

"THE GREYFRIARS HIKERS!" This Week's Grand Holiday-Adventure Yarn
of HARRY WHARTON & CO.—Inside.

The MAGNET^{2D}



**BUNTER,
THE HIKER!**

THE GREYFRIARS HIKERS!



BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Not Lost, but Gone Before!

"HIKING!" said Billy Bunter scornfully.

"Just hiking!" assented Bob Cherry.

"The hikefulness," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "is an atrociously agreeable way of expending a ridiculous holiday."

Billy Bunter sniffed.

Hiking was not Billy Bunter's idea of a holiday. Hiking meant walking. Walking meant exertion. And exertion in any shape or form had never had any appeal for Bunter.

"Well, I think you're silly asses," he said.

"Then you won't come?" grinned Bob.

"No, I jolly well won't! The fact is, I'm going home with Mauly for the holidays!"

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

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles. Why that simple statement of fact evoked a roar of laughter he could not imagine.

But it did! Harry Wharton & Co. yelled.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter. "I fixed it with Mauleverer—I mean, Mauly fixed it with me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" hooted Bunter. "Look here, I didn't come along to hear you cackle! I'm looking for Mauly! Where's Mauly?"

It was break-up day at Greyfriars School. Some of the fellows were already gone. Others were going. Harry Wharton & Co. had walked down to the school gates to see Lord Mauleverer off in his car.

They were walking back to the House

when they met Billy Bunter in the quad. They were discussing their hiking plans for the summer holidays, when Bunter butted in. And, as Mauly had arranged to join up, in a few days, for the hike, they found something rather amusing in Bunter's statement that he was going with Mauly for the holidays.

"Have you seen Mauly?" asked Bunter impatiently. "I've been looking for him everywhere. Toddy asked me if I'd looked in the dorm; and I looked there, but Mauly wasn't there! Skinner said he'd seen him in the Cloisters; and I looked in the Cloisters, but he wasn't there, either! The silly ass seems to have disappeared somehow."

"Oh where, and oh where can he be?" sang Frank Nugent.

"The wherefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Sure you won't come hiking, Bunter?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Quite! I wouldn't be found dead hiking!" answered Bunter. "When you're fagging along in the sun and the dust, and being ordered off by farmers, or run in as tramps, you can think of me at Mauleverer Towers, taking it easy! Sorry I can't take you there with me, but a fellow has to be a bit particular, you know, whom he takes with him when he's going to stay with a lord."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," roared Bunter.

"Where's Mauly?"

"Puzzle—find Mauly!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" snorted Bunter.

And he left the Famous Five chortling, and rolled away in search of the elusive Mauleverer.

His lordship certainly seemed to have disappeared, which was not really remarkable, as he was sitting in a car that was doing sixty, and was already ten or twelve miles from Greyfriars.

Unaware of that rather important fact, the fat Owl of the Remove hunted up and down and round about for Lord Mauleverer.

"I say, you fellows, seen Mauly?" he squeaked, as he came on Skinner and Snoop.

"Didn't you find him in the Cloisters?" asked Skinner.

"No!" grunted Bunter.

"Well, I saw him there! Look again!"

"He's not there, you ass! When did you see him there?" demanded Bunter.

"The day before yesterday!" answered Skinner.

"The—the—the day before yesterday!" gasped Bunter. "Why, you silly ass—you howling chump—you blithering fathead—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner and Snoop.

Bunter rolled on. Coker and Potter and Greene, of the Fifth, were coming away from the House. Bunter called to them:

"I say, you fellows, seen Mauleverer of my Form?"

Coker looked at him. Coker of the Fifth was not a man to be squeaked at by a fag in the quadrangle. Bunter, in his hurry to find the missing Mauly, had forgotten what a great man Coker was.

"Did you speak to me?" asked Coker.

"Eh? Yes! Seen Mauly?"

"The cheek of these fags," said Coker to his friends, "is the absolute limit! What?"

"Kick him!" suggested Potter.

"Just what I'm going to do," answered Coker.

And he did.

Billy Bunter did not stop to ask any more questions of Coker & Co. He squealed and fled.

"I say, Redwing, seen Mauly?"

"No!"

"Beast! I say, Squiff, seen Mauly?"

"Lots of times," answered Squiff of the Remove.

"I mean, have you seen him lately?"

"Late last night, in the dorm."

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Do you know where he is now?"

"No!" grinned Squiff.

"Beast!"

Up and down and round about rolled Bunter, in search of Mauly.

Harry Wharton & Co. came out of the House again, and Bob Cherry bawled:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Found Mauly yet, Bunter?"

"No!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, do you know where he is? Has his car come yet? He's going in a car—I mean, we're going in a car! Look here, help me to find Mauly, and I'll give you a lift in his car to Courtfield Station."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"I'm afraid we should lose our train if we waited for Mauly's car," he answered, and the Famous Five walked on, laughing.

"Beasts!"

Bunter rolled into the House! Every fellow he asked about Mauly seemed to take his inquiry as a joke. Bunter was very anxious to find Mauly, but it was clear that Mauly was not anxious to be found. He blinked into Study No. 12 in the Remove, but it was vacant. He blinked into the other studies—they were all deserted by this time. He drew the passages and the lobbies blank, and rolled out into the quad again.

A dreadful suspicion was in his mind now, that Mauleverer might have forgotten him, and gone off without him. He might not have remembered Bunter, or he might have remembered not to remember him!

The fat Owl blinked round for the Famous Five, but they were gone. Everybody was going or gone, and Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, looking from his study window, stared at Bunter, as if surprised to see him still there!

Bunter rolled down to the gates at last, to ask Gosling. The porter would know whether Mauly had gone, at any rate.

Gosling had an unaccustomed amiable expression on his crusty face. On the last day of term there were tips about. When he sighted Bunter, however, he merely grunted—he did not expect a tip from Bunter.

To his surprise, the fat junior, instead of ignoring his existence, rolled directly up to him. Upon which Gosling summoned up his most amiable expression. If Bunter was going to hand out a tip, Gosling was not the man to discourage him.

"Pleasant journey, Master Bunter, sir," said Gosling.

"Oh! Yes! Seen Mauleverer?"

Bunter's fat hand did not go to his pocket. The amiable expression faded once more from Gosling's face. It was not a tip.

"His lordship's gorn!" grunted Gosling.

"Gone!" yelled Bunter.

"Gorn!" said Gosling.

"Oh crikey! How long ago?"

"About a howr!"

"An hour! Oh! The beast!" gasped Bunter.

"He left a note for you, sir!" added Gosling, groping in a pocket. "Left it with me to give you, his lordship did! And 'ere it is."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter, a little relieved.

Mauleverer, after all, had not forgotten him.

He took the note and rolled away with it, followed by an emphatic grunt from Gosling. He opened the note and read:

"Dear Bunter,—As you weren't about, I'm leaving this for you. I'm joining Wharton and the other fellows next Wednesday for the hike. If you're keen on it, turn up at the Wheatsheaf at Cowgate, in Surrey, on Wednesday."

"M."

Billy Bunter blinked at that note. Mauly was gone—fifty or sixty miles away by that time. And he was joining the other beasts for a hike—and if Bunter was going to spend the holidays with Mauly, he had to hike, too! The feelings of the fat Owl were too deep for words. This was why those beasts had laughed—he knew now why they had laughed!

"Beasts!" hissed Bunter.

It was hiking for Bunter—or Bunter Court! Home, sweet home, never seemed to have a very strong attraction for Bunter, in spite of the glories of Bunter Court that he often described. But it was home, sweet home, or hiking—and even home, sweet home, seemed better than hiking!

And Billy Bunter, with feelings that could have been expressed in no known language, headed for home, sweet home!

Tramping the peaceful countryside is the ideal holiday—at least, so think Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, until Billy Bunter, the "porpoise" of the Remove, throws in his lot with the hikers! Then TROUBLE starts!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

"HIGHCLIFFE cads!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton glanced round.

There was a crowd on the platform at Courtfield Station.

Highcliffe School broke up for the summer holidays on the same day as Greyfriars School, so there were naturally a good many Highcliffians about. Johnny's inimical glance was fixed on three very elegant youths belonging to Highcliffe—Ponsonby and Gadsby and Monson, of the Fourth Form at that school.

Pon & Co. came lounging along the platform, glancing at the Famous Five with the supercilious air they adopted when they desired to make themselves disagreeable—which was fairly often.

"What about tipping their hats off?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No rags, last day of term," said Harry.

"I never see Pon's nose without wanting to punch it."

"Well, you punched it the other day, in his study at Highcliffe," said Harry, laughing. "That will last him till next term."

"It still looks a bit ornamental!" grinned Nugent.

"Here's the train."

The Famous Five packed into a carriage. Bob Cherry stood at the door till it started, shouting to fellows on the platform. He noticed that Pon & Co. stepped into the next carriage, but

without giving them any special heed. The train rolled off for Lantham, and the chums of the Remove settled down for the journey.

There were plenty of both Greyfriars and Highcliffe fellows on the train; but at Lantham Junction they began to scatter.

Harry Wharton & Co. were going to their various homes, to meet later for the hike, when Mauly was to join up. But for a considerable distance their way lay together, and the express bore them westward out of Kent into Surrey.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh alighted at Reigate, for Wharton's home, leaving the other three to continue on their way.

As they waved good-bye they observed Ponsonby's face looking out of the train. But the Highcliffe man did not alight, and Wharton and the nabob walked out of the station without giving him any further thought.

Johnny Bull was the next to drop out, and then Nugent; and Bob, whose home was in Dorsetshire, was the last member of the Famous Five to remain on the express.

There were one or two other passengers in the carriage, but they got out, and Bob was left with it to himself.

For a time he looked from the windows and whistled, as the train rolled on; then he remembered that he had a Holiday Annual in his bag, and sorted it out to read.

He grunted as he opened it, and frowned. That Holiday Annual was not in a state in which a careful fellow kept his books. That, however, was not Bob's fault. It had been through Billy Bunter's hands, and grubby finger-marks were all over it. Even worse than that was the fact that a large number of the pages were scorched brown, as if they had been held to a fire.

That reminded Bob of Ponsonby!

Pon had taken that book away from Billy Bunter, a few days ago, and Bob had gone to Highcliffe to reclaim it—incidentally giving Pon a terrific thrashing.

So far as Bob could see, Pon had "snooped" that book from Bunter, out of sheer Highcliffe impudence. But why he had scorched the pages, while it was in his possession, was an utter mystery. There seemed no sense in such an act, so far as Bob could see.

He would not have been surprised had Pon thrown it into the fire, as it belonged to a fellow he disliked. But he could not begin to guess why he had scorched the leaves. The only reason for holding paper to the fire that Bob knew of was to bring to light writing in invisible ink. But Pon could hardly have been looking for anything of that kind in a book that Bob had bought at the newsagent's in Courtfield.

It was a puzzle—but a very irritating puzzle. Bob, naturally, did not like getting his Holiday Annual back in such a state.

However, he settled down to read it. The train stopped again at a station, and the door of his carriage opened. Three fellows came in and sat down, one of them slamming the door quickly, as if to keep others from entering.

Bob glanced at them over the top of his book. He knitted his brows at the sight of Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson.

His ruddy, cheery face grew grim.

Obviously, the three had intentionally changed into that carriage, after seeing

all his friends leave it at earlier stations.

That meant trouble! It was certainly not for the pleasure of his society that Pon & Co. had come in.

When the train had started again the three moved along, to sit in a row facing Bob. Ponsonby passed his hand lightly over his nose, which still showed signs of having been punched. Pon had not forgotten that punch.

Bob affected to take no notice of the three—he was really not keen to begin a row on his way home for the holidays; but he was not reading now, and he was very much on the alert.

To his surprise, Cecil Ponsonby addressed him in quite a civil tone:

"That you, Cherry? Goin' our way, it seems."

Bob looked up.

"Seems so," he answered dryly.

As a matter of fact, Bob Cherry did not believe that his way home was Pon & Co.'s way; it looked to him as if the three Highcliffians had gone out of their way to follow him.

"Is that the Holiday Annual that we had a row about?" asked Pon, with a smile.

"This is it."

"Bit damaged, isn't it?"

"Yes, rather."

"Well, look here," said Ponsonby, "it was rather rotten to damage your book while I had it. I'm willin' to pay for it."

"That's all right," said Bob. "I don't want you to pay for it."

"I mean, I'll hand over the tin, and you can get a fresh copy," said Ponsonby. "Let me have that—I'm going hiking these hols, as it happens, and I dare say it would get damaged a bit on the road, as I should take it with me."

"As it happens, I'm going hiking, and I'm going to take it with me," answered Bob. "As you say, it might get a bit damaged knocking about; so this copy will do as well as a new one."

Pon & Co. exchanged a glance, and Gadsby and Monson grinned a little. Bob felt like grinning, too; but he suppressed the grin. For some mysterious reason—utterly mysterious to Bob—Pon wanted that particular copy of the Holiday Annual, and no other would do.

That was the meaning of his kind offer to buy a new one for the one he had damaged.

There was a pause. Pon, apparently, wanted to get hold of that book by peaceful persuasion, if he could. But Bob had dropped his eyes to the pages again, as if finished with the conversation.

He did not find it easy to be civil to a fellow he both disliked and despised; and, at the same time, he did not want trouble unless Pon insisted on it. But he hardly expected that matter to end there—and it did not!

Ponsonby started again.

"Look here, Cherry, I want that book!" he said at last, coming out into the open, as it were.

"I know you do!" answered Bob coolly. "But it happens to be my book, and you're not going to have it!"

"I've made you a fair offer of a new copy for it. Why the deuce can't you let me have that damaged copy, when you can get a new one at the bookstall at the next station?" demanded Ponsonby.

"Why can't you get the new one yourself, if you want one?" retorted Bob.

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"I happen to want that one."

"Well, why?" demanded Bob, looking Pon full in the face, over the top of the disputed Annual. "What's your reason? You bagged this book from Bunter, by force, like a cheeky bully. You tried to keep it when I came over to Highcliffe to get it back. You put up a fight to keep what did not belong to you. Now you've followed me on my way home, to try to get hold of it once more. If you're not potty, what's your game?"

"I want that book!" said Pon.

"What is there about this special copy? You've got some reason, and you're up to something. It's something shady and fishy, or it wouldn't be you. But what is it?"

"Find out!" snapped Ponsonby.

"Well, until I find out, I'm keeping my book," said Bob. "I can't understand what your game is, but you're up to something. Anyhow, I wouldn't sell it to you. I don't want to have anything to do with you at all."

"Will you take a quid for it?" asked Ponsonby, unheeding.

"A quid—for a book that can be bought new for five shillings!"

"Yes."

"Well, my hat! This is getting mysteriouser and mysteriouser," grinned Bob. "You're keen on getting this jolly old Annual, that's plain. Make it five quids."

Pon paused a moment.

"Very well; I'll make it five quids," he said. "I've got a fiver in my pocket, and I'll give it to you for that book."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Hard Knocks!

BOB CHERRY stared blankly at the dandy of Highcliffe.

Pon was speaking seriously, Bob could see that; but it was difficult for him to believe that the Highcliffe fellow was in earnest.

"My hat!" murmured Gadsby.

"That's goin' rather strong, Pon."

"Jolly strong!" murmured Monson.

Ponsonby did not heed the remarks of his friends. His eyes were fixed on Bob Cherry with unmistakable eagerness.

Bob, after an amazed stare at him, looked at the Holiday Annual on his knees. He turned over the pages and looked at them. What was the mystery of that Holiday Annual? It had been out of his hands on the day that Billy Bunter had borrowed it, till the following day, when he had got it back from Pon. What had happened to it, in the meantime, to enhance its value—in Pon's eyes, to such an amazing extent?

So far as Bob could see—nothing! It was, in fact, damaged, and reduced in value. Yet Pon was prepared to give him a five-pound note for it.

He would almost have fancied that Pon was wandering in his mind. But it was clear that Gadsby and Monson were in the same game, whatever it was, and all three of them could not have been wandering in their minds at once. There was some secret in that Holiday Annual—something that made Pon desperately anxious to get it into his hands. But, for the life of him, Bob could not guess what it was.

Pon took out an elegant notecase, and extracted therefrom a five-pound note—a holiday tip he had received from a relative.

"There you are!" he said.

Bob Cherry gave a snort.

"Don't be a silly ass!" he said. "Do you think I'd take your rotten money?"

If I were going to let you have the book, I should let you have it at the right price. I was only pulling your leg."

"Will you take this fiver for that Holiday Annual?"

"No; I won't!"

Ponsonby replaced the banknote in the notecase, and the notecase in his pocket. His face was growing hard, and his eyes glinting.

"You mean that you won't let me have that book on any terms?" he asked.

"I mean exactly that!" answered Bob. "I'll have nothing to do with you, Ponsonby. And the more you say, the less I'll let you have my book! I can't make you out. But there's something jolly fishy about this."

"Suppose you tell him, Pon?" suggested Gadsby.

"Shut up, you ass!" said Ponsonby fiercely.

"What is there to tell?" grinned Bob.

"What happened to this jolly old Annual, while it was out of my hands, to make Pon think it's worth five pounds?" He chuckled. "Anyhow, if it's worth a fiver to Pon, it's worth a fiver to me, I suppose, and I'm keeping it."

"I fancy he knows," said Gadsby, with a suspicious look at Bob. "Bunter may have told him somethin'—"

"Shut up, you fool!" roared Ponsonby.

"Are you goin' to give the game away to that Greyfriars cad?"

"Oh, have it your own way!" said Gadsby sulkily. "But if he knows—"

"Shut up!"

Gadsby grunted angrily, and shut up.

If Bob had been amazed before, he was astounded now. According to Gadsby's words, Bunter could have told him something, to account for Pon's keenness to get hold of that Holiday Annual. If so, Bunter himself was unaware of it, for Bunter certainly did not know why Pon wanted the book.

"I'll ask Bunter about it when I see him again," said Bob. "Anything more to tell me? Might give a fellow a tip."

Ponsonby looked at his watch.

"This train doesn't stop again for a quarter of an hour," he said. "We're three to one, Cherry, and we've got you alone here. I'm willin' to do the fair thing, if you'll sell the book—"

"I won't!"

"Then we shall take it!"

"That's why you butted into my carriage, is it?" asked Bob. "Robbery on the railway, by gum! Do you want me to call a policeman at the next station, and give you in charge?"

Gadsby and Monson exchanged uneasy glances.

Pon gave them a scornful look.

"Don't be soft asses," he said. "That's gas! Nobody's likely to believe that three fellows like us pinched a book worth a few shillins."

How's the cad goin' to prove that it was his book at all? Anybody might have a Holiday Annual to read in the train!"

"My name's written in it," remarked Bob.

"And how long would it take me to tear out the title page?" sneered Ponsonby. "Kick up a row at the station, if you like, and all three of us will swear that it's my book."

"Do you belong to Highcliffe, or Borstal?" inquired Bob. "Perhaps you've put your name down for Borstal, when you're sacked from Highcliffe."

Pon rose to his feet.

"Will you hand over that book?"

"Bow-wow!"

"Buck up, you fellows!" shouted Pon; and he flung himself at the Greyfriars junior, with clenched hands and gleaming eyes.

Bob was on his feet in a twinkling. Three to one was long odds; but the champion fighting man of the Greyfriars Remove was not daunted. It was quality against quantity, so to speak, and Pon & Co. were not the fellows for a desperate fight to a finish.

Bob grasped the Holiday Annual with both hands as he jumped up, and brought it down with a crash on Pon's head as he came jumping to the attack. There was a crunch as Pon's handsome silk hat crumpled up under the smite, and Pon gave a yell and sat down on the floor.

Gadsby and Monson stumbled over him, clutching at Bob. The Greyfriars junior tossed the book on the seat, and his hands flew up.

He met Gadsby and Monson with left and right.

volume in the corner of the seat. He was ready for the tussle to go on.

Pon & Co. scrambled up, dusty and dishevelled, panting and gasping. Three to one, they had not expected the combat to run on these lines. They gathered on the other side of the carriage, while the train roared on. Bob watched them coolly, his hands up and ready. Pon's hat, looking more like a concertina than a hat, lay on the floor between the opposing parties.

"Want any more?" asked Bob cheerfully. "We keep it on tap in the Remove, you know. Lots more if you want it."

"Get hold of him!" hissed Ponsonby.

"Look here—" mumbled Monson.

"I believe I'm goin' to have a black eye!" moaned Gadsby.

you won't have a little more while you're on the job?"

"Oh, go an' eat coke!" Gaddy and Monson picked Ponsonby up. They sat him on a seat, where he gasped and mumbled. Pon was as fed-up as his comrades, and evidently had no intention of renewing the combat.

The train roared into a station and stopped. Gaddy grasped the door-handle.

"Let's get out of this!" he gasped. He threw the door open, and jumped out, promptly followed by Monson. Ponsonby gave Bob one bitter, savage look, and jumped out after his comrades. Bob Cherry chuckled.

As the train rolled on out of the station, leaving the three Highcliffians standing in a dusty, untidy, disconsolate group on the platform, Bob leaned from



Gadsby and Monson were scrambling to the attack when Ponsonby, hurled with all Bob Cherry's strength, crashed into them, and knocked them backwards again. The three rolled on the floor together. Bob, breathing hard, but quite cool, waited for the Highcliffians to rise!

Gadsby got the right in his eye, and Monson got the left under his chin. Both of them went spinning back, and collapsed on the seat they had left, yelling and spluttering.

Pon, sprawling on the floor, grasped at Bob's legs, to drag him down.

"Collar him!" he yelled.

But Gadsby and Monson were out of it for the moment. And Bob stooped down and seized Pon by his collar.

With a swing of his powerful arm he heaved the dandy of Highcliffe to his feet, Pon sagging in his grasp like a sack.

Gadsby and Monson were scrambling to the attack when Ponsonby, hurled with all Bob's strength, crashed into them, and knocked them backwards again.

The three rolled on the floor together. Bob Cherry, breathing hard, but quite cool, stood with his back against the door of the carriage, the disputed

"Will you back me up, you funks?" yelled Ponsonby, and he tramped across the carriage at Bob Cherry.

The next moment they were fighting. Gadsby and Monson, slowly and unwillingly, followed on. But it was not easy to get at Bob—neither were they keen to get at him. Had Pon kept him occupied long enough, Gaddy and Monson could have scrambled along the seats and joined in. But Pon did not keep Bob busy long. Twenty seconds had not elapsed when a terrific drive landing on Pon's elegant waistcoat sent him spinning backwards, and he crashed to the floor again.

Gadsby and Monson promptly backed off. They did not want any of the same. Very much indeed they did not.

"Oh gad!" gasped Gadsby. "Here, keep off! Keep back, you brute! We're done!" he yelled in alarm, as Bob made a forward movement. "We give you best! Hands off!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "Sure

the window, and waved the Holiday Annual in farewell.

Then, as Pon & Co. disappeared from his sight, he sat down with the book, and proceeded to go through it—not reading it now, but searching it, to discover what was the mysterious secret that Pon & Co. knew, but which he had no idea of. But if the volume had a secret, Bob was unable to spot it, and he was still in the dark when he reached his journey's end, and walked into Cherry Place with the Holiday Annual under his arm.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby Wants to Know!

"T'S queer!" said Harry Wharton. "The queerfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

It was a few days later, and Harry THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,332.

Wharton, after breakfast in the morning, had a letter in his hand.

That letter was written in Bob Cherry's rather sprawling hand, and it gave an account of Bob's adventure in the train home with Ponsonby & Co.

The captain of the Remove and Hurree Singh had read it together, and they agreed that it was "queer."

"What the thump does Ponsonby want that blessed Holiday Annual for so badly?" asked Harry.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shook his dusky head.

"The knowfulness is not great, my esteemed chum," he answered. "But the wantfulness must be terrific!"

Wharton wrinkled his brows in puzzled thought over the letter. The whole thing was a mystery to him, as it was to the other members of the Co.

"Whatever the fellow is up to, he means business," he said. "I should think he'd gone potty, only there are other Highcliffe fellows in the game with him. They can't want the book itself, of course—they could buy one if they wanted one. There's something in it they want—but what?"

The nabob shook his head again. Keen as the dusky junior was, he was quite beaten by the mystery of that Holiday Annual.

"We've all looked in it since Bob got it back from Pon," went on Harry. "There's nothing in it—I mean, no paper, or letter, or anything. Nothing to account for Pon wanting it. Nothing written in it—"

"Unless—" said the nabob thoughtfully.

"Unless what?"

"Some of the esteemed pages were scorched, having been held to a fire," said Hurree Singh. "The whyfulness is not easy to guess, but—"

"Seems to me just potty," said Harry. "Why should Pon have held the pages to the fire? I remember they had a fire in their study the day we went over to Highcliffe for the book—on a blazing hot day. No reason for holding paper to the fire, except to make invisible writing show up—and that's out of the question."

"Not quitefully," said Hurree Singh. "The esteemed and rascally Pon must have had a reason—and that is the only reason. The whyfulness is a terrific mystery. But it appears that Pon fancied that there is something written in that esteemed book in invisible ink, and he wants to know what it is."

"But why?" said Harry blankly. "Only Bunter had the book, and he couldn't have written in it in invisible ink. If he had, he would say so, too. But he doesn't know what Pon's after any more than we do. So far as I know, the book wasn't out of Bunter's hands, till Pon snaffled it from him."

"But it may have been," said the nabob sagely. "It is terrifically plain that that is what Pon thinks; he is after invisible writing in the esteemed book. When there is only one absurd explanation to a ridiculous problem, my

esteemed chum, that explanation must be the right one, even if it seems preposterously improbable."

"Well, yes, but— Even if somebody had got hold of the book and written in it in invisible ink, why should it concern Pon? Why the thump should be bother his head about it?"

"I give that one up," grinned the nabob. "But he has a reason, and a preposterously strong reason. I am atrociously glad that the absurd Bob did not let him have the book."

"Same here," agreed Harry.

Wells, the butler, came into the breakfast-room. The two juniors had lingered there to discuss the letter from Bob, after Colonel Wharton and Aunt Amy had gone.

"The telephone, Master Harry," said Wells. "Master Cherry is asking for you."

"Thanks, Wells. Come on, Inky!"

Wharton put Bob's letter in his pocket, and went to the telephone cabinet, the nabob following him. Both of them were wondering whether the call meant that Bob had seen something more of the Highcliffe fellows at his home in Dorsetshire.

The captain of the Remove took the receiver.

"Hallo! That you, Bob?"

"That you, Harry?" came back a rather husky voice.

"Yes. Not got a cold?"

"Only a bit of a one—nothing to speak of," came the husky voice, which was not recognisable as the powerful, ringing voice of Robert Cherry. "I shall be all right for the hike."

"Oh, good!"

"But, look here! I've forgotten about the meeting-place—"

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated Wharton.

Hurree Singh, standing close enough to the receiver to catch most of what came from the other end, started.

Both the juniors were astonished. Bob's letter, which they had just been reading, wound up with, "Ta-ta till I see you at Cowgate on Wednesday!" So the statement on the telephone that he had forgotten the place of meeting was really amazing.

"I know it's rather fatheaded," went on the husky voice, "but it's gone clean out of my head!"

"Well, you are an ass, old chap," said the astonished captain of the Remove. "You mentioned it in the letter you wrote yesterday. The Wheatsheaf at Cowgate on Wednesday morning, fat-head!"

"Yes, yes, of course. I remember now."

"Don't forget again, old bean—better write it down, if your memory's playing you tricks like that."

"Right-ho! I will."

"Seen anything more of those Highcliffe cads?"

"Eh?"

"That rotter Ponsonby—"

"What?"

"I hope you gave it to them hard in the railway-train. Rather lucky for you that they were a set of measly, sneaking finks, as they were three to one."

"You cheeky cad!"

"What?" yelled Wharton.

There was a whirr on the telephone, as the fellow at the other end rang off sharply. Wharton stared at the instrument blankly. He had never been so astounded in his life.

"Is Bob mad?" he gasped, looking round at the nabob. "Did you hear?"

"The hearfulness was terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin. "Your idiotic leg has been pulled, my worthy chum. It was not the absurd Bob speaking on the phone."

"Wha-a-at?" Wharton gasped. "Not Bob? But—who was it, then?"

"I have a terrific suspicion that it was the excellent and rascally Pon!"

grinned the nabob.

"Pon!" gasped Wharton. "But what—why—"

He realised now that it could not have been Bob speaking. The huskiness of the voice had been assumed to disguise it; and the last remark, it was certain, could not have come from Bob Cherry. Pon, at the other end of the wires, had been involuntarily "drawn" by Wharton's remarks concerning the Highcliffians.

"The esteemed rotter's motive is terrifically clear," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh quietly. "He wanted to find out where we are starting on the absurd hike."

"Oh!" said Harry. "My hat! And he tricked me into telling him! But what the dickens does he want to know for?"

The nabob laughed.

"Because, my esteemed chum, he is still after that absurd Holiday Annual. We shall meet the ridiculous Highcliffians while we are hiking."

Harry Wharton nodded slowly. It was fairly certain that the keen-witted nabob had read correctly the meaning of that spoof call on the phone. Pon could have had no other reason.

"But—but—" said Harry. "Mean to say you think those rotters will be getting after us—"

"It is terrifically certain."

Wharton clenched his hands.

"I hope they do!" he said. "We'll jolly well alter their features a little for them! I'm fed up with Pon and his cheek. But—I think I'll ring up Cherry Place, and make sure—"

A trunk call to Bob's home near Dorchester had to be waited for. But when the voice of Major Cherry came through, all was clear. The major informed Wharton that Bob had gone out early that morning, and had not yet come in, and certainly had not telephoned. That settled the matter.

"So we're going to see Pon & Co. these holes," said Harry. "They're after that blessed Holiday Annual—I know Bob's taking it with him, and Pon may have guessed it. Well, if Pon barges in, he will get something much less amusing than a Holiday Annual."

And when, early on Wednesday morning, Wharton and the nabob started for Cowgate, it was in the full expectation of seeing something of Pon & Co. when the hike began—and with the fixed determination of making Pon & Co. sorry for the meeting.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Looking for Trouble!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

Bob was first at the rendezvous.

An early train had landed him in Surrey, and he had walked to Cowgate, looking very bright and fresh and sunny in his hiking kit.

The Wheatsheaf Inn, with its red tiles and gabled windows, and its half-obscured sign creaking from a branch of a big oak, was the most prominent building in the sleepy little village.

Bob, standing by the horse-trough in front of the inn, looked this way and that way, like Mosses of old, and spotted Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull walking into the village street. His greeting woke most of the echoes of Cowgate.

"Oh, here you are!" said Johnny Bull, coming to a halt, and unslinging his rucksack.

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"Here we are, here we are, here we are again!" sang Bob cheerily. "Wharton and Inky haven't turned up yet. Or Mauly! Mauly will be late, of course. Lots of time, as we're lunching here before we start."

"Or Bunter?" grinned Nugent. "Catch Bunter coming on a hike; we should have to roll him along like a barrel!" chuckled Bob. "I expect Mauly will come in a car, and bring his butler! That's his idea of a hike."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "What about ginger-pop while we wait?" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Johnny, old bean, you're crammed with good ideas!" said Bob. "Ginger-pop's the very thing! We'll sit under the jolly old tree and imbibe, and watch for the other fellows to wander in."

The three juniors sat down on a rustic seat under the big oak, and the plump, ruddy-cheeked waiter brought ginger-beer. There was a whirr of a car in the narrow, winding village street.

"Mauly, ten to one!" grinned Bob. "Didn't I tell you he'd come in a car? We shall have to persuade him not to take the car on the hike."

The three juniors looked towards the car that came grinding down the rugged street. But it was not Mauly in it. It was a rather handsome Austin car, painted green, with a chauffeur at the wheel, and three fellows sitting inside. And the three fellows were Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe.

"Highcliffe cads!" grunted Johnny Bull. "What the dickens are they doing here?"

Bob Cherry picked up an apple from a dish on the table. But he laid it down again.

"No good rowing," he remarked. "Let 'em rip!"

"They can't know we're here," said Frank. "Don't begin a shindy, for goodness' sake, fathead! They haven't even seen us. I hope they're not stopping to lunch at the inn, though."

The green car stopped opposite the inn. Pon & Co., standing up in the open car, were looking towards the inn, and their glances did not fall in the direction of the three fellows sitting under the shady branches of the oak, half-hidden by the trunk. So far, they had not seen the Greyfriars trio. Bob, who was in exuberant spirits—as usual—had thought of finding a little entertainment by dropping that big ripe apple among them; but he refrained.

"That's the show," said Ponsonby. His rather sharp voice came clearly to the juniors under the oak. "That's the Wheatsheaf."

"Are the cads there yet, I wonder?" said Gadsby.

"Well, we're rather early," said Monson. "Are we stoppin' here, Pon, or hangin' about outside the village for them?"

Bob Cherry & Co. exchanged surprised glances. They had supposed that chance had led Pon & Co. in that direction; but those remarks were enlightening.

"Looking for us!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"Well, if they're looking for trouble, we'll give them all they want, and a little over!" said Bob.

"Well," Ponsonby spoke again, "we want to make sure the cads are turnin' up. Might ask the landlord if he's expectin' five or six disreputable tramps to barge in this mornin'."

Gadsby and Monson chuckled.

"This is the place, right enough," went on Ponsonby. "I got it from Wharton on the phone—the fool thought it was that lout Cherry speakin'."

"I wonder—why, there they are!" Pon, glancing round, sighted the three juniors at the table under the oak-tree.

Bob rose to his feet, with a glint in his blue eyes.

"Yes, here we are, Pon!" he called out. "This is the lout Cherry! Are you asking for some more of what you got in the train?"

Ponsonby, standing in the car, extracted an eyeglass from his pocket, screwed it into his eye, and surveyed the Greyfriars three, with a lofty, supercilious, and contemptuous glance.

"Yes, that's the gang!" he said. "I'd know the ragamuffins anywhere! What a crew!"

"What a crew!" repeated Gadsby and Monson, grinning.

The "crew" stepped towards the car. Even the pacific Nugent was looking grim, and Bob's face was red, Johnny's quite savage. The chauffeur looked at them, and then glanced round at the Highcliffians in the car. Pon murmured a few words in his ear, and the man grinned, and nodded.

"You cheeky, cackling popinjay!" said Bob Cherry. "It seems, from what you said, that you've been looking for us. Well, now you've found us. Get out of that car, you worm, and I'll mop up Cowgate with you."

Pon surveyed him through the eyeglass.

"They never wash at Greyfriars, you men," he remarked, "and judgin' by their looks they never wash in the holidays, either. What a crew!"

(Continued on next page.)

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HERE.

"You cheeky ass!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Don't come crowdin' round the car," admonished Ponsonby. "We never give money to tramps. Don't believe in it." "Oh, give 'em tuppence!" said Gadsby. "They look as if they need it."

"Dash it all, make it a tanner!" said Monson. "Look here, you lot, if we give you a tanner apiece, will you spend some of it on soap?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Bob Cherry, with a crimson face, grabbed at the door-handle. His idea was to get hold of the superb Pon, and teach him, by drastic measures, not to be so funny. Pon stooped in the car, and rose again, with a soda syphon in his hands. Before Bob even saw it, he let fly.

Squisssssssh!
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gadsby and Monson, as the soda flew out in a whizzing stream, and landed full in Bob's face.

"Urrrrrghh!" gurgled Bob, as he staggered back, choked and blinded by the sudden stream.

"You rotter!" bawled Johnny Bull, jumping forward. "I'll—ooogh—gurrgh—wurrghh—" The stream from the syphon caught Johnny's face in turn, and he stumbled back and sat down.

The next moment it was turned on Frank Nugent. He jumped back, but the stream caught him as he jumped.

"Oh!" gasped Nugent. "Ow! Urrrrrghh!"

There was a final squeak from the syphon. Pon dropped it to the floor, chuckling. The car shot away.

Bob Cherry, gouging his eyes, jumped forward again, wild with wrath. But the car shot out of reach. He rushed after it, as it whirled up the village street.

Pon & Co. looked back, with grinning faces.

Bob came to a halt, and shook a helpless fist as the car vanished out of Cowgate.

He walked back to his companions at the Wheatsheaf. The waiter, the ostler, and several idlers were staring on, with grinning faces, apparently amused by the occurrence. The Greyfriars fellows had not found it amusing.

"When I see that cad again—" gasped Bob.

"I'll smash him!" gurgled Johnny Bull. "I'll pulverise him! I'll—"

"I'm going to get a wash!" said Nugent.

That, as a matter of fact, was what all three chiefly needed, and they went into the inn to get it.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter, Too!

"WILLIAM!" Billy Bunter suppressed a groan.

When Mr. Bunter addressed his elder son as William it meant that he was displeased with him.

He often addressed him as William! On that glorious August morning most schoolboys on holiday would have been feeling merry and bright.

Bunter was feeling neither.

Home, sweet home had lost its charms—if any!

Bunter Court, and the magnificence thereof, faded, on close inspection, into a detached villa in Surrey. The Bunter wealth, close at hand, diminished into a moderate income, which—to judge by Mr. Bunter's remarks—went chiefly in income-tax! The princely and ducal guests who thronged the stately halls of

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Bunter Court were never seen within the rather jerry-built walls of Bunter Villa!

At Bunter Villa, the Owl of the Remove did not mingle in the throng of the happy and the gay! His titled relatives—if any—did not give him a look in. Even the company of his brother Sammy and his sister Bessie, did not delight him.

Neither of them realised what a splendid brother he was and how proud of him they ought to have been.

Bessie Bunter, in fact, had a weary, dreary way of harping on the subject of a half-crown that Billy owed her. Bunter was absolutely sick of the subject; but Bessie never seemed to tire of it.

Billy was never likely to hear the end of that half-crown—unless he paid it! That resource did not occur to him.

Sammy Bunter seemed to regard it as his chief occupation in life to get the last piece of cake before Billy could get it!

That was greedy, selfish, and unbrotherly.

Mr. Bunter's company was not largely bestowed on the Bunter tribe. They did not, in point of fact, miss it fearfully; indeed, the brightest moment in the day was when the front door slammed after Mr. Bunter!

Of late Mr. Bunter had not been cheerful.

His family gathered from his conversation at the breakfast table that he had been a "bear."

Mr. Bunter was a stockbroker, and he was by turns a bull, a bear, and a stag—fearsome animals that haunt the purlieus of Throgmorton Street.

On the Stock Exchange you may make huge fortunes by being a bull or a bear at the right moment. Unluckily nobody seems able to spot the right moment.

Mr. Bunter had been a "bull" of gilt-edged; that is, he had bought Government stocks for a rise. They had gone down. So he had changed his tactics, and became a bear of rubbers—that is, he had sold rubber shares for a fall, to buy them back and net a profit when they tumbled to lower prices. Instead of which they had risen!

This sort of thing was disconcerting to a bull or a bear! Differences had to be met; instead of profits, there were losses!

Having been an unlucky "bear" on the stock markets, Mr. Bunter had become rather a bear under the family roof-tree. He was, indeed, like a bear with a sore head.

Hence the sharp, staccato tone in which he addressed his elder son as "William!"

Apparently, Mr. Bunter was going to have a heart-to-heart talk with William before he started for the City that morning. Bunter could have done without it without feeling the loss.

"William!" repeated Mr. Bunter. "You have now been at home a week—more than a week!"

"It seems longer than that!" sighed Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I mean, have I really been home a week?" said Bunter hastily. "How—how time flies!"

"You have quarrelled incessantly with your brother Samuel—"

"You mean Sammy has quarrelled with me—"

"I mean nothing of the sort! You have had endless disputes with your sister Bessie—"

"You mean, that Bessie always rows with me—"

"I do not!"

"Oh!" said Bunter.

He sighed! It was hard to be misunderstood at home, just as he was at school; blamed, when it was obvious to Bunter, at least, that there had never been a more blameless fellow in the wide world.

"You have caused continual trouble with the cook—"

"If she says I had that pie—"

"You informed me, William, that you were passing the holidays with your schoolboy friend, Lord Mauleverer. I paid the sum of £2 15s. 9d. at the school outfitters, in order that you might do your friend credit at his expensive home. Yet," said Mr. Bunter, "you are here!"

Bunter blinked at him! He could not deny it! He was there!

"I forwarded to you at the school," went on Mr. Bunter, in a deeper voice, "the sum of ten shillings, in order that you might have money in your pocket while passing the holidays with your schoolboy friend. What has become of this sum?"

Bunter did not answer. He could not at the moment remember whether that ten shillings had gone on jam-tarts or doughnuts.

"I require an explanation!" said Mr. Bunter firmly. "Why are you not passing the holidays with this schoolboy friend, as I was led to believe?"

"You—you see—" stammered Bunter.

"On the other hand, I do not see!" snapped Mr. Bunter.

"The beast—"

"What—who—"

"I mean Mauly," groaned Bunter.

"It turned out that he was going on a hike—walking tour, you know—hoofing it—and—and, of course, I couldn't take that on!"

"Why not?"

"Eh!" Bunter blinked at his parent.

"Walking!" he repeated, as if that explained everything. "Walking, you know! Slogging about on foot!"

"Laziness," said Mr. Bunter, "is your incurable weakness, William. Hiking is just the thing for you."

"Oh lor!"

"Healthy, manly, sturdy, hygienic, and—cheap!" said Mr. Bunter. "It will make a man of you, William! I am surprised at you! At least, I am shocked at you—extremely displeased, William!"

"You—you see—"

Mr. Bunter rose.

"Is this—this hike, as you call it, now going on?" he asked.

"They're starting to-day from a place called Cowgate, about twenty miles from here," mumbled Bunter.

"Join them!" said Mr. Bunter.

"B-b-but—"

"Lose no time!"

"It's jolly hot weather for walking!" groaned Bunter.

"I trust," said Mr. Bunter, "that you will enjoy your holidays with your schoolboy friends, William! I am sure you will! Loafing about in laziness is bad for you—extremely bad! The housekeeping bills have increased to an absolutely alarming extent since you have been home. William, you are fat and lazy! I am delighted to hear that you are going hiking! It is a splendid thing—exactly the thing for you! Start this morning."

"Oh crickey!"

"As I shall not see you when I return, William, I will say good-bye now."

"Oh lor!"

"Good-bye, my boy! Enjoy yourself!"

"I—I—I say, I shall want my fare to Cowgate—"

"You may use the ten shillings I sent you for pocket-money!"



Pon stooped in the car, and rose again, with a soda siphon in his hands. Before Bob Cherry even saw it, he let fly. Squissssssh! "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gadsby and Monson, as the soda flew out in a whizzing stream, and landed full in Bob's face. "Urrrrrrgh!" gurgled Bob, staggering back, choked and blinded by the sudden stream.

"Oh crumbs!"

Mr. Bunter rolled away, and the door slammed behind him.

"Oh lor'!" said Bunter.

Home, sweet home had been the only alternative to hiking! Now that alternative was taken away. It was hiking or nothing! Billy Bunter sorted through his pockets for cash. If he was going hiking, he had to get to Cowgate before the fellows started. His available cash consisted of a French penny and a bad halfpenny. These financial resources, it was clear, would not pay his way twenty miles.

But Bunter was a fellow with many resources. On the railway you had to take a ticket before you started; and railways, therefore, were no use to Bunter on the present occasion. In a taxicab, on the other hand, you paid at the end of the journey—or somebody else did! Anyhow, you arrived at your journey's end before the trouble started! That, at least, was so much to the good!

Billy Bunter rang up the cab-rank for a taxi. And when he was sitting in that taxi, rolling away to Cowgate, he could only hope that he would be in time to catch the fellows before they started on the hike, and that they would have enough loose cash about them to settle with the taximan.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Pleased!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton jumped.

So did Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Swinging along cheerily, in light hiking attire, rucksack on back, the two

juniors were within a mile of the village of Cowgate, when a car buzzed on the road behind them, and they stepped to the roadside to let it pass.

Instead of passing, it slowed and stopped.

And as it stopped a fat face looked out, a large pair of spectacles caught the gleam of the August sun, and a fat and familiar voice hailed them.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"The esteemed and ridiculous Bunter!" ejaculated Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Billy Bunter grinned at them from the taxi.

He was pleased by this meeting.

Evidently he was in time to join up before the hikers started, as Wharton and Hurree Singh had not yet reached the rendezvous.

Hiking attracted Bunter no more than before. But it was not a matter of choice now; he had to hike. And as he had to hike, he was glad that he was in time to join the hikers.

"Jolly glad to see you fellows!" said Bunter heartily. "I say, I've missed you a lot since we broke up at Greyfriars."

"Have you?" asked Wharton, rather surprised to hear it.

He had not missed Bunter.

"Fearfully!" said Bunter. "You see, you're such a nice chap, Wharton—"

"Eh?"

"Such a good temper, and such pleasant manners—"

"What?"

"That a fellow misses you terribly," said Bunter, blinking at him.

Wharton gazed at the fat Owl. Why Bunter was laying it on with a trowel like this was past his comprehension.

It had not occurred to him, so far, that Bunter wanted somebody to pay the taximan at Cowgate.

"Same with you, Inky," said Bunter. "I hardly know how I've got through the time since I left you, old chap."

"The esteemed Bunter is a terrific flatterer," said the nabob solemnly.

"Not at all, old fellow! I say, hop in!" said Bunter. "Lots of room! You're going to Cowgate, of course—it's right ahead. I'll give you a lift."

"We're going to hike—"

"You're not hiking yet. May as well start fresh," urged Bunter. "We want to be fresh, you know, when we start the hike."

"We?" repeated Wharton. "Are you coming, after all, then?"

"You didn't think I'd let you down, did you?" said Bunter reproachfully. "Hardly! I've had a pressing invitation from Smithy—he wanted me to go on his father's yacht with him, but I said it couldn't be done."

"You mean Smithy couldn't be done?" queried Wharton.

"No," roared Bunter, "I don't! Look here, you beast—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"All serene, old fat bean! Roll on, and tell them at the Wheatsheaf that we're coming on."

"Oh, rot!" said Bunter. "Hop in, I say! Dash it all, I haven't seen you for a long time, old chap. I've turned down a lot of things to join in this hike. Only this morning the pater asked me if I'd care for a run to Norway in his—his steam-yacht. 'No,' I said, 'Maully expects me, and I'm sticking to Maully—and my other pals.' My very words!"

"My dear old fat bean, turn that taxi round and rush back," advised Wharton. "Hiking is all right; but a yachting trip to Norway—"

"I don't care much for it!" said Bunter carelessly. "A fellow gets fed-up on expensive things, grandeur, and all that! We've been keeping it up at Bunter Court—thongs of people, no end of nobs, you know—one of the princes yesterday. Of course, it's all right, but a fellow gets tired of it—it makes a fellow sort of long for the simple life—simple pleasures and all that. Hop in—I'm taking you as far as Cowgate. I simply won't take no for an answer. Now get in!"

Bunter threw open the door of the taxi.

Harry Wharton and the nabob exchanged a glance and a grin, and stepped in. The taxicab ran on again towards Cowgate.

"Fine to be together again, what?" said Bunter, beaming.

He felt that the taxi fare was safe now.

"Oh, fine!" said Wharton gravely.

"The fineness is terrific!"

"I suppose we shall lunch at Cowgate before we start?" asked Bunter, with a touch of anxiety.

"I think that's the arrangement."

"Good! Might do a mile after lunch, before we camp," said Bunter.

"A whatter?"

"A mile. No good slacking, you know," said Bunter. "If we hike, we hike! Let's do a mile a day."

"We shall be doing a good many miles a day, I hope," said Harry, laughing. "If you think you'll get fed-up—"

"Oh, not at all! After all, I'm the best walker in the Remove, you know. I expect I shall walk your legs off," said Bunter calmly. "I say, you fellows, I've seen in the paper that those two chaps have gone to chokey."

"What two chaps?"

"Those smash-and-grab men at Courtfield. You remember the smash-and-grab raid a few days before the vac. They bagged a bagful of jewellery from old Lazarus' shop."

"Oh, I remember!" said Harry, with a nod. "Micky the Sprat and Skid Smith—I remember seeing it in the paper."

"They never got the stuff back," said Bunter. "I say, there's a stack of jewellery and stuff parked somewhere near Courtfield. The smash-and-grab man sticks to it that he lost it swimming in the river when he was trying to get away. That's all gammon, you know. He's stuck it somewhere to bag again when he comes out of chokey. He looked jolly sly, I remember. Awfully deep rotter! Why, he took me in!" added Bunter, as a convincing proof of the deep slyness of Micky the Sprat. "Told me he was a hiker, you know, and I thought he was. Got me to take a message to the other beast—only the bobbies nabbed him before I got to Lantham, and I never spoke to him after all."

"And all the time he was a smash-and-grab man, and the police were after him. If I'd known it at the time, when he spoke to me in the wood, I'd have collared him and marched him to the police station—What are you cackling at? Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!"

The two juniors chuckled. They could not quite see Billy Bunter collaring the smash-and-grab man of Courtfield, and marching him to the police station!

A green car came whizzing from the village ahead, passing the taxi at a great rate.

Harry Wharton glanced at it as it passed, and started a little at the sight of the three well-dressed fellows inside.

"Pon & Co.," he remarked. "They've come through Cowgate. They're on the spot to see us start, Inky."

The nabob nodded, staring curiously after the green Austin as it disappeared along the country road.

"I say, you fellows, was that Pon?" asked Bunter, blinking round through his spectacles. "Cheeky rotter—you remember he grabbed Bob's Holiday Annual away from me on Courtfield Common. I'd have given him a jolly good hiding, only—only—"

"Only he mightn't have let you?" suggested Wharton gravely.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say, have you heard that there's a reward out for that stuff?"

"What stuff?"

"That stuff the smash-and-grab man got away with at Courtfield. They don't believe that he lost it in the river. It says in the paper that the insurance company are offering fifty pounds reward for anyone who finds it. Old Lazarus had his stock insured, it seems, and it's the insurance company that loses the money. I've got an idea."

Bunter paused impressively.

"We're going hiking," he said. "Why not hike round Courtfield and look for that stuff? Fifty pounds ain't to be sneezed at! Jolly good idea, what?"

"Oh, ripping!" said Harry. "But we're going west when we start, and Courtfield is about a hundred miles the other way."

"I think we'd better go that way," said Bunter. "In fact, I think I shall insist on it, Wharton."

"Bow-wow!"

"Look here, you cheeky ass—"

"Hallo! Here we are in Cowgate, and there's the Wheatsheaf! And there's old Bob, and the other fellows."

The taxi stopped outside the Wheatsheaf. Bob Cherry and Nugent and Johnny Bull, newly washed after their encounter with Pon & Co., came up.

Billy Bunter rolled out of the taxi.

"Mauly here yet?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"We shall have to wait for him," said Bunter. "Can't start without Mauly. I'll hop in and phone home."

"There's no telephone here," said Bob.

Bunter did not seem to hear that. He rolled into the Wheatsheaf, and disappeared from sight.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON Co. stood in a cheery group under the big oak in front of the Wheatsheaf.

There was no sign of Mauly yet, but there was plenty of time for his lordship to arrive before lunch. The juniors had plenty to tell one another, and they chatted under the wide-spreading branches of the oak, and refreshed themselves with ginger-pop. Billy Bunter had not been seen since he had rolled into the inn; but his company was not sorely missed—by the juniors, at all events. The taximan seemed to be getting a little anxious about him.

He came over to the Famous Five at last, touching his cap.

"If the car's wanted again, gentlemen—" he said.

"Not that I know of," answered Harry.

"Well, I'd better be getting back, then. The clock's ticking all this time. Where's the young gentleman?"

"Bunter!" roared Bob. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter!"

But answer there came none.

"It's twenty-four and nine," remarked the taximan. "P'raps the waiter would call the young gentleman, if he's forgotten."

The ruddy waiter was coming out with fresh supplies of ginger-beer. Bob asked him to speak to Bunter when he went back into the inn.

"Where has the blithering owl got to?" asked Bob. "He's generally well to the fore when there's ginger-pop going."

Rats For Gussy!

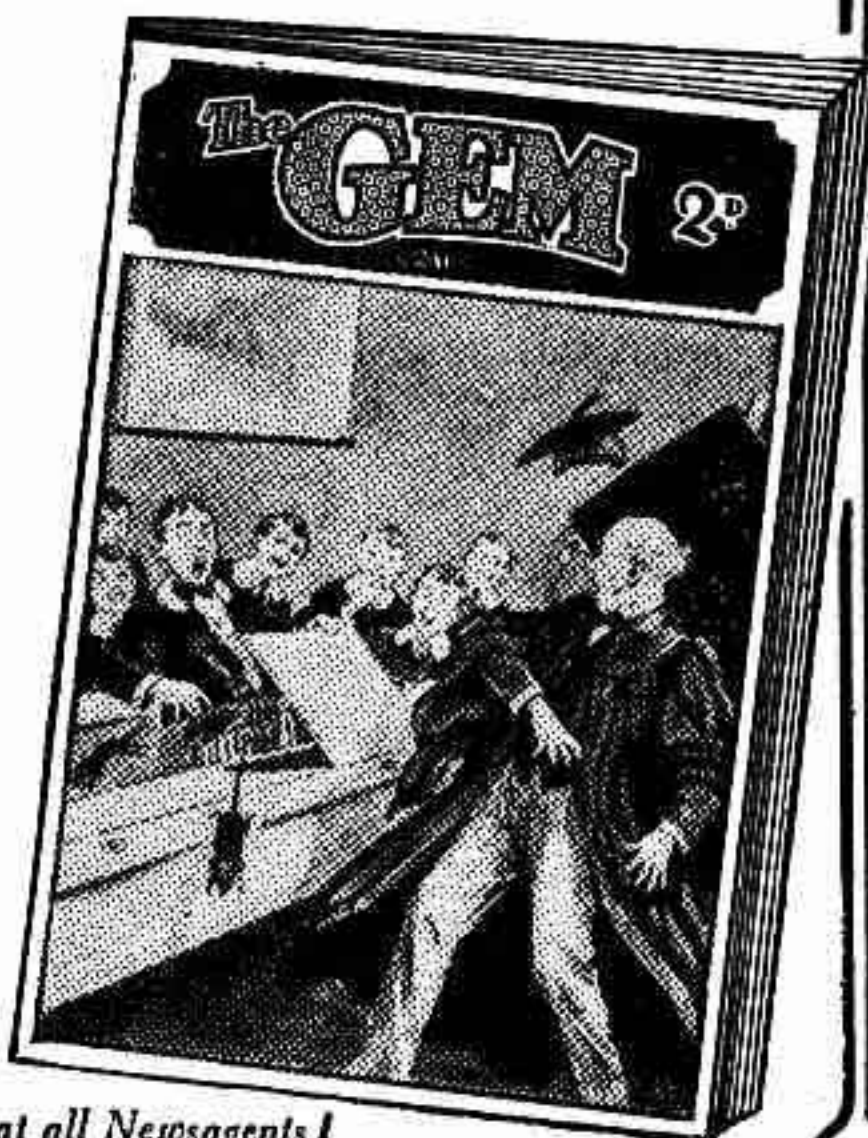
BUT not only rats "depart" from the desk of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. A five-pound note disappears, too! Who's taken it? Suspicion falls on Jack Blake, Gussy's best chum! Read what happens in the ripping, long complete yarn of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, entitled—

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Get yourself a copy of The GEM to-day!

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"Not when there's cab fares to be paid," remarked Johnny Bull dryly.

"Oh, my hat!"

The waiter came back.

"The young gentleman's taking a rest, sir," he explained. "He's sent a message. Will one of you young gents pay the taxi fare?"

"Take a message back," grinned Bob. "Tell him that nobody is going to pay the taxi fare, and that if he doesn't hop out the taximan will come in after him."

The ruddy waiter grinned, and disappeared again. A few minutes later Billy Bunter rolled into view. He looked cross.

"I say, you fellows, it's a bit thick, disturbing a chap when he's taking a rest," he grunted. "Haven't you paid the taxi fare, Wharton?"

"No, you fat brigand!"

"Haven't you, Inky?"

"The answer is in the ridiculous negative."

The taxi-driver began to assume a grim expression. The Famous Five glared at Bunter.

"Pay the man and let him go!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, all right! How much?" asked Bunter.

"Twenty-four and nine."

"You needn't have bothered me about such a trifling amount. But perhaps you haven't a quid or so about you," said Bunter, with a sneer. He ran his hands through his pockets. "Can you change a fiver, my man?"

"No," said the man; "I can't!"

His look indicated that he was going to believe in that fiver when he saw it, and not before.

"Well, look here," said Bunter. "One of you fellows pay the man, will you, and I'll settle when I change a banknote. Give him half-a-crown over."

(Continued on next page.)



Our cricket specialist is never happier than when he's solving knotty cricket problems for "Magnetites." Write

to "UMPIRE," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Then watch out for his reply in this paper.

ALL classes of cricketers—from the man who has played for his country in Test matches to the boy who has just managed to scrape into the second eleven at his school—will soon be looking back on a completed season. How have I fared? That is a natural question, and it is one which every cricketer ought to ask himself at the conclusion of every season.

Has your bowling improved as much as it should have done—as much as you expected it to do? If not, what is the reason? Have you been trying to bowl too fast, or have you been bowling too slowly? And in the batting line how have you fared? I don't suppose for a moment you are satisfied with your average figures. There were certain innings which ended when they should not have ended—when you got fewer runs than you should have done.

I know several first-class batsmen who keep a chart, and from time to time they examine this chart. They will be casting eager eyes over it just now in order to find what lessons the season has for them. The chart shows how they got out in each innings, and, believe me, such a chart occasionally tells some very straight tales. Possibly, my playing readers may not have kept a chart, but at the same time each player can, if he sits down and does a little thinking, make a list of how he has been out during the season. The other day I talked to a man who has been playing for England this season. He showed me his chart.

There were tell-tale figures on it. Seven times, so the chart revealed, he had been caught in the slips this season because he would nibble at that fast ball on the off side before his eye was properly in. "I am not going to do that next season," he said to me, very firmly.

THE WAY TO SUCCEED!

POSSIBLY you have been out many times the same way—nibbling at balls from the bowler which you ought to have left alone. Probably you have been out on several occasions, too, because you made up your mind to "have a dip" before the ball was delivered. Anyway, the point I want to make is this—a self-examination when the

end of the season comes round cannot do any harm. Such an examination ought to be of service for the future. So far as the batsmen are concerned, it's the way the player gets out which matters.

Possibly you may have heard the perfectly true story of Bobby Abel, but even if the story is not new to you, it is worth while recalling it. Abel was one of the greatest of batsmen. In a certain match he made a wonderful score—three hundred and sixty odd—batting for more than a whole day. When the huge innings had ended and Abel had gone off the field, a friend went round to the pavilion to congratulate the batsman on his wonderful knock.

The fine batsman, however, could not be found for quite a time. Eventually he was located in an obscure part of the pavilion premises, in front of a full-length mirror, flourishing his bat this way and that.

"What in the world are you doing?" asked his friend. To this question Bobby Abel replied, with real seriousness: "I am trying to discover how I got out."

Fancy a man who had just made over three hundred and sixty runs standing in front of a mirror with his bat to try to discover how he had managed to get out. Yet obviously that is the way to succeed.

GOOD FIELDING SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED!

IN these days there are many more facilities for winter cricket than there used to be, and I would advise all my young cricket readers who can possibly do so to visit one or other of the cricket schools during the winter. There, under the watchful eye of the experts who run these schools, you can improve your game during the non-playing season and thus prepare to start next season a better player.

Very soon now, with many clubs, the business of handing out the prizes for the season will be carried through. The batsman with the best average and the bowler with the best analysis will be duly rewarded. In connection with this prizes business, the captain of a school's team sends me an interesting query.

"We give batting and bowling prizes," he tells me, "but having noted what you have said during the season about the importance of fielding, I feel that the club ought to give a prize to the best fielder of the side. But how can it be done? How can we decide?"

I am very glad to have such a letter, and very pleased indeed to know that one club is ready to give a prize to the fellow who has fielded best during the season. I am very pleased to hand out an idea, too. I should do it by vote. Give every regular member of the team a slip of paper, and ask him to write on that slip of paper—secretly—the name of the member of the side who, in his opinion, has been the most consistently good fielder. And when the voting papers have all been collected, I should give the fielding prize to the player who received the most votes. Let me add the sincere hope that next season more cricket clubs composed of young players will give a prize to the best fielder, as well as to the best bowler and the best batsman. Good fielding should be encouraged.

WAS THE UMPIRE RIGHT?

A READER in Dublin is worried over a question which puzzles many young players: Can a batsman be out leg before wicket off a ball which turns—that is, a break ball? This reader friend, who bowls break balls, recently made an appeal for leg before against a batsman, but the umpire replied: "Not out!" and further explained that the ball turned when it pitched. So my friend is worried as to whether he ought to have appealed.

This is a point which should be made very clear. A batsman can be out off a ball which breaks one way or the other. Suppose the ball pitches on the off stump and is breaking just so much that it would go on to hit the leg stump. The batsman's legs intervene. He can be given out leg before wicket.

But the batsman cannot properly be given out leg before if the ball does not pitch in a straight line with the wicket. If the ball pitches a couple of inches outside the off stump and then breaks in, the batsman should not be given out leg before wicket if that ball hits his pads.

There are a lot of people who think this leg before rule is wrong, and that the law should be amended so that the batsman can be given out leg before if he stops with his pads any ball which would have hit the wicket, no matter where it pitches. But we are dealing with facts, not with ideas of reform, and according to the present law the ball must be pitched straight—that is, on the wicket—before a batsman can be given out leg before.

"UMPIRE."

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"That's all right," said Johnny Bull grimly. "I can change a five-pound note for you, Bunter."

"If you got five quids about you, Bull, you needn't have disturbed me for this trifle. For goodness' sake, pay the man and let him go!"

Billy Bunter turned away as if that was the finish.

But it was not the finish. Johnny Bull grabbed him by the collar, and jerked him back.

"The man's waiting to be paid," remarked Johnny.

"Ow! Beast! Leggo——"

"Look here, Bunter——" began Wharton.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Bunter. "Do you think I'm going to bilk the man? Give a fellow a chance to get a banknote out of his pocket."

Bunter was given a chance to get a banknote out of his pocket. He went through pocket after pocket; but no banknote came to light.

The fat Owl gave a sudden, dramatic start.

"Oh, my hat!" he exclaimed. "I've left my notecase at home."

"Anything in it?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"All my banknotes," answered Bunter.

"Oh crikey!"

"All my currency notes, too. And I hardly think I've got any change about me," said Bunter thoughtfully. He ran his hands through his pockets again. "Let's see—I have six or seven half-crowns. No. I remember I tipped them to a beggar. Of course, I shouldn't have missed them; but as I've left my notecase at home, it's a bit awkward. What's going to be done?"

Billy Bunter blinked seriously at the Famous Five as he propounded that problem.

"Looks to me as if the taximan is going to be done," remarked Bob. "But I judge by his expression that it will cause something in the nature of trouble."

Bob judged correctly. A truly ferocious expression was growing, and intensifying, on the countenance of the taxi-driver. Perhaps he had met bilks before, and was not pleased to meet one more.

"Twenty-four-and-nine!" said the taximan. "I'm waiting!"

"You will be paid!" said Bunter haughtily.

"You can lay to that!" said the taximan, with emphasis.

"In the circumstances, one of you fellows had better lend me the money," said Bunter. "If not——"

"No if about it!" said Johnny Bull.

"If not, the man will have to wait till Mauly gets here," said Bunter. "Mauly will lend me the money like a shot. Of course, it will come a bit more expensive if he has to wait. Mauly may be late. You know Mauly."

"I'm waiting to be paid," said the taxi-driver. "P'r'aps one of you could tell me whether there's a police station in the village?"

"I say, you fellows——"

"You fat scoundrel——"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I'm not the fellow to make a fuss about sordid trifles, but I must say it's rather thick to ask me to pay for your taxi," said Bunter warmly.

"What?" roared Wharton.

"Not that I'd mind, if I hadn't left my notecase at home. Nothing mean about me, I hope. But as I happen to have left my money behind, I simply can't do it—and that's that! It's up to you and Inky. Dash it all, you came

here in the taxi, didn't you?" demanded Bunter.

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

Harry Wharton looked fixedly at the Owl of the Remove. Then he slid his hand into his pocket.

"Don't be an ass!" said Johnny Bull. "That fat villain's taken a taxi with no money to pay the fare. Let him get run in."

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton turned to the taximan.

"I'll pay," he said. "And I'll make it thirty bob if you'll take that fat slug, and drop it on the road five miles from Cowgate."

The taximan grinned.

"I say, you fellows, wharrer you mean?" roared Bunter. "Think I can walk five miles back here?"

"I jolly well know you can't!" answered Harry. "That's why you're going to be dropped five miles away."

"Why, you—you—you beast——"

"Good egg!" said Johnny Bull heartily. "On those conditions, we'll all stand our whack! Pleased!"

WANTED—

GREYFRIARS LIMERICKS!

A splendid leather pocket-wallet is awarded for every Greyfriars limerick published in the MAGNET.

One of this week's handsome prizes goes to: Julie Ray, 8, Highview, Sutton Waldron, Blandford, Dorset, whose winning effort appears herewith:

Said Inky to Quelch one day:
"I markfully heed all you say.
I'm wantfully yearning
For ludicrous learning,"
Then wondered why Quelch
swooned away.

A pen and paper—a few moments
thought—and YOUR limerick may
catch the judge's eye!

"The pleasefulness will be terrific!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!"

"You silly asses!" howled Bunter, in alarm. "I'm not going in the taxi! I should miss you altogether——"

"That's what we want!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter,

"Hop in!"

"Shan't!"

"You can please yourself about that, of course," said Harry. "But if you don't go in the taxi, Bunter, we don't pay. In fact, you'll have to go in the taxi, anyhow, as the man will want to drive you to a police station to give you in charge for bilking."

"You can lay to that!" said the taximan.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Hop in!"

"If you mean that you don't want my company on this hike——"

"You've got it!"

"But think of Mauly!" urged Bunter. "Think what Mauly will feel like, if he turns up and finds that I'm not here! Think of that!"

"We're thinking of it," assured Wharton. "Quite glad to give Mauly such a pleasant surprise."

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter blinked at face after face. All were adamant. The taximan made a movement towards the unhappy Owl of the Remove.

"Getting in?" he asked.

"No!" gasped Bunter.

"Then I'm going to chuck you in!" said the taximan grimly. "You're going to the nearest police station, you are!"

"Oh, lor'! I—I—I'll get in, if—if you fellows will pay that beast!" groaned Bunter. "I say——"

"Hop in!"

Billy Bunter crawled into the taxicab. He had chanced it once too often.

Harry Wharton closed the door on him.

"Five miles from the village before you drop him," he said.

"Leave it to me, sir!" said the taximan.

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Beast!"

A pound note and a ten shilling note were handed to the taximan. It was, perhaps, worth it, to lose the fascinating society of William George Bunter. The driver took his seat. Bunter's fat face and spectacles blinked from the window.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Good-bye!"

"Lend me half-a-crown, you beasts!" shrieked Bunter. "I shall have to get a train home from somewhere!"

Harry Wharton smiled, and tossed a half-crown into the taxi. Billy Bunter shook a fat fist by way of thanks, and the taxi rolled out of Cowgate with him. Somebody had paid for the taxi, as Bunter had hoped and expected. But the taxi was bearing him away again, as he had neither expected nor hoped. And as the taxi bore him whizzing away, Billy Bunter realised, as he had often sadly realised before, that it was a beastly world, chiefly populated by beasts, and himself almost the only really decent fellow in it!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Happy Meeting!

"H I!" Bunter did not heed that shout.

"Hi!"

The fat junior did not even turn his head.

Bunter was sitting on a grassy bank, under a tree, by the side of a lane, five good miles from the village of Cowgate.

There the taximan, carefully following instructions, had dropped him, and driven off, with a grin on his face—a grin that Billy Bunter could only consider unfeeling, in fact, absolutely heartless.

The taxi and its driver had long since disappeared. Bunter was left on his lonely own, in a solitary countryside, which seemed to have no population but himself, a cow in an adjacent field, and a wandering dog.

Bunter had been sitting on that grassy bank for half an hour, in the lowest of spirits. To rejoin the hikers, he had to cover five miles—which, of course, was out of the question. Even if he survived, they would be gone before he could get back to Cowgate. And he was quite, quite sure that the beasts would leave no clue by which he might follow their trail.

There was no railway station anywhere near Cowgate, as, of course, Wharton jolly well knew when he tipped him the parting half-crown. There was no railway station anywhere near Bunter, for that matter; he had a long, long walk before he could get a train home! Really, it was hard luck—and all because he had landed a taxi-fare of twenty-four shillings and ninepence on the beasts!

Sitting on the grassy bank, Bunter heard a car coming along without heeding it. He heard the car halt, and



The taximan made a movement towards the unhappy Owl of the Remove. "Getting in?" he asked. "No!" gasped Bunter. "Then I'm going to chuck you in!" said the taximan grimly. "You're going to the nearest police station, you are!" "Oh lor!" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows. Yow!"

heard the driver's voice hailing him with a loud "Hi!" still without heeding. Thrice the driver called out "Hi!" and sounded his horn sharply, to draw Bunter's attention, and at last the fat junior blinked round irritably. If some silly ass didn't know his way about, he could hunt for it without bothering Bunter! The Owl of Greyfriars blinked in annoyance at the halted car, and the chauffeur.

It was a very handsome car, with a chauffeur in livery. It looked quite an expensive turn-out. Inside sat a single passenger, leaning back, with a straw hat tilted over his face, apparently dozing. He seemed to take no interest in the circumstance that the chauffeur did not know the way. No doubt he considered that the way would be found sooner or later.

"Here!" called out the chauffeur. "I say!"

"What do you want?" rapped Bunter. "There doesn't seem to be a signpost for miles and miles, sir," said the chauffeur civilly. "I'm looking for a village called Cowgate."

Bunter sat up and took notice.

"Cowgate!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, sir. Know the place?"

Bunter grinned. He detached his fat person from the grass. If he told this lost chauffeur the way to Cowgate, it was going to be on condition that the man gave him a lift there!

"Oh, yes!" he answered. "In fact, I came from Cowgate an hour ago—only I've sent the car home. I was going to walk back. But I dare say you could give me a lift."

The chauffeur eyed him. He was looking for directions, not for passengers. He glanced round at the fellow in the car. But that fellow was still taking life easily, under the shelter of

the straw hat, and did not stir. Then he looked at Bunter again.

"You'd better ask his lordship!" he said at last.

Apparently it was a nobleman in the car.

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter cheerfully.

He rolled across to the car, and blinked at the fellow inside—discerning now that it was a boy, though he could not see his face.

"I say!" squeaked Bunter.

"Oh gad!" came a startled ejaculation under the straw hat.

Bunter jumped! He knew that voice!

"Mauly!" he yelled.

The youth in the car sat up, removing the straw hat. The familiar face of Lord Mauleverer of the Greyfriars Remove looked at Bunter. Billy Bunter's little, round eyes danced behind his big, round spectacles. This was luck!

"Oh gad! Bunter!" said Mauleverer.

"Yes, old chap!" grinned Bunter.

"Jolly glad to see you, Mauly!"

"What are you doin' here, old fat bean?"

"Oh, really, Mauly!" said Bunter reproachfully. "Didn't we fix it up to go hiking together these hols?"

"You're really going hikin'?" Mauleverer did not look overjoyed.

"Yes, rather! I wouldn't let you down, old chap!" said Bunter affectionately. "Did you think I wouldn't come?"

"Yaas!"

"I wouldn't disappoint you, old fellow," said Bunter. "Smithy asked me to go on a trip with him to—Scotland, but I told him it couldn't be done. I told him I couldn't let you down."

"Is there still time for you to join up

with Smithy?" asked Lord Mauleverer anxiously. "I'd let you off, old bean."

Bunter, deaf to that remark, climbed into the car. He plumped down beside the schoolboy earl.

"I've just been at Cowgate, Mauly," he remarked. "The other fellows are there now. I came out to meet you on the way. They were too jolly lazy; but I said somebody ought to meet you, and I came."

"Oh gad!" said Mauly, in astonishment. "But we've lost the way to Cowgate. How did you know which road to look for me on?"

"Oh! I—I mean—I came along to look round, you know, and see if I could see anything of you!" said Bunter.

"The fact is, I shouldn't have cared to join the party, Mauly, if you hadn't turned up. I can't say I like the crowd much—rather a measly lot, you know."

"I don't!" said Mauleverer.

"There's already been a sordid discussion about money," said Bunter. "Not the sort of thing I like."

"You've been diddling them already?" asked Mauleverer.

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"If the young gentleman knows the way to Cowgate—" hinted the chauffeur.

"Oh, yes!" Bunter gave directions, and the car moved on again. The fat junior settled down comfortably beside Lord Mauleverer, looking very merry and bright. Mauleverer for some reason unknown to Bunter, was not looking merry or bright. "I say, Mauly, lucky I met you, wasn't it?"

"Oh, frightfully!"

"If those beasts make any fuss—"

"Eh?"

"Of course, you'll stick up for me, as

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

my pal," said Bunter. "There's been a bit of an argument. Wharton wanted me to pay for his taxi. You know how fellows land things on me because I'm easy-going in money matters."

"No!"

"Oh, really, Mauly! I'd have paid, but it was the principle of the thing, you know," explained Bunter. "I said, 'No, there's a limit, and that's the limit! Pay for your taxi yourself!' My very words!"

Lord Mauleverer looked at him.

"Have you been tryin' to diddle the fellows over a taxi fare?" he asked.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer chuckled. Billy Bunter snorted. And the car ran into Cowgate and stopped at the Wheatsheaf.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Hiking!

"BUNTER!"

Five voices pronounced that name in a sort of chorus.

Lord Mauleverer stepped from the car. Billy Bunter stepped after him, with a defiant blink through his spectacles at the Famous Five.

"The esteemed and ridiculous Bunter!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Turned up like a bad penny!" growled Johnny Bull. "Kick him out again!"

"Where on earth did you pick up that fat oyster, Mauly?"

"What rotten luck!"

"Sorry, you men," said Lord Mauleverer politely. "Have you been kickin' Bunter out? He seems to be keen on the hike, an' I believe it was arranged that he should hike if he wanted to hike. I mean, Bunter arranged it. Think you can manage to stand him?"

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

"Oh, let him rip!" said Harry Wharton. "I expect he will crock up at the first mile, anyhow."

"We'll leave him for dead on the road!" agreed Bob.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Do let a fellow speak!" roared Bunter. "You fellows are like a sheep's head, all jaw! My pal Mauly is hungry after his journey, and it's time for lunch! You can jaw after lunch, if you want to jaw, see?" Bunter slipped a fat arm through Mauly's. "Come on, old chap!"

Mauly gently detached his arm.

"Go in an' begin, Bunter!" he suggested.

"Oh, all right!"

Bunter rolled into the inn.

Lord Mauleverer gazed at the hikers with a thoughtful expression on his noble face.

"What about keepin' the car?" he murmured.

The juniors grinned.

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"Nothing about keeping the car," answered Bob.

"Might be useful——"

"Fathead!"

"Well, how am I goin' to carry my bags an' things?"

"That's an easy one!" chuckled Bob.

"You're not going to have any bags and things."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're going to get into hiking outfit, and carry what you can pack into a rucksack—and that's the lot! See?"

"Yaas, But——"

"I see you've got a hatbox in the car. Were you going to hike in a silk topper?"

"Well, a fellow might want a topper. You see——"

"We'll take the topper," said Bob. "It will do to carry potatoes in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I'll send the hatbox back in the car," said Lord Mauleverer hastily. "Jackson, there's a hikin' outfit in one of those bags. Would you mind sortin' it out?"

The chauffeur sorted it out.

There was a lurking grin on Jackson's face, well trained chauffeur as he was. Perhaps he saw something comic in the idea of Lord Mauleverer hiking.

"I suppose I can change in the inn," said Lord Mauleverer. "If you fellows liked, we'd let Jackson follow in the car, in—in case anybody got tired. Bunter might!" added his lordship thoughtfully.

"Ass!"

"Well, I'll go in an' change," said Mauly, and he picked up his bag and went into the Wheatsheaf.

There was a grave and thoughtful expression on Mauly's noble face. The other fellows were grinning.

Having changed, Mauly turned out in hiking garb, and certainly looked very fit and good-looking in it. The bag containing the elegant attire he had discarded was placed in the car.

Harry Wharton & Co. went into the inn, leaving Mauleverer to give his instructions to the chauffeur about returning to Mauleverer Towers.

Mauly was rather a long time giving those instructions. He seemed to be very careful indeed about them. Bob Cherry came to the inn doorway and bawled to him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Don't you want any lunch, Mauly?"

"Eh! Yaas! You understand, Jackson?"

"Perfectly, my lord!" said the chauffeur, with the lurking grin more pronounced on his clean-shaven face.

Mauleverer came into the Wheatsheaf, and joined the other fellows at lunch. Jackson sat in the driving-seat, and the car buzzed out of Cowgate and was gone.

"I say, you fellows, this isn't bad prog!" remarked Billy Bunter. "Plain but good! After all, a fellow gets fed-up on twelve-course dinners and a lot of footmen hanging about! What?"

"Fathead!"

"Of course, you fellows aren't accustomed to such things," said Bunter. "It's rather different with Mauly and me. Our social standing is a bit higher, isn't it, Mauly?"

"No!"

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

"Shut up, old bean," said Mauleverer gently. "I've landed you on these chaps, but you can't expect them to stand it if you jaw! Be reasonable."

"Why, you cheeky beast——"

"Speechfulness is silvery, but silence is the cracked pitcher that saves a stitch in time, my esteemed Bunter."

"Yah!"

Bunter grunted, and devoted himself to the foodstuffs. He had started his innings long before the rest, but he was "not out" at the finish. He was still going strong when the other fellows left the inn and discussed the route for the afternoon's march. Only a sudden suspicion that they might leave him eating, and start without him, prevented a famine from occurring in Cowgate that day. Bunter tore himself away from the table while the inn's supply of foodstuffs was still unexhausted, though seriously depleted. He looked very fat and shiny when he rolled out, and seemed to move with difficulty.

"I say, you fellows——"

"March!" said Bob Cherry. "All ready!"

"I say, what about starting to-morrow?" suggested Bunter. "This is a jolly comfortable inn, and the grub's good—distinctly good! Nothing like starting on a hike early in the morning."

"Good idea!" agreed Wharton. "You start early in the morning, old fat bean! We're starting now! Good-bye!"

And the hikers started.

"Beast!" snorted Bunter.

And he rolled after them.

Lord Mauleverer also had a suggestion to make.

"It's a good idea," he remarked casually, "to take it easy the first day. I believe hikers always do. You gradually warm up to the work, you know."

"Quite a good idea," agreed Bob. "If you fellows agree, we'll do only twenty miles this afternoon——"

"Oh gad!"

"And thirty to-morrow——"

"Help!"

"And settle down to a regular fifty a day later on," concluded Bob gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer grinned faintly. As a matter of fact, his slim and graceful lordship was as good a walker as any in the party. Lazy as he undoubtedly was, he had taken his full share of the baggage—a little trifle that Billy Bunter neglected. Bunter, however, had his lunch to carry, so there was no doubt that he was the heaviest-loaded of the hikers.

Bunter was soon in a state of perspiration, not to say a state of stew. The August sun was warm, and passing cars left a good deal of dust on the road. Bunter had not looked forward to a hike as a means of enjoyment. Now that he was fairly landed in it, it seemed less enjoyable than ever.

"What about a rest?" he asked, after a quarter of an hour.

"Turn off here," said Bob, at the corner of a shady Surrey lane. "We don't want to stick to the high-roads."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Roll on, thou fat and flabby Bunter—roll!" said Bob, parodying Byron.

"Wouldn't you like a rest, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"Stop, then," said Bunter. "We'll stop together, old chap, and those silly idiots can sweat on if they like. Sit down here. You'd rather rest here with me than tramp on with those fatheads, Mauly."

"Not quite," grinned Mauly; and he tramped on.

He glanced back, rather keenly, when the corner was turned. From somewhere in the distance behind came the sound of a car. Going at an easy pace the juniors sauntered along the shady lane, under wide, green branches. It was a winding lane, with hawthorn hedges and trees, and a stile here and

there. Bob Cherry looked back presently.

"Rotten road for a car," he remarked. "There's a car behind us, somewhere," said Nugent. He grinned. "I wonder whether it's Pon?"

"Pon!" repeated Lord Mauleverer. "Is Pon about?"

"Mauly doesn't know the jolly old story," said Bob.

And as they walked onward, his lordship was entertained by the narrative of Ponsonby's mysterious pursuit of Bob's Holiday Annual.

"Must be potty!" said Mauleverer. "Do you fellows really think there's a car behind us?"

"Sure of it," answered Bob. "Must be Pon. It must be simply crawling, not to have passed us long ago."

"Keeping out of sight," said Nugent, with a nod. "Rather a lark to halt, and let Pon come up. I've got an apple to shy at him."

"Oh, don't let's do that!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer hastily. "Let's keep on. I'm enjoyin' this fearfully."

"I say, you fellows, let's stop and see if it's Pon," said Bunter, as the hikers reached the foot of a steep hill.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Beast!" snorted the fat junior, wiping the perspiration from his fat forehead, and dreading the climb ahead.

The pace was easy, but not easy enough for Billy Bunter. A couple of yards per hour, with the going level, would have suited Bunter, the hiker. He rolled on, perspiring. That steep hill seemed endless to Bunter. As they strolled on their leisurely way, there came, every now and then, the sound of a pursuing car to the ears of the hikers. The Famous Five could not doubt that it was Pon's car. There was no imaginable reason for a car to crawl behind them at a snail's pace, keeping carefully out of sight, unless it was in pursuit of the hiking party.

Still, Pon was free to follow them if he liked. If he overtook them and asked for trouble, they were prepared to hand out all he wanted, and then some! So they hiked on regardless.

A couple of hours, which seemed like a couple of centuries to Billy Bunter, elapsed, before the party halted for tea. They halted under shady trees by the side of a shady lane, where they sat in thick, rich grass, and rucksacks were unpacked. And as they disposed of their tea they watched the lane by which they had come, to see the car appear. But it did not appear, and no sound was heard from it.

Evidently the pursuer was keeping out of sight, following them when they progressed, and halting when they halted. And after tea when they hiked on again, in the delicious cool of a summer's evening, the sound of a car, still out of sight, floated to their ears on the breeze. The pursuer was still on the track.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Camping Out!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Cheese it, Bunter!"

"I'm tired!"

"Seventy-nine," said Bob Cherry.

"What do you mean, you silly ass—seventy-nine?"

"I mean that's the seventy-ninth time you've told us you're tired."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

"We're looking for a camp, old bean," said Nugent soothingly. "We're all ready for a rest now. You tired, Mauly?"

"Yaaa."

"Well, we can't camp here," said Bob, looking round.

The hikers had had a good rest over tea, and the sun was setting when they resumed their way. They marched cheerily under the golden sunset, and were still marching when the sun was gone, and the moon came up over the Surrey downs. Bright and clear, the moon sailed overhead, shedding silvery light. They were looking now for a suitable spot to camp for the night.

Bunter, of course, proposed to make for the nearest inn. They had passed quite a number of inviting-looking inns, and Bunter blinked at every one with a longing, yearning blink. But Bob Cherry declared that it would be a sin and a shame to pass such a glorious night under a roof. Besides, putting up at inns wasn't really hiking. Inns were kept in reserve for rough and rainy nights.

At the present moment they had

TELL A TALE AND WIN A USEFUL PRIZE

like P. Murphy, of 7, Kiln Street, Newry, Co. Down, Ireland, who sent in the following winning effort:



Foreman (testing wall in new house): "I'm speaking quietly, Bill. Can you hear me?"

Bill (from other side of wall): "Ear you! Why, I can see you in three places!"

struck rather a bad patch, so far as camping was concerned. They were in a lane bordered on one side by the high park walls of some extensive estate; on the other by a wide ditch and a high hedge. So they had to keep on.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I'm tired!"

"Eighty!" said Bob.

"Beast!"

Bunter plugged on.

"Blessed if I shan't be glad to see a spot to camp!" remarked Harry Wharton.

"The gladfulness will be terrific."

"What about a lift in a car?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"Is that what you call hiking, fat-head?"

"And where are we going to dig up a car?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Well, there still seems to be a car followin' us," said Lord Mauleverer.

"I've heard it a lot of times."

"That's Pon's car, fathead!"

"I don't really think it's Pon's car. What about stoppin'——"

"Rats!"

"And gettin' a lift——"

"Rot!"

"We could all pack into the car——" "How do you know, ass? You haven't seen Pon's car."

"Oh! 'Hem! I—I think—— Well, let's try it on," said Mauleverer. "Run along in the car to a nice place for campin'—what?"

"Catch Pon givin' us a lift!"

"I feel sure it's not Pon's car."

"Who else would be following us up like this, ass? Anyhow, we're not getting lifts," said Johnny Bull. "Rats!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Dry up, Bunter!"

Groan!

"Here's a place!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

"Oh, good!"

It was a delightful spot. The high hawthorn hedges along the lane gave place to a fence. On the other side of the fence could be seen a small field—green and grassy, glistening in the moonlight. It was the sort of field that a hiker dreams of, but does not often capture. It had a gentle slope to it, was surrounded by trees, and there was a bubbling brook that leaped and danced. The hikers leaned in a tired row on the fence, and gazed at it.

"Ripping!" said Nugent, with a sigh of relief.

"Topping!"

"The topfulness is terrific!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look at that, though!" said Bob, pointing to a board nailed on a tree.

On that board was painted an inscription always familiar, but never welcome, to the eyes of hikers:

"TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED."

"Oh, rotten!" said Harry.

"Chance it!" suggested Johnny Bull. "That sort of stuff is gammon, mostly. They can't really prosecute a chap. Still——"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Property's property," he said. "We've no more right to borrow a man's land than he has to borrow our tent. If we could find the owner and offer to pay——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who's this?"

The hikers discerned a man sitting on the fence, under one of the trees. They had not observed him at first as he sat in the shadow. But the scent of a cigarette came to them; he was smoking. He took the cigarette from his mouth, and gave them an agreeable nod.

"Good-evening, laddies!" he said genially. "Hiking—what?"

"Just that," said Bob.

"Lots of them, in this weather, about here," said the man, with the cigarette. "Good thing, too, if you ask me. Brings business to country places. Look at that field of mine, for instance. What do you think I get when I let it for grazing?"

"Couldn't say," answered Bob.

"Fifteen shillings a year," said the man on the fence. "Believe me or believe me not, that's all that field will fetch for grazing. When I let it to hikers, I get as much for a single night. I can tell you this, young gentlemen—I'm always pleased, for one, to see hikers about."

That was good news to the Greyfriars hikers. Finding the owner of the field on the spot, and finding him glad to see hikers, was distinctly a relief. Fifteen shillings for camping for the night, however, seemed rather steep.

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and they gathered that that was the charge.

"Well, we'd like to camp here to-night, Mr.——"

"Hooker!" said the man on the fence, "I dare say you've heard of Hooker's Farm, if you know this country."

"No; we're strangers here," said Harry. "This field would suit us down to the ground; but——"

Mr. Hooker caught on at once.

"Well, look here, of course you agree to do no damage, and clear up all rubbish before you go!" he said.

"Of course."

"Make it ten bob, then," said Mr. Hooker, getting off the fence. "You don't look the sort to leave all the gates open, and burn a man's grass right and left with fires, and leave broken bottles for the cattle to tread on."

"I hope not," said Harry, laughing. "It's a go, then," said Mr. Hooker, "and if there's anything you'd like sent down from the farmhouse, I'll send it down. Milk—or cheese——"

"Oh, that's all right—one of us will come up and fetch it——"

"Hold on, though—now I come to think of it, things are a bit short," said Mr. Hooker. "I forgot that! No, I'm afraid I can't supply anything in the way of food—if you'd come along yesterday, now——"

"All serene—we've got lots of stuff," said Bob. "Thanks all the same, Mr. Hooker."

"Not at all."

The man came out of the shadow of the tree, into the clear moonlight, and the juniors, looking at him, saw that he had rather a hard, sharp face—not at all like a ruddy and good-natured farmer. However, Mr. Hooker's looks were his own affair; and there was no doubt that they were very glad to meet him there.

He threw open a gate in the fence. "There you are!" he said. "I dare say you'll get going by nine in the morning; I shall have to turn the sheep in then."

"Long before nine!" said Harry, with a smile.

"That's all right, then," Mr. Hooker held out a rather grubby hand, evidently for the money. "I mayn't see you before you go," he added, "and—of course, I can see that I could trust you, but some hikers don't remember to pay before they go——"

Harry Wharton placed a ten-shilling note in Mr. Hooker's grubby palm. He was well aware that there were hikers, and hikers; and he did not blame Mr. Hooker for wishing to be paid in advance.

"Thanks," said Mr. Hooker. "I fancy you'll find you're all right there. Mind, no bits of paper and bottles about—what?"

"Rely on us."

"Good-night, then, gentlemen."

"Good-night, Mr. Hooker."

The man with the hard face and the cigarette faded out of sight up the lane. Gladly the hikers walked into the inviting field, and shut the gate after them. There was a log under the trees within, and Billy Bunter promptly sat down on it. That was Bunter's contribution towards camping.

The other fellows set busily to work.

Up went the tent, in record time, pegged safely out. There was an ample supply of food in the rucksacks for supper; and there was no need of a fire, on a warm summer's night. In a cheery mood, the hikers sat down to supper and ate it with the keen appetite given by a long walk and fresh air.

"Jolly place, and no mistake," said

Bob Cherry, with his mouth full of egg-and-tomato sandwich. "Lucky we dropped on the owner, too!"

"The luckfulness was terrific."

"I say, you fellows, are there any jam-tarts?"

"Nix!"

"You might have packed some jam-tarts! You know I like them! Are there any doughnuts?"

"Just as many as the tarts!"

"Did you bring a jar of jam?" demanded Bunter.

"Yes, we've got a jar of jam."

"Oh, good! Hand it over! Got a tablespoon?"

Bob handed the jar of jam, and the tablespoon, to the fat Owl, under the impression that Bunter was going to ladle out a portion of jam on his plate. Bunter's intentions, however, were rather more wholesale. He lodged the jam-jar between his fat knees, and proceeded to ladle out the contents into his capacious mouth. The hikers gazed at him as if fascinated.

"That's the only jar of jam!" said Johnny Bull, in a deep, sulphurous voice.

"Well, never mind," said Bunter, "it will be enough for me. It's not a lot I eat, as you know."

"Oh gad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"Not bad jam," said Bunter. "Not like our cook makes at Bunter Court, of course. But not bad! I could do with another jar, really! But don't bother about me—I can make this do."

And Bunter made it do! He finished it to the last spoonful. But the last spoonful he did not finish. Johnny Bull rose to his feet, and jerked away the tablespoon of jam from Bunter's fat hand, before he could dispose of it. The next moment he slipped it down Bunter's podgy back.

"Urrrrgggh!" spluttered Bunter.

"You—you beast! Wow! I'm all sticky! What the thump—wow! Ooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wanted all the jam," said Johnny. "Now you've got it! And the spoon, too! And I've a jolly good mind to give you the jar, on your nut."

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter was the first to turn into the tent. He was rather anxious to get at that tablespoon.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Done in the Dark!

BOB CHERRY had rather a thoughtful expression on his face, and a glimmer in his blue eyes. He strolled about the moonlit field after supper—thinking.

Once or twice, during supper, the juniors had heard the sound of a distant car; once they had caught the flash of headlights through trees and hedges. But they had not seen the car itself. Whoever it was that had tracked them so cautiously and persistently since leaving Cowgate, he had kept out of sight, and was out of sight still. But it was certain that he was not far away—skulking somewhere in the dusky shadows, with his lights off. And Bob was thinking of him.

He came back to the camp. Frank Nugent and Lord Mauleverer had turned in, and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh had followed their example. But Wharton and Johnny sat up till Bob came back from his stroll.

"You men tired?" asked Bob.

"A bit!" said Johnny, with a yawn.

"Wouldn't like a little walk?"

"Not an awful lot."

"And a scrap?"

"A whatter?"

"Scrap!"

"You howling ass, have you dug up a tramp to scrap with, or do you want to scrap with the moo-cows in the next field?" demanded Johnny.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"I was thinking of Pon," he answered.

"Oh, blow Pon!" yawned Wharton.

"Let's turn in. I'm sleepy."

"I rather think Pon might wake us up!" answered Bob.

"Eh? Why?"

"What do you think he has followed us for?" said Bob. "He's after that giddy Holiday Annual, of course. They can't mean to follow on for ever, with nothing to do but to watch the backs of our heads while we hike. If they mean anything at all they mean to rush us when we're camped, and get hold of what they're after."

"Oh," said Harry, sitting up, "I hadn't thought of that! Of course, that must be the game."

"Well, what about carrying the war into the enemy's country?" said Bob. "That car's parked not very far behind us. Instead of waiting for Pon to drop on us, let's drop on Pon! What?"

"Good egg!" said Johnny Bull, getting up. "Three of us will be enough—there's only three of that crew. If their chauffeur chips in, we'll mop him up, too. Let's!"

"Good egg!" agreed Wharton. "Pon can't have followed us for anything but trouble, and he may as well have the trouble at once."

And leaving the camp sleeping behind them, the three juniors walked across the field to the gate, and went out into the moonlit lane.

The moon sailed bright over the tree-tops, like a great shining silver plate. Under the wide-spreading branches, however, it was dim and dusky.

The three walked quietly down the middle of the lane, peering into the shadows right and left as they went.

They were certain that the car had followed them to within a short distance of their camp, and stopped; and they had no doubt of spotting it before they had gone very far.

Indeed, from the sounds they had heard during supper, they were fairly certain that it had followed them quite close to the field; and then turned back, as if the pursuer had desired to make absolutely certain that they had stopped for the night.

So far as they could see, it could be nobody but Ponsonby; and if it was Pon, his object was unmistakable. And it seemed an excellent idea to carry the war into Africa, so to speak, and deal with the Highlife before they got going.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry suddenly. "Look!"

He pointed.

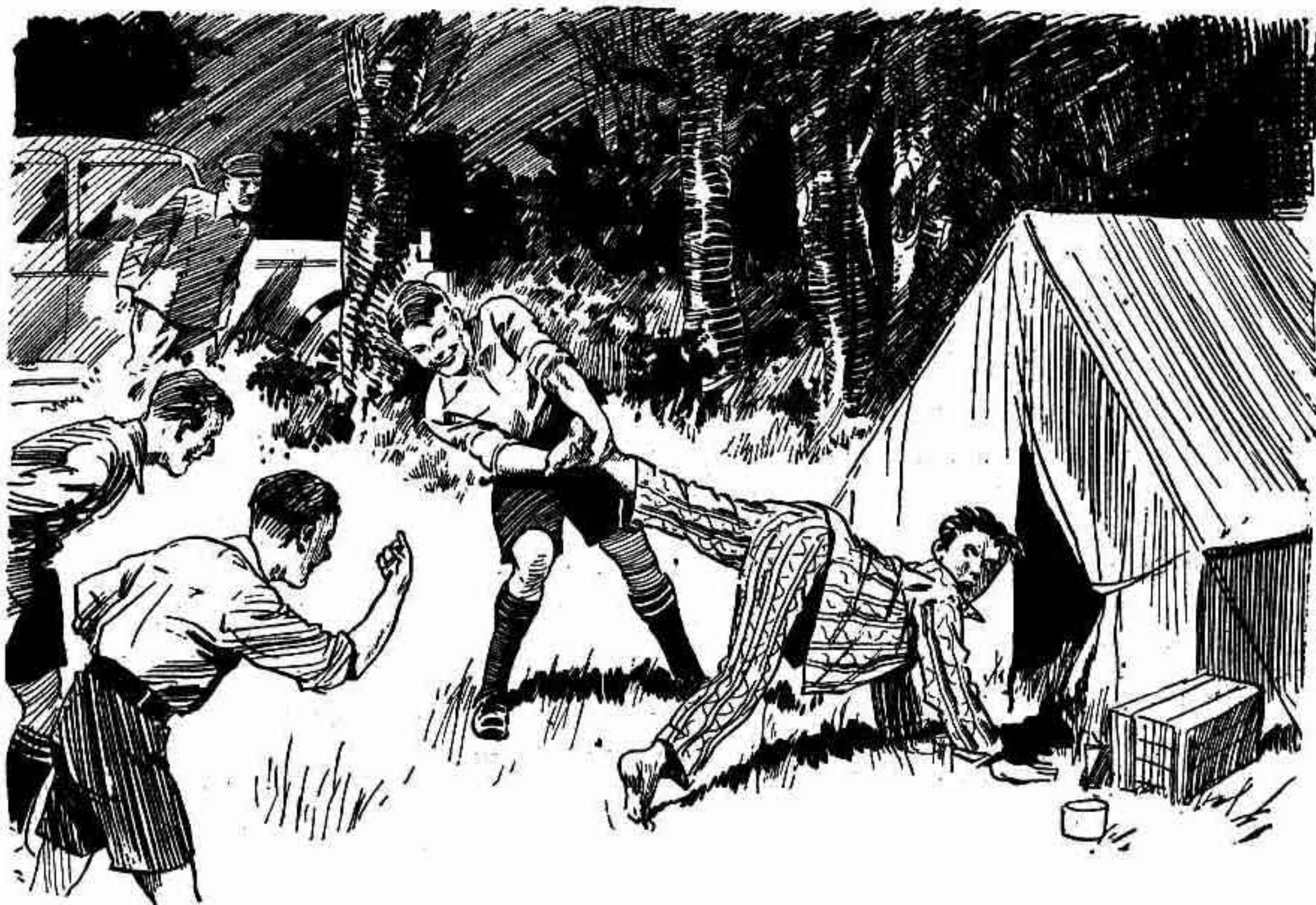
At a little distance, parked under the deep shadow of the trees by the roadside, they dimly made out the shape of a motor-car. It showed no lights; but a red spot glowed close by it, which evidently came from a cigarette.

"That's it!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"One of 'em smoking!" whispered Bob. "Highlife style, you know! I dare say the rest are snoozing in the car—waiting for it to get a bit later before they drop in on us—what?"

"Looks like it!" agreed Wharton.

"We'll give 'em a bit of a surprise!" grinned Bob. "Quiet! I dare say that's Pon smoking—he would be! Collar him and have him over, and sit on his head, and then we'll root the rest out of the car! By the time we're done



Bob Cherry grasped his lordship by the nearest ankle and pulled him out of the tent. "Ow! You blithering idiot! Wow!" yelled Mauleverer. "You dangerous maniac! Yow! Ow!" As Mauly's ankle went with Bob, the rest of his lordship had to follow. On one foot and two hands, Lord Mauleverer travelled rapidly out of the tent.

with them they won't be thinking of surprising our camp—they'll have got the surprise themselves!"

"What-ho!" murmured Johnny Bull. The Greyfriars fellows crept on in the shadows of the trees, their footsteps making no sound on the grass beside the lane.

It was certain, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that this car, parked in a dark corner in a lane that led from nowhere to nowhere, was the car that had trailed them all the afternoon.

No ordinary motorist would have been there at all. That was all the Greyfriars fellows wanted to be certain of; and they were certain of it.

Under the thick branches of oaks and beeches at the corner the darkness was intense. It was difficult to make out even the outlines of the car. Obviously, that black spot had been specially chosen for keeping out of sight.

Only the glowing red tip of the cigarette guided them to the fellow who was smoking. They could not see him in the dark, but they made out that he was sitting a few feet from the car, apparently on a log. The scent of tobacco came to them at last, and they knew that they were very close.

"Now!" whispered Bob.

And he led a rush.

"Oh!" came a startled exclamation.

The next moment the smoker rolled over, under Bob Cherry's hefty grasp. He pitched headlong into the grass, and Bob sprawled over him.

"Got him!" gasped Bob. "Get after the other rotters, you men!"

"You bet!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

And Wharton and Johnny ran to the door of the car.

"Urrrrrrgh!" came from the half-seen figure sprawling and wriggling under Bob. "Grooogh! Ooooooh! Woooooooooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob. "Your own fault, old bean! Ha, ha, ha!"

The cigarette had dropped from the smoker's mouth on to his neck when Bob whirled him over. Judging by his wild shouts, he found the hot end far from agreeable.

"Yaroooh! Yow-oooooh!"

He struggled.

"Nothing doing, my pippin!" chuckled Bob, settling himself on the heaving chest beneath him. "I've got you! Take it calmly! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Have you men got the other rotters?"

"Nobody in the car!" called back Wharton.

"Where the dickens are they, then?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Johnny Bull. "Seems to be nobody about but that sportsman you've bagged! Is it Pon?"

"Can't see him! Strike a match!"

"Urrrrgh! Gerroff!" came in gasping tones from under Bob. "You mad young idiot, gerroff!"

"That doesn't sound like Pon's voice!" said Harry. "My hat! Have you bagged their chauffeur?"

Johnny Bull struck a match. In the flickering light the three juniors looked at the upturned face of the man wriggling under Bob. Then they gave a yell:

"Jackson!"

It was a chauffeur. But it was not Pon's chauffeur! It was Lord Mauleverer's chauffeur!

Bob Cherry rose to his feet. Jackson sat up. He gasped for breath, and fumbled at his neck, where he was feeling the effects of the hot end of the cigarette.

"Urrrrrrgh!" was his first remark.

The juniors stared at him blankly in the shadows. It was Lord Mauleverer's chauffeur; so evidently it was Lord Mauleverer's car. Obviously, the pursuer that afternoon had not been Ponsonby of Highcliffe at all, as they had rather naturally taken for granted. It had been Jackson!

"What the thump—" gasped Bob.

"Urrrrgh! I'm burnt!" gurgled Jackson.

"What are you doing here?" yelled Wharton.

"Urrrrgh! What did you jump on me for?" demanded Jackson.

"We took you for somebody else, you silly ass! What have you followed us from Cowgate for?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"That fathead Mauly!" roared Bob. "I remember now he said several times that he didn't think it was Pon following us! He jolly well knew!"

"Must have told this silly ass to follow!" said Johnny Bull. "That's why he suggested stopping for the car to come up and give us a lift."

"The silly ass!"

"The blithering idiot!"

Bob Cherry burst into a chuckle.

"That's Mauly's idea of hiking!" he said. "A car following on to give a fellow a lift if he gets tired!"

"Urrrrrrgh!" said Jackson.

He picked himself up, still fumbling at his neck.

"Poor old Mauly! He never got the lift, after all!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "How long did Mauleverer tell you to keep this up, Jackson?"

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THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Only Jackson!

"JACKSON!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Jackson!" stuttered Harry Wharton. "Jig-jig-Jackson!" stammered Johnny Bull.

Jackson grinned.
 "Until further orders, sir!"
 "Well, you're getting your further orders now! Get going for home!"
 Jackson shook his head.
 "I'm afraid I can't, without his lordship's instructions, sir!"
 "Oh, quite!" said Bob Cherry. "I'll go and fetch his jolly old lordship, and he will give you your instructions. Come and lend a hand, you men, in case his dear old lordship doesn't care for a walk at this time of night."

"Perhaps I'd better follow you, sir, in case his lordship doesn't care for a walk," said Jackson. And he followed the juniors back to the camp field.

All was peaceful when they arrived there. From the tent came the hefty snore of Billy Bunter and the regular breathing of three other sleepers. But all ceased to be peaceful when Bob Cherry put his head into the tent and bawled:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
 "Oh gad!" came a startled voice. "Is that an earthquake?"

"What the thump—" yawned Nugent.

"What is that terrific and preposterous row?"

"Mauly—turn out, Mauly!" roared Bob.

"Can't!"
 "Why not?"
 "Tired!"

"Poor old chap, he's tired!" said Bob. "I shall have to help him! Turn on a light, somebody!"

Wharton flashed an electric torch into the tent. Bob Cherry jerked off Mauleverer's blanket, grasped his lordship by the nearest ankle, and pulled him out of the tent.

There was a fearful yell from Mauleverer.

As his ankle went with Bob, the rest of his lordship had to follow. On one foot and two hands Lord Mauleverer travelled rapidly out of the tent. He sat down, outside, in the moonlight, as Bob released him and gasped.

"Ow! You blithering idiot! Wow! You dangerous maniac! Yow! Ow!"
 "Your lordship's chauffeur is waiting for your lordship's orders," chuckled Bob. "Cough up the order for home."

"Mauly's chauffeur!" exclaimed Nugent, staring out of the tent at Jackson. "What the thump—"

"It was Mauly's car following us," grinned Bob. "We jumped on Jackson, thinking he was Pon—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Mauly, you blithering owl—"

"Oh dear!" gasped his lordship, blinking at Jackson. "Jackson, you ass, I told you to keep out of sight unless you were wanted!"

"So he did!" chuckled Bob. "But we thought it was Pon's crowd on the trail, and went back to surprise them! And we caught Jackson!"

"Oh gad!"

"Now order him to hop it for home, Mauly!"

"I—I say, it—it's rather a good idea to keep the car handy!" urged Lord Mauleverer. "A fellow might get tired—"

"Is that what you call hiking?"

"Yaas."

"Then you've got a lot to learn about hiking. Jackson's waiting patiently for his orders for home, Mauly! This time we'll hear you give the orders, you spoofing slacker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but I—I think—"

"You think you'd rather keep Jackson on the trail with the car?"

"Yaas."

"Think again," suggested Bob. "Keep on thinking till you think it's the best idea to give Jackson orders for home. We'll wait till you make up your mind to it. But so as not to waste time we'll bump you while we wait—"

"Here, I say— Oh gad! Stop it!" yelled Lord Mauleverer, as Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull grasped him and swept him off the ground.

Bump!
 "Whooooop!"

Bump!
 "Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

"Get going, Jackson!" yelled Lord Mauleverer. "Get going for Mauleverer Towers at once! Don't stop till you get there! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, my lord!" grinned Jackson. "If your lordship's sure you won't want me any more, my lord—"

"Oh, quite! Oh gad! Oh crumbs! Leggo, you lunatics! Good-night, Jackson! Get out! Oh, my hat!" gasped Mauly.

"Yes, my lord!"

"Ow! Wow! Leggo! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jackson walked out of the field. A few minutes later the hikers heard the car starting-up in the distance. Jackson, probably, was glad enough to go. Anyhow, he went.

"That's that!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter awake?"

exclaimed Bob. "Did your snore wake you up, old fat man? I fancy it's been waking all the cows and sheep for a mile round."

"Beast!" Bunter blinked out of the tent. "I say, I heard what you fellows were saying! I say, Mauly, don't let the car go, old man! It's a jolly good idea to keep the car. If I'd thought of it I'd have brought one of the cars from Bunter Court."

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"Keep the car," urged Bunter. "Look here, Mauly, keep the car and we'll travel in it together, and these fellows can walk as much as they like. See? We'll sit in the car and chat, and—"

"On the whole," said Lord Mauleverer, thoughtfully, "it was rather a good idea to send that car back. We really don't want a car."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I want a car, see!" hooted Bunter. "I prefer a car. Of all the selfish beasts—"

"Mustn't be selfish, you men," said Bob gravely. "If Bunter wants a car he'd better have a car."

"I should jolly well think so!" snorted Bunter.

"I put it to the meeting," said Bob. "We'll stop at the first place where there's a telephone, and Bunter can phone home to Bunter Court for a car. Make it the Rolls, Bunter—I prefer a Rolls."

"Agreed!" chuckled Nugent.

"Passed unanimously," said Johnny Bull.

"The agreeableness is terrific."

Billy Bunter blinked at the hikers. The point having been unanimously conceded, Bunter ought really to have been pleased and satisfied. Yet he looked neither pleased nor satisfied. He snorted.

"Beasts!" he remarked

And he rolled back into his blankets. Apparently Bunter was not going to phone home to Bunter Court for the Rolls. Certainly it was improbable that a Rolls would have arrived from that magnificent abode.

The juniors chuckled, and turned in. Jackson was gone, and Pon & Co. were not in the vicinity. They rolled in their blankets, and slept the sleep of the just, lulled, perhaps, by Billy Bunter's melodious snore.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light on the Mystery!

"EARLY to bed—"

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Early to rise—"

Snore!

"Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise!"

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!"

The Famous Five were up in the summer dawn, and had taken a dip in the stream under the trees. But Lord Mauleverer and William George Bunter seemed utterly indifferent to the attractions of becoming healthy, wealthy, and wise. They were still fast asleep when the Famous Five came back to the tent, and Bob Cherry proceeded to wake them up.

Lord Mauleverer yawned, and Billy Bunter snored. In vain Bob pointed out the way to health, wealth, and wisdom. Mauly continued to yawn, and Bunter to snore.

However, Mauly ceased to yawn as the Co. grabbed him and jerked him out of the tent. Then he yelled instead, and, resigning himself to his fate, trotted down to the stream for a dip. Billy Bunter went on snoring till Bob rolled him out, and then his snore, like Mauly's yawn, was changed into a yell. But Bunter did not resign himself to his fate like Mauly, neither did he make for the stream for a dip. Bunter had no use for morning dips.

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "Lemme alone! I'm not getting up yet."

"Just time to dip before brekker," said Bob. "We want you to cook the brekker, fatty."

"Shan't!"

"Well, we'll cook, and you can wash-up afterwards."

"Catch me washing-up!"

"Aren't you going to bathe in that jolly old stream, Bunter? You won't get a chance every morning."

"No!" roared Bunter. "I don't need such a lot of washing as you fellows—I'm not dirty!"

"Lend a hand!" said Bob cheerily.

"A wash will do Bunter good! I remember he washed once last term at Greyfriars, and he looked quite a different man afterwards."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "Leggo! Leave off shoving me, you rotters!"

Whoop!

Splash!

Bunter rolled into the shallow stream, under the propulsion of the Famous Five. Leaving him to splutter there, the cheery hikers proceeded to get breakfast.

The oil stove was set up and lighted, and Bob Cherry wielded the frying-pan. Eggs were poached, and rashers fried at a great rate, while Nugent sliced bread, and Johnny Bull buttered it, and Wharton attended to the kettle and the tea. Breakfast was ready by the time Mauly and Bunter had finished dressing, and there was no doubt that Bunter looked all the better for his involuntary dip. He sat down to breakfast with a shining morning face, and a tremendous appetite.

Of course, Bunter had to grouse or it would not have been Bunter.

"Tea!" he said. "I'd rather have had coffee! Didn't you fellows bring any coffee?"

"Lots!" answered Bob.

"Well, look here, I'll have coffee," said Bunter. "Who's going to make it?"

"Don't all you fellows speak at once," said Bob Cherry. The hikers did not speak at all—they chuckled.

Billy Bunter blinked round a grinning circle through his big spectacles.

"Who's going to make the coffee?" he repeated.

"The who-fulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You don't want tea?" asked Johnny Bull.

"No!" snorted Bunter. "I don't! At home my special footman always brings me coffee in the morning."

"Well, if you don't want the tea, there it goes!" said Johnny cheerfully, and he tipped over Bunter's cup into the grass.

"Why, you—you—you silly idiot!" gasped Bunter. "Is there any more in the pot?"

"No!"

"Then what am I going to do?" shrieked Bunter.

"Go without!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter glared with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. He almost made up his fat mind to make coffee, but laziness supervened and he devoted himself to the solids instead.

Having packed away as much in the way of bacon and eggs as the rest of the party combined, Bunter felt a little better.

He rolled over into the grass in the shade of a tree, rested his podgy back against the trunk, and gave a satisfied grunt.

"Did you pack your Holiday Annual, Bob?" he asked.

"Yes; it's in my rucksack."

"Hand it out, will you?" said Bunter. "I'll let you know later when I'm ready to start."

"What about washing-up?"

"Don't be an ass!" said Bunter peevishly. "You fellows take it in turns to wash-up. Or all of you pile in together. Many hands make light work! It won't take you long—six of you! Don't be lazy!"

"Anybody frightfully keen on washing-up, while Bunter squats and reads the Holiday Annual?" asked Bob.

"The answer is in the ridiculous negative!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Kick him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Jolly old Pon!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as a green car passed in the lane at the foot of the meadow.

Attention was diverted from Bunter for the moment. All eyes were fixed on the green Austin. Ponsonby and Gadsby and Monson were in it; and they all stared at the campers in the field.

The car did not stop, however. It ran on and disappeared from sight in a few moments.

"Looking for us!" remarked Nugent.

"Well, they've found us, if they want us," said Harry Wharton. "I suppose they're going to keep an eye on us, and watch for a chance of bagging that blessed Holiday Annual. It's weird."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"If we'd snooped Pon, instead of Mauly's shover, last night, we might have made him cough it up," said Bob. "I'm frightfully curious to know what he wants that Annual for. It beats me hollow!"

"The hollowfulness is terrific!"

"It's dashed queer!" said Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully.

"I've been thinkin' about that, you men, since you told me."

"You've been thinking?" ejaculated Bob.

"Yaas."

"Then you must be fearfully tired, old bean. We'll let you off your share of the washing-up. Get up, Bunter!"

"Beast!"

"But I've really been thinkin'," said Lord Mauleverer placidly. "I'd like to look at that jolly old book, if you've got it."

"Here you are!"

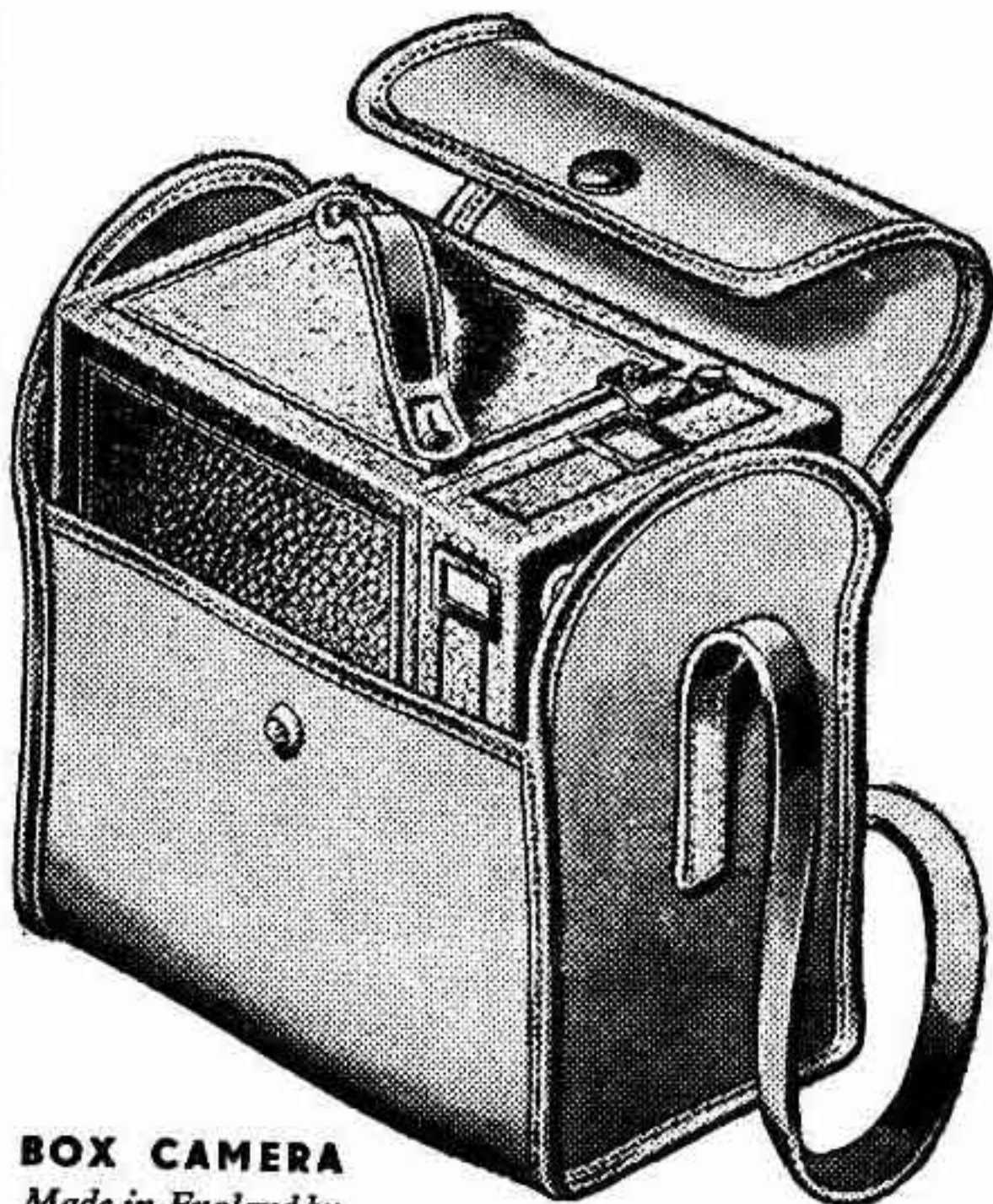
Bob sorted the Holiday Annual out of his rucksack, and tossed it to the schoolboy earl.

Billy Bunter grunted. He had been going to read the Holiday Annual while the other fellows washed-up and packed for the march. But nobody seemed to care what Bunter wanted. It was a selfish world!

Lord Mauleverer, sitting on a log, turned over the pages of the volume. The Famous Five watched him, with a rather amused interest. The mystery of the Holiday Annual beat them hollow, as Bob expressed it. They did not expect much in the way of enlightenment from Mauly.

(Continued on next page.)

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"Lookin' for invisible writin', what?" said Mauly, alluding to the pages that had been scorched at the fire while the book was in Pon's possession.

"I suppose so," said Harry. "But what makes Pon think that there may be invisible writing in the book is a giddy mystery."

"Had it long?" asked Mauly.

"No; I bought it just before the end of the term," answered Bob Cherry. "It was delivered at the school, and hadn't even been unwrapped, when we took it out in the boat the last half-holiday. Bunter snaffled it, thinking it was a parcel of tuck—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"And Pon grabbed it away from him. Bunter never wrote in it in invisible ink, and nobody else touched it—"

"Somebody must have!" said Lord Mauleverer calmly. "Pon isn't a lunatic, and so he must have some reason for what he was doin'. He's got some reason for believin' that there's invisible writin' in the book, and that it's worth a lot of trouble to find out. Who had the book that day besides Bunter?"

"Nobody that I know of, till Pon grabbed it."

"Well, Bunter ought to know. Did anybody else get hold of this book while you had it, Bunter?" asked Mauly.

"Only that man—for a few minutes," answered Bunter.

"Eh! What man?" exclaimed Bob. "This is the first I've heard of any man having had it."

"That smash-and-grab man, you ass!" grunted Bunter. "I told you he spoke to me in the wood, and got me to take a message to another man at Lantham. I didn't know who he was then, of course."

"You told us that, but you never told us he had the book," said Nugent. "What the thump did he want the book for?"

"He spun me a yarn about his friend at Lantham having a boy who would like a copy of it," said Bunter. "He asked me to show it to the man at Lantham. I couldn't, though, because Pon took it, and that man Smith, at Lantham, was arrested when I got there, and—"

"Oh, you nighted ass!" exclaimed Wharton. "If you'd told us that before—"

"What the thump does it matter?" demanded Bunter. "I don't believe the man at Lantham had a son at all—in fact, I'm sure he hadn't! That brute Parker was just spinning me a yarn, to make me take his message."

"The message was in the book," said Lord Mauleverer quietly. "Did you see him write anything in the Holiday Annual, Bunter?"

"No. Of course, I wasn't watching him. He said he'd like to look at the pictures, and I let him."

The Famous Five exchanged glances. The mystery was beginning to clear a little.

"Mauly's on the track," said Bob, his eyes gleaming. "Bunter hasn't sense enough to guess what the man was at, of course; but what he really did was to put some message in the book. Blessed if I know how Pon found it out."

"May have seen them," said Mauleverer. "He seems to have been on the spot—he grabbed the book from Bunter soon afterwards."

"Yes, that's so."

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It was getting clearer and clearer.

"Pon must have spotted them, because what he did afterwards proves that he knew there was a message in the book," said Mauleverer. "That message is what Pon wants to know."

"But I've been through the book a dozen times, and there's nothing in it!" exclaimed Bob.

"So has Pon—and that's why he's searchin' it for invisible writin'. You can use invisible ink in a fountain-pen."

"Oh, Mauly, old man, you'll make them sit up when you get into the House of Lords!" said Bob. "What a brain!"

"But I don't get on to it," said Wharton in perplexity. "It certainly looks as if that man, Micky the Sprat, put a message in the book for his pal to read, unknown to Bunter. He may have used invisible ink. But why the thump should Pon want to know anything about it? He can't be interested in two smash-and-grab raiders who've gone to chokey."

"No," said Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully. "It depends on what the message was about. Pon wants to know. Why? If that man Barker—I mean, Parker—wrote to Jones—I mean, Robinson—"

"Smith, you ass!"

"I mean, Smith. If he wrote to Smith that he was goin' to be snaffled, and warned Smith to clear off, or anythin' of that sort, Pon wouldn't care two straws. But—"

"Well, what?" grinned Bob. "You're flummoxed now, old man."

"Well, Pon might think there was somethin' valuable in the message," yawned Mauleverer. "That smash-and-grab man, I've heard, got away with five or six hundred pounds' worth of jewellery from the shop he busted. He parked it somewhere before he was caught. Looks as if Pon thinks that he was sendin' a tip to his pal where to pick it up."

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull. "Pon wouldn't walk two steps to do anybody a good turn! Lot he cares whether the stuff is ever found or not!"

Lord Mauleverer smiled.

"Might want to find it for personal reasons," he suggested.

"Oh crikey! You don't think even Pon would pinch it?"

"Nunno! Pon's got his limit! But—"

"I say, you fellows," yelled Bunter excitedly. "there's a reward of fifty pounds for findin' that stuff!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Of course, it was certain that a reward would be offered if the stuff wasn't found," said Lord Mauleverer placidly. "Pon didn't need to be very bright to foresee that!"

"Well, my only summer bonnet!" said Bob Cherry blankly. "I'm blessed if I don't believe Mauly has hit on it! He must have been oiling his jolly old aristocratic brain! Here, gimme that Annual—if there's a message in it in invisible ink, we can bring it out by holding it to the stove—"

But just then there came an interruption. The field gate creaked as it opened, and a man in a bowler hat, with a big stick under his arm, came striding towards the camp of the hikers. He was a rather powerful man, with a harsh face, and his manner was belligerent. He strode up to the camp, halted, glared at the hikers, and hooted:

"Now then, what are you doing here?"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

"Pay Up!"

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stared at the man with the stick. His bullying manner was decidedly unpleasant. And his words surprised them. Without waiting for an answer, he barked on:

"Now, then! Out with it! Gipsy gang, camping in a man's meadows! What? Set of tramps! What? Camping on my land! By gum!"

"Certainly we're camping here!" exclaimed Harry indignantly. "We're leaving before nine—"

"Nine! Yes, I'll see you leave before nine!" roared the big man. "Cheek!"

"It's not much past eight now—"

"And it won't be much more past eight before you're run in for trespassing!" barked the big man. "Haven't you eyes? Can't you read? Look at that board on the tree! Trespassers will be prosecuted! I'll get you three months apiece, by gum!"

"Oh crumbs!" said Bob.

The Holiday Annual, and the elucidation of its mystery, were forgotten now. The sudden eruption of the big stranger into the field drove other matters from the minds of the hikers.

"Look here!" said Harry. "I don't know who you are—"

"I fancy anybody in the neighbourhood could tell you who I am!" barked the big man. "Stutters—Joseph Stutters, of Stutters' Farm—and this field belongs to my farm! Got that? And I don't allow trespassers, vagrants, or gipsies on my land!"

"That's all right, old bean," said Lord Mauleverer soothingly. "We're not trespassers, vagrants, or gipsies! We're hikers! I hope you like hikers?"

"Hikers, eh? I've seen your sort before! Trapesing over a man's land, pulling up his fences, burning his wood, frightening his cattle, and—"

"Look here! Can it!" said Johnny Bull.

"What?"

"We've paid to camp in this field. Now chuck it, and leave us alone—see? We're going at nine, or before, as agreed."

"You've paid to camp in this field?" roared Joseph Stutters.

"Yes. Ten shillings," said Wharton.

"And who did you pay, I'd like to know?"

"A man named Hooker—"

"A man named Hooker! I've never heard of a man named Hooker! Anyhow, this field don't belong to a man named Hooker, as it's part of my farm!"

"I say, you fellows, that man Hooker was spoofing us!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, I thought at the time he looked fishy—"

"Fathead! Shut up! Look here, Mr. Stutters! If your name's Stutters we—"

"I'll let you know whether my name's Stutters or not, when I charge you at Hogford Police Station!" roared the big man. "Talking about paying to camp in my field! By gum! If you wanted to camp, why couldn't you come up to my house and ask leave, eh?"

"We haven't seen your house. And that man Hooker said it was his field," snapped Wharton, "and we paid—"

"And haven't you too much sense to pay a man, without knowing whether it was his field or not?" snorted Mr. Stutters.

"Well, we thought—"

"You thought!" jeered Mr. Stutters. "Well, if you've been done, it's your look-out! I hire this field to hikers at ten shillings the night; but I make it a rule that they ask at the house. By gum! Think I don't want to know



The bull was coming across the field after Harry Wharton & Co. with his head down. It was no time to stand on dignity! "Go it!" gasped Wharton. The Greyfriars Removites ran like the wind. "I say, you fellows, he'll get you!" yelled Bunter, from the safe side of the fence. "I say, he's close behind you, Cherry!"

whether people are camping in my field or not? S'pose I turned cattle in, with a gang of silly hikers about? Might have turned a bull in."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"Camping in a man's field without letting him know!" exclaimed the aggrieved Mr. Stutters. "Why, I might have let the field to another lot, not knowing you was here!"

"But we didn't know it was your field!" roared Johnny Bull. "That man Hooker said it was his field, and he'd let it to us—"

"More fool you!" said Mr. Stutters. He pointed with his stick over the tree-tops, where, now that it was daylight, the juniors had a distant glimpse of red chimneys. "There's the house! Why couldn't you walk up to it and find out who was the owner? What?"

"Well, perhaps we might have been a bit more careful," admitted Wharton. "But as we found the man sitting on the fence, and he said it was his field—"

Snort from Mr. Stutters!

The juniors looked at one another. Now that they came to think of it, they realised that they had taken that stranger, Mr. Hooker, on trust. Now it seemed that he was some rogue, who had no right to let anybody into the field, and who had coolly and unscrupulously "done" them for ten shillings. They hoped that they might meet Mr. Hooker again while on the hike!

"Well, we've been spoofed!" said Frank Nugent. "But—"

"That's your business," said the big man; but he calmed down considerably. "If you've been taken in, p'raps you ain't so much to blame. But you can't wonder at a man being annoyed, finding people camping on his land when he's ready and willing to give leave at a fair price if they take the trouble to ask at his house."

"Yes, that's right enough," admitted Wharton. "We're sorry—"

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, my esteemed Stutters!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; a remark that made the big man jump a little.

"Well, you're here!" said Mr. Stutters. "Swindled or not, you're here, and I s'pose you ain't denying that?"

"Well, hardly!" agreed Bob. "We're here all right!"

"Well, then, if you do the fair thing, we'll say no more about it," said Mr. Stutters. "I s'pose you don't expect me to let strangers camp in my fields for nothing, because they're fools enough to be diddled by some rogue and vagabond?"

"N-n-no!" said Harry. "But—"

"We've paid once!" growled Johnny Bull.

"That doesn't cut any ice, if we've paid the wrong man," said Harry, with a grimace. "I suppose Mr. Stutters is entitled to be paid!"

"You never said a truer word!" assured Mr. Stutters. "And I'll tell you this much, you ain't going without paying, because I'll call my men to lay hold of your traps if you try to bilk me."

"Oh, cheese it!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Look here!" roared Mr. Stutters, laying hold of his stick, and looking rather dangerous. "If I have any lip, I'll—"

Johnny Bull looked at him.

"I said cheese it, and I mean cheese it," he said coolly. "You won't handle that stick here, Mr. Stutters! You'll go head-first into the water if you do!"

"Order, old bean!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "The man's in the right, and we're not payin' for polished manners. Let him have his ten bob!"

"I say, you fellows, for goodness' sake pay the man!" exclaimed Billy Bunter,

eyeing Mr. Stutters' big stick with great uneasiness. "I suppose you ain't going to diddle him?"

"Shell out, then, you fat frog!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I told you I'd left all my money at home at Bunter Court—"

"Then shut up!"

"Beast!"

"Yes, shut up, Bunter!" said Harry.

"But Mauly's right, you men. If we've paid the wrong man, it's up to us to pay the right man, I suppose. We'll scrag that rascal Hooker, if we come across him again."

"The scragfulness will be terrific!"

"The awful rotter!" said Nugent.

"Taking us in, and pulling our leg! I suppose we'd better pay!"

And ten shillings were collected and handed over to Mr. Stutters.

He looked a little more amiable as he received the money, and slipped it into his pocket.

"Well, fair's fair," he said. "That's all right! And, look here! You can stay the rest of the day if you like. I ain't wanting the field till this evening. Stay as long as you like till then."

"That's all right," said Harry. "We shall leave before nine. We want to get on our way. I'm sorry we camped without leave, as it turns out—"

"Well, never mind that," said Mr. Stutters. "But let me warn you, young man, not to pay any rogue who asks you for money, without finding out first whether he's got any right to ask. See? Keep that in mind, and you'll find it's a good tip—useful to remember."

And Mr. Stutters stalked away to the gate, turned into the lane, and disappeared.

"May as well get moving," said Bob. "We'll leave the Holiday Annual over till we camp again. It will take a jolly

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long time to go through it. Now, Bunter, why haven't you washed-up?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Yaas, I can't say I like Mr. Stutters' manners," remarked Lord Mauleverer. "The sooner we get off his land the better."

All the hikers were agreed on that. A can of water was dipped from the stream, and the washing-up commenced. Billy Bunter sat down to rest under a tree to watch the process. He sat and rested for about half a minute, after which space of time, Bob Cherry trickled a jug of water down the back of his fat neck. Bunter leaped up in great haste.

"You silly idiot!" he yelled. "Whar-er you up to?"

"Aren't you going to help wash-up?"

"No!" roared Bunter.

"Then you'll have another jug of water—"

"Keep off, you beast!" howled Bunter. "I'm going to help! I—I—I want to! I was going to, all along. Keep that jug away, you maniac!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bunter helped.

Washing-up over, the hikers proceeded to pack. The tent was taken down, and all hands were busy, when a gate in the hedge on the farther side of the field, which the juniors had not noticed before, opened, and a large, stout man with a red face stood in the gateway and stared at them.

"Hi!" he shouted.

The hikers looked round.

"Hi! What are you doing in my field? Get out!" shouted the fat man. "I'm turning the bull into that field. Get out! You impudent young rascals, what do you mean by camping in my field—what?"

The juniors gazed at him. The red-faced man came towards them, with a

very angry expression on his face. They could only gaze at him. He looked like a farmer, and, according to his words, he was the owner of the field. It seemed to be raining owners of that particular field!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

"Hook It!"

"MY only hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry at last.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Look here, who are you?" demanded Johnny Bull.

The red-faced farmer stared at him.

"Me? I'm Brown—John Brown, if you want to know. And what I want to know is, what the thunder are you doing in my field? Lucky I spotted you before I turned the bull in. He'd have had some of you!"

"Oh, gad! How many thumpin' owners has this field got?" asked Lord Mauleverer, in wonder. "Sure this is your field, Mr. Brown?"

"Well, I ought to know, as I've farmed this land for forty years," said Mr. Brown. "What do you mean, hey?"

"Diddled again!" yelled Bob Cherry. "That blighter with the stick—"

"Get out!" The farmer pointed to the gate. "I'm going to turn the black bull into this field. He don't like strangers."

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter started for the gate on the lane at a run. He did not want to stop and ascertain whether the bull liked him. He knew that he did not like bulls. Bunter crossed the field to the lane at about 60 m.p.h.

The other fellows did not stir. They were a little excited and a little angry.

Twice they had paid for permission to camp in that field, and now it looked

as if Mr. Stutters, as well as Mr. Hooker, was a spoofing rogue who had taken advantage of their unsuspiciousness. They were not going to take a third owner on trust. It was really not to be expected. For all they knew, Mr. Brown might be another rogue of the same kidney as Mr. Hooker and Mr. Stutters.

"Are you going," roared the farmer, "or are you waiting for me to lay my whip round you—what?" The red-faced man had a heavy cartwhip under his arm. He slipped it down into his hand.

"Keep that whip to yourself!" growled Johnny Bull. "You'll get hurt if you don't. This is another dashed rascal like the others, you fellows, and we're not paying any more, that's flat."

"No fear!" said Bob. "There's a jolly old limit!"

"I've told you to go!" roared Mr. Brown.

"And we're telling you to go and eat coke!" retorted Johnny Bull. "We've paid to camp here—"

"Rubbish! I never let my land for camping. I never allow vagrants on my land. Get out!"

Mr. Brown cracked the whip.

"We'll get out when we're ready to go!" answered Johnny determinedly.

"I tell you we paid a man named Hooker last night—"

"Never heard of him."

"And a man named Stutters came along half an hour ago and said it was his field, and we paid him—"

"Never heard of him, either."

"And now you come along and say it's your field, and we jolly well shan't believe a word of it unless you prove it," said Johnny. "And you can shut up and be blowed!"

Mr. Brown's red face became quite purple.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer hastily. "If it's really this man's jolly old field—"

"How do we know?" demanded Johnny Bull. "That man Stutters gave us a tip about that—laughing in his sleeve, the cheeky rotter! But it was a good tip, all the same."

"Get out!" roared Mr. Brown.

"We're going out when we've finished packing," said Harry. "Ten minutes or so—"

"You're going now! Get out! I'll lay my whip round you!"

Perhaps Mr. Brown, the genuine owner of that field, had cause to feel angry. He found hikers camped there without leave, in spite of his "Trespassers" board. He was a busy man, and had no time to waste, and the hikers refused to heed his injunctions to depart on the instant. So perhaps it was not surprising that he whirled his whip in the air and brought the long lash round the legs of the nearest of the hikers.

But that, so to speak, tore it. Twice the hikers had been diddled over that unlucky field, and they were not at all certain that the red-faced man was not a third diddler. And a lashing whip round their legs was neither grateful nor comforting.

Johnny Bull gave a roar as he got it, and jumped at the red-faced man. Bob Cherry jumped at the same moment. Mr. Brown found his stout legs hooked from under him, and his stout person came down in the grass with a heavy bump that almost shook Mr. Brown's field.

"Ooooooop!" gasped Mr. Brown, as he landed.

"There, you cheeky ass!" roared Johnny Bull. "Now keep your dashed whip to yourself, you thumping fat-head, see?"

(Continued on page 28.)

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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. Spurred on by a rascal named Valetti, Len Allison, the old man's nephew, and "boss" of the works enlists the services of a masked hunchback to steal the plans. The raid proves fruitless, although old Simon is badly battered. With his crippled father to support, Bill Allison, a crack left-handed bowler, leaves Mike Doyle, a mechanic, in charge of the workshop, and joins the county club as a pro. Bill very soon establishes himself as a match-winner. Later, the hunchback makes a further attempt to steal the plans, but is beaten off. Determined to scare their enemy, Bill and Mike visit Len's home. A surprise awaits the two chums, however, for after being shown into an empty study a secret panel in the wall opens to reveal Len Allison and his sinister confederate, Valetti.

(Now read on.)

A Lucky Escape!

IT was a moment Bill would never forget. The scene stamped itself on his memory for all time.

There was no sound, no movement—nothing but a deep, suffocating silence. It was as though some invisible sorcerer had turned the occupants of the study to stone.

Bill Allison's fists were clenched so tightly that the knuckles shone ivory-white through the skin. Mike Doyle crouched, lightly balanced on the pads of his feet. The butler, mouth agape, beads of sweat glistening on his forehead, appeared to be on the verge of a fit. As for the conspirators, they, clearly, were petrified—stunned by the shock.

From the confident way Len had opened the secret panel it was obvious he had thought the coast was clear. Equally plain was the terror that gripped him now that he had walked straight into the unexpected pitfall.

Stark fear shone in his eyes. His weak, handsome face had gone ghastly pale. Behind him Corsica Phil Valetti bristled like an angry cat, his swarthy features, half in shadow, twisted into a mask of hate as he glared at his old enemy, Cannonball Mike Doyle.

He it was who finally broke the nerve-racking hush.

"You!"

The word was a raven-like-croak, but it galvanised Mike into action.

"Us! And come out o' that!" he snapped savagely, while something blue and sinister flashed in the electric light.

Bill drew a sharp, sibilant breath. For one awful second he feared that the Irishman meant to put Joe and Hump's automatic to a deadly use there and then. So did Len and Valetti; so, also, did the trembling butler, who in his panic turned the tables on Bill and Mike, wrecked their triumph completely, and saved his master from utter collapse.

It was all done in the twinkling of an eye, so swiftly that the partners were caught hopelessly unawares.

Venting all his terror in one hoarse cry, the podgy manservant reeled back flat against the wall, his upflung elbow catching the electric light switch. In a trice the room was plunged in darkness, and the ugly stillness gave place to uglier noise and activity forthwith.

"You fat swab!"

Wild with wrath, Bill spun round and made a dive at the invisible butler, but in doing so collided with Mike and sent him spinning. There came a yelp as the servant toppled backwards through the door and took to his heels. Then from the corner of the room a grating, triumphant laugh was cut short abruptly by the closing of the secret panel.

"They're bolting! They're getting away! The light, Bill—switch on the light!"

It was Mike who shouted in a voice so distorted by rage as to be scarcely recognisable. An unseen arm, strong as a steel cable, flung Bill towards the door, and the youngster's hands, beating against the wall, brushed against the switch. As he thumbed the electric light on once more the study resounded to the heavy thud of Mike's body, crashing full toss into the secret panel.

Len and Valetti, like the butler, had vanished; Mike and Bill had the study to themselves. Fortune having taken a drastic turn in their favour, had deserted them again just as abruptly. In that bitter moment the partners went clean berserk, with chagrin and stinging disappointment,

Again and again they flung themselves at the wall, hammered at it with fists and shoulders, kicked until their toes ached. But the stout oaken panels defied their every effort to break through. Even when Mike sobered down to something approaching sanity, and began to search for some hidden spring or other means of opening the sliding door, he met with no success.

"The tricky hounds!"

Tormented by the lash of defeat, the reckless Irishman put all his seething ire into one last rousing kick. Then, struck by a sudden thought, he cursed himself for a fool, dashed across to the study window and flung it open, peering down long and keenly into the dark garden below.

"Out of it, Bill!" he barked, whipping round suddenly. "Looks as though they're just skipping out by the back entrance. Follow me!"

There was no stopping the infuriated Cannonball now, even had Bill wanted to. Three long strides and both partners were out of Len's study, running down the corridor at top speed.

On reaching the landing Bill had a fleeting glimpse of two scared servants peeping down over the banister-rail. But the fat butler had disappeared as completely as his master. Breathing hard, the two hunters hurried on down to the basement, where Bill, who knew the house, found and opened the back door.

Out into the garden they darted then, Mike switching on his torch. But though the shrubberies, the dripping trees, greenhouse and shed were searched swiftly and efficiently, no trace of the fugitives came to light.

"You're sure you saw 'em go this way?" panted Bill, when finally the fruitless hunt brought them to the high back wall of the garden.

"Yes! And if I hadn't been such a mug as to waste time on that infernal panel, we might have caught 'em," was the disgruntled reply. "I reckon that secret passage in the house must lead down into the cellars somewhere, and then out into this garden. But where the entrance is goodness knows, and we'd better not hang around much

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longer in case that butler spalpeen calls in the police."

Mike's jaw bulged.

"I'll find that passage, though, take it from me!" he vowed. "Now let's get on t'other side of this wall and see if we can pick up their trail. And Bill, go steady! Len's got the breeze up all right, but I wouldn't put it past Valetti to try to hit back at us!"

Quietly they moved along the wall, but, finding the door therein locked from the outside, were forced to waste more precious minutes clambering over the top by the aid of a friendly tree. The lane below, leading to the river, was deserted, and the recent rain had left its surface soft and slushy. The partners prowled on cautiously, Mike flashing the torch at intervals until, on the river bank, he came to a sudden halt.

In a large patch of mud before him were the fresh, sharply defined footprints of a man who had been running at full stretch.

"H'm! Narrow boots, with well-pointed toes—Phil Valetti's dandy winkle-pickers for a dollar!" grunted Mike, moving on more warily than ever.

Five minutes later, however, even the dogged Irishman was forced to abandon the chase.

Again luck had flattered only to deceive. For the partners arrived at the foot of an iron bridge that spanned the river, and although Valetti's tell-tale tracks showed that he and Len had fled that way, there was nothing but open country on the other side stretching away, dark and lonely, to the hills beyond Avonport.

The two rogues had made good their escape!

Mike Makes a Promise!

MIKE sighed, leaned wearily against the bridge parapet, and began to unwrap a stick of chewing-gum. Now that the trail had petered out, his fiery mood had changed, with the suddenness typical of his race, to one of gloomy apathy. When he spoke again, after a glum silence, his voice sounded flat and dull.

"Well, that's that, my son! No use chasin' 'em any more if they've taken to the fields. They're well away now. It's a howlin' wash-out!"

Bill, damp and breathless, scratched his head helplessly, then snorted. Younger than Mike, he found it hard to accept defeat in such a passive spirit.

"Well, then, hang it, we'll go back to his house again first thing to-morrow and slaughter the crawling scug!" he blazed. "And if we don't find him there we'll go to his office at the works!"

Mike shrugged.

"You'll do nothing of the sort, because it'll only be a waste of time," he said bluntly. "We've given Len and Valetti the shock of their lives to-night, and I'll bet Len, for one, won't be seen in Avonport again for a while. As for Corsica Phil—oh, well, let's get home! The luck's been against us, Bill—I'm whacked!"

So was Bill—fatigued and disgusted.

Seeing that there was no more to be done in the rainy darkness, the partners tramped off towards Kelsey, both in a thoroughly bad temper.

Indeed, neither uttered another word until they were half-way to the cottage.

Then, all at once Mike astonished his young comrade by an outburst of grim, quiet laughter.

"Be gum, what a night it's been, son!" he chuckled, and with that slipped an arm through Bill's. "But I've been thinking—one way and another it hasn't turned out such a frost as it seems. Just listen to your uncle as we step along."

Bill obeyed willingly.

"For a start, we've tumbled to the way Len and Valetti work their precious alibi stunt," continued the shrewd ex-racer. "First they go up to Len's study and make sure that the butler knows they're in there. Then in due time they slip out through that confounded secret passage, do their dirty work, and then nip back into the study again the same way. Later on, the butler sees or hears them both come out, and he's willing to swear—quite truthfully, the bloated clam—that, as far as he knows, neither his boss nor Corsica Phil have been out all night. And clever it all is, too!"

Bill sniffed.

"Too clever! But what I can't understand is this—why was Len out with Valetti to-night? I'll swear there was only one man in that open roadster which took Joe the Hump away after the brute had escaped from us! What was Len doing out on such a night?"

"I suppose he got the tip that Joe's raid had gone bust again, and rushed off to meet Valetti and the hunchback for a confab, in case it was necessary for all hands to bunk forthwith," ventured Mike. "You bet they've got a quiet hiding-place for Joe the Hump and that car. Anyway, that's the only theory I can figure out, and it don't matter a hoot in any case. Len was out with Valetti—and we saw how they came in. By gum, I'm glad we went along there to-night, my son!"

"Glad? Gosh, I'm sick of the whole rotten game!"

Mike, after a hasty, sidelong glance, pressed the boy's arm.

"Not you! You're just tired, that's all," he said encouragingly. "And talking of games, let's think out our next move. I tell you frankly, son, I shan't rest easy till we've got the supercharger safely launched. Once that's done not even Valetti would dare try to pinch the plans again. And, anyway, they'd be no use to him then, 'cos the whole motor trade would know about the invention. So we've got to get a real spurt on, and this is what we'll do:

"You're not playing cricket again till the Essex match on Saturday. That means three days clear, and if we both work like niggers in the shop we can get your dad's supercharger finished and ready to be adjusted. And then—"

Bill interrupted somewhat impatiently.

"But what good will that do if we haven't a car?" he demanded. "I've saved all the cash I can, and so have you. But you know as well as I do that we're still a long way off being able to buy even a decent second-hand car for demonstration purposes."

Mike chewed his gum thoughtfully, and both partners pushed on again without speaking till they arrived at the cottage. There, at the gate, the Cannonball suddenly gave vent to another hard laugh, and squared his shoulders like a man who has at last formed a fateful decision.

"Don't worry, lad," he said. "I'll get you a car!"

Quite calmly Mike made that blunt announcement, and instantly mystified Bill still further by adding in the same nonchalant tone:

"Also the car I'll get won't cost a penny piece, either! Now shut your head, come inside, and let's get to bed. Just trust your Uncle Mike, Bill, that's all."

Avonshire v. Essex!

IT was a week later—6.55 on the following Tuesday evening, to be exact. On the Avonshire County cricket ground a tense throng of home supporters were alternately watching the play and the pavilion clock, most of them squirming with excitement in the process.

Would Essex manage to save the game, after all? Or could young Bill get that one last stubborn wicket that meant all the difference between a victory for Avonshire or defeat on the first innings? These were the anxious questions burning in the minds of roughly four thousand cricket enthusiasts that evening.

Avonshire 197 and 223, Essex 211 and 200 for 9—that was how the score stood at present. At 6.50 Essex had claimed the extra half-hour, and thus, with the last pair in, ten runs to make for victory, and five minutes in which to make 'em, a thrilling and sporting finish was in sight.

"Now, Bill!"

"One out of the bag, laddie!"

From all parts of the ground rose the earnest exhortations as the bowling umpire called "Last over!" and Bill Allison walked slowly to his mark, mopping his moist neck and face with a handkerchief.

Since before lunch Avonshire's young star had borne the brunt of the attack, and the strain had taken it out of him, though he successfully disguised the fact from Mr. Jerry Tempest and his loyal team-mates. But there was no getting away from it—his feet were sore, and his left arm felt like two pen'n'orth of chewed string from bowling over after over on a hot day, with the wicket as hard as a board.

His form, too, had been patchy—not nearly good enough to satisfy himself. There had been periods during the afternoon when his bowling had lacked all its usual spin and devil, and the best he could do was to keep a respectable length.

The truth was, of course, that Bill was carrying too big a load of worry on his young shoulders these days. There were dark clouds on his mental horizon. For once in a way his old cheery smile was not on parade.

Nor had the aggressive Essex batsmen made his task any the easier.

With five points for a first-innings lead already in their pockets the merry men from the East had gone all out for a downright win. Cutmore and O'Connor had hit hard and brilliantly during a long third-wicket partnership, and though Bill had rallied and caused a sharp collapse, dapper O'Connor was still in, and Boswell was backing him up by sitting on the splice as doggedly as he knew how.

Bill took a stern grip on himself. Avonshire needed these eight points badly if they were to remain in the running for county honours.

Grimly he skipped forward and began that last important over with a stinging

off-break. Boswell lunged forward to it, over-reached himself, and was well beaten by the lightning break. But, alas! for Bill's hopes, the ball nipped back a shade too much, and instead of clipping the batsman's bails, glanced acutely off his pad and sped away to fine leg.

"Come on!" called O'Connor.

Down the pitch in a flash, he just scraped home in time to beat the throw-in. A round of applause rewarded the smartly stolen run.

But having paid graceful tribute to the enemy, the Avonshire sportsmen shook their heads dubiously. Nine runs to get now! And O'Connor, well set, had the bowling.

Bill needed all his fighting spirit then.

The Essex star, he knew from painful experience, was no ordinary play-for-safety plodder. Last wicket or not, O'Connor was quite willing to have a go at anything in the nature of a loose ball, and with only five left Bill could not afford to take any risks whatever.

With beautiful accuracy the lad tossed up a perfect length ball that zipped in from leg, kicking up nastily. But O'Connor, who had been watching Bill's left hand as a cat watches a mouse, was prepared. Neat footwork carried him right back on to his stumps. As the ball broke he came down on it hard, playing it straight back along the pitch with a bat as broad as Salisbury Plain.

To the next, a real beast of an outswinger, he stepped across and chopped the leather smartly between point and slip. Only Jim Frazer's tigerish pounce saved an addition to the score, but a little flutter of dismay ran through Bill's heart. His outswinger was the deadliest weapon in his armoury. From the confident way it had been played he knew then that O'Connor had him taped.

And, just to confirm his suspicions, the Essex man came dancing clean out of his crease to meet the fourth ball with a terrific straight drive.

Crack!

There followed the flash of a gleaming willow blade, a crisp plunk, and then another as the ball, bouncing once, thudded against the bowling screen and trickled back. A boundary—four-penn'orth, all the way!

The Avonshire supporters groaned inwardly, even while they clapped that gorgeous hit.

Five runs to get—two balls to go! Excitement rose to fever-heat.

Then crack again! Another beautiful drive, past mid-off this time, that brought the spectators to their feet. Just in time Frank Baker raced across from long-off to save the boundary, but though he picked up and returned in his stride, he was too late to prevent the batsmen crossing twice.

Two runs! Three more to get, and all on the last ball!

Worse still from the Avonshire point of view, it looked very much as though their young favourite had definitely shot his bolt at last.

One could have heard a pin drop on the Avonshire ground then.

All the fieldsmen were on their toes. O'Connor slipped his right-hand batting glove into his pocket and took a firmer grip on the bat handle. Bill squinted across at him thoughtfully.

What to do now—that was the problem. Playing with safety with a good-length ball was useless against such a quick-footed, hard-hitting batsman. Besides, by taking off that glove, O'Connor had flung down the gauntlet, thought Bill, with a flicker of his old whimsical humour.

It was win or bust then! O'Connor

meant to have a slam at four or nothing off the last ball. The Avonshire "demon" accepted the challenge, and made his decision with an alacrity that stamped him for all time as a truly great bowler.

Without lengthening his run, but with all his remaining energy and body-swing, Bill slung down his sixth ball—a sizzling, utterly unexpected "snorter"

(Continued on next page.)

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.

I AM afraid I must apologise to a number of my chums for keeping them waiting for an answer to their letters. As you know, however, The MAGNET has been so packed with good things lately, that I have found it difficult to squeeze in much chat. Also, as I have explained, the Old Paper goes to press some considerable time before you receive it, and that, naturally, delays the answers to many queries.

This week I have received one of the most interesting letters I have had for a long time. It comes from a real "old reader," Mr. J. Swain, of Greenwich, who is now 73 years of age! I wonder if he is my oldest reader?

You remember the photogravure plate we gave away some time ago of the Panama Canal? Well, this reader of ours worked on the Panama Canal as long ago as 1885, when De Lesseps was trying to build it. In those days, Panama was a veritable "white man's grave," and fevers and yellow jack carried men off like flies. I don't think a single white man escaped the ravages of the tropical diseases, and Mr. Swain was fortunate in recovering from a bout of yellow jack, which nearly proved fatal. He tells me he has felt the effects of it all his life.

He finishes his letter by wishing long life and prosperity to The MAGNET, from "an old salt of the windjammer days." And I am sure that all my readers will join with me in heartily reciprocating those kind wishes of his.

MY next letter this week comes from J. H. Smart, of Lincoln,

A HOME CINEMATOPHILER,

who takes me to task for a recent paragraph of mine dealing with the widths of "sub-standard" films used in home cinematographs. He points out that there are several other widths of film in use—notably a film of 8 mm. That is correct—but at the time I wrote my last paragraph, the 8 mm. film had not been placed on the British market. Those of you who are interested in taking your own "movies" will doubtless have seen the new machines and films at your local dealers.

Raymond Thornton, one of my Bradford readers, evidently believes that it is not possible to have too much of a good thing. He wants

MORE "GREYFRIARS HERALD."

He suggests that I should devote four pages a week to it instead of two. Well, I would like to do so—but think of the long story of Harry Wharton & Co.! If I increased the size of the supplement, something else would have to be "out" to make room for it, and I don't think the majority of my readers would like the long complete story to be shortened. You have all seen how, in recent issues, I have had to sacrifice my weekly chat in order that your enjoyment of the exploits of the Famous Five should not be curtailed.

ANOTHER suggestion comes from Roland Page (no address given). He thinks it would be a good idea to publish a leisure crossword puzzle each week. I will bear this suggestion in mind.

Here comes a letter from a very shy reader! He is

AN ARDENT HIKER,

but he doesn't like to wear shorts, because—whisper it quietly—he has hairy legs! Well, what of it? Why be shy about that? It is natural for hairs to grow on legs, and I am sure no one need feel self-conscious about a thing like that. I certainly don't advise my reader to shave his legs, as he suggests. Shaving makes hair grow—and makes it all the more bristly and stubborn. And chemicals are injurious to the skin.

THE SWERDNA SALES CO.,

whose announcement offering the New Manx Kite appeared in our last issue, has asked us to state that the sizes of these kites are as follows: 22½ inch—2/6; 24 in.—3/6; 29 in.—4/6; and 31½ in.—5/6.

By the way, don't forget that our offer of a Rigby "Super" Model Aeroplane for 4d. definitely closes this week. If you have not already got yours, you should send in three tokens without further delay. If necessary, back numbers of The MAGNET can be obtained from our Back Number Dept., Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

MR. FRANK RICHARDS asks me to thank I. A. Turnbull (who also gives no address) for the appreciative letter he has sent. I can assure I. A.—and all my other readers—that, much as they have enjoyed the previous stories by this fine author, they will be even more enthusiastic about the future stories which will appear from Mr. Richards' facile pen (or, rather, typewriter!). For instance, next week you will be able to read:

"DOWN ON THE FARM!"

which is as full of good stuff as an egg is of meat. Mr. Richards has let himself go, and the result is one of the most laughable, and, at the same time, enthralling stories we have ever published. You'll find all your favourite characters well to the fore, and you won't want to put down your copy of The MAGNET until you have finished every line of this fine yarn. There will, of course, be further exciting chapters of our grand sporting story: "Allison of Avonshire!" and a rib-tickling supplement of the ever-popular "Greyfriars Herald." The shorter features will appear as usual, and I hope to be "in the office" to deal with more of my readers' letters and queries. So if there is anything you want to ask me—fire away, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

that tricked the fine Essex batsman at last.

All O'Connor saw was the youngster's arm whirl over in a sudden dazzling circle, while the ball that should have been a slow one came hissing towards him at baffling speed. Taken by surprise, he altered his stroke at the last minute and lashed out desperately.

The next he heard, as his bat met empty air, was the sickening click of a shattered wicket behind him.

Swift as a rapier-thrust, the swerving express pierced his defence and slashed the off-stick out of its socket. Avonshire had won, won by two runs with the last ball of the match.

The roar of cheering that followed was heard half-way across the town.

"Bowled! Bowled! Bowled!"

"Well played, Bill! Oh, well played—well played indeed!"

There was a rush, a sudden avalanche of rapturous enthusiasts, bursting out of the stands and over the ropes on to the turf. Policemen waving their arms, and groundsmen carrying iron spikes and cord, were swept along by a tide of cheering humanity. The Avonshire players, who had been staring at Bill in wide-eyed astonishment and delight, pulled themselves together all at once and bolted.

Bill bolted with them; in fact, he led the stampede.

Past experience had already taught the Avonshire star that being caught by a jubilant throng meant a sore back and shoulders afterwards, so he stood not upon the order of his going but made tracks for the pav. as fast as his long legs could cover the ground.

Though he just escaped the gleeful rush by inches, he still had to run the gauntlet of hilarious and heavy-handed members in the stand. Hence, by the time he managed to thrust his way through into the players' room, all he could do was to collapse on a chair and gasp.

One by one his team-mates straggled in after him, and one by one they thumped him on the back, and praised him. Only little Dick Hayes, the wicket-keeper, had a grievance. The rest of the side were as cock-a-hoop over the great victory as the crowd, still shouting and milling outside.

"My stars, Bill, I thought you were licked then!" chortled Ted Forbes.

"So did Jack O'Connor! You could have knocked him down with a feather after that surprise-packet."

"Yes, s'all very well!" snorted Stumper Hayes. "But where did you dig up that cannonball, young Madman? How long has your name been Larwood? Talk about Jack being surprised! Bust me if that ball hadn't hit the sticks it would have plugged me in the jaw!"

"Which was a bit of good luck for you," said Bill, as he made his weary way towards the shower-baths.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss next week's exciting chapters of this popular sporting story.)

THE GREYFRIARS HIKERS!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Oooogh! I—I—I'll—" spluttered Mr. Brown. He scrambled up, landing out wildly with the cartwhip.

"Oh, my hat! Collar him!"

"Bump him!"

"Scrag him!"

"Yaas, by gad! Mop him up!"

Six exasperated schoolboys rushed on the angry Mr. Brown. He went down again with another heavy bump. This time Bob Cherry grabbed the cartwhip away and tossed it into the branches of the nearest tree, where it remained.

Mr. Brown, spluttering with fury, struggled. In the excitement of the moment his hat was crushed over his ears.

It was a gasping, panting, spluttering, and frantically excited Mr. Brown that dragged himself away at last from the grasp of the equally excited Greyfriars fellows.

"Now travel!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Get out, or you'll get some more!"

"The morefulness will be terrific!"

Mr. Brown gurgled.

"Tramps! Vagrants! Grooogh!" he gasped. "You wait a minute, till I turn the bull into the field! He'll shift you, my black bull will! You jest wait a tick, that's all!"

Gurgling for breath as he went, Mr. Brown spluttered away to the hedge-gate by which he had entered.

"Oh, gad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "I really fancy we've got to the right owner of the field at last, old beans! That sportsman sort of seems genuine."

"Well, we're going," said Harry Wharton, with a breathless laugh. "If he's really the owner, the sooner we go the better. Stick those things together anyhow, and let's hook it!"

"Oh, my hat! Listen!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as a deep bellow came from the adjoining field, into which Mr. Brown had disappeared. Evidently there was a bull!

Bellow!

"Time we started, I think!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "That doesn't sound to me like a good-tempered bull!"

Gathering up their goods and chattels, without waiting to finish orderly packing, the hikers started for the gate on the lane. That gate was shut, and over it, from the safe side, Billy Bunter was blinking through his big spectacles.

The Greyfriars fellows disdained to run, but they walked rather fast. There came another bellow from the next field, and a huge animal appeared in the hedge gateway—a gigantic black bull, with red eyes and tossing tail. There was no doubt about the bull now—there he was!

Bob Cherry, glancing back, saw him come careering into the meadow, and gave a gasp.

"Put it on!"

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter, from the lane. "He's after you!"

Harry Wharton looked back. He did not want to run. But at the sight of the careering black bull he ran! So did the other fellows!

The bull was coming across the field after them with his head down! It was no time to stand on dignity! Arguing

with that bull at close quarters was a matter that could only end in favour of the bull!

"Go it!" gasped Wharton.

And they ran like the wind. Bellow!

"I say, you fellows, he'll get you!" yelled Bunter. "I say, he's close behind you, Cherry! I say—Yaroooooooh!"

Billy Bunter roared, as the half-packed tent was hurled over the gate into the lane. It landed on Bunter, enveloped him, and flattened him down on the earth. From under the flapping canvas came muffled roars from the Owl of the Remove.

"Whooogh! Oooogh! Oh, you silly ass! Oh, you beast! Urrrgh!"

The hikers did not heed Bunter! There was no time to heed Bunter! They fairly flew over the gate into the lane.

Jumping and scrambling and stumbling they landed there, and the bull, evidently disappointed, paraded the field, bellowing.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, as he picked himself up. "Oh crumbs! Lucky bulls can't climb gates!"

"Oh dear!"

"Where's Bunter?"

"Grooogh! I say, you fellows!" A suffocated squeak told where Bunter was. "I say, lemme out! Gemme up! Drag off that putrid tent! Grooogh—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The tent was dragged off Bunter. He sat up, gasping. On the safe side of the gate Harry Wharton & Co. proceeded to finish their packing. It was finished very soon, and the burdens adjusted to the backs, and they were ready to start.

"Come on, Bunter!"

"Oooogh! I'm out of breath!" gasped Bunter. "Chucking things at a fellow! I'm not starting yet! Grooogh!"

"If the bull should get through that fence—" remarked Bob thoughtfully.

"Eh?"

"There's rather a gap—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Still, if Bunter's not ready—"

"I'm ready! I say, you fellows, let's get off! What are you hanging about for?" For goodness' sake, let's start!"

And Bunter started—at a run! And the hikers, grinning, followed him. Looking back, they had a glimpse of the red-faced Mr. Brown, trying to get his whip out of the tree. What he was thinking of doing with that whip when he recovered it they did not feel disposed to linger and inquire. They were tired of Mr. Brown and his bull, and they went on their way, leaving both behind.

The first night's camping had been rather exciting. But the Greyfriars hikers did not allow that to worry them. Hill and dale, sunny down and green meadows opened before them as they hiked on with cheerful faces.

THE END.

(Now look out for the next yarn in this grand new holiday series in which the Greyfriars hikers meet with further exciting adventures on the great highway. Note the title: "DOWN ON THE FARM!" and prepare for a real good treat!)

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GENUINE BARGAINS. Good Cheap Photo Material and Films. Send for Samples and Lists, Free.—**HACKETTS, JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL 6.**

Can anyone recommend a free training camp for Battling Bolsover? Uninvited guest at my house for over a week. Strongly recommended to any trainer looking for a man with unlimited "staying" powers!—S. PRICE (Shelly), Box No. 38, GREYFRIARS HERALD.

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EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

August 26th, 1933.

WHO WANTS IT? Wealthy Philanthropist is willing to contribute a fat, substantial figure to any orphanage willing to accept it.—Write "MAULY," Box 40, GREYFRIARS HERALD.

THEM

By James Walker

What the thump are we coming to, I'd like to know? Here's Vivian, an insignificant Remove fag, writing an article in a junior rag on the subject of my character, and how I ought to reform it! It's scandalous!

Since you ask me to write my opinion of him in return, I'll first take the opportunity of saying that his remarks about me are absolute trash—stupid rubbish, by God!

Still, nobody's likely to take much notice of a fan's opinion of a Sixth Form man, so I'll get on to the subject of Vivian. What can I say about him?

The only thing I know against him is that he was, by a strange freak of Fate, reared in the slums of London, notwithstanding that he was by birth a member of the Upper Ten. Certainly, that unpropitious upbringing is a severe handicap to him. He still drops his *H's* occasionally, and his accent contains unmistakable traces of the Cockney dialect, which jars on the ears of sensitive fellows like myself. His outlook on life, rather naturally, is coloured by the impressions he received in his early youth in the insalubrious neighbourhood of Parker's Row, or whatever it was.

Apart from that, I must admit that he is quite a likeable youngster. From what I've seen of him when officiating at Compulsory Practice, his ideas of cricket and footer are rudimentary; but he shows promises and a genuine willingness to learn. In class work, I understand, he's quite good, and at boxing only his slight build prevents him showing up to excellent advantage. Socially, he is well known and appreciated for his cheery, optimistic demeanour.

Not a bad little beggar, in his queue-
way! Still, I shall certainly box his dashed
ears for lampooning me, when the new
Term begins!

(Next week we're going to have an article on William Walter Dabney, from the pen of Tomlinson minor, of the Fourth. Don't miss this treat—ED.)

DICKY NUGENT'S WEEKLY
WISDOM

My petor's so fed up with seeing ink-strayne on my hands that he's thinking of mixing itching powder with the ink.

He evidently beleeves in the old mottoe "An itch in time saves grime !"

Dick Rake's Transformation

Moet Dick Rake, of Greyfriars! But not the Dick Rake we knew last term—that benighted ever-lubber who had hardly ever experienced the tang of the salt sea air—oh dear, no! Dick Rake has changed—altered beyond recognition; you'd scarcely know him now!

We ran into him on the promenade at Southsea. We were immediately struck by his rolling gait. He seemed to be rolling all over the place.

"We started at Rake in stupefaction," Shiver your timbers! "Meeting your messmates!" we gasped. "Come off it, old chap! What's the merry game?!" "Bust me topgallante! It's good to see you again!" shouted Rake. "Takes me back to the days when I was a landlubber myself! Heave-ho, me hearty!" "M-m-my hat! What does it all mean?" we asked wondrously. "You talk like a doney."



thing about him. Another peculiarly almost as striking was the jaunty angle of his yachting cap. No yachting cap belonging to a lesser person than the winner of an international yacht race has ever been seen wearing a cap at such an angle. It seemed an imminent danger of slipping off altogether!

"Rake, old bean, how are you?" we cried heartily.

"Shiver me timbers!" roared Rake, much to our surprise. "Fancy meeting my old mess-mates here!"

"Oh, no!"

"A week?" we hazarded somewhat anxiously.

"Not quite that, as a matter of fact. You see——"

"Ah! You had a long day at sea, then, eh?"

"Not altogether," said Rake apologetically. "To be quite candid, I had an hour on the Solent Sigher—the shilling evening cruise, you know!"

We shook hands silently with Dick Rake. We hardly felt up to trusting ourselves to words.

The last we saw of Rake he was dancing a hornpipe at the entrance to the pier!

MAKES WHOOP-EE



Billy Bunter, who comes into a special category, having received, as far as D'Arny could remember, no invitation to turn up!

Incidentally, the only criticism of the arrangement came from the last-mentioned Bunter generously admitted that the show was well done, but

A large number of Gentians fellows received invitations to the charity fete at Eastwood on Tuesday recently, from our celebrated old friend, Arthur Augustus D'Arvy, of 84, Elm st., Lord Eastwood, who has a reputation for doing things bravely well, excelled himself on this occasion, and there were his arrangements to satisfy every taste in the spacious grounds of a beautiful old home. For those who enjoy the petty selfishness of the fair-gang, there were coconut-shies, hoop-la, a roundabout, a milk-and-cream railway, a shooting gallery, and ake-ball, not to

he couldn't refrain from remarking that in comparison with the kind of show they had on occasions run at Bunter Court, this was a mere bagatelle. At Bunter Court, he stated, his father ran charity fetes at which the latest and most expensive amusements from the Chicago Exhibition were installed, money being simply no object. Bunter would have continued to expound on this theme, but Squiff's bland inquiry as to where Bunter senior parked the family car-ran van when the fair wasn't on, put him off his stroke!

In the afternoon D'Arvy's

menting the old rural pastime of climbing the greasy pole. Fishing, swimming, or being swayed available in the lake, while the tennis courts were thrown open to the public. A small charge was made in each case, but all the proceeds were given to charity without deductions for expenses, and the visitors paid gladly—in some cases double and treble the stipulated price!

Among the guests from Greyfriars were Hoskins and Tomlinson of the Shell, Scott and Vernon of the Fourth, and Squiff, Kippa, Vernon-Smith, and Redwing of the Rivnore. Mention should also be made of

eleven played a team from the village at cricket, and Greyfriars distinguished themselves highly, Vernon-Smith making top score with a faultless 65, while Redwing took bowling honours with 6 wickets for 39 runs. After a keenly fought game D'Arcy's eleven won by 172 to 128, and spectators were unanimous in describing it as a top-top game from beginning to end.

Fireworks concluded one of the most enjoyable days recorded this summer, and the Greyfriars visitors departed late that night with very happy memories of the lavish hospitality of Eastwood House.

NEARLY SOLVED

Stott didn't care to trust to the slender knowledge of French he had acquired from Monsieur Charpentier in the Remove Form-room when he crossed the Channel. He bought a Tourist's Phrase Book and spent a couple of hours learning phrases by heart.

Stott didn't care to trust to the slender knowledge of French he had acquired from Monsieieur Charpentier in the Remove form-room when I crossed the Channel. He bought a Tourists' Phrase Book and spent a couple of hours learning phrases by heart.

From what we can hear of it, he made a pretty rough job of it. He knew just what to say to the other end. Instead of yelling "Halt! Par ici!" he yelled "Facteur! Par ici!" "Anteeportier!" he yelled "Fetch me a taxi!" he said "Allez, allez!" saying "Fetch me a taxi!" he said "Allez, allez!"

cherchez un taxi-auto !"
But Stott had forgotten one thing. He knew how to ask questions all right. When he wanted to find out the way to the post-office he said : " Ou se le bureau de postes ?"
But he didn't know the meaning of the answer. His informant went to great trouble to explain where the post-office was, in accents reminiscent of cracking nuts and with a wealth of gestures to go with it !
But Stott hadn't the foggiest idea what it meant.
Stott never found himself at a loss in the matter of asking questions.
It was when he got the answers that Stott found himself lacking. Everybody answered in French ; but so far as Stott was concerned it might have been Arabic or Double Dutch. I didn't hear the slightest resemblance to the

anyway!
 "Scott is now on his way back to England,adder and wiser man."
 His first task on returning will be to write a letter to the publishers of that Tourist's Phrase Book. It will be a brief letter and very much to the point. Something like this:

"Dear Sir,—I suggest you enlarge this book and insert the answers to your questions, giving, as in crosswords, all the possible alternatives. Perhaps it will help me then!

"Yours disgustedly,
 "W. SCOTT."

Alarm

Trevor and Trelice have been enjoying high old times on Trevor's uncle's farm at Wurleton-on-the-Mangel, and the alarm they experienced one bright morning last week at an announcement of Trevor's uncle was soon allayed when they found out the facts. It was after breakfast when Uncle James said:

after the train stopped and all passengers had alighted that they brightened again.

"Well, be hasn't rived, then, uncle remarked Trevor shortly.

Uncle James replied in mild surprise. "Hasn't he? Why, were you expectin' then?"

"Why, the thrash

"I want you boys to come to the station to meet the thrashing machine,"

Trevor and Trelice looked at each other.

"The—the what, uncle?" asked Trevor.

"The thrashing machine," smiled Uncle James.

"Expected by the first train after breakfast."

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Trelice.

The faces of Trevor and Trelice were as

"The thrashing machine!"

"The thrashing machine?" repeated Uncle James.

"The machine arrived all right; they are unloading it at back!"

Trevor and Trelice looked—saw—a beamed.

"Then you meant real machine, sir asked Trelice.

"Of course! What earth did you think meant?"

"Mr. Quinch of GNR."

Editor.—If this communication should adventure into the optic member of the individual who inadvertently

Dear Editor.—If this communication should advantageously catch the optic member of the individual who inadvertently perennated with a sum of money appertaining to my personal possessions, to wit, one pound sterling in silver coinage, I should experience inordinate gratification if he would effectuate necessary reimbursement. The individual will indubitably collect, upon my penetrating his consciousness with the appropriate reminiscence, that I had just taken leave of a gentleman at Victoria Station (my avuncular relative, Benjamin Todd, in point of circumstance), and was effecting the transference to my pocket of the monetary gratuity he had made me by way of a valdettic presentation when he (the individual to whom I refer) approached

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT

Oliver Krips is a skilled mouth-organ soloist. Good though he is, however, his study-mates feel they can have too much of a good thing—and they occasionally just stuff Krips' mouth-organ down the back of his neck!

Mr. Wimble, the tuckshop dame, terribly scared of mice—and when Bunter drove one out of her shop, she rewarded him with a pint of ginger-beer! Bunter hopes she will find another mouse soon!

of the Cottage Hospital, the
ovites and the Cliff House
arranged a grand carnival
Friarale, with a com
session and a concert at
s. Between them they
collected over \$501

Derwent, of Highbury, and
Daphne Derwent, of Old House
Lane, are brother and sister,
and are known as "Flip" and
"Flop" respectively. They are
leading lights in their school
sports eleven.

gymnastic display by
 numerous Five was highly
 commended by governors of the school.
 He witnessed it. Cherry a
 full performed the weight
 lifts, Wharton and Nurg
 showing dexterity and balance

A surreptitious cigarette Skinner enjoyed behind a hutch on Brown's farm resulted in conflagration. The fire went out—and so was Skinner. Mr. Quelch ordered him to "over"!

desired pecuniary requital.
Optimistically yours,

ALONZO TODD

(Tony gave a total stranger change a pound—and didn't get the pound—and he still optimistic! Our only comment "GREAT PIP!"—Ed.)