

BUMPER FEAST OF CHRISTMAS FUN AND FICTION—INSIDE!

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The **MAGNET**

EVERY SATURDAY.

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Bunter comes to Stay!

BILLY BUNTER PERFORMS—UNINTENTIONALLY!

(A screamingly funny incident from this week's ripping story of Gregfriars.)

ONCE MORE—A Happy Christmas to All My Readers—Editor.



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.).

AN exciting week this, isn't it, chums? You've already had our Christmas Number, but you'll be reading these lines of mine round about

Christmas-time, although I'm writing them in advance. I have already handed on to my own good wishes, together with those of our contributors and staff, so, instead of looking backward, let's look ahead!

There's one good thing to be thankful for—longer days are coming! The 21st of this month is the shortest day of the year, so from now onward you fellows can begin to make plans for taking advantage of the increased daylight. In the meanwhile, however, I guess you're making the most of things, and are just in the throes of the delights of Christmas-time!

Would you like to know my

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION,

which I am going to do my best to carry out? Here it is: I intend to keep the MAGNET the best boy's paper on the market—which is saying something in these days of competition. But it's a go, chums, as you'll see. So look out for some extra special issues in the near future!

I wasn't able to deal with many readers' queries last week, so this week I'd better try to clear up some of those which have accumulated on my desk, waiting to be answered. The first is a topical question, and deals with

THE CHRISTMAS PANTOMIME.

I've always been interested in pantomimes, and you may be sure that I'll be found at some of the London theatres this week enjoying the spectacle which has come to be associated specially with this period of the year. Bob Walker, of Jarrow, wants to know who invented the pantomime, and if it was the famous comedian, Dan Leno, who did so? I'm afraid it wasn't, although Dan certainly became the best-known pantomime comedian in the world. "Pantos" were known to the ancient Greeks, and were also introduced on the Roman stage as long ago as 22 B.C. Needless to say, they weren't the same kind of pantos which we have nowadays. The modern pantomime dates from 1717, when a theatrical manager named John Rich introduced one at Lincoln's Inn Theatre, London. The title of this first pantomime certainly didn't suggest comic production, for it was called a "Harlequin Executed!"

ALITTLE while ago a reader asked me: "Who were the Myrmidons?" This week another reader asks:

WHO WERE THE ILLYRIANS?

The answer is: "Natives of Illyria," of course; but my reader wants to know if there is a country named Illyria. There was, but not now. It was on the shores of the Adriatic, and Shakespeare places the action of "Twelfth Night" in that country. Incidentally there is a very well-known amateur dramatic society in London which is called "The Illyrians"—the reason being that their first production

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was "Twelfth Night," so they took the name of their society from the play.

Do any of you fellows know how to make

A SNOWSTORM IN A GLASS BALL?

E. B., of Torquay, doesn't, so he has asked me to "put him wise," as Fisher T. Fish would say. I dare say many of you have seen those little glass balls which are sold in shops, and contain little models of houses. When they are shaken up flakes of snow begin to fall and cover the model and the ground with white. They are quite easy to make, and this is the way:

Get the smallest goldfish globe you can, and fit it with a flat cork to make it quite watertight. Then construct a little model of a church or a cottage, and paint it with oil paints that will stand water. Pin the model to the underside of the cork, and add a twig or two to give the appearance of trees in winter. Now fill the globe entirely with water, and grate either coconut or Brazil nut until you have sufficient flakes to form a "storm." Put the flakes into the water, and then insert the model which is on the underside of the cork. Press the cork well in, and to make it quite watertight, cover it with sealing wax.

When everything is ready, turn the globe upside down, standing it on the cork. The flakes of nut will drift down slowly over the model, giving the appearance of a snowstorm. You can repeat the "storm" as many times as you like by simply shaking the bowl and thus setting the flakes floating in the water.

Got that? Right! Now have a laugh at this yarn which earns a penknife for Miss Dorothy Jones, of 70, Kingsley Road, Starbeck, Harrogate.

A QUIET SUGGESTION!

Tommy (at Christmas-time):
"What are you going to buy me for Christmas, dad?"
Father: "Er—er, something to keep you quiet, sonny."

Tommy: "Well, you'll have to buy me a drum, dad!"

Have you won a penknife yet? If not, why not? I've still got a good stock of them on hand, and am just waiting to hand them out to you! Somebody's got to have them, and it might as well be you!

While you are racking your brains for a good yarn to send along I'll return to the task of answering some more posers. I wonder how many readers realise

HOW A TUBE IS BUILT

—a "tube" railway, of course, I mean. "Country Reader" asks me to give him a few details this week. To begin with the workmen commence with pneumatic spades, which are very much like the pneumatic drills with which you see men tearing up the streets. As fast as the clay and earth is shovelled out, it is put into trucks and carried away. As soon as the tunnel is big enough a massive steel tube,

bigger in diameter than the tube is to be itself, is placed into position. This has a sharp cutting edge and is worked by a number of hydraulic rams. When this has been pressed forward sufficiently far, the steel circles which form the tube proper are brought along and securely bolted to each other. The rate of cutting out the tunnel with this steel tube is about fifteen feet per working day, and it is interesting to know that the work of constructing new tubes under London is going on practically every day! You can work out for yourselves how long it will take for the whole of the earth upon which London stands to be honeycombed with tunnels!

TALKING about tubes reminds me of an unusual sight you can see in London, and that is

A RIVER RUNNING OVER A RAILWAY STATION!

If you ever get to Sloane Square Station on the District Railway, look above you and you will see a tremendous square steel tube running right across the station from side to side. Not one person in a thousand realises that this tube carries one of London's underground rivers; but it does! When the railway was about to be built it was discovered that the river passed along there, and all efforts to divert it proved fruitless. Therefore, instead of being diverted, it was harnessed, and continues to flow above the very heads of London's travellers!

There's not much connection between "London" and "limericks"—save for the fact that they both begin with "L"—but limericks are the next item on my programme. Come along, you budding poets—the pocket wallets which I am giving for limericks are well worth having. See if you can beat this one, for which D. Carmichael, of 10, Culloden Street, Dennistoun, Glasgow, gets a prize this week.

Billy Bunter felt happy and merry;
He'd found tarts belonging to Cherry;
When he sampled that luck
He had dreadful bad luck,
For his teeth in hot mustard did bury!

I'm getting to the end of my space again, and there's just time to delve into the black book and tell you what surprises are in store for you next week. Frank Richards is starting the New Year well with his yarn, which is entitled:

"THE ARTFUL DODGER!"

It's hard to find new words with which to praise his yarns, because it seems to me that every one of them is better than the preceding one. So shall I just say that next week's story is a Frank Richards' yarn "par excellence," and let it go at that?

John Brearley is well up to standard, too, with another instalment of "Peter Frazer—Ironmaster," while Dicky Nugent—well, did you ever know that cheeky youngster fail to raise miles of smiles with his weekly effort? Of course, there'll be another "footer" article by "The Old Ref.," and your poor old Editor will do his best to interest you, if you'll be good enough to "Come into the Office!"

Before I call a halt this week I must draw your attention to the splendid extra-long complete "thriller" stories now appearing in the POPULAR. This announcement should be of particular interest to MAGNET readers, for these sensational stories feature Ferrars Locke, the famous detective, and Jack Drake, his boy assistant, two very old favourites of yours.

Your Editor.

COMPLETE HOLIDAY ADVENTURE STORY!



This week's seasonable yarn, dealing with the Yuletide Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co.—the cheery chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Raising the Wind!

LOOK here, Wharton—"Oh, scatl!" "Look here, you beast—" "Cheese it!"

"That," said Billy Bunter sarcastically, "is what you call politeness to a visitor, I suppose. It's not the way I should treat a visitor at Bunter Court."

"Br-r-r-r!"

Billy Bunter was seated at the breakfast table.

He had been seated there quite a long time; and he had been very busy all the time. But he was not finished when Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh came in.

Bunter had been breakfasting alone till they came in. Billy Bunter was not an early riser in holiday time; and the rest of the household had long finished when Bunter came downstairs. Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh had been out skating since breakfast. And they came in for hot coffee, which was grateful and comforting on a freezing December morning.

Certainly, Wharton's manner to his guest, William George Bunter, was a little off-hand. But William George Bunter was a rather peculiar guest. The politeness of the celebrated Lord Chesterfield would probably not have stood the strain of Billy Bunter for long.

Bunter paused in the demolition of his ninth rasher, to blink at the captain of the Greyfriars Remove through his big spectacles, with a disdainful and indeed devastating blink.

Wharton, however, did not seem devastated.

He poured out coffee cheerily. "Here you are, Inky! Feeling cold?"

"The freezefulness of the esteemed English climate is a little terrific," admitted Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I've been looking for a chance to speak to you, Wharton," said Bunter. "Now we'd better have it out."

"Fathead!"

"I came here," said Bunter, "to spend the Christmas holidays with you, Wharton. I'm sorry to say that I shall have to change my mind."

Harry Wharton turned towards Bunter quickly. At those unexpected words he sat up and took notice, so to speak.

"You're going?" he ejaculated. "The departfulness of the esteemed Bunter will be the terrific boon and blissfulness," murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"I haven't been treated well here," said Bunter, with dignity. "I expected to have a good time. You practically got me here on false pretences, Wharton."

"Eh?"

"Well, look at it," said Bunter.

"You ask a fellow here—"

Glue sticks . . . so does Bunter to his "pals," who don't want him!

"Who asked you here, you fat fraud?"

Bunter coughed.

"I don't want an argument," he said.

"That sort of thing's beneath me. I came here for a holiday. I find that you've got our headmaster in the house—actually the beak from Greyfriars! Precious sort of a Christmas visitor to inflict on a fellow."

"You fat chump!"

"I can't stand schoolmasters in holidays," said Bunter. "It's not to be expected. We got enough of the beak at school—too much, in fact. I think you might have given your uncle the tip not to ask him here, Wharton."

"My esteemed Bunter—"

"Shut up, Inky! I'm talking to Wharton! It's too thick!" said Bunter. "I could stand your stuffy old uncle, the colonel—"

"My—my what?"

"Your stuffy old uncle, the colonel," said Bunter. "And I could stand your fussy old aunt. She's a good sort,

though rather dense. But landing a schoolmaster on a fellow is too thick."

Harry Wharton gazed across the table at Billy Bunter.

He seemed at a loss for words.

"And that isn't all," went on Bunter. "The servants are cheeky. Your servants here aren't so well-trained as ours at Bunter Court, Wharton. Your butler, Wells, was positively insulting when I asked him to lend me a couple of pounds—"

Wharton jumped.

"You fat villain! You've been borrowing money of the butler?"

"He wouldn't lend me any," said Bunter. "The low beast didn't even understand that I was doing him an honour by asking him. Blessed if I know where your uncle picks up his servants, Wharton. They wouldn't do for Bunter Court, I can tell you."

"My hat!" said Wharton.

"The chauffeur, Brown, is cheeky, too," went on Bunter. "He actually said he couldn't take the car out without Colonel Wharton's instructions, when I told him I wanted it. Barnes, the Head's chauffeur, is just as bad; he's cheeky, too. One bad servant makes many, you know."

Bunter paused, to refill his mouth with kidney and bacon. Having filled it to capacity, he resumed:

"That's not all, either. You've asked Bob Cherry, and Johnny Bull, and Frank Nugent here, without consulting me in the least."

"I have enough of them at Greyfriars," said Bunter firmly. "I don't want them over the Christmas holidays, too. I may as well say plainly, Wharton, that I won't have them, either. I mean it! If you have those fellows here, you can't have me."

"Not really?" gasped Wharton.

"Not really!" said Bunter. "I mean it! You can take your choice."

"Oh, scissors!"

"If you want me here—"

Bunter.

"If—if—if I want you here—"

stuttered Wharton.

"Yes, if you want me here, you've got to bar that crowd off. I mean that! And you'd better give your uncle

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a tip to give the Head a hint to cut his visit short. I can't stand school-masters in the holidays, and I won't!"

"Is—is that all?" gasped Wharton. "Yes, that's about all," said Bunter. "Except that I expect rather better manners from you, Wharton, if I stay. I don't expect a lot from you in the way of manners, of course. But there's a limit."

Harry Wharton, who was still holding the coffee-pot, made a movement with it as if under a strong temptation to scatter the contents over William George Bunter. But he restrained that natural impulse.

"So you're going?" he ejaculated. "I think I'd better," said Bunter, shaking his head. "I dare say you mean well, Wharton. But the fact is, I can't stand you and your friends. The only difficulty is, that coming here in rather a hurry, I forgot to bring any money."

"Now we are coming to the esteemed milk in the excellent coconut," murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"You will have to lend me my fare home," said Bunter. "I suppose you won't mind that, Wharton?"

"Mind?" gasped Wharton. "I'd stand you your fare anywhere, with pleasure."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"How much, you fat fraud?"

"Ten bob."

"Here you are."

"Of course, this is only a loan," said Bunter. "I'll send it to you by the first post after I get to Bunter Court. You've been jolly mean ever since I came here, Wharton. This is the first time you've lent me any money since—"

"It's the first time you wanted it to pay your fare home," explained Wharton.

"Beast!"

"You're welcome—more than welcome, old fat man, this time. Happy journey, and a merry Christmas!" said Wharton. "Good-bye, Bunter! Come on, Inky! Say good-bye to Bunter, and let's get out!"

"Good-bye, my esteemed fat Bunter!" Billy Bunter blinked rather morosely at the two juniors.

There was no sign in their faces of sadness at parting with Bunter; no such sorrow as might have been expected at the prospect of losing so fascinating a guest. On the other hand, Wharton looked quite bucked, and a dusky smile of satisfaction wreathed the countenance of Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"What train are you catching, Bunter?" asked Harry.

"Train?" repeated Bunter.

Apparently he had not thought about a train.

"There's a good morning train—"

"That's all right—"

"I'll look it out for you—"

"Don't trouble, old chap."

"No trouble at all," said Wharton politely.

"The fact is—"

"And we'll walk to the station with you, if you like. We're going for a ramble this morning, anyway."

"The fact is—"

"It will be a terrific pleasure to see the esteemed Bunter off!" remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"I'll get the time-table!" said Harry.

"Leave it to me," said Bunter hastily.

"I'll look out a train, after lunch—"

"After lunch?"

"Yes, old chap."

"It's a fine morning for travelling," remarked Wharton casually.

"And there may be some more snow-fall in the afternoon," observed Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

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"And the best train's in the morning—"

Bunter resumed his breakfast. The two juniors went to the door. Evidently Billy Bunter was not going till the afternoon—if he was going then.

"I say, you fellows—"

Wharton glanced round.

"What time does the picture-house open at Wimpford?" asked Bunter.

Wharton stared.

"Two o'clock, I believe," he answered. "What about it? You won't have time for the pictures if you're catching a train—"

"Oh, no! Yes! Exactly! Only asking," said Bunter. "By the way, you might ring for some more coffee, Wharton! And another dish of bacon and eggs! I've rather an appetite this morning."

John brought in a further supply of comestibles, and Billy Bunter proceeded to follow up his first breakfast with a second. The two juniors left him to it. After which a smile of happy contentment wreathed the fat face of William George Bunter, and he felt that life really was worth living.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Going?

"BUNTER!"

Snore!

"Bunter, old bean!"

Snore!

Lunch was over at Wharton Lodge. After lunch Billy Bunter had disappeared. Possibly he had forgotten that he had a train to catch. If so, Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh had not forgotten.

They looked for Bunter.

It was not difficult to find him. They were guided to him by a deep and resonant sound, resembling the roll of distant thunder.

That sound, familiar enough in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars, was now echoing through the old library of Wharton Lodge. Billy Bunter had pulled a deep settee before the log fire, and was now stretched on it, propped on cushions, in what a novelist might have called an attitude of unaffected grace. His fat little legs were stretched out, his mouth was open; and the deep snore that proceeded from the sleeping Owl awoke many echoes.

Wharton and the nabob looked down on him with grinning faces. Bunter had done well at lunch, though where he had stowed the cargo after his gargantuan breakfast was a mystery. No doubt he needed to rest after his remarkable exertions in the gastronomic line.

"Bunter!" roared Wharton.

Snore!

Bunter was deep in the embrace of Morpheus. It was not easy to awaken Billy Bunter when, like a boa-constrictor, he was sleeping off the effects of a gorge.

Colonel Wharton's voice was heard from the hall.

"Are you boys ready?"

"Just coming, uncle," called back Harry.

He leaned over Bunter and shook him.

"Gurrergh!" came from Bunter.

"Wake up, fathead!"

"G-r-r-r-r-r!"

Shake, shake, shake!

Billy Bunter opened his eyes at last. He blinked sleepily at the two faces bending over him.

"Owl! Beasts! Lemme alone!"

"Tain't rising-bell!"

"My esteemed Bunter—"

"Wake up, ars!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He sat up on

the settee, groped for his spectacles, and jammed them on his fat little nose.

"Wharrer marrer? Wharrer want?"

"We're just going out," said Harry.

"You needn't have woke me up to tell me that, fathead! Go out and be blowed!" said Bunter peevishly.

"But you've got a train to catch."

"Beast!"

"Look here, Bunter, we're going in the car," said Harry. "We can drop you at the station—see?"

"I'm not ready yet."

"You don't want to lose your train," urged Wharton.

As a matter of fact, that was by no means certain. But it was certain that Wharton did not want Bunter to lose his train.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at him.

"You fellows going out with the old joss in the car?" he asked.

"The what?" ejaculated Wharton.

"I mean your uncle, fathead!"

"If you mean my uncle, you'd better say my uncle, if you don't want me to burst you, you fat freak," said Wharton warmly.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"We're going for a drive with my uncle and aunt," said Harry. "You can hop in and get out at the station and—"

"You needn't wait for me," said Bunter. "I don't like a crowd in a car, anyway. Is the Head going?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm fed up with the Head. You can have the blinking Beak all to yourself," said Bunter.

"There's lots of room—"

"I'm not going in the car. Anyhow, the Head's car is here," said Bunter. "I'll use that—when I'm ready. Tell Barnes to be ready at four."

"You can't use the Head's car, fathead."

"Then I'll get a taxi."

"Look here, you ass—"

"Leave a fellow alone!" bawled Bunter. "I'm going to have a nap! If this is what you call being civil to a guest, Wharton—"

Miss Amy Wharton looked in at the library door.

"My dear boys, if you are ready—"

said Wharton's aunt in her gentle voice.

"Just coming," said Harry.

Snore!

Bunter settled down on his cushions again. His deep snore resounded once more through the dusky old library.

"Oh, come on, Inky!" said Wharton, and the two juniors hurried out, leaving the sleeping beauty to finish his nap. A resonant snore followed them as they went.

The car was waiting at the steps. Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, who was a guest at Wharton Lodge, gave the two Removites a kind smile. Awed by the Head's presence at Greyfriars School, he unbent considerably in holiday time, and the juniors had found, rather to their surprise, that the Head was quite human.

"Is Bunter coming, Harry?" asked Colonel Wharton.

"No, he wants to finish his nap—"

The colonel smiled.

"Very well, let us go."

From the library window a fat face and a large pair of spectacles looked after the car as Brown toiled it down the drive. The fat face was grinning. Bunter had finished his nap. He stood at the window, and watched the car out of sight. It was a fine, clear, frosty day, quite enjoyable for a drive in a swift car; but Bunter had other and more interesting occupations for that afternoon, though catching a train was not one of them.

After the car was out of sight Bunter

rang for Wells. The butler looked in at the library door.

"Get me a taxi from Wimford, Wells," said Bunter.

"Yes, sir."

Wells departed to ring up a taxi. Billy Bunter took out his purse and examined the contents. The contents consisted of the ten-shilling note Wharton had given him that morning, and a French penny. Bunter's fat brow wrinkled in calculation.

"Four bob for the taxi to Wimford," he murmured, "and half-a-crown for a seat in the picture house—that's six-and-six! That leaves three-and-six for refreshments; I can do on three-and-six! As for a taxi back—"

Bunter paused a moment.

"After all, the taximan won't want to be paid till he gets here," he murmured. "Wharton will have to square him. Stands to reason he won't want a taximan kicking up a shindy at the door. That's all right."

Having settled that matter to his satisfaction, Billy Bunter settled his fat person on the settee again to wait till the taxi arrived from Wimford.

His deep snore was once more arousing the echoes when Wells came in with his quiet step.

"Your taxi, sir!"

Snore!

"Your taxi, Mr. Bunter!"

Snore!

Wells came over to the settee. He looked down on William George Bunter, who lay sprawling, with his mouth open. The expression on Wells' face was not admiring. He bent over Bunter and shook him by the shoulder.

"Your taxi, sir!"

"Groogh! Beast!"

"I—I beg your pardon, sir!" gasped Wells.

"Beast! Lommo alone!"

"Your taxi, sir—"

"Oh!" Bunter sat up. "All right! Don't shake me like that, you silly beast; I'm not asleep!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Wells.

Billy Bunter gave him an angry blink and rolled out of the library.

Wells stood in the doorway of Wharton Lodge and gazed after the taxi as it bore William George Bunter away for Wimford.

"Well," murmured Wells at last, "thank goodness he's gone to catch his train! Thank goodness for that!"

But the Wharton Lodge butler thanked goodness too soon.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Too Good to be True!

"GONE!"

"Yes, sir!"

"My hat!"

It really seemed too good to be true.

"Gone?" repeated Wharton. "The gonefulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. A faint smile stole over Wells' impassive face.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh looked at one another. They had returned from the drive, with the colonel and Miss Wharton and the Head, late in the dusky December afternoon. Bunter, certainly, should have been gone by that time; but doubts had lingered in the mind of Harry Wharton. Bunter had announced his intention of going, and borrowed his railway fare for the purpose. Yet,

affable, and several times remembered their existence and addressed a gracious word or two to them. But although it was a great honour, a little of it went a long way, so to speak, and the juniors willingly left the three elders to themselves.

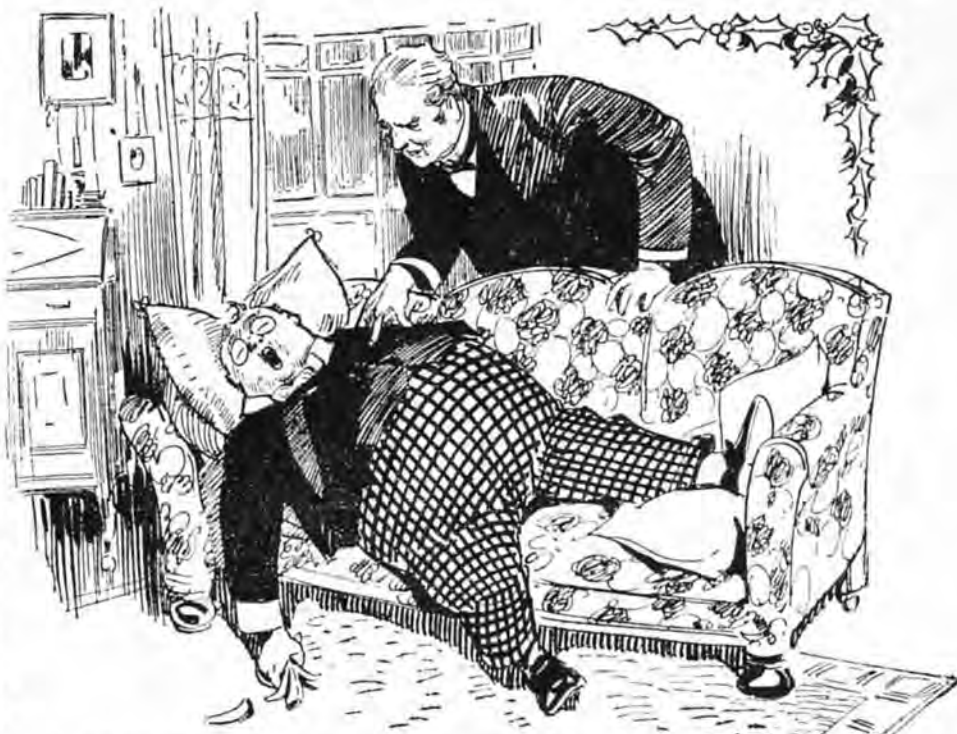
Harry Wharton looked out of the doorway of the Lodge into the dusky December evening.

"I shall be jolly glad when the fellows come, Inky," he remarked.

"The gladfulness will be great!" assented the nabob.

"Thank goodness Bunter's gone!"

"The thankfulness is preposterous!"



Wells, the butler, bent over the fat junior and shook him by the shoulder. "Your taxi, sir." "Groogh! Beast!" grunted Bunter. "I—I beg your pardon, sir!"

somehow, a suspicion had lingered in Wharton's mind that the Owl of the Remove would not so to speak, come unstuck.

But he was gone! He had been gone more than two hours, Wells informed the captain of the Remove when he inquired.

"Actually gone!" murmured Harry Wharton. "My only hat!"

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh went into the drawing-room where Miss Amy Wharton presided over the tea-table, looking very merry and bright. They really looked as if Bunter had not only left, but left them a fortune. Really, it was very considerate of William George Bunter to take himself off in this way. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent were due at Wharton Lodge in a day or two; and it was very doubtful whether they would have felt bucked at finding Billy Bunter there. Bunter was a fellow in whose case absence made the heart grow fonder.

Wharton and Hurree Singh did not linger over their tea. It was a great honour to tea with such a distinguished guest as their headmaster from Greyfriars; and Dr. Locke was extremely

"Let's get a trot before dinner." "Let's!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

There was a glimmering of lights on the drive, and a grinding of wheels. A car was coming up from the gates.

"Hallo, here's somebody coming!" said Harry. "It's a taxi! I wonder who—"

He did not wonder long. The taxi ran up the drive and stopped at the steps. The taxi-driver threw open the door, and a fat figure alighted.

A large pair of spectacles caught the light from the open doorway as William George Bunter blinked in that direction.

"Bunter!" gasped Wharton.

"The esteemed Bunter!"

"The fat villain—"

"The excellent and absurd Bunter has turned up like a bad penny!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur ruefully.

Bunter came up the steps.

"I say, you fellows—"

"You fat villain—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Did you lose your train?"

"Train!" repeated Bunter. "My dear chap, I've been to the pictures—"

"The—the pictures?"
 "Yes—jolly good show at Wimford," said Bunter cheerily. "Crook film, you know—lots of shooting and things. I've had a good time. You fellows should see that picture. If you like to come to-morrow I'll stand treat. I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"You've been to the pictures?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes, old chap. Am I late for tea?" "Tea?"

"Yes; I'm hungry, you know. I had some cake and chocolates at the picture palace; but the fact is, I was rather short of tin. After paying for the taxi and the seat, I had only three and six—"

"What about your train?" roared Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You—you—you—" gasped the captain of the Remove. "You've spent your railway fare at the pictures—"

"If you're going to be mean about a ten-shilling note, Wharton—"

"Excuse me, sir; four shillings, please," said the taximan, who had followed Bunter up the steps, as Bunter seemed to have forgotten him.

"Oh! Oh! All right!" said Bunter.

"Pay the man, will you, Wharton?"

"What?"

"I'm expecting a postal-order in the morning, and I'll settle then," said Bunter. "It's only four bob. I say, I hope I'm not late for tea. I'm frightfully hungry."

Harry Wharton looked at him. The expression on his face was quite alarming.

"You—you—you—" he gasped.

"The fact is, old chap, I knew you'd hate it if I went," said Bunter affably. "You haven't treated me well—I must say that; landing a snuffy old school-master on a chap, and asking a lot

hooligans here, and all that. But I'm not the fellow to let a pal down at Christmas-time. I'm sticking to you, old fellow."

"I—I—I—I—I—"

"Pay the taximan, will you, old bean? Don't keep him standing about in this wind," said Bunter, and he rolled into the house.

"I—I—I—I—I—" gasped Wharton helplessly.

He made a jump after Bunter.

"I say, old fellow—"

"You fat fraud!" roared Wharton.

"I'll jolly well—"

"Yarooooh!"

Bunter bolted. The drawing-room door opened so suddenly that it quite startled the three elders within. It closed behind William George Bunter.

Wharton paused.

"The fat, spoofing villain, I—I—I—I—I—" he gasped incoherently.

"I'm waiting, sir!" said the taximan from Wimford.

Wharton, with feelings too deep for words, paid the man his four shillings, and the taxi drove away.

Billy Bunter was still a guest at Wharton Lodge. Bunter was a stickler, and he had not come unstuck.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Plotting a Plot!

"SHUT the door, Inky! Bunter's not to hear a word of this."

Billy Bunter grinned.

Harry Wharton's voice came quite clearly through the door that separated his "den" at Wharton Lodge from his bed-room.

Bunter was in the latter apartment.

Wharton, perhaps, was under the impression that Billy Bunter had no business in his bed-room. That impression,

however, was a mistaken one. Bunter had business there.

Billy Bunter had arrived at Wharton Lodge for the Christmas holidays, without an invitation and without any baggage. The lack of an invitation did not worry Bunter. But the lack of baggage was a little awkward.

Still, it was more awkward for Bunter's host than for Bunter. Like a moss trooper of old, Bunter knew how to live on the country he invaded.

At the present moment he was standing before a chest of drawers, making a selection from Wharton's shirts and collars and ties.

He paused in that occupation and grinned as he heard the voice of the captain of the Greyfriars Remove from the adjoining room.

The sound of a shutting door followed.

"Is it a wheeze, my esteemed chum?" asked the soft voice of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yes; but it would be a washout if that fat villain heard us."

Bunter winked into space.

Wharton and Hurree Singh had just come up to Wharton's den, and obviously neither of them had any suspicion that Bunter was in the adjoining bed-room.

Bunter made no sound.

Where ignorance is bliss, according to the poet, 'tis folly to be wise. Bunter left the two juniors in blissful ignorance of the fact that he was within hearing.

On tiptoe he approached the communicating door and bent his ear to the keyhole, in order not to lose a word of what was not intended for his ears.

"I've been thinking it over," went on Harry Wharton's voice. "That fat oyster is sticking."

"The stickfulness is terrific."

"Bob and Johnny and Franky will be coming along in a day or two. It wouldn't be fair to the fellows to let Bunter be landed on them."

"His esteemed company is not a boon—oh blessing," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the excellent and execrable Bunter will not depart unless a boot be applied trouserfully."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I don't want to do that," he said. "That's a last resource. I don't want to surprise Uncle James, and startle Aunt Amy, and shock the Head by booting Bunter. Besides, he's such a howling ass that I really believe he doesn't understand what an unpleasant boulder he is. But—he's got to travel."

"That is the proper caper," agreed the nabob of Bhanipur. "But—"

"A fellow doesn't want to be inhospitable, especially at Christmas-time," said Harry, "but there is a limit. It's too thick!"

"The thickfulness is terrific!"

"Well, I've thought of a wheeze," said Wharton. "Christmas is the time for ghosts."

"Ghosts?" repeated the nabob.

"Ghosts," said Wharton. "Bunter is a howling funk, and if he saw a ghost—"

There was a chuckle from the nabob of Bhanipur.

"The esteemed Bunter would be frightened out of his excellent and ridiculous wits," he remarked.

Behind the communicating door Billy Bunter grinned. But he made no sound. He was getting quite interested in the conversation in Wharton's den.

"There's a ghost story attaching to this house," went on the captain of the Greyfriars Remove. "The lodge is built on the site of a manor house that stood here in Stuart times. It was knocked to pieces by the Roundheads,

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and the Wharton of that time was a jolly old Cavalier, who got killed in the scrap. According to the legend, he haunts the place where the Roundheads mopped him up. His ghost has been seen a lot of times, on dark nights—a figure in white, you know, with an unearthly face—

"You have seen the esteemed ghost, my worthy chum?"

"Well, not exactly," said Harry, laughing, "and my uncle hasn't seen it, either. Being a teetotaler, of course, he wouldn't. Still, that ghost is going to walk to-night."

The grin on Billy Bunter's face grew wider, till it extended almost from one fat ear to the other.

"Dr. Locke has heard about the jolly old ghost," went on Wharton, "and my uncle is going to tell him the story after dinner. Bunter will hear it, so it will be fresh in his mind when he goes to bed. When he wakes up, to see a ghostly figure in his room—"

"The esteemed Bunter locks his door at night," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "He is terrifically on his guard."

"That's all right. There's a big wardrobe in Bunter's room, that he never uses. I shall nip up before he does and get inside it," said Wharton, with a chuckle. "He locks his door and bolts his window at night, so when he sees the ghost in his room he can't doubt that it's the genuine article. Only a genuine ghost could get through a locked door."

The nabob chuckled again.

"It's a wheezy good idea," he remarked.

"You'll have to keep him off the scene, Inky, and give me a chance of getting to his room before he goes there. That will be easy enough; you've only got to get him talking. He never leaves off talking if he can help it."

"Rely on me, my esteemed chum."

"Beast!" murmured Bunter, under his breath.

"I can shove on a beard and wig that we use in the theatricals," went on Wharton, "and a white sheet and some phosphorus paint will do the trick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I fancy that fat villain will be glad to clear in the morning. If this doesn't work we'll take him out on the ice and drown him. But we'll try the ghost stunt first—what?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, my esteemed chum."

For some little time the two juniors discussed the scheme, little dreaming what fat ears were drinking in every word. Then Bunter heard the sound of chessmen being set out on a board.

He rose from the keyhole and chuckled silently.

"Beasts!" he murmured.

The fat junior returned to the chest of drawers. He made an extensive selection of the articles he required with extreme caution, making no sound to reach the ears of the two juniors who were playing chess in the adjoining room. Then he left the bedroom by the door on the corridor, closing it softly behind him.

Bunter rolled back silently to his own room.

He grinned as he blinked at the big, old-fashioned oak wardrobe to which Wharton had alluded, and which was to be the hiding-place of the ghost that night. It was an enormous article of furniture, filling a large alcove in the room; and the door of it was locked, the key in the lock. Bunter unlocked it and extracted the key from the lock and put it in his pocket.

There was a fat grin on Bunter's face as he rolled downstairs.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset

Ram Singh were looking forward to the events of that night with keen anticipation.

So was Bunter!

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES!

Here's another jolly poem dealing with the popular schoolboy characters of Greyfriars.

No. 3.—JOHNNY BULL.



OF Johnny Bull I speak with pride:
A loyal and trusty fellow;
He's stolid, firm, and steady-eyed,

Without a trace of "yellow,"
He's free from temperamental ire,
And never very skittish;
The steadfast type we all admire,
And absolutely British!

In argument he stands alone,
A veritable giant;
That he is wrong he'll never own,
He's painfully defiant.
He'll argue till the moon is blue,
And pals are in a paddy.
And still he'll get the best of you,
This "argyfyng" laddie.

Our Johnny on the field of sport
Proves such a staunch defender;
He's li' a mighty, solid fort,
His motto's: "No surrender!"
At cricket great, at football, too;
In troublous times a wonder:
When things are black and folk are blue,
He'll clear the air like thunder.

A member of the Famous Five,
By no means quiet and dapper,
Our Johnny's very much alive—
In fact, he's quite a scrapper.
He knows that fists are meant to fight,
He'll use 'em well and truly;
And heavy blows are his delight
When cads become unruly.

Another point about this lad
That quite deserves some mention,
You'll never find him being "had,"
He's always at "attention."
In all his dealings he's astute,
And full of perspicacity;
He's wide-awake and very cute,
With "Bull"-dog-like tenacity.

Where Cherry, Wharton, and the rest
Supply the brains and jollities
That give the Famous Five their zest,
Our John gives "Bull"-like qualities.
He's strength, and beef, and backbone,
too—
An asset to the party;
He quite deserves a shout from you
That's long, and loud, and hearty!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Caught!

AND from the ghostly figure came a deep, thrilling voice, saying—

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!"

Bunter's deep yawn spoiled the ghost story.

There was no doubt of that.

Colonel Wharton was telling the story of the ghostly cavalier of Wharton Lodge. Round the crackling log fire was gathered a silent and interested circle.

Miss Wharton, with her knitting-needles and her placid smile, sat in her high-backed chair. Dr. Locke, more unbent than the juniors had ever seen him before, sat at ease in a deep easy-chair, the firelight glimmering on his kind old face and silvery hair. The lights were not on; only the leaping firelight illumined the room, and the corners were full of dusky shadows.

The colonel, standing with an elbow on the massive old mantelpiece, was half lost to sight when the firelight died down. Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh sat at a little distance. Billy Bunter was taking his ease on a settee, his spectacles catching the gleam of the fire with an odd effect in the shadows. It was a congenial atmosphere for a ghost story, and James Wharton, who had told the story often, and told it well, was relating it once more, and he had arrived at the thrilling climax, where the phantom cavalier uttered the words of doom that rung like a death-knell in the ears of the terrified Roundhead, when William George Bunter weighed in with that prolonged and emphatic yawn.

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw-aw!"

Bunter was sleepy.

When Bunter was sleepy he was disposed to yawn. When Bunter was disposed to do anything he did it. Consideration for others had never been one of Bunter's weaknesses.

Feeling disposed to yawn, he yawned, loud and long.

The colonel broke off.

There was silence.

From the silence came another Gargantuan yawn from Billy Bunter.

Colonel Wharton gave him a freezing look. Dr. Locke turned his glance on him with severity. Had it been in term at Greyfriars, Bunter would undoubtedly have been told to "bend over" at that moment.

Freezing looks had no effect on Bunter. Indeed, he did not observe them. He sat up on the settee and yawned once more.

"You fat idiot!" whispered Wharton.

"Eh?"

"You preposterous ass!" breathed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"What?"

"I think," said Colonel Wharton, in cutting tones, "that Bunter had better go to bed."

"Just what I was thinking," said Bunter cheerily. "I think I nodded off for a minute. Must have been that story you were telling, sir, that sent me off to sleep."

"Indeed!"

"Well, I'm ready for bed, if you fellows are," said Bunter, rolling off the settee. "A long-winded yarn like that makes a fellow awfully sleepy. You chaps coming up?"

The colonel did not seem disposed to continue the story. He stood gloomily silent.

It was quite an awkward moment, though Bunter was not conscious of it. Wharton and Hurree Singh exchanged a look. But for the presence of their elders the two juniors would have collared William George Bunter on the spot and bumped him on the floor.

That, however, was impracticable in the circumstances. So, as the colonel still remained gloomily silent, good-nights were said, and the three Greyfriars fellows retired. After they were gone, no doubt, James Wharton recovered his equanimity, and gave the head the remainder of the ghost story.

"Awful rot, wasn't it, you fellows?" said Bunter, in the hall. "I say, Wharton, your uncle's jolly long-winded, isn't he? Talk about a sheep's head!"

"You fat chump!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Wharton.

The juniors went up to their rooms. In the corridor on which the rooms opened, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh tapped Bunter on the shoulder.

"My esteemed fat Bunter—"

"Yes, old chap," said Bunter, with a grin.

"I have a box of esteemed and excellent chocolate-creams in my room, my worthy Bunter. If you would like to sample them—"

"What-ho!" said Bunter.

He rolled into the nabob's room with Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Hurree Singh glanced back at Wharton and closed one eye. The captain of the Remove nodded and grinned.

Bunter seemed to be fairly walking into the trap.

Indeed, he appeared bent on playing into the hands of the japers, though it did not occur to either Wharton or Hurree Singh, at the moment, that such was his object.

"Shut the door, Inky," he said. "There's a bit of a draught."

"Certainly, my esteemed Bunter."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh closed his door.

Billy Bunter sat down before the fire, and stretched out his fat little legs, like a fellow who was in no hurry to move again.

The nabob produced the box of chocolate-creams.

Bunter started on them with great satisfaction. There was a lurking grin on his fat face that rather perplexed the nabob.

Bunter finished the chocolate-creams. Still, he seemed in no hurry to move.

It was the nabob's object to keep him there as long as possible, to give Wharton time to don the ghostly attire, and conceal himself in the old oak wardrobe in Bunter's room. Hurree Singh found no difficulty in carrying out his purpose. Indeed, one might almost have suspected that it was Bunter's object to give Wharton plenty of time. Having finished the chocolates, he still sat before the fire, in lazy contentment.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stirred at last.

Wharton had had ample time to don the ghostly attire that had been manufactured out of a sheet, and the wig and beard that had been placed in readiness in his room, and to rub his face with luminous paint, and conceal himself in the big wardrobe. Ten minutes was enough; and Bunter had been half an hour in Hurree Singh's room, and still showed no signs of moving.

"My esteemed Bunter—" murmured the nabob.

Bunter sat up.

"Better get to bed—what?" he asked.

"Any more chocolates?"

"No."

"Then I'll get a move on," yawned Bunter, extracting himself from the chair. "Good-night, Inky."

"Good-night, my absurd and preposterous Bunter!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the room.

He rolled along to his own and entered, the nabob looking after him with a grin on his dusky face.

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A fire was burning in Bunter's room, casting flickering lights and shadows. He switched on the light and blinked round the room.

Nothing unusual met his eye.

The fire burned brightly. His bed was turned down, and his pyjamas—or, rather, Wharton's pyjamas—laid out in readiness for him.

Bunter's glance travelled across to the big oak wardrobe in the alcove. It filled the alcove from the floor almost to the high ceiling, and the big door was closed. Bunter rolled silently across to it, his little round eyes twinkling behind his big spectacles.

From his pocket he drew a key.

That key he inserted swiftly into the lock of the wardrobe.

He turned it.

Click!

"He, he, he!"

Bunter chuckled.



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HER LITTLE MISTAKE!

"I tell you I won't have this room," said an old lady, arriving at an hotel on the eve of Christmas. "I'm not going to pay money to be put in a pigsty with a measly little folding-bed in it. If you think that just because I am from the country—"

"Get in, mum," ordered the profoundly disgusted porter, cutting her short. "This ain't your room. This is the lift!"

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Ghost Does Not Walk!

HARRY WHARTON gave a start. In the roomy interior of the wardrobe the captain of the Remove had heard Bunter arrive in the room.

He made no sound. He did not expect to have long to wait; it never took Bunter long to turn in. But Wharton's occupation of that ancient wardrobe was destined to last longer than he had anticipated.

He gave a start as he heard the key pushed into the outside of the lock, and another as the key was turned. Then the fat cackinnation of the Owl of the Remove came faintly to his ears through the stout oak.

Wharton stood transfixed.

He was locked in!

A quarter of an hour, at the most, he had intended to pass in that place of concealment. Unless Bunter unlocked the wardrobe again, he was booked to spend the night there.

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter chuckled loud and long. The chums of the Remove had chuckled, in anticipation, over that jape on Bunter. Now it was Bunter's turn to chuckle.

"He, he, he!"

Wharton breathed hard.

Bunter knew that he was there! He knew that now. Careful as the chums of the Remove had been to keep the jape from him, somehow the fat junior had got wind of it.

Bunter was tapping on the wardrobe door.

"I say, old bean!"

"You fat villain!" hissed Wharton.

"He, he, he!"

"Let me out!"

"He, he, he!"

"Open this door, you fat rotter!"

"He, he, he!"

"I'll smash you!"

"He, he, he!"

"Bunter, you podgy scoundrel—"

"He, he, he!"

Wharton breathed sulphurously.

"I say, old fellow, I'm going to bed," said Bunter. "I hope you'll be comfortable in there. Bit stuffy, I should think—what?"

"I'll pulverise you, you fat freak!"

"Make yourself comfortable, old bean!" said Bunter cheerily. "I'm going to bed. Good-night!"

"Let me out!" yelled Wharton.

"He, he, he!"

Wharton thumped on the inner side of the wardrobe door.

"I say, old chap, don't kick up that row!" remonstrated Bunter. "How's a fellow to go to sleep, if you kick up a shindy like that?"

"I'll burst you!" yelled Wharton.

"He, he, he!"

"Will you let me out?"

"No, I jolly well won't!" chuckled Bunter. "You stuck yourself in there, old bean, and you can stay there. He, he, he!"

"I can't stay here all night!" shrieked Wharton.

"Can't you?" asked Bunter.

"No, you fat idiot!"

"Well, my idea is that you can," said Bunter. "In fact, I don't see what else you are going to do, old chap. You can't break out of that wardrobe—it's too jolly strong. And I ain't going to unlock the door. He, he, he!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"He, he, he!"

Bang!

"I say, old chap, you'll get a crowd here if you make that row!" said Bunter. "Do you want your uncle to come up and find you there, got up as a ghost? He, he, he!"

"I—I—I—"

"And the Head!" chortled Bunter. "What would the Head think? You'd better not make a row, old fellow."

"I'll smash you!" roared Wharton.

"Good-night, old bean!"

"Let me out!"

"I'm going to bed. Good-night!"

Harry Wharton drew back his foot for an infuriated kick on the wardrobe door. But he paused in time.

He did not want to bring a crowd up to Bunter's room. He did not want to be discovered in the wardrobe.

The Owl of the Remove had him, as it were, in a cleft stick. He was at the mercy of the guest that would not go.

Faintly through the thick oak of the door came the sound of Billy Bunter kicking his shoes off. Apparently the Owl of the Remove was going to bed—leaving Wharton in the wardrobe for the night!

The hapless junior's feelings were inexpressible in words. He was fairly caught in his own trap. It was close and stuffy inside the big wardrobe. To remain there for the night was impossible.

Wharton tapped on the door.

"Bunter!"

"He, he, he!"



Rolling silently across to the big wardrobe, Billy Bunter drew a key from his pocket. Swiftly he inserted it into the lock and turned it. Click! Wharton was a prisoner!

"Will you let me out, you fat villain? I shall be suffocated here! Let me out at once!"

"He, he, he!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"For goodness' sake, old chap, don't kick up that row!" urged Bunter. "I'm sleepy! Your blessed long-winded old uncle fairly made me yawn my head off! Good-night!"

"Let me out!"

"He, he, he!"

"I'll burst you in the morning!"

"He, he, he!"

There was a click as Bunter shut off the switch of the electric light. It was followed by a heavy creak, as the bed groaned under the weight of the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter had gone to bed.

Wharton panted.

"Bunter!"

Snore!

"You frowsy fat villain—"

Snore!

With indescribable feelings, Harry Wharton stood in the massive old wardrobe, and listened to the snoring of the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter had gone to sleep.

Again Wharton drew back his foot for a crashing kick on the door of the wardrobe. Again he paused. He simply could not face the prospect of alarming the house, and bringing the startled household to the spot—to discover him locked in Bunter's wardrobe. Better to stay there for the night than that.

And there was a chance of help from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. The nabob would remain awake—expecting to hear from Bunter when the ghost walked. He was not likely to guess what had happened; but there was a chance.

It was Wharton's only chance. He could not and would not face the ridicule of bringing his uncle and the

servants to the room. If his dusky chum failed him he was booked for the most uncomfortable night in his experience. And he waited dismally, the minutes crawling by on leaden wings as he listened to the deep and echoing snore of William George Bunter.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Inky to the Rescue!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH listened.

Midnight had passed.

Wharton Lodge was silent, buried in slumber. The last light had long been turned off; Wells, the butler, had made his last round, and gone to his room; the last sound of a closing door had long since died away. But the dusky nabob of Bhanipur was not thinking of sleep.

As the long minutes passed and lengthened into hours, Hurree Singh grew more and more perplexed.

The plot that the two juniors had plotted had been plotted with care; and the nabob could not see what could have gone wrong. The ghost should have walked; Bunter's terrified howl should have rung out; the jape should have been working long before midnight. But evidently there was a hitch somewhere.

It was scarcely possible that Harry Wharton had gone to bed and forgotten all about it. But, to make sure, Hurree Singh tiptoed along to Wharton's room, and looked in. The low embers of a fire glowed on the hearth; Hurree Singh looked at the bed, and found it empty. He looked in the adjoining room. Wharton was not there. Obviously, Wharton had carried out the scheme, so far as concealing himself in Bunter's room. Why he had

not proceeded further with it was a mystery. But he hadn't.

The nabob listened outside Bunter's door.

From within came the sound resembling distant thunder, so familiar in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars. Bunter was sleeping the sleep of the just. No walking ghost had disturbed his balmy slumbers. Had Wharton fallen asleep in the interior of the oak wardrobe while waiting for the hour for the ghost to walk? That seemed the only possible explanation.

Hurree Singh returned to his room.

He had long ago turned his light out; but he replenished his fire, and waited. He was sleepy; but he did not care to turn in till he knew what had happened to his chum. With his door half-open on the dark corridor he listened.

He listened in vain. No sound reached his ears from the silent house; only the moan of the winter wind in the trees without.

He looked at his watch at last in the fire-light. It was half-past twelve. Once more the nabob tiptoed along to Bunter's door and listened. The steady snore of the Owl of the Remove was still going strong. Evidently nothing had happened to alarm Bunter. The ghost had not walked.

Hurree Singh tried the handle of the door; but it was locked on the inside. Like a fellow camping in the enemy's country, Billy Bunter locked his door of a night.

The nabob was quite uneasy by this time.

He returned to his own room, stepped from the window to the balcony, and moved along to the window of Bunter's room.

The window was fastened.

Bunter was not a believer in fresh air. THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 1,141.

and the window was jammed shut and fastened.

The curtains were drawn, but between them was an interstice that gave the nabob a glimpse of the interior. Bunter had banked up the fire before going to bed, and it was now burning brightly, illuminating the whole room.

The fire-light played on a fat face on a pillow. There was Bunter—fast asleep and snoring.

But of Wharton there was no sign.

Obviously he was still inside the oak wardrobe in the alcove—why, the nabob could not imagine.

Even if he had fallen asleep while waiting there, he could hardly have slept long in such cold and uncomfortable quarters. The door might have become fastened by some accident; or—something like the truth glimmered into the nabob's mind—Bunter, for some reason, might have locked the wardrobe before going to bed. At that idea a faint grin dawned on the nabob's dusky face. He could imagine the feelings with which the concealed junior had heard the key turn in the lock, if that was what had happened.

He tried the window.

The casement was secured. But by that time Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had made up his mind. Something, evidently, had gone wrong with the plot, and his chum needed his help—and he was going to help him.

He thought of awakening Bunter; but that was impossible without awakening the whole household. There was only one thing to do, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh did it. The window was in small panes, and he selected the pane nearest the catch inside, and jammed his elbow sharply on it. There was a tinkling of falling fragments of glass in Bunter's room.

It did not awaken Bunter. Nothing short of a thunderclap would have awakened Bunter.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh put a dusky hand through the orifice in the pane, unfastened the casement, and pushed it open.

A minute more and he had clambered into the room.

He crossed swiftly to the oak wardrobe in the alcove. Now that he was close to it he could hear a sound of something stirring within. The key was in the lock, and Hurree Singh turned it back and pulled open the heavy oak door.

"My esteemed chum—" he murmured.

"Inky!" gasped Wharton.

The hapless prisoner emerged from the wardrobe.

He had taken off the sheet, the wig, and the beard of his ghostly disguise; but the phosphorus paint still glowed on his face, with an odd effect in the fire-light.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned.

"My esteemed and absurd chum—"

"I'm frozen!" gasped Wharton.

He hurried across to the fire. In the bed Billy Bunter still snored on; and if he was dreaming, he did not dream that the prisoner of the wardrobe was free.

Wharton warmed his chilly hands at the fire. He was chilled to the bone by his long imprisonment in that chilly retreat.

"It'll soon be morning!" he gasped.

"It is a quarter to one, my esteemed chum."

"Oh! It seemed longer than that. That fat villain knew I was there, and locked me in—"

The nabob chuckled. Wharton stared at him.

"You silly ass! What are you cackling at?" he grunted. "There's nothing

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to cackle at! That fat scoundrel locked me in and went to bed. I'm going to smash him! I'm going to spifficate him!"

"My esteemed and ridiculous chum—" murmured the nabob, as Wharton turned from the fire and strode towards Bunter's bed.

Wharton did not heed.

He had passed more than two hours in the chilly recesses of the ancient wardrobe, and it had seemed at least three times as long. Every minute that he had remained there had added to his wrath. His only comfort had been the reflection of what he would do to Bunter when he got out. Now he had gone out, and he proceeded to deal with Bunter.

Bunter's snore suddenly ceased, and a delicious dream of Christmas pudding and turkey came to an abrupt end, as the bedclothes were jerked off him.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

He awakened.

"My absurd chum, Bunter will keep till the morning—" urged Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"He won't!" snapped Wharton.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Bunter, you fat scoundrel—"

"Ow! Keep off!" roared Bunter.

"You beast, how did you get out? I say, old chap, I wasn't going to leave you there really! I—I was just going to get up and let you out! Keep off!"

Smack!

"Yooop!"

Smack, smack!

"Yow-ow-ow-wooooooop! Help! Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter bounded off the bed on the farther side. He grabbed up his spectacles, jammed them on his fat little nose, and blinked at Wharton across the bed.

"I say, old fellow—yaroooooh! Keep off! Keep him off, Inky! How did you get in here, you black beast? I say, I was just going to let you out, Harry, old chap—I was really! Just another minute, and—yooooop!"

Bunter bounded desperately across the bed as Wharton rushed round it.

~~~~~

## ANOTHER MYSTERY!



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"Ow! Help! Keep off!" he yelled.

"My esteemed Wharton—" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Keep him off!" gasped Bunter. "I say, old fellow, wharrer you waxy about? Can't you take a joke? Oh lor! Keep him off!"

The nabob caught Wharton by the arm.

"Let go, you ass!"

"My absurd chum—"

"Let go, fathead! I'm going to smash him up into little pieces!" roared Wharton.

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter rushed to the door.

To unlock it, drag it open, and whip out into the passage was the work of a moment.

Wharton jerked his arm loose from Hurree Singh and rushed after him.

"You fat villain—"

"Ow!"

"Stop, you fat rotter!"

Billy Bunter did not stop.

As Wharton rushed into the passage in pursuit, a fat figure in pyjamas vanished in the distance round a corner. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh hurried out after his chum.

"My absurd Wharton, you will wake the house! For the sake of esteemed goodness—"

Wharton paused.

"I'll smash him! I'll pulverise him! I'll spifficate him! I'll—" he gasped. "Wait till he comes back!"

But Billy Bunter seemed in no hurry to come back; and after waiting a few minutes, calmness supervened, and Wharton admitted that Bunter would keep till the morning.

The two juniors went to bed, and the way was open for Billy Bunter to return to his room. Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, as they laid their heads on their pillows and closed their eyes, had no doubt that he had returned there now that the coast was clear. But the adventures of Billy Bunter on that eventful night were far from over.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Any Port in a Storm!

"O H dear!" gasped Billy Bunter. It was odd. In borrowing a suit of Wharton's pyjamas, Bunter had naturally selected the best and warmest suit he could find. Still, they were not much protection against the cold of a December night.

Bunter's teeth chattered.

In his hurried flight from the exasperated captain of the Remove, Bunter had negotiated several passages, careless whither they led.

He stumbled on a staircase, and clambered hurriedly up the stairs, only bent on placing a safe distance between himself and his pursuer.

There he paused, gasping, to listen.

He blinked round him in the starlight from a window. He knew where he was now—in the servants' quarters.

He quaked and listened.

There was, as a matter of fact, no pursuit. But the moan of the wintry wind, the creaking and rustling of the trees, the cracking of ancient wainscot, were enough for Bunter's terrified ears.

He scudded across the landing, grabbed open the first door he came to, and bolted in.

Shutting the door he palpitated behind it, listening for the pursuing footsteps of the captain of the Remove.

Outside the house the winter wind wailed and howled, and clattered the old ivy against the windows.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

(Continued on page 12.)

# INSIDE INFORMATION



By "The OLD REF."

What style of goalposts are you in favour of, chums—round or square? "Old Ref" is all in favour of the rounded ones, and here he tells you why.

**J**UST a little pat on the back to those of my readers who are proving to me that they keep their eyes open as they move about in the world. Those who don't observe things closely miss a lot of the interest which is in life.

A London boy reader has been noticing things concerning goalposts and cross-bars which are used in big matches on different grounds. He points out that on some grounds the goalposts and the cross-bars are round or oval, and that on other big grounds in London they are square or oblong.

Let me say at once that my correspondent is right on this matter. There is a difference in the shape of the goalposts used on the grounds of the big London clubs. At West Ham and Queen's Park Rangers' grounds, for instance, they use the rounded posts; but at Tottenham they use the square posts. Incidentally, not all the goalposts are of wood. I think those at the Queen's Park Rangers' ground are made of metal.

It is rather a funny thing, when you come to think of it, that the rules and regulations of football should permit goalposts and cross-bars of different design. Yet such is the fact. The rules don't say anything about the posts being round or square: all that they say is that—

*the maximum width of the goalposts shall not be more than five inches, and the maximum depth of the cross-bar the same.*

Obviously a ball which hits a round post will act differently from a ball which hits a square post, and it is quite safe to say that matches have been won and lost owing to the shape of the posts. However, it is not permissible to use different posts at different ends of the field, or to change them at half-time, so that the shape of the goalposts are the same for both sides in any particular match.

**T**HERE is a growing feeling in favour of the rounded goalposts, but the highest authorities of the game—the members of the Football Association—have not yet been won over to the idea of rounded woodwork for posts and cross-bar. This, at any rate, must be the conclusion, seeing that at Wembley, where the English Cup Finals are played, oblong posts are in use.

And I think I can recall a final tie at Wembley the result of which was affected by the oblong goalposts. In 1924, Aston Villa were playing Newcastle United in the final at Wembley. The Villa had the better of the game in the first half, too: looked much the more likely team to win. Some minutes before half-time, however, Billy Walker, the genius of the Aston Villa forward line, met with a nasty accident. The ball was swung over from the Villa right wing, and Walker dashed up with a view to heading it into the net. With his eyes fixed on the ball, Walker did not notice just where he was, and

*he went crashing into the goalpost with the sharp corner right into his chest.*

Walker went out like a boxer who has been given one right on the "point," and at first I thought he had killed himself. However, the injury was not so bad as all that, for the player was able to resume in the second half. But, instead of being the inspiration of the side, he could scarcely do anything at all, and Newcastle United won the Cup.

Now it seems to me quite likely that if the goalposts at Wembley had been rounded off the injury to Walker would not have been so serious as it was owing to the sharpness of the corner into which he ran. I am all in favour of the rounded posts myself, on the ground that they are less dangerous.

**B**Y the way, talking of goalposts and cross-bars, have you noticed the number of goalkeepers who are in the habit of breaking a little-known football rule? It is quite the usual thing for a goalkeeper, going up to a high shot, to swing on the cross-bar as the ball goes over. I have seen goalkeepers do this on scores of occasions, but I have never yet seen a referee tell a goalkeeper that he must not do it. Yet it is a fact that

*goalkeepers who swinging on the cross-bar are breaking a rule.*

A novel point is raised by a reader from Huddersfield. He tells me that recently, when taking part in a game between boys, the opposing side adopted strange tactics. At half-time one side had a lead of two goals to nothing. When it came to the kick-off after the interval the side which was two goals down did not adopt the usual formation. They played seven forwards, two half-backs, one full-back, and a goalkeeper. My correspondent wants to know if this was right: if they should have been allowed to do this? The answer is that the side which did "form up" in the strange fashion was quite justified. There was no breach of the law committed.

**P**ERHAPS it may surprise my readers to know that there is absolutely nothing in the rules which says that a side shall be made up of so many forwards, so many half-backs, two full-backs, and a goalkeeper. Any formation may be adopted, and if a captain thought fit he could play without a goalkeeper.

As a matter of fact, the present formation of a football side—five forwards, three halves, two full-backs, and a goalkeeper—was not always usual. Seven forwards used to be the habit in the long ago.

The only thing a side could not do in this connection would be to play two goalkeepers. They could put two men under the bar, of course, but only one of them would be allowed to use his hands to keep the ball out without incurring a penalty. I might also add—as this bit of information may come in useful at some time or another—that a side must not change its goalkeeper in the course of a game without the referee being informed of the fact.

**A**DARLINGTON reader raises an interesting point concerning what can and can not be done to the goalkeeper. Of course, you all know that a goalkeeper can be charged—legitimately, of course—when he is in possession of the ball. Now my correspondent wants to know what is meant by the word "possession."

*Is a goalkeeper in possession of the ball when he is engaged in fisting it out?*

That is the way my reader friend puts the problem. The answer is—and it has been given officially—that for the purposes of this rule the act of fisting out is not possession, and the goalkeeper cannot be charged—or must not be charged without the charger being penalised—when he is merely fisting the ball out from under his bar.

Let me add here that I can quite understand my correspondent raising this point, because many referees interpret this rule wrongly. I have already seen one First Division match won and lost this season because the referee made a mistake over this rule. The goalkeeper fisted out a long shot. As he did so, an opponent charged into him, sending him to the ground. The referee did not give a free kick, and the ball went to another forward who sent it back into the net before the goalkeeper had recovered. That was a goal which should never have been allowed.

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# "BUNTER COMES TO STAY!"

(Continued from page 10.)

From the bottom of his fat heart Bunter wished that he hadn't landed at Wharton Lodge for his Christmas holidays. Bunter Court was better than this—even with Bessie Bunter and Sammy Bunter thrown in.

"Owl! Beast! He's coming!" groaned Bunter, as a gust of wind shook the windows.

He palpitated.

In his mind's eye he could see Wharton searching the passages for him, bent on vengeance.

Even Bunter could realize that a fellow who had been locked in a chilly wardrobe for two or three hours was likely to feel vengeful when he emerged.

Bunter was still tingling from the two or three hefty smacks Wharton had had time to administer before he fled. He did not want any more—very much indeed he did not want any more.

A long minute passed.

The hapless Owl of the Remove dared not venture from the room in which he had taken refuge.

But it came into his fat mind that the man who slept in the room might have heard him enter, and he blinked round uneasily.

"I—I say, it's all right!" gasped Bunter. "I ain't a burglar, you know! It's all right."

There was no answer.

Apparently the room was unoccupied.

That was a relief at least. Bunter had no desire to be collared by some startled manservant, as a burglar.

The window was curtained and there was not the faintest glimmer of light in the room.

Neither was there any sound of breathing. Bunter, evidently, was alone there.

Another long minute passed—and another! They were very long indeed to Billy Bunter.

He shivered and his teeth chattered.

A lull in the wind was followed by deep silence. There was no sound of pursuing footsteps.

Still Bunter did not venture out.

The beast was still looking for him, or waiting in his room for him to return. It was only judicious to give the beast time to calm down. Wherever the beast looked for him, he was not likely to look into one of the menservants' rooms. Bunter was safe so long as he remained there.

Assured that he was alone in the room now, the fat junior groped for the switch, found it by the door, and turned on the light.

He blinked round him.

The room was empty, save for Bunter.

The bed was made, ready for occupation, but it was not occupied. A suit of pyjamas lay across it. Evidently someone had intended to use the room that night, but had not yet gone to bed.

Bunter was puzzled. He did not know what time it was, but he knew that it was very late; none of the servants could be up at that hour. Yet this room, evidently habitually occupied, was empty; the bed, though made, ready for occupation, had not been slept in.

It was curious; and Bunter blinked about the room very curiously. He wondered whose room it was. It must belong to one of the men employed in the house, and it was very curious indeed that that man had not yet gone to bed.

"Barnes!" ejaculated Bunter suddenly.

On a table lay a chauffeur's cap.

Bunter stared at it.

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The room was the one assigned to Barnes, the Head's chauffeur. Bunter knew that Barnes had a room on this passage, though he had not known which room it was.

Evidently this was Barnes' room.

Brown, the Colonel's chauffeur, slept over the garage. Barnes had been given a room in the house, in the menservants' quarters. This was Barnes' room, evidently; and Barnes should have been in bed long ago.

Where Barnes was, was a mystery.

Possibly he had been given leave of absence by his master, and was away for the night. Indeed, that was the only possible explanation, so far as Bunter could see. The whole household had long ago gone to bed; Barnes could not still be up within the walls of Wharton Lodge. Evidently—Bunter concluded—he was away for the night.

There was nothing, after all, surprising in that, for Barnes had no business at Wharton Lodge, except to wait there so long as his master stayed with the colonel, and if he wanted a night's leave of absence, Dr. Locke was certain to give it to him.

Bunter grinned.

He was in luck.

Nothing could have happened better, in fact.

The beast who was—as Bunter believed—searching for him, could search as long as he jolly well liked. If the beast was waiting in Bunter's room for Bunter to come back, he could jolly well wait. Bunter had, by sheer luck, found a safe and comfortable refuge. Barnes being absent, there was no reason why Bunter should not remain in the room, and the bed looked a comfortable one.

It did not take Bunter long to make up his fat mind.

He turned off the light and plunged into bed. With great satisfaction Bunter tucked his fat person under the blankets.

His eyes closed a few seconds after his head touched Barnes' pillow. A few seconds more and the silence of the room was broken by a rumble like that of distant thunder.

Bunter was asleep.

He slept and snored. Back to his fat mind came the interrupted dream of turkey and Christmas pudding, and as he slept a sweet smile illuminated his face.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Mysterious!

**B**ILLY BUNTER awoke suddenly. What had awakened him he did not know, but something had.

Generally when Billy Bunter's eyes were closed in slumber they were safe to remain closed, and nothing short of a thunderclap would have awakened him till morning.

But the exciting events of the night had told, even on William George Bunter. He slept fitfully. His dream of a turkey and Christmas pudding mingled, in his slumbers, with the avenging figure of the captain of the Remove seeking him along dusky passages. The happy dream became a nightmare, and in the mists and shadows of sleep he had an awful vision of a fierce turkey chasing him along passages and up and down stairs. He mumbled and grumbled in his sleep; and in that disturbed state a faint sound was enough to awaken him.

He opened his eyes and blinked in the darkness.

For some moments he could not remember where he was, or what had happened to him. The vision of a fierce and vengeful turkey faded, to be re-

placed by a recollection of the captain of the Remove.

He poked his little fat nose out over the edge of the cover and blinked round the dark room, and listened intently with both fat ears. If the beast had run him down after all—

There was a sound in the quiet room, and Bunter knew he was no longer alone.

He tried to still his breathing.

He had no doubt that it was Wharton. How could it be anybody else? Bunter was not aware that he had been asleep in Barnes' bed for nearly two hours, he had an impression that he had nodded off for a few minutes.

He listened, with beating heart.

Someone was in the room. He could see nothing, but he could hear someone moving.

But if it was Wharton, why didn't the beast turn on the light? If he knew Barnes was absent, and suspected that the fat Owl had taken refuge in that room, he would naturally turn on the light to look for him. But the darkness remained unbroken.

Then—after a few moments, which seemed long minutes to the quaking Owl of the Remove—there was a scratching sound.

A match was struck.

Bunter blinked in amazement.

The beast was striking a match, though there was an electric switch just inside the door.

The glimmer of the match moved across the shadowy room towards the mantelpiece.

Bunter stared at it.

Dimly in the glimmer of the flickering match, he made out the figure of the person who carried it.

It was not Wharton. It was too tall for a schoolboy.

For a second Bunter's fat heart palpitated with the thought of burglars. He had not forgotten his startling experience at Greyfriars, just before the break-up for the Christmas holidays, when he had come down in the night after Cokers' cake, and had run into a burglar. For a second Bunter lived that horrid moment over again.

But the next moment his terrors were relieved.

The match was placed to a night-light on the mantelpiece, and a dim illumination glimmered through the room. Dim as it was, it enabled Bunter to recognise the man who stood by the fireplace.

It was Barnes!

Bunter's terrors disappeared as he recognised Dr. Locke's chauffeur. But his surprise was great.

He blinked at Barnes in utter amazement.

Finding Barnes' room empty, and the bed not slept in, Bunter had taken it for granted, as a matter of course, that the man was away for the night.

That Barnes would return, in the small hours of the morning had not even occurred for a moment to his fat brain.

Indeed, it was so extraordinary that Bunter wondered for a moment or two whether he was still dreaming.

Where on earth had Barnes been in the middle of the night? Out of the house, that was certain. But where—and why?

Bunter's little round eyes almost bulged from his head in astonishment, as he blinked at him.

He groped by the pillow for his glasses, jammed them on his little fat nose, and blinked again. There was no doubt of it. The man was Barnes.

The glimmer of the night-light showed up, plainly enough, the cool, steady face, the well-cut features, of the Head's chauffeur.

Barnes was not looking towards the bed—evidently he had not the faintest suspicion that his room was occupied.

Bunter made no sound. He was so astonished that he could only blink at the man who stood by the fireplace, a dozen feet away from him.

He noticed that Barnes was breathing hard. Wherever he had been, he had apparently returned to Wharton Lodge at a good speed—perhaps running. He turned from the mantelpiece, but not towards the bed. He dropped into a deep chair, like a man who was weary, stretched out his legs, and remained there, only his deep and hurried breathing coming to Bunter's ears.

Bunter lay on his elbow, dumb, blinking at the chauffeur's profile as he sat in the armchair.

Why the man had put a match to the night-light, instead of turning on the electric switch, puzzled the fat junior. But it occurred to him that Barnes, for whatsoever reason he had been out that night at such an hour, did not desire

hence his stealthy and surreptitious return to the house in the small hours.

If the Head's chauffeur had been joy-riding, it seemed to have tired him. He lay back heavily in the armchair, resting; more like a man who had walked or run a good distance, than like a man who had driven a car.

Bunter sat up in bed.

Now that the chauffeur had returned, obviously Bunter had to vacate Barnes' room and return to his own.

So far, the man had not even glanced towards the bed. But as Bunter sat up, the bed creaked, and Barnes moved, with a sudden swiftness that surprised Bunter.

Like lightning, he leaped from the armchair, and spun round towards the bed. In the glimmer of the night-light his face showed white and startled.

"I say, Barnes—" ejaculated Bunter, startled by the change that had come over Barnes' face.

The chauffeur made an inarticulate sound. He leaped towards the bed,

room. The look on his face as he leaped towards the bed, told of mingled rage and terror, and it had seemed to Bunter that there was a murderous glare in Barnes' eyes as he came.

But if it was there it was quickly gone. As he stared across the bed at the squealing fat junior, sprawling in a tangle of sheets and blankets, Barnes regained his accustomed calm.

"Bunter!" he said.

"Ow! Keep off! It's only me, you silly ass!" gasped Bunter. "You lay hands on me, you cheeky beast, and I'll tell the Beak that you've had his car out! Ow!"

Bunter disentangled himself from the bedclothes, and scrambled to his feet. He blinked at Barnes across the bed.

Barnes was breathing fast, and his face was still white, but he was calm now. When he spoke again his voice was as smooth as usual.

"Master Bunter, you startled me!" he said quietly.

"And you jolly well startled me,



Like a panther the chauffeur leaped towards Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove gave a squeal of terror and rolled on to the other side of the bed!

the household to be aware of his movements. It was not likely that a gleam of light under his door, or from a chink in the curtains at the window, would be observed; but it was possible, and Barnes was not taking the chance.

Bunter grinned.

Evidently Barnes had been out secretly, and had returned as secretly, and desired his actions to remain a secret. He must have got hold of some key to let himself out and in, or perhaps had used a window.

It was odd enough, for there was no doubt at all that Barnes' employer would have given him a night's leave of absence if he had asked for it. So far as Bunter could see, Barnes was taking a lot of trouble to keep secret a matter that need not have been kept secret at all.

But an explanation very quickly occurred to Bunter. He fancied that he knew the ways of chauffeurs! Barnes, of course, had taken the Head's car out for a joy-ride! That was it, Bunter decided, with a grin—the fellow had been joy-riding in his master's car;

swiftly, silently, like a springing panther.

The look on his face was so strange, so terrible, that it frightened Bunter almost out of his fat wits.

He gave a squeak of terror, and rolled out of bed on the other side.

Bump!

"Ow! Wow!"

Bunter rolled on the floor in a tangle of bedclothes.

"Ow! Yaroo! Keep off!" squealed Bunter. "It's only me, Barnes! Ow! Only Bunter! Wow! I ain't a burglar! Ow! Keep off! Wow!"

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

"Keep it Dark!"

**B**ARNES stood staring across the bed at the Owl of the Remove. He made an effort to pull himself together.

For a moment or two his self-control seemed utterly to have deserted him, as he found that he was not alone in his

jumping at me like a wild beast!" gasped Bunter. "Did you think there was a burglar in your bed, you silly idiot?"

"Really, Master Bunter, I did not know what to think—in fact, I had no time to think." Barnes was his normal, quiet, self-possessed self now, though his eyes were gleaming strangely at the fat junior. "I was very much surprised to find someone in my room at this hour of the night. May I ask what you are doing here, sir?"

"It's your own fault," grunted Bunter. "How was I to know that you were coming back?" He blinked at the clock on the mantelpiece. "Why, it's half-past three nearly! Nice time to keep your governor's car out!"

"My governor's car?" repeated Barnes.

"Think I don't know what you've been up to?" sneered Bunter. "I know all about chauffeurs! You've had the Head's car out on a joy-ride, and only

(Continued on page 16.)

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# CLEARING HIS NAME!

By DICKY NUGENT

It looks an odds-on chance of Dr. Birchmell being arrested as a thief—until Hawkeye, the famous sleuth, gets busy on the job!

"H AVING a jolly good time, sir?" Frank Fearless asked that question.

He had just cannoned into Dr. Birchmell, his venerable headmaster at St. Sam's. Dr. Birchmell was at present an uninvited guest at the magnificent Mayfair mansion which belonged to Frank's wealthy pater.

The Head had a contented smirk on his skollery dille and a smear of jam round his mouth. Fearless shrewdly guessed that he had been raiding the pantry—a recreation in which he frequently indulged between meal-times.

"Yes, Fearless, I am having an awfully good time, thank you," he said, in reply to Frank's question. "I must say you've done me proud this Christmas. Matter of fact, I'm thinking of staying on for the rest of the week!"

"Oh crikey!" Dr. Birchmell started violently.

"What did you say, Fearless?" "I said you're very welcome to stop, sir!" said Frank Fearless hurriedly.

"But are you sure we're not keeping you from your friends, sir?" "Possibly you are. Nevertheless, it suits my purpose to stay on here for a while," said the Head, lowering his voice to a meek whisper. "You are aware, of course, Fearless, that I left St. Sam's under a bit of a cloud. The perlice are hunting high and low for me in connection with the affair of the missing Christmas-card munny, and I dare not show my fizz in the streets of London. So I think I had better accept your hospitality a little longer. Thanks for inviting me!"

"Don't mensh!" grinned Frank Fearless, who was much too polite to point out that he didn't reckerlect inviting the Head at all! "By the way, here comes a friend of our family whom the pater has invited to dinner to-nite. Let me introduce him."

Frank was referring to a tall, distinguished-looking gentleman who was just crossing the hall with Mr. Fearless and Jack Jolly and Merry and Bright, the heroes of the Fourth at St. Sam's.

The Head gave one look at the newcomer, then turned deadly white.

"Grate pip!" Hawkeye, the selly-brated slooth, or I'm a Dutchman!" he cried hoarsely. "Sorry I can't stop!"

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And with a wild, hunted eggsspression in his eyes, he made a bolt for the nearest door.

Unforchunilly for the Head, at the very moment when he reached the doorway, the butler, a portly old fellow named Waite, happened to be issuing fourth. There was a terrific crash, and a fearful bump, and the Head and the old retainer collapsed in a heap, yelling.

"Yarooooo!"

"Grooooo! Help!"

In a moment Jack Jolly & Co. had rushed to the rescue. Behind them cantered the dignified figgers of Mr. Fearless and the sellybrated detective.

"Bless my sole! What's all this here?" asked Mr. Fearless, in his deep, refined voice.

"Evidently an axcident, my dear Fearless!" broke in the heavy base voice of the famous Hawkeye. "From what I see, I deduce that two individuals have axcidentally bumped into one another!"

"Good hevans! However did you discover that?" asked Mr. Fearless, in amazement.

"Quite simple, my dear Fearless! But there is no time for me to eggssplain just how I did it. Let me help the unforchunite gentleman to his feet!"

And Hawkeye grabbed the Head's beard and jerked him to his feet. As he did so, he uttered a sudden eggsslamation:

"Thunder and lightning! It's Alfred Birchmell, the missing skoolmaster!"

"It's not!" roared the Head, beginning to tremble like a jellyfish. "As a matter of fact, my name's Buster Brown, and I'm a pork-butcher! Ain't I, boys?"

"First we've heard of it!" grinned Jack Jolly. "You've always been known as Dr. Birchmell at St. Sam's, anyway!"

"As I suspected!" nodded Hawkeye. "Are you aware, my dear Fearless, that this—er—gentleman is wanted by the perlice for pinching a vast sum of Christmas-card munny?"

"Well, I did hear something about it," confessed Mr. Fearless. "But Birchy has always declared he didn't pinch it."

"Nor I didn't!" cried the Head, licking his dry lips in an aggerany of apprehension. "Take my word for it, Mr. Hawkeye, I wouldn't dream of pinching a penny of anybody's munny! Tuck-hampers and such-like I admit I have

pinched by the duzzen; but munny—never!"

"Then you admit you are Alfred Birchmell?" asked Hawkeye.

"Well, as these young idiots refuse to confirm that I am Buster Brown, there's nothing else to be done!"

"And you deny that you are guilty of pinching the missing munny?"

"I swear I never done it!" cried Dr. Birchmell, in wringing tones.

The famous detective pulled out a magnifying-glass from his pocket and eggssamined the Head of St. Sam's closely for several minnits. At the end of that time he replaced it in his pocket, with a satisfied grunt.

"Birchmell, I believe you," he said. "Thank hevvan!" gasped the Head, wiping away the beads of inspiration that had gathered on his massive brow.

"From my eggssamination of you, Birchmell, I should say that you are several sorts of a rotter—"

"Hear, hear!" mermered Bright.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But not the sort of rotter that would sell Christmas-cards on commission and purloin the proceeds!" went on Hawkeye.

"That being so, my dear sir, I will not hand you over to the perlice."

"Thanks, awfully!" cried the Head fervently.

"Instead of that, I will place my servisses at your disposal and see if I can help you to clear your name."

"My hat! All this sounds too good to be true!" grinned the Head. "Do you really think it possibul that you can solve the mistery, Mr. Hawkeye?"

Hawkeye smiled an insorutable emile. "I should shay sho!" he replied, with whimsical humer. "No mistery, however baffling, remains a mistery for long when Hawkeye gets bizzy on the job. Come! We will adjern to the library, and you will tell me all you know about it."

In high good humer, the entire party trotted along to the library. Waite, the butler, brought along an enormous trayload of jinjer-beer and jam-tarts, and while they discussed these, Dr. Birchmell and Hawkeye also discussed the mistery of the missing munny-box.

Dr. Birchmell eggssplained eggssactly

how he had placed the munny-box containing the Christmas-card cash into his desk; he described the little feed he had given just before Breaking-up Day; and then, in brief, graphic sentences, told of the opening of the drawer and the discovery that the cash was missing.

Hawkeye listened in silence, his beetling brows contracted together as his mitey brain pieced the shreds of evidence together. Now and again he crossed the library and consulted weighty books like the "Newgate Calendar," "Crimes & Criminals," "Safe-breaking," and the "Cracksman's Handbook." Apart from that, and re-ling out at half-minnit intervals to grab a jam-tart, he remained motionless.

When the Head had finished, he plied him with keen, intelligent questions, such as "How many tarts make five?" and "When is a door not a door?" and "Who killed Cock Robin?"

The Head answered all these questions frankly and openly, as though he had nothing to conceal.

At last Hawkeye rose, with a satisfied eggsspression on his face.

"Jentlemen!" he said. "I think I have solved the mistery!"

"Grate pip!"

"Already!" cried the Head, almost incredulously. "It seems almost impossibul!"

"Nevertheless, I believe I have done it!" said Hawkeye. "With your kind permission, Mr. Fearless, we will now put on our coats and hats, and get into one of your sumptuous Rolls-Rices."

"Where are we going, then?" asked Jack Jolly wonderingly.

The grate slooth's reply sent a thrill through his little audience:

"To St. Sam's!"

II.  
CLATTER CLATTER! Bang! Crash!

Swiftly the grate, purring Rolls-Rice threaded its way through the bizzy streets of London on its way to Muggleton and St. Sam's.

Jack Jolly & Co., of course, were awfully eggssited at the turn of events, and Dr. Birchmell and Mr. Fearless were almost as eggssited as our heroes.

Apart from the shover, the only person in the car who was not eggssited was Hawkeye. The grate slooth sat in the

corner reading a comic paper and smiling an inscrutable smile. To look at him, nobody would have guessed that he was unravelling an amazing mistery.

All at once Hawkeye glanced out of the back of the car. Somehow Jack Jolly & Co. sensed immediately that he had made a discovery. It was not that Hawkeye gave himself away at all.

"Anything the matter, sir?" asked Jack Jolly respectfully.

"Yes, my boy!" answered Hawkeye, wiping the tears of merriment from his eyes. "See that grate car tearing along behind us?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, that is a Flying Squad car. Evidently the powers that be at Scotland Yard are not so fast asleep as they usually are. They are after the missing skoolmaster!"

"Mean to say they are following us?" gasped the Head.

"Eggssactly! They are following us with the intention of kapturing you and leading you away to kaptivity!"

"Yarooooo!" roared the Head, turning deadly pale with fear.

"But don't get nervuss, my dear Birchmell! With Hawkeye on your side you are as safe as houses—safer, in fact!" finished the grate slooth, as the Rolls-Rice cannoned into a house at the corner of a street, smashing it to smithereens. "Do you mind telling the shover to get a move on, my dear Fearless?"

"Plezzure to oblige a jentleman!" grinned Mr. Fearless; and, putting his mouth to the speaking-tube, he yelled out: "Drive like the very dickens, Bill!"

The response was immejate. Like an unleashed bound, the Rolls-Rice leaped forward, and pedestrians were bowled over like ninepins, without so much as a "By your leave!" The Flying Squad car thundered along in the rear, and the occupants of the Rolls-Rice saw half-a-duzzen infuriated Scotland Yard slooths blazing away at them with revolvers. But the Flying Squad were not close enuff to do any dammdge, and by the time open country was reached they were left far behind.

With a deferring grinding of brakes, the Rolls-Rice pulled up at last in front of the Skool House. Instantly the little party streamed out of the car and up the Skool House steps.

Dr. Birchmell pulled out an enormous key from his trowis pocket and opened the main door of the Skool House. Into the House and up the dusty, deserted staircase the party pored, the Head leading the way with his long, loping gait, and the rest cantering along after him.

Outside the Head's study they pawssed for a minnit while Dr. Birchmell fumbled with another enormous key. While they pawssed, a sound fell on their ears, coming from outside the Skool House—a sound that made the Head turn paler than ever.

It was the toot-toot of a motor-horn. The Flying Squad had arrived at St. Sam's!

"Quick! There is not a minnit to lose, if you value your freedom!" hist Hawkeye.

The Head realised that Hawkeye's words were only too true. With a mitey kick, he sent the door of his sanktum

swinging open, pawssed for a moment to switch on the light, then rushed across the study.

"There you are, Mr. Hawkeye!" he gasped breathlessly. "Here is the giddy desk, and this is the drawer in which I placed the munny-box."

Hawkeye took in the seen at a glance. "Just as I imagined it!" he remarked, referring to the desk. "Lemme see—"

He fell on his neeze and wrenched open the drawer beneath the cash drawer.

"No good looking in there, I'm afraid," said the Head. "That is the drawer where I keep tradesmen's bills and other unimportant items—"

Dr. Birchmell broke off suddenly, and stared in amazement at the neeling slooth. At the same moment a yell of astonishment went up from the rest.

For in the long, tapering hands of the world-famed tee was the missing munny-box!

"The—the munny-box!" gasped the Head.

"Eggssactly! Still locked and still full of munny!" said Hawkeye, grinning an inscrutable grin. "The theory that I formed in London turned out to be correct."

"But—but how did it get in the wrong drawer? I well remember putting it in the drawer above."

"Just not! But you didn't allow for the back of the drawer being loose and allowing the munny-box to drop through into the drawer below!" grinned Hawkeye.

"My hat! I can see that that's what happened now! And you mean to say that you deduced all this in London?" "Eggssactly! What I said to myself was this here—"

At that moment six red-faced Scotland Yard slooths rushed in, brandishing revolvers all over one place.

On seeing them, Hawkeye burst into a roar of insorutable larfter.

"It's all right, jentlemen! You're foiled again!" he guffawed. "Hawkeye has got in before you once more, and you're dished, diddled and done!"

"Oh, blow you, Hawkeye! We're going to arrest Alfred Birchmell—"

"You're not!" grinned the slooth. "Alfred Birchmell is going to pay up his just detts, and the whole matter is going to drop, as a matter of fact!"

And Hawkeye, as usual, was right. There and then the cash changed hands, and with a dull thud the matter was dropped.

The Scotland Yard jentlemen felt a bit agreeved at first. But when Mr. Fearless invited them back to his town house for a feed they forgot their shagrin and became as nice as pie.

It was an enjoyable feed that was held at the Fearless mansion that nite. And the cheers were loud and long when the Head rose to propose a toast. That toast, almost needless to say, was in honour of Hawkeye, the slooth—the man who, by his insorutable methods, had succeeded in clearing Dr. Birchmell's name!

THE END.

(There'll be another rousing yarn by Dicky Nugent in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "AMAZING THE SKOOL!" Don't miss this treat, whatever you do, chums!)





(Continued from page 13.)

just got back. You'd jolly well get the sack if I told the Beak! Yah!"

An expression of relief flashed over Barnes' pale face. Even Bunter, who was far from observant, observed it, and wondered at it.

"I thought you were away for the night, of course," went on Bunter. "What else was I to think, when I found the room empty, after everybody had gone to bed?"

"You think I have had my master's car out on a joy-ride, Master Bunter?" Bunter snorted.

"I jolly well know you have!" he retorted. "You needn't try to pull my leg, Barnes. If you haven't, where have you been, I'd like to know!"

Barnes drew a deep breath. "I'm not denying it, sir," he said smoothly.

"Not much good if you did!" snapped Bunter contemptuously. "You can't stuff me, Barnes!"

A faint smile flickered for an instant over Barnes' face. The colour was coming back into his cheeks now.

"I shouldn't dream of trying to deceive you, sir," said Barnes.

"Wouldn't you—just?" sneered Bunter. "You jolly well would if you thought you could get away with it! But I'm too jolly fly for that, I can tell you!"

"You are too sharp for me, Master Bunter!"

"I fancy I am!" assented the Owl of the Remove complacently.

"But you have not yet told me what you were doing in my room, Master Bunter," said Barnes, and his eyes were fixed on the fat junior with a piercing look.

"That beast Wharton was after me!" granted Bunter. "I dodged into this room to get away from him."

"Is that all?"

"All!" repeated Bunter. "What the thump do you think I came here for in the middle of the night? Think I care two straws whether you'd taken the Beak's car out on a joy-ride or not?"

Barnes' eyes, fixed on the fat and fatuous face of the Owl of the Remove, seemed as if they would penetrate that fat face to the thoughts behind.

It was evident, to his keen scrutiny, that Bunter was telling the truth. It was only by chance that the fat junior had butted into Barnes' room that night. If Barnes had feared any deeper motive, he was relieved.

"I'm going back to my room now!" granted Bunter. "That beast will be asleep by this time—he can't have waited up all this time, blow him! Nice way to treat a guest—after pressing him to come! I've a jolly good mind to clear out of the house the first thing in the morning! I jolly well would, only—only I won't!"

Bunter came round the bed. Barnes watched him.

"Master Bunter—"

"Lend me those matches!" grunted Bunter. "I've got to get back to my room!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Barnes handed him the box of matches. Bunter rolled to the door. Barnes' eyes followed him.

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"Master Bunter, you've found out that I had my master's car out to-night for a joy-ride to London. I am sure you will not mention it to Dr. Locke and get me into trouble with my employer?"

Bunter snorted.

"I don't see why I shouldn't," he answered. "I can jolly well tell you, Barnes, that I don't approve of these goings-on!"

"Dr. Locke would be vexed, sir."

"I fancy he would!" grinned Bunter. "Old Locke's too jolly soft with servants, in my opinion; but he would get his ears up if he knew you'd had his car out all night, running about London and getting back here at half-past three in the morning!"

"I am aware, sir, that I have committed a fault," said Barnes humbly. "Some friends urged me very hard—"

"That's no excuse!" said Bunter loftily.

"I know, sir. But I should take it very kindly if you would promise not to mention my transgression to my employer. It might cause me to lose my place, sir—and just at Christmas-time, I am sure you would not be hard on me."

Bunter's severe, fat countenance thawed.

Bunter's treatment of persons in employment, as a rule, made those persons experience a yearning to take him by his fat neck and wring the same.

But Bunter could be kind to such persons if they ate a sufficient amount of humble-pie, so to speak. And Barnes now, though hitherto Bunter had considered him extremely cheeky, was as humble and meek as even the fatuous Owl of the Remove could have desired.

"Well, I don't mind keeping it dark, Barnes," he said graciously. "So long as you're civil, and know your place, you can always rely on kindness from me."

"Thank you, sir!" said Barnes. "I am very grateful, sir!"

"So you ought to be," said Bunter. "It would jolly well be the sack for you if I told the Beak. Still, old Locke doesn't treat me any too civilly—snapping a fellow up if he opens his mouth! I won't mention it, Barnes, so long as you're civil and keep your place, and don't get cheeky."

"Thank you, sir!" said Barnes. "This kindness is exactly what I should have expected from a young gentleman like you, sir."

Billy Bunter smiled with fatuous satisfaction.

"That's all right, Barnes," he said. "Good-night, my man!"

"Good-night, sir!" said Barnes respectfully.

Bunter rolled away at last. In a couple of minutes he was in his own room and his own bed, and in another his deep snore was once more going strong.

But Barnes was not so soon to bed.

For quite a long time after Bunter had left him, that rather mysterious young man stood, his face tense and thoughtful in the glimmer of the night-light.

He shook himself at last, as if dismissing troublesome thoughts.

"After all, we leave to-morrow!" he muttered. "That fat fool understands nothing, and he will have little time to talk before we go! And after the holidays he will have forgotten. It matters little."

And Barnes extinguished the light and went to bed, though he did not sleep before the grey December dawn was creeping in at the windows of Wharton Lodge.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### The Parting Guest!

"MY esteemed chum—" Harry Wharton opened his eyes and yawned.

It was morning, and the winter sunlight shone in at his windows. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was standing beside his bed, with a smile on his dusky face.

"Owl! I'm sleepy!" murmured Wharton.

"It is nine o'clock, my absurd chum!" remarked the nabob. "The sleepfulness has been terrific!"

Wharton sat up. "My hat! So late!"

"The lateness is preposterous!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "And as the esteemed Head departfully bunks this morning, the turn-outfulness is the proper caper!"

"Yes, rather!" yawned Wharton.

Late as the hour was, it cost Wharton rather an effort to turn out of bed. However, he turned out. He was feeling the effects of the loss of sleep the previous night; but a plunge in cold water revived him, and he came down cheerfully to a rather late breakfast.

Billy Bunter was not down yet.

Bunter also had missed some sleep, and he was making up for it.

Dr. Locke was leaving Wharton Lodge that morning, and Wharton and Hurree Singh intended to see him off in his car; but to Billy Bunter that did not seem at all necessary. The less he saw of the Beak, the better William George Bunter liked it.

Barnes need have had no uneasiness with regard to Bunter mentioning his escapade to his employer—whether he had been engaged on a joy-ride or not. When Bunter awakened, after ten o'clock, he rang for his breakfast in bed, and after breakfast the Owl of the Remove took another nap. Nobody objected to Bunter staying in bed as long as he liked; indeed, the longer he remained there, the more agreeable it was to all the other occupants of the Lodge. So Bunter snored on unregarded.

He was still snoring when Barnes brought the car round for the Head.

Barnes' quiet, composed face showed no sign of anything unusual having occurred during the night. He looked as he had always looked—a model chauffeur. Colonel Wharton was standing on the steps when Barnes brought the car round. The Head was still in the house, and the colonel approached the chauffeur, who saluted him respectfully.

"Good-morning, sir!" murmured Barnes.

"Good-morning—Barnes!" said the colonel, pausing a second before he spoke the name.

Barnes smiled faintly.

"Still Barnes, sir?" he murmured.

"Yes."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Since you made your explanation to me a few nights ago I have had no time to look into the matter," said Colonel Wharton. "As you know, it was a surprise and a shock to me to recognise Arthur Poynings, formerly an officer in the Loamshire Regiment, acting as chauffeur to my old head-master under an assumed name. I have said nothing to Dr. Locke—"

"I was sure, sir, that you would not spoil my chance of making good in the only calling left open to me," said Barnes.

"I should be very sorry to do so," said the colonel. "Except for the one false step you made after the War, I

accept your assurance that your record has been clean. But—"

"But—" murmured Barnes.

"It is my duty, in the circumstances, to investigate that record," said Colonel Wharton.

"I have furnished you, sir, with a list of the names of my employers, since I have been a chauffeur!" murmured the ex-officer of the Leamshire Regiment. "I am prepared to stand or fall by the result of your inquiry."

Colonel Wharton nodded.

"If I find that all is clear, you may rely upon my silence," he said. "If you are running straight now, I shall forget that your name ever was Poynings, and that you were ever anything but a chauffeur."

"You are very good, sir."

"That is simply fair play," said Colonel Wharton, "and I may add that if you should desire to change your calling, and should be in need of help, I am prepared to give you help."

Barnes' eyes gleamed strangely for a moment, as he looked at the bronzed face of the old military gentleman.

"Thank you, sir," he said respectfully. "But I am quite satisfied with my present calling. I have a comfortable berth, and a kind master, and I ask for nothing more."

The colonel scanned his face.

"Your early prospects were very different, Poynings," he said. "You are a Public school and University man—"

"That did not help me much when I was stranded after the war," said Barnes with a shrug of the shoulders. "I found my skill as a driver much more useful than my stores of classical knowledge."

Colonel Wharton smiled.

"No doubt," he assented. "It is a new and harder world since the war, and there is not much room in it for idlers. Nevertheless—"

"I am quite satisfied, sir."

"If you are satisfied with steady work and duty in a humble sphere, you are very much changed since I used to know you, Poynings," said the colonel, as if with a lingering doubt.

"I am changed, sir! I am no longer discontented and ambitious. A year behind the bars cured me of that. All I

ask now is to be left in peace to earn my bread honestly, and to forget that I was ever anything different from what I now am!"

"That is little to ask," said Colonel Wharton, "and you may depend upon me to put no obstacle in your way, if you are in earnest, Poynings."

"Thank you, sir."

The Head's baggage was being brought out now, and the colonel stepped back. His eyes lingered on Barnes, as the chauffeur packed the baggage on the car. Few would have recognised the quiet, sedate chauffeur, as the man the colonel had once known him to be—restless, reckless, self-willed, extravagant, uncontrolled. If the ex-officer was playing a part, he was playing it uncommonly well.

But the colonel had little more time to give attention to the Head's chauffeur. Dr. Locke, having made his farewells to Miss Wharton, came out, and Barnes opened the door of the car for him. The Head took his leave of the colonel, who grim and bronzed veteran as he was, was still in his old headmaster's eyes Jim Wharton of Greyfriars. Then he graciously shook hands in turn with Harry and Hurree Singh, and graciously wished them a merry Christmas.

Then he packed himself into the car, and Barnes toolled it away down the drive.

When it was gone, the colonel turned to the juniors with a smile.

"I hope you have enjoyed your headmaster's visit," he remarked.

"Oh, yes! Lots!" said Harry, rather guiltily.

"The enjoyfulness was terrific, honoured sahib," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gravely.

"But perhaps you will enjoy that of your young friends, who arrive to-morrow, still more!" suggested the colonel.

"Hem!"

The colonel smiled and went back into the house. He had enjoyed the few days his old headmaster had spent with him; but it had been, perhaps, a little weighty to the schoolboys. At all events there was little doubt that they could not miss the Head severely, and that the arrival of Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull,

and Frank Nugent, on the morrow, would more than compensate for the loss.

"The Head's a good old scout, Inby," remarked Harry Wharton.

"The goodness of the esteemed old scout is terrific," agreed the Nabob of Bhampur.

"But—" said Harry.

"The butfulness also is terrific," grinned Hurree Singh.

"Still, he's been jolly decent to us."

"The decentfulness was great."

"All the same, it will be a bit more lively with the fellows here," said Harry, laughing.

"Ratherfully, my esteemed chum."

"I say, you fellows—"

The two juniors looked round. Billy Bunter was blinking out of the doorway, through his big spectacles.

Wharton looked at him rather grimly. But his wrath had evaporated with the night, and he was no longer yearning to kick the fat Owl from one end of Wharton Lodge to the other.

"Well, you fat villain!" he said.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say, is the Beak gone?"

"Yes."

"That's good," said Bunter. "It was a bit thick having him here, in holiday time; still, as he's gone, it's all right. Thank goodness he's gone. I hope your uncle won't be asking any more dashed schoolmasters here. Wharton, so long as my visit lasts."

"You'd better tell my uncle that," answered Harry dryly.

"Well, he's rather a crusty old codger," said Bunter. "I'd rather you gave him a hint, old chap! He might ask Quelch next, and in that case, I'm bound to say that I should have to cut my visit short."

"Then I hope he will ask Quelch."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"The fact is, Bunter, the fellows are coming to-morrow," said the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, I don't mind," said Bunter generously. "Ask whom you jolly well like, Wharton. After all, it's your place."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. "Thanks!"

"Not at all, old fellow! Don't mind me. Of course, Bob Cherry is a noisy beast—"

(Continued on next page.)

## Greetings From Greyfriars!

All the prominent characters at Greyfriars are eager to send you Christmas Greetings. But for reasons of space we are compelled to limit publication to a chosen few.

### WHARTON:

TO one and all, both far and near,  
A heartfelt wish I'm sending,  
That midst the brightest of good cheer  
Your Christmas you'll be spending.

### BILLY BUNTER:

That you'll have tons and tons of tuck  
Piled high on great, big dishes,  
And more besides, if you're in luck,  
I think the best of wishes.  
May Christmas pudding, cake, and pies,  
Appear just never ending.  
'Tis then you'll know, if you are wise,  
A real good time you're spending.

### LORD MAULEVERER:

I'm glad the Christmas season's here;  
The rest I'm badly needing.  
I'll stretch my weary limbs, and doze  
While other folk are feeding.

### COKER:

My earnest wish I'd have you know,  
Your Christmas may be jolly;  
But take good care where'er you go,  
And do not stoop to folly.

### CHERRY:

My wish is, that the greatest fun  
May be your Christmas packet—  
Snowflights, sledging, everyone,  
And kicking up a racket.  
From school we're glad to break away,  
For we were getting restive;  
And now let's shout: "Hip, hip,  
hurrah!"  
To greet the season festive.

### HURREE SINGH:

The goodness of Christmastide  
I wish to all and sundry;  
May foodfulness be put inside  
If you are feeling hungry.  
May wantfulness and sorrow cease  
(I'm sure this sounds dramatic);  
May all have muchfulness and peace,  
This is my wish emphatic!

### BULL:

Though other fellows can, and must,  
I see no rhyme nor reason  
In saying any more than, just,  
"Best Wishes for the Season!"

### FRANK NUGENT:

Already have the other chaps  
Their Christmas wishes spoken;  
And I'll add one, I hope, perhaps,  
To show my good will's token.  
A simple thought, but quite sincere,  
Is this, which I am sending—  
May happiness in next New Year  
Be great and never ending.

### MR. QUELCH:

Though oftentimes I am severe,  
(Of course, with every reason),  
A Christmas glad and bright New  
Year  
I wish you at this season.

### DR. LOCKE:

Dear scholars, and dear readers all,  
My hearty wish I'm adding,  
And what I say although it's small,  
It's really free from "padding."  
I hope you will enjoy the vac,  
With all its fun and pleasure;  
And when once more at work you're  
back  
Its memory you will treasure.  
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"Eh?"

"Johnny Bull is a good bit of a hooligan—"

"What?"

"And Nugent's rather a mamby-pamby."

"You cheeky porpoise—"

"But have 'em if you want 'em," said Bunter. "After all, I never expect you to be considerate to a fellow, Wharton. You always were selfish."

"My only hat! I—"

"But I want one thing clearly understood, if I'm to stay with you over Christmas," said Bunter, blinking seriously at the captain of the Remove. "No more larks! No more of your silly tricks! I can't have my night's rest spoiled by your kiddish japes. You can't expect it."

"Look here, Bunter—"

"That being clearly understood," said Bunter, "I'll stay! Not otherwise. Now I'm going to brekker. If you like to wait an hour, I'll go on the ice with you after brekker and show you how to skate. I suppose there's some brekker going? I had some in bed, but I'm frightfully hungry."

"Look here—"

"Can't stop now, old chap, I'm hungry."

And Bunter rolled away in search of a second breakfast. Harry Wharton gave his dusky chum an eloquent look. "Shall we take him out on the ice, and drown him?" he asked.

The nabob chuckled.

"The drowsiness is the only way," he remarked.

Really, it seemed that some such drastic measure was required, to cause William George Bunter to come unstuck.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### What Happened in the Night!

#### "BURGLARY!"

"Yes."

"Good gad!" ejaculated Colonel Wharton.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had come in after an hour on the ice, and were warming their toes at the fire in the hall, when they heard the colonel's deep voice from the telephone cabinet adjoining.

The juniors exchanged a glance.

"Something's happened!" murmured Wharton.

The colonel's voice went on:

"Certainly. I will come over at once. Tell General Sankey that I will be with him very soon."

The colonel hung up the receiver and came out into the hall. There was an expression of deep concern on his bronzed face.

"Something happened at Sankey Hall, uncle?" asked Harry.

"Yes; the Hall was broken into last night, and General Sankey's collection of Indian jewels taken," said the colonel. "It is a very heavy loss—the value of the jewels is several thousands of pounds. I must go over and see my old friend at once."

And the colonel hurried away.

"Well, my hat!" said Harry. "Blessed if we don't seem to be haunted by burglars these days! There were half a dozen burglaries round about Greyfriars in the last month of the term—one at the school itself, when Bunter butted into the burglar and gave the alarm. I didn't expect to hear of any round about here in the Christmas holidays."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, dry up, Bunter!"

"I say, it's jolly lucky they broke into Sankey Hall, instead of coming

here, ain't it?" said Bunter. "It's only a mile away. I shall jolly well look up my watch to-night."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Do!" said Wharton. "It will be safer locked up. It might roll away."

"Eh? Why should it roll away, fathead?"

"Well, as it's rolled gold, it might roll—"

"Beast! That watch cost twenty-five guineas," said Bunter. "It was a present from one of my titled relations. I shall jolly well look it up to-night, and my money, too."

"You've still got that French penny?"

"Beast!"

Colonel Wharton came back to lunch, and the juniors heard the details of what had happened in the night.

They were keenly interested; for since they had been home for the holidays the colonel had taken them over to Sankey Hall, and they had seen the collection of jewels that the general had brought back with him from India. The Head of Greyfriars had been keenly interested in that unique collection, and the juniors had heard a good deal of talk on the subject. Now, it appeared, the whole collection was gone—vanished in the night.

Some person or persons unknown had entered the Hall, in the small hours, while the whole household slept, and lifted the jewels.

"Some remarkably clever cracksmen," the colonel said. "The safe was an unusually strong one, specially ordered from London, when the general brought the jewels to Sankey Hall. But it seems to have given the man no trouble. The police are in the house; but so far as I can gather there is little hope of obtaining a clue to the thief."

"How dreadful!" said Miss Wharton placidly.

"And there was no alarm?" asked Harry.

"No; the robbery was not discovered till after breakfast. No one appears to have heard a sound in the night. A window on the ground floor was found forced; but it must have been done in silence. The safe was opened without a sound, apparently. The scoundrel got away easily with five thousand pounds' worth of plunder."

The colonel gnawed his grey moustache.

"My poor old friend is terribly knocked over by this. It is a heavy loss for him. By gad! I should like to lay hands on the rascal."

"No doubt the police will succeed in catching the dreadful man," said Miss Wharton. "The police are very clever."

"Hum!" said the colonel.

"I—I say, suppose the beast came here to-night!" said Billy Bunter.

The colonel gave him a glare.

"I wish he would!" he growled. "By gad, I wish the rascal would! I would give a great deal for a chance to lay hands on him!"

Billy Bunter, evidently, did not share the colonel's wish. There was quite an uneasy expression on his fat face. Bunter had not forgotten his awful encounter with the burglar at Greyfriars, and he shivered whenever he recalled that unnerving experience.

Colonel Wharton drove over to Sankey Hall again in the afternoon. He was anxious to hear whether the local police had obtained any clue to the cracksmen.

Billy Bunter was taking his ease, in a deep and comfortable chair before the fire in the hall, a little later, when Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh joined him, with very grave faces.

Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, anything up?" he asked. "What are you looking like a pair of boiled owls about?"

"It's the danger," said Harry Wharton gravely.

Bunter jumped.

"Eh? What danger?"

"The dangerousness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"Look here, you beasts, what are you getting at?" demanded the Owl of the Remove, with an uneasy blink.

"You remember what happened at Greyfriars," said Wharton, in a hushed, solemn voice. "There was a burglary at one place, and then at another, and then at another—a whole series of them in the same neighbourhood. All within a short distance of the same spot. Suppose the same sort of thing happened here?"

"I—I don't see why it should," said Bunter uneasily.

"Well, it may be the same gang, for all we know," said Wharton.

"I—I don't see—"

"Anyhow, it's quite likely that they'll follow the same methods—making a clean sweep of the whole neighbourhood. See?"

"Look here—"

"If they come here to-night—"

"Ow!"

"Of course, a fellow doesn't feel nervous in the daytime," said the captain of the Remove. "But in the middle of the dark, dreary night—fancy hearing the stealthy footstep of a—"

"Ow!"

"The stealthy, creeping footstep in the blackness of the awful night—"

"Groooh!"

"And feeling the sudden, merciless, murderous clutch—"

"Wow! Shut up, you beast!"

"I'm thinking of you, old chap. I can't get away from here, of course; and Inky's bound to stay. But you—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Me?"

"Yes, old chap! You're not bound to face this fearful danger," said Wharton. "Just picture yourself waking up suddenly to find a merciless, murderous, red-handed burglar—"

"Ow! Stop it!"

"Clutching—"

"Wow!"

"With a fiendish clutch—"

"Groooh!"

"The fact is, I don't feel justified in letting you run the risk, Bunter," said Wharton, with the same owl-like gravity. "If you should be murdered—"

"Yow-ow!"

"Or even only battered and smashed by a jemmy—"

"Ooooooh!"

"I've no right to expect you to risk it," said Wharton. "If you think you'd better clear, Bunter, I—I shan't be offended. In—fact, I should feel rather easier in my mind."

"The easierfulness would be terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bunter sat up, and wiped the perspiration from his fat brow. He was shivering in all his fat limbs.

"I—I say, you fellows, p-p-p-perhaps there won't be a burglary here!" gasped Bunter.

"Perhaps not," agreed Wharton. "But if it should happen—and if you should be battered and smashed by a jemmy—"

"Ow! I'm going home."

Wharton and Hurree Singh exchanged an involuntary glance. Unfortunately, the Owl of the Remove blinked at them at the same moment, and spotted that glance. Still more unfortunately he understood it.

The fat junior settled back in his chair, a fat grin slowly overspreading his podgy face.

"I say, you fellows, it's all right," said Bunter. "I hardly think there will be a burglary here. He, he, he!"

"But think—"

"And if there is," said Bunter calmly. "I naturally want to be here to protect you."

"Eh?"

"You fellows would be in a blue funk," explained Bunter. "You'd need a chap with some pluck on the spot. Rely on me."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm not going to desert you, old bean," said Bunter.

"If there's danger, that'll only make me stick to you closer. I'm not the sort of fellow to desert a pal in the hour of peril. Depend on me."

"Look here—"

"Look how I bagged that burglar at Greyfriars," said Bunter. "I should have got him if the other fellows had had half as much pluck as I had. You know that."

"Oh crumbs!"

"My esteemed Bunter—"

"It's all right," said Bunter cheerily. "The fact is, Wharton, if I'd thought of leaving you, old chap, I should stick to you now that you're in danger. That's the sort of pal I am."

"But think of the stealthy—"

"Gammer!"

"Creeping footsteps that—"

"Rats!"

"And the fendish clutch—"

"Pile it on," said Bunter. "You can't scare me! When you fellows feel frightened in the night, just remember that I'm here! If there's a burglar, call me! I'll handle him."

"If you're battered and smashed—"

"I'll risk it, old chap, for your sake."

"Or murdered—"

"A chap can only die once," said Bunter. "What's the odds if he dies doing his duty and protecting his friends?"

"Oh crikey!"

Harry Wharton gave it up. The two juniors drifted away, and a fat chuckle followed them from the armchair. Evidently there was nothing doing.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Man with the Square Jaw!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's cheerful, ruddy face looked from a carriage window as the train rattled into Winford Station. His powerful voice rang along the platform above the clatter of the train.

On the platform, Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh were standing. They grinned cheerily at the ruddy face that looked from the train. Over Bob's shoulders looked the faces of Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent.

The train stopped, and the door was hurled open. Bob Cherry jumped out, and his comrades followed him.

Wharton and the nabob hurried across to meet them. There was a cheery shaking of hands and thumping on shoulders.

"Here we are again!" said Bob Cherry.

"The here againfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous chum!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It is an absurd pleasure to behold your ludicrous countenance once more."



Billy Bunter unrolled the paper and revealed—a cake of soap bearing the inscription: PRICE THREEPENCE. "Beasts!" he roared angrily.

Bob chuckled.

"Everybody merry and bright?" he asked.

"Topping!" answered Harry. "You've arrived too late to see the Head—"

"The Head?" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"Yes; the Head's been on a visit to my uncle. He left yesterday—"

"And we've missed him?" asked Bob, with a chuckle.

"The missfulness is as good as the esteemed missfulness," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We'll try to bear it," chuckled Frank Nugent. "We'll survive somehow."

"The survivfulness will be—"

"Terrific!" chorried Bob. "You fellows seen anything of Bunter, or did he land on Mauly after all?"

"We've seen something of him—quite a lot, in fact," said Harry. "He's at the Lodge now. Mauly got clear at break-up, and Bunter has honoured us; any port in a storm, you know. Got all your things?"

The porter was slamming the doors of the train. The Famous Five stood in a group by the door of the carriage from which the three new arrivals had alighted. In that carriage was one

more passenger, of whom the juniors, naturally, were not taking any particular heed. He was sitting in a corner seat, with a newspaper in his hands, glancing out on the platform, his eyes resting on the merry group of Greyfriars fellows.

Bags and rugs and other impedimenta were landed on the platform, and the juniors stood clear for the porter to close the carriage door.

There was a slam, and the man went on closing doors along the train, while the engine shrieked.

It was then that Wharton's glance fell casually on the face of the passenger within, who was looking from the window.

He gave a jump.

"M-my hat!" he stuttered in amazement.

The train began to move.

"What—?" began Bob in surprise, following Wharton's glance as it was fixed on the face at the window now gliding away.

Wharton made a step after the train.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Nugent.

The captain of the Remove stared at the face at the carriage window.

It was a clear-cut, clean-shaven face, somewhat hard in outline, but not unkindly in expression. The eyes, of a deep grey, were very penetrating. The jaw was square, giving an impression of uncommon firmness. It was a face that once seen was not easily forgotten; and it was a face that Wharton had seen before, twice; once in the dimness of a December night, and again in the wintry sunshine on the day that Greyfriars School broke up for the holidays. He knew it again instantly.

"That fellow—here—" he stuttered.

Frank Nugent caught him by the arm as he was running along the platform after the train.

"Hold on, Harry! What the dickens

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are you up to!" exclaimed Frank, in astonishment. "You can't get on the train now!"

"That man—" gasped Wharton.

"What man?"

"The man in your carriage—"

"What about him?" asked Bob Cherry blankly. "Anybody you know?"

Wharton did not answer for the moment. He stared after the train that was now disappearing down the line. The face at the window was lost to sight.

His chums regarded him almost in bewilderment.

"Know the man?" asked Johnny Bull.

"No—yes—"

"Well, that's lucid!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"My esteemed chum, what is the preposterous matterfulness?"

Wharton breathed hard. The train was gone, and the man with the square jaw was gone. It was too late to take any action if he had thought of taking any.

"I've seen that merchant before," said Harry. "You seem to have travelled down with him?"

"He got in at the last station," said Bob. "He's only been in the train with us ten minutes or so."

"Did you notice him—what he looked like?"

"Not specially. He was reading a paper," said Bob. "Never looked at him in fact. I shouldn't know him again."

"Nor I," said Frank. "Looked a respectable sort of Johnny, so far as I noticed him."

"I never noticed him," said Johnny Bull. "Just saw him sitting there, that was all. What does it matter? Who is he?"

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Well, I suppose you wouldn't notice him, as you've never seen him before," he said. "But he's the man—the same man that I saw that night at Hogben Grange, near Greyfriars; the night Hogben Grange was robbed. You remember that day I went to Folkestone with Bunter, and we missed trains and got back in the middle of the night? We saw that man—by the park wall of Hogben Grange."

"The same man?" ejaculated Bob.

"I'm sure of it. He was going to climb the park wall, when he saw Bunter and me and bolted. The next day we heard there had been a burglary overnight in Sir Julius Hogben's house. I told Quelch about it, and he sent me to the police station at Courtfield to tell Inspector Grimes. It looked—"

"I remember," said Bob. "It looked as if he was the jolly old burglar."

"That's it! I saw him again the day the school broke up, in a train at Courtfield, and I was going to keep an eye on him, but that fat ass Bunter butted in and I lost him. Now I've seen him again."

"Sure he's the same Johnny?" asked Nugent.

"Positive."

"Well, he's going about pretty openly for a giddy burglar," said Bob. "After all, it was only a suspicion—"

"But that isn't all!" exclaimed Wharton. "The man's in this neighbourhood now. He was in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars when the burglaries were going on there, and now he's here—"

"Well, there's no burglaries going on here, I suppose?"

"There was a burglary the night before last, at Sankey Hall. General Sankey's collection of jewels was taken," said Harry. "And now I've seen that man, it looks—"

"My hat! It does!" said Bob, with a whistle. "The same jolly old burglar—breaking new country, what?"

"Well, it looks like it, at least," said Wharton. "He was at Hogben Grange, near Greyfriars, the night of the burglary there. Now he's turned up here just after a burglary at Sankey Hall. It can't be merely a coincidence."

"Hardly," agreed Bob.

"Let's get out," said Harry. "I'd better mention this to my uncle as soon as possible. It may help the police at Sankey Hall."

The juniors crowded out of the station. Bags and passengers were piled in the car, and Brown drove away for Wharton Lodge.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### One Good Turn Deserves Another!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

It was Christmas Eve.

The Famous Five had been out most of the day, and now they were gathered in a cheery group near the log-fire in the hall, the fire-light playing on ruddy, healthy faces while they talked of the morrow and of the arrangements for Boxing Day. Billy Bunter was silent. That was unusual. And Bunter was thinking, which was still more unusual. But he broke his silence at last, to acquaint the chums of the Remove with the result of his cogitations.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, old fat bean!" said Bob Cherry amiably.

Billy Bunter was not, perhaps, the jolly companion the juniors would have selected for the Christmas holidays. But Bunter was there, and he was tolerated good-humouredly. Harry Wharton had made up his mind to put up with Bunter, as it were, and tried to make the best of him. Making the best of Bunter was not an easy task, but the cheery good humour natural to Yuletide helped.

So instead of saying: "Shut up, Bunter!" as usual, Harry Wharton said: "Go it, old fat man!"

"I say, you fellows, I've been thinking—"

The juniors refrained from asking Bunter what he had been doing it with. They gave him their polite attention. "To-morrow's Christmas!" said Bunter.

"Generally," said Bob Cherry gravely, "Christmas follows Christmas Eve. It's quite usual."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, what about it, Fatty?" asked Johnny Bull.

Bunter blinked at the five ruddy faces through his big spectacles. It appeared that he had something of importance to communicate.

"It's rather jolly being among one's best friends at Christmas!" he said.

"The jolliffulness is terrific!"

"I've always liked you fellows," said Bunter.

"Have you, really?" asked Bob, staring at him. "Well, that shows good taste and good judgment, at least."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you fellows," said Bunter, "have always liked me."

"Oh!"

"We're not sentimental," said Bunter. "But at this time of the year a fellow naturally feels a sort of a—a—well, a kind of—of—of—well, you know what I mean."

"Blessed if I do!" said Frank Nugent. "But we'll take the speech as read, if you like, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Get on to the next item!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Well, we've always been pals and chums and bosom friends," said Bunter. "At Christmas-time a fellow might as well say so—what?"

"Um!"

"That being the case," said Bunter, "here we are, six fellows, united in the bonds of a deep and lasting friendship, and—"

"Phew!"

"I don't say you've always treated me well," said Bunter. "You haven't! On more than one occasion, when I've been temporarily short of money, you've refused to oblige a chap with a small loan. That was mean! More than once you've doubted my word. That was ungentlemanly! In a lot of ways you're rather a poor lot!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"But a fellow forgets the faults of



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his friends at this time of the year," said Bunter. "I forgive you fellows freely for all the beastly tricks you've played and all the mean, rotten things you've done!"

"Go on, old fat bean!" said Bob, regarding the Owl of the Remove with great interest. "You don't know how interesting you are!"

"Well, to come to the point," said Bunter. "Here we are, happy and united, and—and—just like Damon and Pythias, you know, only there's half a dozen of us. Jolly good pals and firm friends, and—and four-square to all the winds that blow, you know."

"Six-square!" suggested Bob. "Oh, really, Cherry! United we stand, divided we don't," said Bunter. "Looking forward down the vale of years—"

"Oh, my hat!" The Famous Five simply stared. Bunter, apparently, was getting sentimental. It was quite a new departure.

"Looking forward down the vale of years," continued Bunter, "I see us growing older and older, always happy and united, standing by one another—at least, me standing by you fellows, and you fellows playing up as much as you know how, which isn't much. As I don't expect too much of you, I shan't be a lot disappointed when you fall short. But I hope I shall always forgive you and put up with your shortcomings. Well, as a token of this friendship, this loyal union of half a dozen hearts, I'm going to make you fellows some really decent Christmas presents."

"You are?" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"Yes," said Bunter. "The giving of Christmas presents is a jolly old custom and a good one. It's the sort of thing I like. The heart expands at Christmas-time, you know; we think of our friends more than we do of ourselves—at least, I do."

"Ye gods!" murmured Wharton.

"I've been thinking it over," said Bunter. "I'm going to ask my father for a really decent remittance, and do the thing decently. You're going to have a new bike, Bob."

"Thanks!" said Bob, with a deep sarcasm that was quite lost on William George Bunter.

Bunter, apparently, was in a generous mood, but Bob Cherry was not likely to believe in that new bike until he saw it.

"You're going to have a gold watch, Nugent."

"Fine!" said Nugent. "I'll give my old silver one to my brother Dicky when it comes along. I think I'll keep it for the present, though."

"You're going to have a fur-lined overcoat, Inky. You feel the cold so much, you know."

"The thankfulness is terrific!"

"Yours is a gramophone, Bull. When you get a gramophone, you won't want to kick up such a horrid row on that concertina of yours!"

"You fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Bull! As for you, Wharton, I'm going to get you a pair of skates—the very best that money can buy. I'll teach you how to use them, too."

"Oh crumbs—I mean, thanks!"

"Not at all," said Bunter, with a wave of a fat hand. "We're bosom pals, and my idea is that a chap should treat his pals well."

"The generosity of the esteemed Bunter is preposterous!"

"I mean to be generous," said Bunter. "That's me all over. There's only one little difficulty in the way—"

"Ah!" said Johnny Bull sardonically. "There's a little difficulty in the way, is there?"

"Yes. I shall have to ask my pater for a cheque, and, of course, it can't come now before Christmas. That means a little delay before you get the presents I'm going to give you."

"Only a little?" asked Johnny, in the same sardonic vein.

"Yes, only a little. Of course, Christmas presents ought to turn up on Christmas morning," said Bunter. "But, in the circumstances, this delay is rather unavoidable. Still, with regard to the presents you fellows will be making me, that needn't make any difference."

"Oh!"

"The fact is, I don't want you to spend a lot of money," said Bunter, blinking at them. "I'm going to ask my pater for a cheque to see me through. But I don't want you fellows to do that. Something more moderate, you know. In fact, I should really object to you fellows spending more than a pound or two each on me."

"Great pip!"

"On a moderate scale like that, there need not be any delay in the matter,"



Maurice Campbell Cole, of 93, Newlands Park, Sydenham, S.E.26, wins a useful pocket wallet for the following clever Greyfriars limerick:

That Tom Dutton's deaf,  
there's no doubt!  
For hours in his ear you could  
shout.  
You could bawl and could  
yell,  
Then he'd turn and say:  
"Well!  
What's all the commotion  
about?"

When drawing up your New Year resolutions see that you resolve to win one of our useful prizes.

explained Bunter. "Your presents can come along on Christmas morning at the proper time, as I'm sure you'd prefer."

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter. They were beginning to understand now. That outburst of unexpected sentimentality on Bunter's part was explained. The fat Owl, as usual, was on the make.

"You fat spoofer—" began Johnny Bull, in a growling voice.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"You pernicious porpoise—"

"Look here—"

"Shush!" said Bob Cherry, with a cheery glimmer in his eyes. "I'm surprised at you, Johnny! Here's Bunter, bursting with grub—I mean with friendship, offering us new bikes and gramophones and what not in the generosity of his heart. The least we can do is the play up and treat Bunter with the same generosity he is showing us."

"You silly ass!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You know jolly well—"

"Shush!" said Bob reprovingly.

"Oh," said Johnny, catching the

glimmer in Bob's merry eye, "if you mean—"

"Shush! Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said Bob Cherry, glancing round at a circle of smiling faces, "it's up to us to treat Bunter as he intends to treat us."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bunter doesn't want us to give him presents so valuable as he's going to give us. That's only his usual modest diffidence. I suggest giving Bunter presents all round, of exactly the same value as those we shall receive from him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter. "I think it's a jolly good idea."

"And in our case there need be no delay," said Bob. "Bunter will have to wait a little while for the funds he needs—perhaps more than a little while—perhaps even a long while—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But we needn't wait," said Bob. "We've plenty of funds in hand to give Bunter something as good as we shall get—"

"Plenty!" chuckled Nugent.

"The plentifulness is terrific."

"It's agreed, then?" asked Bob.

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

Billy Bunter beamed.

"I say, you fellows, that's just what I expected of dear old pals like you," he said.

Bob looked at his watch.

"We've time to catch the shops at Wimford before they close," he said. "Who'd like a walk?"

Bunter did not want a walk. The other fellows did, and they walked out in cheery spirits.

"Now, what's the game?" demanded Johnny Bull, when they were outside the house.

"Game?" repeated Bob. "There's no game—"

"Isn't it a jape?" demanded Johnny.

"Well, that depends on the point of view. The idea is to present Bunter with something of the same value as those gorgeous things he's going to give us—"

"He's not going to give us anything, you fathead!"

"I know that, so it won't cost much to give him something of the same value."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter, left alone before the fire in the hall, winked at the fire. A fat grin overspread his face, and he chuckled a fat chuckle. Harry Wharton & Co., as they walked down the frosty road to Wimford, chuckled also. Everybody concerned seemed to be satisfied, which seldom happens in this imperfect world.

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter's Christmas Present!

**K**NOCK!  
SNORE!  
Bang!  
Billy Bunter opened his eyes.

It was Christmas morning. Christmas came only once a year, but Bunter did not desire to celebrate it by getting up early. He snorted as the banging at his door awakened him.

The door was locked! Bunter always locked his door, lest a misdirected sense of humour on the part of the other fellows should disturb his slumbers.

Knock! Bang! Thump!

"Go away!" yelled Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Beast!"

"Merry Christmas, Bunter!"

"Yah!"

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"Let us in, old fat man! Don't you want to see your Christmas present?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter. He rolled out of bed and unlocked the door. The Famous Five were outside, with bright and smiling faces. At their feet lay an enormous parcel, wrapped in huge sheets of brown paper, and tied with ample string.

Bunter blinked at it. The parcel was of oblong shape, fully two feet long, and a foot wide. Billy Bunter's little round eyes glimmered behind his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—" "Merry Christmas, Bunter." "Same to you, old chaps! I—I was jolly glad you woke me up," said Bunter. "So pleasant to hear your voices on Christmas morning—a real pleasure."

"Yes, you sounded pleased," remarked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I say, you fellows, what's in it?" "Your Christmas present, old fat man! We've clubbed together for it," said Bob solemnly. "Every fellow put his little bit, and we bagged it for you."

"But what—" "You'll see when you open it, old scout! I'm not going to tell you that it's something you really want."

"That you've wanted for a long time," said Nugent.

"Needed, in fact," said Johnny Bull.

"Needed badly," said Wharton.

"The needfulness was terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I thinkfully opine that there is nothing you need more preposterously, my absurd Bunter."

"Carry it in," said Bob.

The big parcel was carried into Bunter's room and dumped on the floor. Bunter eyed it eagerly. Bulky as the parcel was, it did not seem heavy, and Bunter wondered what it contained. He was eager to learn.

"I say, you fellows, cut the string!" "No, no! You must open it yourself," said Bob, shaking his head. "You see, it's a pleasant surprise for you."

"Something I need, you said?" remarked Bunter. "Is it tuck?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Something you want more than tuck," said Bob. "The fact is, Bunter, we noticed at Greyfriars that you needed this."

"Did you really, old chap?"

"We did, and we'd remarked on it more than once," said Bob. "Then, putting our heads together about your Christmas present, we thought of this, and decided on it. I take the credit of having thought of it first; but all the fellows said, 'The very thing,' as soon as I suggested it. Didn't you, you men?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Our very words," said Nugent. Bunter fumbled with the cords. But they were well tied and knotted, and there were a lot of them.

"I say, you fellows, is it something jolly expensive?" asked the fat junior. "I mean, if you all clubbed together for the one present—"

"Well, not beyond our means," said Bob. "You see, Bunter, the idea was to give you something of the same value as what you're going to give us. But we couldn't get anything of exactly the same value anywhere."

"They don't give things away!" explained Johnny Bull.

"Shut up, Johnny; none of your jokes now. We couldn't fix it at the precise value, so we went a little beyond," said Bob. "I work it out that this little lot, Bunter, cost three pence more than what you're going to give us."

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"Exactly," said Wharton.

"The exactfulness is terrific."

Bunter blinked at them.

"Blessed if I know how you worked it out so exactly," he said. "I don't see how you know exactly what the things were going to cost."

"Well, we had a pretty good idea how much you would pay for them," said Bob Cherry blandly. "I fancy this comes to three pence more. Still, the intrinsic value of a present is really nothing—it's the spirit of the thing—and especially the usefulness of it. Now, old bean, this will be very useful to you—you've wanted it for whole terms."

"Blessed if I can guess what it is," said the perplexed but gratified Owl of the Remove. "You say you noticed at Greyfriars that I needed it."

"Yes, we all did. So did other fellows, and, in fact, they mentioned it more than once in our hearing," said Bob.

"Well, I'm jolly soon going to see!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, this is frightfully decent of you!"

"Not at all, old bean! One good turn deserves another," said Bob. "Come away, you chaps, and leave Bunter to his pleasant surprise."

And the Famous Five retired from Bunter's room and closed the door.

Billy Bunter hunted out a penknife, and cut the string of the enormous parcel. His eyes gleamed with eagerness through his big spectacles.

He forgot that it was cold, that he had not had his sleep out, even that he had not yet had any breakfast, in his eagerness to behold that wonderful and valuable present.

Really, it was very thoughtful of the fellows. They had noticed at school something that he wanted, something that he needed, and they had clubbed together to give it to him. Apparently, they were not such unmitigated beasts as Bunter had always supposed.

With eager fingers the fat junior unrolled the outer sheets of thick wrapping paper.

A large cardboard box was revealed, tied with string.

The penknife came into action again. The string fell apart, and Bunter jerked off the lid of the big, cardboard box.

To his surprise he found the interior almost full of straw packing. He jerked it out, careless of the litter on the floor. Bunter did not have to tidy the room, so the litter did not matter.

Apparently, the greater part of the interior of the cardboard box was filled with the straw. A puzzled expression dawned on Bunter's fat face. He had supposed that the article was a large one, from the size of the box. But it appeared to be a case of much cry and little wool.

But when the straw packing was removed a smaller box, also of cardboard, came to light.

Bunter opened it.

Within was a parcel tied with string. When this was untied, quite a small cardboard box was disclosed to the view.

Bunter lifted it out.

This, apparently, contained the present. But as the box was only about six inches by three, obviously the article within was not a large one.

Bunter's thoughts ran on gold watches, diamond pins, and such things.

He opened the final box.

An oval article lay within, wrapped in white paper.

He took it out.

This, evidently, was the present. Bunter had got to it at last. With quite an extraordinary expression on his face the Owl of the Remove unrolled the white paper, and revealed—

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

It was a cake of soap.

It bore the inscription, stamped in the soap itself, "Price three pence."

Bunter gazed at it.

The unspeakable beasts had said that it was something he wanted—something they had noticed at Greyfriars that he needed. They had said that it had cost three pence more than the magnificent presents Bunter was going to give them. And it had cost three pence.

Bunter stood with the cake of soap in his hand, and an expression on his face that almost cracked his spectacles.

"The—the awful beasts!" gasped Bunter. "Soap! Three pence! Beasts! Three pence! Soap! Oh, the rotters! Beasts!"

The door opened, and Bob Cherry's cheery face looked in.

"Like it, Bunter?"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Something you need—"

"That you've needed for a long time—"

"Needed terrifically—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crash!

Bob Cherry drew the door shut just in time, and the cake of soap, hurled by a wrathful hand, crashed on it, and rolled to the floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Five chuckling juniors went down to breakfast.

It was much later that William George Bunter came down. He did not look as if he had been pleased by his Christmas present. Neither did he look as if he had made any use of it.

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER!

### Gorgeous!

CHRISTMAS dinner was early at Wharton Lodge.

Bunter considered that a good idea.

Dinner could not be too early for Bunter. Had it followed immediately after breakfast, in fact, Bunter would probably have been ready for it. Bunter's face that day wore a beaming smile. His Christmas present had not bucked him up very much. But there was no "spoo!" about the Christmas dinner.

Bunter knew that. He had had many surreptitious peeps; the matter being one of the deepest interest. He knew that the turkey was a prince among turkeys; that the Christmas pudding was a corker; that the mince-pies were things of beauty and joys for ever. He was intentionally moderate at breakfast, eating hardly enough for three or four fellows. He cut down his snacks during the morning to a cake, a few mince-pies, a dozen or so oranges, a bag of nuts, and a pound or so of chocolate creams. He was determined to have a good appetite for dinner.

Harry Wharton & Co. talked a good deal about the morrow, when there was going to be a dance, and Hazeldene was coming with his sister Marjorie and Clara Trevlyn, and several other youthful guests. But Bunter gave no thought to the morrow. To-day was enough for Bunter. The chief event of the day engrossed his fat thoughts. It would be difficult to say whether it was the turkey or the pudding that Bunter contemplated with the greater satisfaction. On both his thoughts dwelt with ecstasy.

Early as dinner was, it seemed rather late to Bunter. When he sat at last at the festive board, his fat face beamed beatifically.

Every face was bright and cheerful. Miss Wharton wore her usual placid smile, and the colonel's somewhat stern countenance had unbent into a cheery



"I say, you girls," said Billy Bunter, "I've got a sprig of mistletoe here!"

affability. The Famous Five were merry and bright. But brightest of all beamed the fat countenance of William George Bunter.

"I say, Harry, old chap!" murmured Bunter, after his third helping of turkey.

"Yes, old bean?"

"This is a prime turkey."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Not like the turkeys we have at Bunter Court, of course," added the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh!"

"But prime, all the same. I think I'll have some more."

Bunter had some more.

Then he had more still.

And some more!

The morefulness, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remarked in a whisper to Bob Cherry, was terrific.

But he was ready for the Christmas pudding.

His eyes expanded behind his spectacles as it was brought to the table, flaming.

"Oh," he gasped, "good!"

How many helpings of Christmas pudding Bunter had he did not trouble to count. He would probably have lost count, had he tried.

A shiny look came over Bunter's face. A fishy expression came into the little, round eyes behind the big spectacles. He breathed with some difficulty. But he was enjoying himself. Happiness beamed from his face. A dinner like this was worth exertion. Bunter exerted himself. He did not talk much; he had no time for that. The talk of others passed by him like the idle wind which he regarded not. It was a time for action, not for words.

Once or twice Miss Wharton glanced at him with growing alarm. The colonel eyed him once or twice with some uneasiness. Even the chums of the Remove, who knew their Bunter, and his wonderful powers in the gastronomic line, could not help thinking that Bunter was taking risks.

Where he put the mince-pies was an insoluble mystery. He must have put them somewhere, for they disappeared at a great rate like oysters.

How he managed to cram in even one walnut was a puzzle. But he crammed in some dozens.

But the time came when even Bunter could do no more. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.

He toyed idly with candied fruits.

Bunter liked candied fruits; and he made a noble effort. But it was in vain. Hardly a pound of candied fruits vanished inside Bunter.

Even Bunter had a limit, and he had reached it—if not over-passed it. When the juniors rose from the festive board Bunter was very slow in rising.

He seemed to be glued to his chair, and to detach himself therefrom with a herculean effort.

"I—I think I'll have forty winks, you fellows," Bunter remarked. "Nothing like a nap after a good dinner. Nothing like it! Urrrrg!"

"Anything the matter, Bunter?"

"No. Never felt better."

"The esteemed fat Bunter has evidently eaten too muchfully," remarked the nabob of Bhanipur. "A sleep no doubt will do him the world of goodfulness."

Bunter made a slow—a very slow—progress to the hall, where he sank down in a deep chair by the fire. For quite a long time he sat there, with his eyes fixed on the fire with a strange intensity. His eyes were growing glassy.

Suddenly from the depths of the arm-chair came a deep groan.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Groan!

Bob Cherry came over to Bunter. The Owl of the Remove gazed at him with lack-lustre eye.

"What's the trouble?" asked Bob.

"Ow! I—I—I've got a pain!" murmured Bunter.

"Is the painfulness terrific?" asked

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sympathetically.

"Wow!"

"Poor old chap!" said Bob. "Can I get you anything? A little juicy fat bacon—"

"Grooooooh!"

"Shall I thump you on the back?"

"Ow! Beast! D-d-don't touch me!"

"What about shaking you up?"

"Urrrrggg!"

There was a short silence; then a pathetic voice came from the deep chair.

"It wasn't the turkey."

"Eh?"

"The turkey was all right. And it wasn't the pudding."

"What?"

"The pudding was tip-top! And it wasn't the mince-pies. Perhaps it was the stuffing."

"Perhaps it was," chuckled Bob. "Never saw a chap stuff at such a rate, old fat man."

"The stufffulness was terrific!"

"I don't mean that, you silly ass! But it wasn't the stuffing; the stuffing was topping. But it's something. I—I feel rather bad!"

Bunter groaned.

"I—I can't make it out, you fellows! It wasn't the turkey, and it wasn't the stuffing, and it wasn't the pudding, and it wasn't the mince-pies, and it wasn't the candied fruit, and it wasn't the walnuts, and—"

"Perhaps it was the lot of them together," suggested Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Groan!

It had been a glorious dinner. Afterwards Bunter recalled all its details with delight. But for the present the glory had departed from the House of Israel, so to speak. For several hours Bunter ate nothing, and did not even want to eat anything. Which was indubitable evidence that he had dined not wisely but too well.

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## THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

## Slippery

**B**OXING DAY found Bunter quite himself again. When Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn arrived, a fat and fatuous grin, on a fat and fatuous face, greeted them. It was rather annoying, to a fascinating fellow like Bunter, that the two girls, while exchanging cordial greetings with Harry Wharton & Co., hardly seemed to observe that Bunter was there. But Bunter, of course, was not the fellow to be passed unobserved.

"Did you girls know I was here?" he asked, as soon as the other fellows gave him a chance to speak.

"No," said Marjorie. "Oh! That wasn't why you came?" asked Bunter.

Marjorie laughed. "Still, it's rather jolly to find me here—what?" smiled Bunter.

"Oh, frightfully," said Miss Clara.

"I thought you'd think so," said Bunter complacently.

"I say, I've got a sprig of mistletoe here—"

"Chuck it, fathead!" said Bob Cherry.

"You shut up, Cherry! Blessed if I ever knew such a fellow for butting in! I say, Marjorie—I say, Clara—I say, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you. I say, Marjorie—I say—Leggo! Leggo, you beast!"

When Bob Cherry let go, he left William George Bunter making frantic efforts to extract a sprig of mistletoe from his back. The girls disappeared with Miss Wharton, apparently not having any use for William George Bunter and the mistletoe he had so thoughtfully provided.

"Look here, you beasts!" gasped Bunter as he struggled to get that objectionable mistletoe out of the back of his fat neck.

But nobody heeded the fat junior.

Billy Bunter could see how it was going to be. He was accustomed to jealousy of his good looks, envy of his winning way with girls.

Still, Bunter's time was coming!

There was to be skating on the frozen lake that afternoon where Bunter, with his lissom figure and easy grace was going to put the other fellows hopelessly in the shade. There was to be a dance in the evening, and then there would be no holding Bunter. In Wharton's best evening clothes he was going to be the cynosure of all eyes, and cut out the other fellows right and left.

There was solace in that reflection.

Bunter, as usual, was disinclined to move after lunch. But, for once, nothing would have kept him indoors. When the cheery party went down to the ice, a fat figure rolled along with them, carrying a pair of skates. Colonel Wharton walked down to the lake, to keep an eye on the young people, in case of accidents. Everybody was in a bright and merry mood, especially Bunter. It was one of Bunter's foibles that he never doubted whether he could do a thing till he came to do it. Many had been his misadventures on the ice—and he was not, as a matter of fact, at the end of them yet.

"Marjorie, old thing," said Bunter, as he squatted to put his skates on, "wait a minute for me. I'm going to take you round."

Marjorie was deaf.

"Clara, old dear—"

Clara also was afflicted with deafness. "I say, wait a bit!" hooted Bunter.

"These blessed skates won't go on! You really might lend a fellow better skates."

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than these, Wharton! I say, you fellows, lend a hand, will you?"

"Oh, blow!" said Bob Cherry. Bob was very keen to get on the ice with Marjorie; but he was good-natured himself, and he lent Billy Bunter a hand.

Bunter, as it turned out, needed more than one hand.

"Bear a hand here, Inky," called out Bob.

"Certainly, my esteemed chum."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came to help.

Bunter, with his skates on, was heaved to his feet.

His intention was to glide gracefully out on the ice. And show the fellows.



You'll find a chuckle in this joke which has been sent in by M. Colbert, of 26, Harvey Road, Leytonstone, E.11, who bags one of this week's pocket-knives for his winning effort.

Diner: "I say, waiter, take this cup away, the tea is cold!"

Waiter: "Cold, sir? Oh, no! That's just a fancy of yours, sir. It's quite hot still, for I tried it."

Diner: "What? You dared to taste—"

Waiter: "Oh, no, sir! I only dipped my fingers in it!"

I've got heaps of these useful prizes, chums, so step right in and win one NOW!

especially the girls, what skating really was like.

This intention was somewhat baffled by the remarkable and independent proceedings of Bunter's feet.

Bunter's feet were supposed to obey Bunter's will; but each of them developed Bolshevik proclivities on the spot, and refused to acknowledge any authority.

"I—I say, you fellows, hold on!" gasped Bunter.

What became of his feet Bunter did not know. They seemed to shoot away and leave him in the lurch.

The ice was stout. But it certainly would have smashed under the heavy concussion of Bunter's falling form had he not thrown his arms wildly round the necks of Bob Cherry and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and hung on for dear life.

"Ow! Oh dear! Hold me, you beasts!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "Go easy. You're chook-chook-chooking me!"

"Ow! My esteemed fat Bunter!" gurgled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Beasts! Wow! Hold me! Wow! Ow! Help!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The others were all on the ice now, disporting themselves with great enjoyment. Marjorie and Clara, as they glanced at Bunter, perhaps felt relieved that they had not allowed that graceful skater to take them round the lake.

"Help me!" yelled Bunter. "Oh, my hat! You're pushing me over, Bob Cherry! How's a fellow to skate when you hang on him and push him over?"

"You silly ass!" gasped Bob. "Keep your feet steady."

"My feet are all right. You're pushing me over. Look how I keep on slipping!"

"Shall I let go?"

"Ow! No. Hold on!"

"Don't choke me, you howling ass! Let go my neck."

"Shan't!" yelled Bunter.

"My esteemed, idiotic Bunter, if you would try to stand up, instead of hanging on a fellow's ridiculous neck!" gasped Hurree Singh.

"Beast!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob. "Get him going somehow."

Billy Bunter collected his feet and slid out on the ice. He still kept a convulsive grasp on the necks of Bob and Hurree Singh, however. The ice was slippery. Bunter, however, seemed surprised to find it slippery. Looking at the other fellows whizzing about, it seemed easy enough. Probably Bunter would have

found it easy too, if his feet had not persisted in their separate and independent action, regardless of his wishes. But they did.

His right foot plunged at Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and knocked the nabob fairly over. Inky flew, and Bunter let go his neck, just in time to avoid being dragged down in his fall. He plunged onward, still holding Bob's neck, leaving the breathless nabob strewn on the ice.

"Ow!" gasped Hurree Singh. "Oh! My only esteemed hat! Ow!"

"Look out, Bunter!" gasped Bob.

"Can't you hold me, you idiot?" shrieked Bunter. "My mum-mum-my fuf-fuf-feet are running away! Ow!"

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter made a wild plunge and fairly hummed over the ice. It looked, for a moment, as though he would pull Bob's head off.

Fortunately, that did not happen. Bob was left behind, his cap gone, his hair standing on end, and his neck feeling as if it had been stretched to the length of a giraffe's.

Bunter was on his own now!

How he kept on his feet he never knew—and nobody else could guess. But for the moment he remained perpendicular.

He shot across the ice like an arrow.

He did not want to. Very much he did not want to. But the skates seemed to have taken matters into their own hands, as it were.

They shot onward; and Bunter, being attached to them, had to go! By a series of miracles he did not crash.

"Look out!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Danger!" chortled Nugent.

"Ware the steam-roller!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dodge him!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Frank Nugent barely escaped a charge. Harry Wharton caught Marjorie's hand and whirled her out of danger. Horrified eyes watched Bunter in full career, heading for a steep bank, where it seemed that he must crash. But another miracle supervened, and Bunter whirled around. He came whizzing back at the skaters, and they scattered before his charge with ejaculations of alarm.

"Look out!"

"Hook it!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Collar him, somebody!"

"Yaroorh!" roared Johnny Bull, as Bunter, taking another unexpected turn, butted into him and sent him spinning.

(Continued on page 28.)

ANOTHER GRIPPING INSTALMENT OF OUR POPULAR SPORTING SERIAL!

# Peter Frazer-Ironmaster!

by JOHN BREARLEY

(Introduction on the next page.)



## The Hut on the Marshes!

**A** RAINSTORM was raging over Maxport, blowing wildly in from the sea over the great expanse of marshes that stretched down the coast, dismal, melancholy, and desolate.

The marshes had no inhabitants; for the most part they were unexplored. The great steamers, even the smaller sailing-craft, plying from Maxport to the sea had to keep to the broad main channel of the river. Only tiny craft, flat-bottomed punts, could navigate the small, twisted streams, swamps almost, that seeped their way slowly into the heart of the dreary district.

Here and there, dotted sparsely by the side of a creek, stood occasional broken-down huts, half hidden by an embankment of tall, rank grass. They lent somehow an air of sinister mystery to the place, although usually they harboured only the squalid fishing-gear, perhaps the leaky punt of some casual eel-fisher.

A brooding silence, broken sometimes by the high-pitched screech of a sea-bird, lay heavily over it all.

It was a rough night, a night of huddling clouds and ragged starlight, and steady, driving rain that whispered evilly among the long, clutching grasses.

Very few in Maxport would have faced that night on the marshes, the appalling raw dampness, and the utter desolation. But one man, muffled to the chin and clad in long oilskins, ploughing onwards, head bent to the rain, picked out his straggling path with a calm and patient determination that had in it something menacing, forbidding.

Presently, however, he stopped. He had lost the track, and bearings were impossible to find. Coolly, knowing it futile to blunder on, he threw back his head, and the call of a seagull shrilled across the marsh.

In immediate answer, from a short distance to his left, came a tiny stab of light. Obediently he turned and thrust through the darkness towards it. He called again, and the flash was repeated. This time it was only a few yards straight before him, and with a few more blundering steps he came in sight of the hut.

It was a larger place than most of the

huts on the marshes, built deep down in a saucer-shaped embankment; and the man, slithering down through the drenched grass, was brought up sharply by the arms of the waiting signaller.

Without a word he fumbled at the cabin door and stepped inside. Outside, Granger, the red-haired ex-tyrant of Frazer's Foundry, slipped back silently into the shelter of the punt that leaned against the hut, sliding his torch into his pocket as he did so.

There followed a deep silence, broken only by the hissing of wind and rain and the rustling of the long grass.

Out of the wet waving stalks a face lifted for a second on the brink of the embankment and peered down into the hollow; then, like a weasel, a vague figure, a shadowy form that had tracked the mysterious visitor across the marshes, slid down into the saucer and in an instant lay crouched and tense against the thin wall of the hut.

Meanwhile, within the hut, a candle, obscured by a rain-soaked hat before it,

you! You who live free, in comfort, taking no risks, while I am a cold, hungry fugitive—"

Placidly the newcomer seated himself, and at that the little man rose and scowled in anger.

"Where are we all—the cautious ones," he gibed. "Granger, outside, and I dare not show ourselves in Maxport, or anywhere else! And the others are hiding in garrets and slum-cellars, as we do by day, sneaking out here in this forsaken spot at night. That is what your schemes have brought us to! Look at me!"

He was a pitiful sight—wet, muddy, and cold.

"Sit down!" said the newcomer.

The little man sat down again on the stool, staring with venomous eyes; while the other, pulling out a flask and a parcel of sandwiches, tossed them towards him. He fell on the food ravenously.

"That's right, Charles, feed. Feed yourself into better temper!"

Charles paused with a sandwich half-way to his mouth.

"That's as much as you trouble, you dog!" he sneered.

Into the calm eyes surveying him mockingly came a look of chill cruelty—a look that wiped the look of contempt from the little man's face in a second, replacing it with unutterable fear.

Slowly he shrank back from that steady stare, returning it fearfully from the corner of his eyes like a beaten dog. But his companion sat immobile as a statue, hands placidly resting on his knees.

Gradually the smile returned to his eyes, and the tension passed out of the little man's quivering body.

"We're wasting time," murmured the quiet voice once more. "There came no answer from Charles, who had returned to his sandwich and was eating it starvingly."

"It is most unfortunate you were seen in the foundry that night," continued the other, "for we can no longer meet within reasonable distance of comfort."

Charles grunted.

"We have been defeated all along the line," the placid voice went on, talking as undisturbedly as though it

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**"I broke old Frazer—the dog!—and now I'll break this schoolboy cub! And then the foundry will be mine—"**

had been lighted, and shed a flickering light over the mouldering remains of fishing-gear, baskets, and a perished oilskin. The furniture consisted of a stool and a broken packing-case. The wooden walls were soaked through with rain and flying scud. The atmosphere was rank with salt and dampness.

"It is I, Charles," said the newcomer mildly, peeling off his gloves and the muffler round his neck.

From where he had hidden flat behind the door as it had been thrown open another man came forward and flung himself on to the stool, his eyes flashing in rat-like anger. His small body was cold and pinched-looking.

"And time, too!" he snapped bitterly.

A peculiar smile twisted the mouth of the newcomer, and his eyes slid sardonically from the door to the seated Charles.

"You pick such queer meeting-places," he murmured. "Cautious as ever, I see."

The words stung the little man to fury.

"Cautious!" he growled. "That from

owner was before a roaring fire in a cosy room, instead of in a cheerless hut on a desolate marsh, and as though they were discussing victory instead of defeat.

"First, the Seamen fiasco. I dare not bring Petersen and his vessel back for fear Frazer should recognise him. Secondly, the downfall of Granger. Who could have guessed at that disaster? Then this last failure. Now young Frazer has the men on his side—he is a popular hero. And the police are active!"

The beaten look in the little man's eyes was increasing with every word, although there was no change in the placid eyes gazing down at him. Nor was the tranquil, even voice raised.

"Did you hear the crowd cheering the football team three days ago, Charles? I think you could have heard it even here! I heard it, Charles. And have you heard of the athletics and the boxing-club he is forming? Charles, another weapon is lost. We can never strike at him again through the men, I fear—eh, Charles?"

In sudden, panicky rage, Charles thumped both hands on to the packing-case leaning forward to glare into his companion's eyes.

"Curse you! Is it my fault?" he snarled savagely. "Wasn't it me who dogged him down from London, who timed the programme, who gave the signal? Who was it led the bomb raid—ay, and had the young cur trapped in that cellar?"

A meditative look appeared in his companion's eyes.

"And who was it set him free, I wonder?" he asked thoughtfully.

The little man flung back savagely. "You wonder? What does it matter? Luck! Luck is against us. Everyone is hiding, and all our men cleaned out of the works. The Wharfinger closed, and all its passages. Maxport closed to Petersen and his crew. And Peter Frazer, our enemy whom we were going to break, a popular hero with his workmen. Bah!"

His rage had carried him too far. Once more into the other's eyes the chill look crept slowly, stilling the man's fury with his malevolence. Now, however, it did not fade as it had done before, but grew and grew until, where previously the flickering candle had lighted a calm, placid face, now it shone on eyes and features convulsed with hate and fury! The eyes became luminous, seeming to distend, until at last Charles' nerve gave way utterly, and he flung back outstretched against the wall, with a panting, shuddering cry.

"Take 'em away!" he cried. "Don't look at me like that!" Then he stumbled forward, clutching at the other's arm. "We're not beaten yet!" he gasped, terrified by the cruelty in the face above him. "I'll do anything you say! But what can we do?" His voice trailed off weakly. "Financially—"

"If money could break the Frazers," growled the other, "would I run my neck into this mess? Stiffen up, man! It's no use our falling out. We need each other. If I could have broken the Frazers with money, I'd have done so years ago; but I can't!"

He snapped his fingers. The sinister expression of untiring patience and calmness fell on him once more.

"No, Charles, we will wait. Remember, my hatred of the Frazers goes back over thirty years—a man learns patience

in that time, Charles. I want the works; and you want your reward—that comfortable hacienda in old Mexico, eh, Charles? But, most of all, I want the Frazers to go—like that!" He made a wide, effacing motion with his hand. "We disposed of old Frazer—the dog! Now this schoolboy cub—"

Abruptly he rose to his feet, towering above the little man, who lifted miserably yet admiring eyes to his.

"I broke old Frazer! I'll break this one! And that pays off an old score—an old score, Charles. And then I step in to buy a derelict business at my price, the price I can afford. And so all the Frazers have worked and schemed for becomes mine after all these years!"

Again the ungovernable fury that lurked beneath the placid exterior possessed the man. He laughed—a loud, gritting mockery of mirth that shook his frame—a laugh that caused Charles to cower back on his seat. Then he whipped off his sodden hat viciously, slamming it to the rough floor. With it came the wig the man wore beneath it. As he bent forward towards his cringing ally the terrible scar across his bald head gleamed white in the flickering candle-light. Slowly he raised his hand and caressed the awful mark softly. And his eyes looked through Charles, beyond the hut and the marshes and into the long ago of the dim past!

His rage ebbed slowly; a tiny smile crept presently round his firm mouth.

He smiled whimsically and sat down. "Come now. This place is getting on our nerves, Charles. We have talked about ourselves too much. I did not come here for heroics. Listen! I will arrange better quarters for you and for Granger to-night. Now, about the Frazer cub!" He leaned forward, eyes narrowed. "Charles, do you remember Luigi Facetti?"

"Facetti—the Milanese?"

"Exactly. Facetti is in Maxport."

"Here? But how? I thought—"

"As a stoker. Came in on that Dutchman to-day."

"How do you know that?"

The scarred man smiled.

"How do I know lots of things?" he sneered. "Don't be childish! Charles, we'll use Facetti."

A hand wandered to the little man's

#### INTRODUCTION.

Head and sole owner of Frazer's Iron Foundry, it is a strange prospect that lies before Peter Frazer, a cheerful, 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, and he strikes his first blow against his enemies by knocking out the scoundrelly Granger in a fight, and then sucking him. The gang show their hand again before long, when they make an attempt to blow up the foundry. With iron-nerved courage, Peter foils the plot, and, as a result, gains what he has been striving for since the very first—the friendship and admiration of his men. Then comes the great day when the works football team is due to play its first match—against the famous Hornets' second string. Spurred on by the example of their young skipper and the cheers of the crowd round the touchline, Frazer's Foundry play a great game and win handsomely.

(Now read on.)

mouth, twisting the thin lips thoughtfully. The fear had drained from his eyes, and in them was a deep, reflective light. The scarred man watched him approvingly.

"You think the idea is good?"

"I see." The little man nodded. "A good idea. But we shall need care."

"Of course we shall need care—care for the hour and place, care for Luigi afterwards, care for everything. This is desperate! You think the idea is good?"

"Excellent!"

"Then listen!"

Even though the man could not and did not fear eavesdropping out here on the wild marshes, with a guard outside the door, he bent forward to whisper.

For a full half-hour they planned and argued, yet never raised their tones. Outside, in the rain, the listener's mouth tightened with annoyance, as he strained his ears in vain.

At last the scarred man pushed back his chair and rose. He reached for his hat and wig, carefully adjusting the latter. Charles clambered into an oil-skin in nervous haste. A moment later the candle was extinguished, and they were outside. A low whisper, and Granger crawled from beneath his shelter to join them.

The wind had increased, and tore and blustered round the hut as they made their way slowly out of the hollow, heads tucked in and shoulders hunched against the storm. Cautiously they followed Granger down the track. Behind them, leisurely, came the tracker!

Tim and Moller.

THE clocks were booming a late hour when the slim figure that had dogged the Scarred Man across the wild marshes slipped silently round the angle of Frazer's Works and halted at the edge of the football ground.

Farther along the wall, treading heavily on the asphalt pathway, a burly policeman was doing night-beat—one of the inspector's precautions.

The sound of the stalwart footsteps that could be heard so far away made the youngster frown disgustedly and then grin. Waiting until the guardian's sounds had died away he flitted from the shadow of the wall, heading for a light burning dimly in the cottage at the far end of the ground.

He reached the gate bordering on the field, opened it, and, without hesitation, produced a door key and passed silently into the cottage. An old man, poking a grizzled head out of the kitchen, pursed his lips at the youngster's sodden clothes. But without a word the lad ran upstairs and into a bedroom.

Within the room, in a bed by a crackling fire, lay Moller, his head swathed in a turban of bandages. He had been reading idly by the lamplight, yet every few minutes for an hour past had taken a glance at the watch on the bedrail. There was an anxious light deep in his eyes and a curious expression on his dour face.

At the sudden entrance, however, he propped himself quickly on one elbow, taking in every detail of the lad's appearance in a single glance. Then, as if satisfied, he lay back on the pillows and smiled painfully.

"Nice wet job, Tim?"

Tim Osborne nodded briefly and began quickly and deftly to change. There

was no trace of the usual shy clumsiness in his manner; his movements had the same purposeful neatness that showed on the football field. He offered neither remark nor comment until he had changed, after which he made himself some cocoa over a small spirit lamp, and sipped it gratefully. Through the steam above the cup his eyes stared thoughtfully at the fire.

Seemingly in no way surprised, Moller, laying his head more comfortably on the pillows, had picked up his book and was reading contentedly, apparently until such time as Osborne should be ready for conversation.

Presently the lad put his cup away and stepped over to a chest, whence he drew out a black japanned box. This he unlocked and brought out from its depths a thick, well-thumbed book, page after page covered with tiny beautiful writing.

The leaves rustled briskly until he found the entry he wanted, and there was a silence while he stood reading. Then suddenly he thrust a hand into the box once more and drew out something else.

When Moller next looked up Tim was sitting before the fire. The book was outspread on his knees, and in his long, slender hands, gleaming blue in the lamplight, lay a blunt-nosed automatic and a cleaning outfit.

At sight of the gun Moller put his book down carefully and sat up. His underlip came out thoughtfully.

"What ho!" he said. "Like that, is it?"

Tim nodded, meeting his eyes steadily.

"It is now," he answered. "The y've rung in Luigi Facetti"—he glanced down at the book—"The Throtter!"

"Wanted for garrotting all over France and South America," murmured Moller. "That'll be a nice capture, Tim."

"Capture my aunt!" replied the youngster calmly. "We want the big bird—in the act, don't we? If we start picking up the little men—and that's easy enough—we'll give the show away. Does it strike you that we really haven't got a single definite thing on him yet—anything we can prove?"

Moller smiled. Slipping back into the pillows he settled himself, and evenly and with full detail, Tim made his report of the night's adventure.

At the finish the wounded man's eyes flickered with approval.

"Good work, boy! Pity you lost 'em though."

"Pity," agreed Tim quietly. "Round about the usual spot, though. Plenty of time to search when we want to."

The other nodded. "And that's not yet! We want the man up top, as you say, Tim, and we want him stone cold. Get a glimpse of him?"

"What's that matter? We know, don't we? And we know his friends. He'll make a mistake soon and come into it himself. Then—"

Moller's eyes turned to the automatic again.

"That for Luigi?" he asked casually.

"It is," replied Tim serenely. "Ordinary rough necks, like Granger and the others, I don't mind. Peter can chuck them about as much as he wants; but if Luigi gets his hands on him once—"

Moller patted his bandages wearily. "If only he wouldn't take those infernal strolls at night," he growled. "our work'd be easier. I swear they'll nail him from cover one night."

"I don't think so," Tim answered. "Granger and that lot are properly rattled. Then, of course, though Peter doesn't know it, old Fatty's put plenty of men round him. They're very good, too. You can't tell they're 'tees on a dark night till you're within fifty yards of 'em!"

Moller grinned at the gibe. "Still, I wish he'd stick at home," he said. "We know they're not trying anything on there, anyway."



"While you live in comfort, taking no risks," said the little man, "I am a cold, hungry fugitive!"

"Well, he won't," said Tim, rising. "If ever a chap went round looking for trouble more thoroughly than young Peter Frazer, I haven't met him yet. He walks my feet off, dodging about here, there, and everywhere. He's a bit of an Indian himself, too, on the quiet. Hugs the walls and shadows, treads soft, and carries that spanner he put you out with."

He put the book back into its box and slid it back into the chest.

"Don't worry. He's all right. He's usually got young Sparrow with him, and that kid knows the surroundings backwards."

"All very well," grunted Moller irritably, shaking his head. "If it was ordinary fighting we wouldn't have to worry. For his age he's the toughest proposition I've seen—but then look at his uncle and his dad! I wouldn't want to scrap with any of 'em myself."

"I'm looking after him," said Tim, with mock boastfulness. "I, the great Timothy, who treads lighter than a falling leaf. Probably the greatest shadower that has ever lived, who—"

"Who hates himself like poison," growled Moller.

"You're too wonderful, Tim! When I'm better I'll teach you to mock a sick man. Go to bed, son!"

"Bed it is," said Tim Osborne, with a chuckle. "We've got a big match on to-morrow. Wonder how Peter would play if he knew that dear Luigi was after him."

"Better than ever, I'll bet," Moller replied. "That lad's got too much nerve! That's what worries me. And, Tim!"

"Well?"

"When you do go for Luigi, get him right and proper!"

The grin faded from Tim's face. "I'll look after Mr. Luigi," he

promised. "And I want to find that new hiding-place. Peter himself is the real trouble! He doesn't want any interference or protection or anything! He looks on Number One as his own particular prey, and anyone coming in between, is liable to get hurt. But I'll attend to Luigi, for keeps!"

He came over to the bed, and laid a hand affectionately on the other's shoulder.

"Buck up and get fit again," he smiled. "I'm for bed!"

"Good-night, boy!"

"Good-night, dad!"

The door clicked softly.

# The First Cup-tie!

PETER was down early for a run round the ground next morning and came bustling in to breakfast, bullying the patient Mr. Dimmock until the good-natured manager hurried through his newspaper and accompanied him to the foundry.

The young ironmaster had acquired a first-class attack of the fidgets, for to-day was the first round of the Works' THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,141.

## PETER FRAZER— IRONMASTER!

(Continued from previous page.)

Cup, and although he had no hopes of winning it, he badly wanted Frazer's to get through the first two or three rounds. In the "friendlies" the lads had done even better than he had dreamed, but if the season was to be reckoned a success, they must put up a good show in the Cup.

The letters and various reports all ready in the office, were hastily scanned, and so scandalously did Peter behave, that finally Mr. Dunmoch was aroused to revolt.

"For goodness' sake, Peter, leave these to me and go down to your grimy footballers!" he implored, "I've made two mistakes already! You'll drive me crazy!"

His young chief rubbed at his black hair and laughed.

"Sure you don't mind?" he grinned. "Awfully sorry! But you know what to-day is and I simply must get down and rally the boys!"

"And talk football so they'll neglect their work!" scolded the manager smilingly. "Peter, I'm not sure whether it's you and your football or Granger with his strikes, that's caused all these stoppages."

Mention of Granger made Peter look grim for a moment, then with a chuckle he went off, leaving his manager to wrestle with letters, reports, orders, and a dozen other things alone.

And so down into the roar and heat of the foundry, where he bellowed in Baker's ears before a furnace wherein liquid metal boiled and hissed, to the McDonalds on the great mill and out to the youngsters on the trucks. Everyone was fighting fit, and all eager to discuss the game, all save Tim Osborne that is, who worked silent and shy at his bench. Peter clapped him on the back.

"Dependin' on you, young 'un!" he cried. "Fit?"

"Rather, sir!" answered Tim quietly, and as "the master" passed on, his dark, intelligent eyes ran appreciatively over the broad back and the elastic swing of the hefty young body.

Frazer's were drawn against Camber United, a big printing firm, whose ground was in a suburb north of Maxport.

Sharp at one-thirty, Peter collected his braves and they set forth by train. It was a very quiet district, only half built on, and the way to the ground lay through a narrow lane.

The Frazer's team, all their kit packed into one big bag carried easily by the two giant backs, sauntered quietly along, when behind them came the sudden blare of a motor-horn.

Looking back hastily, they found a turn in the lane hid an approaching vehicle, which was rattling along with apparently little speed but much noise.

Even as they stared backwards, the car swung round the bend and came into view; and to a man, they stopped paralysed!

For the car was no other than the dilapidated works lorry, crowded with men from the foundry!

The car was covered with green and white ribbon. Perched up beside the driver, armed with an enormous rattle, was Jenkins, also covered in green and white. The men were armed with puddling hammers.

At sight of the team standing open-mouthed, pandemonium reigned! The motor horn blew till it choked, hammers were raised aloft and thundered on the devoted sides of the lorry, while Jenkins made great play with his rattle.

Roaring, cheering, and thundering, the car-load of men swayed on and into the ground, where Peter and the team, following at the double, beheld the home crowd standing startled and alarmed by the crashing invasion.

The utter and complete surprise of it simply galvanised the team, and brought a dark flush into Peter's cheeks. This was going great guns with a vengeance! The support at home had been good in every match so far, but that the men themselves should spring such a well-planned enthusiastic outing to encourage the side in its first away game showed how solidly he had won their regard.

There was another explosion from the lorry as Peter Frazer led his grinning team out. The Camber men lined up slowly and silently, and it struck Peter that they looked rattled already.

As a matter of fact, they were. This noisy invasion had caused them to tighten up their mouths grimly. But if they were prepared for a rough game, kick and rush and plenty of fouls, they were surprised!

Phew! went the referee's whistle, and immediately up went Frazer's in a polished whirlwind attack.

(Although young Peter Frazer holds little hope of his foundry team winning the coveted trophy outright, he's convinced that every one of his stalwarts will pull his weight to the very last ounce. Look out, then, for another grinning instalment of this great serial next week!)

## BUNTER COMES TO STAY!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Oh crumbs! Bunter, stop!" roared Wharton. "Stop it, you ass!"

Only too gladly would Bunter have stopped. But he couldn't. With his scarf flying behind, he flew on.

Suddenly his uncontrollable feet left the ice. They shot into the air, and as a natural consequence Bunter sat down.

Crash!

The ice was thick. But the thickest Arctic ice would hardly have stood such a strain.

The crash was followed by a splash. Fragments of broken ice flew in all directions, and dark water welled out, and in the water Bunter sat.

"Oh, crickey!" gasped Wharton. "He's done it now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a rush to the rescue. Bunter was grasped on all sides and dragged out. He came out drenched, and dripping, and roaring. The skates were dragged off him, and he was bundled to the bank. Colonel Wharton grasped him and landed him. Bunter roared, and dripped, and squelched.

"Ow! Beasts! I shall catch cold! I'm wet! Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"I will get him to the house," said Colonel Wharton, laughing. "Leave him to me."

And Harry Wharton & Co. resumed skating as Billy Bunter was hurried to the house, squelching water, gasping, and puffing, and blowing.

When the skaters came in Bunter was in bed, piled with blankets, with a hot-water bottle at his feet; and when Wharton looked into his room to ask how he was, Bunter's reply was eloquent, if a little unintelligible.

"Atechoo! Choo-choo! Choo! Atechoo-oooh!"

Billy Bunter was not the cynosure of all eyes at the dance that evening. He did not cut all the other fellows out. He was not even present.

Distant strains of music reached his room and mingled with the sound of Bunter's sneezing.

Bunter did not heed the music. The sneezing occupied his whole attention.

THE END.

(In next week's bumper New Year's issue of the MAGNET you'll find the finest yarn ever penned by famous Frank Richards: "THE ARTFUL DODGER!" If you miss it, chum, you'll feel like kicking yourself.)

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