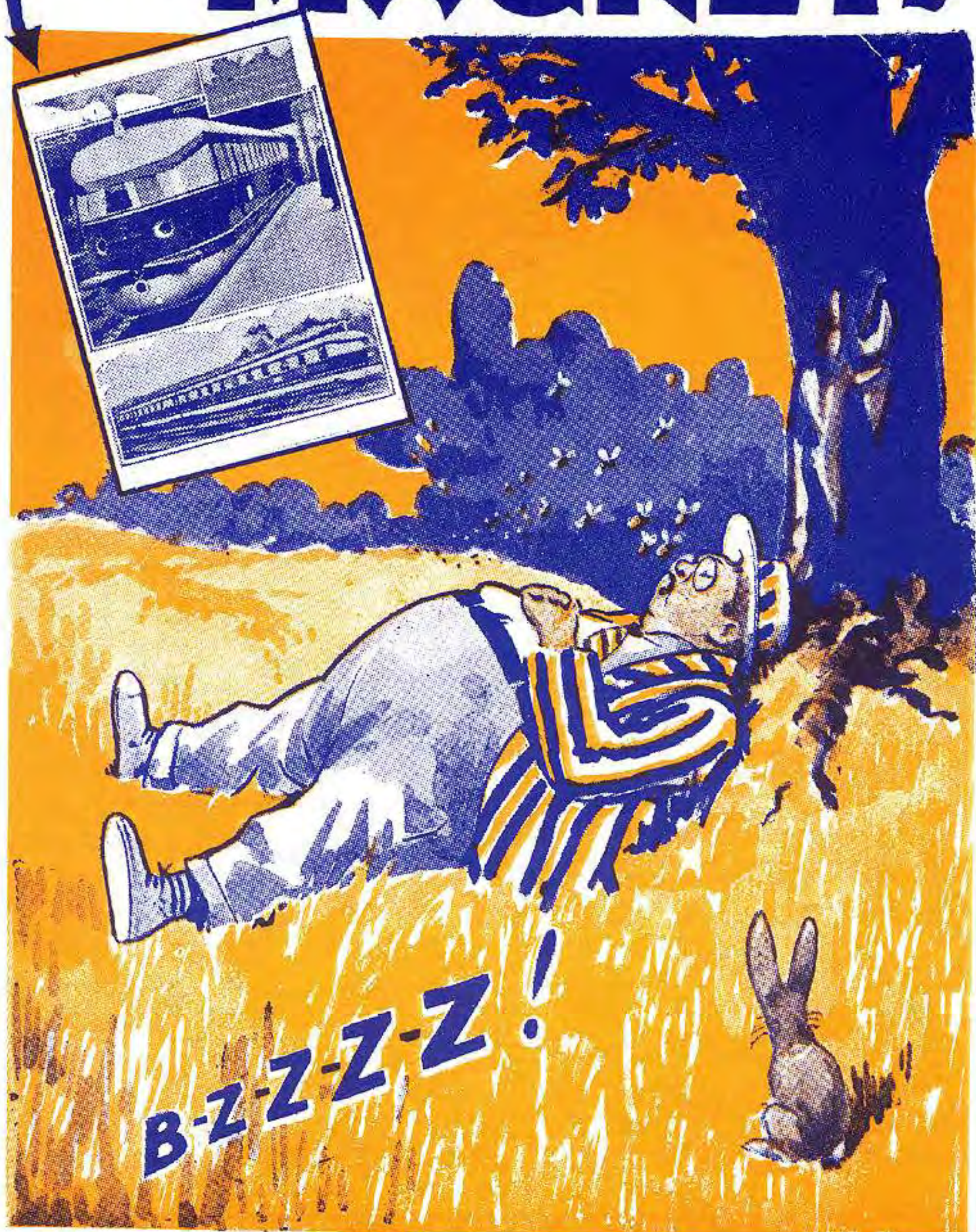


EXTRA-SPECIAL STORY OF HARRY WHARTON & CO.
and Superb Free Photo-Plate inside.

The **MAGNET**²



BUNTER'S HUNDRED-POUND BOATER!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Whose Hat?

"BLOW!"

Bob Cherry made that remark.

He seemed cross.

Bob was in his shirtsleeves. He had a tube of solution in his hand, smears of solution on his fingers, and a dab of the same on his nose. His bike was up-ended, outside the bikeshed at Greyfriars. Bob was at work on a puncture that seemed to be giving him a little trouble. His friends stood leaning on the wall, in the shade, waiting for him to get through. It was a glorious afternoon in early July; perhaps just a trifle too hot for comfort. Even Hurree Jamset Ram Singh admitted that it was warm.

"Blow!" repeated Bob.

"The blowfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Singh sympathetically.

"Take your time, old chap!" said Harry Wharton, "Lots of time! They won't expect us at Highcliffe till five."

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter came rolling up. He blinked through his big spectacles at Wharton, Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh, standing in a row by the shady well. Then he blinked at Bob's crimson face, and grinned. The Owl of the Remove seemed to find something entertaining in Bob's struggle with an obstinate puncture.

"When are you fellows starting?" asked Bunter.

"Not till we go!" answered Nugent.

"I mean, when are you going?"

"Not till we start!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! We may as well all go together, as we're all going to tea with Courtenay at Highcliffe."

Four members of the famous Co. looked expressively at Billy Bunter.

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Bob was too busy to take heed of his fat existence.

"Has Courtenay asked you to tea at Highcliffe?" demanded Wharton.

"Well, he hasn't asked me exactly," admitted Bunter cautiously. "But he's always glad to see me. We're rather pally, you know."

"I don't know!" contradicted Wharton.

"The knowfulness is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

"Jolly hot weather for biking it," went on Bunter unheeding. "I'd stand a taxi, only I've been disappointed about a postal order. What about walking to the corner and taking the motor-bus? I'd prefer it."

"Good!" assented Wharton. "Walk to the corner and take any old motor-bus you like."

"And you fellows——"

"Oh, we're biking!"

"Well, look here, I really don't care for fagging about on a bike in this blaze," said Bunter peevishly. "Besides, my bike's punctured. I asked Toddy to mend that puncture for me more than once; but he hasn't done it—you know how selfish Toddy is. Suppose one of you fellows mend it?"

"Suppose anything you like!" assented Wharton. "No law against supposing."

"I say, Bob, old chap——"

"Shut up!" growled Bob Cherry in a voice like unto that of the Great Huge Bear.

"I was going to say——"

"Shut up!"

"Will you mend my punctures after you've finished that? There's only three—or four, I forget which——"

Bob glanced round at Bunter for a moment. He did not speak, but his look was expressive. One puncture seemed to be trying Bob's patience, rather

severely. The idea of attending to three or four more did not seem to appeal to him somehow.

Billy Bunter blinked at him inquiringly through his big spectacles.

"What about it?" he asked.

"You can't mend your own punctures?" asked Bob.

"Well, I don't want to make myself all sticky! Don't be selfish!"

Bob Cherry glared.

"You bloated, blithering, burbling bandersnatch, do you want me to bash your hat over your silly head?" he demanded.

"Eh?" Bunter jumped back. "You'd jolly well better not! You'll have a row with Smithy if you do."

Bob stared at him blankly for a moment. Billy Bunter was wearing a handsome, expensive, and quite new straw hat. No doubt he did not want to have that hat "bashed." But why Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, should be concerned about it, was rather a mystery. But that mystery did not puzzle the chums of the Remove long. They were well acquainted with the manners and customs of William George Bunter. Evidently he had borrowed the hat—without mentioning the fact to the owner. As that fact dawned on Bob, his frowning face broke into a grin.

"Is that Smithy's hat, you fat villain?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! No! Nothing of the sort!" said Bunter hastily. "Don't you fellows get telling Smithy that I've borrowed his hat! He would be waxy—you know what a bad-tempered beast he is. Besides, I suppose you want a pal to be dressed 'decently' when he's coming over to Highcliffe to tea with you. I suppose a fellow can borrow a fellow's hat if he likes? Not that this is

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Smithy's new straw, you know! I gave a guinea for it in Courtfield yesterday."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. Making out that a fellow's bagged a fellow's hat! You'll be making out next that this necktie is Mauly's."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

Evidently Billy Bunter had dressed a little more carefully than usual to join the tea-party in Courtenay's study at Highcliffe School. Smithy's new hat, and Lord Mauleverer's handsome tie, certainly looked better than Bunter's own property.

"I say, you fellows, do stop cackling," said Billy Bunter crossly. "Look here, when are we starting? What's the good of hanging about? Smithy will be coming down for his bike—he's going over to Courtfield to meet his father this afternoon—I heard him tell Redwing the old jossler was coming. I'd rather not see Smithy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

On the path behind Bunter a junior came in sight coming down from the House. It was Vernon-Smith; and there was a frown on his face. He seemed annoyed about something! Perhaps he had missed his hat!

"Look out, Bunter!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Eh?"

"Here comes Smithy!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter blinked round in alarm. Then he snatched the straw hat off his head and held it behind him as he turned to face the approaching Bounder. The chums of the Remove roared!

"I—I say, you fellows, shut up!" gasped Bunter. "D-d-don't you tell Smithy I've got his hat! I mean, I haven't got it—but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith came up to the group outside the bikeshed. He gave Billy Bunter a stare, perhaps surprised to see him hatless on a brilliant July afternoon. Billy Bunter blinked at him uneasily, his fat hands still behind him holding the straw hat. He had removed it before the Bounder's eyes fell on him; and he hoped for the best.

"You fellows seen anything of a straw hat?" asked Smithy.

"A—a—a straw hat!" repeated Wharton. As they were behind Bunter, the Famous Five had a full view of a straw hat.

"Yes; I left it in my study and somebody's snaffled it. I thought it would be Bunter, of course—"

"Oh, really, Smithy! If you think I'd snaffle your hat—"

"Some silly ass has bagged it," growled the Bounder. "I've hunted for it everywhere. What are you fellows sniggering at? If one of you has been larking with my hat—"

"Not guilty, my lord!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Well, somebody has—and I'll jolly well punch his nose! Look here, Bunter, have you had it?" Evidently the Bounder suspected Bunter. It was quite remarkable how Greyfriars fellows, when they missed things, thought of Bunter at once.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"What have you got behind you?" exclaimed the Bounder. "You're holding something! Why, you fat scoundrel, I'll—"

Smithy made a jump at Bunter.

Billy Bunter jumped back.

"Look out!" roared Bob Cherry.

But he roared too late. Bunter backed into the up-ended bike. Over went the bike with a crash and a clang.

Over went Bunter, staggering backwards. The straw hat dropped on the earth. The next second Billy Bunter dropped—on the hat.

Crunch!

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

And he sat on a flattened straw which now resembled a pancake much more than a hat.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Beastly for the Bounder!

"H A, ha, ha!"

Four juniors roared with laughter. Bob Cherry jumped after his sprawling bike. Herbert Vernon-Smith was jumping at Bunter. Bunter rolled off the squashed straw hat, roaring—not with laughter. A lunge from the Bounder's boot helped him to roll.

"Yaroooh! Beast!" roared Bunter. "Ow! Keep off! I never had your hat! I never— Whoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smithy pounced on the hat. He picked it up, and glared at it. It had been a handsome hat—an expensive hat—one of those very nice summer straws for which a fellow has to pay a good price. But nobody would have paid a good price for that hat now. Nobody would have paid anything for it. No-

THRILLING!

Poor old Bunter—he's broke to the wide. And yet, if he only knew it, the straw hat on his head is worth a hundred pounds! Let Frank Richards tell you in this grand story of Greyfriars how this amazing thing happens!

AMUSING!

body would even have taken it at a gift. That hat was a drug in the market. The Bounder was red with wrath.

He had come down to the bikeshed for his jigger to ride over to Courtfield to meet his father, who was coming down to the school that day. But he forgot all about his jigger, and all about Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire, at the moment. His ruined hat, and Bunter, occupied his thoughts.

Bunter scrambled up. He started to retreat. The Bounder hurled the smashed hat to the ground and dashed after him.

"Hook it, Bunter!" gasped Nugent.

"Put it on, fatty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. certainly sympathised with the Bounder. They knew that Bunter deserved kicking. But the look on Smithy's face hinted that Bunter was going to get more kicking than he deserved. Smithy's temper was often bad; now it seemed at its very worst. He darted after Bunter like a cormorant after its prey. The Famous Five wished Bunter luck as he fled.

"Yaroooh!" floated back from the distance, as a pursuing foot crashed on a pair of tight trousers.

As if that contact had spurred him on, Bunter put in a burst of speed. He fairly flew, his little fat legs flashing and twinkling. He vanished from the sight of the Famous Five. He streaked

for the House, red with exertion, bedewed with perspiration.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, sighted him in the quad. Quelch was taking a little walk after class with Prout, the master of the Fifth. The two masters stared at Bunter as he crossed their line of vision, and they stared at the Bounder in pursuit. Prout shrugged his shoulders. He made no remark, but he expressed by that shrug his opinion that this sort of shindy was the thing to be expected of the Remove—Quelch's boys. Quelch, irritated by the shrug, left him, and strode towards Bunter.

Neither the pursued, nor the pursuer, noticed Quelch in the thrilling excitement of the moment. Smithy overlooked the fleeing Owl as Quelch started towards them. He let out his foot; and there was a terrific thud as it crashed on Bunter from the rear.

"Oooooop!"

Bunter nose-dived.

He went headlong, sprawling on his hands and knees, yelling at the top of his voice. The Bounder stopped, barely in time to avoid falling over him.

"Ow! Wow! Help! Murder! Fire! Rescue! Keep off!" roared Bunter.

"I say, you fellows— Whoop!"

"You fat rotter!" panted the Bounder. "Take that, and—"

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Oh!" ejaculated the Bounder.

He spun round, becoming aware of Quelch.

"Shocking!" Prout was saying. "Outrageous! Scandalous!"

"Vernon-Smith!" hooted the Remove master. "How dare you! I repeat, how dare you, Vernon-Smith!"

Mr. Quelch's brow was like thunder. He was quite unaware of Bunter's offence. All he knew was that the fat junior had been fleeing for his life, and that Vernon-Smith had run him down, and kicked as if he had been kicking for goal in a Soccer game. Smithy had, as a matter of fact, kicked harder than he would have done if he had been cooler. Billy Bunter roared as he sprawled, and he roared all the more loudly as he heard Quelch's voice, and realised that his Form master was on the spot. Bunter was a little hurt, but he sounded as if the little was a lot.

"I—I—" stammered the Bounder.

"How dare you kick Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Go into the House at once, Vernon-Smith! Go to the Form-room and write out two hundred lines from the first book of 'Virgil'! At once!"

The Bounder gasped.

"I—I—I'm sorry, sir; but—"

"You hear me, Vernon-Smith?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Ow, ow, ow!" bellowed Bunter.

"Wow, wow, wow!"

"I—I was just going out, sir!" stammered Smithy.

"You will go into the Form-room this instant, and write out the imposition I have given you!" said Mr. Quelch acidly. "Another word, and I will cane you in addition!"

Smithy breathed hard and deep. The Remove master was not a man to be argued with. And Smithy realised, too, that he had rather let himself go in delivering that kick. He did not utter another word. Detention was bad enough, without a caning to boot. With a scowling brow the Bounder walked off to the House.

Mr. Quelch watched him go in before he went back to rejoin Prout, frowning.

Billy Bunter got on his fat legs. He wriggled rather painfully as he rolled away. But he grinned. That beast!

Smithy had got it in the neck, anyhow. That was so much to the good, from Bunter's point of view. But he was in want of a hat. Smithy's hat, certainly, was at his disposal now, but he did not want that hat any more. Having given the Bounder time to get to the Form-room—safe out of the way—Bunter rolled into the House in search of a hat. He did not want his own. When a fellow was going out to tea he liked to look nice.

In the lobby there were a number of hats and caps from which Bunter was able to make a selection. Among them was a very handsome straw. Bunter did not need to look at the name inside to know that it belonged to Lord Maulverer. Mauly, apparently, had come in and left his hat there—in time for Bunter. Bunter promptly annexed it. It was really a better hat than Smithy's. All Mauly's things were of the very best. Bunter was satisfied. Whether Mauly would be satisfied if he came along for his hat and found it was gone, was another question. Bunter did not bother about that. A fellow really could not think of everything.

Handsomely hatted once more Billy Bunter rolled forth, and made his way to the bikeshed. He lost no time, having a suspicion that those beasts, Harry Wharton & Co., might sneak off without him, if he gave them a chance. But they had not yet started for Highcliffe. Bob Cherry was busily engaged on his up-ended bike once more, looking red and cross. That worrying puncture had broken out again, perhaps owing to Bunter crashing the bike over. The Co. had gone for a stroll while Bob handled it. Watching him at work did not seem to cheer him. Indeed, it seemed to have rather the reverse effect.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I say, Cherry—"

"Shut up!"

"Have the other beasts—I mean the other fellows—started?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here! How long are you going to be mending that rotten puncture? I can't hang round all the afternoon waiting for you!"

Bob took an almost convulsive grip on the tube of solution.

"I shall borrow Mauly's bike, if you're too beastly lazy to mend these punctures for me," said Bunter. "I'm ready to start. I don't see hanging about like this. If you can't mend punctures, you ought to get a new tyre. I suppose you can't afford one!" Bunter sniffed.

"Will you clear off, you fat idiot, when a fellow's busy?" demanded Bob Cherry, in a sulphurous voice.

"Well, why the thump don't you get through?" snapped Bunter. "Clumsy ass, to take all this time over a puncture!"

"You howling fathead!" roared Bob Cherry. "You burst it when you knocked the jigger over!"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

Bob Cherry spun round at the giggling Owl. His temper was already sorely tried. Bunter seemed to think it entertaining to have given him his troublesome task over again. Bob made a stride at him, and jammed the tube of solution on a fat little nose, squeezing it as he did so.

"Oooogh!" gasped Bunter. He left off chuckling quite suddenly.

"Now clear off, you gurgling gargoyle, or I'll give you the rest down your neck!" roared Bob.

"Oooogh! Beast! Grrrgh!"

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Billy Bunter jumped away. He clawed wildly at the sticky solution on his nose.

"Owl! Urrgh! Beast! I'll jolly well—wurrgh!"

"Have the rest?" demanded Bob ferociously.

"Urrgh! Beast!"

Billy Bunter departed in haste. Apparently he did not want the rest. He stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once, still clawing at a sticky nose. And Bob Cherry devoted himself once more to that worrying puncture.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Left!

"WHARTON!"

"Hullo!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were sauntering in the quad, while they waited for Bob Cherry to join them. The four juniors looked round as the call came from a window of the Remove Form Room.

The Bounder was standing there, with a scowl on his face. The Co. came along under the window.

"What's up?" asked Harry.

"I've got a detention," growled Smithy. "That ass Quelch saw me kicking Bunter. Is he anywhere about?"

"Ambling round with Prout, in the quad," answered Harry.

"No chance of cutting, then!" grunted the Bounder.

Wharton's face became serious. It was not a light matter for a junior to "cut" when detained by his Form master. But the Bounder was reckless enough for that, or anything else.

"Ten to one you'd get spotted," said the captain of the Remove. "And, anyhow, there'd be a row when you came in. You don't want a row going on with Quelch if your pater's coming here to-day."

"I know that. But my father expected me to meet him in Courtfield," growled Vernon-Smith. "He's coming down by train—or, rather, he's come. He must have got in at Courtfield before this. Bother that fat idiot! Redwing's gone up to Hawkscliff, or I'd ask him to cut off and meet my pater. If you're not doing anything special—"

"We're going over to tea at Highcliffe when Bob's bike is ready. But that's all right—we'll have to pass Courtfield on the way. We can find your pater and tell him. What's his train?"

"Four at Courtfield."

"It's a quarter past now," said Nugent.

"I know that. I've been standing at this dashed window an hour or more, waiting for some fellow to come along," growled Vernon-Smith. "My father was going to walk back with me across the common—by the path, of course, not the high road. I don't know whether he will wait at the station for me, or start walking, but if he's waiting I want to let him know. If you fellows go by the footpath you'll meet him if he's started, and if not, you can butt in at the station—"

"Right as rain!" said Harry. "Bob can't be much longer now, and we'll get off as quick as we can. If he's at the station we'll root him out and tell him—What shall we tell him?"

"Tell him a silly old fool has detained me—couldn't mind his own business and had to barge in."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I don't think I'll put it quite like that," he said. "Anyhow, we'll let him know you can't come."

"Thanks!" said the Bounder,

evidently relieved. "Now I'll grind at those rotten lines. I want to get out by the time the pater gets here."

"Hullo, hallo, hallo!" came a powerful voice. "You fellows ready? Waiting for you."

"We're off!" said Harry; and the Bounder, with a nod, disappeared from the window.

The Co. joined Bob Cherry, and five bikes were wheeled out into the road. The chums of the Remove were about to mount when a fat figure hurtled out after them like a stone from a catapult.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"I say, hold on!" gasped Bunter. "I say, what do you think? That silly ass Mauly has lent his jigger to Russell, and I can't borrow it."

"Good!" said the Famous Five heartily.

And Hurree Janset Ram Singh added that the goodness was terrific.

"I say, you fellows, we can't bike it, after all!" exclaimed Bunter anxiously—"that is, unless one of you fellows can give me a lift!"

"Anybody feel up to carrying a ton on his bike?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here, shove those bikes in at the gate—never mind about taking them back to the shed. I dare say they'll be all right—and let's go by bus—"

"Good-bye!"

The Famous Five mounted. Billy Bunter glared at them with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"Look here!" he roared. "I say—stop!" Bunter rushed in pursuit. "I say, you fellows, if you're going, lend me a bob for my bus fare! Oh, you rotters! Beasts!"

The five cyclists shot out of hearing. Billy Bunter rolled after them, in haste and wrath. With the selfishness to which Bunter was sadly accustomed, nobody seemed to want to carry his enormous weight behind on a bike. But, at least, Bunter considered, they might have lent him his fare for the motor-bus!

"I say, you fellows!" roared Bunter, as he rolled in pursuit. "Beasts! I say, old chaps! I say, you rotters! Dear old fellows! Pigs!"

The five cyclists shot onwards, turning a deaf ear—or, rather, ten deaf ears—to the voice of the charmer. Billy Bunter plugged on, in the hope of seeing them stop. But he did not see them stop. Very soon he did not see them at all. They vanished towards Courtfield Common, and Billy Bunter came to a breathless halt, and fanned himself with Lord Maulverer's straw hat.

"Owl!" he gasped. "Beasts! Blessed if it doesn't look as if they don't want me to come to Highcliffe at all! Rotters!"

Bunter spotted a Greyfriars cap in the distance ahead, and rolled on. By walking to the corner of the common and taking the motor-bus to Courtfield, he could arrive at Highcliffe soon after the cyclists. But there was a difficulty in the way—Bunter was in his usual stony state, and the motor-bus was only available to passengers who paid their fares. Bunter hoped that the fellow ahead of him was a fellow he could "touch" for the necessary sum. He rolled on hopefully, but his hope sank almost to zero when he drew near to the fellow in the Greyfriars cap—and recognised Fisher T. Fish, of the Remove.

Fishy was the last fellow in the world to lend anybody anything. Orpheus, with his lute, drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek, but with a whole orchestra he could hardly have drawn a loan from

Fisher Tarleton Fish, of New York. But Bunter was desperate, and he tried it on. "I say, Fishy, old chap!" he gasped. "If you've got a bob you don't want—"

"I've got a bob," assented Fisher T. Fish. "But I guess I want it—just a few!"

"Lend it to me, old fellow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fisher T. Fish.

"What are you cackling at?" hooted Bunter.

"Your leetle joke, old fat man!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish. "I'll say it's the bee's knee. It surely is the elephant's side-whiskers! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, make it fourpence!" gasped Bunter. "I can get to Courtfield on the bus for fourpence. I'll settle up when—when—"

"When the cows come home?" asked Fishy.

Billy Bunter rolled on. At the corner of the common the motor-bus from Redclyffe came whirring along—and it whirred on to Courtfield without Bunter.

The cyclists were long ago out of sight. Billy Bunter rolled along the footpath over the common—which saved a great deal of the distance—with the heroic determination of walking to Highcliffe. After all, a few miles were nothing to an athlete like Bunter. He was going to arrive at Highcliffe, if only to show those beasts that he jolly well would!

The wind from the sea blew fresh and keen across the open common, and it was rather refreshing. For a quarter of a mile or so Billy Bunter plugged on heroically. But he slowed down. In spite of the wind from the sea, it was hot—awfully hot. Bunter slowed down

the direction of Bunter, buzzing alarmingly close to his fat little nose. Whether it had mistaken the fat junior's face for a flower in full bloom, or merely been attracted by Bunter's sticky countenance, was a debatable point. Apparently struck with its find, the wasp flew away, to return a moment or two later leading a drove of wasps, which buzzed around Bunter like flies round a honey pot. Even a rabbit, interested in the proceedings, had stopped in its tracks to look on at the sleeping beauty.

Bunter did not heed, however; he was deep in the land of dreams, sleeping as soundly as he ever slept in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars, and his snore mingled more or less melodiously with the buzz of the wasps and the whisper of the wind in the gorse.



"Look out!" roared Bob Cherry, as Bunter backed away from Vernon-Smith. But Bob's warning came too late. The fat junior staggered backwards over the up-ended bike to land full on the straw hat. "Ow!" gasped Bunter.

"I mean when I've been to Courtfield. I—I'm going to the bank for some money—"

"Sure!" assented Fishy sarcastically. "The bank's staying open late to-day specially on your account—what?"

"I—I mean, I'm going to the post office, to—to cash a postal order," gasped Bunter.

Fisher T. Fish chortled.

"You needn't take all that trouble. If you've got a postal order, old fat clam, I guess I'll cash it for you! Trot it out!"

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fisher T. Fish, greatly amused; and he was still chortling when Bunter rolled on—and he grinned all the way to Greyfriars. The idea of a fellow trying to "touch" him for fourpence seemed no end of a joke to Fishy. It was, as he said, the bee's knee—if not the elephant's side-whiskers!

more and more. He fanned his fat and streaming face with Mauly's hat. And at last he stopped where a bunch of oaks, interspersed with hawthorn and bracken, threw a grateful shade.

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

He wanted a rest. His fat little legs were tired, and he was almost melting in the sun. He wanted a rest even more than he wanted tea at Highcliffe. He gave a grunt of satisfaction as he rolled out of the blaze of the July sun into the shade of the clump of trees. He sat down at the foot of a tree in thick grass, leaned back on the trunk, and rested luxuriously. He tilted Mauly's hat over his fat face and closed his eyes behind his spectacles.

It was Bunter's intention to rest for a few minutes—perhaps ten—and then resume his way. But in less than two minutes a deep snore was rumbling under Mauleverer's straw hat.

A wasp hovering near by flew over in

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Hinks' Lucky Day!

MR. HAROLD HINKS—known more familiarly among his friends as 'Arold 'Inks—gazed mournfully into the empty bowl of a pipe and ran grubby hands through the pockets of his tattered coat in the faint hope of extracting therefrom some fragments of tobacco along with dust and fluff.

But Mr. Hinks searched his pockets in vain. Again and again that afternoon he had searched those pockets for some forgotten fragment of tobacco, and he sighed as he drew forth empty hands.

Mr. Hinks was taking a rest on Courtfield Common, about a mile from the town. Sprawling under the shadow of a great mass of hawthorns, Mr. Hinks had a view of great expanses of grass and golden gorse, of the river

winding down to the sea, and the blue, deep sea itself in the distance—and did not even look at that view. Harold had no eye for scenery. He was taking a rest—his career being one of successive rests. Mr. Hinks was one of those men born with a natural disinclination to work. Under happier auspices he might have been a Cabinet Minister, or an ornament of the Diplomatic Service. But, as a matter of sad fact, he was a tramp.

Mr. Hinks was feeling in hard luck now. He had a pipe—a nice briar pipe—which he had skilfully extracted from somebody's pocket in Courtfield that morning; he had a box of matches, won by mysterious operations with a pen-knife on an automatic machine. But he had no tobacco. And he was dying for a smoke. Anybody looking at Mr. Hinks might have supposed that what he was most in need of was a wash. But what he felt most in need of was a smoke—and there was no smoke for Harold. So he gazed mournfully at the empty bowl of a pipe and grunted—and then fixed his eyes on a rather stout, well-dressed, prosperous-looking gentleman who was coming slowly along the footpath from the direction of the town.

Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire father of the Bounder of Greyfriars, was walking slowly. The City gentleman had a good deal of weight to carry, and the weather was hot; also, he was expecting every moment to see his son coming up the path to meet him.

Mr. Vernon-Smith had not waited at the station for Smithy, as Smithy had supposed he might do. As the school-boy was not there to meet him as arranged, the City gentleman started walking to the school, expecting to meet Smithy on the way.

Mr. Hinks watched his slow approach, debating in his mind whether to attempt to cadge a shilling from him when he came by, or whether it would be practicable to up-end the stout gentleman, pick his pockets, and scoot.

Smithy's father did not even see the tattered figure sprawling in the shade of the hawthorns; but as he came nearer Harold Hinks, watching him keenly, decided that he was not a man to be easily up-ended and robbed. His plump face had hard lines, his eyes had a glint in them, his chin was square and firm—and he had a stick under his arm.

Mr. Hinks abandoned the idea of up-ending him, and decided on the cadging wheeze—though that did not seem very hopeful after a nearer inspection of Mr. Vernon-Smith's face.

A dozen yards from the sprawling tramp Mr. Vernon-Smith halted and took off his shining silk hat and wiped his damp forehead. A walk in the country was, perhaps, a pleasure to the City gentleman, accustomed to the hard pavements, the smell of petrol, and the din of traffic. But Mr. Vernon-Smith found it rather tiring, and he had intended to take that walk in company with his son; on his own he would have preferred to take a taxi to the school.

He wiped the perspiration from his forehead and stood looking along the path across the common with an impatient and rather annoyed expression.

It was clear to Mr. Hinks that the City gentleman was expecting to see someone arrive, who was not yet in sight. That, of course, made it still more hopeless to think of up-ending him. Solitary places were required for activities of that kind. Mr. Hinks did not like the idea of witnesses to such transactions.

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Mr. Vernon-Smith replaced his shining top, but he did not resume his walk. He sat down on a log by the footpath under a shady tree. Herbert was not in sight, but he supposed that the boy was coming, so he decided to rest and wait for him to come up. He needed a rest after walking a mile from the station.

Harold Hinks watched him with a sullen eye. He told himself that that fat old toff probably had no end of oof about him—and ten to one he would refuse a "bob" to a 'ard-up cove that might ask him for one.

Unconscious of the sullen and discontented eye fixed on him, Mr. Vernon-Smith took a fat pocket-book from the inside of his coat.

He was not a man to waste time.

There were always business papers in Mr. Vernon-Smith's pocket; he had always two or three big financial schemes working in his busy head, and his time was of immense value.

All the way down from London he had not looked out of the train window once; he had been busy with papers, and reflecting thereon. Now that the Big Slump was ending, Mr. Vernon-Smith was a busier man than ever. The rubber shares he had bought for next to nothing were growing in value by leaps and bounds; the tea shares he had bought at the bottom of the market

TO READERS IN THE IRISH FREE STATE.

Readers in the Irish Free State are requested to note that when free gifts are offered with this publication they can only be supplied when the article is of a non-dutiable character.

were getting near the top; even iron and steel were looking up.

Deep in meditations on these awfully important subjects, Mr. Vernon-Smith sorted papers out of that fat pocket-book and scanned them, and laid some of them on the log beside him.

Among them was a crisp slip of paper, which Mr. Hinks, from the distance, blinked at with longing eyes. He knew that it was a banknote. Mr. Vernon-Smith laid it down with other papers while he searched through the pocket-book for some special paper that he wanted.

"My eye!" murmured Mr. Hinks.

He sat up.

There was no one in sight on the footpath. Whoever it was that the City gentleman had been looking for was not in view yet.

That banknote fascinated Mr. Hinks. It might be a fiver, or a tenner—perhaps a twenty! The amount of baccy and liquor that such a sum represented almost dazzled Harold Hinks.

But he shook his head sadly. The City gentleman's stick lay beside him, and he looked like a man who would use it readily.

And then fortune smiled on Harold.

The wind from the sea was fresh and keen. Occasionally there came a gust. Mr. Vernon-Smith, having looked through his pocket-book in vain for the paper he wanted, began to sort over the little heap he had placed on the log beside him. At the same moment there came a gust of wind—and the banknote fluttered away.

It fluttered directly towards Mr. Hinks.

"My eye!" gasped Harold.

He jumped up.

So did the millionaire.

The gusty wind carried the fluttering banknote swiftly along, and it dropped to the ground half-way between Mr. Vernon-Smith and Mr. Hinks.

With an exclamation of annoyance, Mr. Vernon-Smith started in pursuit of it. He moved quickly—but not so quickly as Harold Hinks. This was Mr. Hinks' chance! For thirty or forty years Mr. Hinks' career had been that of a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles. He was not a man to lose a chance. Like an arrow from a bow, he shot towards the fluttering banknote.

Mr. Vernon-Smith, seeing him for the first time, stared, and then shouted. And he put on speed.

But Harold reached the banknote first—an easy first! His grubby fingers snatched it up.

And as he snatched it he saw the figures on it. It was not a fiver; it was not a tenner. It was a £100 note!

He gasped.

His grubby fingers closed on that note like a vice. He spun round and ran.

"Stop!" Mr. Vernon-Smith shouted frantically. "Stop thief!"

Harold was not likely to stop!

He was not, as a rule, an active man. But he could run! On occasions when a gentleman in a helmet had been behind him, Harold had often put on quite a creditable turn of speed. Now he fairly flew.

Mr. Vernon-Smith dashed after him. A hundred pounds was no more to him than half-a-crown to Mr. Hinks. But he was not a man to be robbed, if he could help it.

But he could not help it. He ran about a hundred yards, and then had to stop, streaming with perspiration and gasping for breath. He gasped and gurgled and gobbled like a turkey. And Harold Hinks, still with the £100 note clutched in a grubby hand, vanished along the footpath as if it had been a cinder path.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Quick Work!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Look out!"

There was a whirring of bikes, a clanging of bells.

Five schoolboy cyclists were coming along the footpath over Courtfield Common. Cyclists were not supposed to use that footpath; there were bye-laws to that effect, posted up on notice-boards for anybody who could read half-obliterated small print. The Famous Five had perhaps forgotten those bye-laws—or perhaps they did not want to remember them at the moment. Anyhow, they were riding along the path by which Mr. Vernon-Smith was expected to come, having promised the Bounder to meet his father and "put him wise." And as they rode in a cheery bunch round a clump of trees, a man running from the opposite direction almost bumped into them.

The cyclists parted to right and left, jamming on their brakes. The man who ran into them was a rather tattered man, in patched trousers, a dingy coat, and a rag of a cap—evidently a tramp. But he was on the right side of the law—he had a right to run as fast as he liked on the footpath, and the Greyfriars fellows had no right to ride there. They did their very best to avoid a collision. Wharton and Frank Nugent rocked to one side, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull to the other. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh barely avoided the running man, skidded, and shot over, bumping into

Mr. Harold Hinks and sending him spinning.

Mr. Hinks gasped and sprawled. The Nabob of Bhanipur sprawled, and the like sprawled.

"My eye!" gurgled Mr. Hinks.

"Oh, my esteemed hat!" gasped the nabob.

The other fellows jumped down.

"Hurt, Inky?"

"The hurtfulness is not terrific!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, sitting up rather dazedly. "Wow!"

"Blow yer!" gasped Mr. Hinks. "Running into a bloke! Knocking a cove over! I'll 'ave yer run in!"

"Sorry!" gasped Wharton.

"You ran into us, you know!" said Bob.

"Can't a cove run if he wants a little exercise?" demanded Mr. Hinks indignantly. "Blow me pink! If there was a copper 'andy, I'd 'ave the lot of you run in!"

Considering what was clutched in Mr. Hinks' grubby right hand, it was rather fortunate for him that there was not a "copper" handy!

"Well, you might look where you're running!" said Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed chums, the fault is ours!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, picking himself up. "My dear and absurd sir, the sorrowfulness for this ludicrous accident is terrific, and the apologise is preposterous!"

"My eye!" gasped Mr. Hinks, gazing at the Nabob of Bhanipur.

The crash had taken him by surprise, but he seemed still more surprised by Hurree Singh's flow of English.

"The regretfulness is great!" assured the nabob. "Let me assist you to your ridiculous feet!"

He gave Mr. Hinks a helping hand up. The tattered man grunted as he resumed the perpendicular. His right hand remained tightly clutched—a circumstance that the juniors noticed, though certainly without guessing the reason.

"Not hurt, I hope?" asked Harry politely. "We're awfully sorry, really! But you came round those trees so suddenly——"

"Can't a bloke run if he likes?" demanded Mr. Hinks offensively.

"Of course! We're quite in the wrong!" said the captain of the Remove soothingly. "But if you're not hurt, there's no great harm done."

"Perhaps a ridiculous half-crown——" suggested the Nabob of Bhanipur; and that coin appeared in his dusky hand.

Mr. Hinks looked more amicable.

"You're a gentleman, sir!" he said, quite civilly. "No 'arm done. But a bloke don't like being knocked over. Thank you, sir!"

Mr. Hinks put out his right hand, and then, remembering himself, put out his left. The half-crown was deposited in his grubby left palm, and peace was established.

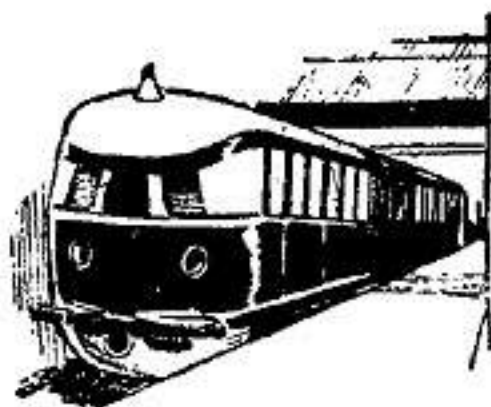
The chums of Greyfriars remounted their machines and rode on. And Mr. Hinks, before restarting on his way, put his right hand into his tattered coat and deposited the £100 note in an inside pocket. He had run over a mile with the stolen note in his grubby paw. Now, however, he considered himself fairly safe; he knew that the "fat old cove" could not have run very far in pursuit. At a more leisurely pace, Mr. Hinks resumed his way, turning over in his mind various schemes for getting that banknote changed.

Harry Wharton & Co. rode on their way. They dismissed the tramp from their minds, naturally not supposing for a moment that they would ever see him again. But they rode rather more cautiously after that little accident.

Herewith some interesting facts concerning

The FLYING HAMBURGER

a monster of the iron road plying between Hamburg and Berlin. It forms the subject of this week's souvenir photo-plate—the eleventh of the series.



ENGINEERS and scientists are saying that one day in the near future folk will all travel by aeroplane, except for the shorter distances, when they will go by train or car as we do to-day. Then someone will start to invent a still speedier method of travel. And so the quest for speed goes on. Meanwhile, the most up-to-date trains are "not so dusty."

There's one whizzing about Germany just now which is claimed to be not only the fastest in that country, but in the whole world. This Flying Hamburger, carrying passengers between Berlin and Hamburg, actually did the 178 miles in 140 minutes on its trial trip a few months ago. That's an average speed of about 76 miles an hour. And at that rate it beats the fastest steam express in Germany—on the same route—by nearly 40 minutes.

Least Possible Resistance!

There are two coaches to the Flying Hamburger, and each has in its rounded "nose" a very powerful Diesel electric engine which works a dynamo, the power from the dynamos being transmitted to motors driving the wheels. The engineers responsible for that tremendous power have a lot to be proud of, for that average speed of about 76 miles an hour was made up of a "burst" of 93 miles an hour on the straight, and 60 m.p.h. on curves.

The cleverness of these engineers wasn't all used up in the engines, for a great deal of the tremendous speed is due to the wonderful "stream-lining" of the Flying Hamburger. There is scarcely a part of the train that sticks out beyond the general surface. The

footboards are let in behind the coach doors; even the headlights are let into the coachwork, instead of projecting.

And you have a job even to see the wheels, because the smooth coachwork is continued down well below the platform level. So there is very little indeed for the wind to catch hold of, the result being that the Flying Hamburger slips through the atmosphere with the least possible resistance to slow down her speed.

No Turntables Needed!

The two saloon coaches which make up this marvellous train hold about 100 passengers, and in case any of these passengers get thirsty or hungry on their swift trip between Hamburg and Berlin, there's a refreshment-room to keep them alive. Each coach has a blunt end and a rounded end, the two blunt ends being coupled closely together and connected by a covered corridor. Each end of the complete train being rounded, and equipped with a Diesel engine and driver's compartment, the train can be driven in either direction. So the Flying Hamburger doesn't want a turntable to whisk her around, any more than our own electric Tube railway trains.

And that's just what the F.H. looks like—a weird sort of stray from the Underground, extremely smooth all over and rounded as much as possible. As speed mounts up, so the newer trains all over the world look less and less like trains, the locomotives themselves losing all resemblance to the familiar engine that we all love to inspect at close quarters when the chance comes our way.

Now take a glance at the small reproduction of next week's handsome free photogravure plate on page 17.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That must be Smithy's pater!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, a little later.

Ahead of the juniors on the path a rather stout gentleman, in a shining silk hat, appeared in view. As they drew nearer they recognised Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith.

"Looks a bit waxy!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The waxfulness appears to be terrific!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith, as he sighted the cyclists, waved a plump hand to them, beckoning. They came up in a bunch, and jumped down. They could see that the millionaire was angry and excited about something, though they could not guess what. He broke into speech before they could say a word.

"Have you passed a man on the path—a tramp?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," answered Harry. "We ran——"

"He has robbed me!"

"Oh!"

"A hundred-pound banknote!" gasped Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, my hat!"

"So that's why he was running!"

ejaculated Bob Cherry. "I noticed he had something in his hand——"

"Same here!"

"The samefulness is terrific!"

"Follow him!" panted Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Follow him at once! Where is Herbert? Why is not Herbert here?"

"He's got a detention, and he asked us to come and tell you."

"Yes, yes! Never mind! Follow that man at once! You can handle him—five of you! Follow him!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were on their way to Highbeliffe, where they were expected to tea in the study with Courtenay and the Caterpillar. But that, of course, had to stand over. If the tattered rascal who had run into them was getting away with a hundred pounds belonging to Smithy's father, they were more than ready to take a hand in the proceedings. And certainly the five of them were more than equal to giving Mr. Hinks all the handling he might require.

"Follow him at once!" boomed Mr. Vernon-Smith. "The rascal—the scoundrel—he snatched up the note—a hundred-pound note—follow him and

catch him—lose no time—get after him at once!"

"Right-ho!"

The Famous Five spun round their machines and remounted. On the bikes there was little doubt of running down the thief before he had time to get off the common.

"Put it on!" exclaimed Wharton, as he drove at his pedals.

"Go it!"

"The go-fulness is terrific!"

With the wind lashing their faces, the Famous Five rode hard. They fairly skimmed along the path over the common, clanging their bells as they turned by clumps of trees or bunches of bush. In a whizzing bunch they shot onward, leaving Mr. Vernon-Smith far out of sight behind. And Bob gave a sudden shout as he spotted a figure far ahead, close by a clump of oaks.

"That's the sportsman!"

"Put it on!"

And with their quarry in sight, the Famous Five fairly raced.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Well Hidden!

"O H, jiminy!"

Harold Hinks uttered that startled exclamation.

Standing by a clump of oaks near the footpath, Mr. Hinks stared back across the green sunny common—at a bunch of cyclists coming on like the wind. Distant as they were, he recognised them as the party of schoolboys he had run into a short time ago. They had gone on their way and vanished—now they were coming back at full pelt. There was deep alarm in Mr. Hinks' face as he watched them coming.

Harold was quick on the uptake—his peculiar career had made him so. He did not need telling why the cyclists had turned back to return on their own tracks at such speed. He could guess that they had fallen in with the "fat old cove," and learned of the robbery. He remembered that the fat old cove had been looking for somebody along the path—probably these very schoolboys, now he came to think of it. Harold realised that he was in a bad box.

He had run from the stout millionaire like a hare from a tortoise. But it was useless to run from sturdy fellows mounted on bicycles. Flight was impossible. If they were after him—and he knew they were—he had no chance whatever of escape. Resistance was equally hopeless. One or two he might have handled—but not the five of them. Concealment was out of the question—he could see that they had spotted him. There was no cover at hand, but the clump of oaks by which he stood—and they would soon root through that clump for him.

"Jiminy!" repeated Harold, in dismay.

Instead of boudlers wealth, as soon as he could get the banknote changed, Mr. Hinks' prospects had suddenly altered for the worse—three months' "hard," and the loss of his plunder! Fortune, which had seemed to smile on Harold, was now frowning darkly. If the stolen note was found on him—

That, at least, he could avoid!

He plunged into the clump of trees and vanished from the sight of the oncoming cyclists.

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In this emergency Harold's brain worked swiftly.

He might get off on a charge of theft if the money was not found on him. And if he could stick the banknote in some undiscovered place, he might find it again afterwards.

He ran into the trees, staring round him for some safe place of concealment for that flimsy slip of paper.

Snore!

Mr. Hinks gave a sudden jump.

"Wot the pleeceman—" he ejaculated.

Snore!

"My eye!"

Mr. Hinks had not known that there was anybody at hand. But that snore apprised him of the fact. And now he beheld a fat schoolboy sitting under an oak and leaning back on the trunk, fast asleep, with a straw hat lying in the grass at his side.

A very ugly look came over Harold's face. But it cleared as he saw that Billy Bunter was fast asleep. Bunter's eyes were closed behind his big spectacles; he was no witness to the sneak-thief's proceedings.

Snore!

There was a whirring of bikes on the common. The scorching cyclists were coming on fast; they were already within hearing.

Almost in anguish, Mr. Hinks stared round to find a hiding-place for that one hundred pound note.

But there was none to be seen. With time on his hands, he might have found some crevice in a trunk—some hollow in the ground—but there was no time—and to keep it on him, or drop it where it could be found, meant three months' hard—as well as the loss of his plunder. The whirring bikes were very near now.

It was a case of any port in a storm. And Mr. Hinks at that urgent and thrilling moment had a brain-wave. He stepped softly towards the sleeping fat schoolboy and picked up his straw hat. Inside that hat was a light leather lining. In a few seconds the one hundred pound note was squeezed under the lining of the straw hat.

Mr. Hinks did not replace the hat in the grass where he had found it. He placed it on Billy Bunter's head.

Then he kicked Bunter in the ribs.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter.

He awoke.

He blinked up through his big spectacles.

"Ooogh! I say, you fellows, 'tain't rising-bell! Oh!" Bunter realised that he was not in bed in the Remove dormitory. "I—I say!"

He scrambled to his feet, blinking rather uneasily at the tramp. Mr. Hinks touched his rag of a cap civilly.

"Spare a copper to 'elp a bloke on his way, sir!" he said.

"Oh! Oh, no! I—I've left all my money indoors!" stammered Bunter. He backed away from Mr. Hinks. He did not quite like the tramp's looks at close quarters.

Mr. Hinks grinned.

This fat fellow evidently had not the faintest suspicion that Harold had meddled with his hat while he was asleep. He had not the remotest suspicion that a stolen banknote was hidden in the lining of the hat now reposing on his bullet head. Certainly such a suspicion was not likely to occur to anybody else. That banknote was safe from discovery—and Mr. Hinks was safe from having it found on him. He had only been in time!

There was a clanging of bikes, a

thudding of footsteps, and five Greyfriars fellows rushed into the clump of oaks.

"He's here!"

"Hiding!"

"We'll jolly soon have him out!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter, have you seen—"

"Here he is!"

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter.

But the Famous Five, unheeding Billy Bunter, surrounded Harold Hinks with grim looks.

"Got you!" said Johnny Bull.

"The gofulness is terrific!"

"'Arternoon, gents!" said Mr. Hinks coolly. "Might you be wanting anything with a bloke?"

"Yes, rather," said Harry Wharton. "We want you—and the banknote you've stolen from Mr. Vernon-Smith."

"Never heard of him," answered Mr. Hinks. "And I'll eat all the blooming banknotes I've got about me!"

"I say, you fellows!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Look here, if you've come back for me—"

"We haven't, fathead; we've come back for this beauty. If you don't hand over that banknote at once, you rascal—"

"If you lost a banknote, I ain't seed it," answered Mr. Hinks stolidly. "Don't know anything about it!"

"Collar him!" said Bob. "We'd better keep him till Mr. Vernon-Smith comes up and see what he says."

"I say, you fellows!"

"Ring off, Bunter!"

"Ain't you going to Highcliffe?" demanded Bunter warmly. "You made out that you were going over to tea at Highcliffe."

"So we are, ass, when we're through with that pickpocket!"

"Well, look here," said Bunter, "lend me a bob and I'll cut across the common and catch the next motor-bus from Redclyffe. See? Then I shall be at Highcliffe as soon as you fellows."

"You won't go unless somebody lends you a bob?" asked Nugent.

"No. You see, I'm stony!"

"Good! Don't lend him any bobs, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

Harry Wharton looked out of the oaks along the path. There was no sign of Mr. Vernon-Smith yet.

"Better take him along," said the captain of the Remove. "Keep hold of his arms—mind he doesn't dodge away."

"Who wants to dodge?" asked Mr. Hinks.

"Well, you won't have a chance, whether you want to or not," grinned Bob Cherry.

Bob and Harry grasped the rascal by either arm. The other three fellows gathered up the five bicycles to wheel. It was likely to be long before Mr. Vernon-Smith overtook them; and it saved time to meet the millionaire on the way. Billy Bunter blinked after them as they went.

"I say, you fellows!" he roared.

"Bow-wow!"

"Beasts."

The juniors did not look back at the wrathful Owl. But Harold Hinks did. Harold was thinking of the banknote hidden in the lining of Bunter's hat. No doubt he would have preferred to keep that fat schoolboy in sight, with some vague hope of recovering the hidden banknote afterwards. But that was not to be. Billy Bunter blinked after the Famous Five, but he did not follow them. Walking to Highcliffe appealed to him less than ever. Billy Bunter snorted, and sat down to rest again—

taking off Lord Mauleverer's hat to fan his fat face; and little dreaming that there was a hundred-pound note tucked away inside it.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Lost!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had to cover most of the distance they had ridden back before they met Mr. Vernon-Smith.

The millionaire was coming on; but slowly. But they met at last; and Mr. Vernon-Smith's face expressed a grim satisfaction at the sight of Harold Hinks in the grasp of the juniors. Several times on the way Mr. Hinks had made an attempt to "hook it," as he would have termed it; but he was given no chance of hooking it. He was still safely held when Mr. Vernon-Smith's grim eye fell on him.

"So you've caught him," said the millionaire.

"Here he is, sir," answered Harry Wharton. "He hasn't handed over the banknote yet!"

"Hand it over at once, you rascal!"

"Wot banknote?" demanded Mr. Hinks coolly.

"What banknote?" repeated Mr. Vernon-Smith harshly. "You rascal, the banknote that blew away from me, and which you ran and picked up before I could reach it."

"I never picked up no banknote, sir," answered Mr. Hinks, with great calmness and assurance. "I was goin' to pick it up, sir, 'op'ing you'd give me a 'arf-crown for my trouble—but it blowed away agin—"

"Rascal!" boomed the millionaire. "I saw you stoop and pick it up."

"That's a mistake, sir!" said Mr. Hinks shaking his head. "It blowed away jest as I was getting my fingers on it."

"Then why did you run?" demanded Mr. Vernon-Smith, almost staggered by the rascal's cool assurance.

"I ran arter the note, sir! But I never found it! I fancy it blowed into them bushes."

Mr. Vernon-Smith breathed hard. His plump face was purple with wrath. But the juniors exchanged rather queer glances. It was possible that the tattered man was telling the truth, and that Mr. Vernon-Smith had judged hastily and mistakenly.

"'Ard on a bloke, I calls 'this!' said Mr. Hinks, with plaintive indignation. "A bloke tries to oblige a gent, and he's collared and called a thief! I call it 'ard!"

"You rascal!" gasped Mr. Vernon-Smith. "If you do not hand over my banknote immediately, I will have you taken into custody and searched for it."

"Get on with it," said Mr. Hinks. "A honest man ain't afraid of going to the police station."

"Search him!" snapped the millionaire.

The juniors hesitated. Searching a suspected thief was work for official hands. But Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith was rather an autocratic gentleman; accustomed to being obeyed.

"Do you hear me?" he rapped.

"Hadn't we better take him to the police station in Courtfield, sir?" asked Harry.

"Do you think I have time to waste over this slinking rascal?" snapped Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Search him at once, and take the banknote from him."

"Oh! Very well!"

"Search all you like," said Mr. Hinks invitingly. "I got 'arf-a-crown, what

(Continued on next page.)

Secure This Bargain While You Can, Boys!

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Dimensions:

Length, 9 ins.

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1½d. STAMPS

HERE.

the ducky give me, and if you find any more money on me, I'll eat it! A bloke can't say fairer than that."

Mr. Hinks was searched.

All sorts of odds and ends turned up in his pockets; but there was no sign of a banknote.

He grinned cheerfully while the juniors searched him. They looked even into the lining of his ragged cap. Naturally it crossed nobody's mind to think of looking in the lining of Billy Bunter's hat!

"It's not on him, sir!" said Harry at last. The juniors were beginning to think that perhaps Smithy's father had made a mistake. If the banknote had been blown away in the wind, it was quite feasible that he might have fancied that the tramp had picked it up when the man's clutch had missed it. Anyhow, it was certain that the slip of paper was not on him.

Mr. Vernon-Smith set his lips.

"Did you see him throw it away?" he asked.

The juniors shook their heads.

"He had it!" snorted Smithy's father.

"Look here, my man, what was it you had in your hand when you ran into us on the bikes?" demanded Johnny Bull. "You had something held tight—"

"Course I did," agreed Hinks. "It was a quid of baccy—all the baccy I had, too."

"Where is it now, then?" asked Wharton quickly. No tobacco had been found on the man.

"Chewed it," answered Mr. Hinks.

"He is lying!" snapped Mr. Vernon-Smith. "He must have thrown the banknote away when you overtook him. Probably it is lying about the place. Let us go back to the place at once."

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. Tea at Highcliffe seemed further off than ever. But they could hardly refuse; and they turned once more, and walked back to the clump of oaks. The sound of a hefty snore greeted them as they reached the spot. Bunter was still there, and he was asleep again. The juniors grinned at the sleeping beauty.

Mr. Vernon-Smith stared at him.

"Bunter was here when we came up," said Bob. "He may have seen—" He jammed a foot against Bunter's ribs and the fat Owl awakened with a jump.

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

"Wake up, you sleepy Owl!" said Harry Wharton. "Look here, you were on the spot when we found this man here. Did you see anything of a banknote?"

"Eh? What banknote?" grunted Bunter.

"He pinched one from Mr. Vernon-Smith! He must have thrown it away before we collared him here. Did you see him?"

"No, I didn't!" grunted Bunter. "He woke me up—"

"It must be here!" snapped Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Look for it! I will watch this man—"

"Oh, all right, sir."

The Famous Five proceeded to root about for the banknote in the oaks and hawthorns. Billy Bunter watched them through his big spectacles without offering to help. It was far too warm for William George Bunter to think of exerting himself. Mr. Hinks watched them, too—quite satisfied, so long as they did not think of rooting over Bunter. Mr. Vernon-Smith held him by the arm—his stick in his other hand ready for use.

Had the banknote been thrown away in the clump, that rigorous search would certainly have unearthed it. The space to search was not extensive. But there was no sign of it.

Mr. Vernon-Smith's brow grew blacker and blacker. He was beginning to give up hope of ever seeing his banknote again. The juniors were beginning to believe that there had been a mistake in the matter, and that Harold Hinks had never had it at all.

"Well, it doesn't seem to be here, sir," said Bob at last. The charms of the Remove were willing to do all they could; but they were getting tired; and they were very late for tea at Highcliffe already.

"What have you done with it, you rascal?" thundered Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Ain't seed it, sir, since it blowed away!" answered Hinks.

"He has thrown it away, of course," said Mr. Vernon-Smith; but perhaps a doubt was creeping even into his own mind.

The juniors stood silent. If a banknote had been thrown away on the windy common, obviously it was no use looking for it.

"P'r'ap; you'll let a cove go now?" suggested Mr. Hinks. "I could 'ave the law on yer for all this, and well you knows it."

"We'll take the man to the police station if you like, sir," said Harry.

"Ready and willing!" said Mr. Hinks.

Mr. Vernon-Smith snorted.

He was certain, or as good as certain in his own mind, that he had seen the rascal snatch up the banknote and run with it. But it was doubtful whether a charge of theft would hold good in the absence of the banknote. Mr. Hinks' defence was at least plausible. Neither did Mr. Vernon-Smith desire to expend valuable time in prosecuting a petty rascal in a country town. The banknote being lost beyond recall, he had, in fact, no further use for Harold Hinks.

"I shall not take him to the station and charge him!" said the millionaire. "He has thrown away the banknote, and it may never be found again. I shall deal with him myself."

With a sudden swing of his arm he threw the tattered man into the grass. Then he swung up his stick.

Whack, whack, whack!

There was a fearful bellow from Mr. Hinks. He had not expected that! Neither had the juniors. They stared on open eyed.

Whack, whack!

"Yoooo-hoop!" roared Harold Hinks.

He bounded up and ran.

Mr. Vernon-Smith made a fierce stride after him, lashing out with the stick again, with all the strength of a rather powerful arm. Twice it landed on a tattered back before Mr. Hinks got clear! Then the rascal went streaking across the common at top speed, leaving the millionaire brandishing his stick and panting for breath.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Billy Bunter.

"This is all Herbert's fault!" snapped Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Had he been with me it would not have happened."

"He was detained, sir," murmured Wharton.

"He should not have been detained!" snapped the millionaire. And, with that, he started to walk to Greyfriars.

"I say, you fellows—"

"For goodness' sake, let's get off!" said Johnny Bull. "It will be supper instead of tea at Highcliffe, at this rate."

And the Famous Five remounted their bikes, glad to get going again. They disappeared on their way at a great rate.

Billy Bunter blinked after Mr. Vernon-Smith, and then rolled after him. Hope springs eternal in the human breast, and Billy Bunter saw a faint chance of raising his bus fare from Smithy's paper.

"I say, sir—" gasped Bunter. He overtook Mr. Vernon-Smith, panting.

"Well, what?" snapped Smithy's father.

"I've dropped a sixpence, sir—" William George Bunter had never been frammelled by any undue regard for the truth!

"What?"

"And I haven't got any more money, sir!" squeaked Bunter. "And I've got to go on the bus—"

"Huh!"

"To post a letter for Quelch—at Courtfield—"

Mr. Vernon-Smith stared at Bunter.

"Only a tanner, sir!" gasped Bunter hopefully.



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Mr. Vernon-Smith snorted. But he put his hand in his pocket, and extracted therefrom a sixpence.

"Oh, thanks!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Vernon-Smith strode on. Billy Bunter grinned. He cut across the common to the road, happily in time to catch the big, red motor-bus that came rolling along from Redclyffe. Bunter was going to be in at the death, after all!

And when, later on, a tattered figure came sneaking back to the clump of oaks, Mr. Hinks' faint hope that the fat schoolboy might still be there was knocked on the head!

The fat schoolboy was not there—he was rolling cheerily on his way to Highcliffe. Mr. Hinks sighed—feeling that it was hard luck!

Had Bunter been still there, Mr. Hinks would have grabbed his straw hat—and

given Bunter the benefit of a set of grubby knuckles if he objected. But Bunter was gone—and the hundred-pound banknote was gone with him—and Harold's only comfort was that he was still likely to find it hidden in the lining of his hat—and that a bloke might come across him again. Mr. Hinks had seen the Greyfriars colours before, and the band on the straw hat apprised him that Bunter belonged to that school.

Bunter, certainly, was not a fellow to be forgotten. Mr. Hinks would know him, if he saw him again.

And Mr. Hinks was not, like less fortunate men, bothered by having a day's work to do every day. He had plenty of time to hang about looking for a chance to meet that fat cove in the barnacles—which was his description of William George Bunter! He had not by any means given up hope of yet laying his

dishonest hands on that hundred-pound note.

Mr. Vernon-Smith, as he walked on to Greyfriars School, thought a good deal about his lost hundred pounds. But he forgot Bunter and the loan of the sixpence—little guessing that that small sum of sixpence had saved the hundred-pound note from thievish fingers!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Tea at Highcliffe!

"YAROOOOH!"

That sudden yell, in the Fourth Form passage at Highcliffe, was rather startling.

There were seven juniors sitting down to tea in Study No. 3, which belonged to Courtenay, the captain of the

(Continued on next page.)



problem, write and get his expert opinion. Address your queries to "Umpire," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

FROM time to time the cricketer needs a new bat, of course. And I gather from a letter just to hand that one of my young readers has the impression that he is needing a new bat rather more frequently than his pocket-money will stand.

Now, cricket bats, like other things, need care, and I fear that they do not always get this proper amount of care. It is not good for a cricket bat, for instance, to be left lying on damp grass. And the best can't be got out of a bat unless the oiling is well and carefully done. Most bats are oiled before they are sold, but it is very easy to find out whether this has been done. If you rub your finger-nail up and down the blade, you will soon discover whether it has been oiled.

In regard to this oiling, however, one mistake which is frequently made is to give practically the whole bat a good soaking. This is not really necessary. It is the blade of the bat—the part which meets the ball—which needs the oil. Putting oil on the back of the bat only adds to the weight, and does not increase its effectiveness as a run-getting weapon.

AN IMPORTANT POINT!

When the bat has been oiled don't take it with you to the wicket with the oil still wet upon it. Dry off the oil which has not soaked in, otherwise you will find the ball slipping off the bat in unwanted directions.

Just recently, the spectators at a match at the Oval, were rather amused by D. R. Jardine. He was playing a big innings, and as it happened things would keep going wrong with the bat he was using. A bit came off one; another developed a bad crack. New ones were brought out to the England captain on two occasions. Each time, after Jardine had chosen the bat and before he took up his stand at the wicket again, he went over to the umpire and very carefully wiped the blade of the bat on that gentleman's white coat. A little thing, but Jardine did it with such obvious pains that he considered it an important thing,

I promised to say something this week about the art of wicket-keeping. It has often been said that there are two sorts of fools who play cricket—those who bowl fast, and those who keep wicket to fast bowlers. Somebody must bowl fast, however, and somebody must keep wicket; and I must say, that those wicket-keepers whom I know personally, all seem to enjoy their job.

They get all sorts of knocks on the fingers, but they seem to regard the swollen joints as all a part of the day's work.

NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS!

THE "stumper," generally speaking, is a specialist, which means that he usually has to be content to be a wicket-keeper and nothing else. Have you ever noticed how few of the wicket-keepers in first-class cricket have any pretensions to being good batsmen? There are exceptions, of course, and one of them is Leslie Ames, the Kent man, who "kept" for England in the last series of Test matches in Australia.

Usually, however, the wicket-keeper is number ten or eleven in the batting list. This is the position of George Duckworth, the Lancashire keeper, though he once told me that he had ambitions to open the innings for his county, or at any rate, to make a century or two. I think the fact that the hands of the man behind the stumps get so badly knocked about accounts, mostly, for their failure to be good batsmen.

Anyway, what we can say is that the really efficient wicket-keeper is worth his place in any side, even if he never gets a run.

When I had a talk with Duckworth recently, about keeping wicket, he impressed upon me, first and foremost, the necessity of being well equipped for the task in regard to outfit. Duckworth wears a pair of ordinary gloves inside his gauntlets, but before he puts these ordinary gloves on he takes the precaution of guarding the tips of his fingers.

He does this with strips of adhesive plaster, which he wraps well round the ends of the fingers.

One of the first questions which the stumper has to decide is whether he will stand close up to the bowling, or whether he will stand back. This is a question which each individual keeper must decide for himself. If he can stand close up with safety, and with possible advantage to his side, then he should do it. Once the wicket-keeper has decided to stand back he must take up his position where the ball will come to him at a convenient height after passing the batsman.

CONFIDENCE IN ONE'S PARTNER!

LITTLE George Duckworth told me to emphasise the importance of allowing the hands to give as each ball is taken. That is the same as saying don't snatch at it. And when Duckworth is standing close up, you will see, if you watch carefully, that he takes every ball with a sort of sweeping movement towards the wicket. By making a habit of this, whether taking the ball from the bowler or from a fielder, he is ready to sweep off the bails should the batsman be out of his ground, or raise a foot even for a fraction of a second.

As a last bit of advice, Duckworth said that wicket-keepers who stand close up should get the idea into their heads that they will have a chance of stumping out the batsman from every ball that is sent down. Of all the fielders, the man behind the stumps is the one who cannot afford to "take a nap." He must be ever alive; ready for the snick or the upraised foot.

Too many of our fellows got run-out in most of our games, writes another reader, and I should be glad if you could give us a hint on running between the wickets. Certainly! The chief reason for run outs is lack of understanding as to who shall call for the run. Remember this as a general principle:

That the call for the run really belongs to the batsman who can see the position of the ball without turning round. In other words, the player actually making the stroke should do the calling, when he plays the ball in front of the wicket, and the player at the other end should be responsible for the call when the ball goes behind the wicket.

Have an understanding with your partner, too, as to the line he will take when running, so that there is no collision, or no necessity for the two runners to dodge round each other. Confidence in one's partner is a big asset in running.

"UMPIRE."

Fourth, and his chum, the Caterpillar. The Famous Five had arrived, rather late—but better late than never. And they were at tea when that sudden, fearful yell awakened the echoes; and they started a little, and looked at one another. There was something familiar to their ears in that unearthly yell.

"Bunter!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"That fat Owl!"

"The esteemed and idiotic Bunter!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The chums of the Remove had forgotten Bunter. Now they were reminded of him, as his dulcet tones echoed far and wide.

"Yoo-hoop! Beast! Leggo! Gimme my hat! Wow! Ponsonby, you beast, I'll jolly well lick you! Wow!"

The Caterpillar smiled.

"That sounds," he remarked, "like our dear old friend Bunter! It also sounds as if jolly old Pon is diggin' up a little fun this warm afternoon. What energy that chap's got!"

Courtenay, frowning, rose to his feet.

Certainly he had not been expecting Bunter to tea. But Bunter was a fellow to turn up unexpectedly at such times. And it was evident that Ponsonby, his old enemy of the Fourth, had spotted the Owl of Greyfriars on his way to Study No. 3, and was "digging" up a little fun, as Rupert de Courcy expressed it.

"Whoop! Wow! Yooop!"

There was a patter of rapid feet in the passage.

The study door burst open.

Courtenay was stepping quickly towards the door as it flew open. He stopped in time to avoid the door—but there was no avoiding Billy Bunter! Bunter shot in like a stone from a catapult.

Crash!

"Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Courtenay. He staggered back, and sat down, and Billy Bunter, reeling from the shock, clutched at the nearest fellow to save himself—and there was a roar from Bob Cherry as Bunter's clutch fastened on his mop of flaxen hair.

"Ow! Leggo! You mad ass! Wow!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Oh dear! I say, you fellows, that beast Pon jumped out of his study at me—wow!—and that beast Gadsby—yow!—and that beast Monson—grooogh—wow! They grabbed my hat—wow!"

Cecil Ponsonby, of the Highcliffe Fourth, put in a smiling face at the open door. There was a straw hat in his hand.

"Look here, Ponsonby!" Courtenay scrambled up, red and breathless. "If you fancy you can rag visitors here—"

"My dear man, I've brought the chap's hat for him," drawled Ponsonby. "He was in such a hurry that he dropped it—"

"You snatched it out of my hand, you rotter!" bawled Bunter. "You banged me on the head with it, you beast!"

"Well, here it is!" said Pon, and he executed a drop-kick with the straw hat, sending it spinning into the study. It dropped on the tea-table, and Ponsonby walked away, laughing.

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "Look at that hat—it's dropped in the jam—Mauly will be jolly waxy about that, I can tell you!"

"Mauly!" roared Johnny Bull. "Is that Mauly's hat?" He hooked the hat off the tea-table. It had been a beautiful hat when Bunter borrowed it. But its handling by Ponsonby had by no means improved it, and the brim was sticky with jam.

"Nice manners at this school!" snorted Bunter. "I'm jolly sorry I came now!"

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Nice way to treat a fellow when he drops in to see his friends!"

"Shut up, you fat Owl!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Shan't!" hooted Bunter. "Ragging a chap—"

"This won't do!" said the Caterpillar gravely. "If Bunter came here to see his friends, and Pon ragged him, it's up to Bunter's friends to give Pon what he's asked for. The best thing you can do, Bunter, is to tell your friends about it at once. Are they in the Fourth?"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Do I know them?" asked the Caterpillar very gravely.

"Chuck it, Rupert!" said Courtenay, laughing. Bunter was a guest, though a self-invited one, and a guest's leg was not to be pulled.

"I say, you fellows—"

"If you fellows want to kick that fat boulder out, don't mind us," said Johnny Bull. "In fact, I'll help."

"Oh, really, Bull! You might remember that you're not in the Remove passage now," said Bunter severely. "There's such a thing as manners—"

"Why, you fat villain—"

"Don't mind him, you chaps," said Bunter. "He can't help having the manners of a bear! Here, you keep off, you beast!" added Bunter, in a roar, and he dodged round Frank Courtenay.

"Sit down, Bunter," said Courtenay hastily. "Here's a chair—take mine! Rupert, scout along the passage for another chair."

"Any old thing!" yawned the Caterpillar. "Shall I tell your friends you've come, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"If you'll mention who they are—"

"Shut up, you ass, and get that chair!" said Courtenay, with a vexed look; and the Caterpillar loafed out of the study.

He returned with a borrowed chair; by which time Billy Bunter was going strong. Tea was half over when the Owl of the Remove joined up; but there were plenty of good things on the table, and Bunter was the man to make up for lost time.

"I say, this is a jolly good cake!" said Bunter, with his mouth full—not to say overflowing.

"Glad you like it!" said Courtenay.

"Not like the cakes I get from Bunter Court, of course!"

"Oh!"

"But good!" said Bunter graciously. "I'll have some more! You might fill a fellow's cup again! I like four lumps of sugar! Leave some of those tarts for me, Cherry."

"Eh?"

"And don't scoff all those doughnuts, Nugent."

"Wha-a-at?"

"About the cricket—" said Courtenay hastily.

"For goodness' sake," said Bunter, "don't let's have a cricket jaw now! These fellows are always jawing cricket! I can tell you, I get fed-up with it! Speaking of cricket, though, do you fellows remember when Ponsonby was junior captain here, and they mobbed you after winning a match—"

"Will you shut up, Bunter?" breathed Harry Wharton.

"Eh! That was before your time here, Courtenay—"

"Yes!" said Courtenay briefly.

"But Highcliffe hasn't changed much," said Bunter, shaking his head. "They never did play the game! My opinion is— Whoooooop! Who's that stamping on my foot? Yaroooooh!"

After which Billy Bunter did not bestow the delights of his conversation on the tea-party. He realised that there might be another stamp if he did.

"Cricket jaw" supervened; and Bunter devoted his attention to the food-stuffs. When the Famous Five rose to go, there were still foodstuffs on the table, and Bunter did not rise.

"I say, you fellows, don't go yet. We haven't finished the tarts!" he squeaked.

But the Famous Five did go, and Courtenay and the Caterpillar left the study with them. Billy Bunter blinked at the unfinished tarts—hastily gobbled a couple more, grabbed up Lord Maul-everer's straw hat, and rolled after the departing guests. He overtook them at the gate, where they had wheeled out their bikes.

The Famous Five said good-bye to their Highcliffe friends, and wheeled the machines into the road. Bunter rolled after them anxiously.

"I say, you fellows, which of you is giving me a lift back?" he asked. "If you don't want to give me a lift, you'll have to lend me a— Whoop!"

Without speaking, the Famous Five grasped William George Bunter, and sat him down in the road—hard. He sat and roared; while the chums of the Remove mounted their bikes and rode away from Greyfriars.

Bunter scrambled up.

"I say, you fellows!" he yelled.

The cyclists rode on without looking back.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. disappeared.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

No Luck for Harold!

MR. SAMUEL VERNON-SMITH shook hands with his son, the Bounder of Greyfriars, and stepped into his taxi.

The millionaire's plump face was quite good-humoured now. Apparently he had forgotten the disagreeable episode on Courtfield Common—the loss of a hundred pounds not being a matter of very serious import to the wealthy gentleman.

He had borrowed the Head's telephone, to notify the local police of the loss and give the number of the note; so that if it was found it would be returned to him; and having thus done all that could be done, Mr. Vernon-Smith had dismissed the matter from his mind.

Smithy's detention had been over by the time his father reached the school; and the plump millionaire had "tea'd" in Study No. 4 with the Bounder, and enjoyed a long talk with his son, chiefly on financial matters, in which Smithy was almost as keenly interested as his father.

Not till it was nearly time for call-over did the City gentleman take his departure—quite restored to good-humour; and Smithy came down to see him off in his taxi.

As the taxi rolled down to the gates, Harry Wharton & Co. "capped" the millionaire very respectfully in the quad; they had been back some time from Highcliffe by then. Mr. Vernon-Smith gave them a nod, and rolled on, turned out of the gates, and took the road for Courtfield.

The July evening was still quite light, and Mr. Vernon-Smith, sitting in the buzzing taxi, gave his attention to his business-papers—every minute of his precious time being, of course, much too valuable to be lost in staring out of a window at golden gorse, nodding trees, and a glorious sunset.

Mr. Vernon-Smith's attention to business matters was, however, interrupted, half-way to Courtfield. An



"Whoop! Wow! Yoop!" There was a patter of rapid feet in the passage and the study door burst open. Courtenay avoided the door, but there was no avoiding Billy Bunter. The fat junior shot in like a stone from a catapult. Crash! "Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, my hat!" gasped Courtenay, staggering backwards.

ejaculation from his driver made him look up sharply.

Coming along the road across the common was a fat figure, which Mr. Vernon-Smith recognised as that of the podgy junior who had been in the clump of oaks that afternoon.

He had had to "hoof" it from Highcliffe; and it was not because he was in danger of being late for call-over that he was running! There was another and more urgent reason for Bunter's haste—and it was behind him, in the shape of a tattered man in a rag of a cap, who was running also, and gaining on the fleeing Owl.

Bunter had been limping dismally along, feeling as if his little fat legs would drop off, when Harold Hinks sighted him! Hinks, hanging about the common in the hope of seeing the "fat cove in barnacles" again, saw him, and started for him at a rush. Whereupon Billy Bunter, who had felt a moment before that he could hardly drag one weary leg after the other, found that he could actually run—and run fast, too!

A tramp suddenly rushing at him from the common, imbued Bunter with unheard-of energy. He dashed up the road with his fat little legs going like clockwork.

"Huh!" ejaculated Mr. Vernon-Smith.

He saw Bunter, and a moment later he saw the running figure behind Bunter, and recognised the man who, he believed, had "pinched" his banknote and afterwards thrown it away to save his skin.

"I say!" Bunter sighted the taxi. "Help! I say—oh crikey—help! Fire! I say—ooooogh!"

"That rascal again!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Stop when you reach that boy, driver!"

"Yes, sir."

The taxi rushed on, and jammed to a halt, a couple of yards from Bunter. The fat junior staggered towards it, and leaned on the door, panting.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped. "I say, help! That tramp's after me! Oh dear!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith threw open the door, ruthlessly shoving Bunter aside. But if he was thinking of collaring Mr. Hinks, and giving that gentleman a lift in the taxi to Courtfield Police Station he had no chance.

Mr. Hinks had stopped, and, after a stare at the taxi, he promptly vanished into the gorse on the common.

But for Mr. Vernon-Smith's unexpected appearance on the scene, Bunter would certainly have fallen into the tramp's clutches, and the banknote hidden in his straw hat would have rewarded Harold for his vigilance.

But Mr. Hinks had been disappointed; the game was up, and he proceeded to seek the open spaces without delay.

"The scoundrel!" snapped Mr. Vernon-Smith, with a glare after the vanished tramp. "Bunter—your name is Bunter, I think—"

"Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter. He blinked at the stout gentleman, and recognised Smithy's pater. "Yes, I'm Bunter! I say, that's that beastly tramp—oh dear!—he was going to rob me—Oh lor'!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith grunted. If the tramp had intended to rob Bunter he must have been in a state of happy ignorance regarding the fat Owl's

finances. Still, there was no doubt that he had been chasing Bunter with hostile intent. Mr. Vernon-Smith looked at his watch.

"Get in!" he said briefly. "I have time to take you back as far as the school; you are not safe here."

"Oh! Thanks!" gasped Bunter.

He clambered in, and the taxi turned and raced back to Greyfriars. Bunter sat and panted till the school gates were reached. Mr. Vernon-Smith sat and frowned. He was losing time—at the risk of losing his train! Still, he felt that he could not leave the schoolboy on the lonely road over the common, with the tramp lurking in the vicinity.

The taxi came back to the school gates with a rush in a cloud of dust. Bunter was still panting; Mr. Vernon-Smith looking at his watch as the taxi stopped.

"Jump out!"

"Oh! Yes! I say, sir—"

"Jump out!"

"All right!" gasped Bunter. "Thanks for giving me the lift! I say—"

Mr. Vernon-Smith threw open the door and pushed Bunter out of the taxi. He had no time to waste on the loquacious Owl! Billy Bunter staggered in the road and turned and blinked at him.

"I say, sir—"

Slam!

The door closed, and the taxi whirled and shot away for Courtfield again. Billy Bunter blinked after it.

"Beast!" he murmured; doubtless by way of expressing grateful feelings. And he rolled in at the gates. Gosling was about to close them; the Owl of the

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(Continued from page 13.)

Remove was just in time. He gasped and panted his way across the quad and joined the crowd of fellows going in for call-over!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You've rolled home, old fat bean!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"A friend gave me a lift in his car!" answered Bunter with dignity. "It was rather more comfortable than fagging through the dust on bikes, like you fellows. Rather a decent car."

And Bunter rolled into Hall.

Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith reached Courtfield with exactly one minute to catch his train. He caught it. He fanned himself in his first-class carriage with a prospectus of the Hanky-Panky Gold Mine Company, Ltd. And grunted! And certainly it never crossed his mind that his good-natured action towards Bunter had, for the second time, saved his hundred-pound note from the thievish fingers of Harold Hinks!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Wrong Hat!

GOSLING grunted. A frown wrinkled the brows of the ancient porter of Greyfriars School.

Standing in the gateway, Gosling was looking out—and his eyes fell upon an object that, undoubtedly, was rather a blot on the landscape.

It was the day after Mr. Vernon-Smith's visit. Classes were over; and fellows were going out or coming in; and many of them glanced, with a smile, at the object that roused Gosling's wrath.

Between the gates of Greyfriars and the road there was a belt of grass on either side of the drive that turned from the road in at the gates.

In the grass lay a tattered figure; that of a tramp, apparently asleep.

Gosling eyed that figure with wrathful disdain.

Now, the land outside the school walls was public land; and any subject of King George the Fifth had a perfect right, if he chose, to walk on it, sit on it, or lie at full length on it.

The tramp was exercising that right.

He was not a pretty object. Nobody could possibly have mistaken him for the Sleeping Beauty! His patched trousers, his tattered coat, his rag of a cap on tousled hair, showed up to great advantage in the brilliant July sunshine. His head rested on an arm—the ragged cap shaded his eyes—and also hid the fact that they were not closed, but very wide open! The man looked as if he was asleep—but his sleep was that of a very wary weasel. Greyfriars fellows, passing him, glanced at him; but did not disturb him. He had a right to repose there if he liked; though it could not be said that he improved the scenery.

But Gosling was not so tolerant. The Magnet Library.—No. 1,325.

Gosling grunted, and grunted again; and frowned, and frowned more darkly. Finally he emerged from the gates, approached the reposing figure, and stirred it with his foot. Upon which Mr. Harold Hinks gave quite a jump, and sat up and stared at him.

"Ook it, my man!" said Gosling.

Mr. Hinks looked at him.

"Ook it!" he repeated. "You pie-faced old image, 'oo may you 'appen to be, when you're at 'ome?"

"Tramps ain't wanted 'ere!" said Gosling severely. "Like your cheek to 'ang about! Looking for a chance to pinch something, I fancy."

Mr. Hinks exhibited a set of grubby knuckles.

"Where'd you like that?" he inquired.

Gosling backed away a pace. Apparently he did not want that set of grubby knuckles anywhere.

"Leave a cove alone!" said Mr. Hinks. "Wot 'arm's a cove doing, you old image you? Take your face away and fry it!"

Gosling eyed him. Hinks was not an athlete, by any means. On the other hand, Gosling had long passed the age when a rough-and-tumble scrap had any genuine appeal. Gosling decided not to shift Mr. Hinks.

Three Fifth Form men came out at the gates; Coker and Potter and Greene. They paused to look on. Coker frowned at the tramp. He did not approve of such a character camping down close to the school gates. Coker of the Fifth was hefty enough to handle two of Mr. Hinks; and Gosling turned to him, touching his hat.

"P'raps you'll tell this feller to move on, Mr. Coker, sir?" he suggested.

"What are you doing here, my man?" demanded Coker.

"Waiting for me blooming car!" answered Mr. Hinks impudently. "The shower's a bit late with the Rolls-Royce!"

Potter and Greene grinned. Coker frowned. He did not want any cheek from a tattered vagrant.

"Well, shift!" said Coker.

"Shan't!" retorted Mr. Hinks.

"I'll jolly soon shift you, then!"

"Oh, come on, Coker!" said Potter. "Leave the man alone."

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"The fellow has a right to sit down here if he's tired!" said Greene.

"Don't be a fathead, Greene."

"Well, look here—"

"Don't jaw!"

Coker left his remonstrating friends and approached Mr. Hinks. That gentleman eyed him rather viciously.

"Are you going?" asked Coker.

"No," answered Mr. Hinks. "I ain't going; and if you lays a 'and on me, I'll go in and tell your schoolmaster, and you'll be walloped."

That was really too much for Coker. Harold Hinks, evidently, was unaware that Fifth Form men at Greyfriars were not "walloped." Coker stopped, gripped the tramp by the collar of his tattered coat, and with a single sling of his hefty arm jerked him to his feet.

"Now cut!" he said.

"Ow! Leggo!" gasped Mr. Hinks. "Leggo my neck, blow yer, and I'll mizzle."

Coker let go. Mr. Hinks glared at him. With a sudden movement, which Coker was not looking for, he knocked the Fifth-Former's hat off. Then he took to his heels.

"Why—what—my hat—I'll smash him!" roared Coker in great wrath. "I'll—I'll—I'll—"

Mr. Hinks vanished.

"Oh, come on!" said Potter. "He's gone!"

Coker snorted. Gosling picked up his hat, Coker replaced it on his bullet head, and the Fifth Form men walked away towards Friardale. Gosling went back to his lodge, satisfied.

Ten minutes later, a tattered figure appeared on the road again. Coker & Co. being off the scene, Mr. Hinks dropped once more in the grass near the gateway; leaning his frowzy head on his ragged arm, apparently sleeping—but keenly watching the fellows who passed in and out.

It had not occurred to Gosling that the tramp had any special reason for lingering on that spot. But he had—a very powerful reason. Mr. Hinks was hoping to spot a "fat cove in barnacles" among the Greyfriars fellows who came out after class.

"I say, you fellows!"

Mr. Hinks gave a slight start as that fat voice fell on his ears. He had heard that voice before.

Half a dozen juniors appeared in the gateway. Peering under his arm, the recumbent tramp recognised the fellows who had collared him, the day before, at the clump of oaks on the common. He was not interested in the Famous Five. But he was keenly interested in the fat junior who was with them—a "fat cove in barnacles"—who was wearing a straw hat like the other fellows. Mr. Hinks' eyes gleamed at the sight of that straw hat. He was, of course, quite unaware that Billy Bunter had been wearing another fellow's hat the day before. He knew nothing of the manners and customs of that ornament of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Come on, fatty!" said Bob Cherry. "Like a walk?"

"The walkfulness will do you good, my esteemed fat Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Going somewhere to tea?" asked Bunter.

"Oh! No!"

"You silly idiots! Think I'm going to walk for nothing?" hooted Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five walked out at the gates. Billy Bunter did not follow. Walking, as an exercise, did not appeal to Bunter; and certainly he was not going to walk if there was nothing to walk for!

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter. "I say, hold on a minute! My postal order never came this morning. I told you fellows that I was expecting a postal order. I say, you rotters, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you! Beasts!"

Apparently uninterested in Bunter's conversation, Harry Wharton & Co. did walk away. They glanced at the sprawling tramp as they passed him; but Mr. Hinks' face was hidden by his arm, and they did not recognise him. Not being so keen on minding other people's business as Coker of the Fifth, they passed him unheeding and sauntered away towards the village.

Billy Bunter remained standing in the gateway, blinking after them morosely. It was not yet tea-time; but Bunter, of course, was thinking of tea. He had been disappointed about a postal order—and was, as usual, stony! His customary resource was Lord Mauleverer at such a time; but that horn of plenty had run dry. Mauly had been quite annoyed about his hat. It was dented, and stained with jam. Trifles light as air to Billy Bunter, but annoying to his fastidious lordship. Mauly had been heard to say that he was going to kick Bunter for borrowing his hat—and for the present the fat Owl was giving his lordship plenty of sea room.

The short-sighted Owl did not even notice the tramp lying in the grass. He blinked morosely after the chums of the Remove as they disappeared down the road and leaned his fat person on the stone pillar beside the gateway. Wibley and Kipps, of the Remove, were coming down to the gates, and the fat Owl was considering whether one or both of them might be good for a small loan to tide him over till his postal order came.

Mr. Hinks, breathing hard, rose to his feet.

He shot a swift glance up and down the road.

Harry Wharton & Co. were gone, and for the moment there was no one else in sight, save Billy Bunter, leaning in the gateway.

It was Harold's chance. He had no time to lose. Anybody might come along at any moment! He crept close to the wall, crept along to the gateway, and was at Bunter's elbow before the fat Owl became aware of his existence.

A sudden snatch, and the straw hat was in Hinks' hand.

"Wha-a-a-t?" gasped Bunter, as his hat was jerked from his head. "What—who—how— Oh crumbs! Wha-a-et— Why, you beast—you thief! Oh crikey!"

Harold Hinks, going at full speed, vanished up the road. Billy Bunter, almost petrified with astonishment, blinked at him dazedly through his big spectacles. The man had snatched his hat and bolted—an utterly astounding proceeding! That dingy straw hat was the least valuable hat at Greyfriars, and why even a tattered tramp could want to steal it was an amazing mystery.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" gasped Bunter.

Harold Hinks disappeared up the road. Bunter was too amazed to pursue. Not that pursuit would have been of any use. Almost in a twinkling the thief was out of sight.

He left the road, turning into a copse towards the river. For several minutes more Hinks ran on, among the trees, Bunter's hat gripped in his hand. He stopped at last, deep in cover, panting for breath.

He grinned breathlessly.

"Wot luck!" he gasped.

And Mr. Hinks proceeded to examine his prize. He turned back the lining inside the hat, in the certain expectation of fingering a crisp, rustling Bank of England note. Then he stared. There was no banknote hidden under the lining. He pulled the lining out all round, revealing nothing but the interior of the straw hat. He gasped.

"Sold!"

The awful truth dawned upon Mr. Hinks. The fat cove in barnacles had been wearing a different straw hat; and it was the different straw hat that Mr. Hinks had so successfully captured. As he realised it Mr. Hinks' feelings were almost too deep for words.

He put the hat on the ground, stamped on it, and slunk away, the most thoroughly disgusted rascal in the wide world.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Pon is Playful!

CECIL PONSONBY, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, grinned.

It was Saturday afternoon—a half-holiday.

Ponsonby and Gadsby were seated at a little table, under the striped awning,

outside the bunshop in the High Street of Courtfield.

They were disposing of cakes and ginger-beer and idly watching the traffic in the street. Not much traffic, as it was not market day.

A fat figure came in sight, the fat

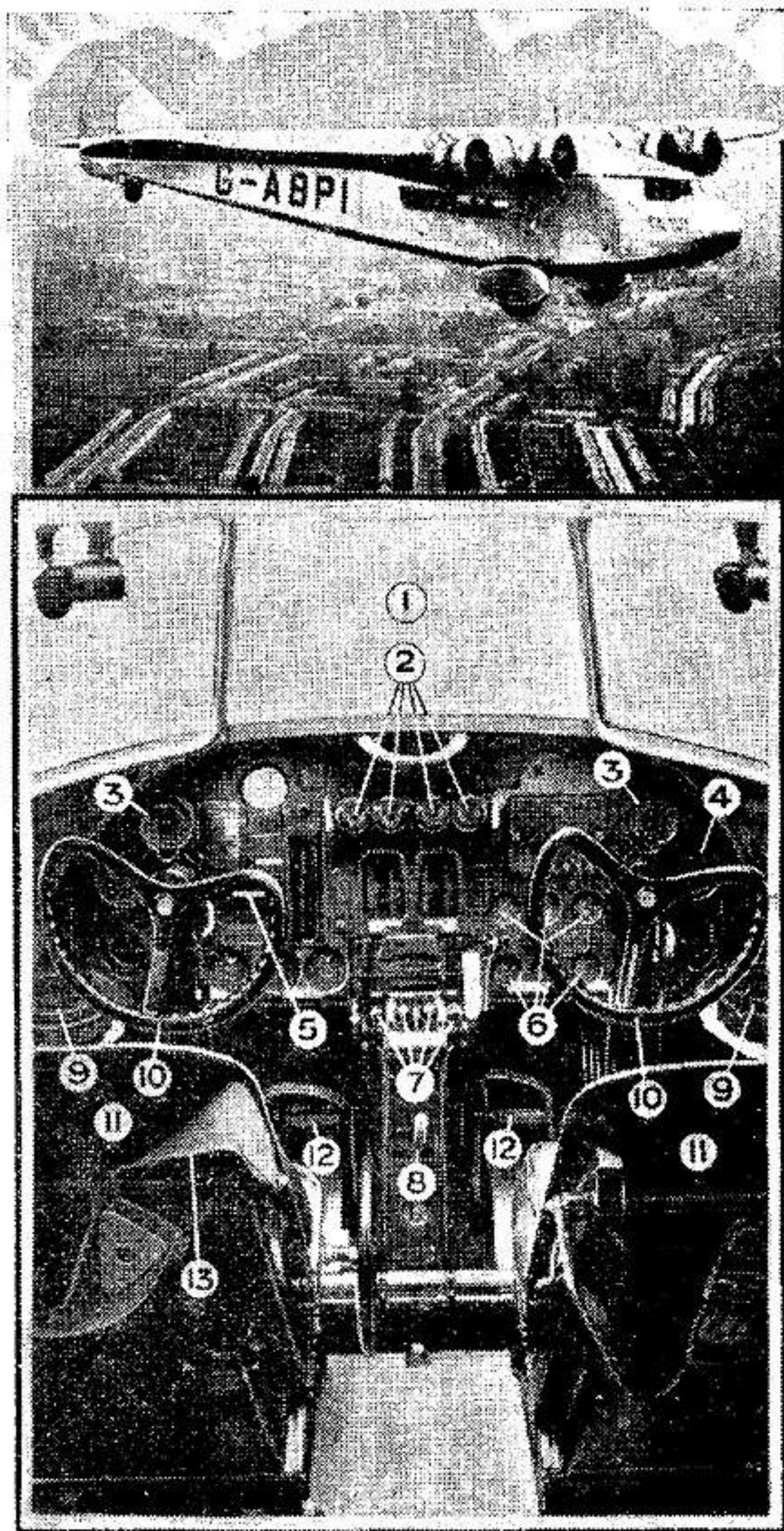
face adorned by a large pair of spectacles, that flashed back the rays of the sun.

"See that freak, Gaddy?" asked Ponsonby.

Gadsby glanced round.

(Continued on next page.)

The subject chosen for OUR TWELFTH PHOTO-
GRAVURE PLATE in this Grand Souvenir Series is:
"IN A SKY-LINER'S CHART-HOUSE!" A small
reproduction of which appears below. It will be Pre-
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Collection, Boys!

"Leave him alone, Pon!" he said warningly. "I dare say there's a crowd of Greyfriars cads in the town this afternoon."

Ponsonby stretched out a hand to a soda-siphon.

"Accidents will happen," he remarked. "One's going to happen now. Not my fault if Bunter gets a swish of soda as he passes."

Gaddy looked up and down the sleepy High Street rather uneasily. Ragging Billy Bunter was a safe game; but not if other Greyfriars fellows happened to be at hand. But none was to be seen.

Billy Bunter came rolling on. The short-sighted Owl discerned two fellows sitting at the round table, and two bikes leaning against the tree in front of the shop. But he did not recognise the "knuts" of Highcliffe, and he was not aware of his danger. Pon sat with the soda-siphon all ready, and Gaddy grinned and waited.

And then Bunter—still unaware of his danger—turned into a shop a couple of doors off and disappeared from the sight of the Highcliffians.

Ponsonby gave a disappointed grunt and relinquished the soda-siphon. His little jest was not coming off, after all.

"The fat freak!" he grunted.

Billy Bunter had walked into Parkins', the school hatter and outfitter.

Bunter was wearing a cap.

He had been minus a straw hat since the extraordinary occurrence at the gates of Greyfriars, the day before.

Why a tramp had snatched his hat and fled with it, and what had become of the hat, Bunter did not know. But the hat was gone—there was no doubt about that. Mr. Quelch, his Form master, was quite surprised when the strange occurrence was reported to him. However, he had given Bunter an order on the school outfitter for a new hat, and the fat Owl was now calling at Parkins' for the same. And having obtained the new straw, Bunter put it on his head, leaving his cap with Parkins, to be sent back to the school. On a blazing July day he naturally preferred the shady brim of a straw hat over his face.

Ponsonby kept his eye on the door of Parkins', still ready with his little jest, if Bunter came on towards the bunshop when he emerged from the hatter's.

But Bunter, when he emerged, did not come on. He turned back.

Had Bunter been in possession of coin of the realm, no doubt he would have dropped in at the bunshop for refreshment, as Pon and Gaddy had done. But Bunter was still in a stony state. Silver and gold he had none! So he turned to walk back to Greyfriars with his new hat.

Ponsonby gave an angry grunt.

Gaddy grinned.

"Nothin' doin'!" he remarked.

"The fozzlin' idiot's bought himself a new hat!" said Ponsonby. "See him look at his reflection in the window when he came out? He fancies he looks rather a knut in that new hat. Queer fancies some people have! I've got an idea that that hat isn't goin' to look so new by the time he gets it to Greyfriars."

Pon rose, and hooked his bike away from the tree.

"You settle the bill, Gaddy," he said, "I'm goin' after that prize porker!"

And Pon walked after Bunter, wheeling his bike.

Bunter, evidently, was going back to

Greyfriars by the road across the common. Pon's playful intention was to follow him out of the town, and then annex the new hat. By the time he had done with it, it would not be a new hat—it would be anything but new. Pon, as usual, was hunting for trouble—any kind of trouble for others, that was safe for himself. And certainly there was nothing to fear from Bunter.

Unconscious of the tracker on his trail, Billy Bunter rolled out of Courtfield and took the road to Greyfriars. Pon did not need to mount his bike for the pursuit; Bunter's progress was about as rapid as that of an old, tired snail. Just outside Courtfield, three Greyfriars juniors came in view—Temple, Dabney, and Fry, of the Fourth Form.

Temple & Co. did not heed the Highcliffe fellow. But they would have heeded him fast enough if they had spotted him handling a Greyfriars fellow who could not stand up for himself. Pon was quite aware of that, and he halted his bike and stooped beside it, affecting to examine a tyre. He kept up that occupation till Temple & Co. had walked into the town and disappeared. They went on their way without any suspicion of Pon's nefarious designs. When they were gone the Highcliffe fellow resumed the pursuit.

Bunter was at a distance now, and well away from the town. He was heading for one of the long, wooden seats with which a thoughtful Rural District Council had dotted the roadside for the benefit of weary wayfarers. Bunter was not the fellow to take a walk of a mile without a series of long rests on the way.

There was already a weary wayfarer resting on that seat.

He was a shabby man in a rag of a cap, with a stubbly chin much in need of a shave.

Closer at hand, Billy Bunter would probably have recognised Mr. Harold Hinks. But the Owl of the Remove had to be very close at hand to recognise anybody.

Mr. Hinks, who was not afflicted with short sight, spotted Bunter as he came along, and could scarcely believe in his good luck.

But for the incident of the £100 note, Mr. Hinks would have been on his way to other places long since. It was not his custom to linger for any length of time in one neighbourhood. He had a natural desire to avoid people who missed chickens, and washing from clothes-lines. But Mr. Vernon-Smith's banknote was hidden in the lining of a straw hat belonging to the "fat cove in barnacles," and all Mr. Hinks needed was to come across that fat cove—which was certain to happen if he haunted Greyfriars long enough. Now it had happened.

Mr. Hinks grinned.

He turned his face away as he grinned, lest Bunter should spot him and take to his heels.

Bunter came plugging on. In the distance behind him was a well-dressed fellow with a bike, which he was just mounting. Mr. Hinks desired that fellow to get clear on his bike before he started on Bunter.

Mr. Hinks, of course, had no idea that the straw hat on Bunter's head was a new hat he had just obtained in Courtfield. He could see that it looked a newer hat than the one he had grabbed yesterday. But so had the one the "fat cove" had been wearing on the day of the banknote! This, Mr. Hinks had no doubt, was the hat he wanted. Apparently, the fat cove had two—but

no cove was likely to have more than two straw hats. They were not the sort of thing a cove bought in dozens, like handkerchiefs. Having drawn a blank the first time, Harold had no doubt that this time he had, so to speak, spotted the winner.

With his back turned to the approaching Owl he waited, grinning pleasantly while he waited.

Bunter came on, unsuspecting.

Behind him Pon had mounted his bike. Bunter had got well ahead, in the delay caused by Temple & Co. The playful Pon intended to shoot by him on the bike and grab his hat off as he passed. Bunter's helpless rage, when that happened, was quite amusing to contemplate.

Whirr! came the bike behind Bunter. He was only a dozen steps from the seat where Mr. Hinks waited for him. He did not turn his head at the sound of the bike. There was plenty of room on the high road for the cyclist to pass him.

But he gave a sudden, convulsive jump as the passing cyclist closed in on him and caught at the brim of the straw hat.

Pon jerked it off and rode on, holding his bike with one hand and waving the hat with the other.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh crikey! Why, you beast! Gimme my hat!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Pon. "Come after it!"

He slowed down to give Bunter a chance. The Owl of the Remove rushed after him.

"My eye!" ejaculated Mr. Hinks, staring at the scene.

He had his own designs on that hat! It was quite a surprise to him to see a well-dressed "toff" like Ponsonby snatch it, as he had intended to do himself. But he realised that this was only a school-boy "lark!" Pon, of course, could not intend to "pinch" the hat!

Bunter rushed at the Highcliffe fellow. His fat face was red with wrath. Pon pedalled slowly, grinning back at him, and allowed him to come almost within reach. Then he shot on again, leaving Bunter perspiring and panting.

"Beast!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gimme my hat!" shrieked Bunter.

"Come and fetch it!" chuckled Pon.

He slowed down again, and Bunter made another rush. But with a fat hand almost clutching him, Pon shot out of reach again.

Bunter halted, gasping with exertion and fury. Pon yelled with laughter. He was quite enjoying this game. Bunter, by this time, was as crimson as a boiled beetroot, and streaming with perspiration. He looked as if he was on the point of melting. He spluttered and puffed and blew.

Then, to his infinite relief, he spotted a little bunch of Greyfriars fellows coming up the road—Hobson and several men of the Shell. He yelled to them.

"I say, you fellows! Stop him! He's got my hat!"

"Highcliffe cad!" said Hobson, of the Shell. "Bag him!"

But Pon was not so easily bagged. He was on a bike, and the Shell fellows from Greyfriars were on foot. Pon was still master of the situation. He spun the bike from the road to the open common. He looked back, waved the hat, and laughed.

"I'll leave it in the pond for you, Bunter!" he yelled.

"Gimme my hat!" shrieked Bunter, quite dismayed at the idea of fishing



Ponsonby was pedalling serenely on, when suddenly a heavy whizzing stone crashed into his rear wheel. Before Pon knew what was happening, his bike was over, and he was sprawling in the grass. As the straw hat dropped from Pon's hand Mr. Hinks grabbed at it!

his new straw hat out of the pond on the common.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ponsonby rode away like the wind, getting into a footpath that led towards the distant pond. Hobson & Co. stared after him. There was no chance of running him down on a bike, themselves on foot.

"I say, you fellows, he's got my hat, you know!" gasped Bunter.

"Fathead to let him get it!" said Hobson; and he walked on towards Courtfield with his friends.

"Beast!"

Bunter, gasping for breath, plugged on after Pon! He had to have his hat, even if he fished it out of a pond.

He had not even seen Mr. Hinks! He would not have seen him now if he had looked for him.

Mr. Hinks had heard Pon's shout as he rode away—and Mr. Hinks' blood almost turned cold at the idea of a hat with a hundred-pound note in it being thrown into a pond!

Mr. Hinks was cutting across the common by the shortest and most direct route, to reach the pond before Pon did. Pon was following a footpath; Mr. Hinks cut across through bush and bramble, hawthorne and gorse, heedless of tripping and stumbling, of thorns and scratches, exerting himself as he had never done since his last experience on the treadmill! Breathless, perspiring, torn, scratched, Harold Hinks ran as if for his life, and reached the pond on the common. Pon, who had slowed down when he found that only Bunter was after him, was still at a little distance, coming on. Mr. Hinks was there

first! And Mr. Hinks crouched, breathless, in the cover of a willow, with a big stone grasped in his hand, and waited for him.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Not a Winner!

CRASH!
"Oh!" gasped Ponsonby.
He was pedalling on serenely towards the pond, intending to toss the straw hat into the shallow, muddy waters as he passed, and then cut off and ride back to Courtfield and rejoin Gaddy.

There was no idea of danger in his mind.

He had seen Hobson & Co. walk on towards the town, and Bunter was far behind him, wearily plugging—not that there would have been much danger from Bunter close at hand.

Suddenly a heavy, whizzing stone crashed into his rear wheel, and before Pon knew what was happening his bike was over, and he was sprawling in the grass.

He landed with a bump that shook most of the breath out of his body, feeling as if an earthquake had happened.

Forth from the willows rushed Mr. Hinks, triumphant.

Bunter's hat had dropped from Pon's hand as he fell. It lay in the grass, and Mr. Hinks dived for it.

Pon sat up dizzily.

"What—what— Oh crumbs!" he gasped. He stared dazedly at the tramp who had so suddenly appeared. "You—you rotter! You rascal! You knocked me over!"

Mr. Hinks grabbed up the straw hat.

He fairly thrilled with triumph as his grubby clutches closed on it. He was anxious, eager, to turn out the lining. But that, of course, he could not do under the eyes of a witness. He did not want this schoolboy to see Mr. Vernon-Smith's £100 note when it came to light.

"You cheeky rotter!" bawled Ponsonby, staggering to his feet. "You frowsy scoundrel! I'll have you locked up for this!"

"Wot you got to say?" demanded Mr. Hinks belligerently. "Pinchin' a cove's 'at! I come arter you to get back the young gentleman's 'at for 'im! Stealin' a 'at!"

"You—you fool!" gasped Ponsonby. "I wasn't stealing the hat! It was a joke—"

"That's enough!" said Mr. Hinks. "I see you pinch the 'at, and for two pins I'd duck you in that there pond! You 'ook it—see?"

"You impudent rascal!" panted Ponsonby.

"Ain't you 'ooking it?" demanded Mr. Hinks. "P'raps you'll 'ook it when I give you a wipe!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Ponsonby, as Mr. Hinks, closing in on him suddenly, gave him the "wipe." A "wipe," it appeared, was a smack, and the smack that Pon received from Mr. Hinks' hard, horny hand fairly made his head ring.

"Ave another?" hooted Mr. Hinks.

"Keep off, you ruffian!" gasped Ponsonby. He grabbed up his machine and put a leg over it, only anxious to be gone. But the machine had been damaged, and it clinked and rattled and jarred. It was in no state to be ridden.

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"Going?" roared Mr. Hinks.

"Keep off!" yelled Ponsonby. "I'm goin', you fool!" And he went, pushing the jarring, jerking, clinking bike away as fast as he could make it move.

Pon, by that time, was sorry that he had been so playful with Billy Bunter. Really, he seemed to have had the worst of the joke!

He disappeared among the gorse, wheeling and shoving the damaged bike. Mr. Hinks was left in triumphant possession of the disputed hat.

He gave a quick, furtive glance round. Bunter was visible in the distance, coming on slowly—too far off to bother Mr. Hinks.

That frowsy gentleman backed into the willows. He had ample time to examine the hat before Bunter was anywhere near.

He jerked the lining out of it.

He stared into the hat.

There was no banknote under the lining! For the second time Mr. Hinks had captured a bitter disappointment.

He could hardly believe his eyes.

The "fat cove" could not have found the banknote in his hat. It had been too carefully hidden from sight, and a banknote was so thin and flimsy that he could not have felt it there and so discovered it. Unless he had, by sheer chance, looked under the lining inside his hat, he could not have found the hidden hundred-pound note. Was that what had happened?

It was not!

Close examination showed Mr. Hinks that this was not the hat he wanted. Straw hats are much alike; but Lord Mauleverer was rather particular about his hats, and the banknote hat was of a better quality than this. Mr. Hinks was not an expert in headgear, but he realised that it was a different hat.

"Blow me pink!" gasped Mr. Hinks. "Ow many blooming 'ats has the cove got? Does he keep a 'ole shopful of 'ats? Fust one 'at, then another 'at, and now another blinkin' 'at! Has he got 'undreds of 'ats?"

It was really surprising. It looked as if the "fat cove" wore a different hat every day, which was unusual, at least. Twice had the enterprising Hinks bagged a hat belonging to Bunter, and neither was the hat he wanted so badly. The hundred-pound hat was as far off as ever. It began to look as if Mr. Hinks would have to keep on bagging hats indefinitely from Billy Bunter till at last he got to the right hat.

"Blow me pink and yaller!" growled Mr. Hinks, in savage disappointment. "Well, blow 'im, he won't wear this blooming 'at again!"

And Mr. Hinks stamped on the hat as he had stamped on the previous one, and he stamped hard, till Bunter's new hat was a wreck and a ruin. With the ruin in his hand, Mr. Hinks stepped out of the willows, intending to throw what was left of Bunter's hat into the middle of the pond.

"Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter spotted him, and came to a dead halt. He was near enough now to recognise Mr. Hinks, the tramp who had chased him on the Courtfield road. He blinked at the tramp, and at the smashed hat in his hand; then he spun round and ran. Mr. Hinks shook a grubby fist after him as he vanished, and tossed the wrecked and ruined hat into the pond. Had Bunter been within reach he was in a mood to have tossed Bunter into the pond after his hat. But Billy Bunter was not in reach. He was out of reach, and getting farther and farther out of reach, as fast as his little legs could go.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Exchange No Robbery!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"It's Bunter!"

"Going strong!"

"Looks as if he's lost his hat—"

"And his senses, too, by gad, to be sprintin' like that in this hot weather!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "Never knew that Bunter was such a goer!"

"The go-fulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stopped and stared in sheer surprise. The Famous Five were taking a little ramble that summer's afternoon, in company with Lord Mauleverer. Their ultimate destination was the bun-shop at Courtfield; but they had plenty of time on their hands, and were sauntering at a leisurely pace among the gorse on Courtfield Common, when Bunter hove in sight in the offing. Bunter, whose usual pace was about one m.p.h., was going strong. He was running as if for his fat life—hatless, his hair blowing in the wind, his fat cheeks crimson, perspiration streaming down his face. It was really amazing to see the fat Owl of the Remove exerting himself in this style, and the Remove fellows could only stare.

"Nobody's after him that I can see," remarked Frank Nugent. "What the thump is he putting it on like that for?"

"Slimming, perhaps," suggested Bob Cherry. "He needs it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's meltin' visibly," remarked Lord Mauleverer, fanning himself with his straw hat—the hat which, all unknown to his lordship, had a hundred-pound note tucked away under the lining.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, in a voice that rang over the common. "What's this game, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter blinked round, spotted the group of juniors, and came panting towards them.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped. "I say, keep him off!"

"Keep who off?" inquired Harry Wharton.

"That tramp!" gasped Bunter.

"What tramp?"

"Eh? Ain't he after me?" spluttered Bunter, blinking round through his big spectacles. There was nothing to be seen but nodding trees and waving gorse. "Oh, I thought he was after me! Oh dear!"

Bunter mopped his streaming face with his handkerchief. It was a hot afternoon, and Bunter was warm and damp.

"Where's your hat, fatty?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Ow! That beast took it!"

"The tramp?" asked Wharton, with a stare.

"Nunno! That beast Pon! But the tramp had it. He must have got it from Pon. I saw it in his hand—all smashed up. It's that tramp who snatched my hat yesterday at the gates—the same man—"

"That jolly old bean seems to have a particular fancy for Bunter's hats!" said Bob Cherry. "What does he want them for? He can't be starting in business as a hatter with Bunter's hats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Wharton, lend me your hat, will you?"

"Eh?"

"Might get sunstroke without a hat in this blaze!" gasped Bunter. "Lend me your hat, old chap! It fits me all right. I've borrowed it once or twice you know—"



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"And what about me?" roared the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, if you're going to be selfish——"

"I am!" said Harry Wharton, with emphasis.

"I say, Mauly, lend me your hat, will you? You're not such a selfish beast as Wharton——"

"Worse!" said Mauly, with a chuckle.

"And that reminds me, I was goin' to kick you for borrowin' my hat the other day. 'Turn round!'"

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

"Turn round, old bean! You can't expect me to walk round you—you're too jolly wide——"

"Beast! I say, you fellows, I shall have to get another hat now," said Bunter. "They won't give me one at Parkins' without an order from Quelch unless I pay for it. I suppose one of you fellows can lend me ten-and-six? I'll settle out of my postal order, you know."

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! I'll keep with you, in case that tramp is hanging about. I can call at Parkins' for my cap."

The juniors sauntered on, Billy Bunter rolling along with them, still dabbling at his fat face with his handkerchief. He described the iniquitous conduct of Ponsonby of Highcliffe in tones thrilling with indignation. Their way lay past the pond. But there was no sign of Mr. Hinks there when the juniors came along. The tramp was gone. But Bob Cherry spotted a smashed straw hat floating among weeds and drift, and succeeded in fishing it ashore with a branch. But it was evidently too far gone for use. It was left lying by the pond, and the juniors strolled on towards Courtfield, rather puzzled by the strange affair. They were not surprised to hear of Pon's rag. But it was surprising that the tramp had intervened in the matter—for no motive that the juniors could guess.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly, when the pond had been left about a quarter of a mile behind. "Here's jolly old Pon!"

Under a shady tree Ponsonby of Highcliffe was kneeling beside his bike, his straw hat pushed on the back of his head, his face red and savagely ill-tempered in expression.

The bike leaned against the tree-trunk. And Pon was hard at work trying to set it to rights, and make it into a going concern again.

He was too busily engaged to notice the approach of the Greyfriars fellows till they were quite near at hand.

Then he looked up suddenly, and jumped to his feet.

"I say, you fellows, collar him!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, make him pay for my hat!"

"You fat worm!" growled Ponsonby. "I've not got your silly hat! A rotten tramp bagged it from me! You'd better look for him if you want it."

"You didn't smash it, and chuck it into the pond?" asked Harry Wharton, eyeing the dandy of Highcliffe.

"No, I didn't!" snarled Ponsonby.

"Then the tramp did—for that's what's happened to it."

"No bizney of mine."

"I say, you fellows——"

"You owe Bunter a hat," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "I can't make out what that tramp wanted to meddle with it for. But he couldn't have if you'd left it alone. Try on Pon's hat, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ponsonby jumped back.

"You cheeky idiot!" he yelled. "Do

you think I'm going to let that fat freak bag my hat?"

"Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," said Bob. "Exchange is no robbery. You bagged Bunter's hat, didn't you?"

"Look here——"

"Whoever is saucy to the goose must be saucy to the gander, my esteemed Ponsonby," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "That is a ludicrous English proverb."

"Hand it over," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You can't expect Bunter to go about without a hat, because you've been larking with his straw."

Ponsonby backed against the tree. The Famous Five surrounded him, smiling, but inexorable. After the feast came the reckoning; and there was no doubt that the dandy of Highcliffe owed Bunter a hat.

"You—you rotters!" panted Ponsonby. "You can rag a man—five to one——"

"If you're yearning for a scrap, old bean, pick your man," said Bob Cherry. "The others will stand round and see fair play. Can't say fairer than that."

"The fairness is terrific."

"I'm not goin' to fight you," said Ponsonby sullenly. "And if you take away my hat, I'll——"

"Nobody's going to take away your hat, old thing," said Bob. "You're going to offer it to Bunter in exchange for the one you pinched, and beg him to accept it. We'll wait while you do it."

"You'll wait a jolly long time!" sneered Ponsonby.

"I'm going to bang your head on the tree while I'm waiting."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I dare say you'll get tired before I do," said Bob cheerfully.

"Hands off!" yelled Ponsonby; and he struck out savagely as Bob Cherry grasped him.

He struggled furiously. But a grip of iron was fastened on his collar, and then his head smote the tree-trunk.

Bang!

"Whoop!" roared Pon.

Bang!

"Ow! Leave off! Leggo!" shrieked Ponsonby.

"Say when!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

"Ow! He can have the hat!" yelled Ponsonby. "Ow! Leggo! You silly villain, you're cracking my head! Wow!"

"Ask him nicely," said Bob. "Say please, Bunter, will you accept this hat in compensation for the loss of your own? Go it!"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

"You silly rotter!" roared Ponsonby. "You——"

Bang!

"Oh gad! Ow! Wow! Leave off! I'll say anything you like!" raved Ponsonby. "I—I say, pi-pip-please, Bib-bib-Bunter, will you—oh, you rotter!—will you accept this hat—ow, wow!—in compensation for the—wow!—loss of your own? Oooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter. "Hand it over! 'Tain't so good as mine, but I'll make it do." Billy Bunter placed Pon's handsome straw on his bullet head and grinned. "I shall have to get these rotten Highcliffe colours off it. It would be rather rotten to be mistaken for a Highcliffe man——"

"You cheeky, fat freak!" gasped Ponsonby.

"Now hold him while I kick him, Bob," added the Owl of the Remove.

"Ow! Beast! What are you kicking me for?"

"For your good, old fat man," answered Bob. "Come on, you men! I've got an idea that Pon's tired of our company—nice as it is."

The Remove fellows walked on, Billy Bunter grinning complacently under his Highcliffe hat. Ponsonby cast a glance after them that was worthy of a demon in a pantomime, and then turned his attention to his damaged bike again.

In the High Street of Courtfield Billy Bunter dropped into Parkins', to have a new band put on his new hat, and then bestowed his fascinating society on the chums of the Remove at the bunshop. And Lord Mauleverer, who had been going to stand tea for six, had the pleasure of standing tea for twelve instead—Billy Bunter being equal to all the other fellows put together.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

BILLY BUNTER leaned back in his chair, with a happy grin and a smear of jam on his fat face.

He pushed his hat—or rather, Pon's hat—back on his bullet head, and dabbed the perspiration on his podgy brow.

Outside the bunshop there was a shady tree, and between the tree and the shop, little tables set out in the open air, quite in the style of a Continental cafe.

It was quite pleasant sitting there in the shade of the tree, disposing of good things, liquid and solid, and watching the sleepy old High Street of Courtfield, and the people who came and went.

Harry Wharton & Co. had finished their tea, but they were in no hurry to go, and Billy Bunter was in still less of a hurry. He had taken on cargo with his usual disregard of the Plimsoll line, and he felt a very strong disinclination to move. Lord Mauleverer sat contentedly; Mauly was never in a hurry to move. Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing came up the street, and they were hailed at once, and joined the tea-party. The juniors were chatting cheerily when Johnny Bull spotted a dingy figure coming along, and drew his comrades' attention to it.

"Isn't that that jolly old tramp?" asked Bob.

The juniors looked round. Harold Hinks, looking extremely dingy in the bright sunshine, came slouching along the pavement, not yet observing the schoolboys at the table under the tree. His eyes were on the ground; and they saw him stoop and pick up a cigar end, which he proceeded to crumble in his grubby fingers, and then cram into the bowl of a pipe.

"That's the man!" said Harry Wharton, with a nod.

Vernon-Smith fixed his eyes sharply on Hinks.

"The man who robbed my pater?" he exclaimed.

"Well, your pater thought so," said Harry. "But—— That sportsman doesn't look as if he'd bagged a hundred pounds recently, does he?"

The Bounder nodded. Certainly the tattered man looked as if he was in very low water financially.

"If he got the banknote, he never kept it," said Bob Cherry. "Your father thought he threw it away, Smithy, but——"

"My pater told me about it," said

Smithy. "I've no doubt the rascal had it, and threw it away when you fellows got after him. It's blowing about on the common somewhere, I suppose. He certainly doesn't look as if he's found it since."

Billy Bunter blinked round. The vagrant was not a dozen feet away, lighting his pipe.

"I—I say, you fellows, that brute ought to be run in," said Bunter, eyeing the tattered man uneasily. "He stole my hat the other day, you know—"

"Must have been frightfully hard up!" said the Bounder. "Couldn't have sold it for more than twopence!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"That chap seems to be jolly keen on Bunter's tales," grinned Bob Cherry. "He snatched off his hat at the school gates the other day, according to Bunter; and to-day he got Bunter's roof away from Pon and chucked it into a pond. Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's seen us."

Mr. Hinks gave quite a start as he spotted the schoolboys sitting under the tree outside the bunshop.

He gave them a very quick, uneasy glance, and then his eyes fastened on Bunter—and Bunter's straw hat.

For a moment Mr. Hinks seemed inclined to retreat; but, instead of that, he came forward, touching his rag of a cap respectfully.

Harry Wharton & Co. eyed him curiously. The man was a loafer, a rogue, and a rascal—they were aware of that. If he had not actually "pinched" that £100 note, they had no doubt that he had attempted to do so. It was certain that he had pinched a hat from Bunter, though its value was so slight that they were inclined to regard the action rather as an impudent joke than a theft. Still, he was displaying considerable nerve in coming up to them.

"P'raps you'd be so kind as to 'elp a cove on his way, sir?" said Mr. Hinks, addressing Wharton, but edging towards Bunter.

"I'll do that," said Vernon-Smith.

"You will, sir?" asked Mr. Hinks.

"Yes! It was my father you robbed the other day, you rascal, and I'll help you on your way—to the police station, if you're still here when I see a policeman!"

"I say, you fellows, let's call a bobby and have him run in!" said Billy Bunter. "He was after me, you know; and if Smithy's pater hadn't given me a lift in his taxi that evening he would have had all my money off me—"

"Which would have made him rich for life!" remarked Bob.

"The richfulness would have been terrific."

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What—" yelled Bob suddenly.

Mr. Hinks' next action took the whole party by surprise. He had edged near Bunter, and now all of a sudden he made a grab at Bunter's hat. Pon's straw hat was in his grasp at once, and Mr. Hinks leaped away and ran.

"My hat!" yelled Bunter.

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors bounded to their feet.

They stared after Harold Hinks almost in stupefaction. He had stolen Bunter's hat again! With Pon's straw grasped in his grubby hand he was running up the street at top speed.

"Is the man mad?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Mad as a hatter—"

"What the thump does he want Bunter's hat for?" gasped Nugent. "Must be a lunatic!"

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"I say, you fellows, after him!" yelled Bunter. "He's got my hat!"

"After him!" shouted Bob.

Bob Cherry was the first to start; the other fellows dashed after him. Even Billy Bunter, disinclined to exertion as he was, joined in the chase. Only Lord Mauleverer was left sitting under the shady tree watching the chaso from where he sat with a lazy eye.

Hinks was running hard—as hard as he could go. People stared at him, wondering what was up.

"Stop thief!" roared Bob Cherry.

Two or three people made clutches at Hinks, but he dodged them and fled on desperately. The juniors dashed after him. Why the man had stolen the hat was an utter mystery, unless he was a lunatic with a weakness for hat-snatching. But they did not see letting him get away with it if they could help it.

Mr. Hinks dodged into a side street, and then into a lane that led to the open common. The juniors raced after him.

But he reached the common, hat in hand, and vanished from sight among the gorse and bracken.

"Hunt him out!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

But it was not easy to hunt Mr. Hinks out once he had taken to cover. For a quarter of an hour they hunted for him, but they did not find him, and they gave it up at last and gathered in a rather exasperated and breathless group. Billy Bunter came panting up and joined them.

"Got it?" he gasped.

"The gotfulness is not terrific, my idiotic Bunter. The esteemed rascal has disappeared."

"Well, you silly idiots!" panted Bunter. "Mean to say you've let him get away with my hat? Why didn't you catch him?"

"Catch him yourself, you fat owl!" growled the Bounder, and he turned to walk back.

"I say, you fellows—"

"He's gone, fathead!" said Harry Wharton. "The rascal's hiding in the bushes somewhere."

"Well, hunt him out—"

"You can hunt him out if you like."

"Beast!"

"The man's a lunatic," said Redwing, as they walked back into the town. "He must be! What can he want Bunter's silly hats for?"

"It's a blessed mystery—unless he's mad," said Harry. "He could have grabbed my hat, or your hat, but he seems to want only Bunter's hats. Must be right off his rocker!"

"I say, you fellows, I want my hat—"

"Well, you got that hat cheap!" grinned Bob Cherry. "After this, old fat bean, you'd better have your hats nailed on. Lucky you've got a wooden head you can nail them to!"

"You silly ass!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors rejoined Lord Mauleverer at the bunshop. Billy Bunter called at Parkins' for his cap—he was still minus a straw hat, owing to the extraordinary activities of Harold Hinks. The juniors discussed the strange affair as they walked back to Greyfriars. The only conclusion to which they could come was that Hinks was some sort of an irresponsible lunatic. Obviously he could not want a schoolboy's straw hat—and they wondered what on earth he could be doing with it.

If they could have seen Mr. Hinks they would have seen what he was doing with it—stamping on it, almost dancing on it, in his rage and disappointment. It was the third wrong hat that Mr.

Hinks had captured, examination proving that it was not the £100 hat of which he was in quest.

Mr. Hinks' disappointment was deep and bitter, and his remarks as he danced on the hat almost turned the atmosphere blue.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Desperate Measures!

MR. QUELCH stared.

He could hardly believe his eyes.

Those eyes were compared by the Remove fellows to gimlets, on account of their keenness. But really, Mr. Quelch at the moment found it difficult to believe their evidence.

He was standing in the gateway of Greyfriars, after class on Monday, exchanging a word or two with Gosling before he went out for a walk.

His glance fell carelessly and casually on Billy Bunter, coming along the road to the gates.

Bunter was wearing a brand-new straw hat!

Mr. Quelch had been surprised—greatly surprised—when Bunter's loss of headgear was reported to him once more. However, he had given Bunter another order on the school outfitter for a new straw. After class Bunter had gone to Courtfield on the motor-bus and fetched his new hat, and returned by the same means of locomotion. But the motor-bus did not pass Greyfriars; it turned off to Redclyffe at the corner of the common, and Bunter had the last quarter of a mile to walk. Resplendent in a new straw hat, Bunter came rolling home.

From the opposite roadside at a little distance from the gates a dingy and tattered figure emerged from among the trees. And then happened the surprising occurrence that caused Mr. Quelch to stare and doubt the evidence of his eyes.

It seemed as if the dingy man had been watching the road by the school gates. At all events, he spotted Bunter as the fat junior came rolling up. He made a direct rush at Bunter and snatched the hat from his head. The fat Owl gave a startled yell.

Mr. Quelch gazed—petrified.

He had been, naturally, surprised when he was told that there was a tramp in the vicinity with an extraordinary propensity for snatching hats from Bunter of his Form. The thing was so very extraordinary that Mr. Quelch had doubted it.

Now he had proof of it!

Under his very eyes, not a dozen yards from his majestic nose, there was the tramp—snatching Bunter's hat!

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"Upon my word! What—what—"

"That's the feller, sir!" exclaimed Gosling. "That's the same feller what snatched Master Bunter's hat afore!"

"Ow! Gimme my hat!" Bunter was shrieking. It began to seem, to Bunter, as if he would never be able to wear a straw hat that summer at all!

Mr. Quelch rushed out of the gateway.

"Stop!" he shouted.

Hinks was already running, hat in hand! This time he hoped that he had the right hat! The number of straw hats that the "fat cove" seemed to possess was a standing surprise to Mr. Hinks. He had never heard of a cove with so many hats! But Harold Hinks was a sticker! He had made up his mind to go through Bunter's hats, from first to last, till he came to the hundred-pound hat! Billy Bunter could not venture outside the gates in a straw hat



Panting and desperate, still clutching the hat, Hinks burst out on the towpath, the Greyfriars juniors hot on his trail. Internally or externally, Hinks hated water. But there was no help for it now. Still clutching the hat, he took a header into the Sark and struck out desperately!

without the danger of going home hatless!

Mr. Quelch ran in pursuit. Bunter stood roaring, blinking after the fleeing tramp through his spectacles.

The Remove master was an active gentleman, for his age; but he was past the time of life when a foot race was really a practical proposition. He had no chance of overtaking Hinks.

But there were people on the road—and ahead of the running rascal a plump and majestic form appeared—that of Mr. Prout, the master of the Greyfriars Fifth.

Prout stopped, in surprise, at the sight of a tramp fleeing with a straw hat in his hand. Then he heard Quelch's voice:

"Stop thief! Stop him, my dear Prout!"

"Good gad!" ejaculated the Fifth Form master.

Prout grasped the situation. Bunter, hatless and yelling. A tramp running, hat in hand—Quelch in pursuit. What had happened was clear to Prout. He immediately proceeded to stop the thief.

"Stop!" he boomed commandingly.

And he planted his plump and majestic form directly in Mr. Hinks' way, his plump hand raised in command.

"Blow me pink!" gasped Harold Hinks.

He had no time to stop. Quelch was coming on fast, and two or three Greyfriars fellows had run out at the gates and were following him—Bob Cherry of the Remove, Nugent, minor of the Second, Hobson of the Shell. More fellows, catching the alarm, were appearing in the gateway. Mr. Hinks was, so to speak, between the devil and the deep sea. He did not stop! He lowered his head and charged on!

Bump!

Crash!

Mr. Hinks' head smote Prout on his third waistcoat button.

There was an awful gasp from the Fifth Form master, like the rush of escaping air from a burst tyre.

He collapsed.

Prout sat down in the dust, and Mr. Hinks, reeling for a moment from the shock, recovered himself, and dashed on.

"Urrrrrrghh!" said Prout. "Oooogh! Woooooogh! Gurrerrgggh!"

"Stop him!" shrieked Mr. Quelch, catching sight of Coker of the Fifth in the road at a little distance ahead.

Coker stared round.

"That cheeky blighter!" exclaimed Coker, recognising the tramp whom he had officiously "shifted" a few days ago from his resting-place near the school gates. He rushed at Hinks to stop him.

Hinks halted. Prout was sitting in the road, rocking with anguish, his plump hands pressed to his third waistcoat button! But Coker was not to be dealt with like Prout! Hinks' escape was cut off!

Desperately he bounded out of the road into the coppice.

"Follow him!" panted Mr. Quelch.

"Seize him!"

"What-ho!" said Coker.

And he rushed in pursuit. Other fellows rushed after him. Mr. Quelch, out of breath, stopped to render what aid he could to the unhappy Prout.

Mr. Hinks raced through the coppice. But on the other side of the little wood was the river and the towpath—and there were a dozen or more fellows on the towpath.

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Hinks.

He had chanced it—once too often! Capture seemed inevitable! Coker was

charging on behind him—five or six fellows racing after Coker, and they were already shouting to the fellows on the towpath.

"Stop thief!"

"Collar him!"

Panting and desperate, still clutching the hat, Hinks burst out on the towpath. Pursuit was fairly at his heels. Coker's long legs covered the ground in great style. Fellows on the towpath stared at him—three or four ran towards him to collar him. Wingate of the Sixth made a grab at him, only missing by inches, as the desperate Hinks leaped away towards the river and plunged in.

Internally or externally, Harold Hinks hated water. But it was a case of any port in a storm.

Clutching hands were almost touching him, and it was the only way. He went into the Sark headlong.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker, stopping on the margin. Coker was keen on the pursuit, but not keen enough to jump into the river with his clothes on.

Hinks apparently could swim. He swam desperately.

"Get out a boat!" roared Wingate, and half a dozen fellows rushed along to the school boathouse.

But Hinks, slipping along with the current, and swimming hard, gained the opposite bank. He was seen to scramble ashore, and run up the bank, into the wood, and disappear. Drenched and dripping, leaving a watery trail behind him, Harold Hinks vanished from all knowledge. And in the depths of the wood he flung himself down, and had to rest for ten minutes at least before he was able to examine his prize—and to discover himself in the happy possession of the fourth wrong hat!

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THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

IT was extraordinary!
It was absurd!
It was annoying, irritating, most disconcerting, in fact!

Nearly all Greyfriars was discussing the remarkable adventures of Billy Bunter and his hat!

Mr. Quelch telephoned to the police station to request that a look-out should be kept for a man, apparently insane, who haunted the vicinity of Greyfriars School, snatching hats!

The description of Hinks was given; but, as Bob Cherry remarked, if the man wanted to keep up this amazing game he could easily change his appearance—he had only to shave and wash!

That the man was a lunatic, more or less harmless, was the generally accepted theory. But there was a weak point in that theory, for a lunatic with a mania for hat-snatching, would have snatched anybody's hat. And this extraordinary man snatched only Bunter's hats! It seemed as if the headgear of the Owl of the Remove exercised a strange fascination over him.

It was clear that he hung about the school, on the watch. It was plain that he watched for Bunter. Other fellows came and went, unmolested. Fags of the Second or the Third, whose hats might have been snatched easily and with impunity, were never bothered by Hinks. Nobody was bothered, but Bunter. And Bunter had lost no fewer than four hats!

Why the hat-hunter concentrated on Bunter was a baffling mystery! It could hardly be a case of revenge, as Bunter had done nothing to give offence to the man. Besides, a revengeful man might have smacked his head, or pulled his fat ears, but why should he "pinch" his hat? He might as well have pinched his necktie. It was simply a mystery which might have beaten Sherlock Holmes or Ferrers Locke.

Billy Bunter grew quite nervous of going out of gates. Every hat he lost meant an item to go on the bill for his father—and Mr. Bunter had an intense dislike of extra items on his bill. However, Bunter had a new straw hat on Tuesday—but he did not go down to Courtfield for it—it was delivered safely at the school.

But Bunter did not walk out of gates in it! Amazing as such a peril was—quite unheard of and inexplicable—it seemed probable that if he went out in that hat he would come back without it! More likely than not it would fall a victim to Mr. Hinks' insatiable appetite for Bunter's hats!

Billy Bunter liked being in the lime-light, he liked being talked about. But he was not enjoying this. It was no joke to be the particular object of the attention of a man who seemed to be a little out of his mind! So far, the amazing man had been satisfied with hooking off Bunter's hats. But, with a lunatic, you never could tell! The fancy might seize him for hooking off Bunter's head as well as his hat! That was serious!

On Wednesday, therefore, though it was a half-holiday and a gorgeous summer's day, Bunter saw Mr. Hinks round every corner, and behind every tree; and his new hat did not feel safe on his head.

But—for once—Bunter found that his company was desired for a walk abroad! The Famous Five wanted him.

Plenty of Greyfriars fellows were keeping an eye open for the surprising tramp. Obviously such a character could not be left at large in the vicinity of the school if it could be helped. And the Famous Five had evolved a scheme for bagging him. After dinner on Wed-

nesday they looked for Bunter; and found him, as they expected, gazing into the window of the school shop. Bob Cherry tapped him on a fat shoulder.

"Come on, old fat bean," he said.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I say, you fellows, if we're going out to tea, I'd rather take a taxi," he said.

"You see, that tramp—"

"We're not! We're going for a walk!"

"Oh, rats!" Bunter turned back to the window, to feast his eyes on the good things that were beyond his reach.

"You see," explained Harry Wharton. "You're going to act as decoy! You know how they catch tiger's in Inky's jolly old country! They tie up a goat and the bleating of the goat attracts the tiger—and then they mop up the tiger! Well, you're going to play the goat!"

"Easy thing for you, Bunter!" said Johnny Bull. "You're generally playing the goat, or the giddy ox."

"Yah!"

"See the idea, old fat man?" asked Nugent. "You walk out, with that new straw on—and we follow you at a distance! If that man's watching for you—and ten to one he will be, on a half-holiday—he will try to grab your hat—and we'll grab him."

"Um!" said Bunter.

"If he's a lunatic, he ought to be colared and taken care of," said Harry. "And if he's only a practical joker, he wants walloping. Anyhow, we shall find out what it all means—and put a stop to it."

HAD YOUR HOLIDAYS YET?

(See page 27.)

"And suppose he gets away with my hat?" demanded Bunter.

"We'll stand you a new one if he does."

"Well, look here, I'll come," said Bunter. "I'm jolly well fed-up with that beast coming after my hat, I can tell you. But I say, my postal order hasn't come—"

"That's all right! It never does."

"Oh, really, Cherry! If I'm going to take all this trouble to please you fellows, I think you might lend me—"

"You fat villain, we're taking the trouble on your account! It's your silly hat the man's after, not ours."

"If you're too mean to stand a fellow a packet of toffee—"

"For goodness' sake, get him a packet of toffee—it will keep his mouth shut, at any rate!" said Johnny Bull.

A packet of toffee was provided; which Bunter proceeded at once to sample as he walked down to the gates with the chums of the Remove. Outside, nothing was to be seen of Hinks, as they walked up the road towards the common. But they hardly expected to see him so near the school; too many eyes were now on the alert for him there. But—after his previous remarkable actions—they had little doubt that he was hanging about somewhere, and that his watchful eyes would fall on Bunter if he was given a chance.

Billy Bunter walked ahead, sucking toffee. At a little distance behind him, making themselves as invisible as possible by keeping close to the trees by the roadside, followed the Famous Five. They watched Bunter like so many cats! If a tattered figure rushed on him and grabbed his hat, they were ready to break into a rush—and they had no doubt that they could beat Hinks when it came to sprinting. Like the goat attracting the tiger by its bleating, Billy Bunter was tempting the hat-snatcher by parading his new straw hat.

They reached the green expanse of the common without adventure. If Hinks was about, he was not near the school, that was certain; and he was not to be seen on the common. But the afternoon was yet young; and the juniors were determined. Bunter, by this time, had finished the toffee; and he was tired. He proposed a half-hour's rest. That proposition was unanimously rejected; and the fat Owl rolled on by the path across the common. Still at a distance behind him, watchful as cats, followed the Famous Five.

The way lay by the clump of oaks, where Bunter had taken his nap that day nearly a week ago, and where Hinks had been run down by the Famous Five after the theft from Mr. Vernon-Smith. Reaching that shady clump, Billy Bunter turned from the path and plunged under the trees. Coming on a couple of minutes after him, Harry Wharton & Co. found him sitting under a tree, leaning back on it, taking a much-needed rest. He gave them a defiant blink through his big spectacles.

"Get on, you fat frump!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter. "I'm tired! I'm going to have a rest! I say, got any more toffee?"

"Kick him!" suggested Nugent.

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Oh, let the fat fooler have ten minutes," he said. "We can scout round and see if that tramp's in sight anywhere. If we spot him, we shan't want Bunter."

And the Famous Five walked on and disappeared along the footpath. Bunter leaned back on the oak and fanned himself with his new straw hat.

There was a rustle in the trees a few minutes later.

Bunter blinked round.

His little round eyes almost started through his big round spectacles at the sight of an unwashed, unshaven face.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

He sat, petrified with terror, as Mr. Hinks came out of cover among the oaks. The tramp was grinning.

It had not occurred to the juniors that Mr. Hinks might be sleeping in the heat of the summer day in that shady clump. But he had been—and the schoolboys' voices had awakened him!

Peering through the thickets at them, Hinks had been hardly able to believe in his good luck when he saw Bunter left on his own, the other fellows going on their way.

Only waiting till he considered they would be out of hearing, Mr. Hinks emerged from cover and stood before Bunter—gloating!

"Gotcher!" he said pleasantly.

"I—I say—" stammered Bunter faintly. That the man was some sort of a lunatic Bunter did not doubt! It was terrifying, unnerving, to be alone in that lonely spot with a lunatic! Bunter wished now that he had not stopped for that rest—much as he needed it!

"Don't 'owl out!" said Mr. Hinks. "You give one yelp, young 'un, and I'll give you such a wipe, you won't ask for another! I ain't going to urtcher! I jest want that 'at!"

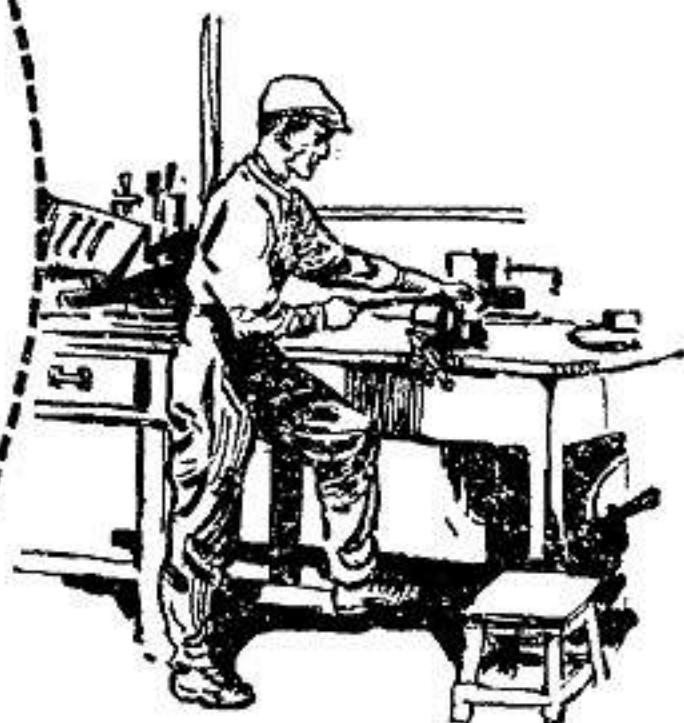
Bunter did not dream of resistance! He was only too glad that the lunatic wanted his hat and not his head! He sat trembling like a fat jelly, while Hinks hooked away his straw hat.

Mr. Hinks was eager—but a little doubtful! He hoped that this was the hundred-pound hat at last! But he had had so many disappointments that he could not help feeling a misgiving. He turned his back to Bunter, to conceal

(Continued on page 28.)

ALLISON OF AVONSHIRE!

By JOHN BREARLEY



WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

Simon Allison, once part-owner of the great Allison Motor Works, invents a powerful supercharger, but fails through lack of funds to put it on the market. Realising that the new invention will revolutionise the small car industry, Len Allison, Simon's rascally nephew—"boss" of the works and a "big noise" in the county cricket team—determines to steal the plans. Later, Bill Allison, Simon's son, brings about a long overdue victory for his school against Avonshire Club and Ground. After the match Len enlists the services of a mysterious hunchback to steal the plans that night. Awakened by the disturbance, Bill rushes into the workshop to find his father lying motionless on the floor and the hunchback making good his escape. The "plans" he has taken with him, however, are fakes! (Now read on.)

Mike, the Mystery Man!

AS gently as haste and burning anxiety would allow, Bill tore open his father's dressing-gown and pyjamas, uttering a cry as he felt faint heartbeats under his hand. Somehow he managed to raise the limp figure, stumbling backwards through the door. In doing so he trod on something hard and cold that rolled away from under his foot.

"A torch!"

Setting his father carefully on the floor again, the gasping youngster searched for and found the object again. It was indeed a big electric torch. Either the hunchback had dropped it, or had it knocked from his hand during the fight.

Bill switched on the torch thankfully, and then knelt to examine his father. The beam of white light revealed an ugly wound at the back of Simon Allison's scalp—a sight that caused Bill to spring frantically to his feet, heedless of his own aching head. Then, almost without thinking, he flashed the torch on the safe beneath the old inventor's bench.

Fresh grief welled up inside the youngster at what he saw.

The safe door hung open, with a neat, clean hole where the combination lock had been, and inside the safe lay the partly assembled model of the Allison super-charger, wrecked beyond all hope of repair.

"Busted to blazes! Maybe that's what woke poor dad," Bill Allison muttered, then abruptly pulled himself together.

He could do nothing more. This was a case for a doctor and the police without any delay.

Stepping past his insensible father, Bill closed the shed door quietly, and then lurched away—barefooted, battered, and bruised—into sleeping Kelsey village as fast as his shaky legs would carry him.

For young Bill Allison the rest of that night of dread, and most of the next day, too, was one long torment.

In the end the various events became just a series of blurred impressions in his over-tired, overwrought mind.

First came a hospital ambulance, rousing the village with its shrill clamour as it rushed Simon Allison into Avonport. Next, two alert, quiet-spoken detectives, asking curt questions and jotting down Bill's answers, what time other policemen searched the shed, the cottage garden, and lane.

A swift drive to Avonport police station followed, where more questions were asked, while a police surgeon re-bandaged Bill's splitting head. Following this came the grimmest ordeal of all—a long, cruel wait, hour after hour, in a hospital ward, ending at last in a brief interview with a kindly, shrewd-faced man, whom Bill knew to be the finest surgeon in Avonshire.

From that point the youngster almost broke down.

Only dimly did he remember being placed into another car by a policeman, and driven to the station again. There, a forlorn flicker of pride sustained him during another momentous interview, for the police had been busy during his absence at the hospital. But, eventually, even the high official who had taken charge of the sensational case saw that Bill had had more than enough.

"All right—no more for to-day, my boy!" he concluded sympathetically. "You get along home—try to rest. And don't worry. We'll get this hunchback pretty soon, from your description. I've got the drag-net out now. You

other gentlemen can go, too. Sorry to have troubled you!"

Thus dismissed, Bill was driven back to Kelsey. It was then late Sunday afternoon.

Outside the cottage a constable was on duty, sternly keeping back a morbid throng of thrill-seekers; and again Bill's pride came to his aid, enabling him to make his way into the house without the help of a friendly arm. But once the door was closed, something seemed to snap inside Bill. Everything spun round; turned black. All he felt were two strong hands grasping him suddenly and then—blankness.

Dog-weary and hungry, Bill conked out on his feet.

When he recovered from the swoon, he was lying in his father's favourite armchair, with his collar loosened, cushions under his head, and an appetising smell of cooking filling his nostrils.

Lounging back with his feet on the kitchen table, sat Cannonball Mike Doyle, eyeing him sombrely.

Bill blinked and sighed. But the instant he tried to speak, Mike sprang upright and limped to the stove.

"Don't talk—eat!" he growled, planking down a well-grilled steak and pot of scalding coffee. "You need grub. Heck! I'd like to kick those fool coppers in the pants!"

Standing over Bill, Mike literally bullied the lad into eating that much-needed meal.

It was the right treatment, too. By the time his plate was empty, Bill's ashen cheeks had regained some of their normal colour, and the strong coffee braced his nerves.

With another sigh, he returned to the armchair, nodding gratefully to Mike as he laid himself back.

He had not set eyes on his father's mechanic since very early morning—centuries ago, that seemed—and then the once-famous racing driver had been answering police questions about the Allison plans and the broken safe in his usual cool, taciturn way.

Now he looked just as dour, just as impassive—though perhaps his eyes were a little colder, his lips just a trifle tighter.

Producing a stick of the inevitable chewing-gum, he pouched it in one lean brown cheek, and his lantern jaw began to move slowly.

"Well, go on, Bill! Talk now!" he ordered with curious gentleness. "Spill your news, son—it'll do you good!"

Bill spread his hands hopelessly. Several minutes passed before he was able to collect his thoughts in proper order.

"The doctor says dad will recover—with luck!" began the boy at length, in a dull, toneless voice. "But even if he does live, he'll be paralysed, Mike! His brain's terribly injured; he'll be just a helpless cripple—and dumb! They've operated on him already, of course; and that's the verdict so far. The doctor said it was too early to give a proper decision yet, but—but that was only to soften the blow, I reckon. Dad's—finished!"

"Crippled—and dumb! Old Simon!" Mike repeated the words twice, and chewed his gum savagely. "Huh! And then you went to the police station, I guess?"

At the sharp question Bill recovered and nodded.

"Yes," he answered wearily. "Saw Superintendent Dickens—you know him. Of course, I described that ghastly humpback as best I could, and he agreed with me that dad must have heard the hound smashing our model and gone down to tackle him alone—just like poor old dad! Then I told the super all about the missing plans, and"—Bill frowned—"he immediately asked me if anyone had been anxious to get hold of 'em lately."

"Ah!" Mike Doyle sat up with a jerk. "And you said—what?" he demanded keenly.

"Well, I said that Len and Valetti had been anxious," he answered slowly. "I had to tell Dickens that, didn't I? Because they're the only ones who've shown any interest in the invention at all!"

"Ye-ah!" Cannonball Doyle lowered his eyes a second. "And then?"

"Why, of course, old Dickens looked a bit sick. I mean—Len's an important man in Avonport; boss of the Allison Works, County cricketer, and dad's nephew, and all that. Still, the super sent over to Len's house, and asked him and Valetti to come to the station at

once—which they did. And, gosh, didn't they ride the high horse, too! Blighters though they are, it seems pretty clear they had nothing to do with the stealing of the plans or—or hitting dad!"

"Does it?" asked Mike softly.

"Yes. Both had cast-iron alibis. Len swears he didn't go outside the house at all last night, as his servants can prove. And he can vouch for Valetti, too, at the time the—the crime was committed. He says Valetti called on him about ten-thirty, just as the servants were going to bed, and didn't leave till midnight. To clinch that, Len's butler, who sleeps in the front of the house, heard him calling out 'good-night' to Valetti from the front door just as the cathedral clock chimed twelve."

"Ah! And I suppose Len called pretty loudly?" inquired Mike, in the same quiet voice.

"Well, yes, I suppose so, if the butler heard him. Why?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing," Mike drawled. "Go on, son!"

Bill stood up and leaned against the mantelpiece, kicking aimlessly at the bars of the grate.

"That's all, Mike!" he said sadly. "Old Dickens apologised to Len and the Corsican, and they stalked off without a glance at me. I—I must say I suspected them myself at first, because I know how eager they were to grab dad's invention. But now—" Bill broke off; his heavy eyes suddenly flashed and hardened. "Now it seems dad had a third enemy, more mysterious and dangerous," he snapped. "Anyway, the police are searching everywhere for this vile brute—"

"Joe the Hump!" nodded Mike.

Bill stared at the mechanic blankly for a moment, then suddenly exploded in a sharp, breathless cry.

For the moment he had failed to grasp the true significance of Mike's words. So far, he had thought of his father's dastardly attacker only as "the hunchback." But now Mike had given the ruffian a name!

"Joe the— What's that you say?" gasped Bill, staggering back to his chair. "You know the brute?"

The imperturbable mechanic grunted.

"Joe the Hump. Valetti's American sidekick!" he repeated deliberately. "No, I don't exactly know him, lad, but I know of him. No one ever saw

'em together in the States—no one ever saw Joe the Hump at all, in fact! But there were rumours—underworld whispers, if you like—that Valetti pulled off some pretty raw stunts, and that his partner was a gosh-awful hunchback, like the one who downed your dad. Yeah, I know about Joe the Hump and Valetti all right. I've got reason!"

He rubbed his right leg pensively, while Bill gaped at him in a whirl of amazement.

"But—but this is terrific news, Cannonball!" he blurted at length. "Oughtn't we to tell the police?"

Mike shook his head contemptuously.

"What's the use?" he asked. "What can we prove? Besides," he added, with sudden force, "I've got an account to settle with Corsica Phil and Joe—a bigger account than ever now! And, by thunder, I'll settle it, too, without the help of the police!"

With the words Mike crashed an emphatic fist on the table and looked at Bill earnestly.

"We haven't a penn'orth o' proof that Joe and Corsica Phil are working together, Bill," he said. "All I'm saying is—don't kid yourself that Len and Valetti had nothing to do with last night's affair. They did. I know it! You've got to watch 'em, boy; fight 'em till they make a mistake. I'll help, by thunder—I'll help! We'll fight and break 'em between us after last night!"

In a moment the ex-racer was on his feet, pacing the kitchen with more agitation than Bill had ever seen him show before. For long, silent minutes Mike limped up and down, head bent, hands deep in pockets. Then, finally, he halted, swung round, and gave Bill a deep, calculating stare, as though weighing the lad up.

"Well, what's it to be?" he asked bluntly. "You're in a tough jam now, Bill, ain't you? You're broke, for one thing—and in future you'll have a helpless father to support. You've got enemies, too—bad ones, who've already struck two crippling blows, and will keep on striking, if need be. What are you going to do? Fight back, or quit?"

With a growl Bill sprang up, fists clenched and broad chest heaving.

"What can I do?" It was a cry that came direct from his heart. "I had a scheme, Mike. I was going to leave school and turn professional for Avonshire. Pro's earn decent money. I'd have saved all I could and helped dad to get his invention on the market by himself. But now—" The boy made a passionate gesture. "That part of it's all finished!" he cried. "I'm willing to fight, Mike—fight like blazes for the old man! But how? Dad's paralysed, won't be able to remember a thing, and the supercharger wasn't quite finished. Either Valetti, Len, or Joe the Hump have grabbed the invention, and the model's smashed. What can I do without the plans to work on?"

Mike Doyle stood rigid as a post, his face a complete mask. Only a fleeting glimmer of satisfaction shone in his eyes, and was gone in a twinkling.

Then, as Bill's shoulders sagged despondently, his companion did a strange thing.

Slowly but coolly he slid a hand under his jacket and produced a soiled roll of papers, the sight of which made Bill reel as from a punch. Just as calmly Mike then tossed the roll of papers on the table and grinned sardonically.

A BIG-THRILL FLYING STORY OF THE GREAT WAR!



They called Lt. Arthur Danby the "Crasher" because he couldn't land a plane for toffee! They called him an "outsider" because he wouldn't make friends with anyone. And, finally, they called him a "spy" because— Every boy should read this thrill-packed story of the Great War, featuring "Baldy's Angels," the crack fighting squadron on the Western Front. The story has been specially written by popular Hedley Scott, who was himself a flying officer during the War, and it appears in this week's Free Gift issue of the

RANGER

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"You'll fight, eh? Good! That's all I wanted to know," he said, in a dry voice. "We-ell, I dunno how you're goin' to raise th' cash yet, but"—with a horny thumb he indicated the papers—"Suppose you keep the real Allison plans—and try!"

The New Partnership!

THE—the real plans!" Bill Allison's voice was thick, indistinct. There was a glazed look about his eyes as though he had just taken a stiff punch on the chin. He stared at the roll of plans on the table; at Mike Doyle, standing with arms akimbo, lips drawn down in a little droll smile. Then suddenly he lurched forward, reaching for the plans like a starving man confronted by food. Yes, they were his father's plans all right—the real, the actual drawings of the Allison super-charger. Then the ones that Joe the Hump had stolen last night must be—

"Wh-where did you get 'em, Mike?" The question came in an explosive gasp.

Cannonball Mike Doyle shrugged his lean shoulders.

"Pinched 'em myself, before the others got the chance."

Simon Allison's mechanic made the confession quite off-handedly, then grinned, a dry grin, in which mischief, triumph, and derision were blended.

"In fact, Bill, I've been burglin' your father's safe ever since the evening Len and Valetti first called and tried to bluff the old man into sellin' the invention," he went on, just as coolly, while Bill gaped, speechless. "You see, son, I knew that if Len couldn't buy the plans, Valetti would try to pinch 'em. I warned your dad so, too, but you know what he is. He just wouldn't listen. So—"

Mike laughed soundlessly.

"So I just took the plans home every night, an' brought 'em back next morning. I'd have had a swell time explainin' if I'd been caught, I guess, but I wasn't. Len, Valetti, and Joe the Hump are the only ones who've been caught. The roll of fakes that Joe sneaked last night ain't worth the smell of an oil rag!"

His amused expression changed to an ugly scowl.

"But, o' course, I wasn't reckonin' on your dad gettin' smashed up trying to defend the fakes," he continued. "And short of doing sentry-go outside the cottage all night, I couldn't stall off a raid, not knowing when one was comin'. I just warned your dad, and saw to it that the plans would be safe, anyway. That was all I could do, Bill. And we'd have still been on velvet if the plucky, obstinate old chap had only bawled for help, instead of tacklin' a he gorilla like Joe the Hump single-handed."

This last remark Mike made to himself as he glanced ruefully at Bill.

The youngster still seemed unable to find his tongue, however. He was gripping the roll of plans as though he never meant to let go again, and devouring them with shining eyes. Only the fact that his father lay unconscious in Avonport Hospital stopped him from going crazy with joy and relief.

The invention was safe, after all. Although Simon Allison might be a life-long cripple, at least, he had not been robbed of the valuable fruits of his labours as well—thanks entirely to the loyal, shrewd ex-racer whom he had befriended.

Mike's foresight and guile had altered everything—lifted Bill from the slough of despond, and filled him anew with fighting spirit and hope.

Clumsily, breathlessly, the lad tried to stammer out his heartfelt gratitude, Mike cutting him short at last with a typically brusque gesture.

"Ah, stow it, kid! Your dad's been a good pal to me!" he said snappishly. "Now we've got to be good pals to him. We've got to do everything for him, 'cos, may be, he'll never be able to do anything for himself again. Most of it's up to you, Bill. But I'll be in with you—see?"

Without any hesitation Bill thrust the plans back into his friend's hands, and if any of his school cronies could have seen their cheerful old "madman" then, they would have received a real jolt of surprise. The cold determination in the lad's eyes, the aggressive thrust of his jaw, gave even the hard-bitten Mike a secret thrill.

"You keep these, Cannonball," said Bill simply. "And as you say, we've got to be partners now—you and me. If you'll run things here—make a new model of the blower, and carry on as you did with dad—I'll try and earn the cash we need. I can do it, too, if

the county'll take me on as a pro. I'll save every penny—do anything, in fact, to fight for the old man."

"Great!"

Mike stowed the plans carefully under his jacket, then laid his hands on Bill's shoulders and shook him gently.

"Son, you're taking on a heavy load; but you've got grit," he said soberly. "Meanwhile, don't say anything about all this to a soul. And don't let Len or Corsica see that you even suspect 'em of being in company with Joe the Hump, either. By now they'll have discovered they've got nothing but a roll of wastepaper, after all. And I'll bet it won't be long before Corsica has another go at getting the real ones. Then—"

"Then, by thunder, we'll get 'em—get 'em good and hard!" cried Bill; and the new partners of the firm of Allison & Doyle shook hands grimly.

"I'll be down at the county ground to-morrow—the moment I leave the hospital!" said Bill.

(Will fortune favour Bill, or will he—? You'll be surprised when you read the continuation of this thrilling cricket story in next week's Free Gift Issue of the MAGNET.)

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 Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

WHILE preparing this little chat of mine I can't help thinking how time flies. Although it seems but a short while ago since I made the first announcement concerning our handsome free gifts of photogravure plates your collection—including the souvenir photo-plate presented free with this issue—now totals eleven! And what a collection it is, too! Every week brings in hundreds of appreciative letters from readers all over the world—a sure sign that the free gifts have proved a great success and that the Old Paper is progressing all along the line.

Unfortunately, however, all good things come to an end sooner or later, and next week will see the twelfth and last of our souvenir series of photogravure plates showing "Marvels of Modern Engineering."

"IN A SKY-LINER'S CHART-HOUSE"

is the subject chosen for our final photo-plate, and in my opinion it is one of the best of the series. It certainly should not be missed by any reader. Be on the safe side; order next Saturday's MAGNET now!

Harking back to readers' letters again, I should like to inform "Anxious Inquirers" that Hedley Scott, author of our recent popular sporting story, "Nobby, the 'Shooting Star'!" and many other MAGNET successes, is writing a series of War-time flying stories featuring Baldy's Angels, the crack fighting squadron on the Western Front. The first story in this sensational series appears in this week's issue of our companion paper "Ranger." Hedley Scott, who "did his bit" in the Great War, has figured in many a stern tussle "up above the clouds," and is second to none when it comes to writing real-life flying yarns. Sample this week's story in the "Ranger" and see what you think of it!

HAD YOUR HOLIDAYS YET?

No? Then look out for the MAGNET representatives at the seaside when you do. Messrs. Cadbury Bros., of Bournville, have contributed a quarter of a million bars of Dairy Milk Chocolate for the consumption of readers buying their MAGNET from beach sellers, kiosks, and other such places at most of our popular seaside resorts. In addition, Cadbury Bros. are giving pound boxes of their delicious assorted chocolates as prizes at our Concert Party, Cinema and Gala Competitions. Be sure, then, and watch for the MAGNET representatives!

By the way, our aeroplane offer has caught on as I fully expected it would. If you have not already done so start collecting the necessary three coupons now. These Rigby "Super" model aeroplanes are going to be all the rage this summer. Irish readers, too, can participate in this great offer as there is no duty on these topping flying planes.

And now for next week's MAGNET programme. Frank Richards kicks off with:

"BILLY BUNTER'S 'HAT-TRICK'!"

a yarn that you'll enjoy. It's full of fun, and has a rattling fine plot, too. All your favourite characters appear in it, and when you've read it you'll agree with me in saying it's one of the best yarns we've ever published. So don't miss it. There will be another thrill-packed instalment of our great cricket story, a tip-top issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," and an interesting contribution by our cricket wizard "Umpire."

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,325.

BUNTER'S HUNDRED-POUND BOATER!

(Continued from page 24.)

from him what he was doing. Unseen by the quivering fat Owl, he examined the lining inside the hat—and breathed hard and deep as he found nothing there! Moreover, he could see, on close inspection, that this was a quite new hat—not the one he wanted. It was his fifth wrong hat!

He replaced the lining and turned back to Bunter. His eyes glinted unpleasantly at the fat junior.

"Now, look here, young cove," said Mr. Hinks, in a low and very distinct voice. "When I see you 'ere one day last week you was wearing a straw 'at—but it wasn't this 'at! What 'ave you done with that 'at? Threw it away, or what?"

"Eh? That wasn't my hat!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Hinks stared.

"Not your 'at!" he repeated.

"No!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'd borrowed it from another chap!"

"You—you—you'd borrowed that 'at?" gasped Mr. Hinks. Light dawned on him at last!

"Eh? Yes! Why? I—I say——"

"Keep where you are!" snarled Mr. Hinks, as Bunter made a movement to rise, and the fat junior shrank back in terror. There was no doubt in his fat mind now that the man was mad. Not only did he bag hat after hat from Bunter—but he was inquisitive on the subject of hats that Bunter had worn on previous occasions! Bunter's hats seemed an obsession with him!

Mr. Hinks stood staring at him. He realised now why he had not had any luck after capturing so many hats from Bunter. He had begun to suspect that Bunter must have had some accident with the original hat, and perhaps thrown it away damaged. But now he understood.

"You—you'd borrowed that 'at?" he repeated. "Borrowed it from another cove at your school, I dessay?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"And you've give it back to 'im?"

"Eh? Of course."

"And what might his name be?"

Mr. Hinks eyed Bunter furtively as he asked that question. He was very anxious not to betray the nature of his interest in that hat. At the same time, he had to know to whom it belonged—if he was to have a chance at Mr. Vernon-Smith's hundred-pound note!

"Eh? His name's Mauleverer——" gasped Bunter.

"One of them coves——"

"Oh! No! Another chap—Lord Mauleverer—a fellow in my Form at Greyfriars——"

"Mauleverer!" repeated Mr. Hinks. He remembered that there had been a name in the straw hat when he packed the banknote under the lining; but in his haste and hurry at the time he had not noticed what it was—not being interested in the matter. Naturally it had never occurred to his mind that the "fat cove" was wearing another fellow's hat!

"I—I say——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sudden roar.

Mr. Hinks jumped.

Five fellows came under the oaks from the footpath. They had come back for Bunter—and found Mr. Hinks!

"Collar him!"

"Here he is!"

"Bag him!"

"Blow me pink!" gasped Harold Hinks, struggling wildly in the grasp of the Famous Five. "Oh, my eye! Whooooop!"

Bump!

Mr. Hinks went down in the grass, hard and heavy. He struggled and gurgled there in the grasp of the triumphant juniors.

"Got him!" panted Bob.

"I say, you fellows," Billy Bunter scrambled up. "Hold him! Sit on him! Stand on him! Keep him safe. He's mad. I say, you fellows, he's raving! Mad as a hatter. I say, he's been asking me about other fellows' hats—he's mad on hats. Raving mad!"

"Oooogh!" gurgled Mr. Hinks. "Whooooogh! Oh crimes! Let a bloke gerrup—oh, blow me pink and yaller!"

"Now," said Harry Wharton, planting a knee on Mr. Hinks' dingy waistcoat. "Now we've bagged you, you rascal, we want to know what the game is. If you're off your rocker——"

"Raving mad!" gasped Bunter. "Hold him!"

"What have you to say for yourself?" demanded Wharton.

"Urrrrrrrrgggh!" That, apparently, was all that Mr. Hinks had to say for himself.

"He doesn't look mad!" remarked Nugent.

"You silly idjit, I ain't mad!" gasped Mr. Hinks. "Wotcher mean, I'd like to know, blow yer?"

"If you're not potty, what have you been snatching a fellow's hat for?" demanded Wharton.

"Only a lark!" gurgled Mr. Hinks.

"Jest a lark! I was always a larky cove. Gerroff my weskit!"

"I say, you fellows, hold him! Stamp on him! Jump on him!"

"Only a lark," groaned Mr. Hinks. "I won't never do it again. On my davy, I'll never touch the fat cove again! Wow!"

Which was quite true. Mr. Hinks was no longer interested in Billy Bunter's hats. Lord Mauleverer was going to be the object of his attentions henceforth.

"The larkfulness was too terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The duckfulness in the absurd pond would be a harmless and necessary lesson; my ridiculous friends."

"Good egg!" said the Co. with one voice.

"Ere, you let a bloke go!" roared Mr. Hinks, in great alarm.

But the "bloke" was not allowed to go. Had he been some harmless lunatic, the juniors would have treated him kindly enough and walked him off to be taken care of. But they could see now that that was not the case. But if he was not, as they had suspected, "batty," he was a most impudent and unpleasant practical joker so far as they could see—and what he needed was a severe lesson. And what he needed, he was going to have! Wriggling and objecting with great energy, Mr. Hinks was walked away to the pond—and pitched headlong into it.

He splashed and sprawled in water and mud, spluttering.

"That's a tip," said Bob Cherry, "and the best thing you can do is to go on your travels. If we see you again you'll get some more of the same."

"Urrrrrrgh!"

"Take my tip, and travel!"

"Gurrrrrgh! Gug-gug!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked away, satisfied with the outcome of the afternoon's expedition. They had no doubt that that ducking would cure the practical joker of his propensity for larking with fellows' hats! And, indeed, when Mr. Hinks crawled out of the shallow water, he was feeling rather disposed to take Bob Cherry's tip, and travel. It really looked as if he would have to earn that hundred-pound note by the time he got his dishonest fingers on it—if he ever did!

THE END.

(Don't miss the grand sequel to this yarn, chums. It's entitled: "BILLY BUNTER'S 'HAT-TRICK'!" and will appear in next Saturday's MAGNET, which will also contain another Handsome Free Photographure Plate. Be sure and order your copy early!)



MY GREAT OFFER

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2

WEEKLY

XMAS CLUBS

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INCREASED my own height to 6ft. 3 1/2 ins.!! T. H., age 16 1/2, to 6ft. 1 1/2. T. F., age 21, from 5ft. 6 to 5ft. 10! **Ross System** is Genuine. Enrol and Watch Yourself Grow! Fee £2 2s. Particulars 1/2 stamp.—P. ROSS, Height Specialist, Scarborough.

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When Answering Advertisements Please Mention This Paper.

SAVE GOSLING!
William Gosling, School Porter, is critically ill from melancholia, owing to the recent falling-off in the numbers of juniors having to be reported for arriving late for locking-up. Volunteers urgently wanted to turn up after locking-up time and so restore his health and strength!—Particulars from the SAVE GOSLING COMMITTEE, Study No. 1, Remove.

THE NEW
Official Herald
EXTRA GOOD EDITION
July 8th, 1933
EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.
No. 40 (New Series).

LOST!
Brand-new Fifties Push-bike. Last seen yesterday afternoon in bushes next to Bunter's old crock.—Apply: M. VERNON-SMITH, Study No. 4, Remove.

FOUND!
Small Collection of Scrap Iron. May have been a bike at one time. Which I spotted yesterday afternoon, and when he got up and went away, there was the scrap iron underneath where he'd been!—Apply: MIMBLE, Gardener, Potting-shed.

LONZY SMOKE A PIPE

Amazing Scene in Quad

Alonzo Todd, champion chump of Greyfriars, has done many surprising things in the course of his young life—but none more surprising than his achievement one day this week when he calmly strolled out of the School House smoking a pipe!

"Are you potty?" gasped Ogilvy, who was the first to spot him.

"If your suggestion is that I am displaying morbid psychological phenomena, the answer is in the negative, my dear Ogilvy!" was Lonzy's answer. "Frankly, I fail to comprehend the basis for your interrogation."

And the Duffer marched on, puffing away regardless!

It is perhaps unnecessary to tell you that Lonzy soon succeeded in attracting a crowd of hefty dimensions. That wouldn't have mattered much if the crowd hadn't been joined by Mr. Quelch; but when the beak took a hand, things took on a serious aspect. Quelch's glare was positively terrifying.

"Todd!" he boomed. "Todd! How dare you!"

"Good-afternoon, sir!" beamed Lonzy, doffing his cap politely, while he continued to puff clouds of smoke into the air of the quad.

"Conditions are most congenial, meteorologically, are they not, sir?"

"Depraved creature!" ground out Mr. Quelch. "I can scarcely believe my organs of vision! You are actually smoking a pipe!"

"Your asseveration is inhumanly correct, my dear sir!" replied Lonzy, cheerfully. "It is quite a new



habit with me; but my prognosis is that it will benefit me exceedingly. Snoot recommended me to try it!"

"Snoot recommended you to smoke a pipe?" gasped the beak faintly. "Boy!"

"I have never noticed previously any inordinate humanitarianism in Snoot, and it therefore was all the more pleasing to observe such thoughtfulness in him!"

Rattled on Lonzy cheerfully. "He gratuitously presented me with the pipe and smoking mixture. Was it not good of him, sir?"

Mr. Quelch's hair almost stood on end.

"You have the impudence

STRANGE NOISE IN THE NIGHT

Remove Hunt Infernal Machine

Last week a good many Removies saw a thrilling "talkie" called "The Time Bomb," at the Courtfield Cinema, and thoroughly enjoyed the sensational episode in which detectives hunt frantically for an infernal machine which can be heard ticking away in a room in which they have been locked.

This week, "real" life became "real" life, for we had a hunt for an infernal machine ourselves!

It was just after midnight when Bunter emitted a sudden yell that woke up the entire dorm in an instant.

"Yaroooo!" he yelled. "It's a time-bomb like they had on the pictures! Listen to it, you chaps!"

We thought for a moment that Bunter had been dreaming. But a moment later we heard it ourselves—a faint, rhythmic ticking or clicking, just like the noise we had heard at the pictures! Of course, it didn't follow that the noise emanated from an infernal machine. But when Skinner suddenly remarked that he remembered seeing a sinister, evil-faced fellow marked into the School House with a parcel under his arm earlier in the evening, we began to consider it seriously.

Wharton and one or two others were sceptical and declined to join in the hunt; but most of the Removies got out of bed and willingly began to scout around.

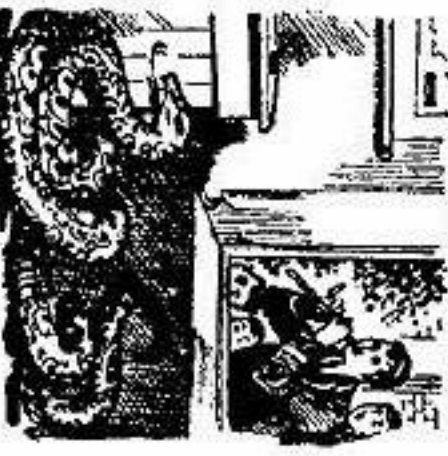
We were soon convinced that all was well in the dorm. But on opening the door, we found the noise was noticeably louder on the landing and louder still on the stairs. Warning to our task, we followed our ears on a ticking trail that eventually led right to Quelch's study. Bolder, who led the expedition, took it for granted that the beak had gone to bed, and flung open the door and rushed in!

The ticking promptly ceased!

It was only Quelch, tapping away at his "History of Greyfriars" on a semi-noisless typewriter.

As for Snoot, who has spent the best part of three days clasping the rear part of his anatomy and performing frenzied hops round his study, the mere mention of the word "pipe" is sufficient to make him hysterical.

But it was a good joke, and if it's any consolation to him, we congratulate him on it!



IN WHISTLE HYPNOTISES SNAKE

MUSICIAN AVERTS FORM-ROOM PANIC

There was a good deal of excitement in the school at the beginning of the week when it was learned that a fifteen-foot python had escaped from a travelling circus passing Greyfriars. Snake-hunts were organised and traps set, but two days passed without any news of the escaped serpent.

On the third day several wild rumours gained currency. One was that the python had been seen at the back of the woodshed. But when Mr. Prout went along and emptied his Winchester repeater into it, it turned out to be merely a coil of hosiery inadvertently left there by the School Fire Brigade from their practice on the previous day! Another rumour was that the snake had been spotted crawling along the Upper Fourth passage, but this proved equally abortive; what had been thought to be the snake was merely Audrey Angel!

Just as afternoon class was finishing in the Removies, however, the genuine python itself turned up, calmly crawling through an open window on to Mickey Dean and's desk.

Demond gave a fearful howl and bolted out of the Form-room for dear life. Bunter and about half a dozen others quickly followed suit, while the rest hurriedly retreated to the opposite wall.

It was an exciting moment.

What to do was a problem. But it was solved by Bob Cherry—in an almost incredible way. Almost before we had reached the Form-room wall, Bob had pulled out a tin-whistle from his pocket. An instant later he was playing a tune which some of us recognised as "Ballet Egyptian."

The effect on the great snake was extraordinary. It coiled slowly down from the desks on to the floor, curled round below Mr. Quelch's rostrum, and then went to sleep! You can bet your life we took prompt advantage of the situation to shut all the windows, clear out of the room, and close the door after us!

Later, the circus hand appeared on the scene, gave the reptile a good feed, and then packed it safely away in a crate prior to driving it back to its circus home.

"But why 'Ballet Egyptian' particularly?" asked one of the fellows afterwards, when we were congratulating Bob on his amazingly successful exercise of presence of mind.

Bob grinned.

"I happened to see this circus myself during the hols, once, and I remembered that that was the tune the snake-chamber played when he sent this particular specimen to sleep!"

Bob really is the snake's lullaby!

AS OTHERS SEE THEM

What I Think of Marjorie Hazeldene

By Audrey Angel

Thought of Marjorie after that can be better imagined than described!

Frankly, the girl beats me. To look at, she's intelligent and friendly and kind. But her curt replies to my intelligent talk about geo-gees convinces me that she's even less intelligent than the average girl, while as to the rest, she's about as friendly as an iceberg, and as kind as a wildcat!

That's what I think of Marjorie Hazeldene!

(The only reason we've printed this scurrilous article is that as it's written by the prize red of the Lower School it will convince most readers that Miss Hazeldene is indeed SWIMMINGLY!



'Lonzy's Little Letters

Dear Editor—While internally perceptive that such advisory activity scarcely appertains to the journalistic functions within your purview, I should be definitely not unappreciative of such supererogatory even-tempered recommendation as you could vouchsafe in respect of the nominative designation of an unexceptionable, if not necessarily pre-eminently, though contemporaneously moderate peculiarly, exponent of the sartorial science to whom I may entrust the manufacture of a pair of nether habiliments.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,

ALONZO TODD.

(What 'Lonzy' means is: Can you recommend a good tailor who'll make him a cheap pair of trousers? Try Chumley's, 'Lonzy' but for goodness' sake don't tell 'em all you've told us, or they'll think you've come in to order a straw waistcoat!—Ed.)

ARE WE CANNIBALS?

Frankly, we shouldn't be at all surprised. Here are the facts:

1. Cook served us up with the worst hot-pot within living memory for dinner to-day.
2. Mr. Quelch has not been seen since morning school.
3. Skinner says that the last time Mr. Quelch was seen, he was in an awful stew!

What else can we think, but that we're cannibals?

But it's all right, you chaps; we've just seen Quelch, so he couldn't have been in that stew after all.

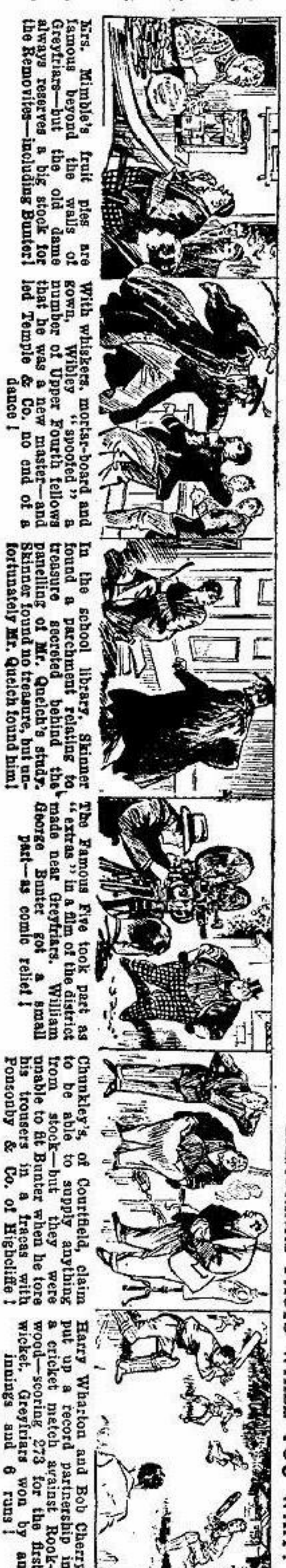
It's breathe again!

Dicky Nugent's Weekly Wisdom

While I was bending over at the gates to stroke old Gosling's black cat, Mr. Prout fell over me and nearly flattened me out, then reported me to Whiggins for "six."

It's supposed to bring good luck to stroke a black cat, but it was a "stroke" of jolly bad luck for me!

Entomology



Advertiser will exchange book on the above subject for an axe, which he needs to chop up his cousin's suggestion to go and enjoy chips.—Apply, ALONZO TODD, Study No. 7, REMOVE.

Mrs. Kibble's fruit pies are famous beyond the walls of gown. Whitley, "spoiled" a number of Upper Fourth fellows always reserves a big stool for that he was a new master—and the Removies—including Bunter! led Temple & Co. no end of a dance!

In the school library, Skinner found a parchment relating to "extras" in a dim of the district treasure secreted behind that made near Greyfriars. William George Bunter got a small part—as comic relief!

The Famous Five took part as "extras" in a film of the district from stock—but they were unable to fit Bunter when he tore his trousers in a tress with Ponsoby & Co. of Higcliffe!