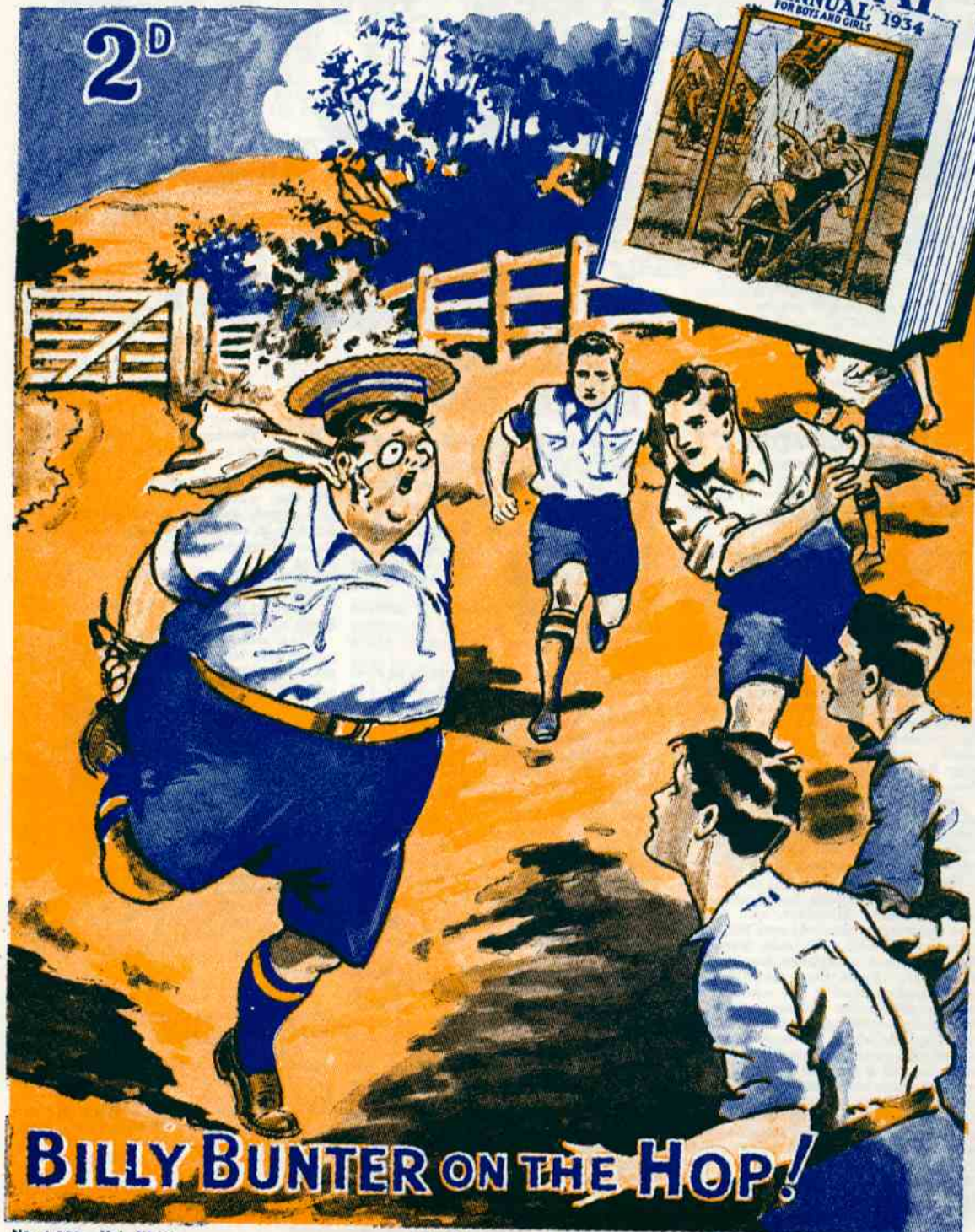
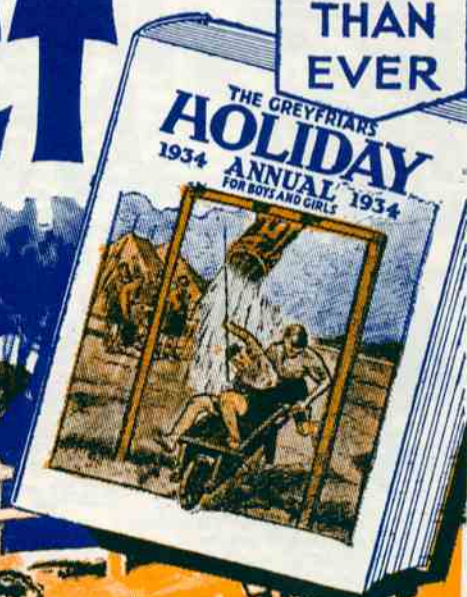


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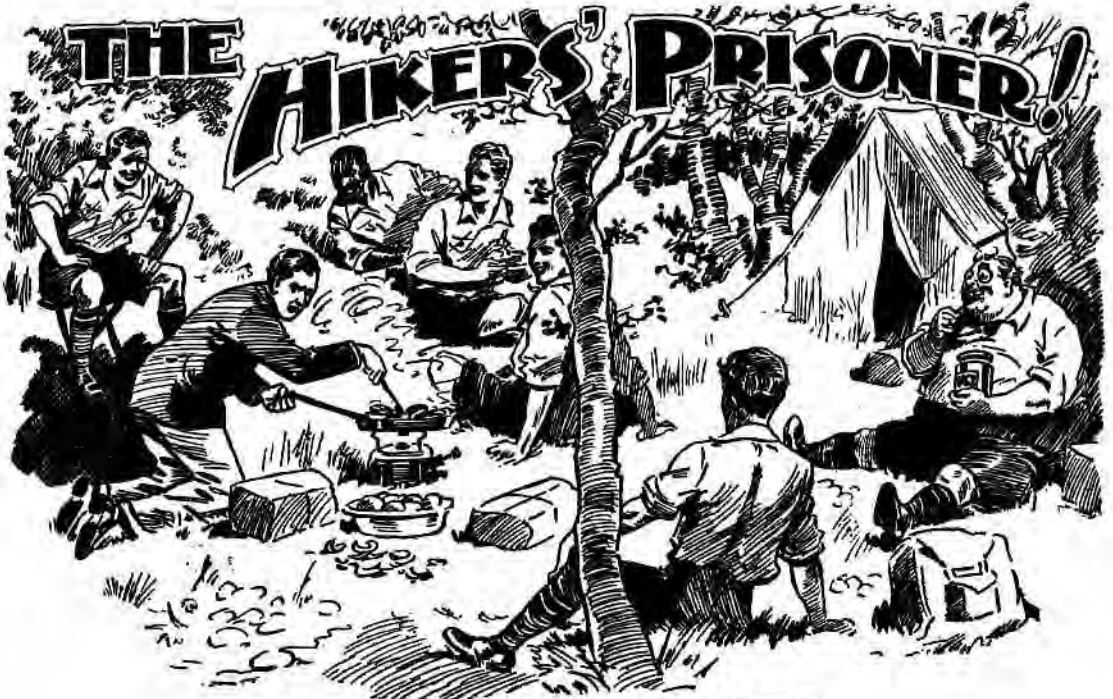
The MAGNET

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BILLY BUNTER ON THE HOP!



BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Quite A Surprise!

WHERE'S that blithering idiot?" Bob Cherry wanted to know.

So did the other Greyfriars hikers. "Where's that howling ass?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Where's that fat, frabjous, footling, fooling frump?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Where's that benighted bandersnatch?" said Frank Nugent.

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

Lord Mauleverer, seated on a log in the grass by the wayside, grinned. Mauly was hungry, like the other hikers; and there was no supper till Billy Bunter came back with the supplies. But Mauly had a wonderful gift of patient toleration.

The Famous Five, of the Greyfriars Remove, stared along the white, sunny, dusty Berkshire road, and inquired—of space—what had become of the fat Owl of the Remove.

The Remove fellows had had a long hike that day. Holidays, and hiking, were drawing to an end, and they were homeward bound. Nobody was tired of hiking; but everybody seemed tired of Bunter. From the spot where the juniors had camped it was a short walk into a Berkshire village—and Billy Bunter had been dispatched to renew the supplies, which had quite run out, at the village shop. As Bunter seldom or never lent a hand in the work of the camp, he was not missed while it went on—in fact, his absence was rather a relief. The hikers fully expected him to linger and sample the supplies before he brought them in. They fully expected him to take twice as long as any other fellow to cover the quarter of a mile. But, making all allowances, Bunter

should have been back long ago. And he had not come back.

Like five Sister Annes, Harry Wharton & Co. watched the road, but, again like Sister Anne, they saw no one coming!

"The fat villain!" exclaimed Bob Cherry wrathfully. "Of course, he would stop to stuff before he started back. Has he wolfed more than he can carry, or what?"

"Taking a rest, perhaps!" snorted Johnny Bull. "If he's had his supper at the shop, he wouldn't bother about ours."

"I'll jolly well scalp him when he does come!" said Nugent. "My hat! I'm hungry!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry suddenly. "What's that?"

From the turning which led off the road to the village behind the wood a surprising figure emerged.

It was Billy Bunter. There was no doubt about that! William George Bunter was not to be mistaken, even at a distance. His podgy face, his big spectacles, his unusual circumference, distinguished Bunter from the common herd. There was only one W. G. B., and this was W. G. B.! It was Bunter—but what was the matter with Bunter was an extraordinary and surprising mystery.

He was hopping on one leg, to begin with! His right leg was curled up, and he hopped on the left! Exertion never was in Billy Bunter's line; and it needed considerable exertion to hop along on one leg, instead of walking on two in the customary manner. But that was what Bunter was doing! Also, his straw hat was upside down on his head—evidently fixed in some manner to his hair, or it would have fallen off. His hands were held behind him, as if clasped behind his back—why, nobody could guess. His necktie was tied, by one end, to one of his fat ears, and blew out in the wind as Bunter hopped!

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at him. The amazing sight seemed to fascinate them!

Bunter hopped towards them slowly. His face was crimson with exertion as he hopped, and the perspiration rolled down it in streams. Evidently his efforts were telling on him. But why was he doing it?

"Is he potty?" gasped Bob Cherry, in utter wonder.

"Mad as a hatter!" said Johnny Bull blankly.

"The esteemed Bunter must be preposterously insane," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Look at him!" gasped Nugent.

"Just look at him! We'd better hike on to the nearest lunatic asylum and land Bunter there."

Lord Mauleverer rose from the log and joined the Famous Five in the road. Even his calm and sedate lordship was startled.

"Oh gad!" said Mauly. "This is the jolly old limit! This takes the jolly old cake! What's the matter with Bunter?"

They gazed, and gazed. Meanwhile, Bunter hopped on.

His progress was about as rapid as that of a tired tortoise. But slowly, by degrees, he approached. And his voice was heard at last, squeaking from the distance.

"I say, you fellows!"

"You potty chump!" roared Bob Cherry. "What are you up to? Do you want to be run in for a lunatic?"

"Beast! Help! I say, you fellows! Yow—ow—ow! Come here, you beasts!" yelled Bunter. "Can't you come and let a fellow loose?"

"Oh, begad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "He's tied! He isn't doin' this for fun—he's tied up!"

"Tied up?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yaas!"

"I say, you fellows—" shrieked Bunter.

—ON A HOLIDAY HIKE! THRILLS AND FUN GALORE!

"Oh, my hat!"

The six hikers dashed towards the approaching Owl at a run. Closer to him, they could see that a cord was wound round his right leg, and knotted. The leg was turned up at the knee, and secured in that position. Bunter was hopping, not because he liked hopping, but because he couldn't help hopping!

"I say, you fellows—"

"Who on earth's done this?" gasped Nugent.

"Some jolly old practical joker, I suppose," said Bob Cherry. "We'll jolly well look for him and give him some practical joking! Poor old Bunter!"

Bunter came to a halt, still at a distance from the camp. He leaned against a wayside tree, gasping and gurgling for breath. Harry Wharton & Co. came running up.

"G-g-g-get me loose!" stuttered Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I've hopped all the w-w-way from Kennet End. Oh dear! Wow!"

Harry Wharton opened his penknife and cut the cord. Bunter's curled-up leg dropped. Then it was discovered that his fat wrists were tied together behind him, and they also were released. Getting his inverted hat off was a tougher task. The crown of the hat had been daubed with gum, and it had been stuck upside down to his hair. The gum had dried, and the hat was fastened tight. Loud yells came from Bunter, as Bob Cherry kindly jerked at it to get it off.

"Yow-ow! Beast! Owl! You're pulling my hair out by the roots!" yelled Bunter. "Yaroooooh!"

"There you are!" said Bob, as the hat came off.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter, by way of thanks.

He jerked off the necktie that was knotted on his fat ear. The hikers stared at him, grinning now.

"They got me in the village," gasped Bunter. "They made me walk out of the village, and then they did this! Ow!"

"What did you let them do it for?" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"But who were they?" exclaimed Wharton. "What the thump should anybody play a trick like that for?"

"That beast Ponsonby—" gasped Bunter.

"Pon!" yelled the hikers.

"Poa and Gadsby and Monson!" groaned Bunter. "I ran right into them in the village street, and they bagged me on the spot! Oh dear! I wouldn't have gone for the grub if I'd known those Highcliffe beasts were anywhere about. Oh lor! And I haven't got the grub—and I haven't had anything to eat—ow! And Pon told me to tell you that if you'd the pluck to go in the village, the lot of you, he'd serve you the same, all round! Wow!"

And Bunter sat down in the grass and spluttered.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Hot Chase!

"PON!" repeated Harry Wharton, and his eyes gleamed.

It was more than a week since the Greyfriars hikers had seen their old enemy, Cecil Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School. That had been far off in Yorkshire. They would have been glad to see him again in order to give him what he had asked for. But after the adventure with the gipsies, whom the black sheep of Highcliffe had "tipped" to kidnap

Bob Cherry on Grimsdale Moor, they had seen nothing of him. And as they had covered the long distance from Yorkshire to the south by a trip on a motor-bus, the hikers had not in the least expected to see Pon & Co. again at least before the next term started at school. But here he was again, evidently, turning up once more like a bad penny!

"Pon!" said Harry again. "The fellow seems determined to haunt us! Is he in the village now, Bunter?"

"Ow! Yes! I left the beasts there!" groaned Bunter. "Wow!"

"Ten to one they've cleared off in their car," said Bob. "They've been chasing us in an Austin. They won't wait to see us, after what they've done to Bunter!"

"Pon said he'd serve you the same."

"Gas!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows, I've had nothing to eat—"

"Look here," said Harry Wharton, "we may catch those Highcliffe cads in the village if we lose no time. Anyhow, we've got to go there for supplies, some of us. Let's all go and get hold of Pon if we can."

"Let's!" agreed Bob at once.

"Good!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Pon says he'll serve us the same as Bunter if we go after him. We'll give him a chance."

"Yes, rather!"

"The rutherfordness is terrific."

"Cut along to the camp, Bunter, and

The last thing Ponsonby of Highcliffe wanted to do was to hike. But he's made to hike this week with Harry Wharton & Co., and, what's more, the lordly Pon is made to earn his keep!

look after it while we're gone," said Harry, and he started for the turning that led to Kennet End.

"Hold on, though—" began Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, rats! Come on, Mauly!"

"But—"

"Get a move on, lazybones!"

The Famous Five were already sprinting up the road. Lord Mauleverer shook his head doubtfully, but he followed them. Something seemed to have occurred to his lordship's mind which had not occurred to the other fellows, but they did not stay to hear what it was. They were too keen on the slightest chance of getting hold of Ponsonby of Highcliffe, and handing out to him that for which he had asked.

Billy Bunter was left alone, grunting and gasping. It was some minutes before the fat junior heaved himself out of the grass and rolled wearily back to the deserted camp.

There, tired as he was, Billy Bunter made a meticulous search of every bag and rucksack in the camp, in the hope of finding some forgotten morsel to eat. But alas for Billy Bunter! The supplies of the Greyfriars hikers had absolutely run out. Bunter, in fact, had finished the last of them that afternoon on the road. There was nothing for Bunter! He found Bob Cherry's Holiday Annual in Bob's rucksack in the tent; and that, though interesting, was not eatable. The fat Owl propped himself against a tree-trunk in the grass and opened the Annual on his fat knees, hoping thus to distract his thoughts from the awful

sinking and gnawing of the inner Bunter.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton & Co. had arrived at Kennet End. It was a tiny village, with only one shop, which was the post office, the village stores, a cycle-repairing establishment, and several other things. Two or three rural inhabitants were to be seen in the village street, gazing with calm interest at a green Austin car which seemed to be in some difficulties. The chauffeur was bending over the open bonnet, and two fellows were sitting in the car—Gadsby and Monson of the Highcliffe Fourth. Ponsonby was not to be seen, but the hikers knew the car, the chauffeur, and the two Highcliffians in the car.

"There they are!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Come on!"

"Hold on, you men," said Lord Mauleverer. "I was goin' to say—"

"Buck up—they're starting!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Yas, but—"

"Come on!" shouted Nugent.

At sight of the Greyfriars fellows, Gadsby called hurriedly to Jervis, the chauffeur. Jervis jumped to his seat and started the car. But it started slowly—very slowly. Harry Wharton & Co. ran up the street, drawing nearer to the green Austin as it crawled out of the other side of the village.

"We've got 'em!" panted Bob.

"Something's gone wrong with the jolly old works; they're just crawling! Put it on!"

It looked as if there was engine trouble of some sort. The car jerked out of Kennet End, barely keeping ahead of the running five. All the five were good sprinters, and they put it on hard and fast, eager to get at the enemy. Lord Mauleverer, however, was not following them now. He stood in front of the village shop, gazing after them meditatively. There was an extremely thoughtful expression on the face of Mauly as he watched the car getting out of the village just ahead of the pursuing hikers. Instead of following them, the schoolboy earl turned and walked into the shop. A white-haired old dame, who looked as if she had never been flurried by a rush of custom, rose slowly from a chair behind the counter, laid down her knitting, and gazed at him. Lord Mauleverer raised his straw hat with great politeness.

"I believe you have cycles here, madam," said Mauly. "Is there one for hire?"

"George!" called out the old lady, sitting down again and taking up her knitting.

Her needles were clicking again when a shock-headed youth put his head through a doorway at the back of the shop.

"Marm!" said George.

The dame pointed to Lord Mauleverer with a knitting-needle. Apparently she was a lady of few words.

"If you have a bike for hire—" said Lord Mauleverer, addressing himself this time to the shock-headed youth.

"This way, air!" said George.

Five minutes later Lord Mauleverer wheeled into the street a bicycle which had probably been new once, but now looked about as old as the white-haired lady in the shop. It clinked more or less musically as he wheeled it. Mauly regarded it rather doubtfully. It was the only one to be hired in Kennet End, so it was a case of any port in a storm. George had assured him that it was a good bike; George's father having done hundreds and hundreds of miles on it.

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in his time—probably in the previous century.

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer, gazing at the ancient bike and listening to it.

He glanced in the direction taken by the green Austin and the pursuing bikers. They had all disappeared out of the village. Mauleverer, in a rather gingerly manner, mounted the bike; not without a secret fear that it might fall to pieces under his weight.

However, it held together. He pedalled, and the musical effects intensified. But he did not follow the hikers and the car. He rode back the way he had come, heading for the camp. People glanced round as he passed, perhaps wondering if it was a jazz band going by. Mauly was rather glad to get out of the village, on the road, and then he let the bike out as fast as he could push it along, only hoping that it would stick together till he got back to camp.

Harry Wharton & Co., in the meantime, were hot behind the green Austin. It seemed that there was something amiss with the car, for it kept only just ahead of the sprinting hikers. Every now and then it nearly stopped and jerked on again. Every moment they hoped to run it down. They were half a mile out of Kennet End when suddenly the green Austin had a complete recovery. It shot away like lightning, Gadsby and Monson grinning over the back at the panting hikers.

They halted.

The car vanished.

"Spoofed!" gasped Bob Cherry.

The hikers looked at one another. Their feelings were almost too deep for words. There was nothing wrong with the car; the Highcliffians had been fooling them, leading them on a wild-goose chase for nothing! Having tired of the amusement, they had put on speed and left their pursuers standing. No doubt it seemed a great joke to Gadsby and Monson in the car. To the hikers, who had had a hard run after a long hike, it did not seem funny at all.

"Well," said Harry, at last, "we were rather fools to be taken in like that! Just pulling our leg—"

"Let's get back!" grunted Johnny Bull.

And the dusty, breathless hikers walked back to the village, where they stopped for shopping at the village stores and then started back to camp.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Pon's Triumph!

CECIL PONSONBY, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, grinned. It was a grin of malicious amusement and triumph. He was looking over a field-gate, from a foot-path in the meadows, at the Greyfriars camp; tenanted at the moment only by Billy Bunter, who sat against a tree with the Holiday Annual open on his fat knees.

Bunter was not reading the Annual, well worth reading as that entrancing volume was. He was turning page after page, blinking through his big spectacles at every page as he turned it. Pon, watching him with a derisive grin, knew what he was looking for. The fat Owl was making one more attempt to solve the mystery of that celebrated Annual; and the fact that he was doing so was a proof to Pon that the Greyfriars fellows had not yet discovered the secret.

Ponsonby swung himself over the gate and walked to the camp. He glanced

up and down the road; nobody was in sight. Harry Wharton & Co. were far away, in vain pursuit of the green Austin; Lord Mauleverer was in the village shop at Kennet End. The coast was clear, and the young rascal of Highcliffe had the coast to himself—except for Billy Bunter, who was not likely to give him any trouble. The astute Pon had laid his plans very carefully this time!

Billy Bunter blinked up as a shadow fell across him. His little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles at the sight of the dandy of Highcliffe. Pon grinned down at him.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter in alarm. "I—I say, you—you'd better clear off, Ponsonby. Bob Cherry's in the tent."

"Is he?" grinned Pon. "They don't seem to teach you to tell the truth at Greyfriars, Bunter."

"I—I mean, he—he's just behind the hedge—all of them—they'll be here in a minute—"

"Can it!" said Ponsonby. "They won't be back for a good while, old fat man. You see, I've got this all cut and dried, Bunter. When they come back, you can tell them that I've fooled them all along the line. I dare say it will amuse them." Pon chuckled. "I was stalkin' you, behind the hedge, as you hopped home, you fat freak!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"And I saw the whole crew of them scud off to the village," grinned Pon. "I fancied they would, when you gave them my message. And they did!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter again.

"And Gaddy and Monson are waitin' for them there in the car, to lead them a dance along the Berkshire roads," went on Pon. "I rather fancy that you won't see them for some time, Bunter."

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter blinked at the Highcliffe fellow in utter dismay. Undoubtedly Pon had laid his plans well that afternoon!

"I fancy you can guess what I've dropped in for," said Pon. "Mind handing me that Holiday Annual, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Ponsonby—"

"Would you rather I kicked you first?" asked Pon politely.

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter. "Bob Cherry will kick up a row if his Annual's gone when he comes back."

"You mean he will kick you?" asked Pon. "Well, if he does, more power to him! You can do with a lot of kicking!"

"Beast! I mean—look here, old chap," gasped Bunter. "There's nothing in this Annual. I've looked a lot of times. All the fellows have been through it. I know you think that that smash-and-grab man, Micky the Sprat, put a message in it for his pal."

"I know he did," said Ponsonby coolly. "I was watching him with you, and heard him stuffin' you, and pullin' your silly leg, getting you to show that book to his confederate, to let him know where he had parked the stuff he grabbed from Lazarus' shop at Courtfield. You never knew the message was in it—but I did. I've been after that book all through the hols; and now I've got it. Hand it over!"

Bunter did not hand it over.

"Look here," he gasped, "I tell you there's nothing in the book; we've all been through it lots of times. But if you like to sit down, we'll go through it together."

"While your scrubby pals come back and catch me on the hop, what?"

grinned Ponsonby. "Hand it over, you fat freak!"

"You've no right to Bob Cherry's book. If there's really a message in it, it's no biznez of yours. You've no right to collar it, and put in for the £50 reward for finding the loot. You know jolly well—"

"No right?" repeated Pon.

"None at all!" said Bunter warmly. "Ever heard that might is right?" grinned Ponsonby. "Whether I've the right or not, I fancy I've the might. If you don't hand that book over at once, I'm going to kick you, like that!"

"Yarooooo!" roared Bunter.

"And like that!"

"Whoooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pon, as Billy Bunter rolled over in the grass, yelling, "Have a few more!"

"Owl! Beast! Keep off!" yelled Bunter. "Wow! Stop kicking me, you rotter! You wouldn't dare if Bob was here, you rotten funk! Yarooooop!"

Ponsonby's eyes glittered. It was true; but he did not let the reminder that, had Bob Cherry appeared in the offing, his heels would not have been seen for dust. He stooped over the fat Owl of the Remove, grasped him by the collar, and banged his head against Berkshire.

A terrific roar came from Billy Bunter. Berkshire was hard!

"Yow—ow—ow—wooop!"

In sheer desperation, Billy Bunter jumped up and turned on his assailant. Grasping the Holiday Annual with both fat hands, he snote.

Pon had not expected that. He had forgotten that even the worm will turn. Taken by surprise by Bunter's attack, Pon received the Holiday Annual with a crash on his features, and, with a yell, he sat down in the grass quite suddenly.

Bunter had knocked Pon down, and he was fairly scared at what he had done. His only idea was to bolt before Pon got up again! He bolted, still clutching the Holiday Annual.

But Pon was up in a twinkling. He leaped after Bunter, a good deal like a tiger, and drove out his foot. Billy Bunter went over as if a cannon ball had struck him, and crashed.

Pon pounced on the Holiday Annual as it fell from the fat junior's grasp, and grabbed it. Twice, thrice, he raised it, and brought it down, heavy and hard, on Bunter's tight trousers. Then he put it under his arm and walked away down the road.

Bunter rolled in the grass and roared.

"Owl! Wow! Beast! Gerraway! Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, rescue! Help! Fire! Yarooooop!"

It was some minutes before Bunter realised that Pon had gone. He set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked after the elegant figure of the dandy of Highcliffe, disappearing down the road in the opposite direction from Kennet End.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as Pon vanished from sight in the distance. "Oh lor! Oh crumbs! He's got it now, and those beasts will make out that it was my fault. Oh lor!"

Bunter sat in the grass, blinking and gasping. There was nothing that he could do, but blink and gasp. He could not have overtaken Pon, if he had followed him; and, had he overtaken him, he could not have handled him. So he sat and blinked.

Clink, clink, jingle, clank, growl, grunt, grind! It was a strange sound on the road, from the direction of the village, as if an American jazz band had got loose and was wandering about

the county of Berks. Billy Bunter stared round in surprise.

"Mauly!" he gasped.
Lord Mauleverer, mounted on a prehistoric bicycle, was coming on towards the camp, at quite a rapid speed, considering the nature of his mount. He clinked and clanked up, and jumped off.

"Pon been here?" he rapped. Generally Mauly drawled, as if it was almost too much trouble to speak at all. Now he was short and sharp. Mauly could be amazingly energetic at times. This was one of the times!

"Eh! Yes," gasped Bunter. "How did you know, Mauly?"

"Sort of guessed," Mauly grinned. "Has he bagged Bob's Annual?"

and Pon, having seen them off, as it were, had had to do nothing but walk into the hikers' camp, snaffle the article he wanted, and walk off with it! No wonder Pon grinned as he walked off.

He fancied that he was clear of the hikers now. He was not going anywhere near Kennet End again. He was walking in the opposite direction—and Gaddy and Monson were going to circle round, after shaking off the hikers, and join him at a pre-arranged spot a couple of miles away. It was the K.O. for the Greyfriars hikers at last!

All through the summer holidays Pon had hunted the hikers, after that Holiday Annual, which he believed to contain a hidden clue to the plunder of

He had seen with his own eyes the whole party of hikers rush off to Kennet End after meeting Bunter. They had all been on foot. Now here was one of them on a bike—hot on his track! It was a startling surprise for the dandy of Highcliffe.

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Pon.

Mauly came on with a clink, a clank, and a rush. Pon glared at him savagely. He was still more than a mile from the spot appointed to meet Gadsby and Monson in the car. Had it been Bob Cherry, or Harry Wharton, on the bike, Pon would have taken to the meadows in a desperate attempt to escape by a foot race where the bike could not follow. Not that he would



In sheer desperation, Billy Bunter turned on the bullying Ponsonby. Grasping the Holiday Annual with both fat hands, he smote. Pon received the book with a crash on his features, and, with a yell, he sat down in the grass quite suddenly.

"Yes. You see, I—I fought like a lion—"

"Which way did he go?"

"Down the road."

Mauly put a leg over the ancient bike again.

"I say, Mauly; got anything to eat?" howled Bunter.

Mauleverer did not stay to answer that question, urgent and important as it was. He drove at the clinking, clanking pedals, and the musical bike vanished down the road at a speed that would have done it credit in its far-off young days.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Run Down!

PONSONBY walked away down the road, with the Holiday Annual under his arm, and a cheery grin on his face. He had won all along the line, this time! Those silly asses—the Greyfriars hikers—had been tricked into chasing Gaddy and Monson in the car;

the smash-and-grab raider at Courtfield. Pon had plenty of money, but he spent it fast enough; and he was very keen to bag the reward of £50 offered by the insurance company for the finding of that hidden stack of jewellery from Mr. Lazarus' shop. Still keener was Pon to inflict a defeat on his old enemies of Greyfriars. Now he had inflicted that defeat, and he was feeling immensely bucked.

He was about half a mile from the hikers' camp when he noticed, without specially heeding, a sound of clinking and clanking on the road behind him.

He glanced round at last casually, thinking that whoever was riding that bike must have found it where it had been landed from the Ark.

But his expression changed as he saw the rider.

It was Lord Mauleverer who was pedalling the ancient machine, and he was pedalling hard and fast, and at a glance it was obvious that he was in pursuit of the Highcliffe fellow.

Pon stared at him blankly,

have been likely to win that foot race. But the dandy of Highcliffe fancied that he could handle Mauly. He knew little of Mauly, except that he looked like a fellow too lazy to live, and like anything but a fighting-man. As a matter of fact, Pon did not expect to have much more trouble with him than with Billy Bunter.

So he stood his ground and waited for the bike to clank up.

It clanked up, and Lord Mauleverer dismounted and leaned it against a fence. Then he came up to Pon.

"Drop that book!" said Mauleverer tersely.

Pon laughed.

"You'll scrap better with your hands empty!" suggested Mauleverer.

"Are we goin' to scrap, you weak-kneed, yawnin' skadadical nincompoop?" jeered Pon. "Hain't you better clear off while you're safe?"

"Yaas! But I'm not goin' to!" Lord Mauleverer came a step nearer, with an

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unaccustomed gleam in his placid eyes.

"I'm goin' to thrash you, Pon!"

"Ha, ha; ha!" roared Pon.

"You're an awful rotter," said Mauleverer calmly. "You've been sneakin' after us, all through the hols, tryin' to pinch that book that belongs to Bob Cherry! You're goin' to have a lesson to keep your hands from pickin' and stealin', dear man."

"Go it!" grinned Pon.

"Up in Yorkshire," went on Mauleverer, "you got some gypsies to kidnap Bob. That was the limit. We've all agreed that you've got to have a lesson. I'm takin' you back to camp with me."

"You are!" gasped Pon.

"Yaas."

"And how are you goin' to do it?"

inquired Pon.

"Well, if you'll walk, I'll walk you there. If you won't, I suppose I shall have to yank you along by your ears."

"And I'm goin' to let you do it?" said Pon banteringly.

"Yaas! I shall have to thrash you first, of course. Will you put down that book an' put up your hands?"

Ponsonby scanned the schoolboy earnestly. Mauleverer was in deadly earnest, that was plain. He was going to do as he had stated, if he could. Pon did not believe that he could. But he was going to try, and it was not Pon's way to engage in a fair fight if he could help it.

"Oh, all right!" drawled Pon. "If you will have it, you will. I suppose it will take me about two minutes to knock you into a cocked hat."

"Yaas, perhaps a little longer than that!" said Mauleverer amiably.

"Ready to begin?"

"Oh, quite! I'll stick the book here, and the fellow who wins gets it," said Ponsonby.

"To the victor the jolly old spoils!" assented Mauleverer. "Right as rain, and— Oh, you cur! Yooop!"

Pon made a motion to stoop and place the Holiday Annual on the ground. Instead of which he suddenly swung it round and crashed it with all his force on Mauleverer's head. Mauly gave a yell and went down in a heap.

Ponsonby made a jump for the bike.

He wanted hardly a minute to get hold of the bike and flee. But he did not get half a minute.

Mauleverer sprawled in the grass, dazed by the treacherous blow. But he was on his feet again very quickly.

He reached Pon as that young rascal dragged the bicycle into the road and put a leg over it.

He grasped the Highcliffe fellow by the shoulder and dragged him over, and it was Pon's turn to sprawl, and the bike sprawled over his legs.

"Oh gad!" gasped Ponsonby.

Mauleverer, with glinting eyes, dragged him to his feet. The bike and the Holiday Annual lay in the road together.

"Now, you tricky rotter, put up your hands!" said Mauleverer, between his teeth. "You're almost too rotten to touch, but I'm goin' to touch you—hard! Put up your paws, you cur!"

And as there was no help for it, Ponsonby put up his "paws" and made a fierce attack.

But Lord Mauleverer did not crumple up under that attack, as the dandy of Highcliffe hoped and expected.

He stood up to it coolly and calmly, hitting out and hitting hard. Twice Pon's fierce blows came home on his lordship's face and made him blink. But he did not give an inch. And he handed back twice what he received; and Pon, to his surprise and rage, found

himself lying on his back in the grass by the road.

He lay there and blinked up at Mauleverer. Mauly waited for him to rise, but he did not rise. Hard hitting was not in Pon's line, and he had already had enough.

"Gettin' up?" inquired Mauleverer politely.

"You Greyfriars rotter!" hissed Pon. "Get out an' leave me alone! You've got that rotten book back—clear off with it, and be hanged to you!"

"Yaas, I've got the book back," assented Mauleverer, picking up the Holiday Annual. "But I want you, too, dear man."

"You fool!" snarled Pon.

"If you consider yourself sufficiently thrashed, old bean, I'm willin' to let it go at that," said Mauleverer gently.

"I hate exertin' myself. But you're comin' back to camp with me!"

"I'm not!" yelled Ponsonby.

"Your mistake—you are! You're goin' to wheel that bike back, and I'm goin' to see you do it," said Mauleverer placidly. "Get up and get goin'."

"I won't!"

"I shall whop you with this jolly old Annual till you do!"

"Look here— Yarooooch!" roared Pon, as Mauleverer suited the action to the word and whopped.

It was quite a hard whop!

He sprang to his feet to bolt. But Mauleverer's grasp was on his collar at once.

Pon turned on him desperately, hitting out. The bare idea of being marched back to the hikers' camp to face the Famous Five filled Pon with alarm and apprehension. Scrapping was better than that.

Mauleverer dropped the book and piled in again. For a wild and whirling minute they fought fiercely. Then Pon was down again.

He lay panting and glaring.

"Any more?" asked Mauly.

"No!" gasped Pon. "Keep off, you rotter!"

"Get up an' get hold of that bike."

This time Ponsonby obeyed. In dealing with Lord Mauleverer his experience was rather like that of the hunter in the story, who went out to shoot a rabbit and woke up a tiger. Pon was fed-up with scrapping. Obediently he lifted the fallen bike from the road. His idea now was to seize the first opportunity of jumping on it and making his escape.

But Mauleverer was too wary for that. He took hold of Ponsonby's arm and held it as Pon held the bike, and they walked up the road together. Once Pon made a fierce effort to drag his arm loose. The Holiday Annual, in Mauly's other hand, swung round and clumped on Pon's head with a heavy clump. Pon roared and gave it up.

"Better go quietly, as the bobbies say to the burglars!" remarked Lord Mauleverer.

And Pon at last went quietly. He had to go, and he went; and Gadsby and Monson were destined to wait a long time at the appointed place for Pon.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Mauly's Astonishing Stunt!

"WHERE'S that ass?"

"Where's that sleepy duffer?"

Harry Wharton & Co., as they walked back from the village to the camp, laden with parcels from the shop, were inquiring again for a missing man. But this time it was not Bunter—it was Mauly!

What had become of Mauly was a mystery to the Famous Five. They knew that he had gone with them into the village; they had last seen him outside the shop there. Since then he had disappeared, as if into space. He had not joined in the chase of the car; they had not seen him again in the village street, and they did not spot him on the road back to the camp. Lord Mauleverer really seemed to have dissolved into thin air!

"Where on earth can the fathead have got to?" asked Johnny Bull. "He wouldn't go back to camp and leave us to it. Mauly's not a funk."

"He must have cleared off somewhere," said Harry Wharton, puzzled. "Goodness knows why, and where."

"The whyness and the wherefulness are both terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Too jolly lazy to run after the car, as we did!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I wonder if he spotted that they were spoofing us, making out that the car wouldn't go," said Bob. "We were rather asses to be taken in. They were leading us a dance, to pull our leg! Queer that Pon wasn't in the car, too."

"Skulking somewhere!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Or up to something," said Nugent, shrewdly. "I wonder if Pon's spotted where our camp is! If so, he may have left Gadsby and Monson to lead us a dance, while he dropped in—"

"Oh, my hat!" roared Bob Cherry. "That's it! And we've left all our packs in camp—my Holiday Annual's there, and Pon—" Without stopping to finish, Bob broke into a run, and went along the road to the camp as if he were on the cinder-path.

The other fellows followed him fast. It dawned on all of them now that Pon had been tricking them.

They arrived breathless at the camp. Billy Bunter was sitting in the grass, still in a gasping state. He blinked at them through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

"Has Pon been here?" roared Bob.

"Yes; and he's got your Holiday Annual! I fought like a tiger—"

"You flabby funk!" gasped Bob.

"You let him get away with it! I've a jolly good mind to kick you all round the camp, you fat fooler."

"Beast! Keep off!" roared Bunter, squirming out of reach. "It's all right. Mauly will get him, as he's on a bike."

"Mauly! Has Mauly been back here?"

"Yes; on a bike."

"Where the jolly old dickens did Mauly dig up a bike?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in wonder.

"Blessed if I know! But he went after Pon on it."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" yelled Bob.

"Look!"

"Grent pip!"

"Mauly! And Pon! Oh, my hat!"

The hikers gazed in amazement at the two fellows coming up the road, to a musical accompaniment from the ancient bike. Ponsonby, scowling like a demon in a pantomime, was wheeling the machine, Lord Mauleverer walking beside him, holding Pon's arm in one hand, the Holiday Annual in the other.

"Well, my only chapeau!" ejaculated Nugent. "Mauly takes the cake! He takes the whole jolly old biscuit!"

"I say, you fellows, that beast Pon kicked me!" exclaimed Billy Bunter.

"I say, let's rag him, now Mauly's got him! Let's wallop him! I say, you fellows, you hold him, while I give

him about a couple of hundred swipes! I've got a stick here."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Lord Mauleverer arrived at the camp with his scowling, infuriated prisoner. The Famous Five gave Ponsonby grim looks. Mauleverer tossed the Holiday Annual to Bob.

"That's yours, old bean," he said cheerily.

"And you got it back for me," said Bob.

"Yaas." "And you've got Pon, too!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "What are you going to do with Pon? You seem to have damaged his nose already."

"I'm keeping him for a bit, if you fellows don't object," said Lord Mauleverer. "I know he's rotten company, rather unfit for nice fellows like us. Still, I'd like to keep him."

"Keep him!" repeated Wharton blankly.

"Yaas."

"Will you let me go?" hissed Pon.

"You know you can't keep me here, you Greyfriars rotters! It's kidnappin'."

"You know all about kidnappings, don't you?" grinned Bob Cherry. "You could be sent to chocky for that rotten trick you played on me, with the gipsies, on Grimsdale Moor, up in Yorkshire."

Ponsonby sneered.

"How are you goin' to prove that I had anything to do with it?" he said. "You're talkin' rot, and you know it. Are you goin' to let go my arm, Mauleverer?"

"Yaas. I hate touchin' you; you're rather poisonous," said Lord Mauleverer. "Will you fellows see that he doesn't bolt?"

"He won't bolt till you give the word, Mauly," said Bob. "I'll jolly well make him sorry, if he does."

Ponsonby was released. He would have given a great deal to cut and run, but he did not dare to make the attempt. Any of the Famous Five could have run him down in a dozen yards. He stood scowling and gritting his teeth.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say, what about the grub?" yelled Bunter. "I'm hungry! Starving! Famished! Ravenous!"

"Shut up!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"You're not keepin' me here," said Ponsonby between his teeth. "You know you can't do it! What do you want me for, anyhow?"

"Yes, what's the game, Mauly?" asked Harry Wharton. "And where the thump did you pick up that old crock?"

"Yaas, it's rather an old crock," agreed Mauleverer. "Somebody will have to take it back to the Kennet End post office and general stores, where I borrowed it. I fancy that chap George would rather keep the quid I left on it; still, it ought to be taken back. Let Bunter take it."

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"Mauly seems to have spotted Pon's game all along," said Nugent, in wonder.

Mauleverer grinned.

"Yaas. I had a bit of a suspicion," he assented. "It sort of seemed to me that it was a game to get the camp deserted—especially when I saw that Pon wasn't with his pals. So I bagged that fearful contraption and got back. I'd rather not ride it again. Bunter can take it back."

"Beast!"

"It's only a shilling an hour for the hire. There will be change out of the

quid I left on it. They sell rather good tarts at that shop, Bunter."

"My dear old fellow, I'll take the bike back with pleasure—after supper," said Bunter affectionately. "I'd do more than that for a pal I really like! But we'd better have supper first. I'm not thinking about myself, of course; but the other fellows are hungry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, let's get those parcels open!" snorted Bunter, and he started on the parcels that the Famous Five had brought in.

Ponsonby made a movement. But he caught a glint in Bob Cherry's eye, and stood still again.

"You haven't explained what Pon's here for, Mauly," said Harry Wharton. "You seem to have licked him, to judge by the look of his chivvy; and I suppose he wouldn't have walked back with you if you hadn't. One lickin' is enough, even for that rotter."

A SPLENDID POCKET-KNIFE GOES TO—

M. Cox, 6, Spencer Road, East Ham, for sending in the following winning joke:



Economic Young Man: "Haven't you anything cheaper than these threepenny coat-hangers?"

Fed-up Shop Assistant: "Yes, sir; we have some very nice nails!"

There are plenty more pocket-knives in stock, so hurry up with your joke, chum.—Ed.

"Yaas. But I'm going to keep him, if you fellows agree. Pon's coming hikin' with us."

"What?" yelled the hikers.

Ponsonby started, and stared blankly at Mauleverer. He had rather expected a ragging at the hikers' camp; but he had not expected this!

"Like the idea?" asked Mauleverer.

"You silly ass!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Think we'd hike with that rotter? He's not fit to touch."

"Hardly!" agreed Mauleverer.

"The rottenfulness of the esteemed Ponsonby is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We do not want his ludicrous company."

"Do you think I want yours?" hissed Ponsonby. "Think I'd be found dead hiking with such a crew?"

"Yaas," said Lord Mauleverer.

"You're dead in this act, Pon—you're goin' to do as you're told."

"You silly rotter—"

"That's enough," said Lord Mauleverer gently. "You talk too much, Pon,

and your language isn't choice. Mind shuttin' up? Now, you men, I'll explain. I know that Pon's rotten company, and his society would probably have a deterioratin' effect on a tramp. He's an out-and-out, thorough-goin'-rotter—the last word—the jolly old limit—the outside edge! But think what a good thing it would be for him to keep in decent company, among decent fellows, for once! Improvin', an' all that!"

"Fathead!" said Johnny Bull. "What about us?"

"Nothin' about you, old bean," said Mauly affably. "I'm thinkin' of improvin' Pon! I'm also thinkin' of teachin' him a lesson, about settin' tramps on to hikers, and bribin' gipsies to kidnap them, an' all that! Pon's in need of a lesson! He's goin' to get it! We can make him useful in the camp for a few days."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob.

"Washin'-up, for instance!" said Mauleverer. "Nobody really likes washin'-up! Pon can do it!"

"Great pip!"

"Fetchin' and carryin', and all that!" went on Mauly. "Lots of things a fellow can do when he really wants to make himself useful! Pon will do everythin' we want!"

"Are you mad?" yelled the enraged Ponsonby. "You can't keep me here, you cheeky rotters!"

"I think we can!" smiled Mauleverer. "And I think it's goin' to do you a lot of good! You're a slackin', sneakin', lyin', pilferin' rotter—and a little honest hard work will do you heaps of good! What do you fellows say? We can do with a hired man to work—"

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

The expression on Ponsonby's face was quite entertaining.

"We'll pay him for his services, of course," went on Lord Mauleverer calmly. "A pound a week, and all found! That's fair, for casual labour."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he's satisfactory, and likes to keep the job, we'll give him a rise later—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see you've got potatoes there! Pon can begin by peelin' the potatoes. You fellows agree?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Passed nem. con.!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Hear, hear!"

"You rotters!" shrieked Pon. "You cheeky rotters! I—I—I—" Words failed the exasperated dandy of Highcliffe. "I—I—I—"

"Nuff from you!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Iired men are not expected to talk too much! Get on with the spuds, my man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Pon. "Gaddy and Monson are waitin' for me—"

"Let 'em wait!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm an accommodatin' chap! I've no objection to Gaddy and Monson waitin' as long as they jolly well like."

"Do you think you can keep me here against my will?" shrieked Ponsonby.

"Yaas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pon, quite desperate, made a bound to escape. Bob Cherry's grasp was on his collar in a twinkling.

"No, you don't, old bean!" said Bob cheerily. "You've barged into our camp of your own accord, Ponsonby; and you came to steal my Holiday Annual. You ought to be given in charge to the police. You're getting off cheaply with a job in the camp."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "He, he, he!" squeaked Billy Bunter, with his mouth full of ham and beef.
 "I say, you fellows, it's a ripping idea! Make him work! He, he, he!"

"Get on with the spuds, Pon!"
 "I won't!" shrieked Ponsonby wildly.
 "Bunter, do you mind kickin' Pon?" asked Mauleverer. "I believe you mentioned that he kicked you? Kick him till he peels the potatoes."

"What-ho!" chuckled Punter.
 Ponsonby glared round at the hikers. He glared at Bunter. He glared at Lord Mauleverer, whose face was smiling, serene—but implacable! He was in the hands of the Philistines, and there was no help for him. He did not want to be kicked! With feelings too deep for words, Cecil Ponsonby, the dandy of the Highcliffe Fourth, sat down and peeled potatoes!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Hired Man!

THERE was a handsome and ample supper in the hikers' camp that evening. It was rather later than usual, but all the more welcome on that account. There were two courses—first, a cold collation, as Bob Cherry loftily described it, consisting of bread-and-butter and ham and beef. The hikers had that course, because they were two fearfully hungry to wait for cookery. While they had it, their new hired man, Cecil Ponsonby of Highcliffe, prepared the second course.

He peeled potatoes and sliced them in a pan, he added a sufficiency of fat, and he fried them on the oil-stove—and he did not dare to burn them. Then he cooked the sosses. And sausages and fried potatoes formed the second course of that excellent supper—and any hiker that ever hiked will admit freely that fried sausages and potatoes go down remarkably well after a hard day's march.

Billy Bunter simply beamed.
 Bunter had got uncommonly hungry—even for Bunter! With an extra-special hunger on him, Bunter naturally enjoyed life when the grub was good and ample.

And Bunter, though he liked Pon's company no more than anyone else, was glad to see him there. Bunter hated being bothered to wash up, or tidy up, or lend a hand at anything in the shape of work. He declared that it was because at Bunter Court he was accustomed to the services of innumerable menials. The other fellows thought it was because he was accustomed to being fat and lazy! But whatever the cause, there was no doubt about the fact—Bunter hated work! Now nobody was going to ask him to do any! Nobody was going to kick him for not doing any! Pon was going to do the work! And—blissful thought—Bunter was at liberty to kick Pon if he didn't!

Almost for the first time since that hike had started, William George Bunter was in a state of satisfaction.

He ate and ate and ate, and was happy! After packing away several suppers one after another, Bunter really was in no state to work! This time he merely had to lol luxuriously while Pon did it! And—for the first time on that hike—the Famous Five of Greyfriars watched another fellow work without doing any themselves! They did not enjoy it like Bunter! In point of fact, they would rather have taken their "whack." But it was settled that Cecil Ponsonby was going to have the lesson

of his life! And that was that! Harry Wharton & Co. had no objection, personally, to a little wholesome work! But Pon loathed soiling his lordly fingers with it. Pon rather regarded himself as a choice flower, which it was the duty of lesser mortals to cultivate with care! Now Pon worked! He peeled potatoes, he cooked potatoes, he cooked sosses, he dished them up—and he did it all with the face of a demon longing to dash the warm frying-pan in the faces of the hikers!

But as he did not dare so to do, his longing made no difference. They sat round the camp, with an eye on Pon, ready to catch him if he bolted, and Pon was "for it," and he went through it.

On the principle that one should not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, the hikers offered him a share of the supper. He refused it with fierce disdain. Nothing would induce him to break bread with the fellows he hated and loathed and fancied that he despised.

His refusal did not worry the hikers! He distinctly pleased Billy Bunter! Bunter found room for Pon's portion, and packed it away, and after that it was too late for Pon to change his mind.

His refusal of his rations did not get him off work! He had the frying-pan to clean and scour, the stove to clean and trim and fill, and the washing-up to do! His face was white and desperate as he did it! He might as well have been a cook's boy in a kitchen—and it did not even occur to Pon's lofty mind that better fellows than he had been cook's boys in kitchens! To his miserably snobbish mind there was something degrading, as well as disagreeable, in work! Bunter, to do him justice, was only lazy! Pon was snobbish as well as slack! So a job of work was really twice as unpleasant to him as to Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer picked up the frying-pan when Pon had scoured it. A cook's boy would certainly have been sacked for such scouring! Lord Mauleverer was not satisfied.

"Cherry, old man, are you tired?" he asked.

"Yes, a bit, old chap!" answered Bob. "Not too tired to do anything for you, though, you old slacker! What is it?"

"Mind takin' Pon by the neck and holdin' him over that log?"

Bob chuckled.

"Not at all, Mauly! Pleased!"

Bob jumped up. He grasped Ponsonby by the neck and bent him over the log. Ponsonby gave a wriggle and a snarl; but he did not resist. Resistance was futile in Bob's powerful grasp.

"Bunter!"

"Yes, Mauly!" mumbled the fat Owl.

"Would you mind—?"

"I'm tired."

"Takin' this fryin'-pan—"

"I'd rather not move."

"And givin' Pon six with it?"

"Oh!" Bunter heaved himself off out of the grass. "Certainly, old fellow! Anything to oblige a pal! Hand it over! He, he, he!"

Bunter, evidently, was not too tired to "whop" the Highcliffe fellow who had kicked him. He whirled the frying-pan in the air and brought it down with a terrific swipe on Pon's trousers. The yell that came from Pon rang far over the county of Berks.

He wriggled frantically. But he was held pinned to the log, and the frying-pan rose and fell six times in succession, with all Billy Bunter's beef in the swipes.

"That will do, old fat top!" drawled Mauleverer. "That's six."

"What about sixteen?" asked Bunter,

"Ha, ha, ha!" suggested Bunter brightly.

"Yarook! Leggo!" howled Pon.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let it go at six," said Mauleverer, shaking his head. "I don't believe in over-doing it—and I'm sure Pon doesn't! Now, Pon—"

"You rotter!" shrieked Ponsonby. "Oh, I'll pay you out for this!"

"Thanks! Take that fryin'-pan and scour it clean. It's got to be so clean that you can use it for a lookin'-glass. Get on with it!"

Pon took the frying-pan.

He gripped it by the handle and looked for a moment as if he was going to brain Lord Mauleverer with it.

But he didn't. He sat down to the frying-pan and scoured, and scoured, and scoured till it was almost as bright as a new pin.

"Let's look at it," drawled Mauly, when Pon put it down. "Good! You see, my man, you can work if you like. You're lazy an' slack, and that's all that's the matter, really. You're goin' to be useful here."

"The usefulness is going to be terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Now wash up," said Mauleverer. "If you break anythin', you'll get six! If you don't wash clean you get six! I'm sure Bunter will oblige."

"What-ho!" chortled Bunter.

Ponsonby washed up. He did not break anything—as he had longed to do. He washed up clean. He put the things away tidily.

By that time the last glimmer of the sunset was in the sky, and the hikers were ready to turn in, the energetic Bob having run the borrowed bike home.

Several times cars had passed on the road, and Pon had been tempted to call for help. But the camp was well back from the road, and cars passed rather fast. And the penalty for giving trouble was "six." And Pon did not want any more of the frying-pan. He was now longing for night, when he counted on getting away as a certainty. Lord Mauleverer had stated that he was to hike with the hikers; but that, of course, was rot—in Pon's opinion, at least! He could get away after dark.

"Well, what about bed?" asked Harry Wharton, yawning.

"The bedfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Let our esteemed and ridiculous hired man light the lantern in the tent."

"What are you going to do with our jolly old hired man now, Mauly?" asked Bob, with a chuckle. "He will bolt to-night, safe as houses."

"Not at all," said Mauleverer cheerfully. "I hope you fellows haven't any snobbish objections to a hired man sleepin' in the same tent?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll make room for him," chuckled Nugent.

"Find a blanket for him—what! And give him a corner of the ground sheet," said Mauleverer. "Might tie his leg to a tent peg, to make sure he doesn't bolt. I'm keepin' him in my employment for a week—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly idiot!" shrieked Pon, his hope of escape after dark fading away.

"You blithering, burling dummy—"

"Don't check your employer, my man," said Lord Mauleverer. "Turn in, and be quiet! If he says any more, Bunter, give him six with the fryin'-pan!"

"You bet!" said Bunter.
 Pon did not say any more. And he



"Help! Help! Help!" shrieked Ponsonby, struggling in the hands of Johnny Bull and Nugent. "They're kidnapping me!" "Don't take any notice of the poor fellow," said Lord Mauleverer to the farmer. "He can't help it!" And Mauly, with a significant gesture, tapped his forehead.

did not bolt that night. When morning rose over the green hills and fertile valleys of Berkshire, Pon was still with the hikers. And how he was to get away from them was a problem to which the dandy of Highcliffe, as yet, could find no answer.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby Hikes!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What—"

"Pon's pals!" grinned Bob Cherry.

It was a bright morning. Breakfast was over, and the hired man had washed up and packed up. The hikers were preparing to take the road when a green Austin car came along and stopped opposite the camp.

Jervis, at the wheel, stared at the camp curiously. Gadsby and Monson, in the car, eyed the hikers uneasily. After the affair of the previous day they were not keen to get near the hikers. But evidently they were worried about Ponsonby, and were in search of him. What had become of Pon was a mystery to Gadsby and Monson—till they saw him standing among the hikers. And then they could not imagine what he was doing there. That he had failed once more in his efforts to snaffle that celebrated Holiday Annual was clear; but that was no surprise to them, for they did not expect him to get away with it. They had no faith whatever in Pon's ability to beat the cheery chums of Greyfriars. But it was a surprise to see him in the hikers' camp! They had come along

hoping to pick up some news of him, but certainly not expecting to see him there.

"Why, there he is!" exclaimed Gadsby. "Pon! What the thump are you up to, Pon? We've been wonderin' what the dooce had happened to you."

Pon made a step towards the road.

Bob Cherry hooked his arm in his.

"Hold on!" he said affably.

"You rotter, let go!" hissed Pon. "I'll yell to them to fetch the police if you don't let me go at once!"

"You won't give more than one yell," answered Bob coolly. "You will be in that ditch the next second, with me standing on you!"

Pon glanced at the ditch. There was a foot of water in it, and plenty of mud! He glanced at Bob, and read in his face that he meant every word he said. His friends were only twenty feet away, but Pon did not venture to call to them. He gritted his teeth, and was silent.

"Are you comin', Pon?" shouted Monson.

Lord Mauleverer strolled over to Pon and took his other arm. Pon gave him a fierce glare of hate.

"Answer your pals, old bean," said Mauly amiably. "Tell them you're hikin' with us for a few days."

"I won't!" hissed Pon.

"Mind pitchin' him into the ditch, Bob?"

"In he goes!" answered Bob.

"Hold on!" gasped Ponsonby, white with rage. "I—I—I'll tell them!"

"Buck up, then!"

"Pon!" shouted Gadsby. "Look here, we've been lookin' for you! What are you doin' with those fellows?"

"I—I—I'm hiking with them for a

few days," gasped Ponsonby, hardly able to speak in his rage.

"Hiking with those Greyfriars cads!" yelled Gadsby and Monson together, in astonishment.

"Greyfriars what?" asked Johnny Bull, picking up a stick and walking across to the car. "What did you call us?"

"Sorry!" said Gadsby hastily. He did not like the look on Johnny's face, and still less did he like the look of the stick in his hand. "I—I—I meant Greyfriars fellows."

"Better say what you mean next time," said Johnny grimly. "You might get thrashed for your dashed impudence, you know."

"But look here—what does this mean?" exclaimed Gadsby. "You're not really goin' with those—er—fellows, Pon?"

A vicelike grip on Pon's arms warned him how to answer.

"Yes," he gasped.

"But what about us?" exclaimed Gadsby. "What about goin' on to my place in Bucks, as we arranged?"

"Ain't you comin'?" demanded Monson. "And what about the car? It's your pater's car, not ours."

"I—I—I'll join you later!" gasped Ponsonby. "I—I—I'm staying with these fellows for a bit. Oh gad!"

"Well, you're your own master, I suppose," said Gadsby. "Are we to keep the car, or what?"

"Yes," gasped Ponsonby.

"Oh, all right."

"Are you goin' to turn up at Gadsby Croft?" asked Monson.

"Yes," answered Ponsonby again.

"Well, when?" asked Gadsby.

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"To-morrow, I—I think!" gasped Ponsonby.

"Blessed if I understand you, Pon!" said Gadsby irritably. "Why ain't you comin' in the car with us?"

"Pon's stickin' to us for a bit!" said Lord Mauleverer blandly. "We had a talk yesterday, an' arranged it! And we're stickin' to Pon!"

"Like glue!" grinned Bob.

"I say, I believe those two fellows are holdin' Pon's arms," whispered Gadsby. "I believe they're keepin' him there by force."

"What rot!" said Monson.

"Well, it looks like it to me."

"What the thump would they want him for, you ask?"

"Blessed if I know! But it looks—"

"Rot! If he chooses to chum up with those outsiders, let him! I shan't miss his company for a day or two, I know that."

Gadsby grinned.

"Same here," he said. "But all the same—"

"Look here, Pon, are you comin' in the car, or not?" called out Monson.

"No!" gasped Ponsonby.

"Then, good-bye—see you later. Get on, Jervis."

Jervis drove on.

The green Austin and Gadsby and Monson disappeared along the road. Ponsonby gazed after them. His face was white with fury as they vanished in the dusty distance.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish," said Johnny Bull. "Now let's get on! See that that fellow carries his share of the baggage."

"And that he doesn't bolt with it!" grinned Nugent.

"There's your lot, Pon!" said Harry Wharton. "Sling it on, and get a move on."

Ponsonby choked with rage.

"Do you rotters really think that you can make me hike with you?" he hissed, between his teeth.

"Looks like it!" said the captain of the Greyfriars Remove cheerfully. "You shouldn't ask for things you don't want, you Highcliffe cad! You're being treated better than Bob was in that gipsy van in Yorkshire! It's tit for tat, and you can make the best of it."

"The tit for tatfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed rotten Pon," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "As the proverb remarkably observes, whoever is saucy to the goose, must be saucy to the gander."

"Good old proverb!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Come on!"

The hikers started.

Pon had breakfasted with the hikers that morning. During the night he had rather regretted refusing supper—and in the morning he was too hungry to refuse breakfast. Now he shouldered his pack, just as if he was a regular member of the hiking party, and marched. But he did not swing off cheerily like the other hikers. He went with rage in his face, and fury in his heart—bitter rancour and hatred running riot in his breast. He had hunted the hikers—he had played many a scurvy trick on them—but it had never occurred to him for a moment that it might lead to anything like this! He had carried on with reckless lawlessness—yet he had never imagined that the hikers, also, might take the law into their own hands! Now he was learning that what was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander! It was quite a valuable lesson for Pon—but he did not like it a little bit!

Leaving the road, the hikers took a shady lane. With Pon in their company

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it was agreed that they had better follow solitary routes as far as possible. Bunter, carrying nothing, as usual, rolled on behind. Quite a bright idea occurred to Bunter, when he got tired—which was five minutes after the morning's march started.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Bunter.

"Put it on, fatty!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "Like me to help you with my boot?"

"Beast! I say, now we've got Pon, why not make him work?" said Bunter.

"He can carry me—"

"What?" gasped the hikers.

"Pick-a-back, you know," said Bunter.

"I can stick on him somehow! And I'm not much of a weight."

"N-n-not much of a weight!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"No—rather light, in fact! What about it?"

"Oh gad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

"I think it's a jolly good idea!" said Bunter.

"What does Pon think?" asked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pon did not speak; he only looked at Billy Bunter as if he could have bitten him. Bunter blinked round at the hikers through his big spectacles inquiringly. It seemed a good idea to Bunter! Anything that saved him the trouble of walking seemed a good idea to Bunter.

Fortunately for Pon, the other hikers did not think that it was a good idea! They chortled and shook their heads. Pon deserved punishment; but he did not quite deserve that!

"Well, what about it?" demanded Bunter.

"Nothing about it, old ten-tonner," said Bob. "March!"

"Beast!"

And the hikers marched, and Bunter marched. They did a mile along the lane without meeting a soul. Then, as they were about to cross a stile, to take a footpath through a meadow, a stout, red-faced, jovial-looking farmer met them face to face. And before any fellow could think of intervening, Pon shouted desperately.

"Help! I'm being kidnapped! Help! Help!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Looking After Ponsonby!

"O H, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

The stout farmer, coming across the meadow, reached the stile from one side as the hikers reached it from the other. He stared at them in astonishment as Ponsonby yelled. Pon made a bound to leap over the stile and get on the farmer's side of it. But Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent had him by the arms in a moment.

Pon was held! But he struggled and shouted.

"Help! Help! Help!"

The farmer gazed.

"Help!" he repeated. "What be the trouble, young master?"

Lord Mauleverer made a sign to his comrades. He stepped forward.

"Don't take any notice of the poor fellow, sir!" he said. "He can't help it! It comes on every now and then." And Mauly, with a significant gesture, tapped his forehead.

"Let me go, you rotters!" yelled Pon.

"Help me, my man—help me get out of the hands of these rotters! They're kidnapping me."

"Mad?" whispered the farmer to Mauly.

"Not exactly—that's too strong a word, sir! A bit excitable, if you know what I mean. Sometimes he's perfectly calm for days."

"Will you help me?" yelled Pon.

"We're lookin' after him," went on Mauleverer calmly. "Hikin', you know, sir. The open air is good for him. Of course, we're takin' every care of the poor chap, though it's a bit of a worry when he begins yellin' at strangers. Only yesterday he snatched a book from a fellow and ran off with it."

"Gosh!" said the farmer.

"I tell you they're kidnapping me," shouted Ponsonby. "Will you get a constable here?"

The farmer gave him a pitying look. He could see that it was a hiking party, and he was not likely to believe that a party of schoolboy hikers were kidnapping anybody!

"Your friends are looking after you, young master," he said. "Better keep calm, my poor lad."

"I tell you they're dragging me along with them by force," yelled Pon.

"Make them let me go."

"Quiet, old top," said Bob Cherry soothingly. "What would you do, wandering about the country by yourself?"

"You rotter!" panted Ponsonby.

"Look here, sir—" Pon could hardly bring himself to address the farmer as "sir"—he much preferred to address him as "my man!" But the case was desperate. "Look here, sir, you can see that I don't want to stay with these brutes! They've collared me and taken me away from my friends."

"That's all right," said Harry Wharton gently, playing up to Mauly's game. "You'll feel better presently."

"Try not to get excited, old fellow," said Frank Nugent solemnly. "That's the chief thing—don't get excited."

"Let me go!" yelled Pon. "Won't you help me, sir? You can see that they're holding me."

"Well, your friends wouldn't be likely to let you go, when you might do yourself some mischief," said the farmer, shaking his head. "There's a deep pond quite near here. Better keep hold of him, if he's a little out of his mind."

"We've got him safe," said Nugent.

"Be calm, old chap!"

Ponsonby fairly gurgled with rage.

"Will you help me?" he roared.

"They're only pulling your leg—can't you see that they're stuffing you? I belong to Highcliffe School—"

"Highcliffe Asylum," said Bob Cherry, explaining to the farmer. "He thinks it's a school."

The farmer nodded.

"You rotter!" shrieked Ponsonby, mad with rage, if not mad in any other sense. "I tell you they're kidnapping me, sir. My name's Ponsonby. My father's Sir Cecil Ponsonby, of Ponsonby Hall."

"Sometimes he thinks he's the King of England," said Bob gravely, "and sometimes Shah of Persia!"

"Poor lad!" said the farmer pityingly.

"I tell you—" raved Ponsonby.

"Be quiet, Jones, old chap," said Bob Cherry; a remark that made it hard for his comrades to maintain their gravity. "Don't talk stuff like that, Jones!"

"Poor old Jones!" said Nugent.

"What on earth's put it into his head that his name's Ponsonby?"

"May know somebody of that name," said Johnny Bull, with owl-like gravity.

"Do you know anybody of that name, Jones?"

Ponsonby was almost raving by this time. Indeed, he looked so crimson and furious that his looks rather bore out

the suspicion that he was not quite in his senses.

"Will you help me get away from these scoundrels?" he yelled.

"Poor boy—poor boy!" said the farmer. "Thinks he's the Shah of Persia, does he? Bless my heart! Poor boy!"

"You silly old fool!" shrieked Ponsonby.

"Eh?"

"You dunderheaded old chump—" "Don't mind him, sir!" said Lord Mauleverer hastily. "He's like that at times. He calls us all sorts of names. But when he's calm there's not a politer chap anywhere."

The farmer nodded. He looked at Ponsonby compassionately, but rather

uneasily. Instead of getting over the stile he stepped back.

"Poor boy!" he repeated. "Poor boy!"

And the farmer walked along the hedge to a gap and proceeded on his way, evidently not desiring to pass too close to the lunatic the hikers were taking care of.

His burly form disappeared up the lane. The hikers contrived not to laugh till he was out of hearing. Then they roared.

Ponsonby stuttered with fury. "Oh, you rotters!" he gasped. "Oh, you rascals! Oh, you sweeps! Oh, won't I pay you out for this!"

"Be quiet, Jones!" said Bob. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the hikers.

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, that farmer was quite alarmed. He didn't want to get near Pon. He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Well, let's get on," said Lord Mauleverer cheerfully. "Better not talk too much to strangers, Ponsonby. You seem to have rather an alarmin' effect on them."

The chuckling hikers crossed the stile and went on their way. Pon went with them, simmering with fury. He had fully expected to get help from the farmer, but Lord Mauleverer had been equal to the occasion. There was no escape for the dandy of Highcliffe, any more than there had been for Bob

(Continued on next page.)



Send your football queries to "Linesman," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. It's his job to answer knotty problems—and it's a job he likes!

THE end of September is welcomed by big footballers, because after this they can, until the Christmas rush comes, settle down to the ordinary routine of one game per week. At the end of the month some of the clubs—Birmingham, for example, will have played eight games, or practically one-fifth of their whole League programme. And five of the eight away from home. A bit stiff, eh?

A reader who has observed this asks me if the footballers get so much per week, or so much per match. The answer is that the wages of the footballer do not go up or down according to the number of games played in a week.

The salary is on a weekly basis, with a limit of eight pounds.

Thus, the only way in which the footballer can benefit, financially, from the early rush of games is by way of bonus. The two pounds per man extra for a win, and the one pound extra for a draw are useful—to the players of the teams which are thus successful. Perhaps it does seem a bit hard that the player should be asked to go through an extra match in mid-week and, of course, help his club to an extra game—without any additional recompense guaranteed. But there it is.

AN OLD-TIME TRUTH!

Possibly, if all the words of wisdom which are handed out to footballers were taken in, the fellows would get serious headaches. But sometimes gems are handed out which are worthy of note. The officials of the Scottish club, Partick Thistle, have been handing out real words of wisdom to the men who play for them. In the club programme recently this advice appeared: "Pay no attention to extravagant praise bestowed on your play. If you believe all the nice things which are said about you when you are doing well, then you are bound to believe all the nasty things which are said about you when you do badly."

I like this allusion to the old-time truth that

a football star is only a hero when he is doing well.

Many a young player has had his head turned by the applause of the spectators, only to find in due course that those selfsame spectators can be very severe when the ball is not running kindly for him. Take successes as they come. That is the wise course for footballers, no matter in what class of football they play.

FROM CLUB TO CLUB!

The wanderings of the leading players are always a topic of interest, and one of these days I will give myself sufficient time to look up the records and then be in a position to answer the question of which player has appeared for the greatest number of clubs. Meantime, I may mention that the experience of "Micky" O'Brien, who is the new manager of Queen's Park Rangers, may take a bit of beating.

If we include the clubs which O'Brien played for when he left this country for America, plus his changes at home, the total reckons up to fourteen. And as he has signed a players' form for the Rangers he may yet turn out for them and bring the total up to fifteen.

In this connection, Harry Bedford has gone round in a rather interesting circle.

He was born at Chesterfield, and successively played for Notts Forest, Blackpool, Derby County, Newcastle United, and Bradford City. As he was not retained by the last-mentioned club he signed on, for the present season, with the club of his native town—Chesterfield.

Here is a secret regarding this player. It was the intention of the Chesterfield officials to make use of the services of this experienced player as a sort of coach for the reserve team. During the practice matches, however, he played so well that he simply could not be left out of the premier side, and in his very first game of the season he scored three goals.

WILL DEAN MAKE A NEW RECORD?

In the course of his wanderings round the clubs I have mentioned, Bedford has always been a consistent goalscorer, and his total of goals obtained

in League matches alone is just over three hundred. It is scarcely likely that he will succeed in beating Steve Bloomer's record of 352 League goals, but there is one man in present-day football who may do it—"Dixie" Dean, the Everton centre-forward.

He notched a goal in his first match of the season, and thus brought his total up to 300 in League games.

When you think he has scored as many as sixty in one season you see the possibilities of Dean making a new record. These figures answer a series of goal-scoring questions which have reached me from George Rigby, of Sheffield.

Sleeveless shirts have been one of the fashions of the hot summer through which we have just passed, and a reader who signs himself "Attire" wants to know why footballers in general don't take to them. I can't answer the question, really, but I see no reason why a footballer should not, on an ordinary-weather day, wear a jersey with very short sleeves. Indeed, I shall expect to see this fashion spread to footballers before very long, just as shorts and sleeveless shirts have been used by the lawn tennis players.

D'YOU KNOW THIS RULE?

Perhaps there is just one reason why shirts without sleeves have not been adopted by footballers. Some of them love to start a match with their shirt-sleeves dangling down, but when things begin to go badly they just roll them back. A source of inspiration!

The footballs are so very well made nowadays that we seldom hear of one bursting during the course of a match. It does sometimes happen, and one of my readers gives me an instance, and asks what should have been done. The ball was sent over from the wing towards my player friend, and as it dropped he "hit it" hard towards goal. As he did so the ball burst, but the boy had put so much power behind it that it still went on, beat the goalkeeper, and finished in the net.

I am sorry to have to say that the referee was wrong in awarding a goal. The moment the ball burst it became "dead" automatically.

A new one should have been obtained and dropped at the spot where the old one burst. Hard lines when this sort of thing happens, but laws are laws.

A last short answer to a correspondent. There is nothing in the rules which says that a footballer can only be charged by an opponent when he is playing the ball. Therefore, the referee was wrong in giving a penalty kick in the circumstances you name, provided the charge was a fair one.

"LINESMAN."

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Cherry when the gipsies had kidnapped him. Bob had remained a prisoner till his friends rescued him. Pon's friends were welcome to do the same if they liked, and could. Probably they were not keen on making the attempt. Gadsby and Monson could hardly have believed that Pon was going willingly with the Greyfriars party, when they reflected on the matter. But certainly they were not in pursuit of the hikers.

By unfrequented paths, keeping carefully away from the roads, the hikers hiked on in the sunny morning. Once Pon yelled to some haymakers, who stared at him in wonder as the other fellows walked him quickly on. Once he shouted to a car in a lane; but before the car could stop—if it did stop—the hikers were getting across a field, Pon in their midst. To the Greyfriars fellows it was no end of a joke, and they were immensely entertained by the looks that Pon gave them. But the joke was quite lost on Ponsonby. By the time the party halted for rest and lunch at midday, Pon was in the state of an active volcano on the verge of an eruption.

They halted by a path across a wide stretch of pasture-land, where there was no inhabitant in sight save a meditative cow. Ponsonby gazed round over a landscape of waving grass and green hedges and gritted his teeth.

"How long do you rotters fancy that you're goin' to keep this up?" he hissed.

"Eh? I've taken you on for a week, my good fellow," answered Lord Mauleverer. "If you give satisfaction we may keep you on longer. But I'd better tell you plainly that I'm not satisfied so far. You talk too much."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you rotter!" gasped Ponsonby.

"The too-muchfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Speech is silvery, my esteemed Pon, but silence is the cracked pitcher that saves a bird in the bush from a stitch in time, as the English proverb remarks."

"Look here——" roared Ponsonby.

"Nuff said!" interrupted Lord Mauleverer. "You talk a lot too much, and you're neglectin' your work! Get on with it; we want some lunch!"

"Do you think I'm goin' to cook for you?" shrieked Ponsonby.

"Yaas!"

"I—I—I—I'll——" Pon gurgled.

"Are you tired, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes! Fearfully!" answered Bunter promptly.

"Too tired to whop Pon with the fryin'-pan?"

"Oh, no! Not at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pon cooked the lunch!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets Wet!

"I SAY, you fellows, there's the Thames!"

The hikers chuckled.

They were on the march again in the golden afternoon. Between two big stretches of poplars and willows a silvery sheen of water caught their eyes ahead. But that beautiful little river certainly was not Father Thames. It was the Kennet, rippling on its way to join the Thames at Reading.

"Where?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Can't you see it?" demanded Bunter.

"Blessed if I can! Point it out."

Billy Bunter pointed to the Kennet with a fat forefinger.

"See it now?" he demanded.

"No," answered Bob gravely. "Can any of you fellows see the Thames from here?"

"I can't, for one," said Nugent.

"Nor I!" said Harry Wharton.

"The seefulness is not terrific."

"Well, my hat!" said Billy Bunter.

"You fellows make out that I'm short-sighted. Well, I can see the Thames if you can't! Just ahead of us."

"I suppose we're eight or ten miles from the Thames," remarked Johnny Bull.

"Bunter's eyesight is improving."

"We're not a hundred yards, you ass!" said Bunter.

"If you're as blind as a set of boiled owls, come on and get a bit nearer."

The hikers marched on towards the Kennet. They came out on the bank, clothed with poplars and willows, with great fir-woods sweeping up the sandhills in the distance. It was beautiful scenery, and they looked about them with keen appreciation; only Ponsonby scowling savagely as usual. Beautiful scenery was wasted on Pon.

"See the Thames now?" demanded Bunter scornfully.

"No!" answered the hikers cheerfully.

Bunter blinked at them.

"Blind?" he hooted.

"The blindfulness is not terrific."

"Well, then, what do you mean by saying that you can't see a river ten feet off?" demanded Bunter.

"Oh, we can see the Kennet all right," answered Bob Cherry.

"But we should want a jolly big telescope to see the Thames from here, old fat bean."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Is it the Kennet?" asked Bunter.

"Never heard of it! I say, you fellows, this scenery is glorious, ain't it?"

"Topping!" said Nugent.

"Lovely woods of beeches and oaks!" said Bunter.

"Willows and poplars," said Johnny Bull.

"Well, willows and poplars, if you're so jolly particular. What I mean is, it's glorious scenery, and—and I think we ought to stay here a bit and—and admire it!"

And Billy Bunter sat down in the grass.

The hikers grinned. They had rather wondered why Bunter was showing such an unusual appreciation of scenery.

Now they knew. Bunter wanted a rest.

"Get up, old fat man!" said Bob.

"We're going to admire the scenery as we go along."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Let's leave Bunter admiring the scenery and get on!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

Bunter reluctantly heaved his weight out of the grass and followed the hikers by a path that ran along the stream for some distance; he grunted with dissatisfaction as he went.

"I say, you fellows, I'm tired!" growled Bunter.

"We've heard that one before," remarked Bob Cherry.

"I'm getting hungry."

"I believe we've heard that one, too."

"Beast!"

Bunter grunted and plugged on. The hikers strolled on at a leisurely pace—the pace had to be leisurely when Billy Bunter was in the party.

Ponsonby tramped in savage silence, with his pack on his back. There was a glitter in Pon's eyes, and he glanced every now and then furtively at the hikers. They were not giving him much attention, though had he attempted to bolt they would have attended to him promptly enough. But they did not

guess what was passing in Pon's cunning mind.

The Highcliffe man unslung his pack, as if to shift it for easier carriage. He swung it in his hands, and suddenly hurled it point blank at Billy Bunter, who was plugging along by the edge of the bank, at that point several feet above the water.

Crash!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

He went over like a skittle, flung headlong by the crash. There was a splash in the Kennet.

"Urrrrgh!" gurgled Bunter, and he went under.

Instantly Pon was running.

The hikers halted. Pon darted away at top speed, and the hikers ran to the water's edge to see what had become of Bunter.

A fat hand was flung up, a fat face and a pair of wet spectacles glimmered in the sunshine. Bunter was three yards out, struggling feebly.

"Oh, the rotter!" panted Wharton.

Ponsonby, running like a deer, vanished up the bank, unpursued.

Bunter was in danger. Pon cared nothing for that; but the hikers had no attention for Pon, with a fellow in danger of drowning.

Bob Cherry went into the water with a bound and grasped the fat junior. Up came Bunter, spluttering.

He flung a frantic, fat arm round Bob's neck, dragging him under.

It was fortunate for both Bunter and Bob that the other fellows were swift to come to their help.

Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull, only pausing to throw down their packs, plunged in and got hold of them.

Three pairs of hands on Billy Bunter dragged him, struggling and gurgling and spluttering, to the bank, where he was fished out.

He lay gurgling in the grass, with the hikers gathered round him.

"Urrgh! Oooogh! I'm drowned!" spluttered Bunter.

"I mean nearly drowned! Wurrgh!" That beast knocked me into the river on purpose!

Urrrrgh! I'm all wet! Yurrghh!"

"All right now——" said Harry.

"Gurrgh! I'm not all right!" yelled Bunter, with a lung-power that showed that there was not much wrong with him.

"I've swallowed a lot of water! Pints of it—gallons of it! Yurrrrghh!"

"If he's swallowed gallons of water we'd better pour it out," said Bob.

"Take hold of his feet and stand him on his head. Open your mouth, Bunter."

"Urrgh! Beast! Leggo!" roared Bunter.

"If you stand me on my head I'll jolly well kick you! Yurrghh!"

"But if you're full of Kennet water, Bunter——"

"Beast!"

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Pon's done us this time! Pon's a deep card—what?"

Wharton knitted his brows.

"The rotten-hooligan! He didn't care what happened to that fat, clumsy duffer——"

"Well, he knew we should stop and get him out," said Lord Mauleverer.

"That was his game!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Better camp here, I think," said Harry.

"We've got to get ourselves dry."

"I'm going after Pon!" said Bob Cherry.

"You fellows camp and leave him to me. He doesn't need more than one fellow to handle him, and I'll bring him back by his neck."

"Good egg!"

Bob Cherry started after Ponsonby, who was already out of sight. But the



Bob Cherry went into the water with a bound and grasped the drowning Bunter. The fat junior flung his fat arms round Bob's neck, dragging him under. But Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull were already plunging in to help, heedless of the escaping Ponsonby!

hefty Bob was twice the man at running that Ponsonby was, and, unless the Highcliffian dodged him in the woods along the river, he had no doubt of running Pon down. In a few minutes he also was out of sight of the hikers, going strong.

The other fellows camped. Billy Bunter, as a matter of fact, was little the worse for his ducking. But Billy Bunter was the fellow to make the most of it. He explained that he was too exhausted by his struggle for life in the Kennet to lend a hand in camping. But he was not too exhausted to change his clothes; he did not want to catch a cold. Having done so, he sat down to rest, and blinked at the other fellows through his big spectacles while they did the work of the camp.

"I say, you fellows, what about supper?" he inquired.

"Waitin' for our hired man to come back and get supper," said Lord Maulveror.

"Oh, really, Mauly! The fact is, I think Pon's had enough," said Bunter. "I think we'd better let him off. You fellows get supper."

Johnny Bull looked at him.

"You think Pon's had enough, do you?" he asked.

"Yes. There's a limit, you know."

"You think one of us ought to get supper?"

"Yes, rather—and at once!"

"Oh, all right!" said Johnny. "Got on with it, then."

"Eh?"

"You're one of us, aren't you?"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"One of us is going to get supper—and you're the one," said Johnny Bull. "And I'm going to kick you till you do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows, I—I think we'd better wait!" gasped Bunter. "I—

I don't think Pon's had enough! Better wait till Bob brings him back!"

Johnny Bull stepped towards Bunter and lifted his right foot. The Owl of the Remove hastily detached himself from the grass.

"Look here, you beast—" he howled.

"I'm looking—to see you get the supper! I advise you to get on with it," said Johnny Bull stolidly.

Billy Bunter blinked at Johnny Bull and at the uplifted boot—then he got on with it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Any Port in a Storm!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars, yawned. Tom Redwing, his chum, glanced round at him with a smile. Redwing was unpacking a lunch-basket in the boat that was tied up by the bank of the Kennet. Smithy, sitting on the gunwale, was idly watching the river ripple past, while the boat swayed gently to the current. Redwing's face was cheerful; Smithy's more than a little discontented.

"Fed-up, Smithy?" asked Tom.

"Oh, no!" said the Bounder. "It's ripping here, old chap. It was a jolly good idea to have a few days on the river. Yaw-aw-aw!" He yawned again involuntarily.

Redwing laughed.

"But too quiet for you, old fellow!" he said. "But it's the last day. Keep your pecker up!"

The Bounder coloured a little shamefacedly. Redwing was his chum at Greyfriars School, and there was no doubt that Smithy was deeply and sincerely attached to his chum—the only fellow he had ever really made friends with at Greyfriars. He had been very glad to have Redwing with him for a

few days towards the end of the school holidays. There was glorious weather as a fine summer merged into a fine autumn. Smithy had really enjoyed a couple of days pottering up and down the river. But his restless nature demanded something more exciting; he was accustomed, in the vac, to all sorts of amusements that Redwing had no desire to share, and would have refused to share. Smithy was a good fellow in his way, but there was no doubt that he deserved the nickname of the Bounder that had been given to him at Greyfriars.

"You're going home to Hawksoliff when we part, old fellow?" he asked.

"Yes; my father's home from sea this week," answered Tom. "You haven't told me where you're going, Smithy."

"Afraid of shockin' you," said the Bounder, with a mocking glimmer in his eyes. "I'm goin' with some Highcliff men, if you want to know."

"Oh!" said Redwing.

"You know Gadsby of the Highcliffe Fourth—ho's gone on some motorin' tour with his friends, but he's due home now. You see," explained the Bounder, with a sardonic grin, "Gadsby's people are away abroad, and Gadsby Croft is shut up; left to the butler an' a few servants. Gaddy and his friends are goin' to have a high old time there, and Gaddy's been kind enough to ask me."

"You're not friends," said Redwing quietly.

"What does that matter when a fellow's father is a millionaire?" sneered the Bounder. "Pon & Co. will be frightfully glad to get me there, though they can't stand me personally."

"What the dickens are you going for, then? You've got a hundred places to choose from—you're welcome anywhere."

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"Thanks; but I'm goin' for a high

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THE HIKER'S PRISONER!

(Continued from page 13.)

old time—like Pon & Co. We're goin' to make the fur fly! I'd like you to come—

"No fear!"

"Well, I dare say you'd get bored, you queer old fish," said Smithy; "but there will be quite an entertainin' set—a bit rowdy, perhaps! Pon and Monson and Drury and Vavasour and Gaddy himself, from Highcliffe, an' I think one or two other fellows! They're goin' to hear the chimos at midnight, and fancy themselves no end doggish."

"I wish you'd eut it, Smithy! Ponsonby's a thorough rotter," said Redwing. "He was rowing with Wharton and his friends, too, just at the end of last term—"

"I believe they've been rowin' since," grinned Smithy. "I've heard from Gaddy! It seems that Wharton and his gang have been hikin', and Pon & Co. have dropped on them more than once, and there's been trouble. No bisney of mine."

"Well, let's have tea," said Tom. "We've got to pull back to Reading before dark. Hallo, that sounds like somebody in a hurry!"

There was a rapid patter of running feet on the bank.

Tom Redwing stood up in the boat, and glanced round. Vernon-Smith did not take the trouble to move from his seat on the gunwale.

Redwing stared at the hurried, breathless figure that came racing along the bank of the Kennet.

"Ponsonby!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated the Bounder, and he jumped up and stared, too. "Fancy meetin' Pon here!"

They watched the running figure curiously. Ponsonby was evidently in hot haste. His face was crimson, and wet with perspiration, and he breathed in panting gulps. They saw him glance swiftly over his shoulder, as if in fear of pursuit; but there was no one else in sight along the green, wooded bank.

Suddenly he caught sight of the boat, and turning, ran down to it. He stopped on the margin of the water, gasping.

"Look here, give me a lift across the river, will you?" he panted. "There's some tramps after me—Oh! That you, Smithy?" He stared blankly at Herbert Vernon-Smith. "You, old bean! I say, you might give me a lift across."

He jumped into the boat, making it rock with his impact. Panting, he fumbled with the painter to untie it.

Redwing laid a hand on his arm and stopped him.

"Hold on," he said quietly. "Leave that alone, please."

Ponsonby gave him a fierce look.

"Mind your own bisney! I suppose it's Smithy's boat! Stand back, hang you!"

"If there's tramps after you they can't hurt you here," said Redwing contemptuously. "You'll be safe in the boat."

"Yes, chuck it, Pon," said the Bounder. "Three of us will be able to handle the jolly old tramps, if they turn up! Can't see anythin' of them."

"It's not a case of tramps," said Redwing quietly. "Ponsonby's been up to something—as usual. It's his way to hunt for trouble, and then eut and run when he gets it."

"Will you give me a lift across the river?" hissed Ponsonby.

"Not till we know why you want it!" answered Redwing coolly.

Ponsonby clenched his hands. He had

escaped from the Greyfriars hikers, but he was in terror every moment of seeing pursuing figures in sight on the riverbank. The boat was a windfall for him—if he could make use of it. He was tempted to knock Redwing spinning into the river; but the sailorman's son clenched his hands, also—and they were a good deal heftier than Pon's. Pon realised that if there was a scrap, it was not Tom Redwing who was likely to be knocked into the Kennet.

He turned to Vernon-Smith again.

"Smithy, old man! You're comin' to Gaddy's place in a day or two—Gaddy's told me so! Stand by me now!"

"What's the trouble?" drawled the Bounder. "Don't spin a yarn about tramps—hand out the facts, old bean."

Pon gave him an evil look.

But it was not necessary for him to answer. By the trees along the winding bank another figure came into sight, running hard; and the Bounder and Redwing recognised Bob Cherry.

"Tramps!" grinned Smithy. "Remove men of Greyfriars—they'd be flattered by your description, Pon."

"I said tramps, and I meant tramps!" snarled Ponsonby. "They call it hikin', an' I call them tramps! An' they're after me—we—we've had a row! Will you give me a lift?"

"Only one of them," said Redwing. "Nobody's in sight but Bob Cherry."

Vernon-Smith, laughing, untied the painter, but held on to the branch with his hand. Pon was anxious and eager for the boat to shove off; but it was for the Bounder to decide that. No doubt, the fact that he was going to stay at Gadsby Croft, where Pon was to be one of the party, influenced the Bounder. On the other hand, he was a Greyfriars man, and his feelings were rather naturally with his own school; and certainly, he rather despised the dandy of Highcliffe for running away from a single enemy; neither did he doubt that whatever the trouble was, Pon had started it. So perhaps it amused him to keep the Highcliffe fellow in suspense; perhaps he had not yet decided whether to help him or not. Anyhow, he held on to the branch, and watched Bob Cherry coming on breathlessly.

Sighting the boat and two Greyfriars fellows in it, Bob paused and looked—and spotted Pon! He ran down the bank.

"Got you, you rotter!" roared Bob. "Chuck that cur out, Smithy! Glad to see you men here—never knew you were in Berkshire! Pitch that Highcliffe cad out on his neck, will you? I want him."

The boat was about six feet off the bank—nothing for Bob to jump. The Bounder's hand slid along the branch, and it floated out two or three feet more, Smithy still holding on. Bob stared at him, and the Bounder smiled. "What do you want him for?" asked Smithy.

"Well, I do want him," said Bob; "and I suppose you're not standing by a rotter like Ponsonby, Smithy? You don't need me to tell you that he's acted like a worm and a cad and a cur and a mean polecat! You know him as well as I do, so you can take the speech as read."

Redwing laughed, and the Bounder chuckled.

"Still, you needn't chuck him out, if you don't want to touch him," added Bob. "I'll jump in for him."

Bob retreated a few paces, made a little run, and jumped.

As he jumped, the Bounder pushed off with a sudden thrust of his arm, and the boat shot out into the Kennet. Naturally, the leaping junior dropped short.

Splash!

Bob Cherry disappeared in the water, and came up again drenched, and spluttering.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Ponsonby.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Warm Work!

"URRRRRGGH!" Bob Cherry gurgled. "Wurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Pon.

The Bounder grinned, and, taking an oar, kept the boat steady. Redwing's face was dark and serious. Whatever the Bounder thought, Tom Redwing was in sympathy with Pon's pursuer, and certainly not with Pon.

"Urrgh! You rotter!" gasped Bob, swimming, and glaring after the boat with a crimson and angry face. "What the thump—by gum, I've a jolly good mind to mop you up as well as Ponsonby, Smithy!"

He swam after the boat with powerful strokes. The Bounder tooled it easily out of reach.

"Keep cool, old bean!" he suggested.

"I dare say the Kennet will cool him!" chuckled Ponsonby. "You're a sportsman, Smithy, old man! Let's get across."

"Look here, Smithy—" began Redwing hotly.

"Oh, leave this to me, Reddy!" interrupted the Bounder. He grinned at the swimmer in the water. "I've asked you what you want Pon for, Cherry! Can't you tell a fellow? I'm not handin' him over without knowin'."

Bob made an effort, reached the boat, and grasped the gunwale. It rocked as he grasped hold.

"You cheeky rotter!" he gasped. "I'll jolly well—"

"Let go this boat!" said the Bounder.

"I'll see you hanged first! I'm after Ponsonby, and I'm going to bag him and take him back; and if you don't like it, you can lump it!" gasped Bob.

"That's for me to say," said Smithy coolly. "You silly ass, do you think you can bully me as if I were a Highcliffe funk? For two pins I'd knock you on the head with this oar!"

"You'll be sorry if you do, you rotter!" panted Bob.

"Let go!" exclaimed the Bounder, threateningly. He had been quite undecided, at first, which side he was going to take in this peculiar dispute. But he had decided now. His arrogant temper was roused, at the mere idea of being overborne.

"Well, I won't!"

"Look here, Smithy, chuck it," exclaimed Redwing, sharply. "You know as well as I do that Ponsonby's to blame, whatever the trouble is."

"How should I know?" sneered the Bounder. "I know that nobody's going to bully me, or barge into my boat without my leave."

"Put that Highcliffe cad on the bank, and let them settle it between them, then."

"That's what I want!" exclaimed Bob.

"Is it what you want, Pon?" asked the Bounder, with his sardonic grin. He was backing up Pon now; but he could not resist the temptation to taunt him.

Ponsonby scowled savagely.

"No, it isn't!" he snarled. "The rest of the gang aren't far away. They've been keepin' me away from my friends, by force. All I want is to get away from the dingy crew."

"And what did you do?" asked Redwing, contemptuously.

"Find out!" snarled Ponsonby.

"I'll tell you what he did," hooted Bob, "he hired a couple of gipsies to

kidnap me and stick me in a van, tied up like a turkey. And we're giving him a lesson about barging in, and we're going on giving it to him, just as long as we jolly well choose."

"As long as I choose, you mean," suggested the Bounder. "It seems to me that I'm rather boss of this show."

"Does it?" booted Bob. "Well, you'll find out that you're jolly well mistaken, Smithy! I'm after Pon."

He dragged himself up the gunwale. Ponsonby snatched up a boathook, with a savage gleam in his eyes. It was a dangerous weapon, with its sharp barbed end; but quite rockless of that, the Highcliffe fellow lifted it to lunge at Bob.

Redwing's grasp was on him instantly. The boathook clattered down, and Pon sprawled across it, hurled headlong into the bottom of the boat by Tom's strong arm.

"None of that!" said Redwing, tersely.

"Good man, Reddy!" gasped Bob. "You rotter!" shrieked Ponsonby, scrambling up. "You Greyfriars cad!"

Bob flung himself over the gunwale into the rocking boat. The next moment his grasp was on Ponsonby. The Highcliffe struggled. Vernon-Smith moved forward, with glinting eyes.

"Let that fellow go!" he snapped.

"I won't!"

"Then I'll jolly well make you!"

And the Bounder grasped at Bob, and dragged him over. The boat danced, almost capsizing, and shipping water. Bob, still grasping his enemy, sprawled, in the grasp of Herbert Vernon-Smith. All of them were drenched by the wash of the Kennet that came over the gunwale. It did not matter much to Bob, who could hardly have got wetter. But Pon yelped, and the Bounder snarled with anger.

"Pitch him out!" he panted. "Here, Reddy, lend a hand, and heave this dashed hooligan into the river!"

"I'll do nothing of the kind," snapped Redwing.

"Well, I can do it without your help," growled Smithy. "Back up, Pon!"

Right or wrong—the Bounder cared little which—he was on Pon's side now, tooth and nail. The two of them grasped Bob Cherry hard, and they struggled in the bottom of the boat. Redwing, with a frowning brow, dipped an oar, and toolled the boat towards the bank again. He would not take a hand against his chum; but certainly he was going to take no hand against Bob.

"Let go, Smithy!" roared Bob, furiously.

"Out you go, you cheeky tick!" answered the Bounder.

The three were on their feet now, Smithy and Pon heaving at Bob to hurl him into the water. But it was not so easy to handle the champion fighting-man of the Greyfriars Remove. Bob's blood was up now, and he was fighting hard.

He released one hand, clenched his fist, and hit out. His knuckles caught Vernon-Smith on the point of the chin, and Smithy went over backwards. His legs caught on the gunwale, and he pitched on his back into the Kennet. "Now for you, you rotter!" panted Bob.

Ponsonby simply crumpled up in Bob Cherry's grasp. Redwing had brought the boat to the bank, and with a powerful heave, Bob sent the Highcliffe fellow spinning into the rushes. He jumped after him to the bank.

Vernon-Smith came up a few yards from the boat, swam to it, and caught hold. Redwing gave him a hand in,

at the same time giving the boat a push away from the bank. It slid out into the Kennet again, leaving Bob on shore, dragging Pon up the bank.

The Bounder panted with rage.

"Pull in, Reddy, you rotter!" he yelled.

"Rats!"

"I'll smash that rotter——"

"You won't!"

With a dip of the oars, Tom Redwing sent the boat shooting out into the current. Almost in a moment, it was twenty yards away from the two fellows on the bank. Herbert Vernon-Smith turned on him, with clenched fists and flaming eyes. For a moment it looked as if the infuriated Bounder would hurl himself at his chum, hitting out right and left. Fortunately, he restrained his fury in time. Scowling, he turned to stare at the bank.

Pon, drenched and dripping, was on the path above the bank now, with Bob Cherry's grip on his collar. He was going back the way he had come! With a grasp of iron on his collar, and a foot ready to help him, Pon had no choice in the matter—unless he chose a fight to a finish—which he evidently had no idea of doing! White with rage,

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Ponsonby marched off, a prisoner! And the Bounder, staring after him, burst into a laugh.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Out of the Frying-Pan Into the Fire!

DARKNESS lay on the valley of the Kennet, and the pleasant vales of Berkshire. A crescent of moon glimmered from fleecy clouds, reflected in the stream as it rippled and flowed between shadowy banks. In the hikers' tent, all but one were sleeping—and for a considerable distance, any passer-by might have heard the deep and steady snore of Billy Bunter, and wondered whether it was the growl of thunder. But in that lonely spot there were no passers-by. The hikers slept the sleep of youth, but Ponsonby was not asleep. Pon's experiences had not made him sleepy! He was wide awake, his eyes glinting in the darkness, planning escape. At the

"witching hour" of night, Pon had not closed his eyes, while all the other fellows were deep in slumber, and assuredly not dreaming of Pon!

The hikers' "hired man," as Mauly playfully called him, stirred at last. He rose silently to his feet. He moved with the stealthy caution of a Red Indian. If one of the hikers awakened, Pon would be collared again—and he was taking no risks that he could help. His clothes had been dried round the stove, since his dranching in the Kennet; they were rather crumpled and shrunken, but they were dry. Pon had put them on again to sleep in, disdainfully and savagely refusing a share of the hikers' blankets. He was fully dressed, even to his boots. All he had to do was to get out of the tent, if he could!

He moved inch by inch.

It was a fairly roomy tent; but with eight fellows in it, it was rather closely packed. It was not easy for the most cautious fellow to move without disturbing some of the other fellows.

Somehow, Pon managed it.

He reached the tent flap and paused.

Bob Cherry was near him, his head resting on the rucksack that contained the Holiday Annual—the book with a secret, which was the cause of Pon's long and obstinate pursuit of the Greyfriars hikers. Ponsonby debated whether to make a snatch at it, before he fled into the night.

But he dared not! Keen as he was to get hold of the book in which he believed that "Micky the Sprat" had placed a secret message, he was still more keen to get clear of the hikers while he had the chance.

He crept out of the tent.

Harry Wharton & Co. slept on. Packed among so many fellows, they had not supposed that the "hired man" would be able to steal out of the tent without giving an alarm. But Pon had succeeded.

He drew a deep breath of the cool night air, and looked round him. On one side was the Kennet, glimmering in the moonlight. On the other were deep, dark woods covering the slopes up from the river. Exactly where he was, and where was the nearest human habitation, Pon did not know. But a path led up through the woods, that by which the hikers had come, and he started to follow it. It would lead him to somewhere; and he cared little where, so long as it was a safe distance from the Greyfriars fellows.

Not that Pon had any intention of abandoning his feud, or giving up his quest of the Holiday Annual. But for the present, he was only anxious to escape.

The camp, and the glimmering river,

(Continued on next page.)

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disappeared behind. Deep woods, gloomy with shadows, were on either side of him; and from the shadows came the faint, strange sounds of the night. Pon glanced to right and left, uneasily, as he tramped on. It was past midnight, and the country was utterly lonely; and vague thoughts of rough tramps, and desperate poachers came into his mind. It was not the walk he would have chosen, had he had any choice in the matter.

On one side of the path were high palings, enclosing some large estate. Over the palings showed thick branches of trees. The palings were high, and strong, and pointed at the top, evidently to keep out trespassers. Whoever owned that wood did not want unauthorised persons barging into it. The path was deeply gloomy under overhanging branches, and Pon could not see two yards before his nose. He came to a sudden stop, as he heard a sharp crack, that sounded to his startled ears like the report of a rifle.

His heart beat unpleasantly. The sound was repeated again, and yet again. Then Ponsonby realised that it was not a gunshot. It was the cracking of wood. And he spotted the direction of the sound.

Someone—unseen by Pon—was breaking an opening into the park palings. Straining his eyes in the gloom, directed at the spot from which the sound came, he dimly made out a dusky figure, and then another. The two men were not ten feet from him—but for that warning sound he would have walked fairly into them.

Pon stood quite still. He did not need telling that men who were breaking a way through palings, at midnight, were breaking the law, as well as the palings. A fellow who wandered about wooded country in the middle of the night was likely to meet with strange characters—and Pon had met some!

Another crack, and another! Then a whispering voice in the gloom.

"That's done it, Mike!"

"If anybody's heard—" came a whisper back.

"Who'd hear, Mike? There's no keepers on this side."

"I dunno! I know Sir Gilbert's been making a row about his birds missing. I know that, Charley."

"It's all right, I tell you! Gimme the bag. You foller me through."

Ponsonby could have gasped with relief. They were going!

He could glimpse only moving shadows. But he heard a faint, brushing sound. Mike and Charley were squeezing through the gap they had made in the palings. The brushing sound continued from within the fence for a few moments, and then all was silent.

Mike and Charley—whatever Mike and Charley were—had gone into Sir Gilbert's preserves—whatever Sir Gilbert was! They had neither seen nor heard Pon, and the coast was clear again. Ponsonby waited till the last rustle had died away, and then tramped on again.

He passed the gap in the palings, and glanced at it as he passed. It was in a shady spot, under thick, overhanging branches; not likely to catch anyone's eye in passing, before daylight, if a keeper happened to come that way. Pon gave it a glance, and passed on—and only a few moments later he gave a startled yell, as a hand fell on his collar, and he was suddenly grasped in the darkness.

Over him towered a burly form. In

the belief that it was one of the poacher gang who had seized him, Pon struggled wildly.

"Let go!" he panted.

"Not so fast!" came a cool voice. "You're one of them, I fancy!" The grasp on Pon's collar tightened as he struggled, and a light glimmered out. In the glimmer, Pon made out a burly figure in velveteens, and realised that it was not a poacher, but a keeper, who had seized him. A head was bent, and he saw a hard, weather-beaten face, with two keen eyes scanning him. "What are you doing here?" the voice went on.

"Oh! You're a keeper!" gasped Pon, greatly relieved by the discovery.

"Guessed that?" said the keeper dryly. "Yes, I'm Sir Gilbert's keeper, my lad, as I fancy you know." He peered more closely at Ponsonby. "You're young for this game; and you don't look like a country lad, either."

"You fool!" snapped Pon. "Do you think I'm a poacher?"

"I may be a fool," said the burly man calmly, "but that's just what I do think, my lad. I heard you breaking the fence."

Evidently the path by that side of Sir Gilbert's estate was not so clear of keepers as Charley had supposed.

"It was not I broke the fence," snarled Pon; "and, if you had the sense of a rabbit, you'd see that I'm not a poacher. Let go my collar, confound you!"

"Where are the others?" asked the keeper.

"I saw two men go through the fence. Get after them, and leave me alone, you fool!" snarled Pon savagely.

"I fancy I'll make sure of you, young man! A bird in hand is worth two in the bush!" grinned the keeper. He shut off the light, and gave a long, low, clear whistle—obviously a signal to other keepers.

"You idiot!" gasped Pon. "How dare you lay hands on me? This is a public path; you've no right to stop anybody here."

"It's a public path," agreed the keeper, "but it's very close to Sir Gilbert's fence, my boy, and I've just heard the fence break. And I've never known anybody use this path at midnight before, unless he was a poacher. What are you doing here?"

"No business of yours."

"Well, you needn't tell me—you can tell Sir Gilbert, when I send you up to the house." The keeper whistled again.

Ponsonby trembled. Evidently the keeper was waiting for another man to come, to take his prisoner "up to the house." Pon realised that the circumstances were suspicious enough. He had no fancy for being sent up to the house, with a hand on his collar, to explain himself to some stiff, suspicious, angry preserver of game. It was fairly certain that he would be kept in custody till he was able to give an account of himself.

"Will you listen to me, you fool?" Pon was too angry and alarmed to choose his expressions carefully. "I'm not a poacher, you dolt!"

"Fool and dolt, eh?" said the keeper grimly. "Go on! P'raps you'll call Sir Gilbert a fool and a dolt!" He chuckled.

"I don't know who Sir Gilbert is, you dummy; I've never even heard of him before."

"You've heard of his birds, I fancy!" "I tell you, I was just passing along this path. I'm a Public-school man, you idiot!"

"Keep it up!" said the keeper. "Larkin will be here in a minute, to take you in hand."

"I tell you—" hissed Pon. He heard a sound of footsteps in the distance; Larkin was not far away. Pon was getting desperate.

"That will do!" said the keeper. "Larkin," he called.

"That you, Mr. Churrock?" came a voice from the night.

Another keeper loomed up.

"Yes. They're at it on this side—broke through the fence—and I've got a boy they was leaving on the watch. Here he is."

Ponsonby set his teeth.

So far, he had stood unresisting in the keeper's grasp, after the first momentary struggle. Struggling was useless! But in that extremity Pon's brain worked swiftly. Suddenly he lowered his head, and, with all his strength, butted Mr. Churrock on his ample waistcoat.

"Oooogh!" gasped Sir Gilbert's head-keeper.

He staggered, his grasp on Pon's collar relaxing. Instantly the Highcliffe fellow tore himself loose and darted away down the path towards the river. Mr. Churrock, winded, staggered against the fence, pressing his hands to his circumference, and gurgling.

"Urrrgh! Oooogh! After him, Larkin! After him, quick! Oooogh!"

Larkin dashed down the path after Pon.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Wild Night for Ponsonby!

PONSONBY panted desperately. He ran hard; but behind him he heard the tramping feet of the keeper in pursuit, gaining at every stride.

He could not escape by running. Long before he got back to the bank of the Kennet he would be grasped from behind. He realised that as he ran—and he realised, too, that the matter was a good deal more serious now, since he had knocked out a keeper to make his escape. An awful vision danced before his eyes of a bench of dunderheaded country justices, all keen game preservers and fiercely down on poaching, sentencing him to three months' hard labour!

Hiking with Harry Wharton & Co. was better than that!

But he had no chance of getting back to the hikers' camp! Pursuit was too close behind!

As he ran, he remembered the gap in the palings. It was a way of escape from immediate capture, at least.

Leaving the path, he plunged into that deeply shadowed spot, and went headlong through the gap.

Within the fence he fell, and lay panting.

Had Larkin followed him, he would certainly have captured the dandy of Highcliffe on the spot, without difficulty.

But Larkin could not see that gap in the dark, and he went tramping and thundering past it.

Ponsonby lay gasping for a few moments, and then he picked himself up and peered through the gap in the fence.

A gasping, gurgling sound approached. Mr. Churrock, still rather winded, was following the under-keeper slowly.

Ponsonby waited breathlessly for him to pass on, when the coast would be clear, and he could dodge out again and escape.

But Mr. Churrock did not pass on.



As Bob Cherry jumped for the boat, the Bounder pushed off, and the boat shot out into the river. Naturally, the leaping junior dropped short. Splash! Bob landed in the water. "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Ponsonby.

The sound of the under-keeper's footsteps were heard returning, and Mr. Churrock waited for him to come, stopping only a couple of yards from the gap where Ponsonby stood peering.

"Got him, Larkin?" gasped the head-keeper.

"No, sir—"

"You let him get away from you?"

"He ain't got away, sir," answered Larkin. "He's stopped somewhere along the path! I know that! I'd have had him if he'd kept on."

"Gone into Sir Gilbert's woods, then," said Churrock. "There's a gap in the fence along here somewhere—I heard them breakin' it. He's gone to warn the gang that we're after them. Find the place, Larkin. My word, I'm fair winded! They'll give him six months for this!"

"Yes, Mr. Churrock."

The under-keeper turned on a light, and groped along the palings. Pon, breathing hard with rage, stopped back from the gap. In another moment he would have been seen.

There was no escape now by way of the path outside the fence. Ponsonby darted back among the trees.

He heard the voice of the under-keeper.

"Here's the place, Mr. Churrock! Three of the palings out, and lying here! This is the way they went!"

"You get after them, Larkin! I'll stay here and stop the hole," said the head-keeper. "I'll get George and Harris here in a few minutes, and send them after you."

Larkin squeezed through the gap in the fence.

Ponsonby did not linger.

He ran on through the wood, bumping into trees in the dark, stumbling, falling, picking himself up, and running on again.

By the sounds behind him, he knew

that the keeper heard him and was in pursuit.

By this time, the dandy of Highcliffe would have given a great deal to be safe back in the hikers' camp! He had got out of the frying-pan into the fire, with a vengeance! He was on enclosed land now—a trespasser, if not a poacher—and close at hand there were poachers at work! If they captured him, how was he to prove that he had nothing to do with it?

He stumbled over a sprawling root, and fell. The next moment a figure was bending over him.

Pon was utterly desperate now.

He jabbed up with a clenched fist, catching Larkin suddenly in the eye, and the keeper started back, lost his footing, and sat down.

Pon was up in a second, running again. Larkin, muttering expressive words, caressed his damaged eye for a few moments before taking up the pursuit once more.

Breathless, panting, Pon ran and wound and dodged among the bewildering trees, hoping and praying that he would find some other way out of Sir Gilbert's estate. He could no longer hear Larkin behind him; that jab in the eye had slowed down the pursuit!

Suddenly, as he plunged among the trees, he heard a husky voice. It was so close that it made him jump.

"Look out, Charley! They're arter us."

"You got the bag, Mike?"

"Yes. Look out—"

Ponsonby would have backed off; he knew that he had run into the poachers. But he had no chance. Hands grasped him in the darkness, and he was flung to the ground.

"Old him!" hissed Mike. "If it's Churrock, I'll give him one with this here stick!"

"Easy—it's a boy!" panted Charley.

"A boy! What's a boy doin' 'ere?"

"Quiet!"

"Let me go!" panted Ponsonby.

"Oh, let me go! I—"

"Quiet, you young fool, if you don't want to be knocked on the 'ead!" said the unseen Charley, in a fierce whisper.

Pon was silent! The two poachers, bending over him and holding him, were listening breathlessly. But there was no sound in the dark wood, save the echo of a far-away faint whistle. If Larkin was still hunting Pon, he had lost the track.

"All quiet!" said Charley, at last. "I reckoned they 'ad us, Mike! But, my eye, what's a kid like this doin' at this game?"

"Young raskil!" said Mike.

"I believe you!" said Charley. "Startin' early, anyhow. Here, you—speak in a whisper! If you bring the keepers down on us, you won't know what 'appens next! Who are you?"

"I—I'm a schoolboy! I—I got into the wood by accident. Let me go!" groaned Ponsonby.

Charley chuckled hoarsely.

"Nice time o' night for schoolboys to be takin' walks!" he remarked. "Don't you try tellin' lies to me, young 'un! Was somebody arter you?"

"Yes—the keepers!" gasped Ponsonby. "They're followin' me—they may come this way any minute."

"Oh, my eye!"

Ponsonby hoped that that statement would alarm the poachers into flight, and cause them to release him. Instead of which, they dragged him deeper into the thickets, and crouched there with him. Pon resisted, but only for a moment, as Mike twisted his arm savagely.

"Quiet, you!" snarled Mike. "If they catches us, they'll find you with your 'ead cracked, whoever you are, Mister Schoolboy!"

Pon lay quiet in the thicket, between

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the crouching poachers. Close by him lay a bag, which was full of something—poached birds, evidently. The two rogues had not been wasting their time in the wood. Pon could have groaned aloud as he lay there—but he dared make no sound! What was to happen to him if the keepers caught him in the actual presence of the poachers and the stolen birds? He thought of the hikers' camp by the Kennet with deep longing! But it was too late to think of that!

For a good half-hour the poachers waited and listened. Then there was a sound of rustling and a glimmering light among the trees.

"They're coming!" breathed Mike. "We got to chance it now, Mike! Look it! Stick to the bag!" whispered Charley.

Ponsonby suddenly found himself alone. The two wary rascals were creeping away stealthily. Pon sat up dizzily. There was a sudden shout, a sound of running feet, and a fall. Stealthy as they were, the poachers had been sighted—and Mike's stick had landed on somebody's head. There was a crashing and rustling that died away in the distance. Then Ponsonby suddenly felt himself seized by the arm from behind.

"Here's one of them!" shouted a voice.

Ponsonby was dragged out of the thicket.

Three keepers surrounded him, and a light glimmered on his face.

"That's the boy!" exclaimed the burly Churrock. "Hold him—he's a dangerous customer! He butted me over and got away, an hour ago."

"Let me go!" screamed Ponsonby, almost in hysterics. "I tell you I'm not a poacher, you dashed fool!"

"That's enough! Here are some of

the birds they've dropped," said Churrock. "The young rascal warned them in time, and they've got clear! Get after them, and I'll take this young scoundrel to my cottage and lock him in till morning. Sir Gilbert wouldn't like to be disturbed this time of night."

"You fool!" yelled Ponsonby. "You dare to lock me in!"

"He's got a lot of cheek for a young 'un at the game!" said Larkin. "Look at my eye! Jabbed me in the eye, he did, when I nearly had him! Mind he don't dodge you, Mr. Churrock, sir."

"I'll take care of that!" said Mr. Churrock grimly.

And Ponsonby was led away, with a grip on his arm that was like a steel vice. All the way to Mr. Churrock's cottage, Ponsonby expostulated and protested, raved and threatened, but Mr. Churrock turned a deaf ear. When the gamekeeper's cottage was reached at last, Pon was slung into a shed, and the door shut and locked on him.

There he was left to wait till morning—when it would please Sir Gilbert to see him—Sir Gilbert, evidently, being too important a person to be awakened on account of a young poacher! And Pon's feelings, as he waited, could not have been expressed in words.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

An Old Acquaintance!

HERE, wake up, you!" A rough shake awakened Ponsonby.

The dandy of Highcliffe had thrown himself, at last, on a heap of straw in the corner of the shed and slept. He was utterly weary; and he slept soundly enough; indeed, it seemed to him that he had only just closed his

eyes when the rough shake dragged him back from dreamland to dismal reality. He started up, staring. Churrock's weather-beaten, grim face was bending over him. Bright sunshine streamed in at the doorway—it was well on in the morning.

"Up with you!" grunted Sir Gilbert's head-keeper. "You're wanted."

He jerked Ponsonby to his feet.

"Oh, you rotter! You fool!" panted Ponsonby. "I'll have you prosecuted for this, you scoundrel!"

Churrock stared at him blankly for a moment, and then gave a gruff laugh.

"Well, that's a good one!" he said.

"You're going to see Sir Gilbert now—and then you'll go before the justices. And if you're too young to be sent to 'ard labour, you'll go to a reformatory. Prosecute me, will you? Well, that's a good one!"

Chuckling gruffly, the keeper led Ponsonby from the shed. From the cottage door, a buxom dame, apparently Mrs Churrock, gave the wretched Pon a compassionate glance.

"Is that the young poacher, Albert?" she asked.

"That's the young raskil," answered Churrock.

"He looks very young!" said the good dame. "I hope Sir Gilbert won't be hard on him, Albert."

"Hard as nails, as you ask me, Emily. Look at the birds he's had pinched by this boy and his gang."

"You silly fool!" yelled Ponsonby. "I'm not a poacher, you blithering idiot! I'm a Public-school man, and my father's a baronet!"

Churrock blinked at him. Mrs. Churrock stared. It was true enough; but appearances were against Pon. His wild night had told on him. His clothes were muddy, dirty, torn, and untidy, his face grubby, his hands unclean—his hat was gone, and his hair wildly tousled. He looked as disreputable a ragamuffin as could have been found within the limits of the county of Berks. His knotty friends at Highcliffe would have had to look at him twice, or thrice, to recognise their knotty Pon!

"Well, my word!" said Churrock. "Ark at him, Emily!"

"Is the poor boy in his right mind, Albert?" asked the pitying Mrs. Churrock.

"Danged if I think he is!" said the gamekeeper. "Anyhow, balmey or not, he's got to see Sir Gilbert. 'Bring him along after breakfast' Sir Gilbert says to me. 'I'll see him then,' he says. Come on, young cracked-pate!"

And Pon, furious and fuming, was led away. He arrived in a wide and handsome drive, lined with beeches, which led away up to a rather stately house in the distance. Standing on the drive was an elderly gentleman in shooting clothes, with a red nose and white whiskers. He had two large and watery eyes, in one of which a gold-rimmed eyeglass was stuck.

This was Sir Gilbert Frump, lord of the manor, owner of vast acres, chiefly occupied in the important business of preserving unhappy birds for the pleasure of shooting them afterwards! That occupation, in Sir Gilbert's watery eyes, was one of immense importance, and anyone who interfered with it was an unmitigated rascal.

He was talking to a stout red-faced man, evidently a farmer, on the drive near the gates. The farmer seemed vaguely familiar to Pon's eyes as Churrock led him up to the spot. As he came nearer, he recognised the man—it was the farmer the hikers had met at the stile the previous day, and who had been a little alarmed by Pon's



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alleged insanity. But the stout man did not recognise this dishevelled scarecrow as the elegant fellow he had seen with the Greyfriars hikers.

Sir Gilbert's eyeglass gleamed round at Churrock and Pon. His brow darkened grimly.

"Wait a minute, Codgers!" he rapped.

"Certainly, Sir Gilbert," answered Codgers, stepping back. The farmer's manner to Sir Gilbert was intensely respectful—perhaps because Sir Gilbert was so great a man, or perhaps because he wanted his lease renewed.

"So this is the young scoundrel, hey?" jerked out Sir Gilbert, fixing his eye, and his eyeglass, on Cecil Ponsonby of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe. "Caught in the act, hey? The others got away, hey? Caught with the dead birds beside him, hey? By Jove! The Bench will make an example of the young scoundrel! Hey! By Jove!"

"You can't charge me," howled Ponsonby. "I haven't done a thing!

I was running away from this fool of a keeper, when I got into your rotten wood. My name's Ponsonby—"

Mr. Codgers, the farmer, gave a start. He had been scanning Pon very curiously, as if half-recognising him. That name struck him at once, and he recognised the fellow he had seen with the hikers. His honest red face was quite pitying, as he stepped nearer to the irate Sir Gilbert.

"I've seen this lad before, Sir Gilbert," said the farmer.

"What? What? You've seen him, Codgers! An old offender, no doubt!" barked Sir Gilbert. "What was he doing? Stealing your chickens, hey? Stealing apples from your orchard, hey? What?"

"Oh! No!" gasped Mr. Codgers. "I don't think there's any harm in him, sir!" He tapped his forehead significantly, and Sir Gilbert started and stared. "Not quite right in the head!" said Mr. Codgers in a low voice.

Ponsonby trembled with rage.

"What? What?" stammered Sir Gilbert. "What? By Jove! You don't say so, Codgers? Where did you see him? In some lunatic asylum, what, what? Keep hold of his arm, Churrock! Keep an eye on him!"

"I've got him safe, Sir Gilbert. My wife thought he was a little queer in the head," said Churrock. "He says he's a baronet's son—"

"What? What? Impudence! Impertinence! The young rascal! Is he mad, Codgers? How do you know he's mad? What?"

"I'm not mad!" shrieked Ponsonby frantically. "My name's Ponsonby, and I belong to Highcliffe School—"

"Don't argue with Sir Gilbert, my poor boy," said Mr. Codgers kindly. "Keep calm—keep quiet! I say this boy yesterday, sir! His name is Jones, but he thinks sometimes that he's named Ponsonby, and sometimes that he's the King of England, or the Shah of Persia."

(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 Electricity House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

ARE all tigers man-eaters? There seems to be an impression that they are, and Harry Groves, of Manchester, has asked me to settle an argument which he has been having with one of his chums on the matter. The answer is "No"—and it's a jolly good job they aren't! Let's have

A TALK ABOUT TIGERS

As a rule they don't prey upon men, but when they do—well, it's time to get a gun and go shooting! Once a tiger has killed a man, he becomes a confirmed man-eater, and the hunter who eventually lays him low gets a substantial reward, which might be anything up to £60. That price was recently paid in the Malay States for a man-eater who terrorised a whole neighbourhood. Every day the man-eater made kills—as many as four in a day. It was a Sikh watchman who eventually laid him low—but not until 38 people had been killed by the terror. When the tiger was cut open, they found thirteen wrist and ankle bracelets, a belt buckle and a length of chain inside it. Some man-killer!

I suppose most of my readers have fished for "tiddlers," but how many have ever gone

FISHING FOR CROCODILES

with a hook and line? That's the way it's done in the Straits Settlements. But instead of worms, dead chickens are used as bait. The hook is a double-edged one, and the line is a strong rope. The bait is left on the mud by the side of a river, and when the croc comes up he goes for that chicken, whether he's hungry or not. A crocodile hasn't a tongue, and once he's swallowed the hook he's done for. The more he struggles, the more he injures himself—and when he's done struggling it's an easy matter to go out in a boat and haul him ashore.

Now and again, in this little chat of mine, I have mentioned strange "records" which various people have claimed. From

a reader in Hartlepool I have received a request to give some information concerning

RECORDS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE!

Well, how's this for a start? The "Chewing Gum Record" is claimed by an American, who chewed 110 ten sticks of chewing gum!

Next, please. What about the "Sneezing Record"? This belongs to an Edinburgh man who sneezed 690 times in succession!

The "Non-Stop Dancing" record is claimed by a native of Luzon Island in the Philippines, who danced for 172 hours without stopping!

An American from Chicago claims the "Pole-Squatting Record." He sat on the top of a flagstaff for 16 days 24 hours. But does he get the record? Not on your life! Listen to this: Simon the Syrian, who lived in the fifth century, sat on the top of a pillar over seventy feet high and only four feet square for over 30 years! What's more, his followers carried on the good work, and one of them is said to have remained squatting on his pillar for 60 years! If you don't believe it, look it up in an encyclopedia under the heading of "Stylites."

I think that's enough of "Freak Records" to be going on with.

WHAT IS A CAMEL'S HAIR BRUSH?

That is the question which Tom Dawson, of Nuneston, asks me. It reminds me of the story of the boy who looked at one and said: "How the dickens does a camel manage to brush its hair with this?" Actually a camel's hair brush has nothing whatever to do with camels. These brushes are made from the hair of squirrels.

Strange how we continue to call things by misleading names. When we talk of a "steal-yard," for instance, the object has nothing whatever to do with steel—nor is it a yard. It is a balance. "Rice-paper" contains no rice, but is made from

pitch or wood pulp; a "ladybird," as you know, is not a bird, but a beetle; and "whalebone" is not bone, although it comes from the mouth of a whale.

That brings me to the next query from "Nosey," of Canterbury, who asks

IS THE RED SEA RED?

The answer, as they say in Parliament, is in the negative. It gets its name from the coral which fringes the Straits of Babel-Mandeb, which is of red and purple hues. The White Sea is so-called because of the whitish-grey Polar skies and the ice which abounds there in winter. The Black Sea received its name because of its storms and the reflection of the dark skies, while the Yellow Sea is tinged with the mud brought down by the Yellow River. Actually the natural colour of water is blue when it is not contaminated by other matter, but in shallow water one gets the reflection of the yellow sand at the bottom, with the result that the water appears greenish. A green tinge may also be caused by vegetable matter in the sea.

The purest water is found in lakes and rivers which are fed by glacier streams, and two of the most notable examples are the Lake of Geneva and the river Rhone, both of which are of the deepest blue, proving conclusively that blue is the natural colour of water in bulk.

Time I was giving you some particulars about next week's splendid yarns. Here goes!

"THE BOUNDER'S CAPTURE!"

By Frank Richards,

tops the list of "Forthcoming Attractions," as they say in the cinemas. And it's a top-notch, I can tell you that! Still, you all know the kind of yarn that your favourite author turns out, and you know that he never lets you down. You can be sure of a real first-rate, bang-up-to-scratch yarn when you see Frank Richards' name upon it. And you won't be disappointed next week, chums.

Then there's the next story in our wonderful series featuring "Umzugan the Mighty!" and chuckles galore in the "Greyfriars Herald." In addition, there will be the usual snappy article on Soccer, and my little chat!

By the way, don't forget that the "Greyfriars Holiday Annual," price 5s., and the "Popular Book of Boys' Stories," price 2s. 6d., are selling like hot cakes. Don't wait until they are "sold out" before you reserve your copy!

YOUR EDITOR

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"By Jove!" gasped Sir Gilbert. "Hold him tight, Churrock!"

"He must have escaped from the persons in charge of him," said the farmer. "A party of very nice boys—very kind boys, indeed—who were taking him about, because the open air is good for him. They told me so! He must have run away from them!"

"Did you run away from the persons in charge of you, boy?" boomed Sir Gilbert. "What? What? Answer me."

"Yes!" gasped Ponsonby. Little as he desired to be taken for a lunatic, wandering away from his keepers, it occurred to Pon that this meeting with the farmer was rather fortunate for him. It was better to be let off as a lunatic than charged as an accomplice of poachers before a Bench of wooden-headed country justices. No doubt he could, in the long run, have proved who and what he was; but he certainly could not have proved that he was not "in" with Charley and Mike! The circumstantial evidence against him was altogether too strong. At the very best, he would have been detained in custody for a good many days while inquiries were made. That was an awful prospect.

"You're sure it's the same boy, Mr. Codgers?" demanded Sir Gilbert, eyeing Ponsonby very suspiciously. He seemed unwilling to lose his poacher.

"Oh, quite, Sir Gilbert," said the farmer. "If the boys could be found, they'd identify him at once. I've no doubt, though he's got himself into such a state I didn't know him at first."

"He must be detained," said Sir Gilbert. "He was found by my keepers in my woods, with dead birds beside him—it looks too suspicious! The boys in charge of him are not here—"

"I can tell you where they are!" gasped Ponsonby. "They're hiking, and they're camped on the Kennet, at the end of the path, where I met this keeper."

"What do you think, Churrock?" asked Sir Gilbert. "If the boy's out of his senses, he may have placed himself in suspicious circumstances. What? What?"

"If the boys are to be found where he says, Sir Gilbert, they can be sent for," said the head-keeper doubtfully. "I could look him in the shed again till they're fetched!"

At that moment, from the road that passed the gates that opened on the drive, came the sound of a voice singing—not a tuneful voice, perhaps, but a very merry and cheery one.

"Who cares for a bike,
Or a car, or a trike?
What I like
Is to hike, hike, hike!"

Ponsonby had never supposed that he would be glad to hear the voice of Robert Cherry of the Greyfriars Remove. But at this critical moment it came like divine music to his ears. And as the cheery hikers swung into sight by the open gateway, Ponsonby yelled to them frantically.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. Hikers to the Rescue!

"GONE!" "The gonefulness is terrific!"

"Gone from our gaze like a beautiful dream!"

"Good riddance to bad rubbish!"

"Oh gad! We've lost our hired man!"

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Such were the remarks of the Greyfriars hikers, when they woke in the morning and found that Ponsonby was gone.

But it did not worry them very much. They had intended to give Pon a longer lesson, and to make him thoroughly tired of barging in; but certainly they had not enjoyed his company. He was gone, and he had, as Bob remarked, taken his bad temper and his scowling face with him. So that was that—and the hikers let it go at that.

After a dip in the Kennet, and brekker, the hikers took the road. They did not expect to see Ponsonby again—he had had ample time to get far away; and they had no idea of the wild and weird adventures that had happened to Pon in the night. From the banks of the Kennet a lane led them to a high road, and they followed the road—noticing, without any particular interest, that it led past the gates of a large country establishment.

Those gates stood open, revealing a drive within, shaded by beech-trees. Bob Cherry was singing in the exuberance of spirits that fine morning, and Johnny Bull was politely requesting him to put the brake on, when the whole party were startled by a yell from the drive within the gateway.

"Wharton! Cherry! You Greyfriars fellows! Come here! Help!"

"What the jolly dickens!" exclaimed Bob, suddenly ceasing to carol, and staring round blankly. "That's Pon's foot!"

"Pon!" gasped Wharton.

The hikers faced round to the gateway in utter amazement. Having, as they had supposed, seen the last of Ponsonby, they were surprised to hear his voice—and utterly amazed to hear him calling to them. Pon, however, was not particular; he was as willing to make use of foes as of friends. All he wanted was to get away from Sir Gilbert, and the grip of Churrock's horny hand—even if it landed him again with the Greyfriars hikers.

"The esteemed Pon!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But what has—"

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, Pon looks as if he's had a high old time!" chuckled Billy Bunter.

Pon did, undoubtedly! Dirty and grubby and torn and scratched and woebegone, Pon looked anything but his usual natty self. Harry Wharton & Co. hardly knew him, except by his voice.

They stared at the group on the drive. They recognised the jovial red-faced farmer at once.

"That's the jolly old farmer we met yesterday," said Bob. "But who's the old Johnny with the white whiskers? And what the thump are they doing to Pon?"

"They've got him!" said Nugent. "Goodness knows why!"

"Will you come here?" yelled Pon frantically.

Sir Gilbert and Churrock and Mr. Codgers all looked towards the gateway and the hikers outside. Mr. Codgers gave them a smile, and waved his hand.

"These are the boys, Sir Gilbert," he said. "I've no doubt they're looking for this poor young fellow."

"Huh!" grunted Sir Gilbert. "By Jove! Well, I'll hear what they have to say. If this boy's mad, he seems to know his keepers! Call them here."

Mr. Codgers trotted down to the gates. "Will you lads step in?" he asked.

"That poor boy has been getting into trouble. He's taken up as a poacher."

"Oh, my hat! A—a pip-pip-poacher!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Yes. He wandered last night into

Sir Gilbert Frump's woods, where poaching was going on, and the gamekeepers took him," said the farmer. "He's been locked in a shed all night—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Sir Gilbert is going to charge him with poaching—but you can identify him. Please come this way."

The good-natured farmer led the hikers up the drive. Sir Gilbert scanned them frowningly through his eyeglass. If Pon was a wandering lunatic, Sir Gilbert certainly did not want to detain him in custody and charge him with poaching. Still, he was rather reluctant to lose his victim. Sir Gilbert had lost a good many birds, and his view was, that somebody ought to be made to smart for it.

"Who are you?" he barked.

"Us!" answered Bob Cherry pleasantly. A Remove fellow of Greyfriars was not to be browbeaten, even by so big a gun as Sir Gilbert Frump, of Frump Park, Berkshire.

"What? What? By Jove! What does the boy mean?" fumed Sir Gilbert. "Here, you, what's your name?"

"Wharton, sir!" answered Harry.

"Oh! Well, Wharton, if that's your name, do you know this boy? What? What? Answer me directly! What? By Jove!"

"Yes, I certainly know him," answered Harry. "He was with us yesterday, and he ran away from our tent last night."

"You're in charge of him—what, what?"

"We were till he got away, certainly," answered Harry, smiling. "He bolted while we were asleep. Hasn't he told you who he is?"

"Has he told you he's the Shah of Persia, sir?" asked Bob Cherry solemnly.

"Hey! What? No! He's told my keeper some nonsense about being a baronet's son, I believe. If you're taking care of a boy out of his wits, you should take more care of him! What do you mean by letting him wander about the country?" demanded Sir Gilbert testily. "What, what! He was found in my woods, mixed up with poachers, by Jove!"

"He's always in some trouble, sir," said Frank Nugent politely. "There never was such a fellow for hunting for trouble. He's really given us no rest since we took him in hand."

"It's not easy to look after a fellow like that, sir!" said Johnny Bull. "But we'll take care he doesn't cut again, if you hand him over to us."

"Yaas, certainly," said Lord Mauleverer.

Sir Gilbert grunted.

"Take him out of my gates, Churrock, and let him go with his keepers," he said. "See them off my land."

"Yes, Sir Gilbert."

Churrock led Pon down the drive to the gate. The hikers went with them, with smiling faces. In the road, Churrock released Pon, touched his hat to the hikers, and went in again. The hikers surrounded Pon in a smiling crowd.

"Found our lost sheep again!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"You rotters!" breathed Ponsonby.

"Is that how you thank us for getting you out of that scrape?" asked Johnny Bull. "Fellows can be sent to prison for poaching."

"I haven't been poaching, you silly idiot!"

"Looks as if you have! I can tell you that that old bean with the ornamental whiskers would have had you run in, if he hadn't fancied you were a lunatic," said Johnny.

"If you haven't been poaching on his estate, what did you get mixed up with poachers for?"



Ponsonby suddenly lowered his head and, with all his strength, butted Mr. Churrock on his ample waistcoat. "Oooooogh!" gasped the head-keeper, staggering back and releasing his hold. "Urrrh! Oooooogh! The next moment another keeper appeared upon the scene.

"Pon's none too good for it, or anything else," said Bob. "Stick this pack on your back, Pon!"

"I'm not going on with you!" hissed Ponsonby, between his teeth.

"You'd rather go back to the jolly old gent with the whiskers?" asked Bob, grinning. "Take your choice."

Pon certainly did not prefer that. In savage silence he slung on the pack, and marched down the road with the Greyfriars hikers. Even in such unwelcome company he was anxious to get going and place a safe distance between himself and Frump Park.

"I say, you fellows, Pon wants a wash," remarked Billy Bunter. "Look here! I'm blessed if I want to be seen with him like that!"

Ponsonby gave the Owl of the Remove a homicidal look. He was only too painfully conscious of his dismal and draggled looks.

"He looks a pretty specimen, and no mistake!" agreed Johnny Bull. "This is what comes of having a night out with poachers. I'm not at all sure that we've done the right thing in getting him off."

"When we come to a pond, we'll let you get a wash, Ponsonby," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You need one, and that's a cert!"

Ponsonby tramped on, dirty and dismal and savagely enraged, but glad at the same time that the hikers had got him out of that awful scrape. He was so glad to get away from Sir Gilbert & Co. that he was not even thinking of escape, for the time.

The hikers were a couple of miles from Frump Park before Pon began to look round him and calculate on the chances of dodging, or yelling to passers-by for help. Then the hikers arrived at a crossroads where there was a pond, and Pon was allowed to wash himself, and make himself a little more presentable.

But, after all his efforts, he was still sorely draggled and shabby and untidy, and he realised with bitter wrath that he looked the least respectable member of the hiking party.

"That's better," said Bob Cherry, surveying him. "Can't expect too much of a Highcliffe man! I've heard that they seldom wash at Highcliffe. If Bunter's satisfied now, we'll get on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A little later there was a honk of a car behind the hikers. They stood aside for it to pass; and beheld a handsome Rolls, with a fellow they knew sitting in it alone.

"Smithy!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith stared at the hikers, and grinned at Ponsonby. He signalled to the chauffeur to slow down.

"Hallo, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton a little uncertainly. Bob's adventure in Smithy's boat on the Kennet the day before made the hikers doubtful whether the Bounder was to be greeted as friend or foe.

"Oh, here you are!" said Smithy. "Still hikin' with Pon?"

"He can't bear to leave us!" said Bob.

"Smithy!" howled Ponsonby desperately. "Lend me a hand! Help me to get away from these rotters, Smithy."

"That's what he calls gratitude, when we've just saved him from being run in for poaching!" said Johnny Bull.

"Step here a minute, Cherry, will you?" said Smithy, taking no heed of Pon's desperate appeal.

"Yes; what is it?" asked Bob, stepping up to the car, which was hardly moving.

"You chucked me out of my boat yesterday," said the Bounder. "I've got a lump on my chin where your paw landed."

"Well, you asked for it," said Bob. "Sorry—but— Oh, my hat! Yaroooh!"

The Bounder's hand came down with a heavy smite on Bob's straw hat. Bob sat down suddenly, with the hat crushed over his ears. The Rolls shot away, and the Bounder looked back, laughing.

Bob scrambled up, mad with fury. The Bounder waved his hand mockingly, and disappeared in the distance.

"The cheeky rotter!" exclaimed Harry wrathfully.

"By gum! I'll punch his nose for him next term!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "I'll mop him up all over the Remove passage!"

But the mopping-up of the cheeky Bounder had to be left over. He was gone; and the hikers resumed their way—Pon, with a black scowl on his face, hiking with the hikers.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Just Like Smithy!

"HOW sweet the moonlight sleeps on yonder bank!"

"Eh, what?"

"That's Shakespeare!" said

Bob Cherry.

Bob, it seemed, was in a poetical mood! Really, it was quite a poetical night and a poetical scene! The hikers had camped on a gently sloping hillside, with a shadowy wood above them, and a shadowy lane below. Supper was over, and the work of the camp done—and they were sitting and chatting before turning in. A silvery moon looked out of the clouds, silvering the grass, glimmering on the dusty lane. From afar came a faint "mooing" of cows; the only sound that broke the rural silence. Billy Bunter, replete with several

suppers rolled into one, was half-asleep and nodding. Ponsonby was scowling—as per usual! And Bob, as already stated, was feeling poetical, and let his comrades have the benefit thereof.

"Eh? is that Shakespeare?" said Billy Bunter, blinking up through his big spectacles, and then blinking round. "Wharrer you mean, Cherry? I can't see any bank! There's no building of any kind that I can see."

"You unpoetical owl!" said Bob. "It doesn't mean a Midland bank, or a Westminster bank—it means a green and grassy bank."

"It means a bank of England!" said Frank Nugent.

"It doesn't, you fathead!" said Bob.

"It jolly well does!" contended Nugent. "All the green and grassy banks in this country are banks of England, aren't they?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a sleepy chortle from the other hikers.

"Oh, if you're going to be a funny ass!" said Bob.

"Well, I think it's rot," said Bunter. "Moonlight can't sleep! How can moonlight go to sleep, I'd like to know? My opinion of Shakespeare is that he was an ass!"

"You fat chump, you have to take it in a poetical sense—"

"It isn't sweet, either!" argued Bunter. "How could moonlight have any taste, sweet or sour? If Shakespeare wrote stuff like that, I'm surprised that they paid him for it."

"Oh crikey!" said Bob. "Kill him, somebody!" And Bob went on:

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps on
yonder bank,
Here will we sit, and let the
sounds of music
Creep in our ears—"

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!" came from Lord Mauleverer, in a deep and prolonged yawn.

"Is that the music?" asked Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh, what?" yawned Mauly. "I wasn't asleep—I heard all you fellows were saying! Did you say you had to go to a bank, Bob? Surprisin' how a fellow runs out of tin, ain't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the hikers.

"I say, you fellows, I'm going to turn in! Don't talk any more—you might wake me up."

Billy Bunter rolled into the tent. In about a minute there was once more a sound of music—that of Bunter's hefty snore. Harry Wharton detached himself from the grass.

"May as well turn in," he remarked. "You ready, Pon?"

"Go an' eat coke!" snarled Ponsonby.

"Going, poaching again, you disreputable sweep?" asked Johnny Bull. "I can tell you that if you get run in again we jolly well shan't bail you out any more."

Pon's answer was a savage scowl. He went into the tent with the hikers, sleeping in his clothes again, evidently with the intention of bolting if he could during the night. So far as the Famous Five were concerned, he was welcome to bolt if he liked, and they would not have been sorry to see the last of him. But they left it to Mauly; and Mauly seemed to think that Pon had not yet sufficiently learned his lesson. So Pon was bestowed in the middle of the tent, with the other hikers ranged round him, so that it was exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for Pon to steal out as he had done the previous night.

He realised that himself, and gave up the idea and settled down to sleep with

the rest—hoping for a chance on the morrow.

In a short time all was silent, save for the snore of Billy Bunter, and the hikers slept the sleep of the just.

They did not even hear the sound of a motor-car at a later hour in the road a hundred yards away, from which the little hilly lane branched off. The car—a big and handsome Rolls—halted on the road, and the fellow in it stood up and fixed his eyes on the glimmering hikers' tent at a distance. Then, after a few whispered words to his chauffeur, he left the car and walked quietly up the lane to the camp. Turning from the lane, he reached the tent; and the gleam of moonlight on his face revealed—if there had been eyes open to see him—the rather hard features and cynical grin of Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Within the tent the hikers, and their "hired man," still slept soundly. If they were dreaming, they were certainly not dreaming that Smithy was outside the tent, or how he was engaged.

Harry Wharton was the first to awake! It was the flapping of loose canvas on his sleeping face that awakened him. He started up in sleepy surprise.

"What the thump—"

"Oh crumbs!" came a muffled roar from Bob Cherry. "The tent's coming down on us!"

"I say, you fellows! Wow! Something's falling on me!" howled Billy Bunter. "I say, the tent's falling! You silly asses, you silly fatheads, why didn't you fix it safe? Yaroo!"

All the hikers were awake now! The tent had suddenly collapsed, and the flapping canvas smothered them. They struggled up, enveloped in canvas, and struggled a way out. Ponsonby emerged with the rest, snarling with angry annoyance. A hand grasped him by the arm as he crawled out.

"Let go, you rotter!" hissed Pon.

"Quiet, you ass! Come with me!" whispered a voice that made the dandy of Highcliffe jump.

"Smithy!" he breathed.

"Quick!"

The Bounder of Greyfriars fairly dragged Ponsonby away. He knew what would happen to him if the hikers found him thus engaged. Ponsonby stumbled after him as Smithy dragged him behind the cover of a bush, and then towards the lane. While the hikers were still struggling out of the collapsed tent, Smithy ran for the lane, dragging Ponsonby after him. Behind them they heard Bob Cherry's shout.

"Look out for Pon, you men! I believe he's bolting—"

"Yaas, begad! Keep an eye on Pon, you fellows!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer. "Has he got out?"

"I say, you fellows," howled Bunter, "where's my boots?"

"Shut up, Bunter! Where's Pon?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

A sound of running feet in the lane below supplied the answer.

"He's cut!"

"After him!"

"Tally-ho!" roared Bob Cherry, and he led a rush down the slope into the lane.

But Ponsonby, with his rescuer, had a good minute's start. They fairly raced down the hilly lane to the high road. At the corner Vernon-Smith paused, looked back, and laughed. Sprinkled along the lane behind were the running figures of the hikers.

"Come on!" panted Ponsonby, dragging at the Bounder's arm. "They'll get us—"

"They won't!" said the Bounder coolly. "It's only a step to the car—hop in, old bean!"

"Oh, good!" Ponsonby ran for the car and bolted into it like a rabbit into a burrow.

Standing in the moonlight at the corner, the Bounder of Greyfriars waved a mocking hand at the hikers. They saw him, then, and there was a shout.

"Smithy!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Smithy, you rotter—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder.

"You did me, old beans, and now I've done you! I don't care two straws about Pon—but you're not goin' to break me! Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"Collar him!" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Collar the cheeky sweep!"

"Bag him!"

Laughing, the Bounder turned and ran after Pon to the car. He jumped in, and the engine roared.

The half-dressed hikers panted up the lane to the corner, in time to see the car shoot by, the Bounder and Pon laughing as it went. It vanished up the dusky road in a twinkling, and the red rear lights winked back from the darkness at the hikers as if in mockery.

"Gone for good this time!" said Bob Cherry, as he rolled himself in blankets.

The tent was up again, and the hikers turning in once more. It was certain that this time Pon was gone for good! His own friends had failed him; but the Bounder of Greyfriars, from sheer arrogance and "neck," had pulled him out of his scrape.

"The goneliness and the goodness are equally terrific!" remarked Hurrey Jamset Ram Singh. "But the misfulness is not preposterous."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Well, we couldn't have kept Pon much longer," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "I'd had more than enough of him, for one, and I fancy that by this time he's learned that we're better left alone."

"Yaas," said Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully. "That was the idea—and I feel sure that Pon won't come bargain in on us again in a fearful hurry. He will be afraid of bein' taken on again as a hired man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—" Bunter sat up, in his blankets.

"Shut up, Bunter! Go to sleep, old fat man!"

"But I say—" howled Bunter.

"Well, what? Cough it up?"

"As we've been woke up like this, hadn't we better have another supper before we turn in?" asked Bunter.

"Say a few rashers and eggs and asses. Nothing much, you know. I'll wait here while you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I think it's a jolly good idea—"

"Oh, ripping!" said Bob. "Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen, Bunter's going to stay up and cook supper for the lot of us, and call us when it's ready! Get to it, Bunter!"

Snore!

Bunter decided to go to sleep!

THE END.

("THE BOUNDER'S CAPTURE") is the title of Frank Richards' next grand long yarn, dealing with the further humorous and thrilling holiday adventures of the Greyfriars hikers. Watch out for it in next Saturday's MAGNET.)

THE FIRST STORY IN AN AMAZING NON-STOP THRILL SERIES! START IT NOW!

UMZUGAAN *the* MIGHTY!

By ROWLAND HUNTER.

For long the evil power of Masasi, the witch-doctor, has terrorised the tribe of Kliecorp. Now arises Umzugaan, a mighty man of valour, who has sworn to overthrow the sorcerer!

The Whistle of Death!

THE sun was sinking in the west behind the kopjes. A vulture soared high in the heavens, a black speck against the brick red of the evening sky. But the peace of the African scene was shattered by the roar of a lion away up in the rocks of the foothills.

Umzugaan—as yet but a stripling from the Kliecorp Zulu Kraal—gazed about him anxiously, and because he was entirely without weapons he strode rapidly along the rough trail towards his father's huts.

Umzugaan was no coward, but he was not reckless, and he had no intention of tackling a lion with his bare hands if he could avoid it. He was anxious to reach his father's kraal before the sun went down. Umzugaan the Elder was the headman at the Kliecorp Kraal, and in due time Umzugaan himself, called the Younger, would succeed him.

Another figure appeared ahead on the trail, leaving the kraal and walking towards the rocky hills. Umzugaan took one look, and then, with a snort of mingled anger and apprehension, he stepped aside to crouch behind a rock. He did not want to come face to face with Masasi, the witch-doctor and devil-man.

Masasi was feared, but not trusted, and instinctively Umzugaan hated him. Masasi only wore a kaross, or hide kilt, as did Umzugaan, but from his belt hung dried lizards, snakes, and a string of coloured pebbles. His body was greasy, bedaubed with ochre and soot, and a sacred ring of red had been drawn around both eyes to prove that he had the power to bewitch anyone with merely a fierce glance.

Umzugaan hid because he did not want to have those evil eyes turned on him, and from the way Masasi strode along, with head drooped forward and chin sunk on his greasy chest, it was plain that the devil-man was not in a good temper.

He strode past the rock that concealed Umzugaan, muttering under his breath. Umzugaan was lost in the shadows and did not move. He remained hidden until Masasi had passed out of sight down into the river bed. Then he rose and stood there, sniffing the freshening wind uneasily and listening intently.

The lion still roared, but suddenly a shrill, ear-piercing whistle split the air. It came from the spot where, as near as Umzugaan could guess, Masasi, the witch-doctor, had reached. As if by magic, the lion ceased its angry roaring and peace settled over the scene.

Umzugaan frowned, sniffed the air again as if he scented trouble, then continued on his way to the kraal. Passing through the entrance in the thorn-hedge which surrounded the village, he walked proudly up to his father's huts.

He was still frowning. He saw his uncle, Intali, scowling at him. Intali, who always caused trouble in the tribe if he could, hated the headman, Umzugaan the Elder. Young Umzugaan also saw that many of the warriors stood in groups, whispering together, and that

the youths kept to themselves, over by the huts of the bachelors.

Umzugaan halted before his father's hut, hesitated, then suddenly stooped and dived in at the low doorway of the conical dwelling. The interior was dim, and a haze of smoke from the fire hung in the hut.

"Hail, my father!" cried Umzugaan sonorously, one hand raised to the level of his head, the palm outwards.

"Peace, my son," said Umzugaan the Elder. "Behold, I desired thee to come and the winds have carried my thoughts to thee, for thou art here. Now, my son, send the women away and the servants, for I would talk to thee in private."

Umzugaan obeyed, then squatted on his haunches before his father, who sat on a lion's skin, a blanket around his shoulders.

"There is trouble in the kraal, father," observed the youngster. "I smelt it in the air as I came up the trail!"

"There is much trouble, my son. I would talk to thee of that. Masasi, the witch-doctor, has been here."

"You refused his demands, father?"

"Wait, my son. It appears that Mkusikosi, the hunter, saw a lion to-day in the hills; such a lion as has never before been seen, for it was glossy black. He returned in fear, my son, saying it was the ghost of Tchaka, the Great Spirit, or else some evil spirit. This I laughed at, my son. A lion is a lion, whatever the colour of its hide. We have slain lions before, and we can slay this one."

"But Mkusikosi, as thou knowest, is very friendly with thy uncle, Intali. Mkusikosi went to Intali with his story, and Intali sent a runner for Masasi, the witch-doctor, to protect us from this black lion. Masasi came to me, demanding flour and cattle as the price for his services. I refused, for I had not sent for him; whereupon he departed, muttering threats."

"We can protect ourselves from lions," said young Umzugaan. "Give me leave, father, to carry spears for one night, and I will slay this lion myself."

"It is not so easy as that, my son," said the headman. "Three days ago Masasi was many miles away, but when the black lion appears in the hills near this kraal, behold, the runner Intali sent, found Masasi encamped in the rocks down by the river bed. It sounds as though Masasi expected trouble here, and where Masasi comes, there is usually trouble."

"So, my son, I have angered the witch-doctor. And Intali would like to see me dead at his feet so that he may rule in my stead until thou art of age to become headman. Even then, he may encompass thy death as well. My son, watch Intali! I mistrust the man. And I bid thee, should I come by an untimely end, to avenge my death on man or beast that causes it. You hear?"

"I hear, my father. I will obey!"

"Swear it, then, my son!"

So Umzugaan the Younger rose to his feet, raised his right hand, and solemnly vowed that should his father



die other than by old age or in battle, he would avenge his death on the man or beast who caused it.

"It is well," said the headman grimly. "Now go to the huts of the bachelors, my son, and sleep the sleep of the warrior!"

The sleep of the warrior, as the youngster knew well, was to sleep with the spears close at hand, and one eye open for trouble. He took his leave, and went to the huts where the young men dwelt who were not yet full-fledged warriors.

The sun had gone down behind the kopjes, and the world was plunged into darkness. The entrance in the thorn hedge was closed, and the kraal slept in peace. The night drew on, and the moon rose in silvery splendour in the east.

And then a woman's shriek rent the silence. Umzugaan was on his feet in a flash, he dashed out of the hut. There were shouts, wails, alarms in the centre of the kraal.

Umzugaan had no weapons, but he raced to his father's hut, and was just in time to see an enormous male lion come crawling out, dragging after it the limp body of a man.

Umzugaan had no need to look twice. The moon shone brilliantly, and in the rays he saw that the lion was not tawny, but glossy black; and the limp man he dragged along was the headman of the kraal—his father—Umzugaan the Elder!

Unarmed as he was, Umzugaan flung himself on the lion and struck it again and again between the eyes with his clenched fists. He forced the brute to drop its burden, and it sprang round with a savage snarl. Umzugaan darted away, and prepared to fight the animal with his bare hands.

The dew was heavy everywhere, and during the previous day it had rained, so that the earth underfoot was muddy. Umzugaan stooped and gathered some of the mud in his hands, very much as a European boy might gather snow to make a snowball.

Even as the lion sprang, Umzugaan flung a handful of the soft mud full in the brute's eyes. Next moment a huge paw caught Umzugaan on the shoulders and crashed him to the ground, torn,

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bleeding, and racked with pain; but the youngster was game. He struck with his uninjured arm and hand, thrusting his fingers in the man-eater's eyes, while the warriors came running with spears for the kill.

But at that second a shrill, ear-splitting whistle sounded from away over the veldt. The lion pricked up its ears, left its victim, and bounded away across the kraal. It streaked through a gap in the thorn hedge, and vanished into the shadows beyond.

Mkusikosi, the hunter, stood over Umzugaan, his spear held aloft.

"Woe to this kraal!" he wailed. "It is the Whistle of Death!"

Umzugaan raised himself painfully on one elbow.

"Thou art a warrior, O Mkusikosi!" he cried. "Leave wailing to the women. Hasten after the black lion and slay it!"

"It is no ordinary lion, O Umzugaan," said Mkusikosi, with bowed head. "Can a man fight evil spirits?"

"This is the work of men!" rasped Umzugaan. "The hands of men made that gap in the thorn hedge for the lion to enter the kraal. Men laid a trail of goat's blood from the veldt to my father's hut so that the lion might follow the trail and slay my father!"

He could just manage to crawl over the ground to where his father lay. Umzugaan the elder was dead. The lion's paw had crushed his skull; and a trail of goat's blood ran from the gap in the hedge to the door of the hut!

"I will avenge!" cried Umzugaan. "Let the spirits hear me! I will avenge!"

And he collapsed, senseless, from loss of blood, over the corpse of his father.

The Council's Decree!

UMZUGAAN did not recover consciousness until the next day. He lay in his father's hut, his wounded shoulder bandaged and poulticed with the juice from crushed beetles, which heals wounds

faster than any other ointment known to man.

Many came to speak with him and sympathise, but he turned his face from them, and would not speak. Then at the end of a week Intali, his uncle, and the elders of the tribe, came and squatted around his bed.

"Hear us, O Umzugaan!" said Zwengu, the wise man of the kraal. "We have mourned thy father these seven days and seven nights; and now, as thou art not yet a warrior, thy uncle, Intali, rules as headman in thy father's stead, and on thy behalf. When thou hast become a warrior thou shalt rule, but not until then."

Intali grinned with triumph. He was a middle-aged man, with the face of a jackal, and cunning, shifty eyes.

"May the spirits make me true to the trust," he murmured.

Still Umzugaan did not speak. They implored him to say something, but he was silent, and eventually they left him, saying that Masasi, in his anger, had brought this evil on the kraal and bewitched the son of Umzugaan the Elder.

Umzugaan was busy thinking all those long days and nights. He recalled how he had heard the whistle that silenced the roaring lion, after Masasi had passed him on the trail that evening, before his father was killed. He connected Masasi with the black lion; and Masasi he connected with Intali, who had sent for the witch-doctor.

Intali had long coveted the position of headman. It would have been easy for him to arrange this thing with the witch-doctor on the payment of much flour and cattle; and now Intali would see to it that young Umzugaan never lived long enough to become headman of the tribe.

It was one thing to guess and another to prove it, but Umzugaan had sworn to avenge his father's death, and the first thing to do was to seek and slay the black lion; and if he found out that Masasi and Intali had worked this crime, then they, too, should die.

One night Umzugaan smelt a man prowling at the door of the hut. He rolled over with his back to the door and snored as if sleeping. The intruder came in, crawling on all fours. His hands reached this way and that until they found Umzugaan's bandaged shoulder.

His object was to tear the bandages off, to start the wounds bleeding again, and, if possible, cause the death of Umzugaan; but with a lithe twist of his body, the youngster wriggled round. His strong hand gripped the unknown's wrist, and his teeth met in the fumbling hand.

Umzugaan could not see his assailant's face, for the man's head was covered with a flour bag. The intruder wrenched himself free, and bolted from the hut, and by the time Umzugaan had crawled from his couch to the door there was no one in sight.

Umzugaan made up his mind. Actually, his wounds had healed better than anyone knew, and before dawn he was up and out. He went round to the compounds and counted the goats of the various herds. As the young men tend the herds before they become warriors, he knew how many should have been in each herd, and behold, one was missing from the herd that belonged to Mkusikosi.

The hunter's wife came to milk the goats, and Umzugaan spoke to her.

"Tell me, where is thy husband, that I may speak with him," he said.

There was veiled fear in the woman's eyes.

"Yesterday a lion slew one of our goats and my lord has gone to slay the beast," she said.

It was a lame excuse, but it accounted for the fact that Mkusikosi was not in his hut. Umzugaan went into the hut, and in the dark interior he found, half buried in the earth, fragments of a broken earthenware jar that were stained with long dried goat's blood. Mkusikosi had laid the trail for the black lion to reach the hut of Umzugaan the Elder. Mkusikosi was helping Intali, to gain favour in his sight.

Umzugaan returned to his own hut and rested, making his plans. Towards evening he ventured out once more, and now the bandages were not on his shoulder. But the scars of the lion's claws were there, and would remain there to his dying day. He went to the central council hut where Intali sat with the elders, and stood before them, his right hand raised in salute.

"I seek privilege, O Intali!" he cried loudly.

The warriors gathered round, eyes rolling, plumes at their spear-heads and at their knees. Behind Intali's low seat stood Mkusikosi, and Umzugaan's eyes gleamed as he saw that the hunter's right hand was bandaged.

"I rejoice to see thee recovered, nephew," said Intali, with a scowl. "Speak now, for it is long since we heard thy voice."

"My voice has been silent because my brain has been active, O Intali!" retorted Umzugaan. "Hear now my words. My father was murdered by the schemes of evil men before the black lion slew him! The gap in the thorn hedge and the trail of goat's blood were the work of men's hands, O Intali!"

The headman scowled at the youngster.

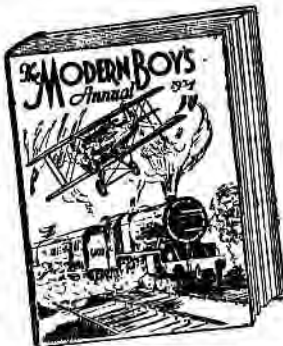
"Keep a watch on thy tongue!" snapped Intali. "Thou speakest in grief, and for that we excuse thee. The



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lion made the gap in the hedge and the trail of blood was thy blood, that dripped from the lion's paws to the ground as it fled."

"So be it," said Umzugaan steadily. "We will speak of that no more until I have the proof to lay before the council. But I made a solemn vow to my father that if he died untimely I would avenge his death on the man or beast that caused it. Therefore, O Intali, I ask thy permission to leave this kraal to seek out the black lion and slay the brute. This permission thou canst not refuse, for it is the law of our tribe that no man may stand between another and his solemn vow!"

Intali bit his finger-nails and Mkusikosi fingered his spears. He stooped and spoke into the ear of Intali, who nodded and sneered.

"Retire a space, O Umzugaan," said Intali. "The council will discuss thy plea."

So Umzugaan withdrew to the door of the council hut and squatted there patiently, while the elders gathered round the headman and argued the matter. Eventually Umzugaan was recalled, and he stood before them.

"Hearken to the words of the council," said Intali. "Because of thy solemn vow we may not lawfully impede thy going, O Umzugaan. But because thou art not yet a warrior and not entitled to carry weapons, thou shalt go for six moons only, and without weapons!"

"It is well, O Intali," said Umzugaan steadily, without flinching at the prospect of the grim ordeal before him. "I accept the words of the council. I go to avenge my father's death. Let those who plotted his end look well to themselves."

At Grips with a Snake!

THERE was silence as the young Zulu strode away from the council hut and made his way through the entrance in the thorn hedge to the veld, darkening now with the shades of evening. He had no weapon of any sort, not even a knife. He was clad only in a hide kaross.

Umzugaan had made his plans. He connected the black lion with the Whistle of Death. The Whistle of Death he connected with Masasi, the witch-doctor, and he went first in search of Masasi's camping ground, where he must have dwelt on the night Umzugaan the Elder met his death.

The sun went down behind the kopjes and the shadows lengthened as Umzugaan made his way to the riverbed. Owing to the rains there was plenty of water running down from the hills.

He picked up the marks of the witch-doctor's bare splay feet in the mud. He followed them along the kloof for two miles or more, and then grew cautious, for in places he saw the imprints of a lion's paws—big prints, proving the lion to be of abnormal size. In places the animal's spoor disappeared into the river itself, and it looked like magic; but on due thought Umzugaan realised that a week previously the river had been sluggish, dried up and only half as wide as it was now.

And then he saw a cave set in the face of an overhanging, low cliff, and before the entrance were all the marks left by a camp-fire. The tail of a monkey, fastened to the cliff-face close by, warned off intruders and marked the cave as the special home of a witch-doctor.

Umzugaan went forward cautiously, without a sound, his empty hands ready



Umzugaan vanished in the shadows behind the boulder and waited. Suddenly a Zulu warrior armed to the teeth came stealthily along the trail. It was Mkusikosi—sent by the rascally witch-doctor to kill the unarmed Umzugaan!

for battle. The spoors on the soft ground were thick—old marks and new marks all jumbled up together.

But there was no sign of life in the cave. Nearer and nearer Umzugaan crept, then he crouched low, moving ahead as stealthily as any wild cat. But the fire was out, and there were no cooking pots about, nor water gourd at the entrance.

Instead—just as Umzugaan reached the mouth of the cave, there was a hissing, and a boa-constrictor slid into view, its head swaying to and fro, the evil eyes blinking at the daring intruder.

Umzugaan steadied himself. Often he had heard it said that Masasi could change himself into a snake or jackal at will, in order to attack enemies or defend himself. Umzugaan had not believed, but now it seemed true.

The snake suddenly darted upwards and started to coil itself round the young Zulu. Desperately, Umzugaan seized the writhing creature with his bare hands and flung it from him. Then, like a flash, he bent down and grasped a large piece of rock. With all his strength, he hurled it at the reptile.

His aim was true. The rock crashed on the reptile's neck, and the force of the impact sent the snake sprawling on the rocky ground, half stunned. Umzugaan made the rocks ring with his war-cry as he rushed forward.

"Umzugaan, the son of Umzugaan! To the death!"

He gripped a huge boulder in both hands and leapt to where the snake writhed. Standing over the reptile, he crashed the great rock down on the contorting head. The boulder split asunder, and the pieces flew in all directions. But on the ground lay what remained of the great snake, the venomous head crushed to a pulp.

"Umzugaan, the son of Umzugaan!" chanted the youngster. "I fight to the

death! The glory to the spirits! Let mine be the strength! So ends Masasi, the man of evil, who changes into a snake!"

And then he frowned. He examined the soft mud of the river shore before the cave, and there he saw recent marks of feet—the feet of a man, and the paws of an enormous lion. They were side by side—not four hours old—leading away to the interior, following the kloof up the line of the river.

As he studied the spoors, he heard the beating of the drums at the Klieidorp Kraal. The beats were irregular, and throbbed on the night air, as the sun dropped below the kopjes. He listened and understood what they said.

"Umzugaan, the son of Umzugaan, is on the trail of the Black Lion. Umzugaan, the son of Umzugaan, is on the trail of the Black Lion!"

The drums of Intali, at the Klieidorp Kraal, beat out the news, and the drums of other tribes took it up. Umzugaan stood there in the shadows like a black statue, listening, his nostrils quivering.

Umzugaan was waiting for an answer, and he heard it—a faint beat echoing over the dark veldt—just two words:

"Masasi hears! Masasi hears!"

Umzugaan stiffened. Masasi was answering Intali. The drums—the black man's wireless—had warned the medicine man what to expect, and Umzugaan was without weapons!

He studied the spoors again as the moon came up out of the east. It puzzled him, but he was no longer afraid. The affair of the snake was, after all, but a chance encounter, and Masasi had not yet proved himself to be supernatural, except in one thing. If the trail did not lie, Masasi had walked up the kloof, side by side with the big black lion—the man-eater!

Only for a second did Umzugaan hesitate, then he collected stones from

the river shore, stowed them in his kaross to serve in place of weapons, then set out up the kloof to follow the trail of Masasi and the Black Lion.

For two hours he held on his way, and then, when the silvery moon was immediately overhead, he became aware that he was being trailed, just as he trailed Masasi. There were many signs that told him the truth. Several times he startled a veldt owl. The bird would fly up until he had passed, then settle down to its meal again. But when Umzugaan paused to glance back, he saw the owl fly up again as some other passer-by came along.

Umzugaan knelt and put his ear to the ground. He heard the padding of bare feet. It was a man who followed him—not an animal. Rising, Umzugaan sniffed the air. His uncanny sense of smell told him the pursuer was a Zulu.

Umzugaan vanished in the shadows behind a boulder; crouched there and waited, a large piece of rock in his right hand. He had to wait nearly an hour before the Zulu came on the scene.

It was Mkusikosi, sent by Intali to

make sure that Umzugaan never returned to the kraal!

Umzugaan stepped out into full view, for he was too honourable to ambush a foe.

"Hail, O Mkusikosi!" he cried. "Dost seek a black lion?"

Mkusikosi did not pretend to be friendly. There were no witnesses out here. Mkusikosi was an experienced warrior and hunter, and Umzugaan was but a stripling. He wasted no time, but with a snarl of rage he went back, bending from the waist, his right arm extended behind him, the broad blade of his throwing-spear almost touching his cheek.

His powerful arm and body acted as a spring. He hurled the huge spear swiftly and accurately at Umzugaan's throat. The moon flashed wickedly on the speeding blade.

But Umzugaan had been an apt pupil of old Zwengu at the bachelor huts. He did not move his firmly planted feet, but he slowed his body round, and presented his side. The spear whizzed past his face and dropped harmlessly on the rocks behind him.

And even as Mkusikosi charged at him with stabbing spear upraised, Umzugaan flung his big stone with all his force behind it. The missile crashed between Mkusikosi's eyes. With a grunt the warrior reeled back, dazed, bruised, and dropped on his back, his spear clattering from his nerveless fingers.

Umzugaan followed up his advantage, and with a bound was on his foe, kneeling on his broad chest, both hands at his throat. Locked in deadly embrace, they rolled over and over. Mkusikosi could not utter a sound, but Umzugaan sang his war-song to the watching moon.

"Umzugaan, the son of Umzugaan! I fight to the death! There is no lion braver than I. There is no buffalo stronger than I. Behold, I am Umzugaan, the son of Umzugaan!"

And when at last he rose to his feet. Mkusikosi, the hunter, lay still and silent. He would hunt no more.

Umzugaan took his hide shield and his spears. Umzugaan now had weapons. Only the headman of the kraal, with the consent of the council, could present him with the ring of rhinoceros hair, the outward sign of a warrior; but the weapons were his by right of victory in battle. It was this law of the tribe.

Umzugaan raised his spear aloft to the moon.

"Here, O my father," he cried, "lex one who plotted against thy life. But this is only the beginning. In six moons will I slay Masasi, the Black Lion, and even Intali, as I vowed to do. To thee be the glory. Let mine be the strength!"

He buried Mkusikosi under the rocks, then proceeded on his way on the trail of Masasi, the devil-man, and the black lion that walked beside him, travelling northward into the mysterious heart of Africa.

THE END.

(You like Umzugaan, boys? Good! Now look out for another feast of thrills in next Saturday's yarn starring this modern Hercules — "UMZUGAAN THE MIGHTY!")

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NERVOUS SHOCK!

Young man would like to be received as patient in nursing home. Treatment required for severe shock, recently caused by seeing Bunter open a letter containing a real postal-order.—Par-ticulars to PETER TODD, School Sanatorium, Greyfriars.



PAY YOUR OWN FEES!
Pleases Pater
—Saves Family Fortunes



Why don't you pay your own school fees? And you—what you—AND YOU! If you go to the pictures at all, you ought to know that it's done nowadays. Why, they all work their way through college in the great United States! Some sell ice-cream, some sell newspapers, and some play in jazz bands! Well, why not in England, too? WHY NOT AT GREY-FRIARS?

Frankly, we think it's time some of you fellows woke up to the fact that we're living in a New Age, when the idea of schoolboys earning the cost of their own education is rapidly becoming the order of the day. You don't know how to set about it? Well, it's easy! Every man-jack of you has some little gift that can easily be turned to monetary advantage.

Temple, of the Fourth, for instance, could, without the slightest difficulty, get a job in Chumley's Sports Depart-ment, demonstrating how not to play football. Just the job he was born for, as you can see for yourselves if you step over to Little Side when the Fourth are playing!

Loder would easily earn his fees as a model for a dog-cleanness' instructional school. He's such a dirty dog that they'd take him on without the slightest hesitation. Alonzo Todd, we suggest, could make pots of money as

When missing from compul-sory practice one Wednesday, Kippis was discovered below stairs, calmly smoking Mrs. Kibbles' tom-cat.

Read This, Kippis

Next week, chaps, we're back in the Remove again, with Scott handing out bouquets or rebukes to Morgan. Book-keeping and hear all about this rarely featured pair!—Ed.)

DICKY NUGENT'S WEEKLY

WISDOM

When I broke bounds to go to the Court-field Ring the other week, I saw Spike Samson give Young Collyfour such a wacking that he didn't come round till seven days later. This is the first time I've seen a man literally knocked into the middle of next week.

For Sail

Large assortment of Prunums, Bibbs and Baby's Comforters. We've decided to grow up, this term!—Apply, The Bargain Bas-sinet, Second Form Room.



No. 53 (New Series).

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

October 7th, 1933.

AS OTHERS SEE SKINNE'S SIMPLE SYSTEM

THEM

What I Think of Wingate

By Bolsover Minor

If young Wingate thinks I'm jolly well afraid of him, you can jolly well bet your life he's jolly well mistaken! I know this is clearly understood by all. If it isn't, I'm quite pre-paired to give Wingate minor a bit on the clock, just to prove it to any Dawdling Tommas!

It's quite true, as Wingate minor remarks, that I spent my early days in a slum. I'm awfully sorry if young Wingate objects. Perhaps he'd like me to go back there? If so, he can jolly well like on, for I'm staying at Greyfriars!

Well, dear readers, I had to get that off my chest; but now that I've got rid of it, I'm as well as well as I can be. I am exceedingly well as I can be.

Of course, he's not always my style of chap entirely. When he starts putting on the swans, he gets my rag out. When he starts running down my major, he gets my rag out.

And when he starts playing the fiddly goat and reading pink sporting papers like Skinner of the Remove, he gets a coat on the back of your trousers!

You'll gather from this that young Wingate is a bit of a mixture. He is. Unlike me, he didn't have the advantage of being brought up in the lap of luxury and spoiled by his parents—he gives me that idea, anyway!

But, on the whole, he's what you might call a gentleman in the making, and I'm jolly well convinced that he'll improve with age.

By the time Wharton is captain of the Shell or Fifth, Wingate minor will be captain of the Remove—and a jolly good captain, too! You wait and see!

"Logic Lads to £ s. d."

Lanham Races were won by Bouncing Boy because it last week. Of course, my was only beaten by a short head last time it ran. You to Greyfriars chaps, bid to you think that said Skinner going? No, sir! It's a gay dog and a bold blade, is Skinner. And also clever! He took Snop's vote, pursued Skinner, with him en route just how der he was.

"Spotting the winner a race meeting is just a matter of simple logic," he said Snop. Snop blathered: "You don't say so!"

"In spite of what he Spoiles Simons and had Little Eric of the Remove say," mumbled Snop, "money is made at rat-pots of it!"

"Yes?" burred Snop in some surprise. "Fact!" nodded Snop. "Money is lost, of course, by mugs. But money is won—by fellows who use their brains!"

"Go on!" bleated Snop, goggle-eyed with wonderment. "Now, take to-day's race—this winner who first race is bound to be Bonny Lass."

"Are you sure?" said Snop. "Positive!" said Snop. "You see, like engaged Nifty Smart who it. That means the odds banking on it!"

"Re ally?" mumbled Snop. "Same applies to Logic! True in the third race, he second, of course, look at

the amount lent at the end of the afternoon. The discouraging sequel—discouraging, at any rate, to people who like to see a certain amount of logic in life—was that Skinner's scientific forecasts proved to be not altogether correct.

The first race was won by Babbling Brook, the second by Naughty Norman, the third by Late Again, the fourth by Doddering Dude, the fifth by Beano, and the sixth by Oh Grumps!

Of Skinner's selections, two came in last, one refused to race, and sat down in the middle of the course, one ran the wrong way round, one stopped half way to do a bit of grazing, and the last one mistook the race for a rodeo and gave a fine exhibition of buck-jumping all on his own.

As Skinner remarked afterwards, the whole thing was illogical from beginning to end. Our suggestion is that Skinner starts a school of logic to put things right—Did Snop get his promised two quid, you ask? Well, we'll leave you to guess that.



Answers To Correspondents.

"Squire" (Remove).—"Johnny Bull is most unreasonable. When I was practising on the harp, he told me to chuck it—and when I chucked it and hit him on the nose with it, he bashed me!"

Try to forget it. It would be most unwise for you to "harp" too much on such a subject!

"Playful." Perrier. (Remove).—So after the Lanham Air Pageant, Lanham said he considered that Coker is a preposterous rider!

What he should have said was that Coker is a silly kite!

"Sufferer" (Fifth).—You want to know a good cure for shooting pains? Easy!

"Ear-ache" (No. 7).—Retain from listening at study keyholes and all will be well!

'LONZY'S LITTLE LETTERS

Dear Editor.—Cousin Peter, to my inordinate dis-composure, recently effectuated the asseveration that I, his congauguous relative, "could not play football for nuns!"

Since it is not permissible to allow such a misapprehension of my motivation to gain currency, I amate myself precipitately to an amending mis-sive. Let all Greyfriars, therefore, comprehend that when I play what is colloquially termed a "football," it is out of consideration for its beneficent physical consequences and the potential plaudits of the populace for my personal puerile playing proclivities—and not for the sake of the eculeutic produce of arboriculturalists!

Yours disidently, ALONZO TODD.

(This is how) Lonzy relates the suggestion that he "can't play football for nuns"! For goodness' sake, chaps, don't tell him he can't play football for TOFFEE, or he'll write at double the length!—Ed.)

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!



SMARTEN UP YOUR FAG!

A good fag deserves a smart uniform. See that he gets it! We have for disposal firemen's helmets, blue serge suits with brass buttons, top-boots, and gamblet gloves.—The very outfit for fags doing toast! Snap up these bargains pronto!—The Friarsdale Volunteer Fire Brigade (in liquidation). Selling Agents, FISHER T. KISH & CO., Study No. 14, Remove.

TWO POINTS OF VIEW

Nugents on Big "Talkie"

Frank Nugent took his minor, Dicky, to the pictures at Courtfield this week and they've both written to say what they think of the big film. Do you mind if we give you their views in silence, so that you won't get too tired of either? You don't? Thanks! Then here goes!

FRANK NUGENT: The theme of the film was just the kind I like—romantic and elevating. Dicky Nugent: The theme of the film was just the kind I like—blundering and horrid.

F. N.: The chief figure in the piece was the heroine—one of the loveliest girls I've ever had the good fortune to see on the films. D. N.: The chief figure in the piece was the villain—one of the ugliest creatures I've ever had the good fortune to see on the films!

F. N.: It was a story of a hopeless love. D. N.: It was the story of a hopeless hate. F. N.: One of the most dramatic incidents was a revolver fight between this lovely girl and the idiotic villain.

D. N.: One of the most dramatic incidents was a revolver fight between this ugly villain and the idiotic girl. F. N.: The second would have shot the girl dead; but, fortunately, in the nick of time, along came a noble rescuer in the shape of Deadshot Dan.

D. N.: He'd have shot the girl easily; but unfortunately, at the last minute, along came a silly faghead in the shape of Deadshot Dan. F. N.: Deadshot Dan made about work of the villain.

D. N.: Deadshot Dan took a jolly long time to get the better of the villain. F. N.: He finished him off by coming out boldly into the open and attacking him with lion-like courage.

D. N.: He finished up by taking cover and defending himself like a rat in a corner. F. N.: Naturally, Deadshot Dan married the lovely girl.

D. N.: Deadshot Dan, like the fathead he was, had to get spoony over the silly girl and marry her. F. N.: It was a good film, crowned by a glorious ending.

D. N.: It was a good film, spoiled by an idiotic ending. Well, chaps, now you know all about it, don't you? Or DON'T you?

THIS WEEK'S CLEVER REMARK

Redwing states that when he threw a pail of water out of his study window, its unfortunate descent on the head of Billy Bunter was quite accidental. Personally, however, we're inclined to think he threw it on "Porpoise"!—