

"The Schoolmaster Cracksman!" Thrilling complete school yarn,
featuring an amazing new master!

The MAGNET²





Come Into the Office, Boys!

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

Now I'm going to have a little rest, while I leave W. Uby, of 13, Wall Street, Essex Road, Islington, N., to amuse you! He has sent along the following limerick, which has earned for him a dandy leather pocket wallet :

A mean young rascal
named Snoop
To any low action would
stoop
With Skinner and
Stott.
Why, it's lucky
they've not
Long before been "ordered
the boot" !

A LITTLE while ago I told you some instances of long-lived men. This week a reader asks me if I can tell him which is

THE LONGEST-LIVED ANIMAL.

This distinction belongs to the giant tortoise, which often attains an age of two hundred years. On the whole, however, birds live longer than reptiles. Parrots, eagles and vultures live for about a hundred years, and a goose has been known to live for eighty years. Elephants have been known to live for seventy years, but their average life is not more than thirty or forty years. Alligators live for about forty years; lizards about twenty; and big snakes about twenty-five.

From Frank Harrison, of Hull, comes the following query :

WHAT DOES "I.D.B." MEAN ?

The initials stand for "Illicit diamond buying," which was very prevalent in South Africa many years ago, and is still carried on nowadays, although the sharpest watch is kept upon everyone employed in diamond mines. If anyone succeeds in hiding diamonds and smuggling them out of the mines, they can, of course, get very large sums for them from the I.D.B. men. Some of the tricks that have been used to smuggle diamonds have been most ingenious.

Just a little while ago a workman fell ill, and was given permission to leave the mines. He asked to be allowed to take his tools with him, and this made the authorities suspicious. The result was that they sawed through his steel tools, and discovered that he had hollowed them out. Inside the hollows, packed in grease, were several of the finest stones which had ever been discovered at that particular mine! Had the man got away with them he would have made a fortune.

DON'T forget, chums, that I am still offering topping prizes of magnificent leather pocket wallets, magnificent books, and topping Sheffield steel penknives in return for rib-tickling jokes and Greyfriars limericks. Michael Bergin, of 49, Bessborough Avenue, North Strand Road, Dublin, Ireland, gets a topping prize this week for the following joke :

Customer (an Irishman) : "I'm afraid, milkman, this milk is adulterated."

Milkman (rather vexed) :
"Not at all, sir; 'tis the same as when got from the cow."

Customer :
"Begorra, if it is, then the cow must have grazed very near the river !"

Don't envy this reader, chums—just send along a yarn yourself, and see if you can't "hit the bull's-eye with it !"

The little items of interest which I have been passing along to you under the heading of

THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE,

seem to have caught on, judging by the enthusiastic letters I have received from readers concerning them. Well, here is another selection :

A frog hears by means of its eyes ! Behind each eye a frog has a small hole connected to a special nerve which carries sound to the frog's brain !

Hot water can be made to boil by placing it on ice ! If water is boiled in a bottle, and the bottle is tightly corked at the moment it is taken away from the flame, the water will go on boiling. When it becomes as cold as the atmosphere it will stop boiling until it is placed on something colder—such as ice—when it will immediately start to boil again !

Clothes can be made out of spider's webs ! In the same manner as silk can be made from silk-worms, so can a material be made from spider's webs, and a French firm once reared spiders for this purpose !

People in England eat fried shark ! The so-called "rock salmon" is really a fish which belongs to the shark family, and is also known as "catfish" and "ground shark."

There are fish that can climb trees ! In Malaysia a fish is found with a couple of leg-like fins, which enable it to squirm around when the tide is out. These fish eat insects, and frequently climb trees in search of them !

A bird without any wings ! The strangest living bird is the New Zealand Kiwi, for it is the only wingless bird. It is slowly becoming extinct.

HERE'S a query which George Harker, of Gravesend, has sent in to me :

HOW FAR CAN A HORSE LEAP ?

George has read a story in which a horse jumps over a thirty-foot chasm, and he wants to know if it is possible. Yes ! The longest jump on record by a horse is thirty-seven feet. The kangaroo is the record animal jumper, and can leap seventy feet with ease. The springbok can clear twelve yards, while lions, tigers, and leopards are also splendid jumpers. But, for its size, the flea is the greatest jumper in the world. It can jump two hundred times its own length, and thirty times its own height ! If a man could jump in proportion, he would be able to clear the Nelson monument !

Now here is the answer to a question which I know you are all wanting to learn. What's in store for you next week ? Well, first and foremost

"JIMMY, THE ONE !"

By Frank Richards.

This is the latest—and greatest—yarn from the pen (or I should say "type-writer") of this wonderful author. And, I can tell you, he has surpassed himself. This story will keep you hanging on to every line of it, and you'll put down your MAGNET with genuine regret when you have finished it.

But you'll still find plenty to interest you in the grand opening chapters of a powerful flying story by Hedley Scott, full particulars of which appear on page 26 of this issue. A favourite among all "Magnetites"—for this popular author has penned several "thrillers" featuring the world's greatest detective, Ferrers Locke—Hedley Scott has broken all previous records with his latest yarn, and this is saying something. Excited, chums ? I'll bet you are ! Make certain of enjoying this splendid treat then by ordering next week's bumper issue of the MAGNET to-day.

In addition to all this you will chuckle with delight at the splendid issue of the "Greyfriars Herald." There will be the shorter features, too, to round things off, and I shall be waiting in the office, as usual, to have a chat with you, and to hand out prizes to the lucky senders of winning jokes and limericks.

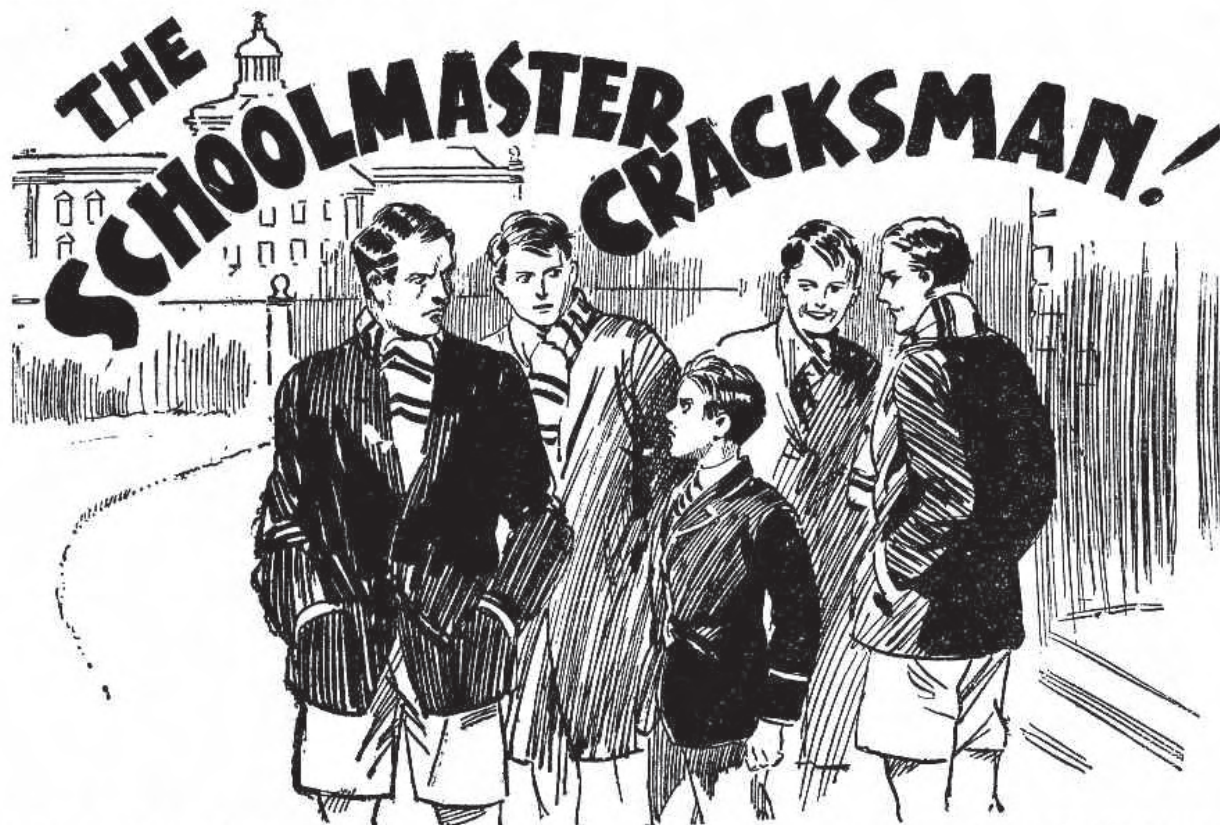
YOUR EDITOR.

STEP IN A DANDY LEATHER POCKET WALLET, A BUMPER BOOK, OR A USEFUL POCKET KNIFE !

and
WIN

These handsome prizes are offered for Storyettes and Snappy Greyfriars Limericks. All efforts to be sent to : c/o MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4. (Comp.).

THESE PRIZES ARE WELL WORTH WINNING, BOYS !



Featuring Harry Wharton & Co., the Cheery Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter's Latest!

"NECK!" "The neckfulness is terrific!" "Of all the thumping cheek—"

"This takes the jolly old cake!" It was quite a chorus of surprise and indignation.

Harry Wharton & Co., of the Greyfriars Remove, were standing before the notice-board, looking at the latest notice stuck thereon.

There were several papers on the board; one a games notice signed by Wingate, the captain of the school; others posted by masters; one in the majestic hand of the headmaster himself. But upon none of these did the Famous Five cast their eyes.

Their attention was fixed upon a grubby paper, written in the well-known sprawling "fist" of Billy Bunter of the Remove, and in Billy Bunter's own original and striking style of spelling.

It was a cheek for Billy Bunter, who was nobody in particular, to stick a notice on the board at all. But the announcement in that notice was not merely cheek; it was sublime impudence. It ran:

"NOTIS.

A Meeting of the Remove is specially corded this afternoon. Fellows are rekwested to role up in the Rag at three o'clock, to be adressed on a verry important subjct.

(Sined)

W. G. BUNTER."

"That fat ass—calling a Form meeting!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Of all the blessed cheek—"

"I wonder what the important 'subjct' is?" said Frank Nugent, laughing.

"Bunter wants kicking!" remarked Johnny Bull. "Let's look for him and kick him!"

"Good egg!" agreed Bob Cherry. "It's days since I've kicked Bunter—and he really needs kicking every day."

"The kickfulness is the proper caper!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

Quite a number of Remove men had gathered round to look at the new and

Form meetings, fathead!" said Bob Cherry.

"Don't you know that Wharton's the only pebble on the beach, Bunter?" asked Skinner of the Remove gravely.

"Well, I should be Form captain, you know, if the fellows had any sense," said Bunter. "It's not my fault that they choose to elect a dud, and you can't say it is, Wharton."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Still, you can countersign the notice, if you like," said Bunter. "In fact, I'll let you take the chair at the meeting, old chap. I want the whole Form to turn up—it's awfully important. I'm not going to tell you what it's about till the meeting takes place."

"Keeping us on tenterhooks, what?" grinned Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently William George Bunter expected general interest and curiosity to know what that "meeting" was about. Apparently he expected an eager crowd to surge into the Rag at three o'clock, with eager ears for the "adress." Billy Bunter often expected things that did not come to pass.

"That's it, Smithy," assented Bunter fatuously. "If the fellows knew in advance, they mightn't come, you know."

"I fancy they might not, in any case!" remarked Nugent.

"The mightfulness is terrific!"

"Bunter's got a surprise in store for us," said Skinner. "He's going to tell us that his postal order's come! It's worth calling a Form meeting to behold it, if it has."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Skinner! As a matter of fact, my postal order hasn't come," said Bunter. "I've been expecting a postal order for some time from one of my

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"A jolly good sort!" is the general opinion at Greyfriars of the new Remove master. But one boy at the school knows the new Form master for what he really is—a notorious cracksman!

surprising "notis" on the board. Most of them were grinning. Billy Bunter pushed his way through the crowd, apparently gratified by the attention his "notis" was receiving.

"You fat duffer!" said Harry Wharton. "What do you mean by sticking a notice on the board and calling a meeting of the Form?"

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I suppose I can call a meeting if I like! It's jolly important, too!"

"It's for the Form captain to call

titled relations, you know. But there's been some delay in the post. Not that that has anything to do with this Form meeting," added Bunter hastily. "I'm not doing this because I'm stony. Don't you fellows run away with that idea."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I'm doing this because I feel that it's up to me, as it was really through me that Quelch got ill, you know."

"Quelch!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

The juniors stared at Bunter blankly. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was laid up with a severe cold in the school sanatorium. A temporary master had taken charge of the Remove in his place.

Certainly, it was through Bunter that Mr. Quelch was laid up; the fat and fatuous Owl having "mopped" a pail of water over him by an unhappy blunder in the dark. But what Mr. Quelch and his cold could possibly have to do with a Form meeting in the Rag was a deep mystery to the Removites.

"What on earth's Quelch got to do with it?" asked Peter Todd.

"That's telling," said Bunter. "I'm not going to say a word till the meeting takes place. Lots of fellows wouldn't come, you see, if they knew there was going to be a collection."

"A collection!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"A—a—a collection!" stuttered Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, you needn't ask me questions; I'm not going to say a word," said Bunter. "You'll hear all about it at the meeting. Still, I hope you'll play up! Think of poor old Quelch, in sanny, sneezing his head off, you know. Of course, he's a beast—but a Form master can't help being a beast, can he? I'm not denying that it's jolly lucky for us that he's ill—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That new man, Lagden, is ever so much better-tempered—he only laughed when I did my construe this morning, instead of jawing a chap, like Quelch. Still, Quelch isn't a bad sort in his way, though I'm jolly glad he's in sanny. Taking him bunches of grapes and things will please him."

"Taking him bunches of grapes!" gasped the Bounder. "Who's going to take Quelch bunches of grapes?"

"That's telling!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "I'm not going to explain till we hold the meeting. Plenty of fellows wouldn't turn up if they knew I was going to take a collection to buy bunches of grapes to take to Quelch in sanny."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Removites.

"You'll hear all about it at the meeting," said Bunter. "I'm keeping the whole thing dark till then. Blessed if I see what you fellows are cackling at. You can take the chair at the meeting, Wharton, if you like; but bear in mind, of course, that the whole thing is in my hands. I take entire charge of the money."

"If any!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, my only hat!" gasped the Bounder. "We're to roll up in the Rag and put up a collection for bunches of grapes for poor old Quelch—and Bunter is to take charge of the money and blow it on tarts at the tuck-shop—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The blowfulness will be terrific!"

"Poor old Quelch! I wonder how long he would have to wait for those

bunches of grapes—with the cash in Bunter's hands!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, this isn't a laughing matter! Think of poor old Quelch sneezing his head off in sanny! It would buck him up no end to think that the fellows are thinking of him, you know. That's why I thought of this stunt. Not because I'm stony, you know—nothing of the sort! I suppose you fellows know that I'm to be trusted with money—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So that's what the jolly old Form meeting is about, is it?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"You'll know what it's about at three o'clock, Cherry. No good asking me questions; I'm not going to say anything till then."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you going to take the chair, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton wiped his eyes.

"No," he gasped, "I'm not going to take the chair! I hardly think there will be a crowd in the Rag at three o'clock. But I'm going to take down this jolly old notice—"

"Look here—"

"And stuff it down your back—"

"I—I say— Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter. "Leggo! I say, you fellows, rescue! Make him leggo! Ow, wow! I say, old chap— Leggo, you beast! Look here, old fellow— Oh, you rotter! I say— Yaroooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow, ow, ow! Beast! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The hilarious crowd of Removites streamed out into the quad, leaving Billy Bunter gasping and gurgling as he made his frantic efforts to extract his "notis" from the back of his fat neck.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life?" bawled Bob Cherry.

Smack!

Flip of the Second Form jumped. Bob Cherry's smack on his back was friendly and cordial, but there was a lot of energy in it.

"Ow!" gasped the fag.

There was not much left of morning break after giving attention to Billy Bunter and his "notis." The Famous Five were making the most of it by enjoying a sharp trot round the quad in the keen wintry air. But they came to a halt as they spotted Flip of the Second under the leafless elms.

Flip was looking deeply clouded. To judge by his look, most of the worries in a worrying world had descended on his young shoulders.

Such small fry as fags of the Second Form were trifles light as air to the heroes of the Remove as a rule; but they took a rather special interest in Flip—once the waif of Puggins' Alley, now rather a fish out of water at a big school.

Flip—even the Head had to call him Flip, as he had no other name—looked a little untidy and a little grubby, as he generally did; but he also looked fearfully down on his luck—for which reason the chums of the Remove kindly stopped to inquire what the trouble was.

"Ow!" repeated Flip, rubbing his shoulder. "Wow! You got a 'eavy 'and, Master Cherry, you 'ave."

"Not so heavy as Jimmy the One!" grinned Bob.

Flip started.

"Jimmy the One!" he repeated.

"The jolly old creak you've told us about, who gave you a terrific walloping once in your alley," said Bob. "What's up with you, kid? Trouble with Twigg?"

"No fear! Twigg's very kind to a bloke," said Flip. "I don't know as he likes having a cove like me in his Form, but he's very kind."

"Not scrapping with my minor again?" asked Frank Nugent.

Flip grinned.

"That wouldn't worrit a bloke," he answered. "I gives young Nugent as good as he 'ands out—and some over!"

"Well, what's the jolly old trouble? Tell your Uncle Robert," said Bob encouragingly. "You're looking as if you've bagged all the trouble in the jolly old universe."

Flip did not answer. The grin had died from his face and the deep cloud returned. It was evident that something weighed deeply on the little waif's mind.

"Doing anything this afternoon, kid?" asked Harry Wharton.

It was Wednesday—a half-holiday at Greyfriars—and the captain of the Remove could guess that Flip was probably left on his own for the half-holiday. The queer little vagrant had not made friends in the Second Form.

Flip shook his head.

"Like to come over to Highcliffe and see us play footer?" asked Harry. "We play Highcliffe to-day, and it will be a good game. We'll make room for you in the brake."

"Do!" said Bob. "There's a half-back in the team who's worth going ten miles to watch."

"Who's that?" asked Flip.

"Little me!" said Bob cheerily.

Flip grinned again.

"Master Bunter coming?" he asked.

The chums of the Remove smiled. Flip's gratitude and devotion to Billy Bunter was as strong as ever, even since he had been some weeks at the school and had made closer acquaintance with the Owl of the Remove. The juniors liked him all the better for it.

According to the poet, simple faith is better than Norman blood. And undoubtedly there must have been plenty of simple faith in Flip when he could continue to regard Billy Bunter with devotion and admiration after weeks of acquaintance.

"Bunter doesn't play footer," said Harry.

"He ain't in the game?" asked Flip.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry, greatly tickled by the idea of Billy Bunter being in the team that went over to Highcliffe to play one of the toughest matches in the Remove list.

"Oh, no!" gasped Wharton. "Not quite! Nunno!"

"The gamefulness of the esteemed Bunter is not terrific," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Flip's brow darkened. Any disrespectful allusion to his podgy patron always roused his ire. That had been the cause of more than one "scrap" in the Second Form.

"Oh, chuck it!" he said. "I dessay Bunter's as good as any man in your blooming Form, and chance it!"

"You silly little ass—" began Johnny Bull.

"Can it!" said Flip.

"Well, would you like to come in the brake, kid?" asked Harry. "You'll see a good game."

"Even without Bunter in it," said Nugent gravely.

"Your esteemed company would cause terrific pleasuredfulness to our ridiculous selves," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Flip grinned again.

"I'd like to come," he said. "You're very kind to a bloke. But I got to see to something this afternoon."

"Detention?" asked Harry.

"Oh, no! But—" Flip broke off. "Ow do you like your noo master in the Remove?"

"Mr. Lagden? He's all right," answered Wharton, rather astonished by the sudden change of subject.

"He ain't gone yet?" asked Flip.

"Gone!" repeated Wharton blankly. "No! He's not going, that I know of. He only came yesterday."

"I know that. And he ain't gone agin'?"

"Of course not. He's here so long as Quelch is laid up—and Quelch won't be back in the Form-room for a week at

good impression on his Form, Flip of the Second did not seem to share it.

His little face set as he looked at the Remove master, and there was something like fear in his eyes.

For a moment or two he stared towards the young man approaching the group under the elms, and then, muttering something indistinctly, he turned and hurried away.

Wharton glanced after him.

"What the dickens is the matter with that kid?" he said. "He seems to be afraid of Lagden. I noticed it yesterday, when Lagden came."

"Queer little animal!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Mr. Lagden came on along the path. He gave the Removites a nod and a

As they headed for the Form-room, Wharton felt a tug at his sleeve and looked round at Flip.

"Can't stop now, kid!" he said. "Time you were in your Form-room, too! Cut off!"

"Jest a minute, sir!" said Flip.

"Buck up, then!"

Harry Wharton dropped behind his comrades, wondering what the fag wanted to say.

"That bloke Lagden—" muttered Flip.

"What about him?"

"You sure he ain't going?"

Harry Wharton stared at the fag in blank astonishment. Apart from the obvious fact that the new master of the Remove was not going, and could not be



Mr. Lagden leapt at Bunter, grasped him by the back of the collar, and commenced operations with the pointer. Whack! Whack! Whack! "Ow! Leggo! Beast!" reared Bunter. "Shame!" came in a chorus from the back of the class, for so sudden was the castigation that the pointer snapped!

least, more likely longer. Why the dickens should Lagden go?" asked Harry, puzzled.

"Oh, I—I jest thought—" stammered Flip.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Doesn't look as if he's going, does he?"

Flip stared towards the young man who came along the path under the elms. Mr. Lagden, like his pupils, was taking a walk in the quad in break. Handsome, slim, but athletic and extremely well dressed, Mr. Lagden looked the best type of Public school master; and although he had taken the Remove for the first time that morning, he was already popular in the Form. Much as the Remove respected their Form master, most of them agreed that Lagden was an improvement on Quelch. But if Rupert Lagden had made a

smile in passing. Mr. Lagden had a very pleasant smile, an agreeable contrast to the severe aspect of the respected Quelch. The juniors looked after him as he went towards the House.

"Decent sort!" said Nugent.

"The decent sortfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Singh.

"That kid seems afraid of him, for some reason," said Wharton. "Blessed if I can understand the queer little ass! What could have put it into his head that Lagden was going—his second day here?"

"Goodness knows! Come on!" said Bob. "The jolly old bell will be going in two ticks."

The chums of the Remove resumed their trot round the quad. The bell clanged out for third school; and they came back to the House and joined the crowd going in.

going, Flip's strange interest in the man was perplexing. What the Remove master could possibly matter to a Second Form fag was a mystery.

"Look here, kid, what are you driving at?" exclaimed Wharton impatiently. "Of course, Lagden's not going! But what the merry thump does it matter to you whether he goes or stays?"

"It matters a 'ole lot!" muttered Flip.

"Well, how does it, then?"

Flip did not answer that question. But the cloud of trouble settled deeper on his face than ever.

Wharton made a movement to go. Mr. Lagden was not so severe a master as Mr. Quelch; but the head boy of the Remove did not want to be late

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for class. The fag caught at his sleeve again.

"Old on, sir!"

"For goodness' sake, don't hang on to a chap! What the dickens is it?"

Wharton was losing patience.

"I—I only want to know," said Flip, stammering. "I jest wanted to know, sir, if you're sure he ain't going?"

"Quite sure! I'm going in to class with him now."

"But arter class, sir—in the arternoon!"

"You young ass! Of course he's not going! In fact, I've heard that he's playing football with the Sixth Form men this afternoon."

Flip's face fell.

"What does it matter, anyhow?" asked Harry.

And as Flip did not answer he jerked his arm away and hurried on to the Form-room, leaving the fag staring after him, with a darkly troubled face.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Asks for It!

BILLY BUNTER rolled into the Remove Form-room—late.

The Lower Fourth were all in their places; and Mr. Lagden was standing by the blackboard, over which hung a huge map. Geography was the subject of third lesson in the Remove.

Geography did not appeal to Bunter. There was no branch of knowledge that had any real appeal for him. Geography, of course, was not so "putrid" as Latin, and not nearly so putrid as maths. Still, it was a branch of knowledge; and, as such, Bunter objected to it.

Bunter's objections to the acquisition

of knowledge were deep. But under the iron hand of Henry Samuel Quelch he had to overcome them somehow. He hoped for better luck with the new master of the Remove.

Lagden had been so good-tempered, hitherto, that Bunter was tempted to "try it on." In first class that morning, Bunter's "con," as usual, had been calculated to make the angels weep. Few Remove men were whales on Latin; but Bunter was the only member of the Form who was capable of construing "est in conspectu Tenedos" into "He was expecting a tenner." Mr. Quelch would have given Bunter sharp words—if not something more drastic—for such a con. Lagden had laughed. The result of which was that Bunter was ten minutes late for third school.

Bunter was the fellow who, if he was given an inch, would take an ell; and who, if allowed to get away with the ell, would soon lengthen it into a league.

One minute's unpunctuality would have drawn forth the vials of Mr. Quelch's wrath; and Bunter was venturing on ten minutes with the new man. If that proved a success, no doubt it would be twenty next time.

Unfortunately for Bunter, it was not a success.

He opened the Form-room door quietly, rolled in, and shut it quietly. He rolled towards the class unobtrusively. Mr. Lagden's eye was on the map, stretched over the blackboard on the tall easel; and Bunter hoped that it would remain there. Easy-going masters would affect not to notice what they did not want to punish; and Bunter was giving Lagden the chance. But, as a poet would say, it booted not.

Mr. Lagden's eyes, which were remarkably keen—as keen, indeed, as the gimlet eyes of Quelch—swept round at him.

"Bunter!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Yes, sir!"

"You are ten minutes late," said Mr. Lagden.

"Am—I am I, sir?" stammered Bunter.

"I'm awfully sorry, sir, but—but the Head stopped me to speak, sir—"

"The Head stopped you to speak?" exclaimed Mr. Lagden.

"Yes, sir! He—he often stops me for—for a little chat, sir."

"The Head was in the Sixth Form room, Bunter, before I came to this Form-room," said the new master of the Remove.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "W-a-a-was he, sir?"

The Removites grinned. Billy Bunter, as a fibber, left Ananias and George Washington standing. But often and often he had no luck with his fibs.

"He was!" said Mr. Lagden.

"I—I mean, Prout stopped me to speak, sir!" stammered Bunter. "Old Prout—I—I mean Mr. Prout, sir, master of the Fifth, sir! He—he—he stopped me to—to—to speak—"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Lagden. "Does Mr. Prout, like the Head, often stop you for a little chat, Bunter?"

"Exactly, sir! He—he often does, sir! He—he rather likes me, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured the Bounder, subduing a chuckle.

It really was surprising that even the fat and fatuous Owl hoped to get away with this.

"I am afraid, Bunter, that you are telling me untruths!" said Mr. Lagden, shaking his head.

"Oh, no, sir! Mr. Quelch will tell you that I'm the most truthful chap in the Form, if you ask him, sir! He—he's often held me up as an example to the Remove, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"You are ten minutes late for class, Bunter, and you have told me untruths," said Mr. Lagden. "I am afraid I cannot allow this to pass. Kindly come here!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles in dismay. Mr. Lagden had a pointer in his hand, with which he had been pointing out places of interest—more or less—on the map. Billy Bunter did not like the look of that pointer.

"I—I say, sir—"

"Come here, Bunter!"

"The—the fact is, sir, I—I couldn't help being late! I—I had to stop when Wingate called me!"

"Wingate?" ejaculated Mr. Lagden.

"Yes, sir—as he's a prefect and captain of the school, I—I had to stop, sir! He would have been waxy if I hadn't."

It was Billy Bunter's way, when he found that one fib would not see him through, to try the effect of another. But really the most credulous Form master would hardly have believed that Bunter was late because the Head had stopped him for a chat, because Mr. Prout had stopped him for a chat, and because a prefect had called him. Really, it was expecting too much.

Mr. Lagden's expression grew severe. "Come here at once, Bunter!" he rapped.

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter had almost reached his place in class. He turned back very unwillingly. It was borne in on his fat mind that the new beak was going to be a beast just like the old beak. At this rate, Bunter reflected bitterly, the Remove might as well have had Quelch back again.

"Come!" rapped Mr. Lagden.

Very slowly indeed Bunter came.

"You are wasting my time, Bunter!" said the new master, with a note in his

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voice that made Bunter jump. "Come here instantly!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. And he hurried.

It was then that Skinner of the Remove was stirred by the misdirected sense of humour for which he was well known. Skinner sat at the end of his form, and Bunter had to pass him. As the fat Owl hurried past, Skinner stretched out a foot, as if by inadvertence.

"Owl!" gasped Bunter.

He flew headlong.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the Remove.

"Owl! Oh crikey! Wow!"

Crash!

"Great pip!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Bunter, stumbling and sprawling blindly, crashed fairly into the blackboard.

The easel rocked—and rocked over!

There was another crash.

Map and blackboard landed fairly on Mr. Lagden.

The map, probably, did no damage. The blackboard seemed to do a lot. All the Remove heard the sharp crack as it established contact with the Form master's head.

There was a yell from Mr. Lagden.

Up to that moment his face had been good-humoured, and all the Remove—except Bunter—knew that he did not intend to deal with the late-comer severely.

But that sharp and painful rap on the head worked a startling change in the new master. Certainly, it might have made any master angry; there was no doubt that Quelch, in Lagden's place, would have been wrathful. Mr. Lagden seemed more than wrathful. He stumbled, and the blackboard crashed on the floor beside him, and the map fluttered round him; and as he strove to recover his balance he stumbled over the crumpling map and fell.

Bump!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, sitting up and staring blankly through his spectacles.

Mr. Lagden scrambled to his feet.

The expression on his face startled the Remove.

He made a leap towards Bunter, grasped him by the back of his collar, and dragged him to his feet. With the other hand he wielded the pointer.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yaroooooh!"

Whack! Whack!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"Good gad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "The jolly old lamb's turned into a jolly old tiger! Good gad!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yooop! Whooop! Leggo! Help! Yarooooh!" roared Bunter.

Harry Wharton started to his feet. That display of savage temper came as a complete surprise to the Remove. They had seen little of Lagden, so far, but they had taken him for a very good-tempered man—much better-tempered than Quelch, in fact. This was rather an eye-opener to them. Certainly, Mr. Quelch would never have dreamed of thrashing any fellow so severely for what was, after all, an accident.

"Mr. Lagden!" exclaimed Wharton.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Billy Bunter roared and struggled frantically.

"Owl! Leggo! Beast!" he yelled.

"Leggo! Wow! Help! Stop! Owl! Wow! Oh crikey! Leggo!"

"Shame!" shouted some fellow at the back of the class.

"Yaroooooh! Leggo!"

"Mr. Lagden!" shouted Wharton.

The raining whacks from the pointer suddenly ceased. Mr. Lagden threw the fat Owl away from him. It seemed as if the amazement and excitement in the Remove had recalled him to himself.

"Go to your place!" he snapped harshly.

"Owl! Wow! Wow! Wow!" howled Bunter.

The hapless Owl almost crawled to his place. Mr. Lagden looked at his Form, and knitted his brows as he read the faces of the juniors. In his place the fat Owl sat whimpering.

"Wharton! Cherry! Replace the blackboard!" said Mr. Lagden curtly.

"Yes, sir."

The two juniors stepped out and lifted the fallen easel, and replaced the blackboard, and the map on it.

Mr. Lagden stood breathing rather deep, his lips set. Once he opened his lips as if to speak, but closed them

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again. Wharton and Bob went back to their places.

Geography was resumed. In a few minutes Mr. Lagden's manner was as calm, as genial, as pleasant as ever. But the Removites were very much on their guard now. They had had a glimpse of the savage, brutal temper that lay hidden beneath that agreeable and smiling exterior. The new master of the Remove had given himself away pretty completely, and the Removites were not likely to forget it.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Flip Wants to Know!

MR. TWIGG, the master of the Second Form, frowned.

"Flip!" he said severely.

"Yessir!"

"Sit still!"

"Yessir!"

Flip of the Second sat still—for about a minute. Then he was stirring again.

The school was at dinner. There were many long tables in big Hall, and each Form at Greyfriars had its own table. At the high table—like the gods on Olympus—sat the high and mighty Sixth—far removed from common mortals. At the lower end of Hall were the fags—the Second and the Third. Between the great men of the Sixth and the small fry of the fag Form were the Middle School. The Remove, or Lower Fourth, were the lowest of these, so they were not far from the fags. Most of the fags were quite indifferent to their neighbours; but Flip of the Second seemed intently interested in the Remove.

Every few minutes, if not every few moments, Flip twisted his head round to stare at the Remove table.

It was upon the handsome face of Mr. Lagden at the head of that table that the little fag's eyes fixed when he looked. For some reason, known only to Flip, Lagden seemed to draw his glance like a magnet.

It irritated Mr. Twigg.

Twigg was a kind-hearted gentleman, and he was very tolerant to the queer little waif who had been placed in his Form, though he did not, perhaps, like his Form to be recruited from Puggins' Alley.

Flip, though he did his best, gave Mr. Twigg more trouble in Form than the other fags; his ways were not Greyfriars ways. That could not be helped; and Twigg was patient with him. But the waif might at least have behaved himself at table, in Mr. Twigg's opinion.

"Flip!" said Mr. Twigg again as the fag's head turned once more.

"Oh, yessir!" gasped Flip, colouring guiltily.

"Sit still!"

"Sittingly, sir!"

The fags exchanged glances and grins and winks. Dicky Nugent turned up his nose, and Sammy Bunter gave a little fat snigger.

Flip fixed his eyes on his plate and gave his attention to his dinner. With a great effort he refrained from looking round at Mr. Lagden again.

But he seemed unable to sit still. Flip, though rather like a fish out of water at Greyfriars School, was generally cheerful enough, in a happy-go-lucky way. He had plenty of troubles in his new life; but it was something like paradise after his old life.

But to-day Flip was not in his usual mood. He was worried and distressed and clouded. In the Form room he had given trouble—answering Mr. Twigg at random and making incessant mistakes. Now he seemed on pins and needles.

"Flip!"

It was Twigg's voice again.

"Oh, yessir!" groaned Flip.

"If you cannot behave yourself I shall send you away from the table, with your dinner unfinished."

"Oh, yessir!"

"Remember where you are, and remember that you are expected to have at least some tincture of good manners here!" said Mr. Twigg severely.

"Oh, yessir!" muttered Flip.

"Horrid little tick!" murmured Nugent minor.

Flip gave Richard Nugent an inimical glare.

"You 'old your row, face!" he grunted.

Mr. Twigg had not heard Dicky Nugent's murmur. But he heard Flip's rejoinder, which was not so subdued.

He gave the fag a portentous frown.

"This passes all patience!" he said.

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"Flip, leave the table at once and go out of Hall!"

"Yessir!" mumbled Flip.

He rose from his place and moved away, most of the fags grinning as he went. Flip did not heed them; he passed the Remove table on his way to the door, and his eyes turned on Mr. Lagden's handsome face. All the Remove fellows noticed that stare at their Form master, though Mr. Lagden himself seemed unconscious of it. Most eyes at the table near at hand turned on the fag as he went out.

Slowly Flip progressed to the door, twice looking back at the Remove table. In the doorway he stopped, turned, and fixed his eyes on Mr. Lagden once more. Then at last he was gone.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged curious glances. Flip's strange interest in their Form master was so obvious that they wondered that Mr. Lagden did not notice it. But the new master of the Remove seemed to have observed nothing.

"Poor little tick!" murmured Bob Cherry. "He's got Twiggy's rag out. What's the matter with the kid?"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry. "I can't make out why he's so jolly interested in our new beak."

"He looked as if he'd seen a ghost when Lagden blew in yesterday. He can't know the man, I suppose?"

"Well, how could he?"

"Of course he couldn't!"

Flip was hanging about, with his hands in his pockets and a dismal expression on his face, when the juniors came out of Hall. Harry Wharton tapped him on the shoulder, with a smile.

"If you're coming over to Highcliffe, kid, turn up for the brake in an hour's time," he said.

"Thank you kindly, sir!" answered Flip. "I'll be on 'and, sir—and verry glad to come."

The Removites passed on, leaving Flip hanging about the door. He seemed to be waiting.

He made a step forward as Mr. Lagden appeared. But he stopped again. Mr. Lagden came out with Wingate of the Sixth, and they were talking as they came. Mr. Lagden was a footballer, which was likely to make him popular at Greyfriars, and he was already on excellent terms with the footballing fraternity in the Upper School. Wingate did not notice the little fag; but Lagden's eyes turned on him for a moment, and a steely gleam came into them; but he passed on with the captain of Greyfriars, leaving Flip staring after him.

Flip wandered into the quad. He caught sight of Billy Bunter there, and his face brightened, as it always did at the sight of his podgy patron. Billy Bunter was not looking very bright. He was still feeling the effects of the tremendous licking he had had in the Form-room in third school, and he wriggled painfully as he rolled. The lightest licking was wont to draw from Billy Bunter deep lamentations—to which the celebrated lamentations of Job were a mere jest. But on this occasion the fat Owl really had cause for complaint, and he had received unusual sympathy in the Remove.

"Wow!" Bunter was remarking to space, as he caught a severe twinge where the pointer had landed. "Wow! Ow!"

"You been a-ketching it, sir?" asked Flip, with deep sympathy.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Ow! Yes! The beast! Wow!" He wriggled. "The awful rotter!"

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Quelch never licked a fellow like that! I wish we had Quelch back again! Wow! I wish I hadn't mopped that pail of water over Quelch! Ow!"

Flip started.

"Your new master been a-walloping of you, sir?" he asked.

"Yes—that beast Lagden! Ow!"

"He's got a 'cavy' and when he loses his temper," muttered Flip. "He always had!"

Billy Bunter stared at him.

"What do you mean, you young ass? What do you know about our new beak? Don't talk rot!"

Bunter rolled away. Flip was sympathetic, but sympathy was not much use to Billy Bunter; it did not soothe the many painful twinges in his fat person.

Flip stood with a dark brow for some minutes; then at last he went back into the House. He made his way to Masters' passage, to the study that had belonged to Mr. Quelch and that was now the quarters of the new master of the Remove. He knew that Mr. Lagden was not there; he had seen him in the quad with Wingate, Gwynne, and some other Sixth-Formers. He opened the study door and went in. Apparently he wanted to see Mr. Lagden, and intended to wait till he came.

Standing by the window, Flip looked out into the wintry sunshine in the quadrangle. It was some time before Mr. Lagden came in, but he came at last. Flip turned swiftly from the window as the study door opened, and the new master of the Remove came in.

Mr. Lagden's eyes fell on him at once. Again that steely glitter came into them. He closed the door quickly and came towards the fag.

"What do you want here?"

He spoke in a low, concentrated tone.

The fag's face paled a little. There was fear in his eyes, mingled with a stubborn determination, as he faced the new master of the Remove.

"You know what I want, Jimmy the One!" he answered. "I want to know when you're going. And I want you to know that if you ain't gone soon I'm goin' to the 'Ead—and you'll go with the coppers 'oldin' you!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Crook's Secret!

RUPERT LAGDEN, Master of Arts—whom nobody at Greyfriars would have dreamed was known in the underworld as "Jimmy the One"—stood silent, his eyes fixed on the fag's stubborn face.

The steely gleam in those hard eyes caused Flip's heart to beat faster.

His fear of the gentleman-crook was deep; but it did not make him falter. He faced the new master of the Remove steadily.

It had been a surprise—a startling surprise—to the Greyfriars waif when the new master had arrived at the school and he had recognised him as the crook he had known well in old days. It had been a still greater surprise to Rupert Lagden to find the waif there. And it had been a most disconcerting surprise. It meant danger for the man who led a double life—danger, and the defeat of his purpose.

In the underworld Jimmy the One was known to few. Of those few the last from whom he would have dreamed of anticipating danger was the neglected waif of Puggins' Alley.

To the police only his strange nickname was known, and even to Scotland

Yard Jimmy the One seemed more like an elusive sprite—a will-o'-the-wisp—than a real person.

Only once in a career of crime that had lasted over ten years and more had official hands fallen on Jimmy the One, and then he had escaped, unknown and unrecognised. And that had been in the early days, when the penniless, extravagant, reckless, and unscrupulous young Oxford man had first turned to crooked ways.

Few—few, indeed—knew Jimmy the One. But Flip had often seen him in the days at Puggins' Alley, when the gentleman-crook came there to see old Isaacs, the "fence," in his dingy den, to dispose of ill-gotten gains. The hapless waif had "dossed" in a dirty, loft in the dingy old house, and he, too, had brought to old Isaacs the loot obtained by surreptitious "pinching" and pilfering.

Once in those wretched days he had even tried to "pinch" from Jimmy the One, and had been beaten so severely that he had lain a whole day in pain in his miserable garret afterwards. And this was the waif that Jimmy the One found in the Second Form at Greyfriars when he came there as the temporary master of the Remove.

There was a long silence in the Form master's study.

Flip stood facing the crook, his face stubborn, though it was hard to keep his lip from trembling.

Lagden at last threw himself into a chair; he crossed one leg over the other, his slim, elegant hands clasped round his knee, and regarded the waif with a steady stare.

The silence became oppressive. Flip broke it at last.

"I asked some of the blokes if you was going, and they hadn't 'eard. It's more'n time you was gone, Jimmy."

Lagden did not answer; only his steady, steely stare remained fixed on the fag.

Was he thinking of risking it? the fag wondered. True, Flip's story might well be laughed at if he told the Head that the new master of the Remove was a professional crook.

Dr. Locke, certainly, would not believe a word of it; he would take it for a fantastic fancy, if not a malicious invention.

How could he believe it?

Rupert Lagden's record was known—he had filled post after post, at school after school—always with satisfaction, with commendation. He could, if he had chosen, have taken a permanent post in some school like Greyfriars; more than one headmaster would have been glad to include him in his staff.

His double life was not only unknown, but utterly unsuspected. Even the Scotland Yard officer, who, long years ago, had clapped a hand on his shoulder, did not know, or suspect, who and what he was.

The Head would not believe a word of it! Likely enough, Flip would be sent away from the school for telling such a fantastic tale!

But—Fantastic as that tale was, it would be remembered when the safe was cracked! The merest whisper of it would be enough for the keen detective officers who longed to get the handcuffs on Jimmy the One! Inquiries once turned in his direction would elicit that a series of successful robberies had taken place in schools where Rupert Lagden held temporary posts; in houses where he had been engaged as secretary. The hidden trail of crime would come to light.

Jimmy the One could not afford to take the risk.



"I been waiting for you, Flip!" said Buster grimly. He leapt at the fag, lifted him from the ground, and carried him through the wood. "Jimmy the One's given me orders to keep you in safe hands! An' I'm a-goin' to!"

Whether he was thinking of it Flip could not tell; the hard face and hard eyes told him nothing.

Something was working in the crook's mind, he could see that. He waited; and still Mr. Lagden did not speak.

The fag stirred uneasily.

"Cough it up, Jimmy!" he said at last. "I got to know! Get out of it, old man, or I go to the 'Ead, and if the 'Ead turns me down, off I goes to the police station at Courtfield. And if they laugh at me, as they may, they'll quit laughing when they 'ear that the school's been robbed—"

Lagden made a gesture, and the fag broke off.

"You've got me, Flip," said the crook. "I can't afford to let you talk—and in this place I can't stop your tongue. But I'm going to trade with you, Flip."

Flip shook his head.

"Nothing doing, Jimmy! I done with pinching—done with handling what ain't mine!"

"You'd go back to it fast enough if they turned you out of Greyfriars!" sneered the crook.

Another shake of the head.

"I wouldn't, Jimmy! You've said yourself that it's a mug's game. But that ain't all. It's a dirty game—a rotten game! I never knowed that in the alley, but I've learned it since. I pinched once since I came 'ere—and that wasn't for myself, neither. But—the blokes what knew gave me another chance. And the looks on their faces, Jimmy—I tell you, I understood then 'ow they looked at it! If it comes to

starve or steal, I'm going to be blooming 'ungry—I'll 'ave my 'and cut off afore I'll pinch!"

A flush came into his cheeks.

"If you're thinking of offering me a whack in the swag, Jimmy, cut it out! I wouldn't touch it!"

"I'm going to trade with you, all the same."

"And 'ow?" muttered Flip uneasily.

"You're called 'Flip,'" said the crook, in a low voice. "You never had any other name that you know of. You were dragged up in Puggins' Alley—among outcasts and thieves, in a slum where the police never venture to go unless three at a time. That's all you know about yourself, Flip. But hasn't it crossed your mind that you have a name—a father—like other boys?"

"Course it has," answered Flip. "Often enough I've wondered about it. But I don't know nothing about that."

"Others may know."

Flip gave a violent start.

He stepped towards the crook, his breath coming thick and fast.

"Jimmy! You know?"

"I've not said so!" answered the crook, watching the fag's flushed, excited face curiously.

"But that's what you mean, Jimmy! And I tell you, too, I've wondered at times if you knowed. More'n once, I know, you asked old Isaacs if I was still about th' alley; more'n once you asked him whether I'd been pinched by the coppers. There was plenty of ragamuffins about the alley, but you never asked nothing about them, or remembered them."

"Fust time I remember seeing you in the alley you knowed me—I could see

that you knowed me. And often and often you looked at me queer. I can tell you, Jimmy, that I've wondered more than once whether you knowed anything about me, and whether we was relations, perhaps."

Mr. Lagden burst into a laugh.

"Good gad! You wondered that?"

"It ain't so, Jimmy?"

"No!" The crook laughed again. "No! Hardly!"

"But you knowed something—and you could tell me if you liked." The fag's face was eager. "Jimmy, I got to be agin you in this—I can't let you diddle the old cove in the gownd what has been decent to me. But I ain't giving you away if I can 'elp it—and you know how glad the coppers would be to get their 'ands on Jimmy the One. If you know a bloke's name, Jimmy, you ought to tell a bloke."

He broke off, with a start.

"Jimmy, is that the trade you was speaking of?"

Lagden nodded.

"That's it," he said. "Make it a trade, Flip. You've got a name—and a father. Hold your tongue about me, and—"

"A name and a father!" said the fag, in hushed tones. "Jimmy, you mean that I got a father living?"

"I mean exactly that."

"Oh swipes!" murmured Flip.

The crook's eyes rested curiously on the flushed, eager face. His look was indefinable; there was dislike in it, and ruthlessness, yet perhaps there was a faint tinge of compassion. Jimmy the One was bad—bad in the grain—hard, ruthless, savage, revengeful, little more

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than a beast of the jungle in the skin of a civilised man. Yet even in that dark mind and black heart there was a saving touch of humanity.

"Tell me, Jimmy!" muttered Flip huskily. "Tell a bloke! You know my father—you seen him?"

"Many a time."

"I—I—I 'ope—" Flip's voice faltered. "If he's living, Jimmy, I don't see 'ow I come to be landed in Puggins' Alley like I was. Don't tell me that he's in prison, Jimmy?"

Jimmy the One laughed again.

It was a natural idea to enter the waif's mind; the only way he could imagine an explanation of his lost and desolate state while his natural protector lived. But the amusement in the crook's laugh showed that that explanation, natural as it seemed, was far from the truth.

"You young ass! Your father is not in chokey—he's a man who sends others to chokey!" said Jimmy the One.

Flip jumped.

"Not a copper!" he gasped.

In Puggins' Alley "coppers" had been the natural enemies of the waif. Even at Greyfriars, he had not wholly overcome his ancient dread of "coppers." More than once he had instinctively turned a corner at the sight of P.-c. Tozer of Friardale.

"Sort of!" said Jimmy the One, still laughing.

"Oh swipes!" said the astounded Flip. "Why, if he didn't know me by sight, Jimmy, he might have run me in when I was a pincher!"

He shuddered.

"Swipes! I'd go straight arter this—if I hadn't fixed it up already! Straight as a string, s'elp me!"

"Don't you worry!" grinned the crook. "The man I'm speaking of flies at higher game than pickpockets in an alley. What would you say, Flip, if I told you that your father was a detective-officer?"

"It couldn't be true!" muttered Flip.

"Stranger things than that are true, Flip! And if you hold your tongue, and mind your own business, and forget that you ever saw Jimmy the One in Puggins' Alley, I'll put you wise—the day I leave this school."

"Swipes!" muttered Flip.

He stood silent, the colour coming and going in his face. The crook watched him, a glimmer of eagerness in his eyes now.

But the brightness died out of Flip's face. He shook his head.

"You're stuffing me, Jimmy, to keep my mouth shut!" he said. "'Ow could it be? 'Ow could a detective officer let his son get lost and landed in a slum to live among thieves? It ain't sense."

"Suppose," said Jimmy the One slowly—"only suppose—that a certain crook, whose name I needn't mention, was getting away with a fortune—a big fortune, Flip, that would have seen him safe for life, and enabled him to throw over the crooked game for good, and live as a rich man among his social equals, without a care on his mind."

Flip stared in silence.

"And suppose," went on the crook, in the same slow tones, "that in the very moment of success, a hand dropped on his shoulder. Suppose he lost that fortune, Flip, and had a narrow escape of discovery, recognition, and prison! Suppose, after his dream of wealth and ease and safety, he saw himself penniless again, and booked for a life of either hard work or crime, with expensive tastes, and no taste for work?"

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"Yes," muttered Flip.

"What do you think that crook would feel like?" asked Jimmy the One.

"What? And suppose he was too careful of his neck to think of handling a gun—and that he spent nights and days, days and nights, brooding over revenge—till at last he got the idea. Suppose that detective officer who had ruined him was a widower with a small son—a little child! Suppose the idea occurred to the crook of stealing the boy and landing him among thieves to grow up as a thief—a breaker of the law of which his father was the defender! Suppose all that, Flip, and you can work out how a detective officer's son came to be a nameless outcast in a thieves' alley."

Flip trembled.

"You!" he breathed.

Jimmy the One shrugged his shoulders.

"You villain!" breathed Flip.

"Don't jump to conclusions, Flip!" The expression on the fag's face startled the crook. "What I've told you is a story I've heard—I had no hand in it."

"That's a lie!" said Flip.

But the expression on his face changed slowly.

"If it was you, Jimmy—if I was sure it was you—I'd go straight to the police now! You're a bad egg, Jimmy, but it's 'ard to believe you're so bad as that. Never mind who did it—but my father? You know where he is, Jimmy?"

"I could ring him up on the telephone here if I liked."

"Oh swipes!" said Flip. "Then—then his name—my name, Jimmy—my father's name—is it in that there telephone-book?"

"Look for it if you like—you have plenty to choose from," said Jimmy the One, laughing.

"You'll tell me, Jimmy?"

"I'll tell you—the day I leave Greyfriars," said Jimmy the One, coolly—"that is, if you hold your tongue while I'm here."

Flip trembled.

"I—I can't, Jimmy—I can't, old man! You know I can't! Arter they've all been so good to me, 'ow can I? I'm giving you a chance to get out and get clear! Ain't that enough?"

"No!"

Mr. Lagden rose to his feet.

"Take time to think it over," he drawled. "It's worth your while, Flip—a name, a father, a respectable home, a place in the world for yourself, instead of living on charity. And—think of your father. In ten or eleven years he has not forgotten you, Flip! He is still a young man, but he looks ten years older than his age. If he had you back—"

"You must tell me, Jimmy," said the fag hoarsely.

"Make it a trade, then," said Jimmy the One.

"I—I can't do that."

"Take time—think it over! I'm playing football this afternoon—I shall soon have to change. Leave me now—and think it over! See me again later, after tea, and tell me what you decide."

"I—I got to think," muttered the fag wretchedly.

"That's right! Cut!"

Slowly the fag left the study.

Rupert Lagden, M.A., stood for some moments in thought after he had gone. Then he went to the telephone, and was busy on that instrument for some time before he left the study to change for football with the Sixth.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Only Bunter!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Just in time, kid!"

Flip stared round almost vacantly.

Bob waved a hand to him from the crowded brake. Harry Wharton & Co. were starting for Higheliffe School, for the football match with Courtenay's team there. As many fellows as the brake would hold were going over with the footballers; but there was room for Flip to squeeze in.

The fag stared at Bob.

He had been glad of the offer of a seat in the brake, glad to be going over to Higheliffe to see the Remove footballers play. Without friends in his Form, and with his podgy patron, Billy Bunter, taking very little trouble about him, the kindness of the chums of the Remove came in very welcome on a half-holiday.

But the talk in Mr. Lagden's study had driven the whole thing from his mind. He had left that study like a fellow in a dream, almost dazed by what he had heard from the gentleman crook. He was in no mood now for anything but getting into a quiet corner and thinking it over—thinking over the startling information the crook had given him—the possibility of finding the father he had never known, and the price the crook demanded for what he could tell! Flip's brain was in a whirl.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wake up, kid!" bawled Bob. "Look here, are you coming along to Higheliffe? Wake up!" "We can make room for you, kid!" called out Harry Wharton.

"The roomfulness is great, and the pleasurefulness will be terrific, my esteemed Flip," declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Flip shook his head.

Without approaching the brake, he went on his way, some of the Removites staring after him in surprise and a natural annoyance. Johnny Bull gave an emphatic grunt.

"Cheeky little tick!" said Vernon-Smith. "I don't see what the thump you want fags in the brake for, Wharton."

"Well, I don't specially," answered the captain of the Remove. "But I thought the kid would like to come."

"Well, he doesn't; and they never taught him to say 'thank you,' in his slum," said the Bounder. "Let's get off."

"There's something queer about that kid to-day," said Frank Nugent. "I can't make him out."

"Not worth making out!" yawned the Bounder. "What the thump does he matter, anyhow? Let's get off."

"I say, you fellows," Billy Bunter rolled up to the brake—"I say, hold on! I say—"

"No room for porpoises," said Squiff. "Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Hold on!" yelled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, what about the Form meeting?"

"The what?" gasped Wharton.

"The Form meeting!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "You jolly well read my notice on the board this morning—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's for three—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the footballers in the brake.

They seemed immensely tickled at the idea of letting a football match slide, to attend Billy Bunter's "meeting" in the Rag.

(Continued on page 12.)

FOOTBALL FAVOURITES!

No. 15.
**JAMES
HAMPSON,**
English
International
centre-forward
of
**BLACKPOOL
F.C.**



Where There's a Will There's a Way !

IT is to be hoped that the managers of football clubs in general have short memories. If they have not, they must spend many sleepless nights worrying about the fine players they have allowed to slip through their hands; players whose merits they have not appreciated. Jimmy Hampson, the centre-forward of Blackpool, a footballer who is well on towards the three hundred goal mark in big football, is a typical case in point.

Hampson was born at little Hulton, a Lancashire mining town which, in case you don't know, is within three or four miles of the ground of the Bolton Wanderers Football Club. As a growing lad he played most of his football on the doorstep of the Wanderers club, as we might say.

"When I was playing with the Walkden Primitive Methodist School team," Hampson told me, "I had no very big ideas about making progress in the game of football. But I liked the game; liked the sensation of scoring goals, as I was always in the forward line."

Gradually the idea of making a name for himself in football came to Hampson, and he determined that he would get on. Actually, he had enough setbacks to have disheartened most young players. First he had a trial with Manchester United, but they did not think him good enough to sign on as a professional. So back he went to his local club. Then Blackburn Rovers became interested in him, and as an amateur, playing from time to time with the "A" team, he spent a couple of seasons on their books.

By this time, Hampson's imagination was running well ahead. Week after week he expected to be approached to become a professional player. Alas, the offer did not arrive. Blackburn Rovers let him go back once more to his local team, and to his work in the pit, which he confessed to me he did not like very much.

I have had the graphic story of Hampson's first engagement as a "pro" from the player himself. "Mr. Percy Smith, the present manager of the Spurs, was at Nelson in 1925, and after I had played a couple of trial games for them, I was told that I was wanted in the office.

"My heart leaped for joy when, at the start of the interview with the Nelson officials, I was told that they were sufficiently impressed with my play to sign me on as a professional. Timidly, expectantly, I asked how much a week I should get. I came right down off my high horse—bang from the land of dreams to reality—when I received the reply: 'Thirty shillings a week.'

"My own ideas—boys do have big ideas, don't they?—were in the realm of five or six pounds a week. Thirty shillings a week was not enough to relieve me of the necessity of going back to work in the pit during the week. But I decided to take it; made up my mind then and there that I would soon be worth much more than that."

And the rapid rise of Jimmy Hampson from the thirty-bob a week stage illustrates once more the truth of the old proverb: "Where there's a will there's a way."

Executioner-in-Chief !

JIMMY HAMPSON had not been long with Nelson when Blackpool came along with an offer of a big transfer fee—big enough for a young player because it was well over one thousand pounds—and a big jump in wages for the player himself.

Some of the managers who had Hampson under notice thought that he was too small to make good as an inside-forward. He has never grown very big. To-day, he only stands five feet six inches—about the same height as Hughie Gallacher—and has never touched the eleven stone mark in

weight. It was this lack of height and weight which made many people think that he could not possibly be a successful centre-forward. But in the course of his very first game with Blackpool, he was moved from his regular position at inside-right to

the place of leader of the attack, and it was as centre-forward that he has made his name.

He got his taste of the real excitement of big football in his first season at Blackpool—the season of 1927-28. Things had not gone well with the seaside club, and they were in grave danger of losing their place in the Second Division. On the last day of the season they had to play Fulham at Blackpool. The seashiders won by four goals to one, and it was Jimmy Hampson who got three of the goals. Small wonder that the spectators at that match dashed across the field at the finish in an effort to carry the centre-forward off the field.

Because of those three goals Hampson scored that day, Blackpool kept their place in the Second Division, and it was Fulham who went down, the "too-little fellow" being executioner-in-chief!

I was not a bit surprised when Hampson told me how he dodged those who would have carried him shoulder high that day, because he is the type of footballer who just does his job. When you try to talk to him about his goal-scoring, he won't be drawn very far beyond paying tribute to the players who make the openings for him. Actually, however, Hampson should not be included among the centre-forwards who want chances served up for them on a spoon, as it were. He goes around looking for them, and one of the things which make him so difficult to stop is the fact that he is unorthodox. You will see him, if you watch closely, away on the wing sometimes; getting away from the half-back who would stick closer to him than a brother.

Surprising Speed and Wonderful Ball Control !

HAVING saved Blackpool from falling out of the Second Division, Hampson played his part—a big part, in helping the club into the First Division.

This was in the 1929-30 season, when Jimmy Hampson scored no fewer than forty-five goals in League games—an average of over a goal per game. This was his most successful term in the goal-scoring sense.

Footballers in the Second Division do not often catch the eye of the representative team selectors, so Hampson had to wait until he was with Blackpool in the First Division before the honours of the game began to come his way. In the early part of the 1930 season there was a red letter day for Hampson in more senses than one. He was chosen to play for the English League against the Scottish League on the Tottenham Hotspur ground. The English League eleven waltzed round the Scots in the most amazing way, beat them by seven goals to three, and Hampson, giving as great a display of the real centre-forward work as I have ever seen, scored three of the goals.

Naturally this success brought him further honours, and he had real International caps awarded to him for playing against Ireland and Wales in 1931. Both matches were well won by England, and Hampson scored once against Ireland and twice against Wales.

A big proportion of Hampson's gals have been made possible by his surprising speed off the mark. Coupled with it he has fine body swerve, and good control of the ball. And shoot! He certainly can do that! Many the goal-keeper who has had a vision of the ball at Hampson's feet, and then has been startled into asking the question: "Where did that one go?" The answer is, usually—into the net!

Because of the entire absence of swank in his make-up; because he is essentially a player who plays the game fairly, Hampson is liked by opponents as well as by colleagues.

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THE SCHOOLMASTER CRACKSMAN!

(Continued from page 10.)

"I say, you fellows—"

"You can hold that jolly old meeting by yourself, old fat man!" chuckled Peter Todd. "You can do all the talking, with nobody to interrupt you."

"Oh, really, Toddy! I say, you fellows—"

"Like us to cut the football match at Highcliffe, and roll up to the meeting, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Yes, old chap! After all, a football match doesn't matter much, does it? And this meeting is rather important, you know! Think of poor old Quelch in sanny and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" bellowed Bob Cherry. "Who's for cutting the footer to hear Bunter wagging his jolly old chin?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Roll away, barrel!"

And the brake rolled off with the hilarious footballers, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after it through his big spectacles, in great wrath.

In fixing his Form meeting for that afternoon Bunter had forgotten that there was a football match on. Trifles like that were not likely to stick in Bunter's memory.

But in view of the great importance of the "meeting," Billy Bunter felt that the fellows might have cut so very unimportant a trifle as a football match! Nobody seemed to share Bunter's opinion on that point, however. Not only had the footballers gone off to Highcliffe, regardless of Bunter and all his works; but a good many fellows had gone with them, and other fellows were wheeling out their bikes to follow, while still others were walking it. It looked as if very few of the Remove would be left to attend Bunter's Form meeting—even if inclined to do so, which was perhaps doubtful!

"Beasts!" grunted Billy Bunter.

Still, all the fellows were not gone, and Billy Bunter hoped for the best. He proceeded to look for stray members of the Remove.

Hazelceno was the first he found. Hazel, having stared after the departing brake, with a frowning brow, was coming back towards the House, when Bunter bore down on him. The scowl on Hazel's face did not look encouraging; but Billy Bunter was one of those persons mentioned in the proverb, who rush in where angels fear to tread.

"Oh, you're not gone, old chap!" said Bunter affably.

"Looks as if I haven't, doesn't it?" grunted Hazel.

"They don't want you to keep goal today?" grinned Bunter.

Hazel gave him a black look, and tramped on. Billy Bunter rolled on with him.

"Cut off!" snapped Hazel.

"Don't be huffy, old chap!" said Bunter. "Cheer up, you know! After all, you can't keep goal like Squiff, can you?"

Hazel did not answer that.

"I offered to keep goal myself," added Bunter. "Wharton turned me down—laughed, in fact."

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Hazel—"

"Shut up, for goodness' sake!"

"The fact is, Wharton's too cheeky!" said Bunter, touching the right chord at last. "He isn't really the only pebble on the beach."

"He thinks he is!" growled Hazel.

Hazel was sore. He did not agree

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with the rest of the Remove that Squiff was worth ten times as much in goal.

"Time he was taken down a peg, what?" said Bunter.

"High time!" grunted Hazel.

"Making out that he's the only fellow to call a Form meeting!" said Bunter.

"You come to the meeting, Hazel, old chap, just to show him, what?"

Hazel stared at him.

"You silly idiot!" was his answer; and he stalked away. Apparently, Hazel was not disposed to come to the meeting, even to "show" Wharton that he was not the only pebble on the beach.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter.

The fat junior continued to look for stray Removites.

It really was important for that meeting to be held and a collection to be taken for providing comforts for the invalid.

Bunter—not for the first time—had been disappointed about a postal order! It was essential to raise the wind! Every man in the Remove sympathised with Mr. Quelch, more or less—and with so much sympathy going, surely some of it would take a practical form! So many fellows had said "Poor old Quelch!" that really one might have expected a rush to attend the meeting, now that the fellows knew that it was on Quelch's account. But apparently the fellows were satisfied with saying "Poor old Quelch!" and did not intend to extend their sympathy beyond that remark.

Or perhaps they suspected that a collection taken to provide bunches of grapes for the invalid might stick to Bunter's own fat hands! It was barely possible!

Anyhow, the Form meeting did not seem to be prospering. Bunter found Bolsover major in the quad; but all the bully of the Remove did was to knock off his cap, without even waiting to hear his remarks. Having fielded his cap, Bunter decided to leave Bolsover major alone. He went into the House, and found Skinner & Co. loafing in the Remove passage. They were not going over to Highcliffe. They were not interested in football; but it transpired that they were still less interested in Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, are you coming to the meeting?" asked Bunter.

"Eh? What meeting?" asked Skinner.

"The Form meeting—you saw my notice on the board this morning—"

"Kick him!" said Skinner.

"I say, you fellows—Yarooooooh!"

Skinner and Snoop and Stott were idle and unoccupied, as usual, that half-holiday. They found occupation, for a few minutes, in kicking Bunter along the Remove passage.

From this occupation they seemed to derive amusement. Billy Bunter found it far from amusing.

He yelled and fled for the stairs. Skinner & Co. followed him, as far as the landing; and Bunter descended in a great hurry.

"Beasts!" he yelled back from the next landing.

"Come up and have some more!" grinned Skinner.

"Yah!"

Bunter did not come up for more. On many occasions, Bunter did not know when he had had enough. This time he knew! He departed in wrath, leaving Skinner & Co. chortling.

Really, the outlook for that important Form meeting was not encouraging. But hope springs eternal in the human breast. Towards three o'clock, Bunter rolled into the Rag, hoping to see some of the fellows arriving. He found the Rag quite vacant.

"Beasts!" said Bunter, addressing space.

Three o'clock, at last, boomed from the clock tower. Billy Bunter turned his eyes hopefully on the door.

It did not open.

The quarter chimed! Still the door did not open. William George Bunter had the Rag to himself! It was a meeting of one—utterly useless to Bunter, for he obviously could not take a collection from himself! With feelings that were really too deep for words, the Owl of the Remove rolled out of the Rag—and the meeting was over!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Straight Path!

FLIP, of the Second Form, stood leaning against one of the old elms, in a quiet corner of the quad.

His little face—grubby, as usual—was dark with thought and trouble.

Flip was thinking—or trying to think.

Nameless, homeless, a waif and an outcast, there had always been at the back of his mind the thought, the knowledge, that he must have relations, connections, somewhere, like every other fellow. He had—or had had—a father and a mother, though he had never known them—or so long ago that the memory was dim and indistinct. He had never hoped to come in touch with them; or, if he had hoped, the hope was so faint as scarcely to amount to a hope. He had always been "Flip"—and Flip he would remain. Even as a Greyfriars boy he was only Flip, the nameless nobody from nowhere. And now, from what Jimmy the One had disclosed, it seemed that he had at least a father—that his father was living; not an outcast like poor Flip himself, but a man in an honourable position; a man whose duty it was to enforce the law that the hapless waif had so often broken.

Jimmy the One was false—false to the marrow of his bones; a bad egg through and through. But he had told the truth in this—Flip knew instinctively that this was the truth.

It chimed in with his former vague suspicions that Jimmy the One knew something of him, something of his origin. And the crook had not told him willingly. Only because he feared betrayal, and the defeat of his nefarious designs at Greyfriars, had he told him—holding out his knowledge as a bribe to the waif to keep silent.

It was a tempting bribe.

The kinless waif longed to know some one of his own blood. The nameless outcast longed to have a name that was his own. The fatherless boy would have given all the treasures of the world to have a father as other boys had. And all this was offered him—he knew that Jimmy the One could make his words good—if he chose!

It was like Satan of old offering the kingdoms of the earth in temptation. Sorely the fag's mind struggled with it.

He had only to hold his tongue! What he knew, no one else even suspected.

Mr. Lagden would remain a week—two or three weeks, perhaps, at the school; and would leave, respected and regretted, as many a time before. Who would dream of suspecting a connection between the temporary master of the Remove and the cracking of the Head's safe—if it chanced to happen while he was at Greyfriars? No one! Who would dream that "Jimmy the One" had ever been there? No one! Flip had no blame, no punishment, to fear!



Bunter succeeded at last in wriggling out of the straw. Then, dim as it was in the cart, he recognised Flip. He caught the fag's eyes, shining in the gloom, turned on him, and saw the gag in his mouth. "Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

All he had was his conscience—the conscience of an outcast, a waif, a "pincher"!

Only a few weeks ago it would have been so different. Only a few weeks ago he would have joined Jimmy the One in any rascally enterprise, and felt himself honoured by such association. He had always admired the gentleman crook; he would have been delighted that Jimmy the One had taken him up. But a few weeks had made centuries of difference. And Flip knew, too, had he still been the "pincher," the pilferer, the rascally young rogue of Puggins' Alley, Jimmy the One might have made use of him; but would never have told him the secret, never have mentioned that he had a secret to tell.

It was because he was honest now, because he would yield neither to threats nor bribes, that the crook had played this last card—unwillingly, because it was the only card left in his hand.

That reflection helped to strengthen poor Flip if he wavered. Honesty, according to the proverb, was the best policy—and surely it was so when it was to his new honesty that he owed the discovery that his father was living.

That much, at least, he knew now—his father lived, his father was an honourable man, an officer of the law, still mourning his loss after so many years, anxious to find his son—his son who was so bitterly anxious to find him. That much he knew, and that much he never would have known but for the fact that he was straight, and that Jimmy the One could bribe him with nothing else.

So much he owed to honesty; and he could not abandon the honesty that had

served him so well. He had only to hold his tongue, and let a thief in the night rob the headmaster who had taken him into the school—that was all! And Flip gritted his teeth over it. Among fellows who regarded a thief as more revolting than a leper, he was to league with a thief to rob his benefactor. This was how he was to repay the Head for taking him in, and Mauleverer's uncle for paying his fees. And Bunter—if Master Bunter knew—

A fat figure rolling down to the gates came within his line of vision.

Billy Bunter did not glance towards Flip, or notice that he was there. But the fag's eyes remained fixed on Bunter till the fat Owl rolled out at the gates and disappeared.

Flip owed much to Bunter—though not so much as he believed. It was undoubtedly through Bunter that he had been taken up by Lord Mauleverer's uncle and sent to Greyfriars. Bunter, in his own fat and fatuous way, had been kind to him since. What would Bunter think?

Flip was not aware that Bunter was not likely to think at all about anything that did not immediately concern his own fat self. Remove fellows would have been astonished could they have known that it was gratitude to Bunter, loyalty to Bunter, pride in Bunter's good opinion, and fear of his condemnation that helped more than anything else to support the tormented little waif as he wrestled with temptation. But so it was. Like the ancient builders who builded better than they knew, Bunter's influence over the waif produced results of which the fat Owl never would have dreamed.

Flip set his teeth. His mind was made up. He stirred at last, with a shiver. It was a cold day; a sharp wind blew from the sea. He had not noticed it as he stood there in painful thought.

He moved away and went towards the House. He was in time to see Mr. Lagden, with a coat on over his football garb, coming away from the changing-room with Wingate, Gwynne, Tom North, and two or three others of the Sixth.

Flip paused. He had to speak to Jimmy the One. Perhaps he feared for his own resolution if he allowed it to wait. Anyhow, he was going to speak—and speak at once. If Jimmy the One did not like it he could lump it. He should have gone before this.

Flip stopped in the path of the Form master and the seniors with a stubborn face.

"Skuse me, sir, I'd like to speak to you," he said.

Mr. Lagden's eyes glinted at him like steel. The seniors stared. Wingate smiled.

"Cut off, kid!" he said good-humouredly. "You mustn't bother Mr. Lagden now."

"I want to speak to 'im, please!" said Flip.

"My dear lad," said Mr. Lagden, laughing, "you are the boy called Flip, I think, in Mr. Twigg's Form. I hardly see what you can have to speak to me about."

"Young ass!" said Gwynne. "Cut!" Flip did not cut.

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(Continued from page 13.)

"I got to speak to you, sir!" he said. The rage that possessed Jimmy the One did not show in his face. He was used to iron self-control. His lips still smiled, while his eyes gleamed like cold steel. He was dictated to by this grubby little outcast, and he dared not disregard him. Already his companions were surprised and curious. But if Flip was driven to speak out they were likely to be more than surprised. Mr. Lagden's voice was calm and had an amused tone in it as he spoke.

"Well, well, I hardly see what you can have to say to me, my boy, but I will hear you. I will rejoin you in a moment," he added to Wingate.

The Sixth-Formers walked on, frowning at Flip as they passed. In their view, he was a cheeky little rascal, and Mr. Lagden an extraordinarily good-natured man to take any heed of him. They were out of hearing when Mr. Lagden spoke again in a low voice that was like a serpent's hiss.

"You little fool! You mad young idiot! How dare you speak to me in a crowd like this! Can't you see—"

"I don't care," muttered the fag. "You don't care!" Mr. Lagden breathed hard. "You don't care! Do you think they won't wonder—"

"I don't care! I got to speak! It's your look-out, and, if you want me to, I'll speak out afore the lot of them—shout it out all over the shop!" said Flip. "You got to go! You 'ear, Jimmy the One? I thought it over, and I ain't standing for 't. You ain't staying 'ere to rob—"

"Hush!" breathed the crook.

"Get out, then!" said Flip. "You got to go—and you got to go to-day! That's settled! You can't come it over me, Jimmy the One!"

Lagden's eyes burned. "You're mighty partickler about them blokes not 'earing a word," said Flip. "Well, they'll 'ear it fast enough if you don't go. They'll 'ear the whole bizney from start to finish. They'll find that the bloke they're goin' to play football with is a crook that's been wanted by the coppers for ten or twelve years! They'll—"

"And what of what I told you—of what I can tell you of your father?"

"You can't square me!" said Flip.

Rupert Lagden's hands clenched hard in the pockets of his coat. If looks could have killed, the waif of Greyfriars would have had only seconds to live.

"You're going, Jimmy the One!" said Flip steadily. "Look 'ere, I'm goin' over to 'Ighcliffe to see the blokes play footer, like they've asked me to. When I get back you got to be gone! You don't want to let me find you 'ere, Jimmy the One, when I come back in the brake. I ain't got any more than that to say. Now you can go and play football if you like. Don't be 'ere when I come back from 'Ighcliffe, or you'll walk out of Greyfriars with the darbies on!"

With that, and without waiting for a

reply, Flip of the Second turned and walked away.

Mr. Lagden stood for a few moments watching him as he went; then he turned and went back into the House.

Flip walked out of the gates. He had given the crook his last warning—and he meant every word that he had said. It was left for Jimmy the One to make his choice.

Mr. Lagden, in his study, stood at the telephone for several minutes. When he rang off he left the study and the House, and walked down to Big Side, where Wingate and his friends were awaiting him. Mr. Lagden threw off his coat and joined the footballers. Judging by his looks and the game he played, Mr. Lagden's thoughts were concentrated on Soccer. No fellow on Big Side dreamed of what was passing in the mind of the handsome, athletic young Form master—they were not likely to guess the black thoughts of Jimmy the One.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In the Cart!

"Oh lor'!" groaned Billy Bunter. It was not Bunter's lucky day.

Everything, in fact, had gone wrong that day. The universe was not being run to the satisfaction of the most important person in it—William George Bunter.

First and worst—he had been disappointed about a postal order, which he had long been expecting.

Then he had bagged a record licking from the new master of the Remove—a beast whose apparent good-nature had proved lamentably deceptive.

And then the Form "meeting," attended only by the egregious Owl himself could hardly be considered a success.

And now he was tired and muddy, plugging dolefully along a deep, muddy lane, and wishing that he hadn't started.

The stars in their courses fought against Sisera of old; and really they seemed to be up to the same game with Billy Bunter!

Having absolutely no other resource left for the afternoon, Billy Bunter had made up his fat mind to walk over to Highcliffe and see the football match there.

He was not in the least interested in the winter game, nor in the progress of Harry Wharton & Co. in pursuing the flying ball, except that he hoped that the beasts were getting jolly well licked! But it was possible that the Co. might "tea" with Courtenay and the Caterpillar after the match; in which case Bunter was rather keen on their society. And even those beasts would give him a lift home in the brake afterwards. Anyhow, it was better than loafing about the deserted school with everybody else, out of gates.

Bunter took the shortest cut for Highcliffe. The shortest of short cuts was really too long for Bunter. The going was easier by the high-road; but it was twice as far.

Bunter rolled into a lane that cut off a good deal of the distance. It was not till then that he made the old discovery once more that the shortest way across may be longer than the longest way round.

Rain and melted snow had turned that sunken lane to deep mud; Bunter's feet squashed and squelched in it, slowly, painfully, and laboriously. He dragged one weary foot after another, wishing that he had taken the

high-road, or, alternatively, as the lawyers say, that he hadn't started at all.

Plop, plop, plop! went Bunter's weary footsteps through the mire.

Many times he stopped to rest. But there was nothing to sit on—only muddy earth and chilly, leafless thickets, wet and dreary. Standing, leaning wearily on a tree, he was dismally conscious of a bitter wind and of cold feet.

"Oh lor'!" said Bunter, for the twentieth time.

His progress was about as rapid as that of a tired snail, perhaps a little less rapid. At this rate the football match was likely to be over before he reached Highcliffe.

That did not matter very much; but tea might be over, too—if there was tea, and even that was not a certainty. Bunter was tired—awfully tired. A very little exertion made Bunter tired—and he had exerted himself quite a lot.

He plugged on dismally.

That sunken lane, shut in by high banks of earth, thickets, and leafless trees, was absolutely deserted. It was hardly ever trodden in winter. Bunter had it all to himself; and there was not the remotest prospect of getting a lift on his way, as there might have been had he kept to the high-road. If only there had been something to sit on it would not have been so bad. Along the high-road, seats had been provided by a thoughtful Rural District Council; but the Rural District Council had quite overlooked that remote, muddy lane. There was nothing to sit on but the earth, which was juicy with mud. Bunter plugged on—plop, plop, plop!

Suddenly he halted, with a squeak of relief.

He sighted a cart.

It was in the deepest, muddiest, darkest, loneliest part of that deep, lonely, muddy lane. He was surprised to see it there. But there it was! And Bunter was glad to see it. He was ready to beg, borrow, or steal a lift—he was ready for anything that would give repose to his weary legs.

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at the cart and plugged on towards it.

It was a covered cart; the canvas cover closed over it. The horse was tied to a tree by the wayside. The carter was not to be seen.

Bunter concluded that he was in the cart, as there was no sign of him anywhere else. He noticed footprints in the muddy earth, but Bunter was no reader of "sign," and he did not notice that the footprints led away from the tied cart, and that there were no returning tracks.

He rapped on the canvas cover of the cart.

"Hi!" he called out.

There was no answer from within, and the fat junior jerked aside the cover at the back of the cart and peered into the dim interior.

The tail-board was down, and it was easy to look in. To his surprise, he found the cart empty—so far as carters went. It was almost empty otherwise, containing nothing but a mass of straw and a few sacks.

"Oh lor'!" said Bunter dismally.

He blinked round the lane and at the frosty woodlands on either side. Evidently the carter had tied up his horse there and gone. Why, was a mystery. There was no building within a mile; the man could hardly be gone to "grub." Why a carter should drive his cart into that solitary spot, tie up the horse, and clear off on foot, was a

mystery far beyond Bunter's powers to penetrate.

Not that he cared a straw what the carter's reasons might be. All he thought of was that he could not get a lift till the man came back.

"Hi!" shouted Bunter, hoping that the man might be within hearing. "Hi, hi, hi!"

The dim woods echoed "Hi!" but that was all. The carter, wherever he was, did not seem to be within hearing.

"Blow him!" growled Bunter.

It was really irritating. There was no chance of a lift. But there was an opportunity of sitting down and resting weary fat limbs, which was better than nothing.

The man could hardly object to a tired fellow taking a rest in his cart; and if he did object, Bunter did not mind.

The fat junior clambered into the cart, and, with a grunt of relief, sat down in the thick straw.

The canvas flap fell in place, shutting out the wintry sunshine.

Bunter stretched his fat limbs luxuriously in the straw. There was plenty of room for the fat junior to lie down. Bunter had a secret persuasion that he really was rather tall for his age; but as a matter of fact, he was only tall sideways. There was plenty of room, and he settled down to rest with a satisfied grunt.

This was better than plugging wearily along a muddy lane. When the carter came back, he would be tipped to drive Bunter to Highcliffe; or, if he was going the other way, back to Greyfriars, which would be better than nothing. That is to say, he could be promised a tip!

As Bunter's financial resources were completely exhausted, the tip itself would not be forthcoming. Still, the man would not expect the tip till after Bunter had had the lift; so that would be all right. If there was one of those sordid arguments about money, Bunter would be at the right end of the drive and on the right side of the bargain, anyhow. Bunter was not worrying about that.

He enjoyed the rest. But it was cold, and he drew a couple of the empty sacks over him as he lay in the straw.

Minute followed minute, but there was no sound of the carter's return.

Bunter was quite puzzled.

Where on earth the man could be was really perplexing. Still, he was bound to turn up sooner or later. Bunter was warm and comfortable now, and he could wait. It was deeply dusky, almost dark, in the covered cart. The silence was unbroken, and Bunter, tucked up warmly in the straw under two or three sacks, began to nod. He did not go to sleep; but he was half-way to the land of dreams when at last there were sounds in the solitary lane.

Footsteps padded in the mud.

Billy Bunter's eyes, half-closed behind his big spectacles, opened. Apparently the carter was returning at last.

The footsteps came to the rear of the cart. The canvas flap at the back was partly pulled aside.

What happened next was so amazing, so utterly unexpected, that it seemed to Billy Bunter like a nightmare.

Something—he hardly saw that it was a diminutive human form—was flung bodily into the cart.

Bunter, who was just sitting up, received it as it landed, and collapsed under it in the straw, the newcomer sprawling over his astounded face.

There was a crash as the tail-board was jammed shut. It drowned the

startled gasp of the Owl of the Remove.

Hardly a moment more, and the horse was untied, the unseen man had clambered into the high seat outside the canvas cover in front, and the covered cart was being driven rapidly away, rocking and jolting and clattering in the muddy lane.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Hand of the Crook!

FLIP of the Second Form swung cheerily along in the cold winter sunshine.

It was a long walk to Highcliffe; but in the keen, fine weather the walk was an agreeable one, and Flip was an active fag.

His heart was lighter as he left Greyfriars than it had been all day.

He had been tempted—tempted hard; but he had fought the good fight, and won. He had made up his mind, and not for all that the gentleman crook could offer him would he stand by, silent, while Jimmy the One carried on his old game at Greyfriars.

He knew that the crook would never speak now. He had to go, and he would go with his secret untold. That was the price Flip had to pay for keeping to the straight path. Still, his heart was lighter.

He knew now what he had never known before but had only dreamed and hoped—that he had a father, and that his father was living.

From Jimmy the One he would learn nothing. That was inevitable now. But there might be other ways. Some time, somehow—perhaps when he was older—he would find his father. At least he could hope. The mere knowledge that he was not, as he had always believed, alone in the world, was sufficient to make his heart lighter.

He had been a "pincher" once, a young rogue among rogues. Greyfriars had taught him better things. But he had now an added motive for keeping "straight." He had his father to think of—his father, who stood for the law, according to what Jimmy had told him, and whom no future action of his should ever discredit. Not even to find that father would he dabble again in roguery. The crook could go, and take his secret with him rather than that.

Flip's grubby little face was bright as he swung along, whistling through his teeth.

His father!

His thoughts ran continually on that. His father, if ever he found him, should not be ashamed of him, should not find him the associate of such men as Jimmy the One. With all his cunning, all his wary astuteness, the crook had touched the wrong chord.

Flip passed the end of the deep lane into which Bunter had turned some time before, unaware that it was a short cut to Highcliffe. He had not been long enough at Greyfriars to learn his way about the countryside. He swung on by the high road towards Courtfield, still at a considerable distance. Here, on one side—the side of the sunken lane—the road was bordered by woodland.

Flip glanced carelessly at a man who was standing, leaning against a tree, by the roadside. The man looked, at a careless glance, like any of the country carters, of whom he had seen many.

But as the fag came swinging up the road, the man stepped from the tree and, to Flip's surprise, directly into his way.

"Hold on, Flip!" he said.

Flip stared at him, and his eyes widened. The hard face, with a ragged moustache and close-set, cunning eyes under the slouched hat, was familiar to him, though it was long since he had seen it.

"Swipes!" he ejaculated.

He stared at the grinning face.

"You 'ere, Buster?"

"Fancy meetin' you here, Flip!" grinned Buster. "My word, you ain't dressed like you was in the alley! You glad to see an old friend, Flip?"

"No, I ain't!" said Flip. "You never was a friend of mine, Buster. Last time I see you you give me a wipe behind the ear, you did. I don't want to 'ave nothing to do with you!"

He backed away a pace, warned by the gleam in the ruffian's close-set eyes.

"And off!" panted Flip.

Buster's grasp was on his shoulder in a twinkling. One rapid glance the ruffian gave up and down the road. A second more and Flip was hooked from the road into the trees with a strength he had no chance of resisting.

He hardly attempted to resist for the moment; he was taken so completely by surprise. He knew the ruffian by sight. Often enough, in the old days in Puggins' Alley, he had seen him. But he had never had anything to do with the Buster. The man was neither friend nor enemy. And the motive for his sudden attack was an utter mystery to the fag. But, whatever his unknown motive might be, the ruffian was in deadly earnest. The little fag was dragged among the trees; and as he opened his mouth to shout, a rough hand was clapped over it.

Half carrying, half dragging the astonished fag, the Buster plunged rapidly through the tangled wood till he was a good hundred yards from the road. Then he stopped.

Flip panted breathlessly.

"What's this game, Buster? What are—"

"Don't make a row, Flip!" said the Buster in a low tone of menace. "You give one yell and you won't give another. If you don't want to be knocked silly, keep mum!"

Without letting go the fag for a single instant, the Buster drew a cord from his pocket and dragged Flip's wrists

(Continued on next page.)

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together and tied them. Flip did not shout. One crashing blow from the knuckly fist would have stunned him, and he knew that Buster was the man to give it. And as yet he was more bewildered than alarmed.

The fag's hands tied securely, Buster drew from his pocket a small, pear-shaped object, with strings attached. It was a ready-made gag; and with a ruthless hand he forced the fag's mouth open and jammed it in and tied it securely. There was no danger now of Flip calling for help, even had there been ears to hear in the lonely wood.

All the time the ruffian's iron grasp was on the little fag—a grasp in which Flip was as helpless as an infant.

Having gagged the fag, Buster uncoiled another cord and bound his legs together. Evidently he did not intend to take any risks with his prisoner.

Then he grinned at Flip, apparently amused by the utter bewilderment in the schoolboy's face.

"You don't ketch on, Flip?" he asked.

Flip shook his head. He could not speak.

"I been waiting for you!" grinned Buster. "Waiting ever since I got a phone call from somebody you knows, Flip."

Flip started violently.

He understood now.

Jimmy the One did not intend to leave Greyfriars. He had till Flip returned from Highcliffe, and Flip was destined never to reach Highcliffe, and never to return. He knew now.

The colour faded out of the fag's face. His eyes, fixed on Buster's face, asked a mute question.

The Buster shrugged his shoulders.

"This is Jimmy's orders," he said. "I got to get you safe, Flip. The next is up to Jimmy. And I don't know, but if you've turned copper's nark, Flip, I fancy Jimmy the One won't give you a chance to talk!"

He said no more.

With ease, the weight nothing to the burly ruffian, he swung the fag from the ground and carried him on through the wood towards the sunken lane on the other side.

Flip could not speak, he could not resist. Brushing against the leafless twigs, he was carried on till the ruffian reached the edge of the wood where it bordered the deep lane. There he set the bound fag on the ground, stepped out of the trees, and took a rapid glance to and fro. Swiftly he returned to Flip, lifted him again, and carried him out into the lane. Flip had a glimpse of a covered cart standing there, the horse's head tethered to a tree. Evidently all had been planned carefully for that swift and ruthless kidnapping.

The Buster bore him to the back of the cart, jerked the flap aside, and flung him in. Flip sprawled on straw and sacks, and on something fat and podgy and soft that lay under them. The tail-board crashed, the horse was loosed, the whip cracked, and the cart drove off, and Flip, hidden from all eyes by the close canvas cover round the cart, sprawled on sacks and straw and Billy Bunter, and gave himself up for lost.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

"O O O O O O G H!"

Billy Bunter gurgled.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

Buster, on the high driver's seat, cracked his whip, rattled his reins, and drove on. It was not easy driving

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in the rough, muddy lane, and all Buster's attention was needed for his horse, which he drove at a good speed. The Buster was naturally rather anxious to get away from the locality as speedily as possible.

The clatter of the heavy cart, the rattling of the harness, the cracking of the whip, made plenty of noise. Billy Bunter gurgled and gasped, unheard and unnoticed by the driver, though Flip quickly became aware that he was not the only occupant of the cart. But Flip could not speak, and he could hardly stir a limb. In amazement he realised that someone was stretched under the straw and sacks upon which he had been flung, and he wondered dizzily whether it was some other victim of the kidnapper.

It was too dark to see anything inside the cart, with the thick canvas closely drawn, until the eyes became used to the dimness. Flip could see nothing, but he could feel the unseen form that wriggled under the sacks.

Clatter, clatter, clatter! Jingle! Crack! The man outside drove on, heedless of his prisoner in the cart, and little dreaming that the prisoner was not alone there. His prisoner was safe enough; bound hand and foot, unable to utter a cry. When the rapidly driven cart turned out of the lane into a road, it passed other vehicles; but there was nothing in its aspect to draw a second glance.

The Buster grinned serenely as he clattered on. There had been little time to make plans. But he had carried out Jimmy the One's instructions without a hitch, and the Buster was feeling completely satisfied with himself and things generally.

"Oooooogh!"

Billy Bunter succeeded at last in wriggling up, and his fat face came out of the straw and sacks, like the head of a tortoise from its shell.

The fat Owl was in a dazed state.

What had happened was so utterly unexpected, so astounding, that it almost seemed to Bunter that he had fallen asleep in the cart, and was dreaming this.

He blinked amazedly in the dimness.

Someone—he realised that it was a human being—had been pitched into the cart on him, and had rolled off as Bunter struggled to a sitting posture. It was absolutely inexplicable to Bunter, and he gasped, and blinked through his big spectacles in the dim gloom, in a state of almost idiotic bewilderment.

Somebody lay hunched in the straw—without movement, without a sound. The cart was in rapid motion, with a continual clattering and jingling, the driver, whom Bunter had not even seen, evidently in haste. Even Bunter could understand that there was something wrong—though he was too bewildered even to begin to guess what it was. Dizzily he blinked in the dimness at the little figure that lay bound in the straw, and his eyes almost popped through his spectacles as he made out the grubby, scared face of Flip of the Second Form.

Clatter, clatter, clatter! The cart rocked and jolted, the whip cracking. Bunter bumped against the side, and gasped again.

Dim as it was in the cart he recognised Flip. He caught the fag's eyes, shining in the gloom, turned on him. He realised that Flip did not move be-

cause he was unable to move. He saw the gag in the fag's mouth, tied by the strings round his head.

It was amazing and bewildering. But Bunter, who, dizzily thinking of calling out to the driver to stop, grasped the fact that he had better not. He did not want to draw the attention of a man who was carrying off a schoolboy, bound and gagged, in a covered cart. Bunter was not a bright youth, but he was bright enough to realise that.

Instead of calling out to the driver—only two or three feet from him on the other side of the canvas—Bunter suppressed his breathless gasping. It was unheard in the noisy clatter of the cart, but in these amazing and alarming circumstances, it was obvious that a fellow could not be too careful.

For a long minute Bunter sat and blinked.

It was Flip who was sprawling in the straw—there was no doubt about that. He was bound hand and foot, and gagged—there was no doubt about that, either. The man who was driving the cart was a kidnapper, and if he found Bunter in the cart it was likely to go hard with Bunter—about that, too, there was no doubt.

Bunter was very anxious that the unseen driver should not find him in the cart—in which case the fat Owl certainly would have been "in the cart" in a double sense.

He blinked and blinked.

Flip's eyes gleamed at him. Dim as it was, he had recognised Bunter now—with an astonishment as great as Bunter's own. But his eyes gleamed with hope and delight. His podgy patron, to whom he owed it that he was no longer a homeless waif, but a Greyfriars fellow, was there—amazingly, but he was there! Flip of the Second was always glad to see Billy Bunter—perhaps the only fellow at Greyfriars who was! But never had he been so glad as now!

Bunter stirred at last.

He moved with caution—though in the rocking and clattering and jolting of the heavy cart caution was hardly needed. But Bunter was taking no risks if he could help it.

If Bunter's first thought was to crawl over the tail-board and drop off behind, it was perhaps natural, Bunter's thoughts always being concentrated on that most important personage, W. G. Bunter, whose lifelong maxim had been "Safety first." But, second thoughts, proverbially the best, came in time. Even Billy Bunter could hardly scramble out of the cart and leave Flip there.

The cart was running more smoothly now, on a high-road, out of the muddy, rutty lanes. Bunter heard a motor-car roar by.

He parted the canvas flaps at the back of the cart, and blinked out. The vehicle was not going in the direction of Greyfriars, but in the opposite direction. It was following a road that, if it kept on, would lead it past the gates of Highcliffe School.

Bunter was getting his lift towards Highcliffe, after all, though in a very unexpected manner!

But Highcliffe was as yet distant.

Bunter turned cautiously back to Flip, whose eyes watched him from the floor of the jolting cart.

He fumbled at the cords, and then groped in his pocket for a penknife. He found it, and opened it.

Flip's eyes shone.

The fat junior cut the cords of the gag and drew it from the fag's mouth.

Flip gasped with relief.

But he did not speak.

Bunter began to saw at the cords on

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Bunter clambered backwards over the tail-board of the cart and hung on convulsively, trying to screw up nerve enough to let go. He let go at last, and landed on the hard road with a terrific bump! "Ow! Wow!" he gasped.

Flip's wrists with the penknife. Flip set his teeth hard as the clumsy Owl gashed his skin. But he made no sound. The cord parted at last.

Flip's hands were free, and he took the knife from Bunter and sawed through the cords knotted about his legs.

He rose on his knees in the straw, lurching with the motion of the cart. A car roared by again. The road was not well frequented; but there was traffic on it.

Flip put his lips close to Bunter's fat ear and whispered:

"Quiet, sir! That bloke Buster'd knock you on the 'ead, as soon as look at you, if he knowed!"

Bunter shuddered.

"Let's get out of this!" he breathed.

"Without 'im knowing, sir!" whispered Flip. "He'd be arter us like a shot, Buster would! He'll 'ear us if we let down the tail-board! Get over it, sir, and 'ang on and drop."

Bunter nodded.

Dropping from behind a cart in rapid motion did not appeal to the Owl of the Remove; but it was the only way. It was better than remaining in the cart, or taking the risk of drawing Buster's attention. The fat Owl clambered backwards over the tail-board and hung on. Flip, swifter and more active, was hanging by his side in a moment.

Buster drove on.

He could not see round the covered cart, even if he had looked round. But he did not look round. Not the faintest suspicion crossed the ruffian's mind that his prisoner was not safe in the vehicle. He had tossed him in, bound and gagged, and without help he could not have stirred. So long as he heard nothing, Buster was not likely to suspect

that anything was amiss. He drove on, unconscious of what was happening behind.

"Let go, sir!" breathed Flip.

The clatter of the cart drowned his whisper.

Bunter's feet trailed on the ground, his toes scratched the earth as he hung on. He hung on convulsively, trying to screw up his nerve to let go. Another car hummed by, and the motorist stared for a moment at the two figures hanging on behind the cart.

Bump!

Bunter dropped.

"Whooooo!" he spluttered, as he landed on the hard earth.

Flip, more active, dropped on his feet, ran for a few yards to keep his balance, and then turned quickly back.

Bunter sat in the road and spluttered.

Flip ran to him, and gave him a helping hand up.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Wow! Oh dear! Oh lor! Oooogh." He staggered to his feet with Flip's help. "Oooooogh!"

Flip stared after the cart.

It was rattling off up the road at a good speed, Buster, on the other side of the cover, invisible, and evidently unsuspecting, for there was no sign of the cart slowing down.

Flip grinned.

The clatter of the cart died away; the vehicle itself disappeared beyond a curve of the road, and was gone. Buster was driving on, in happy unconsciousness of the fact that the cart behind him was now empty, and that every stride of the horse took him farther and farther away from Flip. And the Greyfriars wail chuckled at the thought of the ruffian's feelings when he arrived at his unknown destination—alone!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. A Strange Story!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What—"

"Jolly old Bunter!"

"And Flip—"

"They're a bit late for the match!"

chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Just a few!" grinned Nugent.

"The fewfulness is terrific."

There was no doubt that Billy Bunter was late for the Highcliffe match. The footballers were rolling homewards in their brake when they sighted him in the road, in the falling dusk.

The brake was crowded with a merry swarm of fellows. It had been a good game at Highcliffe, and the Remove footballers had won a victory by three goals to two, so it was in a state of cheery and happy satisfaction that Harry Wharton & Co crowded into the brake to roll homeward.

They were not expecting to see Bunter. They had, in fact, forgotten the fat existence of that important personage.

Bob Cherry was the first to sight the fat figure. Billy Bunter was coming up the road towards Highcliffe, evidently heading for that spot, at the pace of a very old and very tired snail. Flip, of the Second Form, was walking by his side.

The juniors in the brake grinned as they looked at Bunter. The fat Owl looked as if he had been hunting trouble. He was smothered with mud, as if from a fall in the road; and he was looking tired and exceedingly cross. And if he was heading for Highcliffe, it was likely to be a long time before he reached his destination at the rate at which he was proceeding.

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"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob.

Bunter blinked up.

Flip had already recognised the crowd in the brake, and waved a grubby hand. Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles morosely. He had missed the Soccer match—which did not matter in the least! But he had missed tea at Highcliffe, too—if there had been any tea! His weary walk from Greyfriars had gone for nothing! True, he had rescued Flip from a kidnapper—so far as that went! But that did not go very far when a fellow was hungry!

"I say, you fellows, hold on!" squeaked Bunter. "If you're going back, give me a lift!"

The brake stopped.

It was already full—if not a little over-full—but it was possible to squeeze a little more. Bunter and Flip clambered up, and the brake got going again. Bunter was glad to sit down, at all events. That was something. He had walked a quarter of a mile since tumbling off the back of the cart. A quarter of a mile was more than enough for Bunter, especially after his earlier exertions that disastrous afternoon.

"Sorry you were too late to see the game, old fat man!" said Peter Todd. "But we beat them."

"Three to two!" said Johnny Bull.

Bunter grunted.

"Wharton put in the first," said Bob.

"Inky got the second just on half-time, and I can tell you it was touch and go."

Grunt!

"Smithy bagged the winning goal," went on Bob cheerily. Perhaps he thought that Bunter, as a patriotic Remove fellow, naturally wanted to know all about it. "It was a good goal!"

Grunt!

"Even if it was a bit risky," said Bob. "Smithy rather takes chances."

"You have to take chances in footer," remarked the Bouncer.

"The chancefulness may be too terrific, my esteemed Smithy," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, "and in the preposterous circumstances—"

"Rot!" said Smithy.

"The Caterpillar nearly had you," said Johnny Bull. "If his foot hadn't slipped you'd never have got that goal. You ought to have centred to Wharton, Smithy! If that man De Courcy's foot hadn't slipped—"

"His foot did slip!"

"Did you know it was going to, when you took that chance?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"I knew I could put the pill in, and I put it in!" answered the Bouncer. "What might have happened doesn't count."

"You ought to have passed, old man!" said Nugent.

"Rats!"

"Now, look here, Smithy—"

"I say, you fellows—" grunted Billy Bunter.

"Yes, let's tell Bunter about the match, instead of arguing over that jolly old goal!" said Bob Cherry. "Highcliffe bagged two, Bunter—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"And they were good," said Bob. "That man Courtenay is a good man at Soccer. I fancy he would have got in a second time if we hadn't had such jolly good halves—"

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" said the Bouncer.

"But the Caterpillar oughtn't to have got that second goal!" said Tom Brown.

"What were you doing, Squiff?"

"Fathead!" was Squiff's answer.

"Now look here, old bean—"

"I say, you fellows, do leave off talking rot!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The rotfulness is not terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter! The gamefulness was great."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter peevishly. "I say, you fellows, I've had a fearful time!"

"Walked all the way from Greyfriars?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing. "Must have been awful, old fat man."

"How did the Form meeting get on?" asked Bob, with a chuckle. "You could have come in the brake but for that."

"Oh, really, Cherry! Nobody came to the Form meeting—only me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I suppose I'm the only fellow in the Form that really sympathises with poor old Quelch! You fellows ought to think of others, you know—like me. I can't help thinking sometimes that I may grow selfish myself in the long run—associating with you fellows, you know."

"Oh, great Christopher Columbus!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Fancy Bunter growing selfish, you men! Anybody think it possible?"

"Well, I might," said Bunter. "Evil communications corrupt good manners, you know, and all that. But I say—"

"We haven't told you all about the game yet, old chap!"

"Blow the game!" roared Bunter.

"Well, what the thump were you coming over to Highcliffe for, if not to see the game, fathead?"

"Oh, of—of course I was coming to see the game! I wasn't thinking that you fellows might be staying to tea with Courtenay—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing of the sort, you know! I say, you fellows, I've had an awful time—I might have been kidnapped and murdered!"

"Wha-a-a-a-t!"

The attention of the crowded brake was concentrated on William George Bunter as he made that startling statement.

"As it is," said Bunter, "I rescued Flip from a kidnapper!"

"You whatted?"

"Rescued Flip from a kidnapper," said Bunter, "and then—"

"Then you woke up?" asked Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look 'ere, it's true, you blokes!" said Flip warmly. "But for Master Bunter I'd be in a bad box now, s'elp me!"

"What on earth's happened?" asked Harry Wharton.

Even the exciting game at Highcliffe was forgotten, as Bunter and Flip together told what had happened.

Had Bunter alone told the story, it is probable that he would have found many doubting Thomases in the brake. But, corroborated by Flip, his strange tale had to be believed. The juniors listened in wonder.

"And I got a fearful bump falling off the cart," concluded Bunter, "and I got all muddy! And—"

"Well, it was jolly lucky you were in the cart, old fat man!" said Harry Wharton. "But what the thump did the man want to bag you for, Flip?"

"Are you so jolly valuable that you mustn't be let out of Greyfriars?" grinned Bob.

"Yes, that's jolly queer!" said Bunter. "I could understand anybody wanting to kidnap me, you know; millionaire's sons do get kidnapped—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"What did this Bunter, as you call him, bag you for, Flip?" asked Harry. "Shut up a minute, Bunter; your chin wants a rest, anyhow!"

"Beast!"

"He was put up to it, sir," said Flip. "It was Jimmy the One who was at the bottom of it; he put the Bunter up to it."

"Jimmy the One!" ejaculated Bob. "The Johnny you've told us about who belted you once, in your jolly old alley?"

"That's the cove, sir."

"But that only makes the jolly old mystery thicken," said Bob. "What did Jimmy the One want to bag you for, Flip?"

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3^d.

Flip did not answer that question.

He was aware now of the desperate measures the crook was prepared to take to silence his tongue—with the intention of remaining at the school to carry out his schemes there. He knew that the Buster must have been already in the neighbourhood, waiting for instructions, when Jimmy the One had tried to tempt him with the offer of revealing his father's name. And he knew that when Mr. Lagden found that his offered bribe was rejected he must have got into immediate touch with the Buster by telephone, and the ambush and kidnapping had followed.

But the plot had failed, and Flip, safe in the company of a crowd of Greyfriars fellows, was going back—safe and sound. Jimmy the One would not have another chance, and Flip did not intend to "give him away" if he got out of Greyfriars.

Flip was a reformed Flip now; his days of "pinching" were over, but all the more because he had learned what a sense of honour was he shrank from playing the part of an informer. To throw his old shadowed life behind was one thing; to turn into a "copper's nark" was quite another.

If Mr. Lagden left Greyfriars that day he was safe from Flip; the fag only wanted to see him go.

If he did not go, Flip's mind was made up. But he was still giving the crook the chance.

The fellows in the brake were all staring at Flip. Two or three of them repeated Bob's question, and the fag had to answer.

"Jimmy the One wanted to put me where I couldn't talk about him," he said at last. "I know more about that cove than he wants anybody to know. That's why, sir."

"My hat! Have you seen the rotter since you've been at the school, then?" exclaimed Wharton.

Flip grinned faintly. The Remove fellows little dreamed that they, too, had seen him, and that he was their new Form master.

"You've seen him?" exclaimed Bob.

"Yessir, I seen him," admitted Flip.

"And spoken to him?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yessir, I spoken to 'im."

"My only hat!" Wharton's face was very grave. "You ought to be careful to keep clear of a villain like that, Flip. How on earth could he have found out that you were at Greyfriars?"

Flip did not answer.

"Do you mean to say that the rascal is hanging about in this neighbourhood, Flip?" exclaimed Bob.

"He's going away, sir. I told him I'd put the coppers on him if he didn't clear off to-day," said Flip hastily. "And when he finds that the Buster ain't got hold of me, sir, you bet he'll clear off so fast you wouldn't see his 'eels for dust. I shan't never see him no more, sir."

"I say, you fellows—"

"You'll have to report this to the Head, Flip," said Harry; "and you'd better tell him all you know about Jimmy the One, to pass on to the police."

"I say, you fellows, I wish you'd listen to a chap—"

"Well, what is it, fathead?"

"I'm hungry!"

"You howling ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here—what about stopping in Courtfield at the bunshop? If Lagden rags you for getting in late you can tell him the brake had an accident—wheel came off, or something. See?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

GREYFRIARS HEROES.

No. 18.

This week's novel verse by our special Greyfriars Rhymester portrays the hero of Fisher T. Fish, the cute guy from the land of cinema "stars" and stripes.

LIKE Fish himself, his hero comes
From out the land of chewing-
gums;
Of blacks and whites and
curious types;
The land of cinema "stars" and
stripes—
America, to wit.

The country of the great and free,
Exemplified by Liberty;
Though, what with gangs and racket-
eers,

It's time Miss Liberty shed tears
And had some kind of fit.

But, be that as it may, we'll talk
Of Cyrus Quackstein, of New York.
A level-headed guy, who deals
In rubbers, coppers, rails and steels,
And makes the business pay.
That Fishy likes him isn't strange,
For once, upon the Stock Exchange,
By exercise of common sense,
One million dollars forty cents
He gathered in a day.

To Fish, who's all for business,
And worships the Almighty \$,
This kind of thing affects his brain;
He holds his head, as if in pain,
And feels completely dizzy.



But Cyrus doesn't care two straws
For such a deal as that, because
He does it twice a week—and how!
Unless he makes a hundred thou.
He thinks he's not been busy.

He is the kind of man one sees
In "talkies" from Los Angeles;
He owns a sixty horse-power car,
A ninety cabbage-power cigar,
And calls his typist "Billie!"
He spends his lifetime on the phone,
Answering folk who want a loan;
He wrings them dry without remorse
(His speciality, of course,
Is "rooking" the daft and silly.)

Occasionally he loses cash
In some gigantic business crash;
But when the brokers far and wide
Are all committing suicide
Is he a man that hollers?
No fear! He's not a man like that;
He merely goes and gets his hat,
And then a search he will commence
For some poor simp who has no
"cents,"
But very many dollars.

Now Fishy thinks this is O.K.,
When he goes back to U.S.A.,
He's gonna copy Cyrus there;
He's gonna be a millionaire
And hand poor us the mitten.
He'd do it here, but for our laws,
Which clip a business magnate's claws.
It's mighty hard on Fisher T.
No statue of Miss Liberty
Adorns the coast of Britain.

"I'll stand a spread all round to the whole party at the bunshop," said Bunter. "A really good spread, you fellows—"

"Has your jolly old postal order come?" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Well, it hasn't exactly come," said Bunter cautiously, "but I'm expecting it shortly—very shortly. Just at the present moment I'm rather short of money; but one of you fellows can lend me a pound—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, do you fellows want me to stand you a feed, or don't you?" demanded Bunter warily.

Apparently the fellows didn't, for they only chortled, and the brake rolled on without a stop on its homeward way.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Mysterious Disappearance!

RUPERT LAGDEN, MASTER OF ARTS, alias Jimmy the One, smiled.

It was not a pleasant smile. The winter dusk was thick, and a

cold wind blew from the sea. Mr. Lagden, with his coat collar turned up against the wind, stood beside a closed car that showed no lights on a lonely road over Redclyffe Hill, ten miles from Greyfriars School, and as he stood he watched the lower slopes of the road and smiled at the sight of a covered country cart coming slowly up.

Mr. Lagden had played football with the Sixth Form men at Greyfriars that afternoon; but after the game he had not been too tired to take a walk, and he was not seen at tea in Masters' Common-room. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, who had intended to give the young new master some kind advice on conducting the Remove, looked for him in vain, and was driven to give advice to Mr. Twigg instead on the management of the Second Form.

Mr. Lagden was far from Greyfriars, but he had not walked the distance; he had walked as far as Courtfield, where he had hired a car. Now he stood by the car on Redclyffe Hill and watched and waited. He was not on the main road which led from Courtfield to Lantham; he had turned into a by-road,

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deserted and solitary, where he waited for the Buster. And now the Buster was coming.

The smile that came over the Form master's handsome face made it look for the moment anything but handsome.

Standing by the car he watched the lumbering cart. It was the only vehicle to turn into the road where he was waiting. It was the vehicle for which he was watching, he knew that before it was near at hand.

It looked like any other country cart, the driver, in his rough clothes, looked like any other driver. But Mr. Lagden had no doubt, and as the cart came nearer through the wintry dusk he recognised the close-eyed, beetle-browed ruffian who drove.

He stepped away from the car and held up his hand to the Buster. The rumbling, clattering cart jolted to a halt.

The Buster stepped down from the driver's seat; he grinned in reply to the crook's unspoken question.

"Jest pie!" he said.

"You got him?"

"Easy as pie, Jimmy!"

"And—" Lagden breathed hard.

The Buster made a gesture towards the cart.

"You won't hear him," he grinned; "he can't talk, Jimmy. And if he can move, it ain't more'n an inch or two."

"Good!" said Jimmy the One. "And you had no trouble, Buster?"

The ruffian grunted contemptuously. "That nipper wouldn't be likely to give me trouble, Jimmy. After I got your phone call at the Black Horse I got ahead of him easy; he jest walked into my hands."

Jimmy the One laughed softly. The fag had told him that he was going to Highcliffe, and warned him to be gone by the time he returned. He was not likely to return!

"I got him safe, Jimmy," said the Buster cheerfully. "Nobody in sight on the road, and I got him into the wood in a jiffy. I had the cart waiting in a lane behind, out of sight. I chucked him in—and here he is! I see you got a car!"

The crook nodded.

"You've done your job, Buster," he said; "the rest is up to me."

He peered up and down the shadowy road and listened. There was no sound of a vehicle, no sound of a footfall; the spot was lonely and deserted.

"All safe, Jimmy," said the ruffian.

"Get him into the car—quick!"

"That won't take a jiffy!"

Jimmy the One opened the door of the car, while the Buster stepped to the back of the cart.

Lagden's plans were cut and dried. The kidnapped fag, bound and gagged, would lie helpless and silent in the car, as he had lain in the cart, while Jimmy the One drove him away—far from Greyfriars. What the crook's ultimate plans were the Buster did not know; Jimmy the One was not the man to tell his subordinates more than they needed to know. The fate destined for the hapless fag was Jimmy the One's own secret.

One thing was certain—once in the ruthless hands of the crook, poor Flip would have no chance of "queering the pitch" for the gentleman-cracksman at Greyfriars.

When Mr. Lagden returned to the school he would return to find a clear field—the threatened danger gone. And when Flip's disappearance became known, certainly no one would be likely to connect the new master of the Remove with it. No connection

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between Mr. Lagden and the waif was known or suspected; and he had been playing football at Greyfriars, with plenty of witnesses, long after Flip had gone out of gates.

Jimmy the One had planned well, with cunning astuteness, as he always did.

Only—he had not allowed for the chapter of accidents, and for the unexpected, in the shape of William George Bunter! Certainly, no thought of the fat junior, whom he had thrashed in the Remove Form room that morning, had crossed his mind. And yet it was Bunter who, all unknowingly, had knocked the cunning crook's schemes into a cocked hat.

"Strike me pink!"

It was a startled exclamation from the Buster.

Lagden, standing by the open door of the car, stared across at the ruffian in the thick gloom impatiently. The road was lonely and dark; but in such a matter it was impossible to be too cautious. The kidnapped fag had to be transferred from one vehicle to the other; and the more swiftly it was done, the better.

"Quick, you fool!" snapped Lagden. "Strike me!" gasped the Buster.

He had pulled aside the canvas cover at the back of the cart. The interior was densely dark, and he did not expect to see Flip. He groped in the cart for him, and his hands came in contact with straw and sacks—and nothing else. He spluttered amazed oaths as he groped in the cart, hardly able to believe that the prisoner was not there. But he was not there—the cart was empty.

Lagden, with a premonition that something was amiss, came across to him. His eyes gleamed at the ruffian.

"Hand him out—sharp!"

"Strike me! He—he ain't there!"

gasped the Buster, in bewilderment.

"He—he's gone! Strike me pink!"

A fierce oath broke from the crook.

The Buster had lowered the tailboard, and Jimmy the One scrambled over it into the cart. A moment was enough to prove that the kidnapped fag was not there. The crook dropped from the cart again and faced the hooligan, with a deadly gleam in his eyes.

"What's this game, Buster?" His voice was thick with rage. "If you're double-crossing me—"

"S'elp me, I had him in the cart!"

gasped the Buster. "He couldn't have got out I tell you! I tied him up like a turkey—hands and feet—gagged him tight—he never made a sound! There ain't been a sound all the time. But he's gone! I don't get it, Jimmy—I don't get it!" He glared into the dusky interior of the cart, as if scarcely able to believe even yet that the prisoner was not there. "I've been a good way round—I had to keep clear of the town—and all the time there ain't been a sound! I tell you he couldn't move a finger! I don't get it!"

He shrank from the deadly rage in the crook's eyes. Burly and brutal ruffian as he was, the look on the face of Jimmy the One at that moment struck fear to his heart.

"I tell you, Jimmy, I had him—he was there—he couldn't have got over the tailboard, tied as he was—he couldn't move a finger! And if he'd pitched over the tailboard, tied as he was he'd have been killed—he never did it—he couldn't! I—I—" He broke off in bewilderment.

"Then where is he?" hissed Jimmy the One.

"Ask me another!" said the amazed ruffian. "I don't get it! This here has got me beat, Jimmy!"

"Fool! Fool!" Jimmy the One ground the words between his teeth. "If he was here, he got away. He's not here now. He must have managed, somehow, to crawl over the tailboard and fall off—"

"It would have killed him, Jimmy!" muttered the ruffian huskily. "Tain't like hanging on with his 'ands and dropping! I tell you he was tied up like a turkey—he couldn't hang on. If he rolled over the top of the tailboard and crashed in the road—"

The crook laughed savagely.

"I never meant that—but—better so, perhaps! If it was that—"

He broke off and clambered into the cart again. Kneeling there in the straw, he turned on the light of a pocket-torch.

The Buster started as he heard the fierce imprecation that came from the crook the next moment:

"Jimmy—what—"

"Fool!" hissed Lagden. "Look!"

The Buster peered into the cart. His eyes almost started from his head as he saw, in the light of the torch, the gag and the cut ropes lying in the straw.

"Strike me pink!" he gasped.

"He was released!" breathed Jimmy the One. "These cords have been cut with a knife—look, fool! Someone else was here—someone must have entered the cart—"

The Buster could only stare blankly.

"He did not roll out, bound hand and foot, and break his neck! He climbed out and dropped—and he's safe—safe—and back at the school by this time! Good gad!"

Jimmy the One shut off the light and dropped from the cart again. His face was white, his eyes burning.

The Buster could only stare at him stupidly.

What had happened was an inexplicable mystery to him—and to Jimmy the One also, keen-witted and cunning as he was.

But howsoever it had happened, the fact was indubitable; Flip, by some unknown and mysterious means, had been cut loose, and had dropped from the cart, unknown to the man who was driving it. With the use of his hands, he could have dropped uninjured—with ease. And he had done so—and by that time he was back at Greyfriars School—and all the wary plotting of the cunning crook had gone for nothing!

White with rage, Jimmy the One breathed hard and deep. It seemed as if a miracle had interposed to save his victim! Whatever might be the explanation, it mattered little—it was the fact with which he had to deal. And the fact was that Flip was safe back at the school, long since, safe from any further attempt; and perhaps had spoken already—perhaps already told all he knew of Jimmy the One! And if he had not, he would speak as soon as he saw the crook within the school walls again. And Jimmy the One's game was up at Greyfriars.

The Buster broke the silence.

"What you going to do, Jimmy?"

The crook gave him a black look.

"Fool! You've failed me!"

"S'elp me, I—"

"That's enough!"

Jimmy the One walked back to the car and started the engine. Without another word to the dismayed ruffian, he drove away into the darkness.

And the Buster, realising only too clearly that, in the present circumstances, the sooner he was out of the neighbourhood the better it would be for his health, clambered into the cart again and set the horse in motion, with many muttered imprecations.



Bunter poured out the contents of the box on the study table. But instead of a stream of wealth on which to feast his eyes, all he saw was a heap of trouser-buttons, pen-nibs, broken crockery, and the like. "Oh lor!" he gasped. "Beasts!"

Half an hour later the express from Redclyffe was bearing the Buster away to safety. And Jimmy the One, driving the car, with a white, set, savage face, was not driving in the direction of Greyfriars School.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Getting Down to Business!

CLINK! Clink! Clink! That peculiar metallic sound heralded the arrival of Billy Bunter in the Rag.

It was after tea, but not yet time for prep. Winter darkness lay on the quadrangle; a cold wind whistled over the ancient roofs of Greyfriars; but in the Rag all was merry and bright. A big fire roared and glowed, and near the fire stood the Famous Five, in a cheery group, with some more of the footballers, fighting the Highcliffe match over again.

Smithy's goal—that goal which had been rather risky, like so many of the Bounder's goals—was the topic, quite an interesting topic to the Remove footballers—much more interesting than Billy Bunter and all his works. Still, they gave attention to Bunter as he rolled into the Rag. They could hardly help observing him, as his arrival was announced by a clattering and clinking like a jazz band on a small scale.

"I say, you fellows—"

The juniors stared at Bunter.

He was carrying a large tin box, of which the tin lid was closed and locked. In the flat lid was cut a narrow slit—evidently jabbed there by a chisel in the fat Owl's clumsy hand. It was from the tin box that the clinking sound came.

It sounded as if it contained coin of the realm in rather large quantities.

With a cheery grin on his fat face Bunter rattled the tin box and its contents, and drew the attention of the crowd of fellows in the Rag.

"What on earth's that game?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows! I've started the collection myself!" said Bunter.

"The which?"

"Collection! The collection for Quelch, you know!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Bunter rattled the box again. The jazz-band effects drew the general attention on the fat junior.

"Now you're all here, or nearly all," announced Bunter, while the juniors stared at him, "I've got a few words to say—what I was going to say at the Form meeting, you know! Only you fellows never came—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was rather rotten of you," said Bunter. "I came in here and waited, and nobody turned up—nobody at all—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Think of poor old Quelch sneezing his old head off, in a sanny-coughing and snorting, and all that!" said Bunter reproachfully. "Very likely worrying about how his Form's getting on, and thinking we're missing him. You know what Form masters are—they'd never guess how glad a chap is to get shut of them—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, old Quelch isn't a bad sort," said Bunter. "He's a beast; but I'd like to know the fellow who's met a beak who isn't a beast—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And he's better than that new brute,

Lagden—heaps better! Since that brute whopped me this morning I've been hoping that Quelch will get well quick! Honest Injun! I'd really like him to get well!"

The juniors chuckled.

"And I think it's up to us to show him that we haven't forgotten him, and—and that we're thinking of him constantly, you know—"

"But we're not!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"We're all sorry for poor old Quelch!" said Bob. "But I can't say I'm thinking of him all the time. Not quite."

"The not-quiteness is terrific!"

"Well, of course, you haven't such a sympathetic nature as I have, Cherry. You know my kind heart. Some poet says that kind hearts are more than coronets—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob. "Do you mean coronets?"

"Well, it's something of the kind," said Bunter. "Anyhow, I'm frightfully sorry for Quelch—practically mourning over him—and that's why I've thought of this wheeze. I'd have told you all about it this afternoon if you'd come to the Form meeting! You preferred football!" added Bunter, with withering sarcasm.

"We did!" chuckled Bob. "Guilty, my lord!"

"Well, now you're all here, shut up, and listen to a chap!" said Bunter. "Quelch is lying frightfully seedy in sanny, coughing and sneezing, and so on, and the idea is to take him a few comforts—not so much for the things themselves, you know, as to show him how deeply we feel for him—"

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"But we don't!" remarked Skinner. "Keep to the point!" said Bunter. "Now, bunches of grapes are always welcome to an invalid. They're frightfully expensive; but that will only add to the thoughtful generosity of the gift, you know. I shall go down to Chunkley's, at Courtfield, and select something really nice. I'm not asking you fellows to take any trouble. You can leave the whole matter in my hands with perfect confidence. Rely on me to spend the money—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To the best advantage. Now I've started the collection"—Bunter rattled the tin box again, with a terrific clinking and clanking—"I want you men to follow my example. I want you to put your usual selfishness aside, for this once—see?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm going to place this box on the table here," said Bunter. There was a clang as he slammed it down. "Every fellow will be expected to contribute something. Even coppers will not be despised; but silver is preferred—"

"Not really?" ejaculated Nugent.

"Yes, old chap; but a few currency notes, of course, will be welcome. Smithy might put in a currency note, I think."

"Think again!" suggested the Bounder.

"Well, you're always swanking about your money, ain't you, old chap? I think you might put in a pound note. You, too, Mauly! Anyhow, every man here is expected to contribute something!" said Bunter. "Remember that I'm taking all the trouble. All you fellows have got to do is to contribute the cash."

"Go hon!"

"Follow my generous example!" said Bunter. "I've started the collection—" Bunter picked up the box and rattled it again. "I've started it—"

"What with?" grinned Skinner.

"Well, I won't mention the sum," said Bunter. "I don't want to brag about my generosity. I'm not the fellow to brag, as you know."

"Great pip!"

"Follow your leader, you know!" said Bunter, blinking at the grinning Removites. "Be generous, you know—like me! Think of old Quelch—"

"Let's see how much Bunter has started the collection with!" suggested Skinner. "I don't fancy there's a fearful lot of money in the box yet."

"Oh, really, Skinner! If you think I've put three or four old keys in this box just to rattle—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

"I'm not going to unlock the box till after the collection," said Bunter firmly. "In fact, I've left the key in my study. Now, look here, you fellows, I've got to go and see the Head! He wants to jaw about what happened this afternoon. Flip's told him about it, you know, and I've got to tell him. When I come back I shall expect to find that you fellows have played up. Think of old Quelch—"

"Sort out your wealth, Smithy!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

The Bounder chuckled.

"I say, you fellows, think of old Quelch lying in sanny—"

"While Bunter's lying here!" said Skinner.

"Look here, you fellows—"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry. "It's up to us! Roll off, Bunter, and leave it to us! I'm jolly well going to put something in the box, and I fancy every other man will."

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We can't do better than follow your example."

Billy Bunter beamed.

"That's right, old chap! I'll leave the box here, and all of you roll up and do your best!"

"Rely on us, old fat bean!"

And Billy Bunter rolled out of the Rag in a state of happy satisfaction. The Form meeting had been a frost, but the collection, it seemed, was coming off all right; and the collection, after all, was really the important item in the programme.

So long as the collection came off, Bunter was satisfied, and with the support of a popular fellow like Bob Cherry it seemed likely to be a success.

Bob grinned cheerfully as the fat Owl rolled out of the Rag. The other fellows stared at him.

"You silly ass!" said Johnny Bull. "Mean to say you're going to put anything in Bunter's box?"

"Yes, rather."

"Do you think any of it will get to Quelch, and that he will see those bunches of grapes, you howling ass?" snorted Johnny. "If there's anything put in the box Bunter will blow the lot on tuck!"

"The blowfulness will be terrific!"

CAN YOU RHYME?

For submitting the following Greyfriars limerick S. Burchell, of 18, Queen's Avenue, Winchmore Hill, N.21, has been awarded a USEFUL LEATHER POCKET WALLET!

Dr. Locke, the august headmaster,
Had his effigy moulded in plaster.
But Prout had a shock
When he saw Dr. Locke
Had slid from his perch to disaster!

NOW, YOU HAVE A TRY,
CHUM,

at winning one of these useful prizes!

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"My dear chap," he said, "Bunter may have some idea like that in his fat head, but I feel certain that he won't blow the collection on tuck."

"Fathead!"

"I'm going to put something in, and I call on every man in the Remove to follow Bunter's example in the same way!" declared Bob.

"Well, fools and their money are soon parted!" remarked Skinner.

"Who's talking about money?" asked Bob.

"Eh?"

"I said I was going to follow Bunter's example. Well, Bunter has started the collection with two or three old keys—"

"Oh!"

"I've got an old key in my pocket. It's not very valuable, but every little helps."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites, as Bob Cherry groped in his pockets, extracted therefrom an old key which certainly did not look an article of value, and dropped it into the slit in the lid of the collecting-box.

"Roll up, you men!" said Bob cheerily. "Every man ought to contribute something—following Bunter's example."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, you men!" chortled Johnny Bull. "I've got a bad halfpenny—"

"Mine's a trouser-button!" chortled Skinner.

"I've got a penknife with both blades broken!" remarked Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clink, clink, clink, clink!

It would have been a pleasing sound to Bunter's ears had those fat ears heard it.

Contributions fairly poured into the tin box.

There were no currency notes, and coin of the realm was conspicuous by its absence. But the contributions were many and various. Some fellows took the trouble to go to their studies to fetch odds and ends for contribution. Buttons, perhaps, predominated; but pebbles, disused pen-nibs, broken fragments of pencils, bits of crockery, all sorts and conditions of odds and ends, were liberally contributed. The box had not weighed much when Bunter placed it on the table in the Rag. It was quite heavy when the juniors had finished.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Bunter!"

And a swarm of grinning faces were turned on William George Bunter as he rolled into the Rag.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Treasure Trove!

BILLY BUNTER blinked round the Rag. He had heard the sound of a clink as he came in, and it was an encouraging sound. There was happy anticipation in the fat face of the Owl of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Seen the Head?" asked Wharton.

"Yes. Never mind the Head now—"

"But what is he doing about Flip?" asked the captain of the Remove. He was rather more interested in the Greyfriars wail's strange adventure that afternoon than in Billy Bunter's scheme for raising the wind.

"Eh? Oh, he's reporting it to Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield," said Bunter. "Never mind that now—"

"Has Flip told him about the man he calls Jimmy the One?"

"Yes. Never mind Jimmy the One—"

"But has he told him where the man can be looked for?" asked Wharton. "Has he—"

"Eh? No. He doesn't seem to know anything about that, so far as I know. Never mind that—"

"But—"

"For goodness' sake don't jaw so much, old chap. You're all jaw!" exclaimed Bunter impatiently. "Never mind Flip now. I'm thinking of the collection—I mean, I'm thinking of poor old Quelch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope you fellows are going to play up!" said Bunter anxiously.

"My dear man, we've played up!" said Bob Cherry.

"Followed your example!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

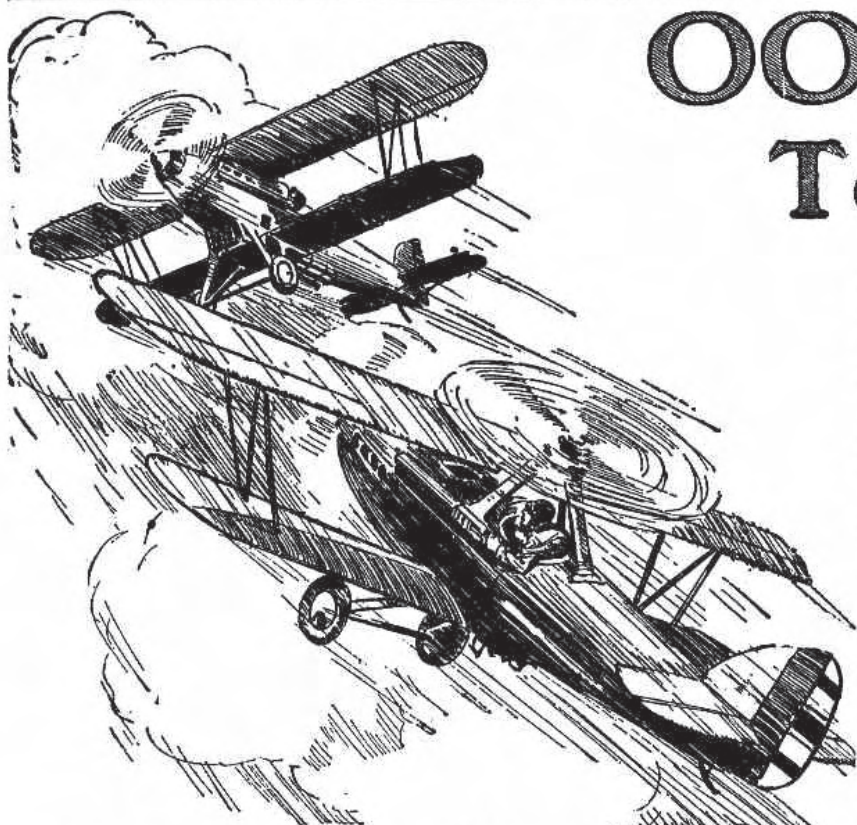
"Your generous example!" said the Bounder.

"I fancy there's hardly a man here that hasn't put in something, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "And now the question is about opening the box."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Bunter grabbed at the tin box on the table. He gave a gasp as he felt its weight.

(Continued on page 25.)



OOM, the Terrible!

A Surprise for Silas Merger :

YOU certainly have astonished me by saying you can fly," said Oom. "Well, there is no time like the present. I will open the passage, and you shall show me. It will certainly be useful to me if you can fly, and, maybe—Well, we can settle our plans later!"

Rick Dare had been eagerly watching. He had seen Esteban relieved by the other sentry, had seen the latter enter the cold storage, and remain there for a long time. Then he had seen someone dart out, carrying the man's rifle and cartridge-belt. He felt certain it was Tom, but would have to chance it.

There was no one else in the plaza to pay attention to their doings, and Oom opened up the secret passage with ease. Evidently he had studied the method well when watching Don Texado.

He stepped inside and waved his hand towards the bigger of the two planes; the other being Tom Dare's.

"There you are—now show me!" he said, walking into the dark passage.

"I will! Stick 'em up, you big cheese, or I'll riddle you with bullets!" cried Rick exultantly, as he poked a big automatic into Oom's ribs.

The Flying-Bandit instinctively obeyed, for there is something in the pressure of a gun-muzzle that forbids argument. But he looked puzzled.

"Who are you?" he cried fiercely. "You're not Gonzalez!"

"By mercy—I'm not!" jeered Rick. "I'm a Dare, not a Don't Dare!"

Oom stared at Rick, and an expression of despair came over his face. Then suddenly his gaze



shifted, and he looked over Rick's shoulder and glowed with triumph.

"Shoot, Esteban!" he yelled in Spanish.

It's the oldest trick in the world, and Rick ought not to have fallen for it. But it was so beautifully done that he was deceived for the flash of a second.

His eyes left Oom's, and the muzzle of the gun wavered. That was enough. Oom's hard right hand hit Rick's wrist edgewise, completely numbing it, and the boy's automatic dropped to the floor. Then the bandit's left swung a cruel upper-cut that effectually knocked Rick out.

As he sagged towards the ground, Oom caught him in his arms and swung his senseless body before him as a shield, with a hideous laugh, as Tom Dare entered the passage and peered into the darkness.

Tom dared not fire, for fear of hitting his brother, and, in the instant that he paused uncertainly, the bandit dropped Rick, darted behind the plane, and was away down the pitch-dark cavern like an arrow.

Tom fired, but the only effect was a tremendous stench of petrol, and

next moment the big plane burst into flames.

"By hokey, this is no place for us, old man!" the elder brother muttered, and, picking Rick up, bumped him into his own plane.

He leapt into the cockpit himself, and started the plane up with the stabiliser whirring as she taxied out.

There was a yell from across the plaza, and half a dozen bullets whirled past as the plane rose; but what with the belching smoke, and the speed of the little machine, not a shot told, and next moment the Dare plane was soaring skywards.

"And what exactly do you think you're goin' to do, Silas Merger, please?" asked Tom Dare.

He and Rick had flown back to the wireless plane and had just finished relating their adventures. There was no holding Silas when he heard of the proposed midnight marriage. Though he spoke quietly, he was trembling with wrath, and his face was livid.

"Don Sebastian Texado, I swore long years ago that I'd kill you with my bare hands, and now, by th' livin' I'll do it! My gal marry a durned greaser? That's an insult that kin be wiped out in one way only. Tom Dare, lend me theet leetle racin' plane of yours. I'm goin' to kill a snake, and I'm goin' to do it right now!"

"You're goin' to do nothing of the sort!" announced Tom. "You're goin' to sit quiet until to-night, when you can do all the damage you want—and we'll help you do it!"

"You dare oppose me?" yelled the millionaire, boiling with passion. "You—my servant! Who d'you think you're talkin' to?"

"My future father-in-law!" grinned Tom easily. "I'm goin' to become a member of the Merger family very soon, and I'm not standin' for the head of it making a durned fool of himself!"

"You—my—" stammered Silas. "Who told you that?"

"Beryl—last night. We talked things over and came to an agreement!" grinned Tom.

"Whoopee—attaboy!" yelled the millionaire, shaking the young fellow's hand in a grip of iron.

"That's right. Now, Rick, you beat it, 'cause me and Mr. Merger are goin' to have a li'l heart to heart talk!"

Just Deserts !

BACK at the hacienda, late in the evening, Oom wandered out of the secret passage without being seen by anyone. He had had plenty of time to ruminate

over past events and to arrange his plans for the future, which needed some arranging, as he was now without the means to make his get-away from the hacienda with one plane burnt and the other gone.

He stole up to the room which had been allotted to him, and sat on the bed packing a valise with the things he wanted until close on midnight.

From his window he could see that the plaza had been brilliantly illuminated by the acetylene flares which had been set near the old stone fountain, in front of which a table, decorated with gorgeous tropical flowers, was standing.

The whole of the Texado family was assembled, dressed in their best, velvet jackets, patent leather riding-boots, with enormous gilt spurs and glittering sombreros on which jewels sparkled in the garish light.

Christofero, his head bandaged, and looking sheepish under the fire of chaff from his brothers and the guests, stood fumbling at a pair of tight white kid gloves.

With a sneer, Oom gathered up his valise and stole down the stairs with catlike tread. He knew that the family and servants would be busy outside, and he was seizing the opportunity.

With a tiny pencil-flashlight in his hand he stole into the library and pressed the spring which worked the trick of the bookcase.

As it swung back, he gave a sarcastic sneer, and, producing a small steel instrument from his pocket, applied it to the safe door. After a bit of fumbling, the door swung back obediently.

"Too easy!" he muttered. "It is like taking candy from a kid, as the Americans say. How the noble Greaser Don will stare when he finds his treasure gone and learns that I have carried off his son's bride as well!"

The Flying-Bandit twisted the handle of the steel inner door, and this also swung back.

As it did so, however, Oom gasped, for the whole of the wonderful Texado jewels had been taken from their cases and lay heaped in glittering splendour in the tray at the bottom of the safe.

"Ha, ha, ha! Donnerwetter, but the Spaniard is kind—he has even put the jewels in readiness for his guest to take away! He is so hospitable! Ah-h-h-h!"

He emitted a sudden scream of horror, and his teeth clenched as he stared down at the heaped jewels

guttering in the light of his torch, for something else glittered; something that moved!

To and fro, with wagging heads and cold eyes, cold as the brilliant stones themselves, the deadly fer-de-lance, the tiny snake whose bite means a hideous death, was easily discernible.

Another and another came out from under the heap as the rays of the torch played upon it, and Oom sprang back, slamming the door to, the sweat pouring down his face at his narrow escape.

Don Texado knew how to guard his treasures!

Stumbling, Oom forced himself along to the dining-room and gulped down glass after glass of raw spirit.

"The cunning old fox!" he muttered. "The snakes, then, were the cause of the stench when I opened the safe the other night. Who else but a greaser would think of so horrible a guard for his jewels? It means, then, that Oom, the Terrible, must be content with the bride without the jewels! It will but make the ransom the bigger, and father will have to pay."

The Flying-Bandit started suddenly as a clock struck the hour of midnight, and he hurried out to join the party on the plaza.

A priest was already there, fumbling with his book. Then there came a sound of cries and sobbing from the house, and the whole party turned to watch Beryl Merger being dragged along by two stalwart negresses who had practically to carry her.

"The bride does not seem too delighted at marrying into your family, senior," said Oom sarcastically in the don's ear. The fiery raw spirit he had taken had gone to his head, and he was ready for anything.

"Senior, you are my guest, is it a custom of your country to insult your host?" asked Don Texado, with great dignity.

Oom cast many an anxious glance towards the secret passage. Would Monte Pedrillo and his men be on time? If not he would have to cause a diversion to gain time.

A diversion was coming—but in a different direction.

Suddenly one of the men gave a great yelp of surprise and fear, for something came swooping down out of the darkness like a great bat—and as noiseless!

The next moment the crowd of men broke and fled as a hail of bullets came from out of the darkness. Right and left they scattered or fell as the plane swooped hither and thither like a great avenging bird.

"Now, Ham, now! Beryl, jump to it!" came Tom Dare's voice, as the little machine hovered overhead with stabiliser whirring.

Suspended head downwards from one of the wings, his knees crooked into one of the supports like a trapeze, the giant negro hung with outstretched arms.

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WINGS of WAR!

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STARTS NEXT WEEK!

"Come on, missy!" cried Ham.

The girl needed no second invitation, and next moment was swung from the ground in the negro's mighty grip. Bullets spattered against the plane's under-carriage as she roared upwards.

The next moment another little bomber dropped from the clouds, and this time there was no doubt about her mission. The Peons and Spaniards fled as Alf Higgs dropped what he called "ard b'iled heggs" in the form of bombs which effectually stopped any return fire.

The bomber next zoomed over the closed secret passage, and a couple of bombs dropped there.

The result was rather like stirring up a wasps'-nest, for the bandits who had been waiting for the signal to attack, came swarming out. Not knowing where the bullets were coming from, they opened fire on the Texado crowd, who fired in return.

Then down zoomed the little wireless plane at an enormous speed, and, after circling the plaza once, came to a stop with her stabiliser whirring, and out poured her crew, headed by old Silas Merger himself.

The millionaire made one bull rush for Don Texado, and there followed as pretty an exhibition of "all in scrapping" as one could wish to see, until the don lay stretched senseless on the ground.

Standing sullenly, his arms bound behind him to a tree, stood Oom, who was Tom Dare's prisoner.

Tom had rushed to put Beryl in a place of safety on the wireless plane, for she had come out into the cockpit to watch, with horror-filled eyes, the thrilling fight her father was putting up.

Suddenly from behind the tree that Oom was bound to there came a tiny form, carrying a shining tube. It was Maleze, and he stood looking up at his late master with a peculiar malignant grin on his monkey-like face.

Under his breath he was singing a little song, indescribably wild, that boded no good for someone.

Oom turned his head, a light of hope in his eyes.

"Maleze, release me—quick!" he hissed.

"All light; yuss, kin do!" chuckled the little forest dwarf, and in a flash he severed Oom's bonds with his keen blade.

Lithe as a tiger, Oom leapt for Alf's plane, which had since landed, vaulted into the pilot's seat and jammed on the power.

Maleze scrambled in at the back somehow, and crouched down in the cockpit.

Whiz!

They were up in the air before a soul had dreamt of the daring escape, and as the tiny express machine whizzed skywards Oom waved ironically as a shower of spent bullets hit the bottom of the hull.

"He laughs best who laughs last!" he yelled, with a wild laugh. And these were the last words he ever spoke.

Suspended head downwards from the plane, Ham hung with outstretched hands. "Come on, missy!" he cried. Beryl Merger needed no second invitation, and next moment was swung from the ground in Ham's mighty grip.

He gave a gasp as he glanced behind him and saw the tiny figure crouched there, malignant, threatening, with hate-filled eyes for the man who had treated him so cruelly.

Oom felt for his revolver, but failed to find it. He picked up the first thing to hand, and hurled it at the tiny head.

Maleze hardly troubled to swerve. Higher and higher rose his song of hate—the last sounds that Oom was fated to hear.

Something flicked on the Flying-Bandit's cheek—light as a snowflake. As he brushed it away, another struck, then another and another, whilst the bright steel tube that had been a "spare" of his old machine pointed ruthlessly at him.

Oom felt a something cold run through his blood, then his legs crinkled under him, and he fell into the bottom of the machine as it hurtled downwards just over the hacienda, and burst into flames as it crashed through the roof.

The remains of the Flying-Bandit were discovered eventually amidst the



debris of a safe his hand dived amongst a heap of precious stones, the ruling passion strong in death!

THE END.

(Like all good things, chums, they come to an end sooner or later. And so with this serial. But why worry? There will be another treat for you in next week's MAGNET—the opening chapters of a grand new flying story by Hedley Scott. Turn to the announcement on page 26 and read the particulars of this coming treat. That done, your best plan is to order your copy RIGHT AWAY!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,251.

THE SCHOOLMASTER CRACKSMAN!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped. "Oh, my hat! Good!"

The box was quite heavy. The contents rattled merrily. If it contained only coppers the sum must have been a large one. Bunter could tell that from the weight, and he hoped that it didn't contain merely coppers.

That hope, as a matter of fact, was well founded. It didn't!

"About opening the box," repeated Wharton, with a cheery wink at the grinning Removites. "After such a collection—such a large collection—with practically every fellow in the Form contributing, Bunter will agree that the box had better be opened in the presence of all the fellows."

"Nothing of the kind!" hooted Bunter hotly. "This matter is in my hands—entirely in my hands!"

"But the collection being so very large—" urged the captain of the Remove.

"I shall account for every penny in this box!" said Bunter loftily.

"After all, that won't be difficult!" murmured Skinner.

"The matter is entirely in my hands. If you fellows think you're going to chip in you're jolly well mistaken. I shall go down to Courtfield to-morrow to buy those bunches of grapes for Quelch. Or—perhaps the next day. After all, there's no hurry."

"Let's make him get the key and open the box," said Bolsover major. "With all that enormous collection inside—"

"We'd really like to see it!" declared Squiff.

There was a general move towards Bunter. The fat Owl clutched the tin box in alarm.

"I say, you fellows—" he gasped. "Open the box and let's all feast our eyes on it," said Nugent.

"The feastfulness will be terrific."

"I—I say, you fellows—keep off!" howled Bunter. "I'm jolly well not going to open the box here! Besides, I've left the key in my study. It isn't in my waistcoat pocket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Bunter! Let's feast our eyes."

"Collar him!"

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter.

With the tin box grasped in his fat arms the Owl of the Remove bolted for the door.

A yell of laughter followed him. "After him!" roared Bob Cherry, without, however, making any movement in pursuit. "After him!"

Bunter flew.

With the tin box and its valuable contents safely clasped to his podgy breast, Billy Bunter dodged out of the Rag and scuttled for the stairs. He feared pursuit; but only laughter followed. The contributors to that collection did not really mind where Bunter opened the box, though undoubtedly his face would have been worth seeing at the moment.

Bunter scuttled up the stairs and escaped into the Remove passage. He bolted into Study No. 7 in the Remove, slammed the door behind him, and locked it.

Then he breathed more freely.

He slammed the box on the study table. The contents clanged and clinked, and Bunter grinned a beatific grin. The box was a good size, but it seemed to be nearly full. Even if it was only coppers—

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter. "Making out that a fellow ain't to be trusted with money! Beasts!"

The fat Owl groped in his waistcoat pocket for the key.

There was a happy grin of anticipation on his face.

His fat fingers almost trembled with eagerness, as he inserted the key into the lock of the tin box. His fat face beamed.

Bunter, of course, was not a dishonest fellow; he would have scorned the imputation. Far, indeed, was it from Bunter's fat mind to raise a collection in the Remove to buy bunches of grapes for his Form master in sanny, and blow the proceeds on tuck for his fat self. Bunter was incapable of such misdoings. All Bunter was going to do was to borrow the collection, temporarily. Merely that, and nothing more.

Bunter was stony. He had been disappointed about one postal order after another. It could make no difference, so far as Bunter could see, if he drew on this source of wealth and made it good when his postal order came. Quelch only had to wait for his bunches of grapes till Bunter's postal order came.

These proceedings to Billy Bunter's

fat mind, seemed perfectly satisfactory. But he was aware that they might not have seemed so perfectly satisfactory to other fellows. Bunter had had a lot of carping criticism in his time. Obviously, it was better to keep the whole matter in his own fat hands.

In his own study, with the door locked, he was safe from interference by captious fellows who did not understand the ways of a really high-minded chap like Billy Bunter.

He unlocked the box. He threw back the lid and turned the box over, to pour out the contents on the study table—a stream of wealth on which to feast his eyes.

The contents streamed out. Bunter gazed at them.

For a fraction of a second his gaze was one of anticipated joy. Then it changed.

His fat jaw dropped.

He gazed, and gazed, hardly able to believe his eyes or his spectacles.

"Wha-a-a-a-at—" stuttered Bunter.

His voice failed him.

The collection in the box was undoubtedly large! All sorts of things had streamed out over the table.

Trouser-buttons and waistcoat-buttons, pen-nibs and fragments of pencils, fractions of cups and saucers that had gone West, all sorts of things, and a single coin among the lot. And that coin was a bad halfpenny—so bad that a blind man would not have taken it as a gift!

Bunter gazed and gazed.

He had the collection in his own fat hands, to deal with as he liked. And that was the collection!

Bunter found his voice at last.

"Oh lor'! Beasts! Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter's fat face was morose for the rest of that evening.

It was quite a contrast to the other faces in the Remove.

All the other faces were smiling; but William George Bunter seemed to be following the example of that ancient king who never smiled again.

THE END.

(The next yarn in this popular series by Frank Richards is entitled "JIMMY THE ONE!" You wouldn't like to miss it, would you? No! Then take a tip from me, chums, and order next week's MAGNET to-day!)

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