. "I'm famished!"

He blinked dismally at Wharton.

"I say, old chap, we shan't get that spread, now—"

"Looks like it," agreed Wharton.

"But I know a jolly good place where we can get a feed—and I'm going to stand you a topping spread," said Bunter. "I've brought you here, and I'm going to see you through. We'll have a tip-top spread."

"Good!" said Harry.

"It's up to me," said Bunter. "I'm not the fellow to let a pal down, I hope. The only difficulty is that I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"Oh!"

"So you will have to lend me a pound temporarily—"

"I've got eighteenpence."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I've only got a penny. And—and that's a French one! Oh dear!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Come on, old fat bean," he said. "We can get a snack each for one-and-six, and then we'd better get back to Greyfriars."

Billy Bunter groaned his way along the Leas.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Late Hours!

IT never rains but it pours.

That is an ancient saying, which often seems to be borne out by facts.

Billy Bunter had been enormously

buckled that morning by the news that his uncle was ill, and that his pater considered it a good opportunity for him to show Uncle George what an affectionate nephew he was.

But Bunter was not bucked now. He was far from bucked. Everything, in fact, had gone wrong, in one way or another.

Quelch, instead of giving him that



Here's an amusing joke to tell your chums during the Christmas festivities.

### THINKING OF OTHERS!

The man in the dock was looking particularly doleful. "Please be lenient with me, your worship," he said, addressing the magistrate. "I have a good many dependent on me for their support this Christmas. It would be only fair to consider them." A soft light came into the magistrate's eyes as he listened to the plea. "Children?" he inquired, with a touch of kindness in his voice. The prisoner shook his head. "No, your worship. Detectives!"

Robert Ashdown, of 210, Bexley Road, Erith, Kent, has been awarded one of this week's MAGNET pocket knives for the above winning effort.

if that beast Quelch hadn't refused to give us a lift in the Head's car and made us lose our train, and if you hadn't been too mean to stand a taxi, old chap. Still, we can make an evening of it. Uncle George is bound to hand out a good tip. Let's get in; I'm frightfully hungry."

The juniors mounted the steps of the Limes, and Bunter rang a peal on the bell. The Limes was a private hotel, or boarding-house—of which there were many in the vicinity. It was not a sumptuous-looking building, and from the lower regions came a strong smell of cooking which hinted that dinner was in the course of preparation somewhere below. Bunter sniffed at that scent, like a war-horse snuffing the battle from afar.

The door was opened by a hall porter, who, on being informed that Bunter had called to see his uncle, Mr. George Bunter, looked doubtful. It appeared that Mr. George Bunter was suffering from dyspepsia, and was keeping his room at present. However, the porter requested the visitors to wait in the hall while he went up to Mr. Bunter's room.

The juniors were kept rather a long time waiting in the hall. The porter returned at last.

"Mr. Bunter thanks you for calling to inquire after him, sir—"

promised lift in the Head's car to Courtfield, had left him to walk, and was going to be very cross when Bunter saw him again. The train had been lost, and the juniors had reached Folkestone very late—too late for an afternoon by the sea. Uncle George had not played up—there had been no hospitable greeting—worst of all, no spread and no tips. A frugal meal for eighteenpence the two had not satisfied the cravings of Bunter's inner Bunter. He had consumed the lion's share, it was true, but that was a mere drop in the ocean compared with what he wanted to consume.

The return journey to Greyfriars started, with Bunter suffering from an aching void under his extensive waistcoat. A connection was lost, and there was an hour's wait for a train, and when at last the juniors were in the train for Courtfield the hour was very late indeed. Bunter was frightfully hungry and snow was beginning to fall. The fine day had turned into a windy cold night, and there were whirling snowflakes on the wind that howled past the train. Snow, certainly, was reasonable so near to Christmas, but it was none the more welcome to Bunter on that account. When they got to Courtfield there was a long walk ahead of them, and after so many delays, lost connections, and slow trains, it looked as if they would not arrive at Courtfield much before midnight.

The whole thing had been a dismal wash-out, and Bunter really wished that his uncle hadn't been ill at all, as the matter had turned out!

He was tired, cold and hungry, and sleepy. Wharton also was tired, cold, hungry and sleepy, but fortunately that did not matter.

When the train reached Courtfield at last, Bunter was fast asleep and had to be woken up. He woke up in an exceedingly bad temper.

It was the last train in; lights were being extinguished in the station as the juniors left it. Courtfield High Street stretched before them dim and silent. Only the street lamps glimmered—not a single window showed a light. No cabs remained on the stand, even if the juniors could have taken a cab, which was impossible. The combined funds of the two were now reduced to Bunter's French penny.

Bunter stood and blinked dismally into the sleeping town.

"Oh dear!" he groaned.

"Let's get a move on," said Harry.

"I'm tired."

"Well, we've got to walk it—no good hanging about."

"I'm hungry."

"Oh, come on!"

"Beast!"

"For goodness' sake get a move on, Bunter!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove impatiently. "Do you know it's turned twelve?"



"Yah!"  
"We shall have to wake up Gosling to let us in—"

"Blow Gosling!"

"Quelch will be sitting up for us—"

"Blow Quelch!"

"He will be in a terrific wax! Come on!"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton started. The Owl of the Remove got into motion at last, and followed him. Their footfalls woke ghostly echoes in the silent street, and Bunter peered uneasily at dark corners. A policeman passed them with heavy tread and flashed his lantern on them. They turned from the High Street into the lane over Courtfield Common, and Bunter blinked in dismay at the shadowy stretches of furze and grass upon which light snowflakes were settling.

"I—I say, Wharton—" he gasped.

"Come on!"

"The common ain't safe at night," said Bunter. "There's tramps—"

"Bother the tramps! Come on!"

"And footpads—"

"Bless the footpads! Get a move on."

"Well, I'm not going to be robbed to please you!" hooted Bunter.

"You fat idiot, the tramps and footpads won't bother about your French penny."

"Well, there's my gold watch," said Bunter. "That's worth twenty-five guineas. It was a present from one of my titled relations."

"I'll buy you another if you lose it," said Wharton cheerily. "You can get them at old Lazarus' for three-and-six!"

"Beast!"

"Are you coming, you ass? We shan't be home till the milk in the morning at this rate!"

"Well, look here," said Bunter.

"What about telephoning to Quelch? In the circumstances he ought to send the car for us."

"I can see him doing it," said Wharton, with a chuckle.

"Be respectful when speaking to a gentleman, Barnes," said Bunter. "I will, when I am speaking to a gentleman!" said the chauffeur.

"The Head lets Quelch use his car when he likes," urged Bunter. "Quelch could send that cheeky cad Barnes in the car to fetch us, if he liked."

"Fathead! Come on!"

"You could telephone, and tell Quelch that I've fallen ill—tell him I've sprained my spinal column, or something of that sort. Something serious enough to make him send the car."

"Chump!"

Harry Wharton walked on, and Bunter groaned and followed him. Wharton turned from the main road across the common into a deep and shadowy lane. Billy Bunter gave an alarmed squeak.

"Look here, that ain't safe! Let's keep to the road."

"This lane saves half a mile, fat-head! The snow will be coming down in tons soon. We've got to get on."

Bunter groaned and followed on.

The lane followed a park wall, mantled with ivy, that bordered the grounds of Hogben Grange. It was an extremely lonely lane at night, dark and shadowy and silent, and Bunter shuddered with dread as he rolled through the gloom.

Every shadowy corner, every clump of trees, was peopled with ruffianly tramps to Bunter's uneasy eyes. But fearful as he was of darkness and shadows, Bunter did not heed Wharton's constant urgings to buck up. He was tired, his fat limbs quaking with fatigue. Progress was slow. Wharton began to wonder whether they would reach Greyfriars before daylight.

It was understood that the juniors would be back late, after such a journey. But it was not understood that they would be anything like so late as this. Undoubtedly Mr. Quelch would sit up for them. Wharton could picture the expression on his face as he sat up, and it spurred him on. But it did not spur Bunter on. The Owl of the Remove

dragged on his fat limbs more and more slowly, and at last he stopped.

Wharton stopped and looked back.

"Come on!" he said.

"I'm tired."

"Back up!"

"Worn out!" said Bunter.

"Can't be helped. Back up!"

"Beast! It's all your fault," groaned Bunter. "I can't take another step without a rest. Oh dear!"

"Oh crumbs!" said Wharton.

"Blow this filthy snow!" groaned Bunter.

"Look here, old chap—"

"Beast!"

"We've only got another mile," urged Wharton.

"I'm not going to take another step without a rest. Leave me! Leave me to perish in the snow!" said Bunter bitterly.

"Fathead!"

Bunter tottered to the park wall, where the thick, overhanging ivy gave some shelter from the falling flakes. He sat down, and leaned against the wall under a mass of thick ivy, nantling above.

Wharton stared at him impatiently. But there was no help for it, though the mental picture of the expression on Mr. Quelch's face was unerving. He sat down at the foot of the wall beside Bunter, realising that he was glad of a rest himself. Bunter leaned on the wall and groaned.

"You—you haven't got any chocolate about you, Wharton?" he asked.

"No."

"I'm frightfully hungry. Not a stick of toffee?"

"No."

"Beast!"

"I'm rather hungry, too," Wharton remarked.

"Oh, don't grouse!" said Bunter. "It's bad enough without you complaining all the time. I should think."

"Oh, my hat!"

There was silence.

The silence was broken in a rather startling manner. On the lonely, shadowed lane that ran by the park wall there was a footfall. It was a quiet footfall; indeed, it had something stealthy about it, but in the deep silence of the night it was startling. Billy Bunter gave a start.

"I—I say!" he breathed. "That—that's a tramp—a footpad—a murderer, perhaps! Oh dear! Quiet! Keep quiet, for goodness' sake!"

Wharton made no sound. Where the two juniors sat close by the park wall they were almost hidden from sight by the thick masses of ivy that hung down over them. Wharton did not share Bunter's quivering fear, but he considered it only judicious, in such a lonely place at such a very late hour, not to attract the attention of the man whose faint footfalls came to his ears. It was long past midnight now, and it was quite possible that the man who was treading that lonely road in the gloom was one whom it was judicious not to meet.

The footfalls came nearer and stopped.

Against the glimmer of the falling flakes Wharton made out a dark figure, standing motionless a few feet away, looking towards the ivy.

For a moment Wharton supposed that the man had seen them, and was looking at them. But that was not the case, as he soon observed. The man stepped a little nearer, and he was scanning not the spot where the two juniors sat at the foot of the wall, but the heavy masses of ivy that hung over their heads. In the glimmer of starlight that came through the lightly falling flakes, Harry Wharton

could see his face clearly. It was a clean-shaven, clear-cut face, with a square chin, a hard-set mouth, and two eyes of a deep grey that were very steady and penetrating. Certainly the man did not look anything like a tramp or a footpad, though what he was doing there at that hour of the night was rather mysterious.

Wharton made no sound or motion. Bunter, his little round eyes wide open with terror behind his big glasses, stared fixedly at the stranger, like a fat rabbit fascinated by a snake.

The man stepped closer to the wall, only a few feet from where the juniors sat under the overhanging ivy. He reached up, grasped hold of the ivy, and tested it with his weight. Evidently his intention was to climb the park wall by means of the ivy; and as he realised that a sudden thrill shot through Wharton. Who was it that was entering the grounds of Hogben Grange in that secret and surreptitious way, long past midnight? Into the junior's mind flashed the thought of the unknown cracksmen.

Wharton felt his heart throb at the thought that he was within a few paces of the mysterious night thief whose depredations had startled the whole neighbourhood for weeks past.

He sat very still.

But as the square-jawed man shook the ivy, to test its strength to bear his weight, a little cloud of dislodged snow particles fell on the two juniors, and from Billy Bunter came a startled gasp: "Ow!"

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### No Admission!

"Ow! Ooooooh!" gasped Bunter. There was a sharp exclamation from the man who had been about to climb the ivy.

He released his hold on the tendrils, and leaped back suddenly.

"Who—what—"

His voice was startled, if not alarmed. His penetrating grey eyes flashed at the juniors, as he stepped along the wall to the spot where they sat under the overhanging masses.

There was a howl of terror from Billy Bunter.

"Ow! Keep off! Help! Yaroooooh!"

The next instant the man was gone.

Whether he was, indeed, the mysterious night thief, or whether he had any other motive for eluding observation, he no sooner discerned the two schoolboys in the gloom under the ivy than he turned and darted away, his footfalls echoing for a few moments on the snowy road, and then dying to silence.

"Ow! Keep off!" Bunter was still howling, when Wharton shook him impatiently by the shoulder.

"Shut up, you ass! He's gone."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh dear! Sure he's gone?"

"Yes, fathead."

Billy Bunter blinked round fearfully. The man was gone. There was no sign of him, no sound from him. So swiftly had he vanished that Wharton might almost have believed that the whole thing was a dream, a vision conjured up by the shifting shadows in the starlight.

But before his eyes still lingered that clear-cut, cool face, with its piercing grey eyes—a face Wharton was not likely to forget. The face, clear-cut as a cameo, the penetrating eyes, the square chin, haunted his memory. He knew that if he ever saw that strange apparition of the night again he would know him instantly.

"I—I—I say, who—who was it?" gasped Bunter.

"Blessed if I know."

"I say, he was going to climb over the wall, and we—we stopped him."

"I think so," assented Harry.

"He must have been a burglar!" quavered Bunter.

"I don't know."

"Well, he must have been. An honest man wouldn't be climbing over the park wall into Hogben Grange after midnight, I suppose. I say, perhaps it's that burglar who's in all the papers now!" exclaimed Bunter, that idea entering his fat mind for the first time.

Wharton made no reply.

He was thinking of it; and it seemed probable enough. That clear-cut face did not seem to strike him as the face of a criminal. Yet what other explanation could there be of the man's actions? It was plain that he had been going to enter the grounds of Hogben Grange secretly, silently, at an hour when all were sleeping. It was difficult to imagine what honest motive he could have had.

"I say, he's that burglar!" said Bunter. "We've frightened him off, you know. He cleared off as soon as he saw me, Wharton."

Wharton smiled.

"Well, now he's gone, we'd better get a move on," he remarked.

"I'm tired!"

"He might come back—"

"Oh!" Bunter jumped to his feet at that suggestion. "I say, come on, Wharton! Don't sit loafing there, you slacker! For goodness' sake, let's get to the school!"

The two juniors resumed their way—Bunter's uneasy glances searching all the shadows as he went.

The man they had seen had totally disappeared; but it was quite possible that he was still in the vicinity, hidden in the deep shadows.

That possibility caused Bunter to make an effort; and he moved rather more swiftly than a tired tortoise now.

Nothing more was seen or heard of the man by the time the juniors had left Hogben Grange behind, and were following the lane that led by the grounds of the Three Fishers, towards Greyfriars.

They came out in the Courtfield road at last, near the school.

The snow was still falling, but lightly, the flakes whirling by on the keen wind from the sea. The hour of one boomed from somewhere in the distance, and they came in sight of the old tower of Greyfriars against the stars.

Wharton whistled softly. It really was not quite the fault of the two juniors; but returning to school at such an hour was absolutely unheard-of, and if Quelch was sitting up it was certain that his wrath would be at boiling-point. It was likely to be a long, long time before Bunter had leave again to visit a sick relative at a distance from the school.

"Oh dear! I'm tired!" groaned Bunter, as Greyfriars came in sight at last. "Ow! Worn out, you know!"

"I'm rather tired," said Wharton mildly.

"Well, it's all your fault! For goodness' sake don't keep on grumbling! Ow! I'm awfully tired and hungry! I say, do you think Quelch is sitting up?"

"Sure to be."

"Think he'll give us some supper?"

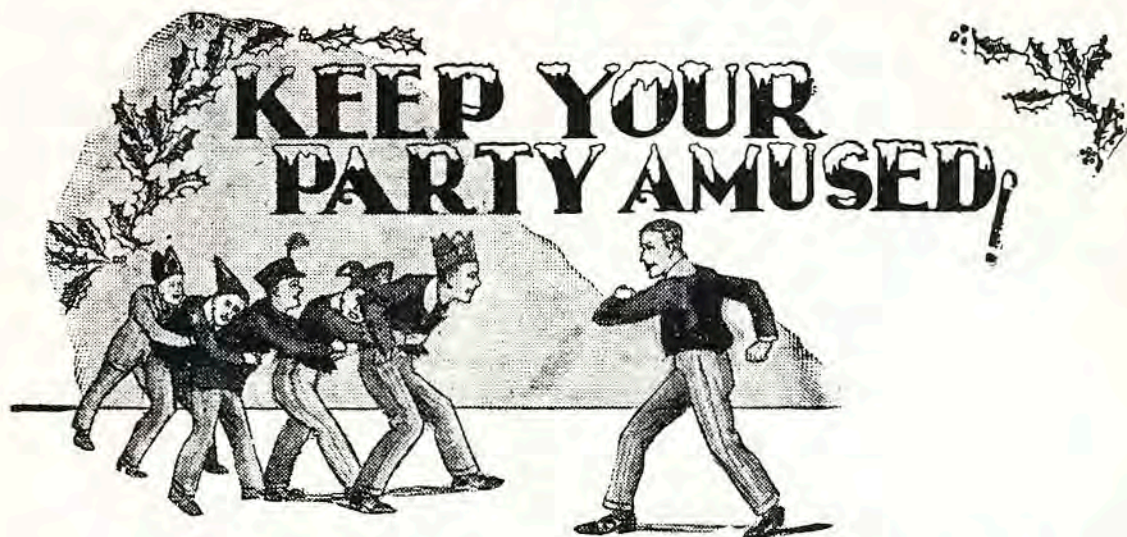
"More likely to give us a licking."

They stopped at the school gates, and Wharton groped for the bell, and rang a peal on it. The bell rang in Gosling's lodge; but there was no response.

Faintly from the distance the juniors caught the sound; but Gosling, apparently, was deaf to it.

(Continued on page 12.)

Here's a page of amusing "Parlour Tricks" to keep you and your chums merry and bright during the Christmas festivities!



### Bung the Bucket!

**H**ERE'S a game that will instantly liven up, and warm up, the chilliest collection of fellows ever gathered together at Christmas-time. You divide yourselves into two groups—the bungs and the buckets.

The buckets bend down in a line, head to tail, each clutching the hips of the bucket in front. The fellow at the head of the line—bucket number one—has to take the strain, steadying himself as best he can. The bungs now prepare to mount the "backs" provided by the chain of buckets.

On the word "Go!" the first bung takes a flying leap, working his way up, one back at a time, to the back of the bucket in front. As soon as bung number one has started, numbers two, three, four, and so on start away.

All the bungs mounted, they start rocking gently from side to side, in rhythm with a song. The fun mounts up swiftly now, and reaches a roaring climax with the eventual collapse of the wildly-rocking buckets. Sides change over then, the buckets getting their revenge as the bungs.

### How the Water Goes!

**A**S soon as you have regained your breath, you can work this water-drinking trick. You'll probably have to run when you've completed it, but you'll be able to crow in triumph over your pals, anyhow.

You start by placing a tumbler or cup of water in the centre of the table. Then you place your hat—or, better still, someone else's—completely over it, so that the cup or tumbler is hidden from sight.

You now challenge anyone in the room to drink the water without touching, moving, or in any way, interfering with the hat or cap.

When the fellows have ceased trying they will naturally expect you to show them how it's done. Right! You're quite ready. After making them all promise not to interfere with the tumbler and its covering, you creep under the table, and make a drinking noise. Then you emerge wiping your lips.

Ask one of the onlookers to remove the covering, hat or cap, that all may see whether or not the water has disappeared. Of course, it hasn't, but the instant the hat or cap is lifted up you grab the tumbler and drain it dry. The trick's yours.

### The Fox's Dinner!

**O**NE of you is nominated as the fox, another becomes the hen. The rest of the fellows stand around ready for the next move. The hen then challenges the fox, asking him what he is doing.

"Picking up sticks!" says he. "What for?" queries the hen. "To make a fire to cook my dinner!" is the response. "What dinner?" demands the hen. "Chickens!" barks the fox. And then the fun commences.

At that last bark from the fox all the fellows standing around become chickens. One grabs the hen by the waist, chicken number two grabs number one likewise, number three grabs him, and so on, thus forming a "chain."

The hen instantly tries to prevent the dinner-hunting fox from ovading "her" outstretched arms. There's some vigorous dodging here, the fox doing his utmost to collar

the chicken at the other end of the line—hen and chickens swaying wildly around to stop him. If he succeeds in capturing one, that chicken has to cling to his waist in the same way that the other chickens are clinging to the hen, by which time "she" will be jolly breathless.

When number two chicken is captured, the captive clings to number one, the fox's "train" increasing in length until the hen's last chick has gone.

You'll need to cool down after this, which will give you the opportunity for performing another trick.

### Scratching for Money!

**G**ET hold of an empty tumbler, two forks, and a penny. Place the two forks about two inches apart flat on the tablecloth—the latter is necessary for this trick—and stand the inverted tumbler on them.

That should leave quite a tidy space between the lip of the tumbler and the tablecloth. Into that space you push the penny, so that it is between the forks, and in the centre of the space covered by the tumbler.

The trick is to get the penny out again without touching it in any way, or with anything, and without moving the tumbler.

You do it by scratching the tablecloth with your finger-nail. Keep scratching at the cloth quite close to the tumbler, and the coin will move by fits and starts towards your finger-nail, until it has left the shelter of the tumbler completely.

### Banging the Bear!

**A**NOTHER warmer-up, this. Chalk a big circle on the floor, on the lino or the bare boards, and push one of your number into it. He becomes the bear, and the circle is his den. You tie a piece of rope or string to his waist, and you've become the keeper. He has to go down on all fours, ready to dodge swiftly about—always on his hands and knees—inside the circle only.

Meanwhile, you have armed yourself with a weapon—a knotted handkerchief—or if you want something heavier you can tie a small orange in one corner of your handkerchief. That's to protect your bear with.

The other fellows all knot their own handkerchiefs, and when the bear gives the word "Go!" they start to wallop him—if he cannot skip out of their way quickly enough. It's your job to stave off the attackers with your weapon, whilst keeping hold of the lead around the bear's waist.

If you can hit one of the attackers, fairly and squarely—you all have to skip about briskly, you see—he becomes the bear, and it's his turn to squirm about in the circle. The former bear becomes the keeper, with a grand chance of getting his own back on the others.

You want to make the circle just the right size, of course. The bear mustn't come out of it, neither should he be able to skulk in the centre of the circle beyond the reach of the wallopers—for the latter are not allowed to put so much as the toe-cap of their boots within the circle's outline.

Get the circle just so, with a very lively bear inside and some nippy fellows and a brisk keeper without, and you get fun as uproarious and swift as any fellow could desire at Christmas or any other jolly time!

## QUELCHY'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT!

(Continued from page 10.)

Wharton rang again—and again.

But there was no stir from the porter's lodge. No light gleamed there—and there was no movement.

There was a wail from Billy Bunter, who was leaning on the gate, half asleep with fatigue.

"Ow! Why doesn't the beast come out and let us in? Ow!"

"I suppose he doesn't hear the bell," said Harry, tugging at it again. "There, if that doesn't waken him nothing will."

It did not wake Gosling!

William Gosling, no doubt, was aware that two Greyfriars men were still out of gates; and possibly he had stayed up to a late hour to let them in. But he was extremely unlikely to stay up after midnight for that purpose; and obviously he had not done so. Perhaps, if he knew that Bunter had gone to see his uncle at a distant town, he concluded that Bunter was staying the night with that uncle. Anyhow, he had gone to bed; and Gosling was a sound sleeper. If, in the mists and shadows of sleep, Gosling heard any sound of that jangling bell he did not heed it.

"Well, my hat!" said Harry.

He desisted at last from ringing the bell. Evidently William Gosling was not going to wake up at that hour of the night.

"Make him come and open the gate!" wailed Bunter.

"He's fast asleep," said Harry. "The bell won't wake him."

"We can't stay out here all night."

Wharton was considering what to do while the fat junior groused. They had reached the school at long last, and found no admission. Probably Mr. Quelch was sitting up, in his study in the House; but he was far away, much too far to hear the bell in the porter's lodge, or a voice calling. Wharton could have climbed over the gate, though it was not an easy task; but Bunter could no more have climbed over the gate than he could have climbed over Mount Everest. Still, it was evident that the juniors had to get in.

"Shout!" said Bunter. "Yell!"

"If Gosling can't hear the bell in his lodge he won't hear us shouting," said Harry. "That's no good!"

"Look here, I'm not going to stay out all night, and perish in the snow, to please you!" howled Bunter.

"We've got to get in somehow, and get to the House," said Harry.

"That beast Gosling ought to be sacked!" groaned Bunter. "I expect he's been drinking, or he'd wake up."

"We can get round and climb over the Cloister wall," said Harry.

"In the dark?"

"Yes, ass; unless you prefer to wait for daylight."

"I'm not going to break my neck to please you, Wharton! I believe you'd like me to break my neck!"

"It wouldn't be much loss, would it?"

"Beast!"

"Look here, Bunter, you've climbed the cloister wall before—"

"Only once, from inside," said Bunter. "It can't be climbed from outside, as you jolly well know!"

"I'll give you a bunk up, and then you can help me from the top."

"If you think I'm going to break my neck, Wharton, you're mistaken! I refuse to break my neck to please you!" Wharton breathed hard.

But he tried to be patient. That well-

known spot, on the cloister wall, at a distance from the school buildings, had been used, more than once, by fellows breaking bounds. On the inner side crumbling stone gave foothold; but from the outside a "bunk-up" was necessary. Had Bob Cherry or Johnny Bull been with him, it would have been easy enough for Wharton. But the fellow who was "bunked" up would have to give a hand to the other fellow below; and it was doubtful whether Bunter was capable of that. And it occurred to Harry, too, that it was doubtful whether he could, unaided, bunk up the enormous weight of William George Bunter.

"Well, I'm blessed if I know what we're going to do," said Harry at last.

"Gosling ought to wake up!" growled Bunter.

"I know he ought, fathead; but if he doesn't that won't get us any forrader."

"Well, it's all your fault! If you'd got a taxi from Courtfield somehow—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Leaving me here to perish with cold!" groaned Bunter. "After all I've done for you, too—getting you off classes, and an extra holiday at the seaside, and—"

"Do you want me to bang your head on the gate, Bunter?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"Eh? No."

"Then shut up!"

"Beast!"

Many times during that unfortunate and deplorable afternoon out, Wharton had regretted joining up with the Owl of the Remove. At no moment had he regretted it so deeply as now.

But regrets were useless; and he had to solve the problem of getting into the school. All the while the truants were lingering at the gate Mr. Quelch was doubtless sitting up in his study at the School House, his wrath growing hotter and hotter. Climbing in somewhere over the walls seemed the only way; and climbing in over the walls was beyond Bunter's powers. There were other gates; but all, of course, locked and fastened for the night.

"We'll try the garage," said Harry at last. "Barnes is a decent sort of chap, I believe, and he may let us in if we can make him hear."

"You can tip him," said Bunter.

"With your French penny?" asked Wharton sarcastically. "If he lets us in we'll thank him as nicely as we can. And mind you're civil to him, you fat rotter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Come on fatty!"

"Why couldn't you think of Barnes before?" growled Bunter. "Of course, we can knock him up, and he's bound to come down and let us in. Like his thumping cheek if he didn't, I think. If he's cheeky I shall jolly well tell him what I think of him. He was cheeky to me this afternoon."

"Oh, dry up!"

"Yah!"

The two juniors left the gates. Evidently Gosling was not going to let them in, and it was useless to linger there. Wharton felt a natural hesitation—which Bunter did not share—at knocking up the chauffeur at one o'clock in the morning. But Barnes, so far as Wharton had noticed him, had seemed a very civil and superior sort of young man, and he hoped that Barnes would not mind very much. As for tipping him, as Bunter suggested, that was impracticable, as there was only a French penny available for the purpose—which even the civilist and

politest chauffeur would probably have disdained as a gratuity.

"Look here, Bunter, suppose I climb in somewhere, and get to Quelch—and you wait—"

"Beast!"

"Quelch will come down and wake Gosling and let you in—"

"Beast!"

"Ten minutes or so!" said Harry.

"Beast! You want me to be murdered by a tramp!"

"Oh, you fat idiot!"

"I won't stay out here alone at one in the morning!" howled Bunter. "I won't—see? Why can't you wake up Barnes?"

"Well, I can, but it's rather thick, waking a man up at this time of night. That isn't what Barnes is here for."

"You silly chump! Barnes is here to do as he's told! If you kept as many servants as we do at Bunter Court, you wouldn't be so jolly particular about them. Make 'em work, that's my idea."

"Oh cheese it!"

"Beast!"

And in that happy frame of mind the two juniors went round to the garage.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Where is Barnes?

HARRY WHARTON stopped and looked up at dark windows. The garage gates opened on a lane beside the school grounds, a little back from the Courtfield road. Within was a paved yard, beyond which was the garage, and over the garage were the rooms occupied by the chauffeur. Standing back from the gates and looking up, Wharton could see Barnes' windows, and, as he expected at that time of night, they were dark. The gates, of course, were closed and locked, and over the top was a row of spikes that rendered ingress difficult and rather dangerous feat.

Wharton had had a faint hope that Barnes might be sitting up; but evidently that was not the case. Indeed, he remembered now having heard that Barnes, who seemed to be a model young man in many respects, was always early to bed, and that the Head on the rare occasions when he needed the car at a late hour, always let Barnes know specially. That recollection made Wharton more reluctant than ever to wake up the chauffeur. But evidently there was nothing else to be done, as Bunter refused to be left alone outside till the gate could be opened for him.

"Buck up, for goodness' sake!" grumbled Bunter. "You can't wake the man up by staring at his windows, Wharton! I'm cold."

"Do you think I'm warm?" asked Wharton.

"I'm tired."

"Same here."

"I'm hungry."

"I could eat a horse."

"You beast, you keep on wasting time complaining and grouching. Look here, wake up that beast Barnes, or I'll jolly well shy a stone through his window and wake him!" howled Bunter.

"There's no bell here," said Harry. "Better knock on the gate."

Bunter sorted out a stone from the lane and banged on the gate.

Bang, bang, bang!

"Not so much row!" exclaimed Wharton hastily.

"Rats! The beast doesn't seem to be waking up. I dare say he won't! Well, I'm going to wake him."

And Bunter fairly crashed the stone on the gate.



## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

## At Last!

**B**ARNES recovered himself. "You—you startled me, Master Wharton. It is Master Wharton, isn't it?" He peered at the junior in the starlight.

"Yes," said Harry. "And me," grunted Bunter. "You jolly well startled me, Barnes! What the thump are you doing out at this time of night?"

"That's no business of yours, Bunter," said Wharton sharply.

"Isn't it?" snapped Bunter. "I jolly well know that the Head would sit up if he knew that his chauffeur had been tramping about at two o'clock in the morning."

Wharton could not help agreeing with Bunter on that point. It was quite certain that these peculiar proceedings on the part of his excellent and well-conducted chauffeur would have surprised Dr. Locke. Still, it was no business of the Removites.

"I am sorry I startled you, sir," said Barnes, with a slight huskiness in his smooth tones, which showed that he had not yet quite recovered from the shock he had received. "Very sorry, indeed, sir! But surely you young gentlemen are not allowed out of the school at this hour?"

"We've had a chapter of accidents," said Harry. "We lost a train and got in late, and couldn't make Gosling hear. So we came round to the garage, hoping that you'd wake up and let us in."

"I regret very much that I was out, sir," said Barnes. "It was very unfortunate, in the circumstances."

"I should jolly well think so!" growled Bunter. "You jolly well know that you oughtn't to have been out."

"Shut up, Bunter!" "Shan't! We shall get into a thumping row for breaking that window, and it's all Barnes' fault, tramping the country in the middle of the night."

"I am really sorry, sir," said Barnes. "I lost the last train at Redelyffe, and had to walk. Otherwise—"

"That's all right," said Wharton. "You're not bound to explain to us, Barnes. It's no business of ours, though Bunter seems to fancy it is. But now you're here, can you let us in?"

"Certainly, sir, with pleasure!" "Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

Barnes produced a key and unlocked the gate. The two juniors were glad enough to see it open.

They followed Barnes in, and the chauffeur relocked the gate. He glanced up at the broken window of his bed-room, where the gap showed plainly in the glass that glimmered in the starlight.

Wharton coloured. "I'm sorry your window's broken, Barnes," he said. "We couldn't make you hear, and Bunter—"

"You needn't put it on to me," interrupted Bunter. "It was an accident, of course. Barnes ought to have woke up—I mean, he ought to have been there to wake up! I shan't pay for that window, I can tell him!"

"Shut up, you fat chump! We're sorry, Barnes—"

"I'm not sorry," interjected Bunter. "And I jolly well shan't pay for the window, so there!"

"The window will be paid for, Barnes," said Harry.

"Please don't trouble, sir," said Barnes civilly. "I quite understand how it was, sir as you couldn't make me hear, and naturally supposed that I was in my room. I am afraid your Form master would be a little angry

with you, sir, if he knew about that window."

"I'm afraid so," said Harry, with a grimace. "But it can't be helped now."

"If you tell Quelch it was me, Wharton—"

"Shut up, you fat ass!" snapped Wharton. "He's bound to know that we broke the window."

"Not at all, sir," said Barnes. "You young gentlemen will probably find Mr. Quelch a little severe coming home so late, and there is no need to make matters worse by mentioning that a window was broken. I certainly have no desire to mention it, sir."

"You're a good chap, Barnes," said Harry gratefully. "It will be bad enough for us, anyhow, and if you don't mind keeping it mum—"

"Not in the least, sir," said Barnes. "I will get the window repaired to-morrow, and nothing need be said about it. And if you prefer to pay for it, sir, I will let you know the amount privately—only a couple of shillings, sir, most likely."

"Thank you, Barnes!" said Wharton.

He could not help feeling deeply relieved and grateful to the chauffeur for his thoughtfulness. Matters were likely to be bad enough for the two juniors when they met their Form master, without a broken window to report in addition to the rest.

"Not at all, sir," said Barnes. "Please let the matter drop. All you need tell Mr. Quelch is that I let you in."

"Good!" said Bunter. "Keep it dark about that beastly window, Barnes, and I'll give you a good tip when I leave for Christmas!"

"This way, Master Wharton," said Barnes. "If you would like me to walk with you as far as the House—"

"That's all right," said Harry. "Good-night, Barnes!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The two juniors went on their way, Barnes standing in the gloom and staring after them for some moments before he turned away and let himself into the garage.

A light was glimmering from Mr. Quelch's study window when Wharton and Bunter approached the House. Evidently the Remove master was still waiting up.

Wharton drew a deep breath and knocked lightly on the door. A light gleamed within at once, and the door was opened.

The grim visage of Mr. Quelch looked out.

"So you have returned?" he said icily.

"Yes, sir. We—"

"I feared that some accident had happened," said Mr. Quelch. "I am sorry, sir. It wasn't really our fault."

"That remains to be seen," said the Remove master grimly. "I shall not go into the matter at this hour of the night. I will take you to your dormitory now."

"I—I—I say, sir—"

"You need say nothing, Bunter."

Mr. Quelch closed the door and locked it when the juniors were within. His expression was grim and unbending. He had been anxious about these two members of his Form, and now that he saw them safe and sound his anxiety changed to anger, as is not uncommon in such circumstances. His manner was very quiet, but the look in his eyes was dismaying.

"But I—I'm hungry, sir!" wailed Bunter.

"Indeed!"

"Famished, sir!"

"Follow me to your dormitory!" said

Mr. Quelch, brushing aside Billy Bunter's state of famine as if it did not matter in the least.

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Silence!" said Mr. Quelch, in a voice that made Bunter quake.

The two juniors followed him in silence to the Remove dormitory. Mr. Quelch turned on the light there, and they went in.

"I shall return in two minutes!" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice.

Two minutes were enough for Wharton and Bunter. They were in bed when the Remove master came back to turn off the light. Several of the Remove fellows had awakened, and were blinking round, with drowsy curiosity.

"Good-night, sir!" murmured Wharton.

"Good-night!" said Mr. Quelch, rapping out the words like bullets. And he turned off the light and departed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You're back, then!" yawned Bob Cherry. "Where on earth have you fellows been?"

Snore!

Bob chuckled. "Bunter's asleep, or else it's a thunderstorm," he remarked. "You asleep, Wharton?"

"Jolly near—tell you to-morrow!" murmured Wharton; and his eyes closed, and there was silence and slumber once more in the Remove dormitory.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

## A Serious Illness, and a Quick Cure!

**C**LANG, clang!

The rising-bell rang out in the frosty December morning.

Billy Bunter snored on regardless. And Harry Wharton, for once, did not heed the rising-bell.

Bob Cherry jumped out of bed, and the rest of the Remove turned out, with those two exceptions. The bell ceased to clang, but Wharton and Bunter were still fast asleep.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry.

Wharton started, and opened his eyes. He sat up in bed drowsily.

"Rising-bell, old chap!" said Bob.

"Oh, my hat! I'm sleepy!" yawned Wharton, rubbing his eyes. "Can't be helped, though. Here goes!"

And he rolled out of bed.

Bunter snored on. It was not till most of the Remove were ready to go down that Wharton shook him and awakened him.

"Ow! Lemme alone!" mumbled Bunter.

"Time to get up, fathead!"

"Beast! Lemme alone!"

"You'll be late for prayers!"

"Lemme alone!"

Bunter closed his eyes again.

Wharton shook him once more, and the Owl of the Remove reopened his eyes and blinked at him ferociously.

"Will you lemme alone?" he hissed. "I'm tired! I'm sleepy! I ain't going to gerrup! Tell Quelch I'm ill!"

"Better turn out, old fat bean," said Harry. "You won't like it if Quelch comes up for you."

"Think of breakfast!" said Bob.

Bunter showed some signs of animation for a moment, but only for a moment. Even breakfast did not tempt him from sleep.

"Lemme alone! Tell Quelch I'm ill—dying, in fact! Tell him to go and eat coke! Lemme alone! I'm going to sleep!"

And Bunter went to sleep.

He was left asleep, and he was missing at prayers and missing at the

(Continued on page 18.)

# INSIDE INFORMATION



Most of us look forward to Christmas as a time of jollity and feasting, but the professional footballer has little time for either jollity or feasting . . . he's working "overtime!"

**T**WO or three years ago, I happened to be refereeing a match around Christmas-time, when the conditions were almost as bad as they could be. The wind was blowing strongly, and on it came intensely-cold sleet. Indeed, it seemed to be "raining ice."

One or two of the players were obviously feeling the effects of the cruel conditions, and there was at least one appeal to me to put an end to the game—to call it off. Noticing the "down-in-the-dumps" state of some of the players, a more than usually cheery soul tried to buck them up. "Never mind, boys," he said, "it's always some sort of weather at this time of the year!"

And although the "some sort of weather" which we get around Christmas-time is not always what is called seasonable, the middle of the season often brings delicate problems for the officials.

"Is the ground fit for play?" So far as big matches are concerned, the answer to that question lies solely with the referees appointed to take charge of the matches.

***If the referee says play, then the players must turn out. If he says the ground is unfit, then the players can't go on with the game, even though they may not agree with the decision.***

It may be taken for granted, however, that referees always try to get through matches on the appointed day if it is possible to do so. Indeed, referees are instructed to that effect; that matches must not be postponed for trivial reasons.

Roughly speaking, there are only two reasons for a football match being postponed. If the referee cannot interpret the rules of the game, then he must call the match off. Obviously, if there is fog about, so thick that the referee cannot follow the play, then he cannot control the game according to the rules. If there is snow on the lines, so that they cannot be seen, this also renders it impossible for the official to carry out the rules of the game.

The first really big match of the present season to be "called off" owing to the state of the ground was that between Arsenal and Middlesbrough about the middle of November. After the game had gone on for nearly an hour the referee said that he could not see the penalty line, and that being so he could not carry on the game and interpret the rules as they should be interpreted. You will remember that there was a bit of a rumpus over that decision, the spectators, who were already wet through, apparently thinking that it wouldn't matter much if they got wetter still.

The other occasion when the referee is justified in calling a match off is when, in his opinion, it would be dangerous for the players to carry on. When there is sudden frost, following rain or thaw, for instance, and the surface of the pitch is like a sheet of ice, then it is obviously dangerous for a game of football to be played.

**I**N my time, however, I have witnessed riots almost, consequent on the postponement of a big football match. On Boxing Day, of 1919, I was at Middlesbrough for the purpose of seeing a match between the team of that town and Notts County. Much interest had been worked up in that game, and there were a lot of people assembled both inside and outside the ground.

When the referee went over the pitch, however, he came to the conclusion that it would be dangerous to the players to attempt to carry the match through, and so it was called off. There had been a game on the previous day, when the ground had been very soft.

***During the night, however, hard frost had set in, and all the bumps made by the feet of the players the previous day had frozen as hard as iron.***

Immediately it was known that the match was off, those who had paid their money at the turnstiles became restive. They began to shout for their money back. The situation was eased a little, when some young lads jumped over the rails, and with a threepenny rubber ball, started a match on the "dangerous" pitch. The other people round the ground had to laugh. For a few moments, however, the situation looked very ugly, and I can tell you that I was very pleased to get out of the ground without being badly crushed by the hundreds of folk who rushed to the office demanding their money back.

It is in the hope of preventing scenes of this kind that referees are instructed to get to the grounds at which they have to officiate some time before the game is due to start, so that they can, if necessary, give a decision as to the fitness of the ground before would-be spectators have been admitted.

**M**OST of you will remember the Christmas of 1927, one of the worst of recent times, so far as football is concerned. The matches of Christmas Day were got through all right, but late in the day it began to snow, and by the next morning the white carpet lay thick upon the grounds of all the clubs in the south of England. There were no matches on that day, because it was Sunday, but most of the clubs had a game due to be played on the following day—officially, Boxing Day. Heroic efforts were made by some clubs to get their pitches cleared on the Monday morning, but the task was beyond the efforts of the workers, and most of the matches had to be declared off.

***Around Christmas-time the officials of all football clubs should be prepared for emergencies in regard to the footwear of their players. In a very short time, the state of a pitch may change completely, and very often it is a case of the players best shod for the pitch winning the match.***

Charlie Paynter, the trainer of West Ham, tells a Christmas-time story of how he was caught napping, although this particular story—as all Christmas stories should—had a happy ending. On the day of the match the West Ham players travelled to Birmingham, and all the prospects were for a game on a soft ground. So boots with the usual studs were the only ones taken away by the trainer.

During the journey, however, a keen frost set in, and by the time the game started, the Birmingham pitch was iron-hard and slippery, too. The Birmingham players, being at home, were able to wear rubber-soled boots, and getting a better foothold, had most of the play in the first half. At half-time they led by a goal to nothing. As the game progressed, however, the weather did another sudden change. It began to thaw again, and the surface of the pitch softened. That suited the boots of the West Ham players, and caused the rubber-soled boots of the Birmingham men to become a handicap. And West Ham won the match by two goals to one.

To my young readers who are called upon to play games on frost-bound grounds, I may give a bit of advice.

***Don't wear boots with long studs in them. Better still, have boots without studs at all. But if the surface of the pitch is slippery, then have strips of rubber nailed on to the soles of the boots.***

Another bit of advice, which may come in useful for mid-season football. If you have to play a game when the ground is in a dangerous condition, cut out the shoulder charge. I have known first-class teams enter into an agreement before a match that they would not charge each other.

**"CRIKEY!"**  
Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth at St. Sam's, pawed in the doorway of the Form-room and uttered that eggscclamation in tones of sheer amazement. For a moment, he could hardly believe the evidence of his own peepers.

It was the last day of the Christmas term—a day when the scandalously strict discipline enforced at St. Sam's was relaxed a little. But even on last day of term, one hardly eggpected to find a whole Form indulging in an orgy of violence and destruction.

Yet that was what the Fourth were doing! Half-a-duzen juniors were wielding huge pickaxes with deadly effect on their desks. Another half-duzen were nocking in the walls with sledge-hammers; two or three were jumping on the black-board and another two or three, armed with heavy hatchets, were dealing shattering blows to the cased.

Crash! Bang! Wallop!

The noise and clamour were simply deafening. Mr. Lickham fairly gasped. For a minute, he was too paralysed with astonishment to do anything. Then, coming back to earth again, he made a megaphone of his hands and bawled above the din:

"Boys! How dare you?"

Instantly the terribul racket was silenced—the Fourth looked up from their labours, grinning all over their diles.

"Good-morning, sir!" they chorused. Mr. Lickham snorted like an old war-horse.

"I'll give you 'Good morning!' you young vandals!" he cried, sternly. "What the merry dickens do you mean by wrecking the giddy Form-room at this season of festivity and good-will?"

The Fourth looked rather surprised. "Aren't we doing right, then, sir?" asked Jack Jolly, the handsome captain of the Form.

"You know blinking well you're not doing right!" answered Mr. Lickham, with dignity. "Surely you are aware that smashing up the desks, otsetters, simply isn't done?"

"But the Head told us we could do it, sir!" said Frank Fearless.



The noise and clamour was simply deafening. "Boys!" bawled Mr. Lickham. "How dare you!"

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Mr. Lickham started violently.

"The—the Head told you?" he ejaculated.

"Jolly went to the trouble of asking him specially, and the Head answered 'Yes.' Didn't he, you chaps?" asked Fearless, turning to the others.

"Yes, rather!" yelled the Fourth.

"My hat! The Head must be completely off his rocker!" declared Mr. Lickham. "What eggactly did you ask him, Jolly?"

"I asked him whether we could break-up to-day," answered Jack Jolly. "He said 'yes' immediately!"

For a moment, Mr. Lickham stared at

the captain of the Fourth with a blank kind of eggpression on his face. Then he suddenly burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Did you imagine, then, that he meant you to break up all the furniture in the Form-room?" he howled.

"Certainly, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha! This is funny and no mistake!" gurgled the historical Form-master. "Don't you see, you young fatheads, that the Head meant a different kind of 'break-up' altogether?"

"Oh!" merrered the Fourth, a doubt entering their minds.

"When the Head mentioned 'break up,' I have no doubt that he meant we were going to have a 'brake' up to the skool to convey us to the station. Savvy?"

"My hat! We never thought of that!" grinned Jack Jolly. "Better stop the other 'break-up' then, you fellows!"

The rest of the Fourth fully agreed with their leader and hurriedly put down their pick-axes and other deadly weppons.

Scarcely had they done so before there was a clatter of hob-nailed boots in the passidge outside, and Dr. Birchermall, the distinguished Headmaster of St. Sam's, cantered in.

The Head's skollery fizz, which was usually beaming like a fool moon at Christmas-time, was on this occasion rinked and furrowed with care. Trials and troubles had fallen upon the shoulders of the Head thick and heavy at this season of peace and goodwill to all men.

It was hard luck on the old fogey to have nothing but trouble and worry to look forward to throughout the Christmas; everybody was agreed on that point. The Head, who had been working hard as a representative of a firm of Christmas card and novelty merchants, had looked forward to a life of luxury and ease during the holls. Two mites before, however, the munny-box in which he had kept the proceeds of his Christmas sales had mysteriously disappeared, and in one



Rascal as Dr. Birchermall undoubtedly is, Jack Jolly & Co. stand by him in his hour of need!

blow, all the Head's fond dreams had been dashed to the ground. Beastly booby and tyrant as he was, the fellows couldn't help feeling sorry for him.

"Good-morning, boys!" croaked Dr. Birchermall.

"Good-morning, sir!" shouted the Fourth. "Merry Christmas!"

The Head larted—a harsh, bitter lart.

"By the look of things at present, it won't be a very merry Christmas for me, this year!" he said. "I am sorry to say, my boys, that ruin stares me in the fazzog just now, and unless a miracle occurs you will shortly witness the un-presidented spectacle of your Headmaster being led away with gyves upon his wrists!"

"Grate pip!"

"To-day, the collector for the Christmas card people calls for his munny," announced the Head, dramatically. "When I tell him there's nothing doing, I tremble to think what he will say."

"But can nothing be done, sir?" asked Mr. Lickham. "Can't I go round with the hat for you or something?"

Dr. Birchermall ceased his lamentations and eyed his subordinit rather thoughtfully.

"By Jove! That's not at all a bad idea, Lickham," he said. "It hadn't occurred to me, but if you're willing to do it—"

"Plezzure, sir!" grinned Mr. Lickham. "How much are you short, mite I inquire?"

"Ruffly, about fifty pounds, my dear Lickham."

Mr. Lickham recoiled, as from a blow. "Fifty what?" he asked, feintly.

"Fifty pounds!" repeated the Head. "You mean fifty quid?"

"Eggactly!"

Mr. Lickham scratched his pate in perplexity.

"Item! I hadn't thought it would be as much as that," he confessed. "I thought perhaps about fourpence-ha-penny or fivepence."

"Nevertheless, the fact remains that I have lost fifty quid!"

"Then, in that case, I can't hold out much hope of my collection being successful," remarked Mr. Lickham, regretfully. "However, I will do my best!"

And Mr. Lickham took off his mortar-board and trotted round the Form, collecting.

Unforchunatly, as Mr. Lickham had prophesied, the sum of fifty pounds was rather beyond the range of the Fourth. The juniors gave freely and jennerosly, and when the contents of the mortar-board were pored out on to a desk, it was found that the collection amounted to tenpence in coppers, a threepenny-bit with a hole in it, two peanuts and fifteen trowsis buttons. But jenneros as that

collection was, it wasn't much use to the Head in his present plite.

Mr. Lickham added three-ha-pence which he found in the lining of his coat, and then handed over the lot with a jesture.

"That's the best I can do, sir," he said. "I trusted it will enable you to ward off the perlice."

Dr. Birchermall grabbed the collection and transferred it to his trowsis pocket.

"Thank you, Lickham. But for this, I should be absolutely broke!" he merrered, in a broken voice. "I'm afraid it won't help me greatly in my predikka-ment, but it will buy me a few doennuts and a bottle of jinjer-pop in the tuckshop, and I suppose I must be thankful for small mercies. Cheerio!"

And the Head made tracks for the Skool tuckshop.

## II.

**"M**ITE a bloke inquire if Birchermall is about?"

Jack Jolly was standing at the top of the Skool House eps looking out on the snow-covered adseape when these words fell on his ars.

Looking round, he perceived a grim-looking gentleman with a dille like a ferret. Almost innemately, he guessed the egypticity of the newcomer. Jack Jolly had a wonderful gift for adding two and two together and making them five or six, and he exercised that gift on this occasion.

"The Christmas-card man!" he eggclaimed.

"At your servics!" leered the collecting gentleman. "I've come to collect some dils from our representative, Alfred Birchermall, and I haven't any time to waste. Where is he?"

"Somebody asking for me?" asked a deep, refined voice from the doorway, and the Head himself looked out.

Like the kaplin of the Fourth, the Head realised innemately who the caller was. But the Head, of course, was far too proud to betray his feelings in any way. Beyond turning garsly white and nocking at the noezo and trembling violently all over, he showed no sign whatever of feeling ill at ease.

"Are you Alfred Birchermall?" asked the Christmas-card collecting gentleman.

"That's me!" said the Head, with his usual faultless grunmar.

"Then in that case, I'll trouble you for fifty pounds!" said the Christmas-card collecting gentleman.

The Head larted mirthlessly.

"Sorry, old chap—can't be did!" he retorted.

The collector gave a violent, convulsive fart.

"You can't pay me the fifty pounds you owe me!"

"Unforchunatly, it is utterly imposs!" said the Head. "The fact is that some awful rotter has boned my takings! What are you going to do about it?"

The collector eyed the Head and chewed his lipps till the blud spurted out. When he spoke, his voice was hard and metallic, and there was a steely look in his eyes. It was evident that he could, when he liked, be a man of iron determination.

"Then, in that case," he said, "you'll have to go to chokey till you jolly well can pay!"

A strangled sob escaped Dr. Birchermall's lipps. He threw out his

bony arms in a pleading jesture.

"Surely, sir, you won't send me to chokey at Christmas-time?" he cried.

"Won't I?" snorted the collector. "We'll see about that!"

He turned to the huge crowd of juniors who had by this time assembled, and jerked his thumb significantly in the direction of the trembling headmaster of St. Sam's.

"Keep an eye on the old covey while I ring up the perlice, will you?" he asked.

Jack Jolly stepped to the four, his eyes flashing fire.

"Keep an eye on him yourself!" he shouted. "Think we're going to help in sending our own Head to clink for Christmas? Not likely!"

"No fear!" yelled the crowd at the back.

The collecting gentleman bared his gleaming fangs in a crool smile.

"Very well, then. I will take him to the perlice-station myself!" he said. "Come along, Birchermall!"

With that he attempted to grab the Head by the scruff of the neck.

With a frightened squeal, Dr. Birchermall leaped down the steps and raced madly away.

"Stop thief!" yelled the collector, and he started off in persawt.

"Groooo! Keep-imeff boys!" panted the Head, as he tore across the snowy quad. "Lemme get away from that fellow before he puts the perlice on my track! Poof!"

Such an appeal from the Head was not to be ignored. On hearing it, the juniors fairly jumped into action. Jack Jolly and a crowd of the Fourth quickly made some snowballs, and then rushed after the Christmas-card man, thirsting for his blud.

"Give him sox!" yelled Jack Jolly.

The juniors did so. They gave him sox in the form of snowballs til he hardly knew whether he was on his head or his boots.

Natcherally, Dr. Birchermall took full advantage of the respite. As soon as he found his retreat

no longer cut off, he made a B-line to the Skool gates, escorted by a crowd of cheering juniors.

Just as he got into the roadway, a Rolls-Rice car swept past the gates, clugging and snorting along in the direction of Muggleton and London Town.

Dr. Birchermall was never the man to hezzitate, and he did not do so on this occasion. Taking a short run, he made a leap at the luggage-grid at the back and landed farly and squarely in the middle of it.

Two minnits later, he had vanished down the road, and the juniors, larting fit to bust over the enjoyable entertainment, returned to the Skool House.

The Christmas-card gentleman met them half-way across the quad. As he passed he flung them a bitter glarnse, which they were only just in time to dodge.

"Bast you!" he cried savvily. "But for your interference, I should have kaptured him easily! But never mind! I'm going straight to the perlice-station now, and within five minnits the telegraph wires all over the country will be buzzing with a description of the wanted man!"

"Give him another volley, chaps!" yelled Jack Jolly, in reply to this outburst, and the juniors obliged by pelting the collector with snowballs until he flew out of the gates.

Shortly after that, the brake that was to take the Fourth down to the station rolled up on the seen, and the Head and all his troubles were soon bannished from the juniors' minds in the eggstement of starting off for the Christmas vack.

Jack Jolly & Co. were going to spend Christmas at the magnificent town house of Frank Fearless' pater, and they were looking forward to a rattling good holliday in London. Natcherally, by the time they reached Muggleton, they had forgotten the very eggstistence of Dr. Birchermall.

Though they were not aware of it, they were destined to meet the Head again in very eggstraordinary circumstances before Christmas was over. But for the time being, our heroes oblitterated him from their memories and threw themselves hart and sole into the merry old Yuletide festival!

THE END.

(You'll be tickled to death when you read the next story in this amusing series of St. Sam's yarns. It'll appear in next week's MAGNET.)



"Stop, thief!" yelled the Christmas-card man, persawing Dr. Birchermall across the snow.

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(Continued from page 14.)

breakfast table. At that table Mr. Henry Samuel Quelch presided, with a baleful eye.

Mr. Quelch had felt it his duty to remain up overnight while two members of his Form were absent. But a middle-aged gentleman could not sit up till after two in the morning without feeling the effects of it. Mr. Quelch had red eyelids and a very sharp temper. The look on Quelch's face warned the Remove that they had to be very good that day. He noted Bunter's absence at once, and fixed a gleaming eye on his head boy.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Where is Bunter?"

"He's not down yet, sir, I think."

"Do you mean to imply, Wharton, that Bunter is still in bed at this hour?"

"Hem! Yes, sir. He was very tired."

"Is it your view, Wharton, that you are entitled to remain out until any hour you choose and sleep in the morning after turning night into day?" inquired Mr. Quelch.

"Hem! No, sir."

"Go to the dormitory at once and fetch Bunter."

"Very well, sir."

Wharton departed. He found William George Bunter still fast asleep, and snoring as if for a wager. He shook him.

"Groggish!"

"Get up, Bunter!"

"Shan't!"

"Brekker!" said Wharton.

Snore!

"You fat idiot!" exclaimed Wharton, shaking him again. "You've got to turn out! Quelch is ratty!"

Wharton dragged off the bedclothes. There was a roar from Billy Bunter as the December cold smote him. He sat up.

"Look here, you beast! I'm not coming down!" he yelled. "See? I'm tired! Sleepy! Ill! Tell Quelch! Gimme those blankets!"

"You've got to come down, you fat clump!"

"I won't!" hooted Bunter. "I refuse to stir out of bed when I'm seriously ill. Tell Quelch I'm ill! Tell him from me that I've got a pain in my chest! I think it's pneumonia, or plumbago. Tell him there's plumbago in my family—galloping plumbago! Now lemme alone!"

And Bunter, seizing the bedclothes, hunched himself up in them and glared defiance at the captain of the Remove.

There was no doubt that Bunter was tired and sleepy. Wharton could guess that from his own feelings. He stood in doubt, regarding the fat junior. Bunter recommenced snoring.

Harry Wharton went downstairs again at last.

"Where is Bunter?" inquired Mr. Quelch.

"He asked me to tell you that he felt ill this morning, sir," said Harry. "He—he's very tired after last night, sir."

He added, at a venture, "No doubt!" said Mr. Quelch dryly. He rose from the table, apparently.

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with the intention of seeing to the invalid himself.

When he arrived in the Remove dormitory, he had a cane under his arm. That, perhaps, was what Mr. Quelch considered a suitable medicine for Billy Bunter's malady.

Snore! Bunter was going strong as his Form master approached his bedside. The hand of authority shook him, and Bunter woke up.

"You beast!" he howled. "You rotter! Oh, you blighter! If you don't lemme alone I'll punch your silly nose!"

"Bunter!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crikey!"

"Bunter, how dare you?"

"Oh dear! I—I didn't know it was you, sir! I thought it was that other beast—"

"Wharton has informed me that you are ill, Bunter," said the Remove master, in a grudging voice.

"Oh dear! Yes, sir! Frightfully ill!" gasped Bunter. "I—I slipped in the snow last night, sir, and—and sprained my spinal column. And—and I've got shooting pains in my legs, sir, and—and a burning feeling in my chest, I think it's pneumonia, sir, or—or cancer."

Such a complication of unusual complaints might have moved the heart of any Form master.

But Mr. Quelch's face did not relax. It only grew grimmer.

"You feel that you cannot rise this morning, Bunter?" he asked.

"No, sir! Yes, sir! I—I feel as—as if I'm expiring, sir!" groaned Bunter. "Awful pains, sir—frightful! Pip-pip-perhaps you'll let me have brekker in bed, sir, in—in a few hours from now—"

"If you cannot rise, Bunter—"

"I—I can't, sir! Impossible!"

"I will assist you, Bunter."

"It—it wouldn't be any good, sir! I—I can't move a limb."

"I think you are probably mistaken, Bunter. However, we shall see," said Mr. Quelch grimly.

Whack!

The cane swished in the air and came down across Bunter's fat legs. A fearful yell awoke the echoes of the Remove dormitory.

"Yaroooooh! Whoop!"

Whack!

"Yooooop!"

Bunter evidently was mistaken in supposing that he could not move a limb. He moved all his limbs at once with remarkable celerity. The speed with which he moved his fat limbs out of reach of the cane was quite a record.

"Ah! You are able to rise, as you see, Bunter!" remarked Mr. Quelch, with ferocious humour, as Bunter blinked at him across the bed.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"If you are not down in five minutes, Bunter, I shall cane you—"

"Ow, ow!"

"And you will have no breakfast."

"Oh lor!"

Mr. Quelch quitted the dormitory.

Bunter was down in five minutes.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Luck!

"IF you have tears, my beloved earsers, prepare to shed them now!" remarked Skinner of the Remove.

"You're for it, you two!" grinned Snoop.

"Put some exercise-books in your bags!" advised Hazeldene. "Quelch's seeing red this morning."

These remarks—and many more—were made to Wharton and Bunter after breakfast. They had orders to present

themselves in their Form master's study—and they were feeling a natural reluctance.

Skinner & Co. seemed to be amused; other fellows were sympathetic. But all agreed that the hapless two were "for" it.

"Well, it's no good hanging it out," said Harry. "Come on, Bunter, and let's get it over."

"I—I say, you go first!" said Bunter. "As the whole thing was really your fault, Wharton—"

"Come on, ass!"

"It's up to you!" snapped Bunter. "You can explain to Quelch that we were late owing to his being such a beast as to refuse us that lift—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you can tell him how you lost the connection at Ashford, and—"

"Are you coming, fathead?"

"Besides, if he takes it out of you first, he will go easier with me when I come next," argued Bunter. "It will take the edge off. You go in first, Wharton, and say I'm coming! See? Don't be funky."

"Fathead! I'll go in first if you like."

Harry Wharton made his way to Mr. Quelch's study. Bunter lingered at the corner of Masters' passage, deeply uneasy. Possibly the keen edge of Quelch's wrath might be taken off in dealing with Wharton. But Bunter could not help feeling that there would be plenty left for him.

Wharton found the door of his Form master's study open; and the deep, booming voice of Prout, the master of the Fifth, showed that Mr. Quelch was not alone. Wharton paused in the doorway.

"There is no doubt about it, Quelch!"

Mr. Prout was saying, with a tone of excitement in his deep, fruity voice.

"None whatever! It is not in the morning papers, but it will be in the later editions. The postman mentioned it to me, and I telephoned Inspector Grimes; and the news is undoubtedly true."

"Indeed," said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir, there is no doubt about it," said Prout. "That unknown miscreant has been at work again. Obviously the wretch is living in this very neighbourhood. All his depredations have been in this vicinity—within a few miles' radius of Greyfriars. Hogben Grange is scarcely more than a mile away—"

Harry Wharton started.

His own affairs, which were troublesome enough just at present, had banished from his mind the recollection of that curious meeting by the park wall of Hogben Grange the previous night. But he remembered it now as he listened to Prout's booming voice.

"I have not learned the particulars," went on Prout. "But a very extensive robbery took place last night at Hogben Grange. Gold and silver plate. I understand that the Hogben plate is famous and very valuable. Some thousands of pounds—"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch. "It is really shocking! Probably the same rascal who attempted to break into the school a week ago."

"Undoubtedly!" said Mr. Prout. "The police attribute the whole series of robberies to the same person. Some desperate criminal, Quelch, who has selected this neighbourhood as the scene of his operations. Really the police are very remiss."

"No doubt their task is a difficult one," remarked Mr. Quelch.

"No doubt. Nevertheless, it is time that that desperate rascal was laid by the heels," said Prout. "It is really scandalous! This is the sixth or seventh successful burglary in this district. It is really quite alarming!"

"You may come in, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, catching sight of the junior hesitating in the doorway.

Wharton entered; and the Fifth Form master rolled out of the study, to carry his exciting news to other members of the staff.

"Now, Wharton, you will explain your conduct," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "You returned to the school last night at an unheard-of hour. You caused me great anxiety, and a considerable and serious loss of necessary repose."

"I am sorry, sir," said Wharton sincerely; and he proceeded to relate the chapter of accidents and mishaps.

Mr. Quelch listened with a grim brow.

"Having lost your train, Wharton, you should not have gone to Folkestone at all," he said, when the junior had finished. "Having done so, however, you should have taken measures to return at a reasonable time. You should not have lost the connection at Ashford. You should not have travelled by a slow train when by catching the right train you might have travelled more quickly. I do not see that your explanation is any excuse at all."

Wharton coughed.

"We—we weren't so late as—as it seemed, sir. We were quite a long time trying to make Gosling hear—"

"Gosling, I believe, has a right to sleep at night," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes! But—but we couldn't get in—"

"Then how did you enter, Wharton, if you did not succeed in waking Gosling?"

"Barnes let us in, sir, by the garage gate."

Wharton made no reference to the broken window. As Barnes was willing to keep that episode dark, Wharton was more than willing. Certainly mention-

ing it would not have helped to clear Mr. Quelch's brow of its thunderous expression.

"Very good!" said Mr. Quelch. "I am bound, Wharton, to take a severe view of this matter—"

"If you please, sir—" murmured Wharton.

"Have you anything else to tell me, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir. I—I heard what Mr. Prout was saying—about a burglary last night at Hogben Grange—"

"That does not concern you, Wharton."

"I think I ought to tell you, sir, that we came back that way last night, and stopped to rest a little while under the park wall at Hogben Grange—"

"You do not mean that you saw anything of the occurrence there which Mr. Prout has mentioned?" exclaimed the Remove master.

"No, sir; but we saw something that I think I had better mention." And Wharton proceeded to describe the incident of the square-jawed man.

Mr. Quelch listened with surprise and keen interest.

Wharton, to his great satisfaction, noted that the thunder was fading away from the Remove master's brow in his interest in the recital.

"Describe the man to me as well as you can, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch. He laid down his cane as he spoke. Wharton could only hope that he would not pick it up again. He proceeded to describe the man he had seen in the starlight by the wall of the Grange.

"A man about thirty I should think, sir; nothing unusual about him, only that he had a very square jaw. I think his eyes were grey. Clean-shaven. Medium size. He was dressed in dark clothes."

"You are sure that he was about to climb into the Grange, over the park wall, when he was alarmed by finding you there?"

"Quite sure, sir. There's no doubt at all about that," said Harry. "He would have been up the ivy in a few more moments if he hadn't heard Bunter, and found us there."

"And then he changed his intention and left?"

"Yes, sir—cut off as fast as he could. Of course, he could easily have climbed the wall in another place, out of our sight."

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"And the time when this occurred, Wharton?"

"About half-past twelve, sir. I remember hearing one o'clock strike when we came in sight of the school."

"This may be very important," said Mr. Quelch thoughtfully. "Undoubtedly there was a robbery at Hogben Grange last night; and it is very singular that this man should have been entering the grounds in so surreptitious a manner, if his intentions were innocent. It is possible, at least, that the man you saw was the unknown miscreant who has been committing depredations in this neighbourhood for weeks past."

Mr. Quelch remained silent for some moments, in deep thought.

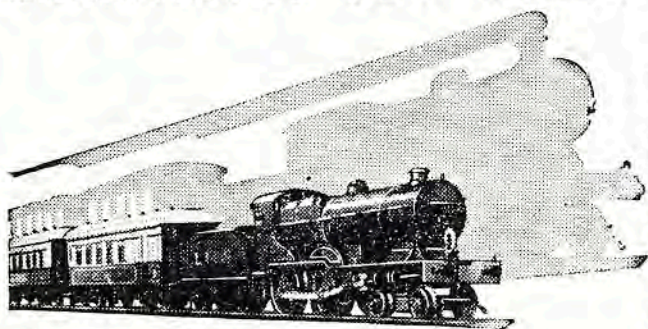
Wharton waited hopefully.

The Remove master went to the telephone at last, and rang up Courtfield police station. He asked for Inspector Grimes, and fortunately got that gentleman. He proceeded to detail what Wharton had told him, and finally he turned back to the junior.

"Inspector Grimes agrees that this information may be of some import-

(Continued on page 20.)

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ance," he said. "He desires that you and Bunter may call at the police station this morning, and tell him all you know. You may go to Courtfield immediately, Wharton, and take Bunter with you."

"Certainly, sir."

Wharton hesitated, looking at his Form master. Mr. Quelch started a little. He really seemed to have forgotten that Wharton was "on the carpet." The junior's look recalled it to his mind.

"Hem!" In the circumstances, Wharton—Mr. Quelch paused. "Certainly you have been very remiss, very careless; but, in the circumstances—" He paused again. "You will take a hundred lines, Wharton! Bunter will take a hundred lines! You may tell him so. That closes the matter."

"Thank you, sir!" said Harry.

And he left his Form master's study with a cheery countenance. At the corner of Masters' passage Billy Bunter met him with a lugubrious fat face. But the lugubrious expression faded away when Bunter heard the news, and he grinned.

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "Ripping! Jolly lucky there was a burglary last night at Hogben Grange, old chap—what? Couldn't have happened better."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Lucky for us, perhaps," he said; "not for Sir Julius Hogben."

"Eh? I wasn't thinking of him," said Bunter—a quite unnecessary statement.

There was no doubt that the delinquents were in luck. During first school that morning, Wharton and Bunter were at Courtfield, interviewing Inspector Grimes, and giving the description of the man they had seen under the park wall of Hogben Grange. They did not hurry back, and so they missed second school, and arrived at Greyfriars again in time for morning break. So the matter had not turned out so badly, after all.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Brilliant!

"CHRISTMAS is coming!" Billy Bunter made that statement, with a thoughtful and serious countenance, quite as if it were a new discovery of his own.

"Go hon!" remarked Peter Todd.

"We break up soon, Toddy—"

"We generally break up at the end of the term," remarked Peter; "and it's quite a common thing for Christmas to come at the end of the year. Any more original discoveries?"

"Oh, really, Toddy! I was thinking—"

"Gammon!"

"As Christmas is coming, and as we break up soon, we shall be leaving our dear Form master before long," said Bunter.

"Eh? Would you like to take Quelchy home with you for the Christmas holidays?" asked Peter sarcastically.

"Oh, my hat, no! But—"

"I hear that the Head's visiting Wharton's place during the hols," remarked Peter. "Nice for them, but not quite such a corker as Quelchy."

"Jolly glad I'm not going there, then," said Bunter. "I'm spending the hols with Mauleverer, Peter."

"Does Mauly know?"

"Beast! But do come back to the subject," said Bunter. "I've been thinking, Peter, that Quelchy isn't half such a bad sort."

"His bark's worse than his bite," agreed Peter.

"We're leaving him for a long time," said Bunter, shaking his head sadly.

"Seen my hanky?" asked Peter.

"No. Why?"

"I want to cry."

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know! After all, Quelch, being a schoolmaster, can't help being a beast. One has to make allowances," said Bunter. "Taking him all in all, Quelchy isn't so bad. Properly speaking, it's painful to part with him."

"Not so painful as staying with him," said Peter.

"That's rather unfeeling, Toddy. Decent chaps ought to feel respect and—affection for their Form masters."

"I've got lots of respect," said Toddy. "No end! Affection, I fear, is rather at a discount. I'm not sure Quelchy would appreciate it. But what are you driving at, you fat idiot? Wandering in your mind—if any?"

"Oh, really, Toddy! What I mean is, Quelchy does his duty according to his lights. He's no more of a beast than a schoolmaster generally is—less than some, in fact. Look at Hacker! He's worse-tempered than Quelch! Look at Prout! He's a bigger ass! Look at Capper—"

"Well, what about it?" inquired Peter, in wonder.

Bunter's feelings towards his Form master, as a rule, lacked both respect and affection. Quelch was a Form master who made a fellow work. A Form master who made Bunter work could not expect to rouse in Bunter's breast any feelings except those of a homicidal nature.

So this panegyric of Quelch, from the Owl of the Remove, was rather surprising. Apparently Bunter was driving at something; but what he was driving at was a mystery to Peter Todd.

"Whatever you like to say about Quelch, Peter," said Bunter, with a severe blink at his study mate, "I think he's all right. We're parting with him, and absence makes the heart grow fonder—"

"It certainly does in Quelchy's case," agreed Toddy.

"Well, my idea is this—why not make Quelchy a Christmas present, as a sign of the respect and affection of the Form?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Surprised you?" asked Bunter. "Well, that's my idea, Toddy. I'm expecting a postal-order shortly—"

"Do you mean this Christmas, or Christmas 1959?" asked Toddy.

"Eh? This Christmas, of course."

"Then your postal-order won't come in time. Better make it 1959."

"Beast! I intend to put the whole of that postal-order towards the fund," said Bunter. "If there happens to be any delay in the post, I shall contribute my allowance instead. The fact is, Peter, I mean business. We're going to give Quelchy a handsome Christmas present, if the fellows will back me up," said Bunter firmly.

"Fathead! Quelchy wouldn't take a present from the Form."

"Of course, we should have to do it tactfully," said Bunter. "That will be all right, if the matter's left in my hands. I've rather a delicacy in delicate matters, as I dare say you've noticed."

"Not at all."

"Oh, really, Peter! Now, tell me as a pal, what do you think of the idea?"

"Rotten!"

"I expect jealousy from you, Peter,

when I propose a really ripping wheeze. Go and eat coke!"

And Bunter, with a sniff, rolled out of Study No. 7, leaving Peter staring. He rolled along to Study No. 1, where the Famous Five were at tea. Five voices were raised in unison:

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

Bunter rolled in.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hook it!"

"I haven't come to tea," said Bunter. "I've come here to consult you fellows about a wheeze—something rather important. Toddy thinks it a splendid idea."

"Let that cake alone."

"You fellows are just as fond of Quelch as I am, aren't you?" said Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles.

"Eh? Rather more, I should say," answered Bob Cherry.

"The morefulness is terrific!"

"Well, the fact is, I think a lot of him," said Bunter, with his mouth full of cake. "Hard-working Form master—strong sense of duty, and all that. Not so beastly as he might be, by any means, considering that he's a master. That's why I'm proposing to make him a Christmas present before we break up."

"Oh, my hat!"

"A token of respect and affection and—love, and things!" explained Bunter. "I'm starting the fund for the purpose, with a postal-order that I'm expecting shortly. I shall expect all my friends to contribute. I hope you're going to back me up."

"Rot!" said Harry Wharton tersely.

"The rotfulness is preposterous."

"Oh, really, you fellows! Don't be selfish, you know!" urged Bunter. "Think how pleased Quelchy will be when we hand him the handsome Christmas present in Form, on the last day, say! The last day in Form is always rather awful—everybody fed-up, and the Form master in a bad temper. The presentation will smooth things over. Quelchy will be touched. I step forward in a graceful way, you know, and hand him the present, with a few well-chosen words. The fellows stand up and cheer. It will please Quelch no end, knowing what we really think of him, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will touch his heart," said Bunter. "Quelchy's got a heart—that stands to reason. He will go easy with us—let us off lines, and lickings. It will make things better all round—may make him start next term in a good temper, for all we know. It's possible. I hope you fellows aren't going to be selfish."

The Famous Five stared at Bunter. The suggestion of a Christmas present for Quelch rather took them by surprise—especially from Bunter. Bunter really was not the fellow they would have expected to think of it.

"What are we to give him?" grinned Bob Cherry. "A brand-new cane? He's rather worn out the old one this term."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Talk sense," said Bunter. "There's only one thing that is absolutely certain to give pleasure."

"What's that?"

"Something to eat, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They're selling Christmas puddings at a pound each, at Chunkley's, in Courtfield," said Bunter. "Where the burglary was, you know. Luckily, the burglar didn't burgle the puddings. I've looked at them—in fact, every time I've been in Courtfield I've looked at those

puddings. They're prime—splendid value for the money. I know something about puddings."

"That's so," chuckled Bob. "You do. You're an authority on that subject, at least."

"A Christmas pudding, you see, is specially appropriate as a Christmas present," said Bunter. "Any more cake?"

"No, you fat cormorant!"

"You're rather mean in this study. As I was saying, a Christmas pudding is the best thing you can give anybody for a Christmas present. I shall put my postal-order towards it—say, ten bob. I shall expect the fellows to raise the rest. If I happen to be short of tin at the

it at our hands. He's a good sort—in his own way, of course. With his opportunities he could be ever so much worse a beast than he is. And after getting the present he can't very well ask a fellow for lines. And it's practically certain that, in the long run, we get the pudding ourselves. See?"

Bunter blinked round at the chums of the Remove. Evidently he expected enthusiastic backing, now that he had propounded that brilliant idea. But there was no enthusiasm.

"Well, what do you say?" he asked.

"Rats!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"The ratfulness is terrific."

"Look here, old fellows—"

could manage occasionally without their leadership, and to impress upon them that they weren't the only pebbles on the beach.

The Famous Five having declared that the wheeze of handing Mr. Quelch a Christmas present was "rot," Percy Bolsover immediately took the view that it was a ripping idea, and gave it his hearty support.

Perhaps Skinner had the same reasons. Perhaps he had other reasons. At all events, he supported Bolsover major's view. And Snoop, who always followed Skinner's lead, gave it his support—with a mental reservation to the effect that his support was going to be simply moral support and would not be carried so far as the making of any contribution in actual cash.

The Famous Five when they came into the Rag after prep heard the matter being discussed; indeed, Bolsover made his loud voice a little louder than usual for their behalf.

"Jolly good idea! Blessed if I know how a fathead like Bunter thought of it," he declared.

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Some fellows may be too stingy to contribute," said Bolsover major, still more loudly. "But there are plenty of fellows willing to whack out for a good thing like this."

"You see," said Bunter, "we're practically certain to get the pudding—"



The heavy stones left Bunter's hand and went crashing through the windows of the chauffeur's garage.

time you fellows can lend me something. It's only a pound, anyhow—and a splendid pudding. We fix it up in a nice box, tied with ribbon, with 'Merry Christmas' on top, a sprig of holly, and so on—everything tasteful and nice. We present it to Quelch—"

"Is this a scheme to lay Quelch up over the Christmas holidays?" asked Nugent. "If he ate a Christmas pudding I fancy we shouldn't see him again next term!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter grinned—the grin of superior wisdom.

"That what I'm coming to," he explained. "Quelch can't scoff Christmas puddings at his age. He would get indigestion, dyspepsia, all sorts of things. At the most he would scoff a slice of it. Well, then, what would he do with the pudding? Stands to reason that he would hand it over to us—"

"Eh?"

"Well, what else could he do with it?" asked Bunter. "See the point? We please the old bean no end by making him a handsome Christmas present—and in the long run we get the pudding ourselves. See?"

"Oh crickey!"

"Bit diplomatic—what?" smiled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no doubt that it was diplomatic. Only a brilliant intellect like Bunter's could have evolved such a masterly scheme as this.

"You're backing me up, of course?" said Bunter. "I really think it's the wheeze of the term. Quelch deserves

"Bosh!"

"Beasts!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of Study No. 1, leaving the Famous Five chuckling, in search of other support for the wheeze of the term.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. The Present for Quelch!

"JOLLY good idea!" said Skinner heartily.

"Ripping!" said Bolsover major.

"Bright!" said Snoop.

Billy Bunter beamed.

Peter Todd had turned the great idea down. The Famous Five had called it rot! It was quite gratifying to Bunter to find hearty appreciation like this among Skinner & Co.

Bolsover major, perhaps, took up the idea simply because the Famous Five didn't. Bolsover had a desire to show the leaders of the Form that the Form

"Shut up," said Bolsover, frowning. "That's like you, Bunter—always a measly little beast."

"Look here—"

"Still, more likely than not Quelch will hand it over to the Form," said Bolsover. "I don't quite see what else he can do with it."

"I say, you fellows, he's sure to be pleased, and it will show him what a lot we think of him, and—"

"Well, we don't think much of him, as a matter of fact," said Bolsover major. Bolsover was nothing if not contradictory. "Still, it's always a good wheeze to stroke down a Form master's fur the right way, like a cat's. He can't help being pleased, even if he refuses the gift."

Bolsover took out a notebook and pencil.

"The pudding costs a pound," he said. "Twenty contributions of a bob each will do the trick. I'll make the collection."

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"I say, Bolsover, I'll make the collection," objected Bunter. "It's jolly well my idea, you know—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But look here, you beast—"

"Shut up!" roared Bolsover major, in a voice that made the fat junior jump.

And Bunter unwillingly shut up. Now that Bolsover major had condescended to take up the matter, he took over the direction of affairs as a matter of course. Bunter found himself a very unimportant person in the carrying out of his own scheme. But that was Bolsover's way.

"Where are you going, Snoop?" called out Bolsover major, as Sidney James Snoop made a strategic movement towards the door.

"I—I've got a letter to write—"

"What about your bob?"

Snoop did not seem to hear that. He vanished from the Rag.

"Now then, Skinner—"

"The fact is, I'm rather hard up," said Skinner blandly. "I think it's a splendid idea—splendid! But—"

"I'm starting the subscription with a two-shilling-piece," said Bolsover major.

"Now, then, Bunter—"

"Put me down for ten bob," said Bunter recklessly.

"My hat! You've got the money?" ejaculated Bolsover.

"I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"You silly ass!" roared Bolsover major. "How much can you put up in cash?"

"I—I've only got a French penny—"

"You fat idiot! Now, then, Stott—"

"Threepence," said Stott.

"We're getting on," said Bolsover major sarcastically. "Hallo, here's Fishy! How much are you standing, Fishy?"

"Eh?" Fisher T. Fish gave him an inquiring look. "What's the game?"

"Christmas present for Quelch! How much are you contributing?"

Fisher T. Fish looked at him. He seemed almost dazed at the idea of anyone asking him to give away something for nothing. It cost Fishy an effort to give something for something! To give something for nothing seemed to him the last syllable in lunacy.

"Waal, I swow!" he gasped. "I guess you're loco! Quelch ain't going to give us Christmas presents, is he?"

"No, you boney ass!"

"Then I kinder guess that I ain't giving him one!" said Fisher T. Fish emphatically. "Forget it, you gink! Wash it out, you bonehead!"

And Fisher T. Fish walked away with an indignant snort. The mere suggestion that he should part with money he took as an insult to his Transatlantic intelligence.

"I say, Toddy, what are you putting up?" asked Bolsover major.

"I'm putting up with your jaw, old bean," answered Toddy.

"He, he, he!"

"What about you, Squiff?"

"Nothing about me, old scout," answered Samson Quincy Ilfrey Field.

"Smithy, you've got lots of money—"

"And lots of sense to look after it!" answered the Bounder.

Bolsover major gave a snort. His own two-shilling piece, and Stott's threepence represented the collection so far. The fund did not seem to be thriving. The fellows who seemed to approve of it most seemed likely to contribute to it the least.

"Better make it a tin of toffee instead of a Christmas pudding, Bolsover!" called out Bob Cherry.

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"Or a bag of tarts!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bolsover major stalked over to the Famous Five.

"We're going to make Quelch a Christmas present!" he snapped. "I think it's a jolly good idea, if you don't!"

"Because we don't, you mean," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"The becausefulness is terrific!"

"Well, don't be mean!" said Bolsover witheringly. "Shell out, and don't be stingy! You'll get your whack in the pudding if Quelch hands it over to the Form; and he's practically bound to."

Thus adjured, the Famous Five sorted out a shilling each, and the sum of five shillings was handed over.

"Well, that's decent of you," said Bolsover major, mollified. "Look here, you can manage the affair on equal terms with me if you like, Wharton."

"Leave it to you, partner," answered the captain of the Remove politely.

"I say, you fellows, you'd better make me treasurer—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's my idea, you know!" hooted Bunter. "I think the money ought to be placed in my hands. It will be safe there."

"Safe to stick to!" grinned Peter Todd.

"Look here, I insist on being treasurer—yaroooooh! If you kick me again, Bolsover, you beast, I'll—Yooooooop!"

"That's seven-and-threepence!" said Bolsover major, as Bunter, roaring, retired out of boot-range. "Now, you men, play up! You've got lots of oof, Newland."

Monty Newland smilingly contributed half a crown.

"Nine-and-ninence!" said Bolsover major. "We're getting on. Did you say two bob, Ogilvy?"

"No," said Ogilvy, "I didn't!"

"What do you say, then?"

"Rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There seemed to be more merriment than enthusiasm, in the Rag, on the subject of Mr. Quelch's Christmas present.

But Bolsover major was a stickler. Having set his hand to the plough, he would not draw back. His prestige was at stake.

He canvassed up and down the Rag and the Remove studies for contributions, and they came in; though generally in very small sums. Even Skinner, under pressure, contributed sixpence.

It was true that Skinner did not contribute that sixpence, until Bolsover had banged his head on the wall. Still, he did contribute it at last, and every little helped. Snoop found that he had a threepenny-bit—after observing Bolsover's methods with Skinner.

By the time Wingate of the Sixth drove the Removites off to their dormitory, Bolsover major had succeeded in collecting the necessary pound. He had a rather remarkable collection of coins—mostly copper and small silver. Still, a pound was a pound, whatever might be its component parts. The Christmas pudding was an assured thing now.

"I'll cut down to Courtfield on my bike to-morrow, and get the pudding at Chunkley's," said Bolsover major, after lights out, from his bed. "They'll give me a box with it. And a sprig of holly."

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter, "I'd better go! I know more about puddings than Bolsover does!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can rely on me to bring it back safe—"

"Safe inside!" chuckled Skinner.

"Too safe," said Bob Cherry. "That pudding would never be seen again, unless by the X-rays!"

"Beast!"

"I'm going for it," said Bolsover major. "Shut up, Bunter! In fact, I think I'd better make the presentation to Quelch, in class, too."

"Why; you cheeky beast!" roared Bunter. "Isn't it my wheeze from beginning to end? I'm going to make the presentation—with a speech. I've got lines to do for Quelch—and they've been doubled. He will let me off the lines when I've given him a Christmas present—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" bawled Bolsover major.

"Oh, draw it mild, Bolsover!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "It's Bunter's idea—for what it's worth—and it's up to Bunter to make the presentation!"

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly.

Bolsover major grunted. Having taken the matter into his own lordly hands, Bolsover was disposed to go the whole hog, so to speak. However, he said no more on that point; but it was settled that Bolsover should fetch the pudding from Courtfield. Had Bunter fetched it, there was little doubt that it would have reached Greyfriars as an inside passenger.

The next day, after morning school, Bolsover major cycled down to Courtfield. He returned with a parcel on his bike.

The parcel was opened in the Rag; and many admiring eyes were fixed on Quelch's Christmas present.

It really was a very nice and substantial Christmas pudding. There was not a man in the Remove who would not have accepted such a Yuletide gift with his very best thanks.

"What a ripping pudding!" said Bunter. "Fairly makes my mouth water! I say, you fellows, won't Quelch be pleased when he gets it!"

Whether a middle-aged Form master would be equally delighted, was perhaps doubtful. But if not the actual pudding itself, at least the kind thoughtfulness of his Form was bound to please the Remove master. As in the case of the man who presented his friend with a frog preserved in brandy, it would be valued not so much for the gift itself as for the spirit in which it was given.

"I say, you fellows!" exclaimed Bunter, with a gloating eye on the pudding. "I—I say—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I've got an idea—"

"Go and boil it!" growled Bolsover major.

"Oh, really, you beast—"

"What's the big idea now, Bunter?" asked Peter Todd.

"Well, come to think of it," said Bunter, eyeing the pudding lovingly, "old Quelch mayn't be keen on puddings, and it's not absolutely certain that he will hand it over to us, so—so let's eat it now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

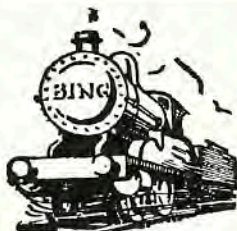
"I say, you fellows, I've got a pocket-knife here—Yaroooooooh!" roared Bunter, as Bolsover major smote.

Bunter rolled under the table.

His second brilliant idea was not acted on. The pudding was enclosed in the box again, and tied up with a nice ribbon, in which a sprig of holly was

(Continued on page 24.)

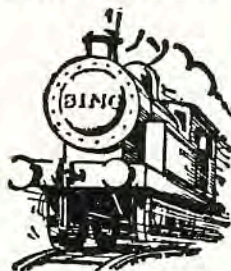
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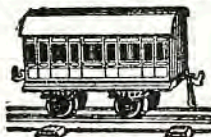
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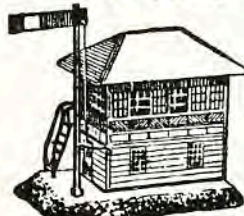
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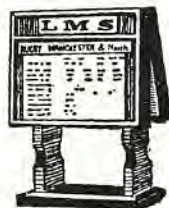
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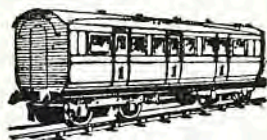
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## QUELCHY'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT!

(Continued from page 22.)

stack. On the lid Bolsover major wrote in a large hand:

"WITH BEST WISHES FROM THE REMOVE FOR A MERRY CHRISTMAS."

Then Bolsover major carried the box off to his study, for safe disposal, till afternoon school. And most of the Remove men looked forward to the afternoon, and to seeing a pleased, gratified smile dawn upon the crusty features of Henry Samuel Quelch when, in the presence of the whole Form, he received his Christmas present from the fat hand of William George Bunter.

### THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

#### Quite A Surprise!

**S**NOWBALLS were flying in the quadrangle after dinner that day, and Skinner of the Remove stood at the window in the Remove passage, looking down on the scene. The fall of snow had been welcomed by most of the Remove, and they were enjoying themselves before afternoon school. Coker of the Fifth, crossing the quad with his usual lofty stride, his head held high as became so great a man, found himself suddenly the mark for many missiles—and quite an exciting game was going on. Coker was charging right and left in towering wrath, the cheery Removites scattering before his wild charges, and piling in snowballs from all directions at Coker.

Almost every man in the Remove was joining in that cheery game—except Skinner. Skinner watched from the window for a few minutes, and then strolled back along the Remove passage. Snoop joined him there.

"All serene!" said Skinner. "Come on!"

Snoop chuckled. They entered Bolsover major's study together.

"Keep an eye on the passage," said Skinner. "It won't take long! But if that rotter Bolsover came in—"

"Buck up!" said Snoop.

"What-ho!"

Skinner quickly untied the ribbon on the pudding-box. He opened the lid, and lifted out the Christmas pudding.

Then he unwrapped something he had brought into the study under his arm.

"It cost three bob!" he remarked regretfully. "But the jape's worth it, Snoop."

"Quite!" chuckled Snoop.

"Eighteenpence for each of us," said Skinner. "But, after all, we get the pudding, what?"

"We do!" grinned Snoop.

"That's cheap at three bob," said Skinner.

"And Quelch will get his Christmas present all the same," chortled Snoop.

"Fancy his face when he gets it!"

"And fancy Bunter's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner fastened to the bottom of the box the object he had unwrapped. He squeezed it down in place, for when left to itself, the peculiar object rose far above the top of the box. He shut down the lid, and secured it with the ribbon.

"That's done!" he said. "Better cut."

"You bet!" agreed Snoop.

He peered out into the Remove passage. The coast was clear, and the two young rascals hurriedly quitted Bolsover's study, and scudded along the passage to Study No. 11. From Study

No. 11, for some time afterwards, there was a sound of champing jaws. Undoubtedly that Christmas pudding from Chunkley's was a very nice one. Both Skinner and Snoop agreed on that.

When Skinner and Snoop rejoined the Remove shortly before afternoon school, they had a rather sticky and shiny look, and were breathing rather hard. Quite a lot of the pudding was left, in deep concealment in Skinner's study—but Skinner and Snoop had disposed of rather more than was good for them, and they were feeling a little languid.

Still, they were looking forward to the presentation in the Form-room as keenly as any of the Removites, perhaps even a little more keenly.

At the clang of the bell, Bolsover major hurried up to his study, and came down with the box under his arm.

Skinner and Snoop eyed it rather curiously, and exchanged a grinning glance. Outwardly, the box showed no sign of having been tampered with. Inwardly, it was a different matter.

But the "true inwardness" of that box was as yet a secret.

Billy Bunter held out a fat hand.

"Hand it over, old chap!" he said.

"Look here, this had better be left to me," said Bolsover major. "You'll only make a muck of it, you fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Leave it in my hands."

"I say, you fellows, make him gimme the box!" yelled Billy Bunter, in great indignation. "It was my idea! I say, Quelch gave me a hundred lines for being late when I went to Folkestone,

How's this for a clever Greyfriars Limerick?

There's a Greyfriars fellow named Greene  
Who with Coker is generally seen.  
But he's always moody  
If Coker's Aunt Judy  
Doesn't send them a cake or a "bean."

A pocket wallet has been forwarded to Dennis Merriman, 2, Devonshire Road, Cambridge, who sent in the above winning effort.

and they've been doubled because they weren't done, and—"

"Shut up!"

"Shan't!" hooted Bunter. "Quelch will let me off the lines if I give him that Christmas present. He's bound to. Look here—"

"If you want a thick ear, Bunter—"

"Cluck it, Bolsover!" interrupted the captain of the Remove. "It's Bunter's wheeze, and Bunter makes the giddy presentation. Give him the box."

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry.

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

Bolsover major hesitated. In his usual overbearing way he preferred to keep the matter in his own hands.

But public opinion was evidently against him, and he handed over the box at last to the Owl of the Remove with a grunt.

"Now go it, fatty!" said Frank Nugent.

Bunter grinned complacently.

He rolled on to the Form-room with the box under a fat arm. The Remove were rather early for class, and Mr. Quelch had not yet arrived.

The juniors took their places, and Bunter placed the box on his desk before him.

"I say, you fellows, mind you're ready to cheer when I make the presentation," he said. "I'm going to make a little speech first—a few well-chosen words, you know—"

"Stick to the few," said Bob. "Never mind the well-chosen."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You shut up, Cherry," said Bunter. "I'm managing this! Mind you cheer when the time comes. It's time old Quelch was here! He's always keeping a fellow waiting—"

There was a step in the Form-room passage.

Mr. Quelch entered the Form-room.

He glanced over his Form. A less keen eye than Henry Samuel Quelch's would have detected at once that something unusual was on.

Mr. Quelch frowned a little. There was an air of expectation about the Removites, and many faces wore smiles. The Remove master suspected that something in the nature of a "jape" was on.

His glance rested on Bunter, and on the box that reposed on the desk in front of the fat junior.

"Bunter!" rapped out Quelch.

"Yes, sir! I—"

"Have you written your lines?"

"Nunno, sir! I—"

"If they are not handed to me after tea, Bunter, you will be caned. And what do you mean, Bunter, by bringing that object, whatever it is, into the Form-room?" demanded Mr. Quelch crossly.

Bunter gasped. It was just like Quelch to spoil the whole thing by beginning in this way!

"You—you see, sir—"

"I do not see, Bunter! You are very well aware that you are not allowed to bring extraneous objects into the Form-room."

"Yes, sir! No, sir! But, sir—"

"Go it, Bunter!" whispered Skinner.

Bunter picked up the box and advanced before the class. Mr. Quelch watched him with a grim gimlet eye.

"The—the fact is, sir—" stuttered Bunter.

"You may place that box in the waste-paper basket, Bunter."

"Oh, sir! No, sir! You see, sir—I—I— It—it's a Christmas present, sir."

"This is absurd," said Mr. Quelch. "If anyone has sent you a Christmas present to the school, Bunter, you should not bring it into the Form-room."

"I—I don't mean that, sir. I mean it's—"

"Well, what do you mean?" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"I—I mean—" Bunter stammered, trying to recollect the little speech he had rehearsed for the great occasion. But under the grim gimlet eye he was hopelessly confused. "I mean, sir, it's a token of respect and affection of the Remove for a Christmas pudding, sir."

"What?"

"I—I mean, for their Form master, sir. For you, sir. Admiring and respecting our pudding—I mean, our Form master as we do, sir, we thought—"

"Are you in your right senses, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Then what do you mean?"

"I—I mean, we—we wish you to accept this—this gift, sir, as a token of our respect and affection, sir!" gasped Bunter, getting it out at last. "We all agree, sir, that you are not such a beast as most Form masters—"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"I—I mean, that you are not a beast at all, sir!" gasped Bunter. "And—being Christmas, sir, we've bought you a present, regardless of expense."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

"A—a Christmas present for you, sir, from the Remove!" gasped Bunter, and he held up the box.

Mr. Quelch's face relaxed.

Billy Bunter collided with Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh and sent them sprawling!



"Indeed!" he said.

"Yes, sir. We—we hope you'll like it, sir. It's really prime. It was my idea, sir. If the other fellows make out that it was their idea, sir, don't you believe them. I thought of it first, and did the whole thing."

"It is quite impossible for me to accept a present from my Form," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "However, I shall assume that your intention was good."

"Oh, yes, sir! We—we thought you'd like it, sir, as—as it's specially appropriate to Christmas-time, and— and won't you open the box, sir?"

Mr. Quelch hesitated a moment, and then he took the box and untied the bows of the ribbon.

"Certainly I cannot accept a present from my Form," he said, but his tone was quite kindly now. "But if it is intended as a mark of respect and esteem I thank you! Certainly I will look at it. I—"

The lid of the box was now unfastened.

Mr. Quelch was about to raise it. But he did not need to do so.

Now that the lid was unfastened it shot up, as if there were a spring inside.

The lid fell back.

From the box emerged a painted wooden clown's head at the end of a long, coiled spring.

Mr. Quelch jumped, and almost dropped the box.

Bunter gasped.

The Remove looked on spellbound.

It seemed like magic—horrid magic—to the Removes. A Christmas pudding had been fastened up in that box under all their eyes. They had naturally supposed that it was still there. Instead of which, a jack-in-the-box leaped to view as soon as the lid was

open, and swayed there, nodding its ridiculous head at the astounded Form master.

Mr. Quelch gazed at it.

Bunter gazed, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

The Remove gazed.

For a long moment a pin might have been heard to drop in the Form-room.

Then there was a gasp—a gasp of horror.

On Mr. Quelch's speaking countenance an expression was gathering that might have stricken terror to the stoutest heart.

He tried to speak, but found some difficulty in doing so, so deep were his emotions.

He found his voice at last.

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"Bunter, how dare you!" Having found his voice, Mr. Quelch proceeded to use it in tones of thunder.

"Wretched boy!"

"Oh lor'!"

"This," boomed Mr. Quelch—"this is an insult. It is an intentional insult! Upon my word!"

"Oh, sir! No, sir! I—I—I— It's a trick!" babbled Bunter. "Somebody's got at it. Oh dear! Oh lor'! Oh crikey!"

"It is indeed a trick! The most impudent, the most insolent, the most outrageous trick I have ever heard of in all my career as a schoolmaster!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Crash!

The box was hurled to the floor.

It landed there with a crash that split it into several pieces, and the jack-in-the-box sat amidst the ruins, still nodding genially. Jack, in the box, was the only person present who seemed at all unconcerned.

Mr. Quelch made a stride to his desk. He grabbed his cane.

"Bunter!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Bend over!"

"But, sir—"

"Obey me this instant, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

"Do you hear me, Bunter?" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Ow!"

Bunter bent over in dire dismay.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow, ow, ow!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow, ow, ow!"

"Go to your place! The whole Form will be detained until six o'clock, Wharton!"

"Oh! Yes, sir."

"Take that—that ridiculous object from the Form-room and—and throw it away!"

"C-c-certainly sir."

The ridiculous object disappeared. Under the gleaming eye of Mr. Quelch the Remove fairly quailed. That afternoon the Lower Fourth had the time of their lives. Some of them had their consolations. Bolsover major was glad from the bottom of his heart that the presentation had been left in Bunter's hands. Skinner and Snoop had the happy prospect of disposing of the remainder of the pudding that evening. But for the rest there was no solace, and they really felt that life was hardly worth living long before six chimed from the clock tower of Greyfriars. Woofullest of all was Bunter. Never, never again, so long as Greyfriars had a local habitation and a name, was Billy Bunter likely to think of making his Form master a Christmas present.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,139.

### THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER. Bunter's Last Chance!

"SEEN Mauly?"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Oh really, you fellows—"  
"Puzzle, find Mauly!"  
chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Blest if I see anything to cackle at! I'm going home with Mauly for Christmas. I told him so—I mean, he asked me—a very pressing invitation. Now I can't find him," said Bunter.

Lord Maulverer had disappeared early on breaking-up day. Perhaps it was because his lordship knew that Billy Bunter intended to go home with him for Christmas.

Anyhow, he had disappeared. Quite bright and early a magnificent car had called for Mauly, and borne him away to parts unknown. In the kindness of their hearts the Famous Five had taken Bunter to the tuckshop while Mauly disappeared. After which Mauly, naturally, was not to be found.

"He can't have started without me," ejaculated Bunter. "I told him plainly I was coming with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you beasts, where's Mauly?" yelled Bunter.

"O where and O where can he be?" sang Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter breathed hard and deep. The dreadful truth dawned on his fat mind.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, is he gone?"

"Gone from our gaze like a beautiful dream!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, I never wanted to go home with Mauly for Christmas," said Bunter. "He fairly chivvied me into it, you know, and I said yes in my good-natured way. The fact is, I never meant to desert my old pals. I wouldn't, you know, at Christmas-time. When are you fellows starting?"

"The whenfulness is terrific."  
"Are you taking the first bus or the second?" asked Bunter.

"Which are you taking?" asked Johnny Bull.

"The first."

"Then we're taking the second."

"Look here, you know, you don't want to miss me at the station—"

"Your mistake!" said Bob Cherry.

"That's just what we do want."

"The wantfulness is preposterous."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" Bunter contributed a feeble cackle. "You fellows will have your little joke! He, he, he! You'll see me at the station! I'll take the second bus."

"Then we'll take the first."

"Beasts!"

It was quite an anxious time for William George Bunter. That delightful residence, Bunter Court, seemed to have lost its attractions for William George, now that the school was breaking up for Christmas. Glorious and gorgeous, according to Bunter, were the Yuletide celebrations at that magnificent mansion; the cream of the peerage, and a prince or two, were going to be there, yet Bunter was not eager to join that distinguished throng. He preferred, as he said, Christmas with his old pals. The difficulty was that this preference was strictly confined to Bunter; the old pals had very different ideas on the subject.

So the fat junior had to be wary that day.

Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent and Bob Cherry were in the first bus. They were going home, to rejoin the captain of the Remove later at Wharton Lodge. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was going with Wharton; and so was Billy Bunter—if he could contrive it.

Bunter watched the second bus with an eye like an hawk's. He took an early seat in it, and waited for Wharton and Hurree Singh to step aboard.

But they did not join the crowd there.

When the bus was full, and about to start, Bunter blinked out anxiously for the chums of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, Wharton will be left behind!" he exclaimed.

"Eh? Wharton's gone," said Peter Todd.

"Gone?"

"Yes; they're walking."

"Oh! Oh dear! The beasts! Here, let a fellow pass—I'm getting out. I say, you fellows, did they walk to Friar-dale or Courtfield?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter jumped out of the bus. It rolled away and left him. The bus was going to Friar-dale, and for that reason Bunter shrewdly guessed that his intended victims had walked to Courtfield. They were, as Bunter bitterly realised, dodging him—dodging an old pal! But William George Bunter was not to be dodged, if he could help it!

He approached Gosling. Gosling's usually crusty face melted into a smile. Christmas tips had come Gosling's way, and mollified his usually crusty temper; besides, he was not going to see the Greyfriars fellows again till next term, so life seemed good to Gosling. From Billy Bunter, certainly, he did not expect a tip; but here was Bunter, specially seeking him out—and Gosling smiled.

"Merry Christmas, sir!" said Gosling.

"Did you see them go?"

"Eh?"

"I've missed my pals," explained Bunter. "Wharton and Inky—did you see them start?"

"More'n an hour ago, sir," said Gosling cheerfully. "Asked me to see the boxes on, sir, and 'anded out a very handsome tip, sir! Very generous young gentlemen, sir!"

This was a hint.

But Bunter was deaf to hints.

"More than an hour ago!" he gasped. "Oh crumbs! The beasts! Oh dear!"

He did not hand Gosling a tip. He did not even wish him a merry Christmas. He turned away—dismayed. The beasts had an hour's start of him, and the game was up. The smile faded off Gosling's crusty face. Its expression was more crusty than ever. But Billy Bunter did not heed Gosling. He had much more important matters to think of.

Bunter stood in the road, and blinked in the direction of Courtfield.

He had wild thoughts of telephoning for a taxi. But that would lead to a lot of trouble with the taxi-driver. The beast would want to be paid.

There was a hoot and a whirr, and the Head's car glided into the road, with Barnes at the wheel. Bunter jumped out of the way.

Then, as he observed that the car was empty, Bunter jumped in the way again.

"Barnes! I say, Barnes! Hold on, Barnes!"

Barnes looked at him.

"Yes, sir! What is it?"

"You going to Courtfield?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes, sir; I have to meet the train."

"Give me a lift!" gasped Bunter.

"Really, sir—"

Bunter dragged open the door of the car and bolted in. Barnes stared round at him.

"Really, sir—" he repeated.

"Get a move on!" said Bunter cheerfully. "If you've got to meet a train you'd better not waste time."

Barnes gave him a fixed look. He had to meet the train to pick up a visitor for the Head. Certainly he was not there to give Bunter a lift.

"This isn't allowed, sir," he said.

"You're wasting time!" remarked Bunter.

"I think you'd better get out, sir."

"Shan't!" said Bunter.

Barnes gave him another look. Then he drove on. Bunter settled down in the car and grinned, as it rushed on swiftly to Courtfield.

(Continued on page 28.)

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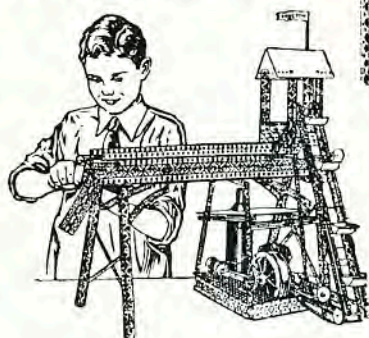
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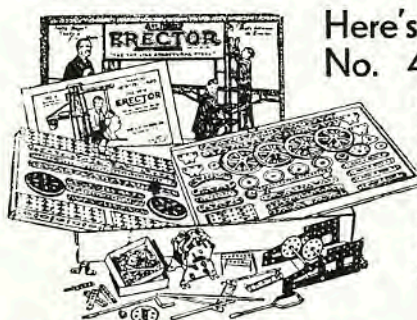


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## QUELCHY'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT!

(Continued from page 26.)

### THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

#### Startling!

**H**ARRY WHARTON smiled. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned.

The two juniors were on the platform at Courtfield Station, waiting for the express to come in.

They were in a cheery mood.

Christmas-tide, and breaking up for Christmas, naturally made them feel cheery. And they had missed Bunter.

"Three minutes," remarked Wharton. "I hardly think that fat oyster will show up in the time."

"The show-upfulness is not likely to be terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The express came in and stopped. The two juniors strolled along the train, and selected a carriage, and stepped into it, and bagged corner seats.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sat down, and Harry Wharton stood at the door, looking out along the platform.

There was no sign of William George Bunter. If the Owl of the Remove had taken the school bus to Friar-dale, he was safely disposed of. If he hadn't, he was safe at Greyfriars. Wharton smiled cheerily.

Then he gave a sudden start.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated.

"The esteemed Bunter?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"No!" gasped Wharton. "My hat! Look! It's the man!"

Hurree Singh looked in astonishment. On the other side of the platform was another train, about to proceed in the other direction.

Stepping into it was a man of rather athletic build, with a clear-cut, clean-shaven face, deep, keen grey eyes, and a square jaw.

Wharton stared at him blankly.

He had never expected to see again the man he had seen that snowy night under the park wall of Hogben Grange, the man whom he more than suspected of being the mysterious crackman. But he had known that if ever he saw him again he would recognise him at a glance. And he certainly recognised him now.

"It's the man!" he gasped.

"My esteemed chum, who—what?"

"The man of Hogben Grange—the burglar!"

"Oh, my preposterous hat!" ejaculated Hurree Singh.

Wharton caught his breath.

"It's the man, Inky! I'd know him anywhere, though I don't suppose he knows I know him. He's taking that train; it will be gone in a minute. Look here, we ought to keep him in sight!"

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"There is timefulness to change trains, my ridiculous chum. Let us keep an absurd eye on the preposterous rascal," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"It won't matter if we get home a bit late," said Harry. "Let's take that train and chance it—what?"

"Let's!" agreed the nabob.

The two juniors jumped out of the express.

They started across the wide platform at a run towards the carriage into which the square-jawed man had stepped in the other train.

He was looking from the window, and his glance fell on the two schoolboys.

He gave a slight start, and Wharton knew that the recognition was mutual.

He hurried on.

No definite plan had formed in Wharton's mind, but he was practically certain that the square-jawed man was the man who was so badly wanted by the police, and his intention was to keep

"Yooop! Oh crumbs! I say, you fellows, where's my specs? Ow, ow! Gerroff! Oh crickey!"

"You silly chump!" shrieked Wharton.

"Yarooogh! Help!"

Wharton dragged himself away and leaped to his feet.

But it was too late!

There was the shriek of a whistle, and the Redclyffe train moved. Wharton made a jump for it, but a porter pulled him back.

"Too late, sir!"

With feelings too deep for words, Harry Wharton stood and watched the train glide out of the station, bearing the square-jawed man out of his sight. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh joined him, gasping, and rubbing the back of his dusky head, which had established contact with the platform rather painfully.

"Done!" grunted Wharton.

"The donefulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"You fat ass!" roared Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say, you'd better get in!" gasped Bunter. "They're shutting the doors; you'll lose your train. Come on! I say, you fellows, wasn't it lucky I got a lift to the station? I might have missed you."

"You—you—" gasped Wharton.

"Come on, old fellows! Have you got a lunch-basket in the train? All right; you can order one at the first stop! I say—Whooooop!" roared Billy Bunter, as two exasperated juniors seized him and sat him down on the platform. "Whooooop! Yooop! Yarooogh!"

"Come on, Inky!" gasped Harry; and the two juniors jumped into the express just in time.

A porter slammed the door after them.

Bunter sat on the platform and spluttered.

"Oh! Wow! I say, you fellows, wait for me! I say—Yow-ow-ow!"

The express was in motion now. From the window, two smiling faces looked at the fat junior sitting on the platform. He blinked at them.

"Good-bye, Bunter!" shouted Wharton. "Merry Christmas, old fat man!"

Bunter scrambled up breathlessly.

"Ow! I say, you fellows—"

"Merry Christmas, Bunter!"

"The merrifulness is terrific!"

"Oh lor!"

The express roared out of the station. Billy Bunter gazed after it. He was still gazing as the express vanished down the line, bearing away the chums of the Remove to a merry Christmas.

THE END.

(Well, chums, have you enjoyed this yarn? Of course you have! It's a ripping series altogether, believe me. Next week's story will prove my words. Make a note of the title: "BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS!" and prepare yourself for a treat!)



Billy Bunter gazed at the departing express as it vanished down the line!

him in sight till he could decide what to do.

He was half-way across the platform when a fat figure came hurtling along from the entrance.

"I say, you fellows!"

Bunter came panting up.

"I say, you fellows! Jolly nearly missed you!" gasped Bunter. "Stop! I say, where are you running to? That ain't your train; that's the local for Redclyffe. I say, you fellows—Yarooooh!"

Billy Bunter spun round like a teetotum as Wharton collided with him.

"You chump!" shrieked Wharton.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter.

He clutched wildly at the two juniors to save himself. He caught Wharton by the arm and Hurree Singh by the neck; then he spun over, dragging both of them down with him.

Bump!

CONTINUATION OF OUR POPULAR SERIAL!

# PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!

By JOHN BREARLEY.



Somebody is trying their hardest to get rid of young Peter Frazer—Ironmaster, even if it means blowing up the foundry, lock, stock and barrel!

## INTRODUCTION.

Head and sole owner of Frazer's Iron Foundry, it is a strange prospect that lies before Peter Frazer, a cheery, strapping youngster of eighteen, when he arrives in the squalid industrial city of Maxport to take over the great business left to him by his dead uncle. Peter soon realises that his legacy has brought danger with it, for he is kidnapped on his way to his new home. Luckily, he escapes, but with only one clue to the identity of his unknown enemy: the man is completely bald, with a terrible jagged scar running across the top of his head. At the works Peter learns from his manager, Mr. Dimmock, that Frazer's Foundry is on the brink of ruin, owing to the activities of a man named Granger and his gang. Peter is determined to fight his enemies tooth and nail, and he starts by knocking out the scoundrelly Granger in a fight and then sacking him. Later, Peter falls into the hands of the gang, and is saved only in the nick of time from a horrible death by an unknown man, who afterwards vanishes without disclosing his identity. Before leaving him to his fate the young ironmaster's captors had told him that they were going to blow up his works, and Peter dashes to the foundry in a desperate attempt to foil their plan. He is just in time, for in the galvanising shed he surprises three of the scoundrels beside a huge bath, and stuns one with a spanner. The others vanish mysteriously, and Peter finds to his amazement that the unconscious man is Moller, his engineer foreman. At that moment one of the foundry hands suggests that they had better find out what the gang had been doing, and Peter agrees.

(Now read on.)

## Panic!

TWO of the foundry-hands brought in the limp figure of Moller and laid him down in the moonlight near the great bath.

By Peter's orders they took off the man's coat and folded it underneath his head.

Watching them abstractedly, he saw one of the men suddenly stiffen. Beneath the florid grime on his face, an ashen pallor spread, and slowly he raised a trembling finger and pointed beneath the bath.

"Look!" he gasped.

So intense was the man's tone that for a second no one moved. Then, with one accord, they bent and stared where he pointed. Under the bath, pushed towards the middle and adjusted carefully on a block of wood, stood a squat

In the nick of time Peter Frazer reached the bomb!

metal canister with coils and a dial. In the fearful hush came softly but clearly a steady ticking sound!

For a space, during which hearts seemed to stop beating, Peter and his men crouched on hands and knees and stared at the bomb.

Then nerves snapped like fiddle-strings, and, cursing and shouting, they fled helter-skelter from the shed, leaving Peter and Sparrow and the unconscious Moller.

Why Sparrow stayed he himself could not have said. If Peter had wavered only a little, the cheerful youth would have beaten all records back to Maxport, so scared was he. Yet as his leader suddenly slid forward and began to wriggle steadily underneath the bath, Sparrow only watched with goggling eyes.

Half way to the bomb Peter twisted his head a little.

"Bath of water!" he muttered, and went on.

Sparrow, on legs that seemed to have run to water, fetched the bath. Some of the men had crept back and were huddled by the door.

Again Peter turned his head. He had reached the bomb, and although he knew nothing about it, was trying with desperate coolness to draw it free without jarring anything.

"Phone police!"

Sparrow darted away again to the foundry telephone, pausing as he went through the door to deliver his opinion of the men in a few choice words.

When he got back again Peter had drawn the canister free!

Gently, his heart bumping painfully, he crawled backwards from beneath the bath and laid the evil thing softly in the water Sparrow had fetched.

Came a brisk patter of footsteps, and into the room stepped the doctor Sparrow had phoned, and behind him Collins and Mr. Dimmock.

Peter stopped them dead with a jerk of his head. Hoisting the bath, he crossed the room steadily, kicked open the door and carried his terrible burden into the centre of the field and laid it down softly. After which, in a sudden wave of sick relief, he sprinted back to the foundry as fast as ever he had run in his life.

He found the doctor busy over Moller, and Mr. Dimmock tearing his near, grey hair and asking questions of everyone. Dodging him neatly, Peter ordered the men back to the neglected furnaces and bent down to assist the doctor. The keen-faced medical man shot a searching glance at him, and shook his head in response to Peter's question.

"Knocked out badly!" he said. "But that's all! No fracture. Glancing blow, I should imagine."

His eyes fell on the spanner.

"Was it that that hit him?"

"Yes."

"Thrown or wielded?"

"Er—thrown!"

"I see. Well, that accounts for the glancing blow. A direct blow with that—"

He nodded significantly, finished his bandaging, and rose briskly. As he did so, there came the tramp of feet and the shed became suddenly full of policemen.

On the bench where he lay stiffly, Moller's eyes flickered open, slowly at first, then became fixed on the stern faces bending over him.

His dark brows under the bandages knitted in a frown of pain, but he appeared to be puzzling something out. His eyes, roving vaguely around, suddenly fell on Peter. They brightened a trifle, then clouded, and finally closed wearily.

"Good!" he murmured sleepily, and as the doctor bent over him gave a sigh and relapsed once more into unconsciousness.

## Peter Becomes Popular!

THE chief inspector of Maxport's police force, nodded solemnly to Peter and Mr. Dimmock, and sank gingerly into the office chair that Jenkins offered, for he was a heavy man and ponderous. The slim, shrewd-faced man accompanying him slipped into another chair. Together they studied Peter Frazer's worried face judiciously. It was the morning following the sensational bomb attempt on Frazer's Foundry.

Having settled himself comfortably, the inspector shook his head slowly.

"A blind alley, Mr. Frazer," he said—"so far. We've placed Moller under arrest in his own home, but, of course, he wasn't able to make a statement until an hour ago."

Peter leant forward anxiously. The inspector's pompous, measured manner of explaining was exasperating.

"Well, what did he say?"

"The man's statement, Mr. Frazer, is this: He spent last evening in

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Maxport until eight o'clock. Then he came home, had supper, and afterwards strolled across the field to the foundry. Reason; to see how Collins was getting on, as he is a new under-foreman, and last night was his first shift. Correct? Good! Well, then the moon came out as he crossed the football field towards the back entrance of the foundry, and a man ran out. Moller missed him, so he entered the works by the back door, and was just inside when three or four other men ran out from the galvanising shed. He said he jumped forward to stop them when something hit him, and then he lost consciousness."

Mr. Dimmock's hand clasped together agitatedly on his desk, bent forward.

"And all this is true, inspector?"

The inspector's solemn gaze swivelled round.

"All true, sir!" he stated definitely. "We've found three witnesses to prove Moller was in town until eight o'clock, in which case he could not have broken in with the others. Also, a lad who works here—Osborne—and his house-keeper were with him until he started out for the foundry."

Peter shoved his hand perplexedly through his black hair.

"Well, inspector, if what you say is right, then Moller's a stout fellow, not only because he came to see how Collins was getting on, but because he tried to tackle three or four men at once. What about them? Any news?"

"No, not yet, sir. But any moment I'm—or—expecting to hear. We've got your descriptions, and—or—the net is out. They'll be caught, never fear. Eh, Smith?"

"Sure, sir!" replied the slim man, speaking for the first time.

"But," declared the inspector forcibly, "Maxport's a deuce of a place in which to find anybody. Smith, here, can vouch for that."

"Oh, quite, sir!" agreed Smith. "We—or—can't find even that cellar you were in, Mr. Frazer. Pity you can't give us more directions!"

Peter was about to reply curtly; but at that minute Mr. Dimmock's pent-up indignation got the better of him. He pounded on the table.

"But, good heavens, Mr. Inspector, if it wasn't Moller, or if Moller isn't mixed up in it, then you're at a dead end! Then there's the little man who fixed up the bomb. Why, good gracious, another outrage may follow at any moment while the gang's at large! It's perfectly monstrous!"

The inspector's fleshy mouth pursed disapprovingly. His solemn grey eyes surveyed the manager with displeasure.

"All in good time, sir," he said coldly. "I've already arranged for police protection for everyone concerned, and also for this foundry. About the men. This man Moller was not among them. That's final, and you can take it from me!"

Mr. Dimmock being repulsed, Peter took up another point that had been worrying him.

"Well, inspector, what the dickens was the outrage supposed to be? You know what happened to me down at the docks—someone wants to get rid of me badly. But they said they'd ruin the foundry as well! What they did was to fix up a bomb beneath the galvanising bath. Not the mills, or the furnaces, but the bath!"

The inspector settled still further into his chair.

"That attempt to drown you last night was nothing, sir," he said "That is,"

he added, as Peter grinned and Mr. Dimmock snorted, "it wasn't part of the original scheme. They had a plan, and a neat one at that, to damage your foundry so much that it'd ruin you to make it good. That was all cut and dried! When you butted in on them in the beer-house, they thought they'd make a complete job, damage the works and—or—remove you!"

"I understand," replied Peter slowly. "But still I don't see what the damage was going to be! A new bath'd cost a pretty penny, but, dash it, it wouldn't ruin us!"

For answer, the big inspector looked inquiringly towards the slim Mr. Smith.

"The bomb is a timed one," said that gentleman softly.

"Timed—a time fuse?"

"Ay!" Leisurely Mr. Smith pulled out his watch and examined it. "Due to go off ten minutes from now, as a matter of fact!"

Just as slowly he rose to his feet and strolled to the window.

"Look here, sir!"

Wonderingly the others followed him, and from where they stood they could just see through a big window into the galvanising shed. The place was a-bustle with busy men and youths working around the great bath and at the trucks.

"Well?" snapped Mr. Dimmock.

"What is a galvanising bath filled with, sir?" asked the slim official.

"Well, molten metal mostly, and other—"

Mr. Smith raised a thin hand, smiling faintly.

"Quite. And the bomb is a timed one—due to go off in a few minutes from now!" He waved his hand curiously towards the window. "If that man hadn't bent down and discovered the bomb last night—"

For a full moment, as Mr. Smith's meaning sunk home, neither Peter nor his manager spoke. Joy hands seemed suddenly to clutch at the young iron-master's heart, and for a second his steady nerve was shaken.

Before his eyes a picture was growing of the great bath filled with acid suddenly exploding among that roomful of men, the air filled with flying, searing metal and iron fragments! White as death, he stared with fascinated eyes at the cool little police official, and as full realisation swept over him, he felt sick and faint.

"The fiends!"

A great hand descended on his shoulder, shaking him. It was the inspector, and he wheeled the lad away from the window, a kindly smile on his important face.

"But thanks to you, Mr. Frazer, they were dished!" he said expressively. His hand engulfed Peter's. "You're a plucky chap, sir," he went on. "But still more important, you've saved many lives! Those fellows yonder'll feel different towards you when they hear the news. Congratulations, sir. You have my respects. For all you know, that bomb might have gone off in your face!"

But Peter was too dazed to heed him, and stared through the man blankly.

"Twice they've tried to do me in," he muttered fiercely; "but, by golly, to nearly drown me and then try to kill my workmen—"

The inspector thumped one great fist into the other.

"It's in our hands now, sir! From now on you're under police protection—and the works, too!"

"And about time, too!" snapped Mr. Dimmock icily.

With a final warm handshake, the police officers departed, and Peter and his manager eyed each other anxiously. For the first time since he had taken up his task doubt crept into the youngster's heart! For himself, he must take a chance, but was he justified in risking the lives of other men and lads? Abruptly he put the question to his manager.

"Peter, it's up to you!" Mr. Dimmock replied. "If you feel like that, then sell out, lad." He laid a fatherly hand on the young master's shoulder. "I don't know what to advise for the best! Think it over!"

Peter felt the older man meant to be comforting, but why should he be driven out of his inheritance by these fiends, these cowards who struck at him through other men?

Peter then left the room, and as he stepped into the yard and across to the foundry, a sudden blind rage against the unknown Scarred Man took possession of him. He felt as the old Berserkers must have done! For just five minutes with his enemy—

With fists tightly clenched and jaw set, all unconsciously, he strode through the huge doors and into the mill-room. The roar of the place, the glow and flash of the furnaces and the clang of crashing iron, fitted in with his mood, and he stood there, head flung back, taking it all in—Frazer's foundry—his foundry!

"Give it up—"

Suddenly through his thoughts it dawned on him that men were charging from all parts of the building, that most of the clatter had stopped, that others were pouring in from all over the works and through other doors, and each and every one of them was coming straight at him.

His mind flashed back to his first day. It was thus they had approached him as he stood with his back to the gates, desperately intent on stopping them from leaving their work flat.

He braced himself as then for their charge; then, wonderingly, he saw that every approaching face wore a great beaming grin beneath its grime, and suddenly a deafening cheer rent the air!

"Up with him, boys!"

The words swelled into a great rolling roar. Peter smiled and fell back, protesting, but a huge stoker, black and shiny, jumped forward and gripped him. Then they were all around him.

Great grimy hands clutched at his and wrung them friendlily, smote him on the back till he was in a maze; then great hands swept him into the air above the cheering, swaying crowd of men, and finally out into the air and on to the football field.

There the men let themselves go! Cheer after cheer rolled out, and Peter, swaying and gasping, was allowed at last to slip to the ground. The men spread around him in a grinning, excited circle.

Many hands reached out then, and propelled Collins, the new under-foreman, forward. He should have been at home, but he stumbled forward towards his dazed and dishevelled employer and grasped his limp hand in a firm grasp.

"Sir, the boys are trying to thank you for what you did last night! If that bomb hadn't been discovered an' ye hadn't fished it out, then, Mr. Frazer, there's many here now as'd be dead, and others injured for life."

(See next week's MAGNET for the continuation of this magnificent serial, boys!)



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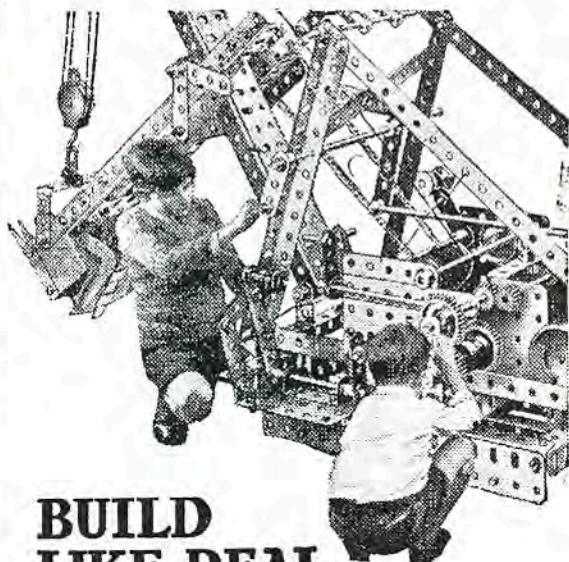
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