

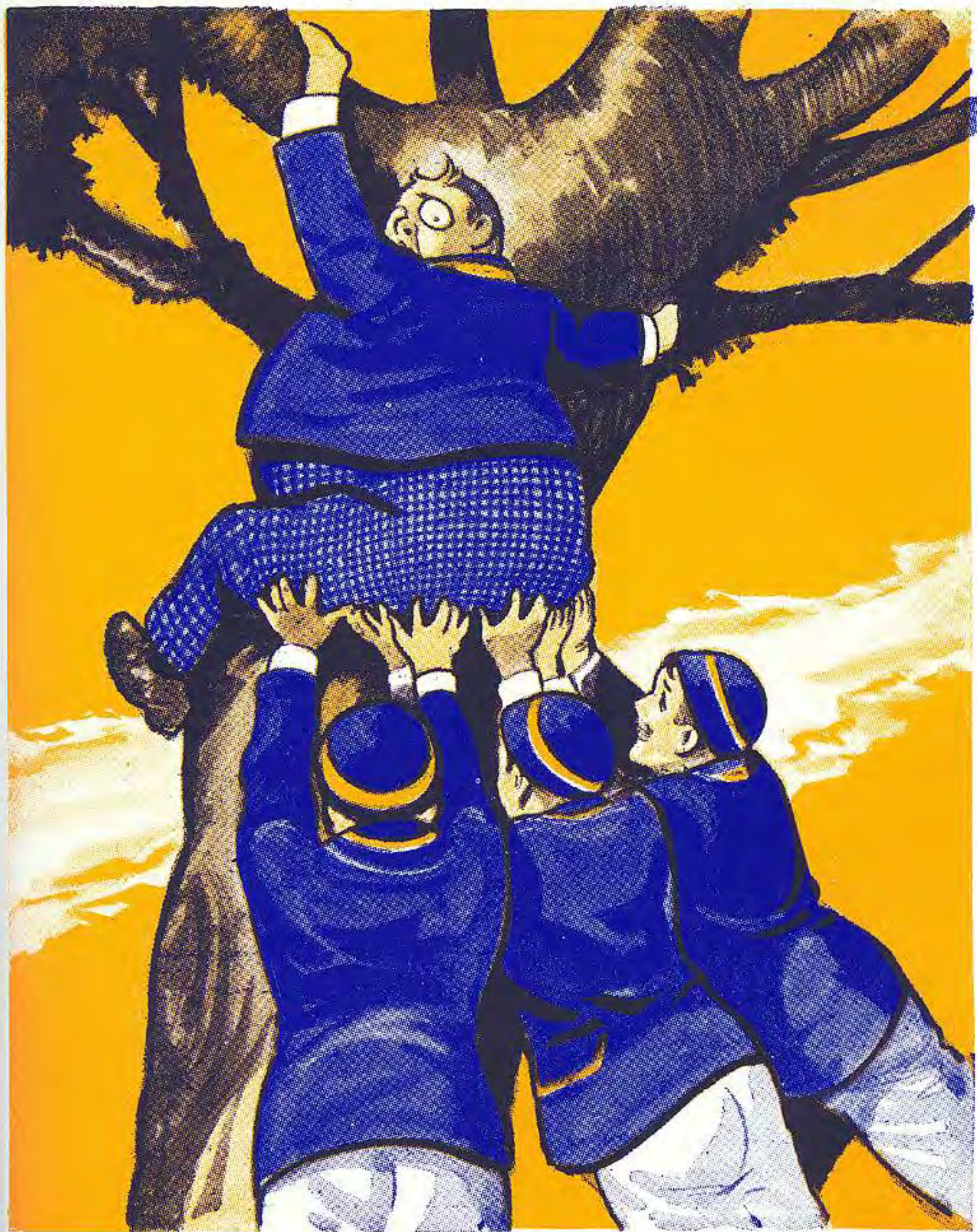
Australia v. England—Read "The Test Match Hope!"
—Inside.

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Week Ending June 14th, 1930.

EVERY SATURDAY.

The **MAGNET**²





THE GOLDEN CROCODILE!

Each week members of the famous "Thrill Club" forgather, and many are the sensational stories they have to tell. This week, in accordance with the rules, Mr. Beamish, a student of Egyptology, tells of his most thrilling experience.

excited at the discovery, and then, with a shudder, realised that I would never live to make it known. I sank hopelessly on to a rocky dais. I had a little food in my haversack, and some water, not enough to keep me alive long, and then—those crocodiles, hundreds and hundreds of them, all seemed to be waiting to tear me to pieces with their voracious jaws!

Time passed, several hours, and I was still stretched in a half-stupor along the rocky platform, when a groan caught my ear.

In a flash I guessed the truth, and, leaping up, I examined the golden image of the crocodile. I saw that there were a number of small holes in the sides, and guessed the image to be hollow. The long flat back, I found, was decorated by two protrusions. I fingered these, and after a while a long panel in the back of the crocodile lifted up.

I peered into the interior, and saw that it was a coffin, and one wherein the living were buried!

The groans were coming from an emaciated occupant of this ghastly prison-house, who lay stretched out as if already dead, swathed in a blue garment, with a blue tarboosh wound about his head.

I pressed my water-bottle to his lips, and even the few drops that he managed to swallow seemed to revive him a little. I persisted, and gave him a tiny piece of food from my haversack. After a while he raised himself unaided to a sitting position, and looked at me with eyes of great intelligence. I helped him to get out of the coffin-like interior of the crocodile, and though he was feeble, he succeeded in standing up. By eloquent signs he conveyed to me that a party would soon be coming to the cave, and that the only chance we had of escaping was to wait, crouched in hiding, near the door, and slip out before it closed on their entrance.

We crouched together for a time in a convenient recess, and soon, truly enough, the metal door slid aside, and a procession of white-robed figures came in and walked down the wide steps. I watched them form a semicircle round the golden crocodile, and then a number of the party, who I saw were bound hand and foot, were lifted and hurled into the crocodile-crammed lake beneath. There were a few ear-piercing shrieks, and the figure in the blue garment at my side touched me on the arm. Together we hurried through the opening into the blinding light of the desert sun.

We raced for some distance across the sands, until my companion tottered and fell in his tracks. I stooped down and discovered that he was dead. I hadn't the slightest idea of my whereabouts or direction. On my right was a lake, and the desert stretched away on the left. I looked about, and then I saw some gesticulating figures in the direction whence we had come. If they hadn't already seen me, they soon would, for I was in white drill, a conspicuous figure against the skyline for many miles. I decided to change my identity. Picking up the body of the dead man, I carried him to a clump of prickly pear-trees. Obscured from sight, I stripped off his blue gown and tarboosh, and put them on. Then I dropped the poor devil gently into the waters of the lake, and, throwing my helmet after him, I walked slowly away.

When I re-emerged from the plantation I looked, to the eyes of those seeking me, a totally different object, but though I walked with no appearance of haste, I felt by no means calm within. No one, however, molested me, and after an arduous march I managed to make my way back to my scientific colleagues. I told them my story, and the next day we went to the entrance to the labyrinth together, but it had already been closed, and we came away.

THERE was an immediate hush as the chairman of the Thrill Club rose to his feet and addressed the vast assembly.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I will now call upon our worthy friend, Mr. Beamish, to tell you the story of the greatest thrill in his life."

Amid a thunder of applause the chairman sat down.

When I was a youngster of twenty-five (began Mr. Beamish) I was helping in some geological research work in Egypt. To be exact, I was in that area of the Libyan Desert known as the Fayum.

In the Fayum there is a lake called Birket-el-Kerim. It's thirty miles long, but in the days of ancient Egypt it was more like three hundred, and on its shores stood cities, temples, and pyramids. The cities and temples are in ruins, or have totally disappeared, but there's enough left to keep a student of Egyptology happy for a couple of lifetimes.

I had been pottering about these ruins, principally round the remains of the most mysterious city of all, the city called Crocodilopolis. As you all know, the Egyptians had a way of making certain animals sacred—the cat, the bull, the serpent—and in this part of Egypt the crocodile was venerated, looked upon as a kind of god.

Another ancient relic that fascinated me very much was near by, and that was the pyramid of Hawara. It was said that this pyramid had been intended as the funerary temple of Amenhemet the Third, but there was a curse upon it, and a vast labyrinth running from it that had been walled up, and which no one had dared to explore.

Being young and venturesome, I had made up my mind at having a shot to open the labyrinth. I worked for a fortnight with pick and spade, and at last succeeded in making a hole large enough to crawl through.

Walking through a tunnel which seemed never-ending, I eventually reached a cavern crowded with crocodiles, and they were floating in shoals in the lake beneath!

I turned to go, and then stopped dead, for a pair of bright eyes were fixed upon me, and a leah, dusky face was wearing a cruel sneer. The owner of the face and eyes was standing motionless in the tunnel, and as I stood staring at him a metal door slid silently between us, and I realised that I could not escape.

With the courage of desperation I ran forward, my object being to find a way out of that crocodile-infested place, but with bitter dismay I discovered only another metal door, as immovable as the first, at the top of a flight of wide steps. I was a prisoner!

Looking about, I saw the cave was ornamented with carvings and precious stones, while in a recess, richly embellished, I found an enormous crocodile, an image, carved in gold. I surmised that this part of the cave was used for some sort of crocodile-worship, and sacrifices were possibly made here to the god crocodile. I felt wildly



A Gripping Story of School Adventure, featuring Harry Wharton & Co.—the Cheery Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Hunting Bunter!

"BUNTER!" No reply. "Bunter!" roared Harry Wharton.

But answer there came none. Billy Bunter, generally too much in evidence, was for once not on view.

"Bunter!" Wharton's voice rang along the Remove passage, and woke echoes in every study.

The captain of the Remove was looking exasperated.

He was in flannels, and had a bat under his arm, and was due on Little Side, where most of the Remove had already gathered for games practice. And he did not want to waste time on Bunter.

"Bunter!" he shouted again.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You coming, Wharton?" called out Bob Cherry from the stairs.

"I've got to bag that fat idiot, Bunter."

And Wharton shouted once more: "Bunter! You fat freak, show up! I'm waiting for you! Bunter!"

But if William George Bunter was within hearing, he was acting on the principle that silence was golden. Like the ancient gladiator, he heard but he heeded not.

Bob Cherry came up the Remove staircase, with a cheery grin on his ruddy face.

"I'll help you root him out," he said. "He's up here somewhere—he was seen scotching up the stairs."

"That fat frump!" growled Wharton. It was compulsory practice that afternoon and Bunter had to turn up with the rest of the Form. Bunter's excuses

for dodging games practice were many and various, and often he got away with them. This time his excuses had failed him, and he had apparently adopted the plan of keeping out of sight. Which was intensely annoying to a junior cricket captain who had to get on with his job.

"I can't let him slide!" grunted Wharton. "Wingate jawed me last time for letting him off because he said he had a headache, and the time before because he said he had a toothache. There'll be a row if he's let off again. The fat freak's hiding somewhere."

"We'll root him out!" said Bob cheerily.

"Look in his study first."

whose spelling were like unto no others in the Remove.

"Dear Wharton,—I'm fritefully sorry I can't play too-day. The jactt is, I think I can help to putt old Grimes on the trakk of Fishy, and I'm gorn to the polcece-stashun to speek to Inspektor Grimes about it."

"W. G. BUNTER."

"The fat fozzling freak!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"The ink isn't dry on it!" he remarked.

And Wharton chuckled, too.

It was more than a week since Fisher T. Fish, the American junior in the Remove, had been kidnapped.

In some place unknown, Fishy was held a prisoner; while Barney McCann was demanding a ransom from Mr. Hiram K. Fish, of New York, for his release.

The Remove fellows, of course, were sorry for Fishy; though it could not be said that they missed his company very much.

Every fellow at Greyfriars, in fact, could bear the loss of Fisher T. Fish's company, with a great deal of fortitude.

Still, they naturally felt rather concerned about him; and no doubt Billy Bunter considered that that message would see him safely through.

Unfortunately for William George Bunter, the ink was still wet on his missive, and it showed that Bunter had been very recently in the study.

So recently, indeed, that the two juniors had no doubt that he was still there!

Bob Cherry glanced round.

The study armchair had been backed

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SCHOOLBOY SON OF MILLIONAIRE KIDNAPPED!

30,000 DOLLARS RANSOM DEMANDED!

The two juniors hurried along to Study No. 7 in the Remove. Bob Cherry hurled the study door open with a crash.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he roared. "Are you here, Bunter?"

No answer.

The study appeared to be empty when Wharton glanced round it. He gave an exasperated grunt.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's this?" exclaimed Bob.

He picked up a paper that lay on the table—a sheet of impot paper, on which a message was written.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "That's for you, old bean!"

Wharton looked at the paper; and in spite of his annoyance, he grinned. It was in the sprawling hand, and the remarkable orthography, of William George Bunter; whose writing and

up into a corner of the room. Bob chuckled as he noted that fact.

He had no doubt that Billy Bunter was squatted in the corner, screened by the big chair.

Wharton noted the same thing at the same time; and made a stride towards the corner.

"Hold on!" said Bob, catching his arm.

"What—"

"Bunter isn't here," said Bob, in a loud voice. "There's nobody in the study."

A fat face, behind the big chair, was irradiated by a fat grin. But Billy Bunter made no sound. He waited for the beasts to go.

Bob Cherry stepped to the fender, and picked up Peter Todd's kettle. It was half-full of water.

Wharton grinned.

Bob stepped quietly towards the armchair. He placed a knee on it, and reached over the high back, kettle in hand.

Then he tilted the kettle.

A stream of water flowed from the spout; and there was a sudden fearful yell from the corner.

"Yoooooooooggggghh!"

The stream flowed on.

"Owl! Oooooogh! Gug-gug-gug! Yooooooooch!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Up from the corner, like a jack-in-the-box, leaped Billy Bunter, with water streaming over his bullet head and down his neck. As the kettle was just over him, Bunter would have been well-advised to rise more cautiously. Still, in the circumstances, it was natural that he should jump. He jumped up, and there was a crash as his bullet head met the kettle and knocked it from Bob's hand. There was another crash as the kettle landed in the corner.

"Yarooogh!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! My napper! Wow! Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—you—" stuttered Bunter, as he rubbed his damaged head with one hand, and gouged water out of his eyes with the other. "You—you—you awful beasts! You knew I was there all the time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, fatty," said Harry Wharton.

"Beast! I can't come now," howled Bunter. "I'm drenched—"

"Well, you've got to change for cricket—"

"I mean, I'm injured! My head's cracked—"

"That's all right—you've always been cracked," said Bob.

"Beast! My brain's fractured!" howled Bunter. "I can feel concussion coming on!"

"You'll feel concussion, if I have to use this bat on you," said Harry. "Get a move on, fathead!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "I can't play cricket when I'm terribly injured. My brain's concussed—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm nearly stunned—practically senseless—"

"Not practically," said Bob. "Quite senseless—as per usual! Can't you really get a move on?"

"No!" howled Bunter.

"Think you could if I gave you a dig with this bat? Try?"

"Yarooogh!" roared Bunter. He moved with almost startling suddenness as he received a dig from the cricket bat.

"Good!" said Bob. "That's turned out all right! Try again!"

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"Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter made a jump from the study. Another dig sent him scudding down the Remove passage to the stairs.

Wharton and Bob Cherry followed, laughing.

But when they reached the changing-room Billy Bunter had vanished. For once, Bunter's movements had resembled those of the hare rather than those of the tortoise. He had disappeared into space.

"Bunter!" shouted Wharton.

"Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Why, I—I—I'll—" gasped the captain of the Remove. "Look here, we've got to find him! Wingate will lick the fat idiot if he doesn't turn up. Bunter!"

"Bunter! Bunter! Bunt! Bunt!" roared Bob.

For five minutes the two juniors sought the vanished Owl of the Remove. Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh came along to help. But they sought him in vain. Bunter had already disappeared as completely as Fisher T. Fish. And as it was already late for games practice Harry Wharton gave it up at last, and the chums of the Remove proceeded to Little Side without Bunter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Distressing Situation!

BILLY BUNTER grinned.

From a high, mullioned window he had a view of Harry Wharton & Co. as they walked away to the cricket field.

Bunter had found safety.

He was in the library. Nobody would have thought of looking for Bunter there. It was not by any means a favourite haunt of his. The library contained nothing that appealed to Bunter, except several very soft and very deep easy-chairs. Much would Bunter have preferred to take refuge in the tuckshop. In the tuckshop there were many things that appealed to him.

But in the tuckshop he would have been found and shepherded off to games practice, while in the library he was safe from that dread infliction.

Bunter really did not feel up to cricket that afternoon. Had he done so it would have been rather unusual; for Bunter never did feel up to cricket. He never felt up to anything that required exertion.

On this special afternoon it was, in Bunter's opinion, too hot for cricket. On the last occasion it had been too cold. It was always too something-or-other for Bunter to exert himself.

It was true that if Wharton reported his absence he would get a licking from the captain of the school. But Wharton wouldn't report him, very likely; it was naturally a repugnant sort of duty. Wingate would perhaps miss him if he looked on at the junior games practice, in which case Bunter certainly would be called on the carpet. Still, he would be able to tell Wingate a tale of severe internal pains, or blinding headache, or throbbing toothache, or something in that line. Bunter's fertile fancy in such matters was never shackled by any undue regard for facts.

The chief thing was to keep out of sight till games practice was over. Bunter was prepared to trust to luck for the rest.

A couple of hours in a soft, deep chair, sucking the aniseed-balls from the packet he had with him, seemed rather attractive. Bunter accordingly sat down in a very comfortable chair and filled his large mouth to capacity with aniseed-balls.

If this wasn't better than fagging about after a beastly leather ball in a beastly hot sun Bunter did not know what was good.

He was cosy and comfortable, and gradually filling up his interior spaces with aniseed-balls. Fellows who liked cricket better than that could play cricket—and be blowed to them.

Of course, there were drawbacks to this arrangement; for there is nothing absolutely satisfactory under the sun. For instance, Lower Fourth juniors were not allowed to frowst in the library; they were not even supposed to enter it except at specified times, and with the special permission of their Form masters.

Only the great and glorious Sixth had the right to walk in and out of the library just as the spirit moved them.

Still, the risk was not great. The librarian, Bunter knew, had gone out for a walk with Mr. Prout, so he was not likely to butt in. The First Eleven were playing a match, so few of the Sixth were about. Mr. Quelch, master of the Remove, was in his study—or had been in his study a short time ago. Only the Head, in fact, was at all likely to come to the library that afternoon—and Bunter hoped that he wouldn't. Even if he did, probably he would only come for a book, and most likely would go out again without seeing Bunter, who was deep in a big, high-backed chair near a window and quite invisible from the greater part of the long, lofty apartment.

Easy in his mind and easy in his chair, the Owl of the Remove settled down in fat comfort.

Sunlight fell brightly in at the mullioned windows. Distant sounds floated from the playing fields. Bunter travelled through his bag of aniseed-balls. He felt happy and sticky and contented, and he leaned his head back on the soft leather and nodded. Having nothing more to eat, a nap was indicated. With his head resting on soft, padded leather, his feet on a hassock, his eyes shut behind his big spectacles, and his mouth open, Bunter slid into balmy slumber.

And just as he slid, the door opened and startled him; his mouth shut, and his eyes opened.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter under his breath.

He did not know who had entered the library; but whoever it was, he was evidently a beast, for he had disturbed Bunter.

Bunter did not rise.

Had he risen he would have been visible to whomsoever had entered the library. He sat tight and hoped the beast would go.

But the beast did not go.

Bunter heard a shifting of books, and then the creak of a chair. The unknown beast had sat down at a writing-table.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Bunter.

He felt bitterly that this was just his luck. He had selected the dusky old library as the safest hiding-place while games practice was on. And some beast was bound to come and settle down there.

Bunter remained where he was. The beast was bound to go sooner or later; and Bunter was in no hurry, after all. And he was quite safe from observation where he sat.

After a time the fat junior ventured to peep round the armchair. He had a glimpse of a majestic figure at the writing-table a few yards away. His head popped back again like that of a tortoise into its shell.

"Oh crikey! It's the Head!" breathed Bunter.

It was Dr. Locke! And he showed no sign of moving! Three or four volumes lay on the table round him, and he was writing. Evidently he was busy on some learned bosh.

Half an hour passed away, and the Head was still writing, with intervals for reflection. Then the library door opened again.

"Ah! Come in, my dear Quelch!" said the Head in a very cordial tone.

Bunter could have groaned.

As if it wasn't bad enough for the Head to plant himself in the library while Bunter was there, his own Form master had to come and join him!

"I am finding a little time this afternoon for my task, Quelch," said the Head. "I have every hope that in a few years more my edition of 'Sophocles' will be ready for the Press. I cannot help thinking that in certain respects it will excel previous editions."

"Perhaps I should not have interrupted you, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "But you desired to hear Inspector Grimes' report on—"

"Oh! Yes! Quite so!" said Dr. Locke in a very different tone. Inspector Grimes, evidently, did not interest him so much as Sophocles. "Has Mr. Grimes any news of the missing boy?"

"None, I am sorry to say." "Dear me! This is very distressing, Mr. Quelch," said the Head, with a sigh. "It is very distressing indeed."

"Very, sir," said the Remove master. "Mr. Grimes reports that all that is in the power of the police is being done, but there seems to be absolutely no clue to the whereabouts of the boy Fish. It appears beyond doubt that he was taken away in a fast car, probably to a very great distance from Greyfriars. Really it is a very difficult task for the police."

"Quite so!" said the Head. "It is very distressing! Of course, we need have no fears for the boy's actual safety. The object of these unscrupulous persons is not to harm him, but to extort a ransom from his father."

"That is so, sir! Fish will suffer no hurt! But—"

"But it is very distressing," said the Head. "I felt bound to inform Mr. Fish by cable, and his reply was somewhat curt. Yet I fail to see what greater precautions we could have taken for the boy's safety, Mr. Quelch. Mr. Fish does not seem to understand that we are quite unaccustomed here to the methods of American criminals. His cable stated that a letter was following; and I fear that his letter may contain acrimonious expressions. It is very unfortunate."

Tap! Billy Bunter felt like groaning again as he heard that tap on the door. He began to wonder whether all Greyfriars was going to gather in the library that afternoon just because he had taken refuge there from games practice.

"Come in!" said the Head.

As Bob Cherry tilted the kettle at the back of the armchair, there was a sudden fearful yell from Billy Bunter. "Ow! Gug-gug-gug! Yooooch!"



It was Trotter, the page, who entered. He brought in letters on a tray.

"Ah, thank you, Trotter!" said Dr. Locke.

The door closed on the House page.

"One moment, my dear Quelch," said the Head, as the Remove master made a movement to go. "One of these letters has an American postmark; and I have no doubt it is from Fish's father. Pray sit down, and perhaps you can give me some counsel in the matter. I fear very much that Mr. Fish will be somewhat acrimonious."

"Very good, sir." Mr. Quelch sat down, and the Head opened the letter from Hiram K. Fish. There was silence for some moments, and then Billy Bunter heard Dr. Locke utter an ejaculation.

"Goodness gracious! Upon my word! Ridiculous!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Hide-and-Seek with the Head!

"RIDICULOUS!" repeated the Head.

"My dear sir—" said Mr. Quelch.

"Absurd!" said Dr. Locke. "Mr. Fish is utterly unreasonable. He is naturally annoyed and anxious; but this—Really—really—"

Billy Bunter listened with all his ears.

So long as the two masters did not discover him there, Bunter was feeling that he was rather in luck.

As this affair did not concern him in the very least, the Owl of the Remove was naturally deeply interested in it.

"Listen to this, my dear Quelch!" exclaimed the Head in agitated tones. "Listen to this, and give me your

opinion! I am sure you will agree with me that it is ridiculous."

"I have little doubt of it, sir!" said the Remove master.

And the Head proceeded to read aloud the epistle from Hiram K. Fish:

"Dear Dr. Locke,—As stated in my cable, I hold you responsible for my son. I cabled you a warning to keep tabs on him because Barney McCann's bunch had got after him. That put it up to you, sir."

"Now I hear from you that Barney got into the school, making out he was a detective sent by me from New York to watch over Fisher. You fell for this, sir, and I guess it's your funeral."

"If your British police can get Fisher back from that bunch, well and good. If they can't, and I guess they surely can't, it's up to you."

"I've had a message from Barney already, asking thirty thousand dollars' ransom for Fisher. I guess I've answered him to deal with you. The boy was in your charge. If he can't be got back from that bunch without paying ransom, it's you for the ransom. I calculate that the whole responsibility is on your shoulders; and, as a reasonable man, you can't expect to put it on mine."

"You'll hear from Barney; and I guess you want to make terms with him. I leave it to you. Maybe you're not well up in the law; but any solicitor will tell you a school-master's responsibilities."

"To put it short, you've lost the boy, and you've got to get him back. If it costs you money, that's your funeral, not mine."

"Yours truly,

"HIRAM K. FISH."

The Head's voice was quite agitated as he read out that epistle. Mr. Quelch listened with a frowning brow.

This view, perhaps, was the one that Mr. Hiram K. Fish might have been expected to take. No doubt he was anxious for the missing heir of the Fish dollars; but business considerations came first.

"A most acrimonious letter!" said the Head. "A most unreasonable letter! A—a ridiculous letter, Mr. Quelch! Does Mr. Fish imagine, for one moment, that—that I can deal with a criminal—that I can negotiate with a lawless rascal—that—that—" The Head broke off. "Absurd! Ridiculous!"

"I doubt whether the police would permit such negotiations, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "It would, I believe, be called compounding a felony. Such a ransom would have to be paid surreptitiously, by a secret agreement. That, I believe, is the course followed in the United States, where happenings like these are not uncommon."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"The position is awkward, sir. But we must hope that the police will succeed in tracing Fish."

"But if not—" said the Head.

Mr. Quelch made no reply to that.

Undoubtedly the position was an awkward one. It could not be denied that Fisher T. Fish had been in the charge of his schoolmaster, who was responsible for his safety.

Certainly, a schoolmaster could not be expected to be equal to the cunning wiles of an American crook. Dr. Locke had never had dealings with a character like Barney McCann; and Barney had quite a bewildering effect on the old gentleman.

Still, that did not relieve him of responsibility. It was quite a distressing situation.

"It would have been judicious," said the Head at last, "to request Mr. Fish to remove his son for a time from the school, when he became the object of the—the machinations of these rascals."

"Undoubtedly!" said Mr. Quelch.

"In fact, I gave a hint to that effect," said the Head. "But Mr. Fish did not seem to think of it. I—I hope and trust that the police will succeed in finding the boy."

"As for the suggestion that you should negotiate with these rogues, and pay the demanded ransom, I agree with you that it is ridiculous, sir," said the Remove master. "The sum involved, moreover, is enormous—no less than six thousand pounds. This may be a small sum to Mr. Fish; but we have not all cornered pork!" said Mr. Quelch, with a touch of satire.

"Quite so," said the Head. "It appears to be Mr. Fish's recent very remarkable financial operations which have caused the whole trouble. From what I have heard, Mr. Quelch, it appears that Mr. Fish has obtained control of some foodstuff in his own remarkable country, and is making large sums of money by raising the price of this commodity. This, I learn, is a legal transaction; but from a moral point of view, Mr. Quelch—"

Dr. Locke shook his head.

"From a moral point of view, sir, I see little to choose between Mr. Fish's methods and those of Barney McCann."

"Strictly between ourselves, sir, I subscribe to that view," said the Head. "Really, Mr. Fish could spare the sum

required, from—from what I really can only regard as his loot. However—"

"However—" said Mr. Quelch.

"We must hope that the boy will be found."

Mr. Quelch left the library, and the Head reverted to Sophocles. Sophocles, however, seemed to have lost his savour, as it were; Mr. Fish's letter worried the Head deeply. The kidnapping of Fisher T. Fish had worried him already; and Hiram K.'s letter put the lid on.

Dr. Locke laid down his pen; and began to pace the library.

He paced it from the door to the window, to and fro. Unfortunately, the window that was the objective of the Head's peregrinations was the window where Billy Bunter sat deep in the big chair.

Bunter trembled.

He heard the swishing and rustling of the Head's gown, as he paced. It approached the high back of Bunter's chair—and he caught his breath.

Then the Head turned, and paced back, and Bunter breathed again.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bunter.

To and fro paced the agitated headmaster. Each time he turned back when he reached Bunter's chair, without passing it. Each time he came within an ace of spotting Bunter; but so far, he had not spotted him.

The Owl of the Remove fairly palpitated.

Every time the footsteps approached his fat heart was in his mouth. Every time they retreated he had a new lease of life, as it were.

Bunter wondered savagely how long the Beak was going to prance up and down the room. Any minute he might extend the length of his peregrination, pass the big chair, and when he turned, infallibly spot the fat junior in it.

It was really awful for Bunter, alternating every minute between hope and fear.

He very nearly squeaked aloud when the Head, at last, passed the big chair and continued on his way as far as the window.

Bunter had a view of his back; and gazed at it as if it had been the face of a Gorgon instead of the back of a schoolmaster.

When the Head turned—

Bunter whipped out of the chair, circumnavigated it, and crouched down behind the high back, trembling.

The Head turned, and came pacing back.

Bunter crouched and shuddered.

But the Head passed on unseeing; and Bunter breathed once more. Onward went the headmaster on his journey towards the door.

Bunter whipped round the big chair again while his back was turned.

When the Head reversed, at the door and came pacing back, Bunter was crouching in the chair again, which faced the window; and the Head passed him once more and reached the window.

Again the fat junior whipped round behind the chair; breathless with terror and excitement, and with the perspiration streaming down his fat face.

This game of hide-and-seek with the headmaster was telling on Bunter's nerves. He wished from the bottom of his fat heart that he hadn't dodged cricket practice that afternoon. Cricket was better than this!

Fortunately, this time the Head stopped at the window, and stood gazing out into the sunny quadrangle.

Bunter waited for him to turn—but he did not turn.

He waited a full minute; but still the



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Head stood at the window, and gazed into the quad.

Apparently he was a fixture there. Bunter blinked round at the door. If he could steal on tiptoe to the door and bunk, while the Head's back was turned to him—

On the other hand, suppose the Head turned just as he was bunking! It depended on whether the Head continued to admire the beauties of Nature, or whether he resumed his uneasy pacing to and fro. And Bunter, of course, could not guess which he was going to do.

Another minute passed! Still the Head's majestic back was turned; still he gazed out into the quad.

Bunter resolved to risk it.

On tiptoe, suppressing his breathing, the fat junior stole towards the door. Having quitted cover, he was now in full view if the Head turned. His fat heart beat in jumps.

He drew nearer and nearer to the door. Still the Head was motionless. He reached the door, almost suffocating with suppressed terror and excitement. He turned the handle. He drew the door open. Cautious as he was, there was a sound.

The Head glanced round.

At the same moment, Bunter whipped round the door to the safe side. He left it open and scooted.

"Who is there?" called out the Head.

Bunter did not answer that question. He was doing the passage at about 70 m.p.h.

Dr. Locko gazed at the open door in surprise.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

He crossed to the door and glanced out. Had he hurried, he would have been in time to see a fat figure, in hot haste, turning a distant corner. But he did not hurry; he crossed the library with the slow and stately motion of a Spanish galleon. So when he glanced out of the doorway, Bunter had vanished.

"Bless my soul!" repeated the Head, much puzzled.

It was quite perplexing. Someone, apparently, had come and opened the door and scuttled away unseen. It was impossible to surmise that anybody was "larking" with so majestic a personage as a headmaster. So the Head had to give it up as an insoluble mystery.

And Bunter, having reached safety, sat down and gasped, and gasped, and gasped, and mopped the perspiration from his fat brow, still shuddering from the narrowness of his escape.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Tea in Study No. 1!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"You fat villain!"
"Oh, really, Wharton—"
"You've got to go to Wingate," said the captain of the Remove. "It will mean six, and serve you jolly well right."

"The rightfulness will be terrific, my esteemed frowsting Bunter," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton & Co. had come in to tea after games practice. Until then, they had seen nothing of Billy Bunter. But they were not surprised to see him then. Bunter had been in hiding; but had he been hiding from a war-party of Red Indians, a meal-time would have drawn him out of cover.

The Famous Five of the Remove were sitting down to tea in Study No. 1 when a fat face and a pair of spectacles glimmered in.

Bunter rolled into the study.

"I say, you fellows, Toddy's gone

out to tea," he said. "You know what Toddy is—when he goes out to tea he never thinks of a fellow! There's nothing in my study. If you'd like me to tea with you—"

"Buzz off, you fat fly!"

"He, he, he!" said Bunter, taking that remark as a joke. "I say, you fellows, that looks a decent cake." He drew a chair to the table.

"You'd better go and see Wingate," said Harry. "You won't want to sit down to tea when he's done with you."

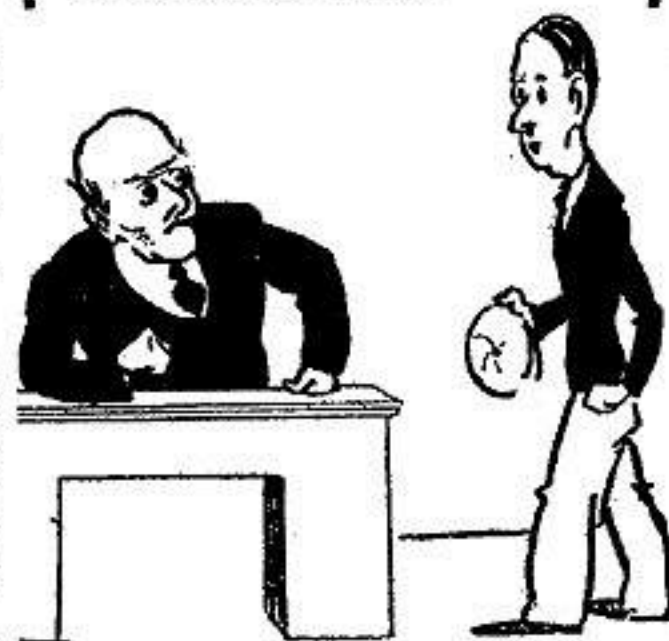
"Then I'd better have tea first," said Bunter. "Those poached eggs look rather nice. Five—six—seven! Good!" Bunter reached for the dish of poached eggs. "Leave some of the cake for me."

And Bunter turned the poached eggs on to his plate.

"You fat cormorant!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Boys, you'll just have to
LAUGH AT THIS JOKE,
which wins a pocket knife for
J. Cooke, 21, Clensmore Street,
Kidderminster, Worcs.



Manager: "So you've come in answer to our advertisement for a bus-conductor?"

Applicant: "Yes, sir."

Manager: "Have you had any experience?"

Applicant: "No, sir; my last job was packing sardines."

Manager: "Excellent! Start to-morrow!"

See if you can win one of these useful prizes. I've got heaps more in stock.

Wharton reached for Bunter's plate, and captured it in time. Bunter blinked at him in surprised indignation.

"Look here, old chap, don't be greedy!" he exclaimed. "Seven poached eggs ain't much for a hungry fellow. I suppose you want to feed a fellow when you ask him to tea."

Wharton, without replying, placed an egg on each plate. Billy Bunter gave a snort.

"That leaves only two for me!" he grunted. "You fellows always were rather greedy. Greediness is a thing I never could stand. It's bad form, if you don't mind my mentioning it."

"Kill him, somebody," said Frank Nugent.

"Oh, never mind," said Bunter loftily. "I can fill up on cake. It's not much I eat, as you know."

And Bunter disposed of two poached eggs as if they had been oysters, and started on the cake.

"I say, you fellows," he said, with his

mouth full. "Did that beast Wingate really miss me at games practice?"

"Yes; and you've got to go to his study."

"Didn't you tell him I was ill?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You can tell him your whoppers yourself," he answered. "He may believe you. He doesn't know you so well as we do."

"Beast!"

Bunter gobbled cake.

"I say, you fellows, it's rather rotten for the Beak!" he said. "Old Fish is going to bring an action against him."

"Wha-a-t?"

"He makes out that it's the Head's fault that those kidnappers got hold of Fishy!" said Bunter. "He's going to prosecute."

"You fat chump!"

"Horrid for him, isn't it?" said Bunter, still gobbling. "I suppose the Head will get a writ, or something. Old Fish is in a frightful rage with him. Called him all sorts of names."

"And the Head told you about it?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"As a matter of fact, he did," answered Bunter. "He was consulting with Quelch, and I was present."

"You were present when the Head consulted with Quelch?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yes. Any more tea in the pot? The Head read old Fish's letter out to us."

"He read it out?"

"Yes; to Quelch and me. Old Fish used awful language—language I shouldn't care to repeat. He's going to prosecute the Head, and get damages out of him. Unless Fishy is found out at once he's going to apply for a warrant!" said Bunter.

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I suppose I ought to know what was in old Fish's letter, when the Head read it out to Quelch, and I heard every word—I mean he read it out to Quelch and me. He asked Quelch what he had better do about it, and Quelch was flummoxed—hadn't a thing to suggest. Then he turned to me—"

"He—he turned to you?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes, and said: 'What would you advise, Bunter?' Just like that!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I did what I could to soothe him. He was frightfully upset," said Bunter. "I think I comforted him, though. He seemed calmer when I left." Bunter blinked round the table through his big spectacles. "Any more cake?"

"No, you cormorant."

"Anything in the cupboard?"

"Lots of things in the cupboard, if you'd like to eat them."

"Good! I'll get them out, old fellow!" Bunter rolled to the study cupboard, and blinked into it. "I say, Wharton, where is it? I can't see any grub here."

"I never said there was any grub. There's lots of things if you'd like to eat them—a tennis-racket, and a pair of slippers, and Nugent's old football boots."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter turned away from the cupboard. There were, indeed, a lot of things there; but even Bunter did not want to eat them.

"Well, I'd better clear!" he said. "If that's what you call a feed, you fellows, I can only say that you're frightfully mean. I wonder whether

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Maully's had his tea yet. Sorry I can't stop any longer, you men—I've got to speak to a fellow."

"Don't forget to call on Wingate!" shouted Wharton, as the Owl of the Remove rolled out of the study.

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter departed; but he did not depart in the direction of the Greyfriars captain's study. It was tea-time; and one tea was not much to a fellow like Bunter. He rolled away to Lord Mauleverer's study, like a lion seeking what he might devour.

"What has that fat idiot got hold of now?" asked Bob. "Has he been listening to the Head talking to Quelch?"

"Looks like it!" said Harry. "I shouldn't wonder if old Fish is cutting up rusty. I suppose the Head's responsible for Fishy."

"All the old scout's fault for cornering pork!" said Nugent. "If he wasn't bagging other people's dollars, Barney McCann wouldn't have bagged Fishy."

"I don't suppose old Fish looks at it like that!" said Wharton, laughing. "It's rather rotten for the Head. Fishy's been gone well over a week now; and the police haven't found him. Old Fish will make a fearful fuss if he has to pay thirty thousand dollars out of the millions he's purloined from the American public."

"If the Head asked us to help—" remarked Bob Cherry thoughtfully.

"Us!" ejaculated Nugent.

"I don't mean he's likely to," said Bob, with a grin. "But I should be quite willing to take off a few weeks from school."

"Go hon!"

"And go fishing for Fish!" said Bob. "After all, we're Scouts—and jolly good Scouts. The Head might do worse than leave it to us."

"The mightfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose a fellow couldn't very well suggest it to him!" said Bob. "But these headmasters think they know better than the Lower Fourth."

Vernon-Smith looked into the study.

"Bunter here?" he asked.

"He was—but isn't!" said Harry. "But if you want him to tea he'll turn up all right. He's had only one tea so far."

"I jolly well don't!" answered the Bouncer. "Wingate wants him—and not to tea, I fancy. I've got to find him."

"Look in Maully's study—or any study where there's grub going."

"Blow him!" said the Bouncer; and he went up the Remove passage in search of Bunter.

Evidently he found him; for a few minutes later Bunter's voice was heard in the passage, raised in protest.

"Leggo, you beast! I'm not going! I dare say Wingate will forget all about it if he's given time. Leggo, Smithy! I'll jolly well hack your shins if you don't leggo!"

"You fat idiot, you're to go to the prefects' room at once."

"Well, I jolly well won't! Yaroooh! Leave off kicking me, you beast! I'm going, ain't I?" yelled Bunter. "If you kick me again, you rotter! Yaroooh!"

And Bunter went.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Nice for the Head!

WINGATE of the Sixth was in the prefects' room, when a doleful and dismal Bunter arrived there. There were a good many of the Sixth in the room after tea; for although it belonged specially to the prefects, any prefect could bestow the freedom of it on his friends; so there were few of the Sixth who did not foregather there. Billy Bunter blinked in at the doorway, at more than a dozen of the great men of the Sixth Form, who were mostly discussing the cricket of the afternoon. Wingate was talking to Gwynne and North; and although he was evidently not thinking of Bunter the ashplant under his arm showed that he was ready for him. Bunter rolled dismally in, and some of the seniors glanced at him; and Wingate looked round.

"Oh, you!" said Wingate. "You cut games practice again to-day, Bunter! Bend over that chair!"

"I—I say, Wingate—"

"Buck up!" said Wingate.

"But—but, I say, I—I really couldn't play this afternoon, Wingate!" urged Bunter. "Generally I'm frightfully keen on cricket, as any man in the Remove will tell you; but—"

Wingate, ashplant in hand, paused.

"You can make any excuses you like," he said. "But buck up—I've got to give you six, you know."

"I was ill!" said Bunter pathetically. "I was just going to change for cricket when I felt a fearful pain."

"You'll feel another in a minute," said Wingate genially. "Is that all?"

"Nunno! I—I was—was—I mean I—" Bunter cudgelled his fat brain for a better excuse than illness, which, indeed, he had worn threadbare that term. "The—the fact is, Wingate, I—I was worried about the Head."

"What!" gasped Wingate.

Every man in the room turned his head to look at Bunter now. For a Lower Fourth junior to state that he was concerned about the headmaster was something quite new.

"You see, the Beak being up against it," said Bunter. "I—I was—was so sympathetic, you know—I felt I couldn't put my mind into cricket, keen as I am on the game."

"Do you mean the Head's fallen ill, or what?" asked the astonished captain of Greyfriars.

"Oh, no! I mean about old Fish threatening him."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Is the kid potty?" asked Loder.

"Sounds like it," said Wingate. "Anyhow, we don't want to hear his drivel. Bend over, Bunter."

"You see, I—I saw him, quite broken down," said Bunter. "Old Fish is threatening to prosecute him if he doesn't get young Fish back—in fact, I gathered that he's applying for a warrant for the Head's arrest."

"Yo gods!" said Gwynne.

"Or something of the sort," added Bunter hastily. "Anyhow, he wrote the Head a fearfully abusive letter, and threatened him, and—and in the circumstances, I felt so awfully sorry that—that—that I forgot all about games practice, Wingate."

Wingate gazed at him.

Bunter's excuse for cutting games practice was, this time, novel, and it seemed to have taken the Greyfriars captain's breath away.

"So—so that's how it was," said Bunter, encouraged by Wingate's silence. "C-c-can I go now, Wingate?"

"No!" roared Wingate. "You young rascal, how do you know anything about any letter Mr. Fish may have written to the Head?"

"Oh! I—I—I—I mean—I—I heard the Beak reading it out to Quelch—quite by accident."

"Well, on my word!" gasped Wingate.

"This is gettin' amusin'," grinned Loder of the Sixth. "The Head would be pleased to know that he'd taken Bunter of the Remove into his confidence."

"You young rogue!" exclaimed Wingate. "You dared to listen—"

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter. "I—I wouldn't!"

"Did you hear without listening?" asked Walker.

"Yes, exactly," stuttered Bunter. "I—I mean—that is to say, it was an accident—a pure accident. Happening to go to the library for a book, I happened to hear—"

"I think this is the limit," said Wingate. "I believe that young scoundrel is always spying and prying. But to spy on the Head is really the limit. I was going to give you six, Bunter. I'll make it a dozen."

"But—but I didn't!" howled Bunter, in alarm. "It was by sheer chance. I went to the library for a book. I never went there to dodge Wharton."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Loder. "Go it, Bunter!"

"I wasn't hiding there," explained Bunter. "Nothing of that sort. As for dodging out while the Head was looking out of the window, of course, I never thought of it. You see, there was no need, because I wasn't hiding there."

"You young sweep!" said Wingate. "You hid in the library, and listened to the Head talking to Quelch. I think I'd better report this to Dr. Locke."

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, Wingate, I—I'd rather take six, if you don't mind! Oh dear!"

"Bend over that chair!"

With a dismal groan Bunter bent over the chair. The cane rose and fell six times in succession, to an accompaniment of exactly the same number of anguished yelps from Bunter.

"That's for slacking," said Wingate. "Don't get up; I'm not finished yet."

Six more swipes elicited six more fearful howls from Bunter.

"Don't move," said Wingate. "There's more to come. That's six for listening to a private conversation. I'm going to give you six more for repeating it."

"Yaroooh!"

The last six fell very lightly; but not lightly enough for Bunter. He roared at every whack.

"Now you can cut," said Wingate. "And if I hear any more jaw from you about what you've been prying into, look out for squalls."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter rolled dismally out of the prefects' room, leaving the great men of the Sixth grinning. He groaned his way dismally up the stairs. On the whole there was no doubt that Bunter would have done better to turn up at games practice that afternoon.

On his dismal retreat he fell in with Coker & Co. of the Fifth, and they stopped to stare at him.

"Hallo! Is that something new in the contortionist line?" asked Coker.

"Ow!" groaned Bunter. "I've been licked! Ow!"

"Good!" said Coker. "The more you fags are licked, the better for you. You're not licked enough."



Billy Bunter ventured to peep round the armchair, and he had a glimpse of a majestic figure at a writing-table. "Oh crikey!" breathed the fat Removite. "It's the Head!"

"Hear, hear!" said Potter and Greene.

They did not always agree with the great Coker; but in this matter, at least, most of the Fifth saw eye to eye.

"It's a rotten shame, you know," said Bunter. "I—I wasn't able to play cricket, because I was so upset at old Fish threatening to bring an action against the Head—"

"What?" gasped Coker & Co. "For letting his son get kidnapped," said Bunter. "He wrote a frightfully abusive letter, calling the Head all sorts of names—names a fellow wouldn't care to repeat."

"Old Fish did?" gasped Potter. "Yes. Quelch said the letter was actionable," said Bunter. "I dare say it was. It was awfully abusive."

"If that pork merchant has been cheeking the Head, he ought to be jolly well sat on!" said Coker warmly.

"Cheek isn't the word for it," said Bunter. "He fairly blackguarded the Head right and left. Called him an old fool—"

"Called the Head an old fool?" ejaculated Greene.

"Yes. And told him he ought to be jolly well ashamed of himself. I heard every word when the Head read the letter out to Quelch."

"Then you ought to be jolly well kicked," said Coker.

"Oh, really, Coker— Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as Coker proceeded to

do what he had stated ought to be done.

Bunter fled for the safety of the Remove passage. Coker & Co. walked on, discussing with considerable interest the surprising news that Bunter had imparted.

That news was not long in spreading through the House.

Bunter was not the man to keep his mouth shut. And when he had any item of news in his possession, it was his way to share it with anyone who would listen. This particular item of news was so thrilling that plenty of fellows were willing to listen to it.

Fellows agreed, of course, that Bunter was a frowsy little sweep to listen to a private conversation, and that he was a still frowsier little sweep to repeat what he had overheard. Nevertheless, they generally listened to what he had to say before expressing these just opinions.

And Bunter never could be content with the cold, unromantic facts. He never told a story without embroidering it.

By evening the story had been told to a dozen fellows or more, and every time it was told, it grew more thrilling. And when Bunter came into Study No. 7 for prep that evening, Peter Todd gave him a glare.

"You'll get flogged at this rate, you fat idiot!" said Peter warningly. "If the Beak gets to hear these yarns you're making up—"

"Oh, really, Toddy, I hope you don't think I would exaggerate!" said Bunter.

"You fat chump! I heard Skinner say you told him that old Fish called the Head a benighted idiot in his letter."

"So he did," answered Bunter. "And that wasn't all. He said that if the Head didn't get Fishy back pretty soon he would come over and see him about it, and—and—and jolly well give him a hiding."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Peter.

"Old Locke was fearfully alarmed, and looked almost pale," said Bunter. "In fact, he looked quite pale—absolutely pallid, as a matter of fact. Old Fish said he would bring a horse-whip with him—"

"Great Scott! I'd leave it at that, if I were you!" gurgled Peter. "Don't make it a revolver!"

"Yah!"

Bunter had to leave it at that for the present, as prep filled up his valuable time. After prep, however, he had quite a large audience in the Rag, who all wanted to know what old Fish had said to the Head on the subject of young Fish. Dr. Locke probably would have been astounded had he been able to hear. But the headmaster moved in serene majesty in a sphere far removed from the haunts of the Lower School, and his august ears heard nothing.

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Fish in the Net!

FISHER T. FISH wandered restlessly round the room. Fisher T. Fish was tired of that room.

For ten or eleven days now Fisher T. Fish had been a prisoner in the hands of the kidnappers.

A shuttered window and a locked door barred Fishy from the outer world. He saw no one but Barney McCann, who had kidnapped him, and Mike, the redheaded man, who brought in his meals.

He was fed-up to the back teeth. So far as accommodation and food went, he was treated well. He was supplied with books and newspapers, and in the latter he had the entertainment of reading about the efforts the police were making to find him.

He had not the slightest expectations of being found and rescued. He smiled derisively at the idea of British bobbies keeping their end up against American crooks.

Now that the "bunch" had got him, Fishy's only hope of release lay in the payment of the ransom demanded by the kidnappers. And he wished that Hiram K. would get on with it.

Fishy had been in high feather when he first learned that his "popper" had cornered pork in the United States, and that dollars were rolling in like a flood-tide. And he had felt rather important and distinguished when it transpired that a bunch of crooks had marked him down as their prey, to kidnap him and hold him to ransom.

But the charms of that unique and distinguished position had faded away, now that he was in the hands of the "bunch." Fishy had rather admired Barney McCann, as a wonderful specimen of what "Noo Yark" could produce in the way of crooks. But he was fed-up with Barney now.

He roved recklessly about the room, grumbling.

Where he was he had no idea. McCann, impersonating a detective from New York, had gained admittance to the school, and carried off Fisher T. Fish in a huge Saratoga trunk, as baggage. From the interior of that trunk, Fishy had naturally seen nothing. It had been comfortably padded, and supplied with air-holes for breathing. Barney had been quite considerate in these small matters.

As a professional kidnapper, who had followed that peculiar business for many years with great success, Barney had nothing to learn. He would not have harmed a hair of his prisoner's head so long as the ransom was duly paid. But if it was not paid—

Fishy wondered often, and very uneasily, what would happen in that case.

Of course, his popper would ransom him. Thirty thousand dollars was a large sum, but not much to a millionaire rolling in dollars. Hiram K. Fish would pay up; but Fishy wished that he would get on with it. The delay worried him.

From a chink in the shutter, which he had widened with his penknife, Fishy had had a glimpse of outdoors. It was only a glimpse of rather extensive grounds, shut in by a high fence, along which grew a row of tall poplar-trees.

That was enough to tell Fishy that he was in the same house where Billy Bunter had been a prisoner, when he had been kidnapped in mistake for Fishy. He remembered Bunter's description of a high fence and tall

poplar-trees. Moreover, he had found "sign" of Bunter in the room, in the shape of a handkerchief the fat junior had left behind, exceedingly in need of a wash. In this very room Bunter had been a prisoner.

Fisher T. Fish prided himself on being the sharpest guy ever. He despised Bunter as a fat gink who did not know enough to go in when it rained.

Yet Bunter had escaped, and Fishy gave up the idea of escape as hopeless. Bunter had contrived to conceal himself under a rug in McCann's car, and the kidnapper had driven him away, unknowing. But Fisher T. Fish found it quite impossible to bring off any such stunt. With all his sharpness, he was more helpless in the hands of his captors than Billy Bunter had been. Really, one might have supposed that Bunter was the sharper of the two.

But Fishy did not look at it like that. He was still satisfied that he was the sharpest guy ever, while he remained a helpless prisoner, dimly waiting for the payment of the ransom to release him.

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets!" growled Fisher T. Fish, as he perambulated the room. "Oh, great gophers! This is surely getting my goat!"

It was quite a relief to Fishy to hear the key turned in the lock, though it only brought one of the bunch to the room.

Generally it was Mike Clancy who came. But this time it was Barney McCann himself.

McCann had a rather grim expression on his face. That expression made Fisher T. Fish feel a little apprehensive.

"Say, you heard from the popper yet?" asked Fish.

McCann gave a grunt.

"There's pen and paper," he said. "I guess you're going to write another letter to Hiram. You're going to tell him that that ransom had better be paid, if he ever wants to see you in one piece again. Mention that if he doesn't square up, your next letter will be a registered packet with one of your ears in it."

"Oh, I swow!" ejaculated Fisher T. Fish.

"I guess Hiram thinks I'm a kid to be played with," said McCann savagely, "and I allow he's going to learn better. I've had more trouble over you, you young geck, than I've ever had in all the fifteen years I've traded in kidnapping millionaire's sons."

"Search me! First I get that fat gink by mistake, owing to his having a letter of yours in his pocket, and making me believe he was you. Then he gets away, and if he'd been able to tell the cops where he'd been kept, I guess they'd have swooped down on this shebang, and I'd have had to get another headquarters. Then Slick Flick tries on the dodge of holding Greyfriars up with a gun, and gets cinched. I've got to see him through, and that means money!"

McCann relieved his feelings with an oath or two, and went on:

"This here country gets my goat! Over the pond, I'd have had Slick out of the stone jug before you could say 'no sugar in mine.' It would have cost me five hundred dollars. But in this dog-goned country you can't square the cops. I'll say I could walk around offering them rubes five thousand dollars, and they wouldn't open the door for Slick to make a get-away! Nope!"

This time a whole string of oaths expressed Mr. McCann's opinion of a

country where the police could not be "squared." There was no doubt that this had placed unexpected and unaccustomed difficulties in the way of the enterprising Barney.

Fisher T. Fish listened with growing uneasiness. Hitherto, he had been well treated by the kidnappers. Barney was not the man to ill-use a guy who was worth a small fortune to him. But if the small fortune did not accrue—

"I guess," went on McCann, "that this is my first and last stunt in this dog-goned country. They don't know enough in this country to see them through an infants' school in the States."

"Search me! A heap of dollars wouldn't open the door for Slick. He's got to stand trial. And that ain't all! I can pay lawyers—you can buy a lawyer in any country, even in this dog-goned island—but I can't square the jury, and if I tried to square the judge, I guess they'd cinch me and put me along with Slick! Search me!"

McCann snorted.

"I guess I wish I was back in the States!" he growled. "And I'll sure hop back jest as quick as I know how when I'm through with this. But I can't tote you over to the States. Even the British police would get suspicious if they saw me hustling you on to a steamer! I got to keep you here till Hiram ponies up. And he's refused!"

"Oh, great snakes!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"My agent in New York has seen him twice," said McCann. "He ain't coughed up a continental red cent. He allows that we'd better touch the schoolmaster who lost you for him. That cuts no ice! I guess that old gink couldn't find the money, even if he was willing. They don't make the dollars schoolmastering that they make cornering pork! Nope! Hiram has got to cough it up."

McCann pointed to the ink and paper on the table.

"Put it straight to your popper, you young guy," he said. "Put him wise that the next letter will have your ear in it. I guess that will make him sit up and take notice."

"Oh, I swow!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "Say, p'raps the popper can't raise the durocks."

"And him the boss of the Pork Combine, and raking in dollars faster'n he can count them!" jeered McCann. "Don't talk foolish! Write that letter, if you don't want to go home to the United States a small piece at a time."

Fisher T. Fish sat down to write.

Incredible as such a threat seemed, he had no doubt whatever that Barney McCann was in deadly earnest. McCann was not in the kidnapping business for his health, as he would have expressed it. If the ransom for the millionaire's son was not forthcoming, it had to be extorted—and there was only one way of extorting it. If Hiram K. Fish did not pay, and if the police did not succeed in rescuing the kidnapped schoolboy, the crook's ferocious threat would be carried out.

Fisher T. Fish wrote quite an eloquent letter—so eloquent that even McCann was satisfied when he read it over. Fishy urged his popper to pay, and to pay promptly, and he urged him at considerable length.

Barney McCann took the letter, and left him, and the door was locked again on Fisher T. Fish.

He resumed his dismal roving about the room, in a much more uneasy and perturbed frame of mind than before.

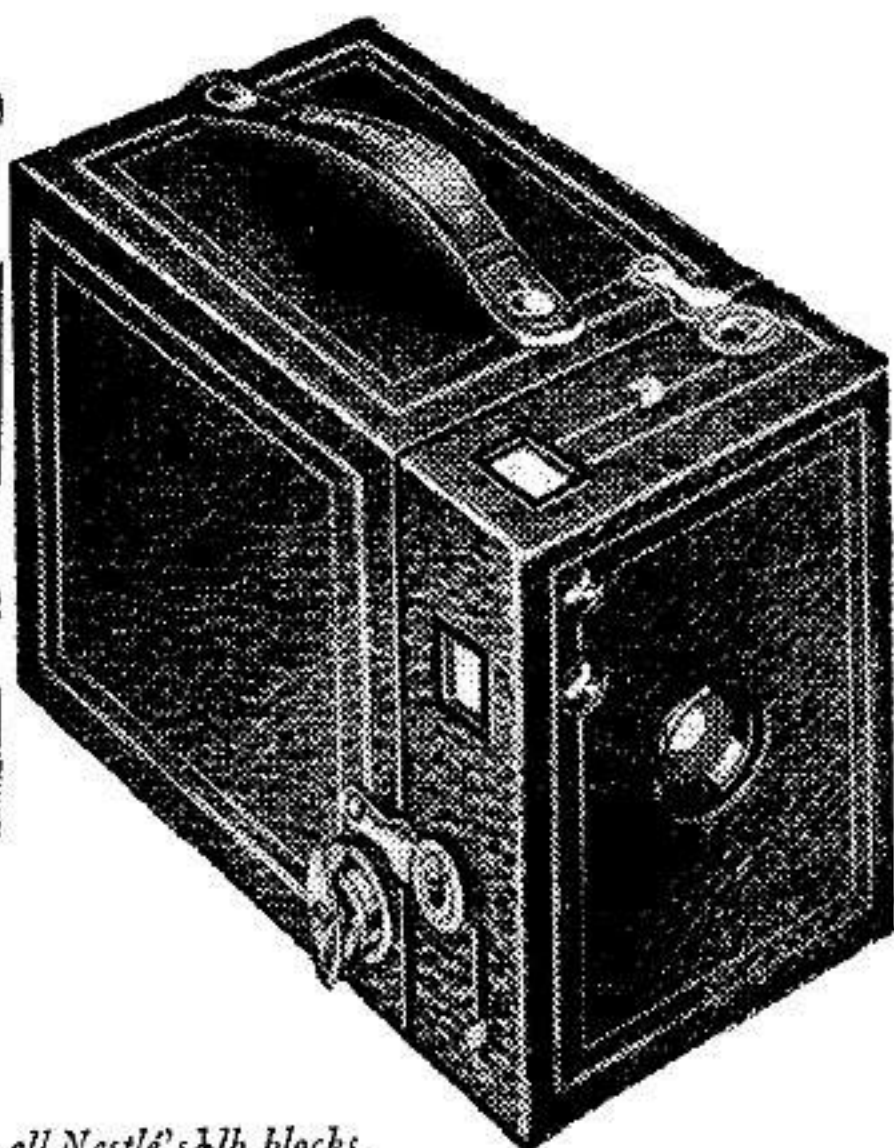
Why had not Mr. Fish paid?

(Continued on page 12.)

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THE MYSTERY OF THE POPLARS!

(Continued from page 10.)

He could not expect the English police to prove more than a match for a New York crook, any more than Fishy did. He must know that he had to pay, and why did he not pay up?

A dismal doubt smote Fisher T. Fish. If his popper did not pay up, when he knew that he had to pay up, it was probable that the reason was that he could not.

Hiram K. Fish had cornered pork. Dollars had rolled in. He had blossomed forth into a millionaire. But well Fishy knew the mushroom nature of American millionaires. In that great and glorious city, New York, a guy might be a millionaire one week, and "touching" a friend for a dinner the next. Corners did not always work; combines sometimes fell to pieces; a corner might break—and a sudden fortune might fade away as suddenly as it had arisen. Some other astute guy might have tons of pork up his sleeve, as it were. He might flood the market with pork and break the corner—and vast profits that showed on paper might suddenly become of no more value than the paper they were written on.

Fisher T. Fish wondered dully whether something had gone wrong with the corner—whether the dollars, instead of flowing in, were flowing out!

Of course, the popper would keep it dark if he was up against it; credit being ninety-nine per cent of the game. Nobody would know—till the crash came.

But it seemed to Fisher T. Fish that he felt a chill breath of coming disaster. He felt that his popper would have paid, if his popper could have paid. But so long as Hiram K. Fish kept up an outward appearance of prosperity, Barney McCann was not likely to believe that he could not pay. And Fisher T. Fish groaned dully at the prospect of one of his long ears going over to New York in a registered packet, as a reminder to his popper that payment was overdue.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

All Bunter Knew!

THE Beak looks blue!

Skinner of the Remove made that remark.

Many Greyfriars fellows had made the same observation, though perhaps in more respectable language.

Dr. Locke, it was certain, wore a worried look.

It was natural that a "Beak" should be worried when a schoolboy in his charge had fallen into the hands of unscrupulous kidnappers. But the Head was evidently more worried now than he had been at first.

The prolonged absence of Fisher T. Fish, the comings and goings of Inspector Grimes of Courtfield, the constant telephone messages; all these things, doubtless, had a cumulative effect. But apparently the letter from Mr. Fish in New York had put the lid on.

That letter was quite disagreeable. It disturbed the Head greatly. It worried and troubled him. He would have been still more worried and troubled, in all probability, had he known what startling versions of that letter were now current in the school.

It was impossible for Billy Bunter to hold his tongue, and equally impossible for him to refrain from exaggeration.

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Certainly, his various versions of that letter from the pork magnate varied. But they all agreed on one point, that old Fish was giving the Head a fearful time for losing young Fish. As Skinner put it, the old Obadiah was badgering him about the young Obadiah.

And the Greyfriars men, who liked and respected their venerable Beak, were annoyed and indignant. They would have liked to tell old Fish what they thought of him.

In the Sixth Form room, when the Head took the Sixth, the seniors observed that he was worried and absent-minded. Juniors, who generally saw the great man from a distance, often observed the frown of perplexed thought on his brow. Trotter had reported in the kitchen that the Head had given a deep sigh one day when Inspector Grimes was announced. Hobson of the Shell, who happened to be in the Head's study one day when the telephone-bell rang, told the Shell that the Beak had jumped just as if a cracker had gone off. The whole affair, undoubtedly, was having a wearing effect on Dr. Locke. And on top of all the worry, it appeared that old Fish was bullying him about it.

"It's rotten, you men," said Harry Wharton, to his friends. "The old scout will get ill if this goes on. Somebody ought to find Fish!"

"It's old Fish's fault," said Johnny Bull. "Honesty is the best policy. He shouldn't have cornered pork."

"The cornerfulness of the esteemed pork was the cause of this terrific trouble," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Old Fish should have kept his young Fish in his own giddy aquarium!" said Bob Cherry. "He knew that the kidnappers were out to catch his Fish."

"Still, there it is!" said the captain of the Remove. "The bobbies don't seem able to find Fishy, and the old porker in New York is ragging the Head. Fish ought to be found. If that fat idiot Bunter had the sense of a bunny rabbit, he ought to be able to help. He was in the hands of the kidnappers for days, and he ought to have spotted something that would help the bobbies to get on their track."

"But he didn't," said Nugent. "Inspector Grimes has asked him a lot of questions, and all he can say is that he was kept in a locked room."

"If he wasn't the biggest idiot ever—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Billy Bunter blinked in at the door of Study No. 1, where the Famous Five were discussing the Fish affair. He blinked round the room and gave a dissatisfied grunt.

"I say, you fellows, ain't you going to have tea?" he asked.

"We've had tea! But come in," said Harry.

"Eh? What is there to come in for, if you've had tea?" asked Bunter.

"The pleasure of your intellectual conversation, old fat bean," said Bob Cherry.

"I've got to see a man—" said Bunter. "If there was nothing to eat in the study, Bunter had no desire to waste his valuable time there."

"There's some toffee—" said Harry Wharton.

Bunter rolled in.

"Of course, I'm always glad to come in for a chat with you fellows," he said.

"Where's the toffee?"

"Look here, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove. "You were in the hands of Barney McCann at one time, owing to your stealing a letter belonging to Fish—"

"I had that letter on me quite by chance—"

"Anyhow, they saw it, and took you for Fishy on account of it, and bagged you," said Harry. "Look here, set that fat lump of cheese that you call a brain to work, and see if you can think of anything to help find him."

"Yes, but—"

"But what?"

"Where's the toffee?" asked Bunter. To Bunter, was a matter far transcending in importance the kidnapping of Fisher T. Fish.

"Here you are, fatty! Now, think while you guzzle, if your fat nut is capable of thinking at all."

Bunter filled his mouth with toffee. "I've told old Grimes all I know, more than once," he said. "I was rolled up in a rug when they bagged me, and, of course, I couldn't see anything. All I know is that they took me at least fifty or sixty miles."

"But the place they kept you in—" urged Nugent.

"It was a room," said Bunter.

"Well, we could have guessed that much. But where was the room?"

"In a house!"

"Go hon!" said Bob, with deep sarcasm. "You're sure it was in a house, and not in an aeroplane, or the branches of a tree?"

"I say, you fellows, I think—"

"Good! What do you think?"

"I think this is pretty good toffee. Got any more?"

"You fat villain—"

"Never mind the toffee," said Harry Wharton. "Look here, you must have seen something of the place. What was it like? You got out of the house when you sneaked into McCann's car and hid under the rug."

"It was a bungalow," said Bunter, chewing toffee. "There was a hall—what they call a lounge hall, with the rooms opening off it. Shutters on all the windows. About an acre of ground round it—and a high fence, with poplar trees inside. A detached garage, built of corrugated iron. I've told old Grimes all that. Any more toffee?"

"No, you cormorant."

"Well, I think I'd better be going, as—"

"Can't you think of anything else?" demanded Wharton. "You hid under the rug in McCann's car when you sneaked out, and he drove you away. Haven't you any idea of the direction?"

"Of course I haven't, when I was under the rug all the time. Think I was going to put my head out and let that beast spot me? I say, you fellows, I must really be going. Wibley's got a cake for tea—I mean, I've got to see a fellow—"

"You think the car covered fifty or sixty miles?"

"Yes, it was going jolly fast, and it was a long drive. Might have been a hundred miles."

"And you didn't notice anything?"

"Yes, rather."

"Well, what did you notice?"

"It was jolly uncomfortable on the floor of the car, under that beastly rug. I got jolly well bumped."

"You fat chump. I mean did you notice anything important?"

"That was important, wasn't it?" said Bunter. "I can tell you I was frightfully shaken."

"Anything else, fathead?"

"Yes—I nearly lost my specs."

"You frightful idiot!" roared Bob Cherry. "Who wants to know whether you were bumped or whether you nearly lost your silly specs?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Snore! Billy Bunter was asleep. "Ain't he a bute?" said Bob Cherry. "It's heartless to wake him up, but we've got to do it!"



"Can't you tell us anything about the house they kept you in?" demanded Wharton.

"Well, it was a jolly lonely place," said Bunter. "The first time, I got out at night, and ran for it. I never saw a building or anything. I hadn't passed a building or a man or anything when they got me again and took me back."

"You didn't see any signposts?"

"Never thought of looking for any. Besides, I can't see in the dark. I'm not a cat."

"Which is a pity," remarked Johnny Bull. "Cats have more sense than pigs."

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Of all the born idiots—" said Nugent.

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of No. 1 Study. There was no more toffee, and as a natural consequence, there was no more Bunter.

Bob looked at the captain of the Remove with a grin.

"Well, what do you deduce from Bunter's evidence, Mr. Sherlock Holmes?" he asked.

"I deduce that Bunter ought to be in a home for idiots!" growled Wharton. "Passed unanimously! But that doesn't get us any forrarder."

"My esteemed and ludicrous chums, I—"

"Go it, Inky," said Bob encouragingly. "What have you got in your old black nut?"

"The ridiculous Bunter has told us that the electric light was in the house where he was a fatheaded prisoner."

"I remember that," said Harry.

"But what about it? You don't call that a clue, do you, Inky?"

"He has told us that the house was very lonely."

"Go it!" said Bob.

"In lonely country houses, the common or garden electric light is unobtainable," said Hunree Singh. "In such esteemed places, my absurd chums, it is necessary to install a private plant. You cannot have the absurd electricity laid on unless you are near a town. So in the house of the worthy kidnappers, there must have been a private plant."

"That's so," agreed Wharton. "By Jove! That's a sort of clue! If the police could get a list of all the country places with private lighting plants within a radius of a hundred miles of Greyfriars—"

"I fancy that's rather a big order!" grinned Bob. "I don't know whether the police could do it, but I'm jolly certain we couldn't. I'm afraid the Boy Scouts of Greyfriars will not come on in this act."

"I wish we could do something," said Harry. "I hate to see the old Beak worried like this."

"Same here; but—all we can do at present is—"

"Well, what?"

"Cut out and get some cricket before lock-up," said Bob.

"Fathead!"

But on reflection, Bob's suggestion seemed the only practical one, and the Famous Five gave up the consideration of the Fish mystery, and went out to get some cricket.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Chance!

"COMING down?"

Frank Nugent asked the question in No. 1 Study after prep. Harry Wharton had taken a letter from his pocket.

"I'll read this first," said Harry. "It's from my Aunt Amy, and I've had it in my pocket all day. See you later."

"Right-ho!"

Frank Nugent joined the rest of the Co. in the passage, and they went down.

Aunt Amy, Colonel Wharton's sister, was a regular and somewhat lengthy correspondent. Her epistles dealt chiefly with considerations of health, and contained a great deal of kind advice that was a little superfluous in Wharton's case. Sometimes, it is to be feared the captain of the Remove skipped a little. But he was very fond of his kind and affectionate aunt, and he took all the interest he could in her news of local affairs and local people; though it was rather hard for a Lower Fourth fellow at Greyfriars to remember that it was the vicar's gardener who suffered from rheumatism, and Mrs. Hopkins at the post-office whose boy had gone to Canada, and that some very agreeable people had taken the Larches on the Wimford road that had been so long empty.

But duty was duty; so Wharton sat on the study table and read the long, affectionate, somewhat rambling letter from Miss Wharton.

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

It is well said that virtue has its reward. A word in the letter struck Wharton quite suddenly; the word "Poplars."

In all the discussions of the place where Bunter had been imprisoned, that word had emerged. If Bunter had noticed anything else, he had noticed the tall thick poplars that surrounded the lonely house, and screened it off from public view.

So the word naturally struck Wharton, and he read over again the passage in which it occurred.

"Do you remember that rather solitary house about half-way to Wimford? Perhaps you have never noticed it. It is called the Poplars. Last summer it was taken over by some Anglo-Indian people with whom your uncle is acquainted—a Major Chucker and his family. Major Chucker had been a District Officer or a Salt Collector or something—I forget exactly what—in India, and your uncle had known him there. They came over several times to play bridge, and it was very agreeable. We were quite sorry when they left. Did I mention that the Poplars belongs to a gentleman who suffers from rheumatism, and who has gone to live at San Remo, and is let furnished by the agent at Wimford?"

Wharton rubbed his nose.

Miss Wharton didn't always make her meaning quite clear; but he gathered that it was not the gentleman who had gone to San Remo who was let furnished.

"The Poplars has been taken again, very early in the spring, which is quite unusual. There is quite a discussion in the village about the people. They are Americans, and keep very much to themselves. The dear vicar called, and was actually refused admission, being told by a person with an Irish accent that Mr. Brown, the American gentleman, was an invalid, and did not desire callers. The vicar was much hurt. I thought it was most unfeeling; for I am sure that the invalid gentleman would have been greatly cheered by a conversation with the vicar—at least, he ought to have been. Nobody calls at the house now, and even tradesmen do not call, and of course, they resent this very much as they were accustomed to liberal orders from the Chuckers when they were there. I do not think that Mr. Brown can be an agreeable man."

Wharton ceased to read.

He sat on the study table, staring at the letter.

Was it possible?

Miss Wharton's letters always contained a great deal of local gossip of this kind, very interesting to the old lady herself, though rather less so to the captain of the Greyfriars Remove. By this time the junior found a startling interest in it.

A house called the Poplars, taken by Americans who kept very much to themselves, who were rude to callers, and upon whom the local tradespeople

were not allowed to call! The coincidence was striking.

Probably it was all a coincidence. But a house near Wharton Lodge would be about seventy miles from Greyfriars. And if the house was called "The Poplars" surely it meant that there were poplar-trees there!

Wharton, in his holidays at home, had never noticed the place, or at all events did not remember it. It was half-way to Wimford, it must be well over a mile from Wharton Lodge.

Was it possible?

It would be strange enough, if by sheer chance, in this way, he had dropped on a clue to the secret headquarters of the kidnapping "bunch." But stranger things had happened.

For some time Wharton sat thinking.

He made up his mind at last that it was at least worth looking into. There would be nothing lost by making sure.

He left the study and went downstairs, but not to the Rag. He was looking for his Form master, and he found that gentleman in Masters' Common-room. Mr. Quelch was in conversation with Mr. Prout, the Fifth Form master, so probably he was not sorry to be interrupted. At all events, he gave his head boy a benevolent smile.

"What is it, Wharton?" he asked.

"I've had a letter from my aunt, Miss Wharton, sir, and if you will allow me I should like to telephone home," said Harry.

"No bad news, I hope?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir! But—"

"You may use my telephone, Wharton."

"Thank you very much, sir."

Wharton proceeded to his Form master's study, rang up the exchange, and asked for a trunk call to Wharton Lodge. He waited rather eagerly till the call came through. The more he thought over the matter the more it seemed to him that a strange chance had placed a clue to the missing junior in his way.

The bell rang at last, and he jumped to the telephone. It was the voice of Wells, the butler at Wharton Lodge, that answered.

"Is that you, Wells?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, sir. Is that Master Harry?"

"Yes. I'm speaking from Greyfriars. There's something I want to know, and I think you can tell me, Wells. Do you know a house in the neighbourhood called the Poplars?"

"Quite well, sir."

"It's a furnished house, taken by Americans?"

"A Mr. Brown, sir."

"You've seen the place?"

"Many times, sir!" said Wells, with a note of surprise in his voice. Probably he was very much astonished by Master Harry ringing up from Greyfriars to ask these extraordinary questions.

"Is it surrounded by poplar-trees, Wells?"

"Yes, sir."

"How large are the grounds?"

"I think about an acre, sir."

"Is there a high fence?"

"Quite so."

"Is there a private plant—an electric lighting plant—at the Poplars?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Do the people there keep a car?"

"Yes, sir."

"What sort of a garage is there at the place?"

"I believe it is a corrugated iron building, sir."

"Detached from the house?"

"Precisely."

"Have you ever seen the man—the Mr. Brown?"

"No, sir. He keeps himself very reserved, sir."

"Any servants at the place?"

"From what I have heard, sir, only one—a manservant."

"A big fellow?"

"I have heard so, sir—a very powerful Irish-American."

"Thank you, Wells; that's all. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Master Harry!" said the astonished butler at Wharton Lodge.

Harry Wharton left Mr. Quelch's study, with his heart beating and a gleam in his eyes. Detail for detail, the description of the Poplars answered to Bunter's description of the place where he had been kept a prisoner—even to the big Irish-American who had guarded him.

"My hat!" murmured Wharton.

He went back to Study No. 1 in the Remove, sat down to the table, and wrote a letter home. The possibility had become a probability—a very strong probability, in Wharton's mind. And he wrote to Colonel Wharton:

Dear Uncle,—Could you arrange it with the Head for my friends and me to come home for a few days from school? I know this will surprise you, but I have a reason; and I'm sure I needn't tell you that it is not just to get a holiday. I believe we can do something that will benefit the Head very much; but, of course, until I am sure, I don't want to talk about it. I know this sounds extraordinary; but I hope you will trust me, and do as I ask.

Kindest love to Aunt Amy, and I have received her letter.

Your affectionate nephew,

HARRY WHARTON.

The captain of the Remove dropped that letter into the school box just in time before dorm. After which he could only hope for the best.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Good News for Six!

THE next day Wharton did not expect a reply from his uncle, but on the second day he looked eagerly in the rack in morning break. And there he found a letter addressed to him in the well-known hand of Colonel Wharton, and he reached for it eagerly. He opened it at once, standing among the other fellows who were there for their letters, and his face brightened as he read.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that a jolly old remittance?" asked Bob Cherry. "You've got quite a fiver look on your chivvy, old bean!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Better than that!" he answered.

"My hat! Not a tenner?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Better still! Come into the quad and I'll tell you."

"I say, you fellows—" gasped Billy Bunter, as the Famous Five walked out. If there was something better than a tenner in the letter from the colonel, Bunter wanted to know all about it.

But the juniors did not heed the Owl of the Remove. They hurried into the quad and stopped in a secluded spot under the old elms. There Harry read out the letter from his uncle:

"Dear Harry,—I need not say that I was astonished by your letter, and am quite at a loss to understand you. At the same time, I have always trusted you absolutely, both your good sense and your good faith; and I

shall, therefore, do as you ask. I am writing to your headmaster by the same post, and I have little doubt that he will send for you and tell you his decision.

"Your affectionate uncle,
"JAMES WHARTON."

Four members of the Co. looked blankly astonished. They looked at one another and they looked at their leader. "Is that better than a tenner?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Much!" answered Harry.

"Blessed if I see it! Can't make head or tail of it! Give me a tenner!" said Johnny.

"The muchfulness does not appear terrific to my absurd self," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The explainfulness is the proper caper, my absurd chum."

"I've asked my uncle to get leave from the Head for us to go to Wharton Lodge for a few days," said Harry.

"Oh, that's a geegee of quite another colour!" said Bob. "Mean to say the old scout is playing up?"

"Looks like it."

"But what—" asked Nugent.

"I'll explain," said Wharton. "I haven't said anything so far, in case nothing came of it—"

"A still tongue is a cracked pitcher that is better than a bird in the bush," remarked Hurree Singh, with a nod.

"Exactly," said Wharton, laughing. "Well, the fact is, you fellows, I believe I've got a clue to the missing Fish."

"Phew!"

"Lend me your ears!" said the captain of the Remove. And he read out the passage from Miss Wharton's letter, and then detailed his talk on the telephone with Wells.

The Co. listened with astonished faces. Scepticism, perhaps, was mingled with that astonishment at first, but by the time Wharton had finished the Co. were considerably impressed.

"Blessed if it doesn't look like a winner!" said Bob Cherry. "The jolly old Poplars sounds exactly like Bunter's description of the place."

"The exactfulness is—"

"Simply terrific!" grinned Bob, "and the big idea is for us to go and have a look round, what?"

"That's it," said Harry. "Of course, this isn't much for the police to go on; I don't know whether they'd act on it. But it's good enough for us to start on. If we can get a look at the place we may make sure of it, and if there's anything in it, we can let the police know. Until then, the less said the better; we should get frightfully laughed at if the fellows fancied we'd gone on a wild-goose chase."

"Yes, rather!" said Johnny Bull emphatically. "Not a word! If there's nothing in it, it would be the joke of the term if it got out."

"That's what I thought," said Harry. "We can keep our mouths shut and look into the thing, if the Head gives us leave to go—and it looks as if my uncle will fix it. After all, he's a governor of the school, and the Head thinks a lot of him. He's about the only member of the governing board that doesn't butt in and bother. I believe the Beak will play up."

"You won't tell the Beak—"

"Oh, my hat! No! He would be more likely to lick me than to give me leave if he thought I was setting up to help him out of a scrape. Least said soonest mended."

"A still tongue—" began Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, who was a regular whale on proverbial wisdom, though he

got his proverbs a little mixed as a rule.

"Exactly," said Bob. "A still tongue is a stitch in time that saves a bird in the bush from becoming a cracked pitcher or a soft word that butters no parsnips."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bob—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's the jolly old bell!"

The bell for third school interrupted the conference, and the chums of the Remove joined the rest of the Form going in. Billy Bunter bore down on them in the Form-room passage.

"I say, you fellows, what was it? If it was more than a tenner—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. If you've got a whacking remittance, Wharton, I think you might cash my postal-order for me—"

"Where's the postal-order?"

"It hasn't come yet! There's been some delay in the post. But if you hand me the ten shillings now—"

"Fathead! It wasn't a remittance!"

"Rot!" said Bunter warmly. "It jolly well was! I'm surprised at you prevaricating like this, Wharton."

"Why, you fat villain—"

"You looked jolly pleased when you opened the letter," said Bunter. "Well, if it was only a letter from home how could a fellow be pleased by a letter from home if there wasn't a remittance in it?"

"There must be a lot of affection running to waste in the Bunter family," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what was in the letter, anyhow?" asked Bunter. "I suppose you can tell an old pal, Wharton."

"I'm using my uncle's influence to get you a few days away from work, Bunter," answered Wharton gravely. "If it turns out all right you'll get off classes for two or three days."

"Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, that's topping!" Billy Bunter's fat face brightened wonderfully. "I say, your uncle's a good sort, Wharton, though he's rather a stuffy old fossil. I say—"

But the Famous Five went into the Form-room without waiting for any more. As they went to their places Mr. Quelch called to Wharton.

"Wharton, the Head desires to speak to you in his study after third school."

"Yes, sir!" said Harry.

Mr. Quelch's manner was a little prim. Mr. Quelch most emphatically did not approve of leave from school in the middle of the term. From his manner Wharton drew the inference that the Head had decided to grant that leave. Indeed, it was a little difficult for the headmaster to refuse a special request from a governor of the school.

Third school seemed rather longer than usual to the cheery Co. that morning. But it came to an end at last, and Harry Wharton repaired to his headmaster's study. He lost no time, and arrived there just as the Head arrived from the Sixth Form room. He followed the headmaster in.

"Ah, Wharton,"

said Dr. Locke, "I

have received a communication from your guardian—h'm! He has made a somewhat unusual request—h'm! He desires me to grant leave to you and some of your friends to visit Wharton Lodge for a few days—h'm!"

"Yes, sir!" said Harry hopefully.

"I have so much respect for Colonel Wharton's judgment that I am sure he has a good reason for making this request," said the Head. "I have therefore decided to grant it."

"Oh, good! I—I mean, thank you, sir!" stammered Wharton.

The Head smiled benignly. Worried and troubled as he was over the Fish affair and the unreasonable attitude taken up by Mr. Hiram K. Fish, this never affected his kind good-temper.

"Colonel Wharton says that you will give the names of the friends who will accompany you, Wharton—"

"Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh, Bull, and Bunter," said Harry.

Bunter was not included in the list exactly on the grounds of friendship. Bunter was wanted because he had been in the house of the kidnappers and might have some remembrance of the Poplars when he saw the house.

Dr. Locke pursed his lips.

"That will be leave for six Lower boys," he said. "Well, well, Colonel Wharton's judgment must be relied upon. I will speak to your Form master, Wharton, and you and the boys you name may have leave for three days."

"Thank you, sir."

The captain of the Remove hurried away as if he were walking on air. Four fellows were waiting for him at the corner of the passage.

"Is it a go?" asked Bob Cherry eagerly.

"It's a go!"

"Hurrah!"

"I hope to goodness there's something in it," said Harry. "Of course, I couldn't say anything to the Head. But if it turns out a winner he will be glad he gave us leave."

"We'll jolly well catch that Fish for him!" said Bob.

The Famous Five strolled cheerily out into the quad. Life at Greyfriars was very agreeable, but a three days' run was a very pleasant prospect. And if they had luck and really did get on the track of the missing junior it meant tremendous kudos for the Co.

"Not a word to Bunter till we're out of the school," said Harry. "He would spread it all over Greyfriars."

"Yes, rather!"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled up. "How has it turned out, Wharton? Have you got leave for me?"

"Yes, old bean! We're going to

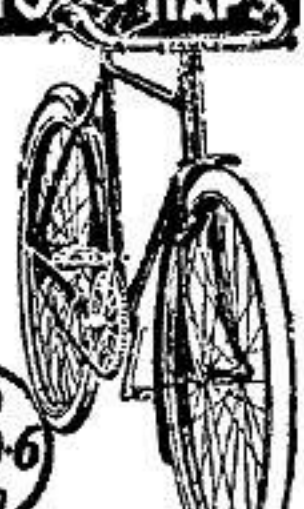
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Wharton Lodge for three days, and you're coming with us."

"Well, that's all very well," said Bunter, "but I'd rather go to Margate."

"Wha-a-at?"

"If we've got leave from school what's the good of going to Wharton Lodge?" argued Bunter. "I don't see much fun in a stuffy old colonel and a fussy old lady—"

"Why, you ungrateful fat scoundrel, I—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Well, we're going to Wharton Lodge, you image," said Harry. "If you want to go to Margate you can go and ask the Head for leave. I can see him granting it!"

"Well, if he's only given you leave to go home that's rather rotten," said Bunter. "But I'll tell you what. Let's pretend to start for Wharton Lodge and then head for Margate. I'll stand all the exes for a holiday there. I'm expecting a postal-order—"

Harry Wharton chuckled.

"If your postal-order comes before we start we'll make it Margate," he said; "otherwise it's Wharton Lodge."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" said Bunter.

From which reply it might have been guessed that Bunter had little expectation of the postal-order reaching Greyfriars in time.

And he was right; it didn't!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Homeward Bound!

"LOTS of luck, old bean!" said Peter Todd, when he learned of the good news for six.

"Rotten favouritism!" said Skinner.

Certainly there were a good many fellows in the Lower Fourth who envied the Famous Five their good luck. Most of them, however, took Toddy's view, which was much nicer than Skinner's.

"But what's it all about?" Skinner wanted to know, when the juniors were packing their bags to depart. "The Head hardly ever gives a man leave in the middle of the term. What's it for?"

"That's telling!" said Bob Cherry, with a mysterious shake of the head.

"A blessed secret?" sneered Skinner.

"A deep and deadly awful secret!" answered Bob. "Still, if you wouldn't repeat it, Skinner, old man—"

"I wouldn't of course," said Skinner eagerly.

"Mind, not a word to a single soul!"

"That's all right."

"It's rather important," said Bob dubiously. "But if you really mean that you'll keep it dark, Skinner—"

"Honour bright!" said Skinner, with an intention—which he did not state—of spreading the news all over the Lower School, whatever it was. Harold Skinner's honour needed a lot of polishing to make it bright.

"Well, then I don't mind telling you—" said Bob, and paused.

"Go it!" breathed Skinner.

"You won't tell anybody?"

"No, no!"

"Then I'll let you into it," said Bob.

"We're going on a special mission to the United States—"

"The United States!" gasped Skinner.

"To see the President. I suppose you know they have a man called a president there, instead of a king? Well, we've got a special mission to him, to protest against obsolete horse being exported under the name of canned beef—"

"You silly idiot!" yelled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you believe me?" asked Bob, in a pained voice.

"You silly chump! Look here! What the thump, has the Head given you leave for?" snapped Skinner, who seemed badly to want to know.

"Well, to tell you the actual facts—" said Bob.

"Well?" growled Skinner.

"We're going on an expedition in the interests of geography! We're bound for the Equator—"

"The Equator?"

"Yes, to see if it's really there."

"You—you—you blithering imbecile!" said Skinner, and he gave up making inquiries.

It was obvious that he was not going to learn the facts, whatever the facts were.

A taxi bore the Famous Five and Billy Bunter away to Courtfield Station. In the taxi Billy Bunter developed curiosity.

"I say, you fellows, it's rather queer the Head giving us leave," he remarked.

"How did you get your uncle to wangle it, Wharton?"

"Asked him," answered Harry.

"But you must have spun him some yarn?"

"Fathead!"

"Look here, you might as well tell a chap," urged Bunter; "I may be able to work it with my people another time, if it's a good one!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I understand why you got leave for me, too!" added Bunter. "That ass 'Toddy thought it was queer, and he said so. Cheek, you know! Toddy's a fool. Of course I knew."

"Did you?" exclaimed Wharton.

"How the dickens—"

"Well, of course I did," said Bunter.

"You'd hardly enjoy the holiday without me, I suppose."

"Oh, my only summer bonnet! Do you think that was the reason why I got leave for you, too?" gasped Wharton.

"Well, what other reason could there be?" asked Bunter. "But I say, you fellows, I'd much rather go to Margate. Look here, Wharton, I'll tell you what. Make it Margate, and I'll promise to come and spend the whole summer vacation with you at Wharton Lodge."

"Oh crikey! What an inducement to make it Margate!" gurgled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean it!" said Bunter. "Now, what about it, old fellow?"

"My dear man, if you really mean it—"

"I do!" said Bunter.

"Then nothing on earth would induce me to make it Margate!"

"Beast!"

"Now we're safe out of Greyfriars and you can't shout it all over the school, I'll tell you why we're taking you along," said Harry. "We're going to look for that place where the kidnappers had you."

Bunter's eyes opened wide behind his spectacles.

"What rot!" he ejaculated.

"You haven't sense enough to give the police a tip to find the place. But if you saw it again, do you think you would know it?"

"Of course I should. But I'm jolly well not going near it!" said Bunter warmly. "I'm not going to be kidnapped and murdered. I can jolly well tell you!"

"You wouldn't be both," said Bob. "If they kidnap you, you won't be murdered; and, on the other hand, if they murder you, it stands to reason

that they wouldn't take the trouble to kidnap you afterwards."

"Beast! Mean to say this isn't a holiday, after all, and you're going to look for Fishy?"

"Just that!"

"Is there a reward offered for finding him?" asked Bunter.

"Not that I know of."

"Then what do you want to find him for?"

"Guess!" said Johnny Bull.

But it was impossible for Bunter to guess why any fellow should take the trouble to help another fellow, unless there was a reward of some kind attached. Bunter had to give it up.

The cheery party arrived at the station, and boarded the train. Bunter blinked round the carriage.

"I've got your ticket, fatty," said Harry. "That's all right."

"I was looking for the lunch-basket," said Bunter.

"The what?"

"Lunch-basket."

"What lunch-basket?"

"I suppose you're going to have some grub put on for a journey like this?"

"Suppose again!" said Wharton cheerfully.

"Now, look here, you fellows," said Bunter, in a very determined way, "I'm willing to give up my time for your sakes, and put up with a stuffy old retired soldier and a fussy old lady. I'm a generous chap, and I'm always easy-going, as you know. But I want one thing to be quite clear—if I'm coming with you I've got to be treated decently in the way of grub. It's not much I eat, but I'm not going to starve. I may as well say plainly that if a lunch-basket isn't put on this train, I shall step out of the carriage and go back to Greyfriars!"

"You mean that?" asked Harry.

"Every word!"

"Well, there's the door!"

"Eh?"

"There's still time to hop out before the train starts."

"And I'll help you," said Johnny Bull, standing up and drawing back his right foot. "Ready?"

"Of course, I wouldn't desert my pals, when they're relying on my help to see them through," said Bunter. "I'm not that sort, I hope. Look here, there's a man with chocolates on a tray. Shall I call him?"

"Certainly, if you like!"

"I mean, will you buy the stuff if I call him?"

"Not at all."

"Look here! If this is the way you're going to treat a chap who's making sacrifices for you—"

"Bunter won't be much use," said Bob Cherry. "For goodness' sake, let's boot him out! Open the door!"

"I say, you fellows, it's all right! What I really meant to say is, I don't care for chocolates on a railway journey. I—I was thinking that Nugent looked rather hungry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The last door slammed, the whistle shrieked, and the express moved out of the station. Billy Bunter grunted, and settled down in his corner. It was too late to boot him out now. The Owl of the Remove blinked round discontentedly.

"Got any toffee, Bob?"

"No."

"You got any, Nugent?"

"No."

"You got any, Bull?"

"No!"

"What about you, Inky?"

"Nothing about me, my esteemed pigful Bunter."



Slowly but surely the saw worked through the wood circling round the lock of the shutters!

"Boasts!"

And as there was nothing to eat, Billy Bunter closed his eyes behind his big spectacles, and went to sleep; and his deep rumbling snore mingled more or less musically with the rumble of the train.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Bird's-Eye View!

COLONEL WHARTON greeted his nephew, and his friends, with cheerful cordiality, when they arrived at Wharton Lodge. Miss Wharton was very pleased to see Harry, and thought it very kind of the Head to give him an extra holiday in term time; but that did not surprise her, for she was sure that the Head must be very fond of Harry. The colonel, however, was a little perplexed; and Wharton expected questions which he would have found it difficult to answer. In his own mind, he felt almost certain that chance had placed in his hands a clue to the missing schoolboy; but he was very unwilling to say anything on the subject till he was sure. Had the colonel questioned him, he would have had no choice in the matter.

But the colonel, who was a man of few words at all times, was not given to asking questions. After the other fellows had gone to bed, he spoke briefly to his nephew.

"I've done as you asked me, Harry; and knowing you as I do, I am sure that you would not have asked so very unusual a thing, without a good reason. But I am quite in the dark."

"I suppose so, uncle," Wharton admitted. "If you like, I will explain the whole matter; but—"

"But you would rather not?" said the colonel, with a faint smile.

"Well, yes," said Harry. "Because I may be making a mistake. Most likely you would think me rather an ass—"

"I think not," said the colonel. "But I will ask you no questions—I trust you, and trust your good sense. You shall explain the matter in your own time. Good-night, my boy!"

And Wharton followed his comrades to bed.

There was no doubt that Colonel Wharton was very perplexed. How the party of juniors were going to render any service to their headmaster by taking a few days' leave from school, was altogether too puzzling for the old gentleman to make it out. Certainly, on the face of it, it looked like the flimsiest excuse for getting a holiday. And Harry realised that his uncle's faith in him was very strong, to stand such a test.

It was the intention of the Co. to commence operations early the next morning. But in that, they had not counted on Bunter. Bunter absolutely declined to turn out early. He breakfasted in bed at nine; and took a little nap afterwards till ten.

Probably the nap would have lasted till lunch-time; but at ten Bob Cherry invaded Bunter's room, and squeezed a wet sponge down his neck.

Then Bunter got up.

He was down by half-past ten. But he

blinked round with a dissatisfied expression when he came out of the house with the Famous Five.

"Where's the car?" he asked.

"In the garage," answered Harry.

"Ain't we going in the car?" demanded Bunter.

"You fat frump, can we drive up to the place in the car?" hooted Bob Cherry. "We've got to keep out of sight of the people at the Poplars?"

Bunter sniffed.

"Well, I don't believe in acting syrup-tiously," he said. "I'd rather go in the car, open and above-board."

"Fathead! Get a move on!"

"If you fellows think I'm going to walk a mile," bawled Bunter, "you fellows are jolly well mistaken, see!"

"You can't walk a mile?" demanded Bob.

"No, I jolly well can't!"

"Well, can you run a mile?"

"No, you fathead!"

"Try!" said Bob. "I'm going to kick you every time you lag, so you'd better try hard. Start!"

"Yarooogh!" roared Bunter, as Bob's boot clumped on a pair of very tight trousers. "Wow! Beast!"

And he ran.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co., and they followed.

"Let's dribble him all the way!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows— Whoop! Wow! I say—yooooohoop!"

Bunter dodged a boot, and rolled out

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of the gates of Wharton Lodge into the road. The chuckling Co. followed.

"Think you can walk now, Bunter?" asked Bob.

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

"If you can't, you're going to be dribbled—"

"Beast! I'll walk!" gasped Bunter.

"Of course, if you'd rather I helped you with a shove of my boot every now and then, I don't really mind the trouble," said Bob considerately.

"Beast!"

The juniors walked on cheerily in the summer morning—only Bunter grunting morosely; and every now and then giving a little groan to show how fatigued he was by this unnecessary exertion. But the Famous Five were really not likely, in the circumstances, to drive up to the Poplars in a car! That was not the way to scout successfully.

They walked along the country road towards Wimford. It was a glorious June morning, and they enjoyed the walk, and the unaccustomed freedom from the claims of school.

But they left the road, at a considerable distance from the Poplars. If Barney McCann really was there, it was possible, at least, that he might know some of the juniors by sight; and it was certain that he would know Billy Bunter if he saw him. So it was necessary to keep carefully out of observation from the house.

Wharton knew the countryside thoroughly, and the Wimford Road and its surroundings had always been familiar to him. The Co., too, knew the lie of the land pretty well, from their frequent visits to Wharton Lodge. It was easy enough to reach a spot from which the Poplars could be surveyed, without betraying themselves.

Although Wharton had never noticed the place specially, and had quite forgotten it when he read his aunt's letter at Greyfriars, he had since recalled to mind that he had seen it, while cycling in the Surrey lanes near his home. He had refreshed his memory by a talk with Wells, while waiting for Bunter that morning. So his objective was quite clear in his mind now.

The Poplars was on the Wimford Road, but it lay some distance back on a shady leafy lane. From the road it was not likely to be noticed unless specially looked for.

It was quite secluded, and there was no other building within half a mile; which not only answered to Bunter's description of the place where he had been imprisoned, but was obviously exactly what Barney McCann must have wanted for his peculiar purposes.

Leaving the road, Wharton led his comrades by a field-path, and then by a bridle-path through a patch of woodland, to the slope of a low hill, where rich green pastures were dotted with flocks of sheep. He stopped at a group of beeches on the hillside.

"Good!" said Bunter, plumping down at the foot of a tree. "For goodness' sake, let's have a rest. Did you fellows bring anything to eat?"

"We haven't come here to rest, fat-head," answered Wharton. "You're going to climb one of these trees."

"I'm not!" roared Bunter.

"We can see the Poplars from here."

"Blow the Poplars!" Bunter seemed to be getting cross. "Bless the Poplars! Hang the Poplars!"

Leaving the fat junior squatting in the grass, the Famous Five clambered up one of the tall trees, and their heads emerged from the foliage on a high branch.

"There you are!" said Wharton pointing.

Between the hillside and the Wimford Road lay the Poplars. The juniors scanned it from the high beech, getting a complete view of the whole place; inside as well as outside the tall fence by which it was surrounded.

The bungalow lay in the middle of about an acre of enclosed ground. On all sides the tall fence surrounded it, with a thick row of tall poplars overtopping it. There was a gravel drive from the front gate to the house, curving round to the detached garage at the side. Smoke rose from one of the chimneys. Every window was shuttered; and on all the windows that could be seen, the shutters were closed.

"My hat!" said Bob. "That looks exactly like Bunter's description. Even that fat idiot must be able to say whether it's the place or not, when he looks at it."

"I should think so!" said Harry. "I can't help believing it's the place. What are all the shutters closed for, on a summer's morning?"

"To keep somebody safe inside!" said Bob.

"I feel sure of it."

"The next thing is to haul Bunter up here," said Nugent. "We ought to have brought a steam derrick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

After a good look at the place, the juniors descended the tree. As they dropped into the grass beneath, a deep rumbling sound greeted them.

Snore!

Billy Bunter was asleep.

"Ain't he a brute!" said Bob Cherry, surveying the slumbering Owl. "He must be frightfully sleepy, after getting up at ten in the morning, and fearfully exhausted after walking a mile. I suppose it's heartless to wake him up—but we've got to do it."

Bob bent over the sleeping Owl, and suddenly roared in his ear.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bunter jumped out of slumber.

"Oh! Ow! What? Beast!"

"Wake up, old fat man!" grinned Bob.

"Shan't!"

"You take his other ear, Franky, and help me get him up," said Bob.

Bunter rose to his feet quite suddenly. He did not want helping up—not by his fat ears. He blinked round at five smiling faces with a wrathful blink.

"Now, look here, you beasts, I'm tired, and I'm going to have a rest," he snorted. "If you think I'm going to climb that tree, Wharton—"

"Get on with it," said Harry.

"Go and eat coke."

"Up you go!" said Bob. "You've got to look at the place, fathead, and tell us whether it's the right place or not."

"Rats!"

"Well, if we have to carry you up, we may drop you," said Bob. "We'll try if you like. But if we drop you it will very likely jolt the jolly old globe out of place, and pitch it into the sun, or something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—silly idiot!" gasped Bunter. Billy Bunter's weight was considerable; but really it was not sufficient to jolt the earth out of its orbit if he dropped.

"Up with you," said Johnny Bull.

"Buck up, Bunter," said Wharton, encouragingly. "If it's the right place, old fat man, we'll take you on to Wimford and feed you at the bunshop, and send you home in a taxi."

"Oh!" said Bunter, brightening. "Of course, I want to help you fellows. That's what I'm here for. It's the right place."

"How do you know without looking at it fathead?"

"Oh, I feel sure of it," said Bunter. "I'm absolutely certain it's the right place. Now let's get on to Wimford. I'm hungry."

"Get up the tree, you fat chump! We'll help you," said Harry.

"I suppose I can climb a tree without help!" growled Bunter. "I fancy I can climb better than any fellow here, and chance it."

"Well, go ahead and do it."

Bunter grunted, and set himself to the task of climbing the tree. He

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puffed and blew, and blew and puffed, and made slow progress. He turned a fat face crimson with exertion towards the juniors.

"I think you might give a fellow a bunk up!" he gasped. "I can't see what you're standing about like a lot of moulting owls for, doing nothing. Can't you lend a fellow a hand?"

The Famous Five lent him many hands, and the fat junior clambered into the tree at last. Combined efforts landed him on a high branch, and his bullet head emerged from the foliage, and his spectacles glimmered in the sunshine over the beech. He blinked in the direction pointed out by Wharton.

"Is that the place?" asked Harry.

"What place?"

"Can't you see it?"

"You know I'm shortsighted, you beast. I can't make it out from here."

"Oh, Christopher Columbus!"

"Lemme go down! I believe this branch is going to break."

"Shall we chuck him down?" asked Johnny Bull, in deep disgust. "Fancy the blinking owl not being able to see the place, now we've lugged him up to the top of the tree."

"Well, we really ought to have thought of that," said Wharton, ruefully.

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

"Of course, I can see it," said Bunter.

"Only I can't make it out clearly."

"You blinking owl—"

"My excellent and ridiculous chums—" said Hurree Singh.

"Oh, it's no good talking, Inky," said Bob. "We ought to have remembered that the fat ass can't see a yard from his silly nose."

"I did remember it, my worthy and idiotic Bob," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, gently. "And I have brought the esteemed field-glasses in my ridiculous pocket."

"Great pip! Inky, old man, you're a giddy jewel."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin, produced a pair of field-glasses from his pocket. He opened them, and handed them to Bunter.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Look, ass!"

"This branch is creaking—I believe it's going to break."

"Then the sooner you get your job done the better; you're not going to shift till you've done it."

"Beast!"

Bunter jammed himself more safely in a fork of the branch, insisted upon all the other fellows holding him, and then gingerly raised the field-glasses to his eyes, and focused them on the Poplars. The place rushed into near view at once.

"That's the place," said Bunter. "I'd swear to it. There's the garage where I hid when I heard the beast coming—that back window with its shutters belongs to the room where I was shut up—the kitchen window's on the other side of the back door—there's the laurels behind the house where I dodged out of sight of the red-headed beast in case he saw me from the window—and—Great Scott! There's the red-headed beast himself."

The back door of the bungalow opened, and a tall, powerfully built man came out. His red hair could be clearly seen even at the distance. He went round the back of the house to the garage, and for a whole minute was in full sight of the juniors in the tree-top.

"That's the beast they called Mike!" said Bunter.

"Sure!" asked Wharton, eagerly.

"Of course I'm sure, fathead! Think I wouldn't know that beast again, after seeing him every day three or four times when he brought my grub?"

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES!

Here's another rousing poem from the pen of our long-haired rhymester. This week he picks on Dick Russell.



GREYFRIARS has a host of chaps,
An infinite variety;
But never one has come,
perhaps,
So filled with stern propriety
As Richard Russell; he who'd flee
A mile from signs of fighting;
In fisticuffs he could not see
The fun that chaps delight in.

His ways, indeed, were very mild;
His manner most pacific;
He thought his schoolmates rather wild,
Their heavy blows prolific.
But others, seeing in the boy
An embryo Carnera,
Made it their task, their pride and joy,
To coach him, and to rear a—

Champ, who'd make Greyfriars proud,
By bringing down upon her,
Of compliments, a mighty crowd,
And shoals of well-won honours.
Their prophecies were not far wrong;
They made a "star" of Russell;
His fistic manner's really strong,
With well-trained brain and muscle.

Dick Russell is a sport all round,
With boundless, strong agility;
Dramatics, too, a use have found,
For his pronounced ability.
Japes and jests don't int'rest him;
His mind's on something bigger;
He finds the most delight and vim
In "spinning" on his "jigger."

Dick Russell, in the boxing ring,
Has never met H. Wharton,
For both think it is not "the thing"
For chum-ship to be fought on.
Our Harry is Dick's staunchest friend
Through fair or foulest weather;
And wheresoe'er their pathways wend,
They always go together.

At work and sport Dick's good all round,
A friend of boys and masters;
In fistic combats, he'll be found
To ward off all disasters.
So let "Dick Russell" be the toast,
He's brought us fame and glory;
His boxing prowess we shall boast
Throughout Greyfriars story!

They gave me canned beef, the rotters."

"That settles it!" said Nugent.

"The settlefulness is terrific."

"That's all right, then," said Johnny Bull. "You can fall off that branch as soon as you like, now, Bunter."

"Beast!"

The Famous Five helped the unwieldy Owl down the tree. It was a laborious task, but they landed him safe on the solid earth again at last. All the five were elated and excited now. The matter had been placed beyond doubt; they knew now that the Poplars was the hiding place of the kidnappers and their prisoner.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Dry up, old fat man."

"I say, if you think I'm going to that show, you're jolly well mistaken," said Bunter. "I'm not going near the place."

"My dear ass—"

"I mean it," said Bunter. "I'm not going to be shot and stabbed and murdered and kidnapped, I can jolly well tell you. I refuse to go anywhere near the place. That's got to be clearly understood."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Right for once," he said. "You've done all you can do, fathead. You weren't brought here as a fighting man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, I'm hungry. Let's get on to Wimford. Walking all these miles has made me frightfully hungry."

"Oh, come on!" said Wharton.

And the juniors—carefully keeping out of sight from the Poplars—walked back to the road, and went on to Wimford, where Bunter, at last, was made happy at the bunshop.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

After Dark!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. returned to Wharton Lodge in time for lunch. They were in an elated, but at the same time rather thoughtful mood. All the Co. agreed that the matter was beyond doubt now; that they could put their finger on the kidnappers' den, where Fisher T. Fish was a prisoner. But the plan of action that was to follow required thinking out.

Colonel Wharton was not at home to lunch, and the schoolboys lunched with Miss Wharton—Bunter, in fact, lunched several times over. He had had rather an extensive feed at the bunshop; but fortunately it had not spoiled his appetite.

After lunch he had a very serious announcement to make to the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows! You'll have to get on without me this afternoon!" he said.

"Impossible!" answered Bob Cherry gravely.

"Well, you'll have to," said Bunter. "I'm tired with all that exertion this morning, and I've had a fairly good lunch. I'm going to have a jolly long nap. I shan't come down till tea."

"But be reasonable, old fat man!" urged Bob. "How can you possibly expect us to get on without you all that time?"

"Well, I mean it," said Bunter. "You can jolly well do the best you can. You never consider me. Well, I'm not going to consider you, see?"

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"Don't be hard on us, old fellow!"

"Relent!" said Nugent.

"Unsay those cruel words!" urged Bob.

"The mournfulness of our esteemed selves will be terrific and preposterous, my worthy Bunter."

"Mind, I'm not to be woke up!" said Bunter. "If you fellows miss me, well, perhaps you'll learn to value my company at its proper value. Perhaps it will be a lesson to you. That's all I've got to say."

"About enough, too!" remarked Johnny Bull.

And Bunter rolled away to his room for a nap, heartlessly regardless of the grief the loss of his fascinating company could not fail to cause. The Famous Five, however, did not look unduly grieved. In fact, they were grinning as they strolled out on the terrace.

"Now that fat idiot's hibernating, we can jaw," said Bob Cherry. "What are we going to do, O king?"

"Trot out the giddy plan of campaign," said Johnny Bull.

Wharton wrinkled his brow thoughtfully.

"Well, it's practically certain now that we've got on to the place where Fishy is kept!" he said. "But—"

"But?" said Nugent.

"If we were absolutely certain, I suppose we should be bound to call in the police. But we can't go as far as that. Moreover—"

"Good word!" said Bob. "Go it!"

"Moreover," said Wharton, laughing, "although that is practically certainly the place where Bunter was kept when they had him, we've no proof that Fishy is kept in the same place, or that he's still there if he was taken there."

"It is an immoral certainty!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bob. "I suppose you mean a moral certainty. I see your point, Harry. If the police went so far as to get a search warrant on our information—and I'm not sure they would—we should look a precious set of asses if Fishy wasn't there."

"That's it," said Harry. "I believe we've got on to the place. Now we've got to make sure Fishy is in it. That means a scout round the place at close quarters—which means after dark."

"Quite!" agreed Bob.

"And"—Wharton paused a moment, and then went on—"if we find that Fishy really is there I don't see handing the job over to somebody else to pull off. We can take some golf-clubs with us, and there are five of us—and we're fairly useful in a scrap. If Fishy is there, why shouldn't we hook him out?"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'd like to get a lick at that black-guard McCann with a brasse!" remarked Johnny Bull thoughtfully.

"Jolly good idea!" said Bob heartily.

"If we fail, we'll give the bobbies a turn. But we shan't fail. Only we've got to make jolly sure, before we clump anybody on the napper with a golf-club."

"We shan't want Bunter!" went on Wharton. "The fat duffer would only be in the way. We'll pack him off to the pictures at Wimford, so that he can't cackle while we're gone. We don't want anybody to be anxious about us. We'll start for Wimford with him, and leave him on the road—and get busy. How's that?"

"Good!"

And, the matter being settled, the juniors proceeded to make a few

preparations for the expedition, and filled in the rest of the afternoon with tennis.

Bunter had not come down when they came in to tea; and they learned from Wells that the fat Owl was still tired, and wanted tea in his room. Which did not dash their spirits at all: they were bearing the loss of Bunter's company with great fortitude.

A couple of hours later, Harry Wharton looked in on the fat junior. Bunter had had a good tea—in fact, several teas rolled into one—and was resting on a settee after his gastronomic exertions. His mouth was wide open, and he was snoring.

Wharton shook him into wakefulness.

Bunter gave him a glare.

"Wharrer you wakin' me up for?" he demanded surlily. "Can't a fellow have a snooze in peace? If you think I've come here to fag about all day long, Wharton, you're jolly well mistaken. I haven't."

"Like to come——"

"No."

"To the pictures?"

"Oh!"

"We're going to have a taxi."

"Oh, I'll come!" said Bunter. "I rather fancied you'd find that you couldn't get on without me. I don't mind; I'll come. Mind, we have a taxi back, too."

"Yes, fatty."

"And, look here, a fellow doesn't want to be hungry at the pictures. Lend me ten bob!" said Bunter. "I know your uncle's tipped you since you came home. It's no good saying you haven't — Oh, good!" Bunter's fat fingers closed over a ten-shilling note. "I say, old fellow, I'll come with pleasure. It's rather a fag, but I always was a self-sacrificing chap, as you know. I'm ready."

Ten minutes later, six juniors packed into a taxi from Wimford, and started. Bunter blinked at a little bundle of golf-clubs that Bob Cherry put in.

"What on earth are they for?" he asked.

"Golf!" explained Bob.

"You're not going to play golf at the pictures, I suppose?"

"Why not?" said Bob blandly; an answer that left William George Bunter considerably perplexed.

The taxi buzzed away on the Wimford road. Wharton spoke to the driver when it had covered a third of the distance, and the car stopped.

"What the thump are we stopping for?" demanded Bunter.

"Golf!" said Bob cheerily. "Would you rather go on to the pictures or come and play with one of these clubs, Bunter?"

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "I'm going to the pictures. You fellows can jolly well go and play golf if you like."

"Keep on, then, old fat bean! We'll try to bear the parting."

"Go to the pictures, old chap, and take a taxi home!" said Wharton. "Ten bob will see you through. Ta-ta!"

"I say, you fellows——"

But the fellows were already walking away, with the golf-clubs under their arms; and Bunter grunted, and went on in the taxi.

Harry Wharton & Co. left the road, and strolled into the woodland. There they sat in the grass, to pass the time till darkness fell. Not until the dusk was deepening into darkness did they make a move in the direction of the Poplars.

They followed the narrow little lane that led to the back gate of the house. It was dark and deserted. They reached

the gate, and Bob clambered on it and looked over. Not a glimmer of light came from the house.

In a few minutes the five of them were over the gate, and treading cautiously up the path and towards the bungalow. Closer at hand, they made out glimmers of light from chinks in the shutters of the back room, which according to Bunter was the room where he had been kept a prisoner. In that room—at least, so they hoped and believed—Fisher T. Fish was a prisoner in his turn.

"Hush!" whispered Wharton suddenly.

The back door of the bungalow opened.

Before it was fairly open the juniors had thrown themselves on the ground, where, in the thick grass, they were quite invisible in the darkness.

They heard a heavy tread.

In the gloom they had a glimpse of a powerful figure, moving round the back of the house towards the garage. The light suddenly came on in that building.

The Famous Five lay quite still. Minute followed minute, and at last a sound of voices from the garage came to their ears. They could not distinguish the words, but they made out a voice with a sharp American accent, and another voice with an Irish accent in reply. It could scarcely be doubted that the speakers were McCann and Mike.

The throbbing of an engine followed.

"They're going—or one of them is!" whispered Wharton. "Lie low till all's quiet!"

"What-ho!"

The juniors made no sound or movement, but they listened intently. They heard the grinding of the car on the gravel drive, and the sound of the shutting of the distant front gate. Then heavy steps came round the house again, and the red-headed man went in at the kitchen door and closed it behind him, and they heard the sound of a shooting bolt.

Harry Wharton rose to his feet.

"Now it's time for our innings!" he remarked.

And the juniors, on tiptoe, approached the house of the kidnappers.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Rescue!

FISHER T. FISH picked up a book, threw it down again, and grunted, and moved restlessly about the room.

Fishy was looking dismal.

The hour was getting late, and it was past bed-time at Greyfriars. But Fishy was not feeling inclined to turn in.

Every day that passed and found him still in the hands of the kidnappers worried Fishy more and more.

Several times since he had written that eloquent appeal to his popper Barney McCann had come in to see him, and every time the crook had seemed more savagely angry and morose.

Barney's enterprise was not panning out, as he would have expressed it, in the accustomed way. Already he regretted that he had shifted the scene of his activities to the European side of the Atlantic. Barney sincerely wished himself back in his own delightful country. But he had incurred heavy expenses, and he could not afford to let go without getting the ransom for his prisoner. He was as anxious as Fishy for Hiram K. Fish to "pony up," and end the matter satisfactorily.

Every night he ran up to London in the car to see a confederate who received cables in code from New York. Late every night he came back disappointed. His manner to Fishy was growing threatening more and more so every day. He was allowing time for Mr. Fish to receive that letter from his son. But he swore savagely that if a favourable cable did not follow, one of Fishy's ears should cross the Atlantic as a reminder to his popper. And the shuddering Fishy had no doubt that he meant it.

Fishy was feeling bad. He was convinced that his popper would have paid up if his popper could have paid up. And if he couldn't that meant that the "corner in pork" had failed, after all, that Mr. Fish, instead of raking in millions of dollars, was fighting tooth and nail to keep the corner going, with every available dollar involved in the struggle.

He might pull through and bring off the corner. Or the crash might come, landing Mr. Fish in bankruptcy.

Bankruptcy, perhaps, would not hurt Mr. Fish very much. An American financier was accustomed to that sort of episode. No doubt he would rise refreshed from his bankruptcy, and start raking in dollars again. But in the meantime—

In the meantime Fishy felt over his ear with trembling fingers.

"Oh, I—Wow!" mumbled Fishy. "Oh, Jerusalem crickets! I sure wish the popper never had cornered pork! Oh, great snakes!"

It was very silent in the secluded house. In the hall outside his locked door Fishy could hear the creaking of a rocking-chair, where Mike sat smoking his pipe and reading a newspaper. No other sound broke the silence of the summer night.

Fisher T. Fish wandered restlessly about the room. His thoughts turned on escape. That fat gink, Bunter, had got out somehow. But it was hopeless to Fishy. He looked at the locked door and groaned. He looked at the shuttered window and groaned again.

And then Fishy gave a sudden jump. Tap!

It was the lightest of taps on the shutter without.

Fisher T. Fish came to a dead stop and stared at the window, his heart thumping.

Tap!

It was repeated. Who the great-horned toad was tapping at his window-shutter at that hour of the night? Fishy's heart throbbed. Obviously it could not be one of the kidnapers. Then who—

Tap!

Fisher T. Fish approached the window. His heart beat almost to



Two whizzing golf-clubs crashed on the back of Mike's head as he rushed down the path, and he pitched forward on his face. The chums of Greyfriars were not disposed to stand on ceremony with an armed crook!

suffocation. What could it mean except that someone was trying to get into communication with him—to help him? He opened the casement, and the thick, strong wooden shutter, locked with a strong lock, was between him and the unknown person who tapped. Fisher T. Fish put his lips to the chink that he had widened with his penknife, and whispered:

"Say!"

He heard a muttered exclamation outside, and gathered that there was more than one person there. Then a whisper came back:

"Is that you, Fishy?"

"Jerusalem crickets!" gasped Fisher T. Fish, as he recognised the voice of Harry Wharton. "Holy smoke! Is that you, Wharton?"

"Yes."

"Carry me home to die! How'd you get here?" gasped the amazed Fishy. "You mean to say you've come after me?"

"Yes, ass!" Wharton had found the chink in the shutter, and he whispered through it. "You're alone in there, I suppose—or you wouldn't be talking?"

"Yep! Door's locked, and a guy sitting in the hall outside."

"How many of them in the house?"

"Only one—Mike! McCann's gone up to town as usual to root after a cable from New York. Mike's in the hall."

"Good! He can't hear you?"

"Not so long as we whisper. Say, how many of you there?"

"Five!" came Bob Cherry's voice.

"The whole happy family, Fishy."

"I guess I never was so pleased to hear any guy toot!" breathed Fisher T. Fish. "Say, you're some lads!"

"We are—we is! Put your money on the old firm!" said Bob.

"Say, you want to get me out of this!" whispered Fisher T. Fish.

"They're trying to touch the popper for a ransom, and the popper ain't playing

up, and they're going to cut off my year—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"It's the truth! They're going to cut off one of my years and send it registered to New York to wake up the popper."

"Oh, great Scott!"

"I guess I feel my years every morning to make sure they're still on my cabeza!" muttered Fishy dismally. "They may have it off to-night when McCann comes back, for all I know! Get me out of this!"

"That's what we're here for," said Harry. "Keep a stiff upper lip! We're getting in after you."

"Say, you want to watch that guy Mike. He's a tough, and he packs a gun."

"We'll try not to give him a chance to use it. We've brought some golf clubs for Mike."

"Say, you don't want to get shot up," whispered Fisher T. Fish anxiously. "You don't want to slip up on this job. I got to get out of this."

The juniors chuckled softly. Fishy's anxiety that they should not get "shot up" was evidently chiefly on his own account. But the chums of the Remove did not mind; they were accustomed to Fisher Tarleton Fish and his little ways.

"Leave it to us, old bean," said Bob. "We've brought some tools with us to open the aquarium."

"The what?"

"Where they keep the Fish, you know."

"You pesky bonehead!"

There was another chuckle. Then the Famous Five got to work. They had tools from Harry Wharton's toolbox in their pockets. Bob Cherry got going with a brace-and-bit on the shutter, near the lock. The lock itself was far beyond the powers of the juniors, whose education in the matter of housebreaking had been neglected. But they were handy with tools, and they could work their way through wood.

The bit ground its way through the

solid wood, with a dull, grinding sound. Fisher T. Fish cast anxious glances towards the locked door. If Mike heard the sound of the grinding bit—

Harry Wharton & Co. were prepared for a scrap with Mike, if it came to that. But Fisher T. Fish listened in fear and trembling.

He moved about the room, making a noise to drown the murmuring grind of the bit on the wood. But there was a good distance, and a thick, closed door, between the shuttered window and Mike, and the sound was not really likely to reach him.

The bit came through the shutter at last. A round orifice let a stream of light out into the dark garden.

Into the orifice a slim saw was slipped. Now that there was an edge to work on, the saw worked steadily. It cut slowly but surely through the wood, circling round the lock.

It was not easy work; but the juniors took turns with the saw. Slowly, slowly but surely, it ate its way. At last the lock hung by a mere fragment of wood, and Wharton snapped it away.

The next moment the shutters opened wide.

"All serene!" grinned Bob Cherry. Buzzzzzzzzzz!

Through the silent house rang the raucous peal of an electric bell. There was a startled exclamation from the man in the hall, and the crash of a rocking-chair as Mike jumped out of it.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "There's an electric alarm—"

"Quick, Fishy!" panted Wharton.

The juniors had not foreseen it. But the kidnappers evidently left nothing to chance. The shutter had been securely locked; but it was connected with an electric alarm, which sounded when the shutter was opened. The silent house was filled with the raucous buzzing.

"Quick!" shouted Bob.

Mike could be heard leaping across the hall towards the locked door of the prisoner's room.

Fisher T. Fish made a desperate bound from the window.

He landed in the midst of the Famous Five.

"Beat it!" he gasped.

"Cover!" breathed Wharton, and he grabbed Fishy's arm, and dragged him behind the bank of laurels at the back of the house. His comrades ran with him, and they dropped out of sight behind the shrubbery.

"Say, we want to beat it!" gasped Fishy. "I'll say he's got a gun—"

"Fathead! Lie low!"

In the lighted, open window the figure of Mike appeared, and the summer stars glinted on the barrel of a revolver in his hand. Fisher T. Fish crouched low. From the window, in the starlight, the whole party would have been under fire had they run for the gate. Wharton had thought of that in time. Whether the crook was desperate enough to shoot they could not tell, but they did not like the look of the revolver and the enraged face above it.

"Thunder!" they heard Mike Clancy roar. "He's gone! He—Thunder! Come back, ye young devil ye, or I—I'll—" He leaped from the window, and rushed down the garden.

Whiz! Whiz!

Two whizzing golf clubs crashed on the back of Mike's head, as he rushed down the path past the laurels. He pitched forward on his face, with a gasp, and before he could rise three

more golf clubs were crashing on him. The chums of Greyfriars were not disposed to stand on ceremony with a crook who had a revolver in his hand.

Mike Clancy half rose, and collapsed again, stunned. Harry Wharton tore the revolver from his hand.

"Hold him!" he panted.

"I've got a cord!" said Bob.

"Good! Fix the brute up!"

The red-headed man had been stunned; but he was already stirring. In another minute he would have been struggling. But a minute was more than enough for the juniors.

When Mike's eyes opened he was lying bound hand and foot. He glared up dizzily at the Greyfriars fellows.

Fisher T. Fish grinned down at him.

"Say, you've sure come out at the little end of the horn, Mike!" he said.

"I guess you can tell Barney that the game's up when he moseys in. Say, you'll find a British prison a pleasant change after the gaols you're used to across the pond. Beat it, you fellows! Barney might come back!"

And, leaving Mike where he lay—to be called for and collected later by official hands—Harry Wharton & Co.

WELL DONE, DONCASTER!

This clever Greyfriars limerick, which has been submitted by R. B. Smith, 62, Palmer Street, Hyde Park, Doncaster, has won one of this week's

USEFUL POCKET WALLETS.

When Coker turns out to play cricket,
He takes up his stand at the wicket.
His bat sweeps the air—
The ball isn't there!
He falls on the stumps! Can
you lick it?

Have a shot, score a bullseye,
and a wallet will come your way,
chum!

made a rapid departure. The hour was very late when they arrived at Wharton Lodge.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

All Serene!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter was still up when Wells admitted the juniors. He blinked at them accusingly.

"So you've got in!" he said.

"We've got in!" agreed Harry Wharton cheerfully.

"You were pulling my leg!" said Bunter. "I've been to the pictures, and got back in time for supper—"

"Good!" said Bob. "I was right—fully anxious about that! I don't think I could have borne it if you'd missed supper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! You weren't in!" said Bunter severely. "Now, why weren't you in?"

"That's an easy one," said Bob. "Because we were out."

"Well, I told your uncle you'd gone to play golf," said Bunter. "But I don't believe he believes you've been playing golf after dark."

"Oh, my hat! Probably not!"

"You've been up to something! No good telling me you haven't—I know you have! Now, what have you been up to?"

"Snuff!" said Bob.

"Look here! Why—what—who—" stuttered Bunter, catching sight of Fisher T. Fish for the first time.

"Why, that—that's Fish!"

"Fish it is!" chuckled Bob. "All alive—oh!"

"The Fishfulness is terrific!"

"Say, you fat gink, I guess I'm glad to see even your fat mug again," said Fisher T. Fish. "It's sure better than Barney's, though it's some uglier."

"Oh really, Fishy—"

"Where's my uncle, Wells?" asked Harry.

"In the library, sir. Miss Wharton is also up."

"Come on, you men!"

And the juniors marched into the library, where Colonel Wharton greeted them with a somewhat severe countenance, and Miss Wharton with a bright smile of relief. Both of them glanced in surprise at Fisher T. Fish.

"Harry, what—"

"I hope you'll think we did right, uncle!" said Harry. "This chap is Fishy, who was kidnapped from Greyfriars—"

"I have heard about it, of course," said the astonished colonel. "But how—do you mean to say you boys have found him?"

"I guess that's the size of it, sir!" said Fisher T. Fish, "and I'll say there never was a guy so powerful glad to be found."

"So that is why you wanted leave from school, Harry?"

"That is it, uncle," answered Wharton, "and now we know that we were on the right track—and here's Fishy to prove it—I want to tell you the whole story. It was Aunt Amy who put us on the track."

"My dear boy!" exclaimed Miss Wharton.

"It was, really, auntie," said Harry, with a smile. "But it seemed such a chance, that we didn't want to say anything till we made sure."

"Sit down, and spin your yarn," said the colonel. And he resumed his seat and his cigar.

The story was told. The colonel listened in silence, Miss Wharton with several startled ejaculations.

"Good gad!" said Colonel Wharton, when he had heard all. "You've done well, though you should not have taken the risk you did. However, as it's turned out so well, I'll say no more about that. You had better get your supper while I get on the telephone."

And the juniors went to supper—Billy Bunter going with them. It was two hours since Bunter's supper, so he was ready for another.

Colonel Wharton telegraphed, first to the police at Wimford, to send men to the Poplars, then to Greyfriars, to inform the Head of the rescue of Fisher T. Fish.

"Bless my soul!" came the Head's voice, when he heard the glad news. "Is it possible? Those boys—you are sure of what you say, Colonel Wharton?"

"Fish is here in the house now, sir!" said the colonel.

"Bless my soul! I am delighted! You will convey my thanks to the boys, sir! Bless my soul!"

There was the news the next morning. The Wimford police had taken possession of the Poplars immediately after the colonel's telephone call, and having taken Mike into custody, they had

(Continued on page 27.)

"SMILING" BILL MURRAY'S TAKEN ALL CRICKETING ENGLAND BY STORM . . .
WATCH HIS LEFT-HANDED BOWLING, HIS LEG-BREAKS, AND . . . THE BATSMAN'S WICKET!

THE TEST MATCH HOPE!

By JOHN BREARLEY.

(Introduction on page 26.)



Two great brown hands closed over the ball and gripped it tight. The "miracle" had come to pass!

The First Test!

ALL Desford stood on the green to give Bill a thunderous send-off as the great car slid past on its journey to Trent Bridge, where he was to take part in the first Test match. The same ordeal awaited him in the city, too—only on a larger scale.

When Bill's selection for England was first announced, it had been Mr. Barr's intention to drive him to Nottingham by car. But Severnshire had "struck" indignantly. They were fond of the old millionaire, and appreciated his work for the county; but at the same time, they didn't see why he should keep Bill all to himself, and they said so plainly.

Such a crowd of Severnshire folk were travelling to Trent Bridge to watch their young idol play that it was decided everyone should go by special train.

Whereupon James Barr fumed, snorted, and finished up by ordering the special train himself!

A jolly, laughing crowd let go an encouraging yell as Bill drove into the station, and another crowd fought each

other for places on the train. In a reserved, first-class compartment Bill found a seat waiting for him with Mr. Barr, Major Weaver, Drummond, the Oxonian, and two or three other leading sportsmen of the county, while next door, the Severnshire players discussed his prospects and listened more or less respectfully—more less than otherwise—to George Hammett's reminiscences. It was a very merry party that sped through the evening towards Nottingham.

Yet, for the first time anyone could remember, Bill Murray had lost his smile. His thoughts were back in the little cottage where his father sat dumb and helpless in one chair, and Alec in another, with both hands swathed in bandages.

There and then he registered a silent oath that, as soon as the Test match was over, he would find the man who had sent those batting gloves. And when he found him—

He looked up to see James Barr and the others regarding him curiously. His mouth broke into its old cheery smile, but his grey eyes were hard.

"Here they come!"

If his first appearance at Lord's in the Trial match had given Bill Murray a thrill, it was as nothing compared to that wonderful moment next morning, when the English team, with himself in their midst, filed slowly out of the pavilion at Trent Bridge on the opening day of the Nottingham Test.

The bewildering crash of applause that greeted them made even the veterans of the side smile grimly, and Bill bit his under lip. But the sight of the perfect ground, green and smiling in the morning sun, was as good as

a tonic. His muscles braced themselves instinctively.

He was glad England had lost the toss, although everyone else was disappointed. Winning the toss for him meant spending an idle, fidgety day in the pavilion. Now he was into the fight from the word "go"!

Thousands of critical eyes scanned the players as they came on to the field, and a murmur went up when the crowd noticed that Larwood and Bill wore their sweaters round their necks. Next moment the clicking score-board confirmed the news. Nottingham and Severnshire were to open the English attack!

"Gummy! They're turning young Bill loose early!" muttered some of the anxious Severnshire supporters. "And this bally ground's the worst in England for a slow bowler to start on!"

"Rot!" answered others. "He and Larwood'll make an awkward contrast!"

"Um-m! Hope he's not windy, though!"

"Windy! Him! Don't make us laugh!"

Although he was surprised, Bill was far from nervous at the prospect of opening the bowling. A slight breeze was blowing against him, and he grinned as he tested its strength, for bowling into the wind meant he could play ducks and drakes with his swervers, and not tire his fingers by having to spin every ball. The time for that would come when the shine had gone off the leather.

To the tune of more clapping and some shrill "coo-ees," Woodfull and Ponsford appeared, strolling calmly to the wickets. The umpire threw a gleaming red ball to Larwood, who caught it confidently. The fieldsmen went quickly to their places.

"Play!"

The 1930 Test campaign had begun!

As usual, the opening was quiet. Larwood bowled a neat maiden to the Australian captain, and Bill, intent upon getting his length and touch, did the same to Ponsford. A second maiden from Larwood, and then Ponsford flicked Bill's last ball through the slips for a single.

Crowd and players relaxed. The tension went out of the atmosphere; everybody settled down to business. The fun began.

It is a well-known fact that to Billy Ponsford, Larwood of Notts is a "Jonah." On practically every occasion they have met the great Victorian fell a victim in some way to the sturdy fast bowler; and now, bowling at his most terrifying pace, Larwood got him again.

Three hissing balls in succession pitched a perfect length, jumped up wickedly, and whistled past Ponsford, chest high. The fourth, turning sharply, shot between his bat and his body, leaving him helpless. As the fifth screamed past his off-stump, he sparred at it gingerly. Bill in the slips

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dived and just managed to knock it up, after which Frank Woolley's long arm reached out and completed the catch!

"Thank you, William!" he bowed gravely, as a long-drawn roar and a flourish of match cards saluted England's first success. Bill picked himself off the grass, and Chapman came over to pat him on the back.

One for one! A good start.

Kippax came in and played the last ball of the over; then all eyes turned on Bill Murray and Woodfull.

They made a strange pair, the tall youngster with the gay smile, and the grim, watchful captain of Australia. More than one member of the crowd clenched his hands painfully as he watched the duel open between them.

For this match Bill had increased his leg trap to four men, so that, a few yards from the batsman's elbow, Sutcliffe, Hammond, Tate, and Chapman crouched like tigers.

Woodfull's firm lips hardened. Although he did not show it, that leg trap was worrying him badly, for Bill was forcing him to play straight at those watchful men every time, and the slightest slip would mean disaster.

The youngster's accuracy was uncanny. A great hush fell on Trent Bridge as the crowd watched him peg the Australian skipper down mercilessly. With a finger on each side of the seam and his long arm swinging loosely across his body, he made the ball do the maddest tricks in the air. Time and again it floated straight for Woodfull's stumps, only to skid to leg at the last moment and jump fiercely at the batsman's pads, forcing him into a cramped and hasty stroke—towards the leg trap.

There was another danger, too, as Woodfull well knew; the deadly cork-screw that first swerved inwards and then broke back. The Australian could see Bill was not spinning the ball yet, but he could not afford to take a chance, so he backed up his bat with his pads—in case!

Two overs went by. Bill would not let go his stranglehold; Woodfull was content to defend. The crowd sighed as two balls in succession curled marvellously round his bat—only to bump harmlessly against his broad pads.

It was stalemate; or looked like it. For a moment Woodfull's caution relaxed into confidence. And then Bill sprung the snare he had been working for so patiently.

With the next ball, instead of swinging his arm across his body, he whirled it downwards and away. Straight and true as usual, the ball sped for the middle stump, then swerved—the other way!

Taken completely by surprise, Woodfull spotted the difference too late; his bat was already moving to cover his legs. Changing quickly, he whipped it across the wicket. But the ball won.

The stumps were not even touched. Only the off bail was snicked off cleanly and neatly, and ball and bail disappeared into Duckworth's great gloves. Not until the famous Australian tucked his bat under his arm and began to stride stolidly towards the pavilion did the crowd realise he was out. Bill Murray had got him again.

Pandemonium reigned then at Trent Bridge. Five for two wickets, and those two Ponsford and Woodfull! The deafening applause made Bill's ears tingle, and his happy face went suddenly scarlet.

"Murray! Murray! Well bowled, Murray!"

"Well played, Severnshire!"

Again and again the cheers rang out. The faces of the other players, too, were pictures of delight. One question sprang to everyone's lips immediately—would Australia collapse?

The fighters from down under soon applied the answer to that, however. Soresly wounded though she was, Australia showed her teeth in defiance and struck back fiercely. With their backs to the wall Kippax and Jackson fought Bill and Larwood tooth and nail, their bats as straight as their nerves were steady.

Lunch-time came and passed. The score was 45 for two, Kippax and Jackson still in. In his second over of the afternoon Bill got a little more spin and a little more pace on a leg-break and crashed it through Jackson's guard. Another long duel followed with Kippax and Bradman.

Chapman, the English captain, handled his bowling like a master. The batsmen were never allowed to settle down; his bowlers were kept as fresh and lively as possible.

Between them, Bill Murray and Jack White kept one end going, nailing the Australians down with baffling tricks and cast-iron length. At the other, Chapman unleashed his storm troops—Larwood, Tate, and Clarke, each in turn shooting down balls that whistled through the air like meteors.

The afternoon wore on, thrilling in its breathless intensity. A miraculous display of stumping dismissed Kippax at last, and brought Bill his third wicket, and a bit of forked lightning from Tate sent Richardson back to the pavilion.

But Bradman stuck like glue; and in Fairfax he found a worthy partner. The game became a deadlock once more; slow, but charged with electricity.

Bill still smiled. For the second time that season he kept Bradman tied up, making him dance to the tune he played. Yet he could not get him out.

At five o'clock tea was taken. In the pavilion Frank Woolley gave forth a wintry smile.

"This game's a draw already, chaps—unless a miracle happens!"

Bill did not answer. Instead, he stripped off his shirt and plunged his shoulders under the cold shower. Then he took a rough towel and rubbed.

When Chapman tossed the ball to him after tea the English captain noticed that something about his youngest

INTRODUCTION.

Thanks to his amazing bowling feats, "Smiling" Bill Murray, a Severnshire County colt, is hailed everywhere as the hope of England in the coming Tests, and is promised fifty pounds for every Test match in which he plays by a millionaire named Barr. "Smiling" Bill is more than elated at his success, for he has a fixed purpose in life—to earn the money to pay for an operation to cure his paralysed father, who, years before, had been "outed" when about to expose a coining gang, and has been unable to speak since. Fearing the possible consequences should John Murray regain his memory, Luke Thurston and his rascally associate, the Weasel, who were Murray's assailants, try to ruin Bill's cricket career by means of a pair of batting-gloves cunningly doctored with carbolic acid. Bill's younger brother, Alec, however, is the unfortunate victim of their vile plot. "Never mind me," says the plucky youngster, nursing his blistered hands, "you go in, old son, and win. We'll find the joker who sent the gloves when you come back!"

(Now read on.)

bowler had changed. He stared thoughtfully. In place of the burly lad with the cheery grin he saw a grim-faced youth, with eyes like steel points and a chin like a battering-ram; a bowler who looked once at the scoreboard, once at the clock, and long and earnestly at the wicket.

Chapman's face burst into its own sunny smile. He winked jovially at Jack Hobbs as they went to their posts.

"A short course of fireworks now, I think, J. B.!" he murmured.

Bill was almost quivering with eagerness. A miracle had to happen, and he meant to achieve it—or burst! His first over was a maiden that worried Bradman a lot. His second was even worse.

Crowd and players were on thorns.

The first ball of Bill's third over was a bad one. The boy promptly cracked it to the boundary. The second, too, he drove into the deep for two.

"He's cracking up!" whispered someone to James Barr, sitting in the stand like some fierce old bird of prey. "The strain—"

"Got him!"

The millionaire turned with an angry snarl.

Trent Bridge had gone crazy. Hats, cards, sticks, all were flying in the air. Men and boys leapt madly to their feet; girls cheered shrilly.

For Bradman's wicket was an utter wreck, and the young Australian was walking hurriedly back to the pavilion, too heart-broken for once even to smile.

Wall took his place, iron-faced and cool. He saw the ball dropping slowly down on him from a great height; he stepped out, swung his bat—

"Hold it, Jack!"

Chapman's voice cracked with excitement. Yet he need not have worried. Jack Hobbs, the best cover-point in the world, ran swiftly in on tiptoe, got cleanly under the ball, and held it safe.

One hundred and ten for seven!

Another note was added to the cheering now.

"Hat-trick, Murray! Hat-trick, boy!" called a thousand voices insistently.

Bill did not hear; he was deaf to everything. Tense as a fiddle-string, he watched Oldfield take guard and glance leisurely round the field. He danced forward, steadied himself—then put all his body and soul into a fast, straight ball!

Crash!

Oldfield stood paralysed, unable to realise for a while that he was not dreaming. The ball had streaked through the air as fast as anything Larwood or Tate had ever put down, touched the turf for a thousandth part of a second, and shot his off-stump spinning wildly over Duckworth's shoulder.

He was out. Bill Murray had done the hat-trick, and Australia's back was broken.

No one—least of all the English players—seemed to remember much about the next heart-gripping twenty minutes. Everything was like a dream. At tea-time Australia had been safe for the day—and for Monday, too. Now she was in grave peril.

Fairfax played heroically; McCabe helped him. They were badly up against it, however. Taking the ball from Clarke, Larwood brought one in from leg at eighty miles an hour, and smashed McCabe's middle stump in two.

Grimmett came out of the pavilion—last man in!

An over from Bill gave Fairfax two runs. Another from Larwood nearly gave Grimmett heart-disease.

Anxious eyes turned to the clock once more; but Bill Murray could only see those three slender sticks twenty-two yards away from him. And his smile had returned!

He tried Fairfax with a leg-break. It was smothered. He tried another, a bit slower, which beat the batsman and missed the wicket by an inch.

His third was blocked, his fourth curled sharply into the leg trap, and Hammond nearly had a catch. His fifth was smothered again.

In an atmosphere of killing suspense he sent down the last ball of the over, and, the moment he let it go, prowled after it like a panther. Intent upon the spinning leather, Fairfax did not see him come as Bill followed the ball right up the pitch.

Once more the Australian batsman reached right out to smother the ball at the break. Singing with back-spin, it hung horribly in the air for one fatal instant, and then it was Fairfax made a fatal mistake and over-reached.

Instead of clipping the ball cleanly, he clumped it sluggishly into the air off the splice of his bat—and froze with horror as he suddenly saw Bill right on top of him!

Just for a second the ball hung clear. Trent Bridge gasped. They saw Bill leave the turf in a reckless leap, saw his long arms shoot out. Two great brown hands closed over the ball, gripped it tight; then he pitched forward on the grass with a sob.

Frank Woolley's "miracle" had come to pass. The innings was over, and England had a victory in her grasp.

(Australia's back is broken—victory is in sight for England! Be sure you follow this exciting game in next week's instalment of this gripping serial. You'll enjoy every line of it!)

THE MYSTERY OF THE POPLARS!

(Continued from page 24.)

waited for the return of Barney McCann. Barney had driven back fairly into their hands, and he was now in Wimford police station with Mike—the unhappiest kidnapper ever. Only too clearly, now, it was borne in on Barney's mind that he was on the wrong side of the Atlantic for such stunts.

Fisher T. Fish was expected to look merry and bright that morning. Instead of which, his bony countenance was overcast and woeful.

For there was more news—in the financial columns of the morning paper. The corner in pork had broken! Other guys, more astute than Hiram K. Fish, had, it appeared, had tons and tons of pork up their sleeve, and they had thrown it on the market and "busted" the corner! Hiram K's millions had faded away; instead of rolling in dollars, it appeared doubtful whether he would be able to pay ten cents in the dollar when he went bankrupt.

"It's fierce!" said Fishy dolorously. "It's sure fierce!"

"Never mind," said Bob Cherry consolingly. "You'll be safe from kidnappers now. Another bunch might have got after you, now that Barney McCann's in chokey! Now you're safe as houses."

But Fishy was not consoled.

"It's sure fierce!" he said. "I guess I'm glad, though, that you guys got me away from Barney last night! This news would sure have got his goat, and he might have taken it out of me! I guess he's spent a heap of dollars on this kidnapping stunt, and this noos would have made him hopping mad! I'm pesky glad I didn't meet up with him when he got back last night."

Then he shook his head. "But it's sure fierce!" he added.

"Perhaps your popper will corner something else," suggested Bob. "He's busted on pork, but he may corner pickles or parsnips—"

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"I guess he won't be downed for long," he said confidently. "After all, he's done pretty well out of several bankruptcies, and I guess he's got a plum stacked away somewhere. The popper's spry."

And Fishy took comfort from that reflection.

That afternoon, a police constable arrived from Courtfield to conduct Fishy back in safety to Greysfriars. As a matter of fact, he was safe enough now, now that his popper was no longer a millionaire.

The same day a letter arrived from Dr. Locke. It was a letter that gave great satisfaction to the chums of the Remo. It overflowed with grateful thanks to the juniors for the service they had rendered—which was satisfactory—and it added that, as a reward, they were to take a whole week's leave, which was still more satisfactory.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" said Bob Cherry. "The Head's a brick, and he knows how to treat really nice fellows nicely."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co.

"We've got a whole week's holiday, and we're jolly well going to enjoy ourselves—"

"Hear, hear!"

"The only fly in the ointment is Bunter—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"But we're going to have a jolly holiday—Bunter and all!" said Bob!

And they did!

THE END.

(You simply must read the next yarn in this thrilling series, entitled: "POP OF THE CIRCUS!" It's a real corker, chums.)

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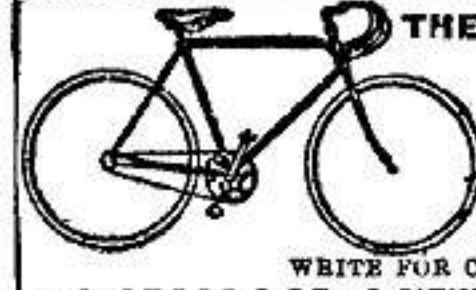
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CHANGE TO-DAY TO B.D.V.

"GOOD-MORNING, boys!" called out Dr. Birchmell, the reverend and majestic Head of St. Sam's, as he strolled into the school tuckshop one fine morning.

"Good-morning, sir!" responded Jack Jolly & Co. of the Fourth, looking slightly surprised, for the tuckshop was hithertherto hardly the place in which one eggpected to find a gentleman of Dr. Birchmell's caliber.

"Pray carry on feeding your faces, boys," said the Head, who seemed to be in his happiest mood. "I have merely trotted in to place a small order with the tuckshop dame. Take down what I call out on a list, will you, mam?"

"Delighted, I'm sure, sir!" said the tuckshop dame, with a curtsy.

And then, to the astonishment of the juniors and the tuckshop dame alike, the Head proceeded to read out the following formidable list:

"Five hundred dozen of five hundred rock cakes, five hundred stake-and-kidney pies, ditto veal-and-ham, half a ton of best toff, one thousand ice-cornets, and two thousand bottles of jinger-beer!"

"M-m-my hat!" stuttered Jack Jolly & Co.

"That's all, I think, mam," said the Head. "Please deliver them to a market which I am having erected in my private garden, and I'll pay you to-morrow!"

"Grate pip! Are you feeling hungry, sir?" venchered Jack Jolly.

"Why, sir, you've ordered enuff grubb to last you for a week!"

"The Head laughed heartily.

"Dear me, Jolly! I am sure that the quantity I have ordered would last me considerably longer than a week—I should say nine days, at least. But, anyway, you are under a misundrehension. The tuck is not for myself."

"Then who is it for?" asked Jack Jolly pointedly.

The answer made Jack Jolly & Co. start violently.

"For my guests!" gasped Frank Fearless. "Surely you must be joking, sir!"

"Not at all, Fearless! Why on earth should you think that?"

Frank Fearless grinned slyly.

"Well, sir, everybody knows what a mean, grabbing, stingy, miny old hunk you are—"

"Stop!" eggclaimed Dr. Birchmell, collaring furiously. "For those insulting remarks, Fearless, you shall pay dearly. Forcibly, I have brought my birchrod with me—"

"H'm! What I really meant was that everybody knows what a noble, kindhearted, free-handed gentleman you are—"

"That is better! Under the circumstances, I will overlook the matter, more especially as you and your friends are among my guests."

"What?" yelled Jack Jolly & Co.

The Head smiled.

"I thought it would be a pleasant surprise for you, my boys. Seems too good to be true, what? Nevertheless, I assure you it is true. This afternoon I am having the whole skool to a garden party to be held in the grounds adjoining my private house. As you see from the order which I have placed with the tuckshop dame, I am doing the thing on rather a grand scale. There will be grub in plenty, and you will all be able to enjoy the biggest blow-out you have enjoyed for a long time."

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The ST SAM'S GARDEN PARTY!

The Head of St. Sam's is on the rocks again this week, boys. But he's a cute old bird, is Birchmell, and his latest wheeze for taking in the "splish" is a corker!

"And—and it's all free!" asked Bright.

Dr. Birchmell nodded.

"Absolutely free, my dear Bright. There is only one stipulation. That is that every guest, on entering the gate, shall show the prefect on duty there that he possesses the sum of ten shillings. That—them—is merely so that the rag-tag-and-bobtail of the skool shall be eggcluded, and the garden party thereby confined to influential and moneyed fellows like yourselves! Savvy?"

Our heroes nodded, though they still looked a little suspicious.

"Then if we turn up this afternoon, all we have to do is to show ten shillings each at the gate, and we're admitted free of charge? That so, sir?" asked Jack Jolly, just to pin the Head down.

"Eggactly!"

"In that case, sir, I think we can all promise to turn up. What say you, chaps?"

"Y'whatno!" I know you will enjoy yourselves. There will be lots of grub and lots of fun, and I don't intend to stand on my dignity," said the Head, sitting down violently, as he slipped up on a banana-skin. "Yarooooo!"

"Ho, ha, ha!"

And, with the juniors roaring with laughter and the Head roaring with pain, the interview came to an end.

After dinner, crowds began to flock down to the spacious grounds surrounding the Head's house. Everybody was amazed to find the Head opening out his hat like this; but there didn't seem to be any catch in the invitation, and most of the fellows felt very pleased to accept it.

St. Sam's being a skool for gentlemen's sons, most of the skollers were simply rolling in oof, and the matter of showing ten bob at the gate presented no difficulty whatever. With the exception of the fags and a few others



who happened to be on the rof, nearly everybody in the skool turned up.

It was an ideal day for a garden party. The grass was green instead of pink, the sun was pouring down instead of up, and rain, snow, hurricane, monsoons, and earthquakes were conspicuous only by their absence.

The fellows strolled about under the trees, discussing current topics and eating current buns, at setteme. In one shaded arbor, Mr. Lickham performed conjuring and sly-of-hand tricks for the amusement of those who cared to watch, and in another corner, Mr. Justiss, the master of the fifth, did wait-lifting feats, stood on his head, and, in other ways kept an admiring crowd applauding for quite a long time.

Half-way through the proceedings all eyes were attracted by the arrival of Fossil, the skool porter, baring in his arms several hundreds of brightly-culoured balloons.

"My hat!" The Head intends to turn the garden party into a fiddy carnival, by the look of things!" remarked Jack Jolly.

"Perhaps there's still a catch in it somewhere," said Frank Fearless. "Hist!" He's just about to make a speech."

The eggsted yelling and shouting that was going on everywhere died away into respectful silence as the

stay out. Now then, jents roll up and buy your balloons! Ten bob each and the winner takes the lot!"

II

THE Head's guests looked at the Head, then looked at each other. "Knew there was a catch in it somewhere," said Frank Fearless. "This is it!"

"All fair and square, gentlemen!" yelled the Head. "No jiggery-pokery about this game. You just put your name on the ticket and release the balloon, and the one that goes the farthest gets the prize!"

"Of, course, as you say," murmured Jack Jolly, to Frank Fearless, "there is a catch in it somewhere!"

"Simply must be!"

"But I can't quite see where it comes in, for the moment. It's just possible, of course, that the Head intends to run it fairly."

"Remotely possible!" grinned Merry Jolly. "We've had a feed at the old buffer's eggspence, anyway, and I suppose we can't eggpect things all our own way. Hero goes!"

And Jack parted up with a ten-bob note, and took a balloon in eggexchange. Others rapidly followed his eggexample. Nobody felt like abstaining in view of the alternative, and eager crowds of purchasers were soon swarming round Dr. Birchmell and his aged assistant. Before long the air was thick with balloons. Some bust before they went very far. Others sailed merrily away until they were lost to sight. Speculation was rife as to who would win the competition, and the eggitement was soon intense.

After everybody else had sent up his balloon, Dr. Birchmell, grinning all over his dile, released one for himself. Then he packed up the pile of notes and silver he had amassed into an attashy-case and descended from the jinger-beer crane once more.

"That's that!" he remarked lightly. "I trusted that the best man may win, gentlemen. The prize, I find, will amount to seventy-five quid—quite a respectable amount!"

The Head then went to the market to refresh himself with a glass of jinger-beer and a rock cake.

Before he went, however, he grabbed Mr. Lickham by the arm, closed one eye in a tremendous wink, and whispered hoarsely into his ear for a minute. Very few of the fellows even noticed the trifling incident, but Jack Jolly & Co., who had wonderful powers of observation, saw it and wondered what it meant.

They soon learned.

Mr. Lickham, after a brief interval, shipped off quickly in the direction of the Skool House.

A few minutes later, there was a violent ringing of the tellyphone-bell from within the Head's house. It was followed by the eggst from the house of a hurried maid who scampered straight up to the Head.

"Oh, sir, do come quick," she eggclaimed, dropping a curtsy. "There's a gentleman wants to speak to you from Orstralia!"

"My hat!" muttered the crowd, with a start of surprise.

"What is the gentleman's name?" asked the Head, smothering a yawn.

"Which he says he's Bill Smith, and he's ringing up from Wagga-Wagga!"

"Some unimportant trifle, I eggpect!" yawned Dr. Birchmell. "Perhaps you would like to take the call for me, Burleigh?"

Burleigh, 'a rugged kapin of St. Sam's, looked a little eggrieved.

"I should have thought you'd wanted to take it yourself, sir, as it's from Orstralia," he remarked. "However, I'm quite willing to answer the call, if you like."

And Burleigh tramped off to the Head's house.

When he came back, his eyes were simply blazing with eggitement.

"What do you think?" he yelled. "That tellyphone-call was from Orstralia to say that someone there has found a balloon with the Head's name on it!"

"Y'what?"

"Fact!"

"Dear me! Then it would appear that I have been fortunate enuff to win the prize!" eggclaimed the Head. "This is indeed a pleasant surprise, Burleigh. Thank you very much for taking the call. I will now take the munny into my house and look it up."

"Half-a-minimie, sir?" interrupted Jack Jolly. "Rather suspicious that your balloon should have reached Orstralia in less than half an hour, isn't it?"

"My hat! Never thought of that!" eggclaimed Burleigh.

"I suppose there's no possibility that the tellyphone-call didn't come from somewhere a little nearer than that country?"

"Jolly!" thundered the Head. "Are you eggsting that there is something fraudulent about this business?"

"Nimno! I was merely eggsting that the call mite have been made by somebody quite near—Mr. Lickham, for instance—"

"Jummy! Come to think of it, it did sound like Mr. Lickham's voice!" cried Burleigh.

There was a buzz from the crowd.

Dr. Birchmell glanced them with a fierce skowl.

"Gentlemen!" he said. "It saddens me to think that after all the years I've been in charge of this hero skool I should have to face imputations against my character. The best answer I can give to the slander is to say nothing at all, and that is what I am going to do. But I did think that after spending twenty quid on a garden-party I should receive a little gratitude from you!"

"Not much to be grateful over when you've rooked us of three times what you've spent on us!" growled Burleigh. "I suggest that you return our entrance fees and call the competition off—then we'll be grateful!"

The Head snorted.

"Ratts—and many of 'em, if I may say so!" he said, with dignity. "If that's your attitude, then the best reply I can make is, bah! Apart from that, the only other remarks I have to offer are pah and yah!"

With those words, Dr. Birchmell retired, and the garden-party came to an end. From the point of view of the guests the slyly suspicious circumstances attaching to the balloon competition had rather spoiled it. But from the point of view of the Head there was no doubt whatever that no other occasion in living memory had been a more unqualified success than the St. Sam's Garden Party!

THE END.

(Next week's supplement deals with Meddler Greyfriars and is entitled: "YE REBELS OF GREYFRIARS!")

Make sure you read it, clams!

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