

"FOOLED ON THE FIRST!" Superb Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co. **Inside!**

The Magnet

K27



*The
Dud
Giver!*



Come Into The Office, Boys—and Girls!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

SOME time ago, in my chat, I mentioned a place where there was a "three-way crossing." In this case both a road and a canal crossed over a railway. As a result, one of my readers, who signs himself "Semaphore, Staffs," has sent me particulars of what appears to be

BRITAIN'S MOST BAFFLING CROSSING.

To begin with, on the lowest level is the Grand Junction railway; over this crosses a lane; then a canal, and the junction of four roads. Over the canal is another double track of railway. My reader asks: "How's that?" It looks like a record to me. I wonder if any of you can beat that one? In this country of ours there are hundreds of marvellous examples of modern engineering of which very little is heard. If there is anything out of the ordinary in your neighbourhood, write and tell me about it. I'll pass on the information to other readers.

A reader who signs himself "Secretary of the MAGNET League," is an ambitious youth,

HE WANTS TO BECOME AN AUTHOR,

and asks me how to set about the job. As he is just under fifteen years of age, he is starting early; but, in authorship, as in many other professions, the earlier a youngster starts the better chances he has. The greatest secret of writing successful stories is to read a great deal. By comparing various magazines and periodicals, one learns what various styles are adopted by different authors, and also the kind of stories which different Editors prefer. There are several reference books which can be obtained from booksellers, giving details of every publication issued in this country, together with the kind of stories they publish, and what they are prepared to pay for them.

There is really no royal road to success in writing stories. Every author has his own distinctive style, and a novice must find out his own style by constantly practising the art of writing. He must not expect to get his earlier stories published. Most authors write for years before they begin to sell their stories. The great thing is not to be easily disheartened, even when Editors continue to reject manuscripts. By plodding away and learning by his failures, the would-be author should, eventually, be able to place his stories, and, if his stuff is good, will soon carve out his own market.

There are several schools of authorship which can help with good advice, but it must be remembered that they cannot help an author unless he himself can turn out good saleable stuff. Authorship cannot be taught, although the lectures which are arranged by such institutions as London University help the novice to avoid many pitfalls which might otherwise

hamper him. If this reader lives near any provincial university, he should make inquiries as to whether there is any course there dealing with journalism or story-writing.

From "Constant Reader," of Birmingham, comes

A WIRELESS QUERY.

He wants to know why the reception of foreign stations on wireless sets fades away. It is rather difficult to explain this briefly, but possibly my reader has heard of what is generally called the "heavyside layer." This is a sort of reflecting surface in the atmosphere, approximately seven miles up in the air. Wireless waves transmitted from foreign stations do not come direct to our sets. They rise into the air, and strike this "heavyside layer," which reflects them back towards the earth. But the position of this layer is not constant. It fluctuates considerably, and thus the reception of our sets varies according to the variations of the "heavyside layer," which is what we call "fading."

ONE of my girl readers takes me to task this week! She wants to know why I call my weekly chat "Come Into the Office, Boys!" She thinks that I must have a very good percentage of girl readers, and that it is not quite fair to ignore them.

YOUR EDITOR APOLOGISES

to his many girl readers. This is a matter I must attend to, and I thank my girl reader for mentioning it. I have a very large number of girl readers, and, believe me, I am always very pleased to hear from them. So pass along your queries, girls, and I'll do my best to answer them.

Incidentally, this girl reader, Miss McLaughan, of Bathgate, sets me a poser. She wants to know what is the oldest coin actually in circulation to-day. I don't think anyone can answer that question, because one frequently comes across some very old coins. People with money-boxes save coins for very long periods, and then put them back into circulation again. For instance, only the other day I received in change a coin that was nearly two hundred years old. It was in perfect condition, which proved that it had not been generally circulated. I should imagine that some collector had decided to dispose of his coins, and, not getting a good offer for them, had merely put them into circulation again in the ordinary way, for their face value.

THE VALUE OF COINS

depends merely upon what collectors are willing to pay for them. Actually, old British coins are only worth their face value, but if a collector wants an old coin very much he is willing to pay a considerable amount for it, despite its

ordinary value. This reader also points out that there are a considerable number of pennies coined before the year 1900 now in circulation, and wonders why it is. The reason is that too many pennies were coined in those years, and later it was discovered that there was a glut of pennies. For some years after that very few pennies were coined—and that is why earlier pennies predominate.

From Arnold Kidson, of Marton-in-Cleveland, comes a query regarding

BACK NUMBERS.

He wants to obtain some back numbers of "The Schoolboys' Own Library." He should write to the Back Number Department, Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and send the ordinary price of the issues required, plus the cost of postage. For a certain length of time back numbers are kept for the convenience of readers, but very old issues are not always obtainable.

One of my North Country readers sends me a query regarding

THE MEANING OF TOWNS' NAMES.

He wants to know, for instance, how Newcastle-on-Tyne got its name. Actually, this name dates only from Norman days, when William Rufus built what is known as the "Old Castle." Previously the town had been called Monkchester, but after the days of Rufus it was termed "The New Castle upon the Tyne," which has been shortened into the name which it now bears.

The same reader wants to know how the village of Bamburgh received its name. This village was originally the capital and royal city of Northumbria, and was founded by a king with the unusual name of Ida. His wife's name was Bebb, and he called his "city" Bebbaburgh—or the castle of Bebb. This was a bit of a mouthful and gradually people shortened it, as the names of so many towns have been shortened.

EVERYBODY'S DOING IT!

Doing what? Why, trying their hand at making up the Mappa-Mundi Map of the World. This exciting game consists of a large jigsaw puzzle map of the world on which you have to place the capital cities in their correct positions. The more cities you place correctly the more points you score. Mappa-Mundi is a game that grips, fascinates and educates. For teaching geography it is invaluable.

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Ready for next week's list of features? Right!

"FACING THE MUSIC!" By Frank Richards.

is another "super-production" of this first-rate boys' school story author. It's crammed with exciting situations, and when you've finished it you'll agree that it's as good as any story he has ever written.

Thrills you'll find in plenty in our further chapters of "The Sea Spider!" while the "Greysfriars Herald" supplement will be better than ever. Jump to it, chums, and order next Saturday's issue of the MAGNET at once!

YOUR EDITOR.

FOOLED on the First!



By
FRANK RICHARDS

—ANOTHER RATTLING FINE YARN OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Just as Good!

"MAULEVERER!"
"Yaas, sir?"
"Have you written your lines?"

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Mauly.

"Oh lor'!" murmured Billy Bunter. Both of them looked dismayed.

Lord Mauleverer of the Remove had walked out of the House, in the sunny spring afternoon, handsome and elegant. Billy Bunter had rolled after him, neither handsome nor elegant. Both were heading for the gates, when Mr. Quelch put his head out of his study window and snapped.

Mauly, of course, had forgotten his lines. His Form-master had a better memory for such things!

He fixed his eyes sternly on the dismayed Mauly.

"You have not written your lines, Mauleverer?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"Yet you were going out!"

It was not to be denied! Mauly was going out! A hundred lines, due for delivery in his Form-master's study before tea, had not been touched. Forgetful and oblivious of those lines, Mauly was going out. Sterner and grimmer grew the brow of Mr. Quelch. "Mauleverer!"

"Oh dear! I mean, yes, sir?"

"You will go to your study at once, Mauleverer, and write your lines. You will not leave the House again till the lines are written and brought to me."

"Yaas, sir!" groaned Mauleverer.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter. It was Mauly, not Bunter, who had to go in and write lines. But Billy Bunter looked the more dismayed of the two. "I—I say, sir—if you please, sir—"

Quelch's gimlet eye turned icily on the Owl of the Remove.

"Have you anything to say to me, Bunter?"

"Oh! Yes, sir! If—if you please, sir, c-c-can you let Mauly off, sir?"

"What?"

"You see, sir, we're going down to Courtfield—"

"Bunter!"

"To the bunshop—"

"Boy!"

"A lot of fellows are expecting us there—"

"If you speak another word, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, "I shall give you a hundred lines also!"

On the morning of April 1st nobody at Greyfriars is immune from the gentle arts of the "leg-puller." But there's a limit to all things—even on April Fools' Day!

Billy Bunter's mouth was open. He shut it promptly. He had a lot more to say, but it was not judicious, in the circumstances, to utter another word.

Mr. Quelch stepped back from his window. Lord Mauleverer walked to the doorway. After him rolled Bunter. By the House steps he clutched the schoolboy earl's sleeve.

"I say, Mauly, look here! I'll go, and—"

"Oh, good!" said Lord Mauleverer. "You cut down to the bunshop, old fat man, and tell the fellows I'm kept in, will you? Tell them I'm fearfully sorry, and all that! Awf'ly good of you, Bunter!"

Shaking a fat and rather grubby paw from his sleeve, Mauleverer went into

the House. Billy Bunter blinked after him through his big spectacles.

"You silly ass!" he gasped.

And he rolled in after Mauly.

His lordship was looking quite worried, as he headed for his study in the Remove passage. Really, it was frightfully unlucky that Quelch had spotted him going out! For there was going to be a spread at the bunshop in Courtfield—and Mauly was the founder of the feast! He had asked at least a dozen fellows. As it was a fine and sunny half-holiday, they were all out of gates, and it had been arranged for all of them to meet at the bunshop for tea.

Harry Wharton & Co., who had gone up the Sark in a boat, would be there. Vernon-Smith and Redwing, who had gone to the pictures, would be there! Three or four other fellows would be there! Only Lord Mauleverer—whose presence was the most essential, in the circumstances—would not be there! It was really very awkward!

"I say, Mauly!" Billy Bunter rolled into the Remove passage after his lordship. "I say, you fathead—I mean, I say, old chap—"

"Cut off, old bean, and wait at the bunshop, and tell the fellows!" said Mauleverer. "Awf'ly good of you!"

And he went into his study. Billy Bunter, however, did not cut off.

He rolled into Study No. 12 after Mauly.

"I say—" he hooted.

"Now, look here, old bean!" said Mauleverer. "You're a pretty slow walker. You've not got too much time. Cut off, like a good chap! Can't keep a lot of men waitin' about."

Billy Bunter gave him a devastating blink through his big spectacles.

"And what about the spread?" he demanded.

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"Oh, that's off, in the jolly old circus!"

"You can't ask fellows to a spread and let them down!" said Bunter. "I don't call that cricket! It doesn't matter so much about the other chaps—but what about me?"

"You?" said Mauleverer.

"Me!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"But you weren't comin', were you?" asked Mauly innocently. "Did I ask you, Bunter? By Jove, I must have forgotten it!"

"Oh, really, Mauly! Of course I was coming! What the dickens do you think I've been waiting about for you for?" demanded Bunter warmly. "Here I've been hanging about waiting till you started, and now—"

Lord Mauleverer grinned. It had not occurred to his unsuspicious mind why Billy Bunter had been haunting him like a fat ghost for the last half-hour. Now he knew.

"But it's all right," said Bunter. "I'll go down to the bunshop, Mauly, and tell the fellows you can't come! But there's no need to cut out the spread."

"Eh?"

"I'll pay for it!" explained Bunter.

"By Jove, that's fearfully decent of you, Bunter!" said Mauleverer, in surprise. "Jolly good idea! I say, can you see my Virgil? I believe it's in the study somewhere!"

"Never mind that—"

"But I've got to do a hundred from Virgil—"

"Do talk sense!" urged Bunter. "As I've said, I'll pay for the spread! But I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"Oh!"

"I suppose you can trust me with the money?" said the Owl of the Remove, with a great deal of dignity. "I dare say it can be done on a fiver. Hand me the fiver, and I'll get off to Courtfield. Sorry you can't come, and all that; but, after all, the spread's the thing, isn't it? It will be just as good."

Lord Mauleverer gazed at Bunter. It was, after all, quite a simple way out of the difficulty, though it had not occurred to Mauly's noble mind.

"If you hand me the cash, and I pay for the spread with it, it will come to the same thing!" explained Bunter. "The only difference will be that you will be here writing lines instead of there at the spread. That's all."

To Mauly, that was a very considerable difference! To Bunter, it seemed a trifle light as air! However, Mauly was very keen not to disappoint the fellows who had been asked to the spread, and Bunter's suggestion offered a solution of the problem. Mauleverer extracted a five-pound note from his notecase.

"I suppose you don't want any change out of this!" remarked Bunter, as he tucked the fiver into his own notecase, where there was plenty of room for it.

Mauly grinned. If Billy Bunter started spending a fiver on a spread, it did not matter very much whether the schoolboy earl wanted any change out of it. There was not likely to be any change.

"No, that's all right, old fat bean!" said Mauly. "Hop off!"

Billy Bunter hopped off promptly. Lord Mauleverer sorted out Virgil and sat down sadly to lines. Billy Bunter rolled away to Courtfield in a state of happy anticipation! A fiver to the schoolboy millionaire was a small thing—to William George Bunter it was not!

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That spread at the Courtfield bunshop was going to be a feast of the gods! Billy Bunter's fat face beamed as he rolled. If he could only have foreseen—

But, as the novelists say, let us not anticipate!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Venerable Stranger!

"**R**OW, brothers—row!" sang Bob Cherry.

His voice echoed far over the shining Sark.

"We're rowing!" said Johnny Bull.

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

"Want to go faster?" asked Frank Nugent.

"No, ass! I was just singing!" explained Bob.

"Whattin'?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Singing!"

"Oh, all right, now you've told us!"

"Fathead!"

Bob Cherry was in exuberant spirits that afternoon. He generally was. On a glorious spring afternoon, pulling up the rippling Sark between green banks, in the roomy old boat, any fellow might have been in great spirits. Bob, when he was in exuberant spirits, sometimes burst into melody. Only a very keen musical ear was needed to detect the melodiousness thereof.

Four fellows were pulling. Harry Wharton sat at the lines. It was rather an old boat, and rather patched in places, and its paint had long ago lost its pristine brightness. But it was roomy, and it was comfortable, and it belonged to the Co., and they thoroughly enjoyed having it out on a half-holiday.

"Great idea of Mauly's!" remarked Bob. To the satisfaction of his friends, he left off singing. "We shall be ready for tea when we pull in at Courtfield Bridge—what?"

"The readiness," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "will be—"

"Terrific and preposterous!" chuckled Bob.

"Hear, hear!"

"That old johnny is hailing us," said Harry Wharton.

For some minutes, as he steered, he had had his eyes on a man walking on the towpath, and now the other fellows glanced at him, also.

He looked an elderly man, with a white beard and moustache, and fringes of white hair escaping under his silk hat. Having attracted the attention of the schoolboys in the boat, he was waving to them.

"Pull in, and see what he wants!" said Nugent.

The old gentleman on the bank seemed so old, so respectable, indeed, so venerable, that the Famous Five, like the good fellows they were, felt bound to treat him with respect. The boat pulled in to the towpath, and the white-haired gentleman raised his silk hat politely to the crew. Not to be outdone in politeness, the chums of the Remove capped him in return.

"Anything we can do for you, sir?" asked Harry, wondering what the ancient one could possibly want.

"Please excuse me for calling to you," said the stranger, in the high-pitched voice of age. "You are, I think, Greyfriars boys. I remember the old school cap."

"That's right," said Harry, very civilly.

If this ancient gentleman had once been a Greyfriars fellow, and was an Old Boy, he looked the oldest Old Boy

the juniors had ever seen, and they were naturally ready to oblige him in any way they could. If he wanted to be ferried across the river, they were prepared to expend ten minutes in his service.

"I am walking to Courtfield Bridge to take the motor-bus for Lantham. It stops at the bridge, I think?"

He blinked at the juniors in the boat over gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Yes; it's the regular stopping-place, sir."

"But I am in a difficulty," went on the venerable one. "I foolishly left myself without any change, and I fear that the conductor of the bus may not be able to change a note. Seeing that you were Greyfriars boys, I thought perhaps you might oblige me."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Easy enough," he answered.

"Thank you so much, my dear boy!"

The old gentleman fumbled in a pocket, and fished out an expensive-looking Russian leather case. Opening it, he revealed that it was fairly well filled with banknotes. It seemed that he was a wealthy old gentleman.

Wharton had expected him to produce a ten-shilling note, or at the most a pound note. But it was a five-pound banknote that he extracted from the case, which seemed to contain only banknotes.

"You are very, very kind," he continued, holding the note down the bank to Wharton, who was standing up in the boat. "It is very, very awkward to get on a bus, with nothing smaller than a five-pound note."

There was rather a pause.

The juniors wanted to be obliging, but changing a five-pound note for a stranger was not exactly a prudent proceeding.

As it happened the Famous Five were financially quite able to do so by combining resources.

That was certainly not always the case. But the approach of the Easter holidays had elicited tips from various relatives, and the chums of the Remove were quite well supplied with small cash. Handing it over to a stranger—even such a respectable and venerable stranger—was another matter, however. They wanted to be civil and obliging, but—

"You can get change in a shop in Courtfield, sir," said Johnny Bull respectfully, but firmly.

Johnny was blessed with a large allowance of solid common sense.

The old gentleman blinked at him.

"Oh, yes—yes, no doubt!" he assented. "But that will mean losing my bus. But if you have not sufficient change, never mind. Please excuse me for having delayed you."

"Hold on!" said Harry. "I think we can manage it."

He took the note from the old gentleman's hand.

Johnny Bull gave an audible grunt. Wharton coloured with vexation. Johnny's grunt implied that he regarded him as an ass, which was neither grateful nor comforting.

Wharton was no fool. He was not by any means simple enough to be taken in by a "dud" banknote. He examined the note the man on the bank passed down to him. It was obviously genuine. Wharton was not blessed with innumerable banknotes like Lord Mauleverer; but he had seen and handled plenty of them, and he knew the genuine article when he saw it.

"It's all right!" said Harry, rather gruffly. "Why shouldn't we change it, and save a man a lot of trouble?"

Grunt from Johnny. There was no

reason for refusing to change that bank-note, except that it was injudicious to do so. That was enough for Johnny Bull.

But, as so often happens, solid common sense produced an irritating, instead of a soothing effect. Johnny Bull's grunt, instead of deterring the captain of the Remove, only made him obstinate.

He groped in his pockets for change. "Look here—" began Johnny.

"Don't you worry!" said Harry tartly. "We can manage all right. I've got a couple of pound notes."

To state the exact truth, his comrades were rather inclined to side with the cautious Johnny. But the Co. always played up. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh

sensible fellows don't change banknotes for strangers, and that's that!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Wharton. And, with one more grunt from Johnny Bull, the subject dropped, and the juniors pulled on to Courtfield Bridge. There they landed, and tied up the boat, and walked down the High Street to the bunshop.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Feast—and the Reckoning!

THAT ass, Mauly, is late!" grunted Hazeldene of the Remove.

"Better late than never," said Tom Brown cheerfully.

Hazel was getting irritable. He had been over to Cliff House School that afternoon, to see his sister Marjorie there, and had cut back to Courtfield on his bike to be in time. That was a matter of a good many miles, and Hazel did not like the idea of having covered a good many miles for nothing! Also, he was hungry.

"If that ass doesn't come soon—" growled Hazel.

"Oh, give him a chance!" said Harry Wharton. "It's a bit of a walk from Greyfriars."

"The silly fathead knew when to start, I suppose. He's walked it before."

"Here comes Bunter, at any rate!" grinned Vernon-Smith, as a fat junior rolled in and blinked round through a



Smack! Hazeldene gave a wild yell as Bessie Bunter's fat hand smote his face. "Bessie!" shrieked Marjorie Hazeldene. "I'll smack him again!" exclaimed Miss Bunter, dancing round the enraged and dismayed Hazel. "I'll give him porpoise! I'll give him fat little beast!"

produced a pound note, and Bob Cherry a ten-shilling note. Frank Nugent sorted out fifteen shillings in silver.

Then Johnny, whose bark was worse than his bite at all times, added the rest that was required. He felt bound to play up as a member of the Co., but he added another disapproving grunt at the same time.

However, the sum was made up, and passed up to the venerable gentleman on the bank. He thanked the school-boys with old-fashioned courtesy, raised his silk topper again, and toddled on his way up the river.

The boat pushed off again, and pulled on.

"Silly asses!" commented Johnny Bull.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Harry. "We're going to the bunshop to tea with Mauly, and I can change this fiver there, and whack it out again."

"If they'll change it," said Johnny.

"Why shouldn't they, fathead?"

"Well, if it's a dud—"

"It's not a dud. Think I'm blind?"

"No. I think you're an ass," said Johnny calmly. "That old gent may be all right; he looked all right. But

"I shouldn't wonder if the silly ass has forgotten all about it!"

"Rot!"

"The forgetfulness of the esteemed Mauly is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But not so preposterous as that."

Four o'clock was the time fixed for the gathering of the clans in the bunshop. It was now a quarter past, and the clans, so to speak, had gathered. Harry Wharton & Co. had walked in from the river. Smithy and Redwing had arrived from the pictures. Tom Brown and Squiff had come in from a ramble on Courtfield Common; William Wibley from a shopping visit to the theatrical outfitter's, one or two other fellows from different quarters.

They had gathered at the large table booked in advance by Lord Mauleverer for the tea-party. Only one man was missing, but as he was the founder of the feast his absence was rather a serious matter. One or two other fellows, as well as Hazel, wondered whether Mauly might possibly have forgotten the fixture. His lordship's forgetfulness was rather well known in the Remove.

big pair of spectacles. "Wonderful nose Bunter has for a feed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, here you are!" Bunter rolled up to the rather crowded table. "I say, you fellows—"

"Did Mauly ask that fat owl?" grunted Hazel.

"Does Bunter ever wait to be asked?" grinned the Bounder.

"With the esteemed Bunter the askfulness is not a sine qua non!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, there's no room for you here, Bunter," snapped Hazel. "Wait to be asked before you barge in."

"That's for Mauly to say," remarked Wibley quietly.

Billy Bunter blinked at Hazeldene—a disdainful blink.

"The question is whether there's any room for you, Hazel!" he retorted. "Did Mauly ask you, I'd like to know?"

"I shouldn't be here if he hadn't!" sneered Hazel. "My name's not Bunter."

The Owl of the Remove reddened with wrath.

"Well, if your name was Bunter it

wouldn't be in all the newspapers, anyhow!" he answered. "There's nothing in the papers about any Bunters being wanted for bank robberies, at any rate!"

Hazel's face became deadly pale.

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton hastily.

"Well, let Hazel shut up, then!" said Bunter. "I didn't start the ragging, did I? Think I'm going to be jeered at because Hazel's got an uncle that's robbed a bank, and he thinks everybody is thinking about it night and day? I dare say Mauly only asked him out of pity."

Hazel half-rose, whether to walk away or to hurl himself at the Owl of the Remove was not clear. Bob Cherry caught his arm and pulled him back into his seat. Scrapping, in the most select bunshop in Courtfield, was really hardly the thing.

"Chuck it, old bean!" said Bob amiably. "This isn't the Remove passage, you know."

"Have you seen anything of Mauly, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, to get the fat Owl on another subject.

Hazel had really asked for Bunter's retort, but it was a painful topic. Indeed, it was probable that Bunter's suggestion was well founded, and that the kind-hearted Mauleverer had asked Hazel to the feast simply because he fancied that everybody had his uncle's disaster up against him.

Nobody had, as a matter of fact, but Hazel was touchy, suspicious, and sensitive, and he had been like a bundle of nerves ever since the newspapers had announced that the police were anxious to interview John James Hazeldene, late of the Brighton and County Bank, last seen in the neighbourhood of Friar-dale.

Hazel's pale face had flushed crimson, and paled again. He sat biting his lip, savagely angry and miserably self-conscious.

"Mauly can't come!" announced Bunter.

"Is that a message from him?" demanded the Bounder.

"Yes, old chap. Quelch spotted him going out, and reminded him that he hadn't done his lines—"

"The ass!" said Smithy.

"But it's all right!" added Bunter cheerfully. "I've come instead."

If Billy Bunter expected that piece of information to console the tea-party, Billy Bunter was disappointed.

Nobody looked bucked.

Judging by the general expression, Billy Bunter was regarded as a very poor substitute indeed for Lord Mauleverer. Why, Bunter did not know, for he knew that he was a much nicer and more entertaining chap than Mauly. Still, there it was. Even the fat and fatuous Owl could not fancy that his announcement was received with anything like enthusiasm.

"Oh, rotten!" said Nugent.

"The rottenfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows, it's all right—"

"Fathead!" said several voices.

Only Bunter supposed that it was all right!

"I say, you fellows, do let a chap speak. What I mean is, I'm standing the feed instead of Mauly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I suppose you want the spread, as you're all here!" said Bunter warmly.

"Has your postal order come at last?" inquired the Bounder, with deep sarcasm.

"Not exactly a postal order," said Bunter cautiously. "But I've had

rather a decent tip from one of my titled relations."

"If any!" murmured Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It happens to be a fiver!" said Bunter carelessly.

"Gammon!"

"Well, look!"

The juniors looked. In fact, they stared. They almost goggled at the five-pound note produced by the fat Owl. Certainly, Bunter often talked of fivers, and even tenners, as if they were as common as blackberries at Bunter Court. But seldom or never did those fivers and tenners travel from Bunter Court as far as Greyfriars School.

"Well, my hat!" said the Bounder. "Whose is that, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Won it in a raffle?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"I suppose Mauly gave it to him to pay for the feed, as he couldn't come!" sneered Hazel.

"Oh, that's it, of course!" agreed Vernon-Smith, with a nod.

Billy Bunter gave Hazel a fierce blink through his big spectacles.

The chance of "showing off" and displaying wealth did not often come Bunter's way. He was not the fellow to lose such a chance when it did come.

Certainly, Bunter's glory of wealth could only be brief. When the tea-party saw Mauleverer again they would know the facts. That, however, did not matter, for the moment. For Billy Bunter was going to swank as a fellow who had a fiver to spend on a spread. At all events, he was going to get away with it, if he could! Hazel's sneer, therefore, was extremely annoying to the fatuous, fat Owl.

"If you can't be civil, Hazeldene, you'd better clear!" he snapped angrily. "I'm standing this feed, with my fiver and—"

"Yours?" jeered Hazel.

"Well, it's not one of the bundle of fivers that your uncle bunked with from Brighton, anyhow!" hooted Bunter.

Again Hazel half-rose; again Bob pulled him back.

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Bob. "Nobody here believes that Hazel's uncle bolted with that bundle of fivers."

"I fancy Hazel does, or he wouldn't be so jolly sore about it!" jeered Bunter. "And I jolly well think—"

"What about the feed?" said Redwing. "We're all hungry, and I fancy we all know where that fiver came from."

"From one of my titled relations—"

"Well, get on with blowing it, anyhow!" said Squiff.

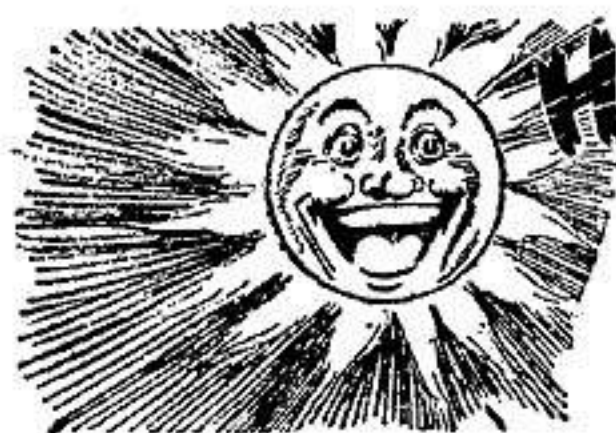
That was a suggestion upon which Billy Bunter was quite prepared to act.

A waiter was hovering round the table and Bunter proceeded to give orders.

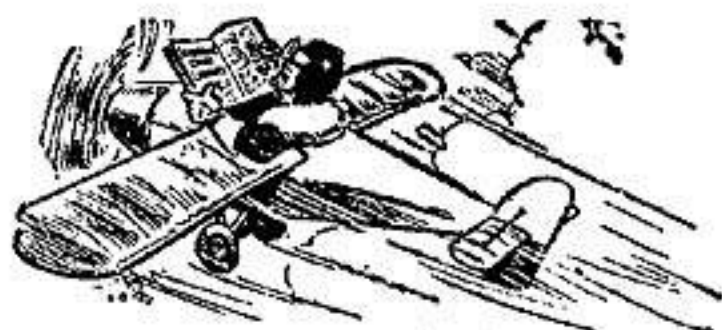
With more than a dozen fellows to tea the orders had to be rather extensive, and it was very easy to run the amount up to five pounds. Good things were piled on the table and the juniors set to work. And the good things began to disappear at a great rate, especially those that were set before William George Bunter. There were few things in which Bunter excelled, but clearing a table of food-stuffs was his long suit.

Every face was bright and cheery—except Hazel's, which was clouded and sulky. The waiter was assiduous in his attentions. He had seen Bunter's fiver, and was prepared to do his best to encourage the fat junior to expend it to the last sixpence. Bunter did not need a lot of encouragement. He gave reckless and lavish orders.

"If that fiver isn't a tenner, old fat bean, you'd better call a halt!" Bob



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Cherry suggested at last. "Let's have the bill."

The bill was brought.

It amounted to five pounds, two shillings, and sixpence!

"That's all right," said Bunter. "I happen to have left my change at the school. You can lend me half-a-crown, Smithy."

"Call again next week!" said the Bounder humorously.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

A half-crown, however, was forthcoming, and handed over to the waiter with the five-pound note. No more orders were given; but there were still a good many things on the table, and the tea-party finished them while the waiter was gone. He seemed rather a long time bringing back Bunter's receipt.

When he came back at last, there was no receipt.

He gave the fat Owl of the Remove a look so peculiar that all the juniors noticed it at once, and wondered what it meant.

"Would you mind stepping into the manager's room, sir?" he asked.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh—why?" he ejaculated.

"The manager would like to speak to you, sir, if you don't mind."

"Oh, all right!"

Bunter rose and rolled after the waiter, puzzled, but not alarmed. The other fellows exchanged glances.

"What on earth's the matter?" murmured Nugent.

"Something's up!" grinned the Bounder. "Perhaps that banknote was really Bunter's, after all—and a dud!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He must have got it from Mauly!" said Harry Wharton uneasily.

"Looks as if he may have got it from some sportsman who makes his own banknotes! There's something up, anyhow."

The juniors waited, rather anxiously. Bunter had followed the waiter into the manager's office. Several minutes elapsed. Then suddenly the door of the manager's office opened, and Billy Bunter reappeared in the public view.

He came at a run!

After him came the waiter, also running. After the waiter came the manager, and he, too, was running, though, being a gentleman of considerable girth, he was nowhere in the race.

Bunter did not return to the table. He bolted for the doorway on the street.

The Greyfriars fellows stared at the scene in utter amazement.

Bunter was fleeing—as if for his life! Customers all over the place stared at him.

The pursuing waiter shouted to another waiter near the door, who cut in to intercept the fat junior's flight.

Bunter, evidently desperate, and frightened out of his fat wits, lowered his head and butted.

Crash!

Bump!

The hapless waiter flew.

As he rolled and gasped, Billy Bunter whipped out of the doorway and bolted down Courtfield High Street, going very strong.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Banknotes from Brighton!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stood as if transfixed.

They had known that something was "up." It was clear now that something very serious indeed was up.

The waiter, gurgling in the doorway,

was picked up by the other waiter. The manager rushed back into his office, where he could be heard barking into the telephone. Then he came back into the teashop, and hurried to the schoolboys' table. By that time they were wishing themselves anywhere else, but it was hardly possible to leave in the present state of affairs.

"What on earth's the matter, Mr. Moon?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Mr. Moon, the manager, gasped.

"Very serious—very serious! Of course, that foolish boy should not have been frightened; he must have come by the banknote innocently."

"He certainly did, if there's anything wrong with it," said Harry. "Is that what's the matter? A bad note?"

"A perfectly good note," said Mr. Moon, "but a stolen note."

"Wha-a-at?"

"A stolen note!"

"Great pip!"

"Someone must have passed it on that silly boy," said Mr. Moon. "But as soon as I began to explain, he took fright."

"Bunter all over!" grinned the Bounder. "But how the thump can a stolen banknote have got to our school? Where was it stolen from?"

"Brighton!" said Mr. Moon.

"That's a good step from here. What—"

Smithy broke off as he saw the ghastly look that had come over Hazel's face. Banknotes stolen at Brighton had a very particular and terrible interest for that unfortunate junior.

"You young gentlemen may not have heard of the affair," said Mr. Moon.

"Probably you do not read the newspapers. But some weeks ago there was a bank robbery at Brighton, a bundle containing a thousand five-pound notes being taken from a safe."

"The Brighton and County Bank?" panted Hazel.

Mr. Moon glanced at him.

"Exactly!" he said. "The cashier of the bank disappeared—a man named, I believe, Hazeldene."

Hazel wiped his damp brow. Mr. Moon, who did not know his name, gave him a puzzled look; the juniors averted their glances.

"He was seen, some weeks ago, in this neighbourhood," went on Mr. Moon, "and the numbers of the stolen notes have been circulated by the police. In the circumstances, we are, of course, very careful in examining five-pound notes. The one just paid in was numbered 00002222—one of the numbers on the list."

"Well, my hat!"

"I have telephoned to Inspector Grimes," said Mr. Moon. "Perhaps you young gentlemen will remain until he comes. With regard to your bill here, no doubt you will be prepared to—"

The juniors looked at one another.

After the feast came the reckoning! The bill came to £5 2s. 6d. As a stolen five-pound note did not, of course, constitute payment, five pounds remained to be settled.

"We shall pay, of course," said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Mauly will settle later," said Redwing.

Wharton nodded, and took out his notecase, and drew therefrom a five-pound note—the one received from the venerable stranger on the bank of the Sark.

"That will make it right," he said.

"Oh, quite!" said Mr. Moon.

He took the five-pound note, and the juniors were not surprised to see him examine it carefully.

As a man suspected of stealing a thousand five-pound notes was known to have been recently in the vicinity, fivers were regarded with very meticulous care in Courtfield shops just then.

An extraordinary expression came over Mr. Moon's face.

"Master Wharton—I think your name is Wharton—"

"Yes," said Harry.

"May I ask where you obtained this banknote?"

"We gave a man change for it this afternoon."

Grunt! from Johnny Bull.

Wharton jumped. The manager's expression was alarming!

"You don't mean—" he stammered.

"I do!" said Mr. Moon grimly. "If you look at this banknote, sir, you will see that the number is 00002223; it is the next on the series to the one paid to the waiter by Master Bunter!"

"Then it—it—it is—"

"It is one of the stolen notes from Brighton!" said Mr. Moon gravely.

"Surely, sir, you did not change a banknote for a stranger? You will be able to tell Inspector Grimes—"

Wharton gasped.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Bang goes five quids!"

"The bangfulness is terrific!"

"I told you so!" remarked Johnny Bull oracularly.

"With your permission," said Mr. Moon gravely, "I will keep this note till the inspector arrives. With regard to your bill—"

Herbert Vernon-Smith took out his notecase. The Bounder, fortunately, was well supplied with cash.

"See if that's on your list, Mr. Moon!" he said, laughing, as he flicked a five-pound note across the table. "I don't fancy it will be—I don't change banknotes for strangers!"

Mr. Moon examined the Bounder's banknote. He compared it with a list he took from his pocket. Then he was satisfied. Vernon-Smith's fiver was not on his lengthy list.

"Thank you very much, sir!" he said.

"Master Wharton, perhaps you will step into my office. Mr. Grimes will be here soon. Anyone else, also, who saw the man who gave you the stolen note."

"Certainly!" said Harry, with burning cheeks.

He was glad enough to get into the manager's office, away from the sea of staring eyes in the bunshop. The Co. went with him; the other fellows walked out into the High Street. They also were glad to get away from staring eyes. The Greyfriars party were getting altogether too much publicity to be pleasant.

Hazel left the crowd of juniors at the door. His bike was at hand, and he wheeled it into the road, mounted, and rode away rapidly.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In Hiding!

HIDE me!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Hide me!" panted

Bunter.

Peter Todd, in Study No. 7 at Greyfriars, jumped up and stared at his fat study-mate in amazement.

There had been a rapid patter of footsteps in the Remove passage—so rapid that Peter had not supposed that it was Bunter coming. Bunter seldom covered the ground at that rate!

But it was Bunter, and he burst into his study gasping, panting, perspiring.

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his eyes almost popping through his spectacles.

At the best of times nobody would have called Bunter a hero! But never had he been seen in such a state of awful funk as this!

Terror sat on his podgy brow!

A wild bull behind him might have reduced Bunter to that state! But no wild bull, of course, could have gained access to the Remove passage! So it was difficult to account for Bunter's alarming state.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"Hide me!" gasped Bunter. "Quick! Oh lor'! I say, where can I hide? Oh crikey!"

"Loder of the Sixth after you?" asked Peter, mystified.

"Ow! No! Ow! Wow!"

"Coker of the Fifth ragging?"

"Ow! No! Worse than that! I say, hide me!" shrieked Bunter. "I won't be arrested! I won't be sent to prison! Oh crikey!"

"Arrested! Sent to prison!" gurgled Toddy. "You fat, frabjous, footling fooler, what have you been up to now?"

"Nothing!" moaned Bunter. He leaned on the study table and gurgled for breath. "I never stole the banknote, Peter!"

"You never s-s-stole the b-b-bank-note!"

"No! I wouldn't rob a bank—"

"Rob a bank!" said Peter dazedly. "No, I don't think you would! I don't think you've got brains enough! Has anybody robbed a bank?"

"Oh dear! Yes! That beast Mauly! It was his note! I was only jig-jig-jig-joking when I told the fellows it was mine! Oh lor'! Mauly's landed me in this!"

"In what?" yelled Peter.

"They're after me! Old Moon said he was going to telephone to Inspector Grimes! I won't be arrested!" howled Bunter. "I say, Peter, be a pal, and hide me before they come after me. Tell them it was Mauly stole the banknote."

"Mum-mum-Mauly!" stuttered Peter.

"Yes! It was his banknote! If it was pinched, he did it! I say, Peter, I believe I can hear them now! I say, they're after me! You won't see a pal taken off to chokey, Peter. I say, I've run all the way from Courtfield—"

"And you haven't burst?"

"Beast! I say, I mean, old chap—dear old fellow—I've always liked you, Peter! I never thought you a skinny scarecrow, like the other fellows! I always said you couldn't help your looks, old chap! I say, you stand by me now, and hide me—"

"I'll hide you!" agreed Peter grimly, and he picked up a fives bat. "Turn round!"

Bunter jumped back. That, it seemed, was not the sort of hiding he wanted.

"You silly ass!" he howled. "Keep off! I don't mean that!"

"I do!" said Peter.

"Beast! I say, Peter, be a pal! Hide me somewhere, and when the bobbies come take them to Mauly! Tell them he's the man they want."

"You blithering, blethering idiot!" shrieked Peter Todd. "Will you tell me what you're driving at, if you know yourself?"

"They're after me—the police—I just got away in time!" groaned Bunter. "They were going to keep me there till the police came! Oh lor'! They may be here any minute! Mauly gave me the banknote—"

Peter Todd advanced upon his fat

study-mate and grasped him by the collar. He hooked him out of the study into the Remove passage.

"Come and see Mauly!" he said.

Peter failed to make head or tail of Bunter's wild and incoherent story. But he could see that the fat Owl was frightened out of his wits—such as they were! Apparently it had something to do with Mauly, and Mauly's banknote, so Peter marched the wriggling Owl along to Study No. 12.

Lord Mauleverer had written his lines and taken them to Quelch. Now he was taking a well-earned rest on the study sofa, with his hands clasped behind his noble head, resting on a down cushion.

"Don't come in!" he called out, as Peter pitched the door open.

"Eh!" demanded Peter. "Why not?"

"Tired!"

"Fathead!" Peter Todd came in and hooked in Bunter after him. "Have you been ladling out banknotes to this blithering idiot, Mauly?"

"Eh? I gave him a fiver to see the tea party through at the bunshop!" said Lord Mauleverer. "What about it?"

"Beast!" howled Bunter.

"Oh, gad! Didn't you enjoy the feed, old fat man? What's the row?" asked Mauleverer, sitting up on the sofa in his astonishment.

Bunter shook a fat fist at him.

"You rotter! Getting a chap to pass your stolen banknotes!" he roared. "Mind, you'll go to chokey for it, not me!"

"Mad?" asked Mauly.

"Mad as a hatter, I think," said the wondering Toddy. "Something seems to have happened—blessed if I can guess what—"

"They got me into the manager's office!" howled Bunter. "Old Moon said that fiver was stolen—he had a list—one of the notes that Hazel's uncle pinched from the bank at Brighton!"

"What?" yelled Peter.

"I just got away!" gasped Bunter. "I'm not going to be arrested! I tell you, I'm not going to chokey! I—"

Breath failed Bunter, and he gurgled.

Peter Todd gazed at him. Then he turned quietly to Lord Mauleverer, who was staring at the fat Owl in dumb astonishment.

"I suppose you know where you got that banknote, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"Not from Hazel, by any chance?"

"Eh! No! I changed it for a man yesterday," said Mauly, in wonder. "A venerable-looking old johnny in a white beaver—he dropped on me when I was out of gates after class—told me he was an old Greyfriars man—looked fearfully respectable—"

"You howling ass! You changed a banknote for a man you'd never seen before?"

"Yaas. You see, he told me he had no change, and was going to take a motor-bus," explained Mauly. "Why shouldn't I change his note for him?"

"Lots of reasons, I should think—and Bunter's just told you one of them, unless he's dreaming," answered Peter. "Looks as if that bank robber really is in the neighbourhood, as the newspaper said, and he's getting mugs to change the stolen notes for him."

Lord Mauleverer jumped.

"Oh, gad!" he gasped.

"I say, you fellows, it wasn't me!" Bunter found his voice again. "I say, I never robbed the bank—"

"You howling ass!" roared Peter.

Lord Mauleverer grinned. The matter was serious enough, but the idea of the fat Owl of the Remove in the

role of bank robber had its comic aspect.

"I never did!" hooted Bunter. "And I won't be arrested! I say, will you hide me before the police come, Peter, you beast? I say, Mauly, will you hide me in this study? I say—"

There was a footstep in the Remove passage. Bunter gave a squeal of terror.

He rushed out of the doorway. The footsteps were coming from the stairs. Bunter flew in the opposite direction, and bolted up the box-room stair at the end of the passage.

"Bunter, you potty ass—" roared Toddy.

"Oh, gad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

Bunter was gone! Any footstep at that moment was the footstep of a policeman to the terrified Owl of the Remove. He was firmly convinced that he had had a narrow escape at Courtfield, and that the police were "after him."

The footsteps came on, and Fisher T. Fish of the Remove looked into the study with astonishment in his bony face.

"Say, you guys, what's the matter with that fat clam Bunter?" asked the astonished Fishy. "He sure was burning the wind up the passage."

"Mad!" explained Peter.

And Fisher T. Fish grinned and went on his way. Peter went to look for Bunter! But he did not find him. Bunter had disappeared! Wherever he was, he was lying very low—in mortal dread of an official hand on his fat shoulder. The fact that he was in no danger made no difference to Bunter, as he was unaware of it! In some deeply hidden spot Bunter quaked!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Misunderstanding!

MISS BESSIE BUNTER, charming sister of the fascinating Billy, leaned on the gate at Cliff House School, and blinked through her spectacles at an approaching cyclist.

Miss Bunter sniffed.

The fellow on the bike was a Greyfriars man. There were some Greyfriars men of whom Miss Bunter was pleased to approve; on whom she would bestow plump smiles. But Hazeldene of the Remove was not one of them.

Bessie did not like Hazel! There were other girls at Cliff House School who did not like him, either. His sister Marjorie was the most popular girl at Cliff House but her friends did not think much of her brother. Least of all did Bessie Bunter like him!

Bessie knew many things that did not concern her like her brother Billy at Greyfriars; and among other things, she knew that Hazel had often borrowed money from Marjorie—but she did not know that he had ever repaid it!

Borrowing money, without subsequent repayment, was rather a weakness in the Bunter family; but that did not make Bessie view it with an approving eye in others.

So Bessie sniffed—and then frowned! Hazel dismounted, put his bike at the fence, and came on towards the gate where Miss Bunter leaned.

The harassed expression on his face did not move Miss Bunter's sympathy. She took that to mean that Hazel was hard up once more.

Also, she took it to mean that Hazel had heard that Marjorie had received a pound note from her parents abroad. Bessie knew about that pound note;



There was a step outside the dormitory, and the door-handle turned. Bunter made a swift dive under the nearest bed. He was out of sight as the door opened and Mr. Quelch stepped in. "Boys!" said the Remove Form master. "Are you all asleep?" There was no answer.

for, having, noted the letter with a foreign postmark, she had taken it from the rack to give to Marjorie—and by some accident the envelope had come open while in her fat hands!

Such accidents often happened with brother Billy, in the Greyfriars Remove! The Bunter tribe were prone to accidents of that sort.

Bessie had her own designs on that pound note! Marjorie had been "stuffy" about that letter coming open by accident; so the fat girl's designs on the pound note had not yet materialised. They were booked to materialise by tea-time, if Bessie could manage it.

So it was quite a blow to see Hazel trundling in, with that harassed, hard-up look on his face!

Obviously—to Bessie—he had heard of the pound note! Equally obviously, he had come after it! All was clear to Bessie!

Her fat lip curled. If Hazel bagged that pound note from Marjorie, where did Bessie Bunter come in? Clearly, nowhere!

Miss Bunter felt that it was up to her to frustrate his knavish tricks, if she could.

Hazel gave her a careless glance as he came up to the gate. He had already been to Cliff House that afternoon to see Marjorie—leaving her in haste to go to the tea-party at the bunshop in Courtfield. He had, Bessie inferred, gone without the pound note that time, and now had come back for it! What else could he have come back for?

"Marjorie about?" asked Hazel.
"She's playing net-ball," answered Bessie promptly. "Can't interrupt her, Hazel. The Bull would be wild."

Miss Bullivant, otherwise the Bull, was maths and games-mistress at Cliff House. Hazel gave an angry grunt. He wanted to see Marjorie, but he did

not want to see the Bull. A Cliff House girl's brother was allowed to come in and see her, certainly; but the Bull would have roared, if not gored, if he had interrupted net-ball.

"Is she going to be long?" grunted the Greyfriars junior.

"Yes, until tea!" answered Bessie. "And she's going to tea with Miss Bellew our Form-mistress so you can't see her."

Hazel gave Bessie Bunter a glare. Looking in over the gate, he saw that there was no sign of net-ball going on. Also, he could see Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn walking on a garden path at a distance; and if the Cliff House Fourth had been playing net-ball, both of them would certainly have been busy.

He realised that Bessie Bunter had, in the customary manner of the Bunter tribe, departed from the strait and narrow path of veracity!

"You little beast!" said Hazel, which certainly was not the way for any boy to speak to any girl, even an exasperating young lady like Elizabeth Bunter!

Bessie's eyes gleamed behind her spectacles.

Hazel pushed open the gate.

"I wonder" said Bessie, "that you've got the cheek to come in. Hazel! All the girls have seen it in the newspapers about your uncle—"

Hazel crimsoned.

"We're all very fond of Marjorie," went on Bessie. "No girl would say anything to Marjorie about it! But you—" Miss Bunter sniffed. "I can tell you—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Hazel, and he swung open the gate and came in.

"What did you say?" gasped Bessie.

"I said shut up!" snapped Hazel.

"If my brother Billy were here, I'd ask him to thrash you!" said Bessie.

Hazel stared at her for a moment and burst into a laugh. Hazel was no great

fighting-man, but certainly he would not have been alarmed by any war-like proceedings from Billy Bunter.

"You can cackle!" hooted Miss Bunter, greatly exasperated. "I've a good mind to smack your face!"

"Oh, my hat!" Hazel jumped back. "Look here, don't be a little idiot, Bessie! Tell me where Marjorie is! I want to see her!"

"Yes, and I know why!" jeered Bessie.

Hazel's face paled.

"You know why?" he exclaimed. "You've heard—"

He broke off, realising at once that nobody at Cliff House could possibly have heard yet of what had been revealed at the Courtfield bunshop, six miles away.

"Yes, I've heard," answered Bessie.

"In fact, I've seen it."

"You've seen what?"

"The pound note!" answered Miss Bunter disdainfully.

"The pound note?" repeated Hazel blankly. "What the dickens are you talking about?"

"Think I don't know what you're after?" jeered Bessie.

Hazel gave her a glare. Had Miss Bunter been Master Bunter, undoubtedly Hazel would have punched at that moment! But he could not very well punch Elizabeth Bunter, so he glared instead.

"You silly little idiot!" he snapped savagely. "Will you tell me where Marjorie is, or not?"

"She's kept in!" answered Bessie. "The Bull's given her a detention in maths."

Hazel grunted, and walked on up to the house. If Marjorie was under detention, it would be difficult to see her; but he was going to try. And after the previous information Miss

Bunter had given him, he did not quite trust her present statement.

Miss Bunter grinned, and resumed her watch over the gate.

In point of fact, Marjorie Hazeldene had walked down to Pegg with Clara Trevlyn, and Bessie was expecting to see them coming back to tea at any moment.

So she was quite satisfied to see Hazel disappear in the direction of the house. She watched anxiously for Marjorie. Two figures came into view in the lane. Bessie Bunter hurried out.

"I say, you girls!" she exclaimed breathlessly.

Marjorie and Clara stopped. Bessie gave a backward blink at the house. Hazel was not coming back yet, but he was not likely to be long.

"What is it, Bessie?" asked Marjorie in surprise.

"I say, I've got to post a letter for Miss Bellew," said Bessie hurriedly. "Come down to Pegg with me, will you?"

"We've just been," answered Clara.

"Well, come again—it's a lovely walk!"

"Rot!" said Clara Trevlyn. "Post it in the school box!"

"Miss Bullivant asked me specially to take it down to Pegg!" explained Bessie.

"Miss Bullivant did?" exclaimed Marjorie, in astonishment. "But if it is Miss Bellew's letter—"

"I mean Miss Bellew did! Come on!"

"Bosh!" said Miss Clara. "You can walk down to Pegg on your own, Bessie!"

"I say, do come!" urged Bessie. "I—I'm afraid of the—the dog at the Anchor—"

"You don't have to pass the Anchor to post a letter."

"I—I mean, I—I want you to come, because—because I'm so fond of your company!" urged Bessie. "You come, Marjorie! You're not a cat like Clara! Do come, old dear!"

"What is that podgy little duffer trying to pull our leg for?" asked Clara. "Put the letter in the school box, Bessie."

"Miss Primrose wants it registered—"

"Miss Primrose!" exclaimed the two girls together.

"Yes, and I can't refuse to oblige the Head, you know! I—I'm afraid I might lose the letter—it's got a lot of money in it! Do come!"

Marjorie smiled, and Clara laughed. Why Bessie Bunter was prevaricating they did not know; but the fact was plain enough.

"Well, let's see the letter!" chuckled Clara. "If you're afraid of losing it I'll carry it for you!"

"The—the letter—" stammered Bessie.

"Yes, Shell out!"

"I—I've got it in my pocket! It—it's safer there till we get to the post office! I say, do come! I've got to catch the post for Miss Primrose—I mean, Miss Bellew—that is, the Bull! I'm in a hurry!"

"Race you!" said Miss Clara, closing one eye at Marjorie.

"Oh, all right!" gasped Bessie.

A race was the very last invitation that the plump Bessie would have accepted as a rule! Now she jumped at it.

"Come on!" she gasped.

And Bessie flew.

Marjorie and Clara stood looking after her, without moving, as the fat school-girl pounded down the lane towards Pegg.

"What is Bessie telling lies for?" asked Clara.

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"Goodness knows," answered Marjorie.

"Hallo! Isn't that your brother?"

Hazel, with a red and angry face, came out at the gate. He started at the sight of the two girls, and stared at them, forgetting to raise his cap.

"Oh, here you are, Marjorie!" he exclaimed. "That little beast Bessie told me you were in detention—"

"Bunters can't help telling whoppers," said Clara. "It runs in the family."

Bessie Bunter, a dozen yards off, had suddenly realised that the two girls were not following her, and that she had the race to herself! She spun round like a fat humming-top.

"Cats!" she gasped.

And Bessie came charging back up the lane.

"Oh!" she gasped at the sight of Hazel. Her strategy, after all, had been a failure; as Bunter strategy so often was.

"Look here, Marjorie, I've got to speak to you," Hazel was saying. "You can come out, I suppose. I'll wheel my bike—"

Marjorie glanced at Clara, who tossed her head slightly. Bessie came gasping up.

"I say, Marjorie—"

"Oh, clear off!" growled Hazel. "What the thump have you been telling a pack of lies for?"

"Marjorie, old dear—"

"You should not tell such untruths, Bessie," said Marjorie Hazeldene severely. "I might have missed my brother if—"

"That's all the thanks I get for trying to save your pound note!" said Bessie, with a sniff.

"Wha-a-t?" exclaimed Marjorie.

"Not that I want it!" said Bessie, with dignity. "Still, I think you might have something decent for tea in the study. Look here, let's ask Miss Bellew to let Hazel come in to tea! I'll do the shopping, if you hand me the pound note—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from Miss Clara. The meaning of Bessie Bunter's strategy was now revealed. She was after the pound note, and scented a rival in Hazel!

Hazel's face reddened with rage.

"I don't see anything to cackle at in that porpoise's cheek, Clara Trevlyn!" he snarled.

"Hazel!" exclaimed Marjorie.

"Fat little lying beast!" snarled Hazel, too enraged to remember his manners, which never had a very high polish at the best of times.

That was too much for Elizabeth Bunter!

Smack!

Hazel gave a wild yell as a fat hand smote.

"Bessie!" shrieked Marjorie.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Clara.

"I'll smack him again!" exclaimed Miss Bunter, dancing round the enraged and dismayed Hazel. "I'll give him porpoise! I'll give him fat little beast! I'll give him—"

Marjorie grasped her brother's arm and drew him away in one direction—Clara, almost in hysterics, grasped Bessie and pulled her in another. Hazel, scarlet with fury, seized his bike and wheeled it up the lane with Marjorie, while Clara hooked Elizabeth Bunter in at the gate.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Told You So!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. came up the Remove staircase, not looking their brightest.

They had had an interview with Inspector Grimes, who had been very keen to get a full description of

the venerable stranger who had palmed off the five-pound note on them. That description the juniors had been only too willing to give, hoping that Mr. Grimes would succeed in tracing that very respectable-looking spoofer.

Mr. Grimes had been rather amused at what he appeared to regard as their simplicity in being taken in by a crook. They gathered, too, that he had a suspicion that the white beard and whiskers which had made the venerable stranger look so venerable, did not grow on the venerable one; but had been adopted for the purposes of disguise. Which, when the juniors came to think of it, seemed very probable.

It was annoying to have been swindled; it was annoying to have been mixed up in a police affair; it was still more annoying to have lost five pounds—the greater part of their combined wealth! But what was most annoying of all to four members of the Co. was the fact that Johnny Bull had told them so, and did not let them forget that little circumstance.

Johnny, who was great in common sense, did not shine in tact! It was true that he had been against changing that fiver for the venerable stranger. It had been done contrary to his opinion. Still, it would have been tactful to pass lightly over that detail.

Instead of passing lightly over it, Johnny referred to it, not once, but several times.

By the time they came up the Remove staircase, Johnny's pals were feeling rather disposed to bump him on the floor. Johnny, in the painful circumstances, had a right to regard them as asses! But it was neither grateful nor comforting to be so regarded!

Peter Todd met them on the Remove landing.

"Seen anything of Bunter?" he asked.

"Not since he bolted out of the bunshop," answered Harry. "Hasn't the howling ass come in?"

"Oh, yes; but he's disappeared again! In hiding!" explained Peter, with a cheery grin. "He thinks the police are after him."

"The blithering owl!"

"It's rather rotten," said Toddy.

"That ass Mauly gave him a fiver, it turns out, to pay for the spread, and it was a pinched fiver! But I suppose you know all about that, as you were there—"

"More than we want!" said Harry. "But we don't know how Mauleverer got hold of a pinched fiver. How on earth—"

"Mauly's the last word!" grinned Peter. "What do you think of a fellow who changes a banknote for a stranger?"

"Eh?"

"You'd hardly believe that any fellow could be such an ass!" continued Peter. "An old respectable-looking gent, Mauly says—made out that he was an old Greyfriars man—"

"Oh!"

"Pitched Mauly a yarn about being short of change for going on a bus—"

"Oh!"

"And Mauly gave him change for a fiver!" Peter roared. "I say, did you ever hear of such a benighted idiot?"

The Co. looked rather sickly.

What had happened to themselves, evidently, had happened to Mauleverer! They could hardly agree that Mauly was a benighted idiot, without placing themselves in the same category.

"Absolutely priceless ass, what?" said Toddy. "I must say that a fellow who is such an ass deserves to lose his fiver."

"Un!"

"Don't you think so?" asked Toddy.

"Hem!"

"Well, look at it!" argued Toddy. "Is there another fellow in the Remove who would be taken in like that?"

"Hem!"

"Even Bunter isn't such a frightful idiot as that!" said Peter. "Dash it all, there's a limit even to Bunter's fatheadedness. What would you fellows do, for instance, if a stranger tried to get you to change a fiver for him, with a yarn about wanting change on a motor-bus?"

Harry Wharton & Co. did not reply to that question. Johnny Bull was grinning. The other four were not grinning, or feeling anything like grinning!

As the matter had turned out, their proceedings that afternoon did look a little idiotic. Still, how was a fellow to know?

"Mauly's the prize ass and no mistake," grinned Peter. "I say, though, it begins to look a bit thick about Hazel's uncle, doesn't it? He's known to have been hanging about in this neighbourhood quite lately, and now some of the stolen notes are being passed about here. Poor old Hazel!"

Harry Wharton started. He had not thought of that aspect of the case before, but now that Peter pointed it out he saw what it looked like. Bob Cherry whistled.

"Better not say anything like that up and down the school, Toddy," he remarked.

"Of course not," agreed Toddy. "Make it as easy for poor old Hazel as we can, of course. It looks jolly bad, but it's not his fault. He fancies that everybody has got it up against him. I say, that idiot Bunter has got to be found. Like to help me look for him?"

"Bother him!" answered the Co. together; and Peter grinned, and went off on his own to continue the search for Bunter.

The Co. went on to Study No. 12, and looked in on Lord Mauleverer. He gave them a rather wry grin.

"Sorry, and all that, old things!" said Mauly. "Must have been rather unpleasant at the bunshop. Not my fault, really, though I suppose I was a silly ass to change that fiver for a man I never knew. Toddy's been tellin' me so."

"Priceless ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"We're all in the same boat!" said Harry Wharton ruefully. "We did just the same thing up the river this afternoon, and it must have been the same awful rascal, of course. We're five quids to the bad, same as you."

"Rotten!" said Mauly sympathetically.

"You were a fathead and no mistake, Mauly!" remarked Johnny Bull. "But you're not the only fathead in the Remove, if that's any comfort. I tried to keep these chaps from playing the goat, but, of course, it's no good talking sense to fatheads."

"Give us a rest!" suggested Frank Nugent.

"Well, you remember that I told you so," said Johnny Bull. "I'm not the fellow to rub it in, I hope; still, facts are facts, and I did tell you so. You can't get out of that."

The Co., with deep feelings, walked out of Mauly's study. Lord Mauleverer grinned as Johnny followed his friends. He had a suspicion that Johnny Bull was perilously near a ragging.

Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing came up the passage. They were telling half a dozen fellows about the exciting occurrences at the Courtfield bunshop. The Boulder seemed greatly amused.

"I'm not surprised at Mauly bein' taken in," he said. "Mauly goes about with his mouth open, asking people to diddle him. But the same spoofer

diddle Wharton's lot in the same way. You should have seen Wharton's face at the bunshop!"

"They must have been fearful duffers to have stolen notes landed on them!" said Ogilvy.

"Thanks!" said Harry Wharton dryly.

Ogilvy looked round at him. "Well, you must have been, you know," he said.

"I suppose we shall never hear the end of it!" remarked Bob Cherry, with a sigh.

"Well, it ought to be a lesson to you," argued Johnny Bull. "It's worth the money if it's a lesson to you to be more careful, isn't it?"

"Shut up!" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"Dry up!" roared Nugent.

"Esteemed speech is silvery, my idiotic Johnny, but silence is the stitch in time that saves ninepence," urged Hurreo Singh.

"Well, don't get shirty about it," said Johnny. "Nothing to get shirty about, that I can see. I warned you not to have anything to do with that old beaver—"

"Chuck it!"

"Well, I did warn you, you know."

Harry Wharton breathed hard. The other fellows in the passage were laughing. The Co. had reached the limit of endurance.

"Johnny, old man," said the captain of the Remove. "You're right! You were right all the time! You're always right! You always will be right! Now, you men, bang his head on the wall for being so jolly right!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold on, I say! Yaroooooh!" roared Johnny Bull, in surprise and wrath, as his exasperated friends seized him and banged his head on the passage wall, amid shrieks of laughter from the other Removites. "I say—Yoop! You silly fatheads! Yarooooop!"

Bang!

"Leggo! I did tell you so, didn't I? Didn't I say—Whooop!"

Bang!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-whoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

"Yaroooooh!"

Feeling better, the Co. released Johnny and walked away. Johnny was left gasping and rubbing his head. And he did not mention again to his friends that he had told them so!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Guilty!

HAZEL jammed his bike into the hodge and threw himself on a grassy bank in a quiet spot in Pegg Lane.

Marjorie sat on the bank beside him with a cloud on her face. She could read in her brother's expression that there was some new trouble—a more serious trouble than the dingy escapades which sometimes landed him in difficulties. Bessie Bunter had been needlessly alarmed about the pound note. It was a much more serious matter than a shortage of cash that was troubling the Greyfriars junior.

Marjorie's heart was beating painfully. The flight of her uncle, John James Hazeldene, the former cashier of the Brighton and County Bank, was a constant weight on her mind. That he was innocent of wrong-doing she was fully assured, but she knew only too well what his skulking flight looked like in the eyes of others. It had been a relief to her when he had taken the alarm and fled from the vicinity of Greyfriars

and Cliff House; but, at the same time, it added to her anxiety to know nothing of his movements. She hoped and hoped to hear that he had gone back to Brighton to "face the music," but no such happy news had reached her. Now she seemed to read the worst of news in her brother's black and gloomy looks.

She laid her hand on his arm as he did not speak.

"What is it, Hazel?" she asked quietly. "Have they taken him?" That was what she dreaded to hear. If John James had gone back to face the music of his own accord it would have been good news, but if he had been taken back by the police—

"No such luck!" said Hazel, bitterly and savagely.

"Hazel!" she breathed.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" he said gruffly. "You've believed, and I've tried to believe, that he was innocent! Now I know that he was guilty, and the sooner they get him, the better! We may hear the end of it in time if they get him packed away safe."

"He is not guilty, Hazel," said Marjorie quietly.

Her brother laughed scoffingly.

"That's all you know! That's what I've come over here to tell you, and to warn you," he added savagely. "I jolly well know that when he was hiding at the woodcutter's cottage in Lantham Woods you were in touch with him! I jolly well know you saw him there, though you wouldn't tell me!"

"You did not want to be mixed up in it," said Marjorie.

"And I didn't want you mixed up in it, either!" snarled Hazel. "I'm sorry old Grimes never got him there. He was tipped somehow, and I jolly well suspect that that meddling fool Wharton had a hand in it!"

"Harry stood by me that day like the good friend he is, Hazel," said Marjorie quietly. "He did what I had a right to expect my brother to do."

"Oh, shut it!" snarled her brother. "I'm not helping the scoundrel to get away with the loot, I can tell you that! And you're not, either. That's what I want you to understand clearly. You're not going to have anything further to do with him. Do you hear?"

Marjorie did not seem to notice the bullying tone. Like all weak natures, Hazel resorted to bullying when he was dealing with anyone who would tolerate it.

"What has happened?" asked Marjorie. "I can see that something has happened!"

"You're not to see him again."

"How can I see him, Hazel, when he is gone? He may be a hundred miles away now, for all I know."

Her brother gave her a searching look.

"Honest, Marjorie?" he asked.

Her lip curled, and the wretched Hazel reddened.

"Well, of course, I know you'd tell me the truth, old girl!" he said. "But—but he's taken you in if he's made out that he's gone. He's still hanging about this quarter somewhere."

"You have not seen him?"

Hazel gritted his teeth.

"If I saw him I'd put the police on him at once! I tell you he robbed the bank at Brighton, as they all think. I tell you he's still about here. The notes are being passed in this neighbourhood."

Marjorie's face paled.

"How do you know?"

"How do I know?" Hazel gave a bitter laugh. "Because they were passed in the bunshop, at Courtfield, where I went after leaving you this afternoon. Mauleverer had one, and that fool, Wharton, another! I don't

know how Mauly got hold of his, but Wharton was idiot enough to change a fiver for a stranger. I suppose Mauleverer did the same!"

"And the notes——"

"Identified by their numbers as belonging to the packet pinched at Brighton!" groaned Hazel.

"Oh!" breathed Marjorie.

"They've circulated the numbers all over the place—I suppose, since he was seen in this district. Two of them at the bunshop this afternoon. I dare say a dozen others will turn up in different places! He's started getting rid of the lot."

Marjorie clasped her hands.

She had believed in her uncle's innocence. She had helped him, believing in him. But what was she to believe now?

John James Hazeldene was, or had been, skulking in that neighbourhood! In that neighbourhood, of all others, the stolen banknotes were beginning to circulate?

What did it look like?

John James was there, because, a hunted fugitive, he had hoped to get help from his nephew at Greyfriars School, and had, indeed, received help from his niece at Cliff House! But for what imaginable reason could the bank thief be in that neighbourhood—if John James was not the bank-thief? Why should he have selected that quiet corner of Kent—with the whole kingdom open to him? Surely some busy city would have served his purpose better for getting rid of stolen fivers—if he was not John James Hazeldene!

The girl's head seemed to be turning round.

Was her uncle guilty, after all?

"Now I've told you!" Hazel's voice broke in on her tormented thoughts. "You're not to see him again—do you hear? He's not gone far. He's skulking somewhere else, now that he's been rooted out of Lantham Woods. He fixes up some sort of sneaking disguise to go out and palm off the banknotes on silly mugs like Wharton and Mauleverer——"

"No!" breathed Marjorie. "No!"

Hazel clenched his hands.

"Can't you see for yourself?" he snarled. "If another man had robbed the bank, do you think he would come to this corner of the earth to begin passing the notes? Why should he?"

"I cannot believe——"

"Oh, you're a fool! All girls are fools!" Hazel rose from the bank. "I've warned you! You know as well as I do now that's he's guilty, and that he's got the plunder on him. If you help him again, you're an accomplice. Do you hear that?"

The girl shivered.

"If you get a word from him, let me know! I'll get through to old Grimes and put him on to it!" said Hazel. "I've done it once, and I'll do it again! He's not going to disgrace us more than he has already!"

Marjorie rose to her feet. Her face was white, but her look was firm.

"I can't understand it all," she said quietly. "I can't make it all out, but he is innocent, Hazel, I am sure of that!"

"Oh, you fool—you fool!" hissed her brother.

"I'm sure of it!" Marjorie repeated.

"Does that mean that you will help him, if he gets in touch with you—that you will get mixed up in it again?" he snarled.

The girl paused for a moment.

"Yes!" she answered steadily.

Hazel's hands were clenched convulsively; his eyes blazing. He looked for

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a moment as if he would have struck her. But he checked his rage.

"Go your own way, then!" he said thickly. "Leave me out of it! I'll have nothing to do with him, or with you, either!"

He dragged his machine into the road.

"Hazel!"

He threw himself on the bicycle and rode away, without a word and without a backward look.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Under the Bed!

"BUNTER!"

No reply.

Mr. Prout, who was calling the roll in Big Hall at Greyfriars, blinked at the Remove, and marked Bunter absent. Mr. Quelch frowned. Quelch did not approve of a fellow cutting roll.

In the Remove a good many fellows grinned.

Bunter had not been seen for some time.

All the Remove knew by this time that the fat Owl was in a state of terrified funk, and was lying "doggo," in fear of a visit from Inspector Grimes.

Mr. Grimes had, in fact, called at the school; but, having learned that the banknote paid over at the bunshop by Bunter had been obtained from Lord Mauleverer, it was Mauly that he interviewed.

He got from Mauly a description of the venerable merchant who had planted the stolen note on him—a description that tallied precisely with that of the venerable stranger Harry Wharton & Co. had met on the banks of the Sark.

Having now no desire whatever to see Bunter, Mr. Grimes departed without even knowing that that fat and fatuous youth was in hiding at all.

Bunter, of course, was not aware of that! In terror of hearing the official tread of the police, the fat Owl was still in hiding.

After call-over Bunter was still missing.

At prep he had not been seen.

It was fairly certain that he was still within the walls of Greyfriars. But where, nobody knew.

Prep over, the Removites gathered in the Rag, where everybody asked everybody else if Bunter had turned up.

Bunter hadn't!

Mr. Quelch, in a state of great annoyance, had asked the prefects to look for him. Wingate and Gwynne, Sykes and Bancroft, and one or two others, were doing so. Loder and Carne and Walker assured Mr. Quelch that they would look everywhere, and then retired to Loder's study for a game of nap, with the door locked—which was their way of carrying out their duty! However, the prefects who did search for Bunter, searched in vain.

Wherever the fat Owl was hidden, it was clear that he was hidden deep!

"The blithering ass!" said Bob Cherry. "He will have to turn up for dorm."

"For supper, you mean!" grinned Skinner. "I can't see Bunter cutting supper!"

But Bunter did!

Even the pangs of hunger—which must have been fierce by that time—failed to draw the frightened Owl from his lurking-place.

When the Remove went up to bed he was still missing.

Wingate of the Sixth saw lights-out for the Remove. There was a buzz in the dormitory after the prefect was gone.

Only Hazel did not join in it. Hazel's own troubles, as usual, filled his mind, and he had hardly noticed that Bunter was absent, and certainly did not care a bean whether he was missing or not. But all the other fellows were deeply interested in the antics of the fat Owl.

"Quelch looked like biting somebody!" Skinner remarked. "Bunter's booked for a high old time when he does turn up!"

"I guess Quelch will make him squirm a few!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish.

"Serve the silly ass right!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——" came an unexpected voice.

The juniors jumped. From the darkness of the dormitory came the familiar fat voice of the Owl of the Remove.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Here!" ejaculated Nugent.

"Hiding in the dorm——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, don't yell!" came Bunter's gasping tones. "I say, I'm fearfully hungry——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, I've been under a bed for hours and hours and hours——"

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

Bunter's mysterious lurking-place, it seemed, had been under a bed in the Remove dormitory.

"Do shut up!" gasped Bunter.

"You'll bring Quelch here, or a beastly prefect! I say, I'm awfully hungry! I say, which of you fellows is going down to get me some grub?"

"The whichfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Don't all speak at once!" chortled the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Toddy, old chap——"

"You howling ass!" said Toddy old chap!

"Oh, really, Toddy! I say, you fellows, has that beast Grimes been here yet?"

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Skinner.

"Oh lor'! Lucky I kept out of sight, wasn't it? I say——"

Billy Bunter broke off suddenly. There was a step outside the dormitory, and the door handle turned.

Bunter made a swift dive under the nearest bed. He was out of sight as the door opened and Mr. Quelch stepped in. The light flashed on—too late to reveal the elusive Owl.

A moment before all the fellows had been wide awake, most of them sitting up. But as the light flashed on, all heads were laid on pillows, and a sound of regular breathing, and a snore or two, told that the whole Form were fast asleep!

Which, however, was not quite good enough for Mr. Quelch, who was too old and wary a bird to be caught with chaff!

Gazing into an—apparently—sleeping dormitory, Mr. Quelch smiled a grim smile.

"Boys!"

No reply.

"Are you all asleep?"

Silence!

"It is very singular," said Mr. Quelch, "that you should be all so fast asleep, when only a few moments ago I heard a sound of loud laughter from this dormitory."

The Removites realised that it was rather singular—altogether too singular to deceive Mr. Quelch!

"Are you asleep, Wharton?"

The captain of the Remove sat up.

"Hem! No, sir!"

"I fancied not!" said Mr. Quelch dryly. "I had an idea, Wharton, that that foolish boy, Bunter, who has been



"Lucky man, Bunter!" said Clara Trevlyn, as both she and Marjorie Hazeldene stood staring at Billy Bunter perched up in the cart. "Did you phone to Bunter Court for it?" "Eh?" asked the puzzled Owl. "For what?" "Your car!" answered Clara. "Isn't that your Rolls?"

concealing himself somewhere, might come out of his hiding-place at bed-time! Has he come here?"

"I—I haven't seen him, sir!" stammered Harry.

That was perfectly true; he had not seen Bunter, in the dark, though certainly he had heard his voice. It was a true answer; but it could not be denied that it savoured rather of the wisdom of the serpent, than of the innocence of the dove!

"Has anyone else seen him?"

"No, sir!"

Nobody had—that was certain!

"Very well!" said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips.

Rather to the surprise of the Removites, and considerably to their relief, Quelch let the matter drop at that point. He switched off the light, left the dormitory, and shut the door.

There was a gasp of relief from under Bob Cherry's bed.

"Oh, crikey! Thank goodness he's gone! I say, you fellows, do you think it would be safe for me to turn in? Think the beast will come back?"

Bunter crawled out from under the bed.

"You howling ass!" said Harry Wharton. "There's nothing for you to be afraid of, and nothing to hide for, and the sooner you show up—"

"Beast!"

"I tell you—"

"Yes, you'd like to see me run in, wouldn't you?" hissed Bunter. "I'm not going to be locked up to please you, I can jolly well tell you! I—"

"You potty porpoise!" roared Bob Cherry. "Nobody's after you—"

"Beast!"

"It's all right, you ass!" exclaimed Nugent

"Yah! Beast! I say, you fellows, now that brute Quelch's gone, I'll turn in, but I want one of you fellows to go

down and scrounge me some grub! I can tell you I'm frightfully hungry, and—"

The door opened. The light flashed on again! Quelch had not gone very far!

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Bunter.

He dived for a bed! But it was too late! The wily Quelch had not departed—he had only waited a few minutes outside the door. The flashing light revealed the legs of William George Bunter, disappearing under Vernon-Smith's bed.

"Bunter!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

The fat legs wriggled out of sight.

"Bunter!"

Under Smithy's bed, Bunter lay low! Perhaps he did not realise that he had been spotted. Anyhow, he understudied Brer Fox, and lay low like that sagacious animal and said "nuffin."

"You utterly absurd boy!" said Mr. Quelch. "Emerge at once!"

Bunter did not emerge.

With a grimly frowning brow, Quelch advanced to Smithy's bed, and stooped. Bunter rolled hastily out and under the next bed, which was Tom Redwing's. Quelch groped.

He groped in vain!

He had brought his cane with him. He gripped it.

"Bunter! Emerge immediately!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Otherwise, I shall use my cane!"

No reply!

With set lips, Quelch lashed under Smithy's bed with his cane. But it met with no resistance.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

He was surprised! He had seen Bunter's fat legs disappearing under that bed! He was not aware that as he had stooped on one side the fat Owl had rolled out on the other!

The thunder in Quelch's brow was

positively terrific. He stooped lower, and the Removites had the unaccustomed sight of their dignified Form-master on his hands and knees, peering under Smithy's bed.

A chuckle ran through the dormitory. An entertainment like this seldom came the way of the Remove, and they enjoyed it.

Looking under Smithy's bed, Quelch had a view of Bunter, crouched under the next bed! Breathing hard, he rose to his feet and went round to Redwing's bed and stooped there. Without speaking, he lashed with the cane under Tom Redwing's bed.

"Yaroooooooh!"

Bunter fairly bounded as he caught the cane. His head smote the bed above him, almost bumping Redwing out.

Whack!

"Whoop!"

Bunter wriggled out wildly. Quelch whipped round the bed like a shot and grasped Bunter by a fat ankle as he was squirming under another bed. He dragged.

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

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Yaroo! Leggo!" shrieked Bunter. "It wasn't me! I won't be locked up! I won't go to prison! They don't give you enough to eat in prison! Yaroo! I say, you fellows—whoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jerking Bunter by the ankle, the Remove master hooked him into the middle of the room. There he sprawled and gasped.

"Rise!" roared Quelch.

"Oh, crikey!"

Bunter wriggled to his feet. He was so obviously intending to bolt, that his Form-master grabbed him by the collar.

"Bunter, you foolish boy, if you dare—"

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FRANK RICHARDS

(Continued from page 13.)

"Ow! I won't be locked up!" yelled Bunter. "I never robbed the bank—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't know how to rob a bank—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you be silent?" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, you stupid boy, you are in no danger—only your own absurd folly has made you suppose so! Cannot you understand, you obtuse boy, that you are in no danger whatever?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Are—are you sure of that, sir? I—I thought that old beast Grimes was after me—"

"Nothing of the kind, you stupid boy!"

"Oh! I—I say, have I missed supper for nothing?" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You will go to bed at once, Bunter! First, however, I shall cane you for having caused so much trouble."

"Oh lor!"

"Bend over that bed, Bunter!"

"Oh, crikey!"

Whack, whack, whack!

It sounded like three pistol-shots ringing through the Remove dormitory. Three fearful yells from Billy Bunter rang yet more loudly.

"Now go to bed, Bunter—"

"Yaroo!"

"If you are not in in three minutes, I shall cane you again!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Bunter was in bed in two minutes.

Mr. Quelch, frowning, turned off the light, and left the dormitory. He left the fat Owl gasping and groaning, and the rest of the Remove chortling.

"Ow! Yow! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—wow! I say, who's going down to get me some grub?" groaned Bunter. "I say, I've missed supper—all for nothing, as it turns out! I say, are you going down to scrounge me some grub, Toddy?"

"I fancy not," chuckled Toddy.

"What about you, Wharton?"

"Nothing about me, old fat bean."

"Will you go, Smithy?"

"I don't seem to think so."

"Reddy—I say, Redwing! You're not a funky rotter like those rotten rotters! Will you go, Reddy?"

"Ask me again to-morrow."

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave it up. Luckily, sleeping came next to eating in his list of the joys of life. No grub being available, the fat Owl took it out in sleep, and his deep snore was soon echoing through the Remove dormitory.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

All Fools' Day!

"SNOOPEY," said Harold Skinner a few days later, "what's the date?"

"The date!" repeated Sidney James Snoop. "The first, of course!"

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"Exactly!" said Skinner.

Snoop looked at him.

"What about it?" he asked.

"Lots," answered Skinner. "On the first of April, my dear man, it is permissible to pull fellows' legs, which, of course, I should never think of doing at any other time."

Snoop chuckled.

The first of that merry month, April, was bright and sunny, and most fellows looked merry and bright that morning. There were one or two clouded faces. Hazel, as usual, looked sulky; Billy Bunter was in a very serious frame of mind, having had one of his many disappointments about a postal order. The Famous Five were very cheery, having recovered by that time from the disastrous affair of the five-pound note, and Johnny Bull having ceased to mention to his friends that he had told them so.

Skinner, with Snoop in his wake, bore down on the Famous Five.

"What's up with Quelch, you men?" he asked.

"Eh? Is anything up?" asked Wharton.

The chums of the Remove had been discussing the approaching holidays, and did not at the moment remember that it was All Fools' Day.

"Well, he looked rather ratty," said Skinner, "when he said he wanted you. He had his cane on the table."

"Oh crumbs!" grunted Johnny Bull. "What's the row now? He was all right in the Form-room."

The chums of the Remove headed for the House, to see what Quelch wanted. Skinner winked at Snoop, and strolled on, and stopped again, where Coker of the Fifth Form was laying down the law to his pals, Potter and Greene.

"I say, Coker—" began Skinner.

"Clear off!" snapped Horace Coker.

"Oh, all right, if you don't want Prout's message!"

"Oh, bother Prout!" grunted Coker. "I'm getting fed-up with Prout! What does he want?"

"You're to go to his study and take your atlas."

"What the thump does he want to see my atlas for?" snorted Coker.

"He didn't tell me," answered Skinner, which was true enough, as the Fifth Form master had told Skinner nothing at all.

And the humorist of the Remove walked off with Snoop.

Coker gave an angry snort.

"Blow Prout!" he said. "Making out that there's something wrong with my geography, I suppose. You heard him in the Form-room this morning, you men. He was saying that Samarkand was in Asia. Form-master, you know, and doesn't know that Samarkand is in South America."

"I'll bet he doesn't!" agreed Potter; and indeed it seemed very probable.

Horace Coker was the only man at Greyfriars, or anywhere else, who knew that Samarkand was in South America.

Coker, grunting discontentedly, went off to root out his atlas, and convey the same to his Form-master's study.

Skinner's next stop was under the elms, where Lord Mauleverer was gracefully sauntering. Mauly, popularly supposed in the Remove to be the biggest ass ever, promised to be easy game on the first of April.

"Seen the notice on the board, Mauly?" asked Skinner affably.

Mauleverer shook his head.

"It's ripping! Extra half-holiday to-day for the Remove," said Skinner.

"Pretty decent of Quelch—what?"

"Yaas."

"Only there's a snag in it," added

Skinner sorrowfully. "You know, we have an hour of French with Mossoo this afternoon."

"Yaas."

"Quelch can't get us off that, so the timetable's altered," explained Skinner. "We're to put in that hour before dinner, so as to leave the afternoon clear. Class-room No. 10."

"Yaas."

"Cut off, old chap, or you'll be late! I'm going to tell some other fellows who haven't seen the notice on the board."

Skinner and Snoop walked on under the elms. Glancing back over their shoulders a moment later, they expected to see Lord Mauleverer heading for the House, and Class-room No. 10 for French.

Mauly, however, was still sauntering gracefully—not in the direction of the House.

Skinner turned back.

"Mauly, you'd better buck up!" he called out.

"Yaas. Aren't you fellows comin'?"

"I'm going to tell Bunter."

"Awful good of you, Skinner, to risk bein' late, just to tell Bunter!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "You're a good-natured chap, Skinner. I'll wait for you."

"Don't wait, old man!"

"Oh, yaas; I'll wait!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I don't mind waitin' a bit—not on the First of April, old bean."

"First of April!" said Skinner innocently. "Is it the First of April?"

"Yaas; I think it must be. They don't make these sudden changes in the timetable on any other date," answered Lord Mauleverer amiably.

Whereat Skinner snorted, and Snoop grinned. His lordship evidently was not to be caught. Leaving the smiling Mauly to saunter, Skinner proceeded in search of less wary game.

Hazeldene, leaning on an old elm, and scowling at the universe in general, was his next victim. Hazel, had he been asked, would have said that he had at least ten times as much sense as Mauly. He did not, however, seem to be so alert to Skinner's guile.

"They've got him!" Skinner said to Snoop, as they were passing Hazel. "There's no doubt he's the man. Found the banknotes on him—a regular stack, and—"

Hazel gave a violent start. He had no doubt, of course, to whom Skinner was alluding—the subject of his own morose and dismal thoughts. He made a jump towards the two juniors.

"What's that?" he exclaimed hoarsely.

Skinner looked round at him.

"Oh, that you, Hazel? Haven't you seen it in the paper—"

"What paper?" breathed Hazel.

"I should have thought you'd keep an eye on the papers in the jolly old circumstances."

"Don't be a fool! What paper? Where is it?" Hazel, in his agitation, caught Skinner by the arm.

"Smithy's got one—in the Rag!"

Hazel let go Skinner's arm, and started for the House, running like a madman.

Skinner grinned, and Snoop looked rather dubious.

"I say, that's rather thick, Skinner!" he muttered. "That isn't a thing to pull a fellow's leg about."

"Rats!" said Skinner. "Bunter's next. I've got a first-class one for Bunter. And he's fool enough for anything."

Billy Bunter was seated on one of the old oak benches under the elms.

His fat brow was worried and

thoughtful. No postal order had materialised that morning, and the fat Owl could not help feeling doubts whether it would materialise by the afternoon's post. Shortage of cash was a perpetual worry to Bunter. All the more at the present moment, because it seemed a long, long way to dinner. And without cash he could not obtain a much-needed snack at the tuckshop.

Moreover, he had heard that Peter Todd was teasing out in the Fourth that day, which meant that there would be no tea in Study No. 7.

Neither was it likely that there would be much going in Study No. 1, since those silly asses, Harry Wharton & Co. had been diddled out of five pounds by an unscrupulous rogue. Altogether the world looked rather gloomy to Bunter

that fine morning, and the bright spring sunshine did not cheer him. But he pricked up his fat ears when he heard the sound of voices from behind the bench where he sat.

Two fellows had stopped to talk under the elm, apparently unaware that Bunter was sitting there only a couple of yards from them.

Bunter, of course, listened. That was one of Bunter's little ways. And what he heard, as it happened, was of the deepest interest to Bunter.

"Bit thick, I call it!" Skinner was saying. "Why should Quelch let seven fellows off class this afternoon, and not the rest?"

"Favouritism!" said Snoop.

"I found it out quite by chance," went on Skinner. "They seem to be keeping

it dark; but I know the chaps—Wharton and his lot, and Redwing, and Smithy! Smithy, of course, is standing the feed."

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles. The mere mention of a feed was enough to make the Owl of the Remove sit up and take notice.

"They're getting off class," went on Skinner, "and going up to Redwing's hovel at Hawkscliff. Smithy's ordered things right and left—by gum, I'd like to be on in that scene, Snoopey! Cold chicken and ham patties—"

Bunter gasped.

"Pots of jam, and jellies, and cakes, and meringues—you know how Smithy spreads himself, old chap! Money to chuck away!"

(Continued on next page.)



Herewith some more answers to readers' Soccer queries by "Linesman," who, throughout the season, has offered "Magnetites" the benefit of his knowledge and experience in first-class football. If you've a problem that wants solving, write to "Linesman," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

THE GAME OF THE YEAR!

THE last of the International Soccer matches of the season will be played on the sixth of April, when the chosen players of Scotland and England meet. Extraordinary interest is being taken in this game, and it is estimated that if there were an arena in Glasgow capable of holding 200,000 people it would be filled for this game.

Two years ago, when the corresponding game was played at Hampden Park, the official attendance figures were 136,259, and the receipts amounted to nearly fourteen thousand pounds. That stands as the biggest "official" crowd which has ever attended a football match at any time or place. There were, of course, more people present at the English Cup Final of 1923, but the actual figures for that game will never be known, because tens of thousands of people got in without the formality of going through the turnstiles.

The match against England is the game of the year so far as Scotland's football "fans" are concerned, and it is not an exaggeration to say that Scots in general don't mind what happens in the other Internationals so long as victory over England is gained. In reply to a Scottish reader, I can give him the assurance that if the past is any criterion, then Scotland will win this game.

Very seldom has an England side won the International on Scottish soil. England won an "unofficial" International game at Glasgow immediately after the War, but of the subsequent games between the two countries played in Scotland, England have only won once and drawn once.

The last England victory in Scotland was in 1927, and it was sufficiently notable to be worthy of recall. Quite early in the game Jack Hill, the England centre-half, received such a severe injury over his left eye that he had to have three stitches inserted. He insisted on turning out again in the second half, however,

and played at outside-right. Alan Morton, that wonderful Scottish winger, scored first for Scotland, but the rearranged England side then staged a gallant rally, and two goals by "Dixie" Dean, who still plays at centre-forward for Everton, of course, enabled England to win the match.

If Scotland beat England on this occasion they will share the International championship honours of the season, but England only need to draw to finish definitely on top. Wales have been International champions in each of the last two seasons, but this time round they haven't a chance.

QUICK JUMPS TO FAME!

WHILE talking about International matches, I may also take the opportunity of answering a question from Fred Kershaw, who wants to know the youngest player who was ever honoured by being chosen for his country. This, as it happens, is an easy question for which it is not necessary to dig into ancient history. In the amateur International match played between Ireland and England in February of this year there appeared the youngest player who has ever been chosen for an International game.

The player who gained this distinction was Norman Kernoghan, who, at the age of sixteen, not only played for Ireland at outside-right, but scored a goal! Only two years previously this strip of a lad had played in a schoolboy International game!

The distinction of being the youngest International player of all time came to Kernoghan only a few weeks after he had been promoted to the first team of Cliftonville.

Naturally, quite a lot of big clubs became interested in the "infant prodigy," as Kernoghan might well be called, but his father is not keen on him making football a career. A commercial course is mapped out for him, but whether the

lad will be able to resist the glamour of the game which he loves, and which he plays so well, remains to be seen.

This game of football is full of romantic stories of quick jumps to fame, and the fact that Kernoghan is an outside-right tempts me to refer to another young winger who has jumped to the front this season. This is Alfred Kirchen, now outside-right of Arsenal, who was signed on by them from Norwich City a few weeks back.

Kirchen is a farmer's boy who was unknown outside Norfolk village football only a few months back. He did not get a regular place in the Norwich first team until this year, but then he began to shine so brightly that other clubs were attracted by him, and for the "raw lad," as he was described, Arsenal paid a transfer fee of five thousand pounds. It is now probable that at the end of his first season in good class football Kirchen will get a medal for helping his side to win the First Division championship.

WAS THE REF. RIGHT?

THE story of this player, and others who could be mentioned, seems to me to serve as the only possible reply I can give to such correspondents as Arthur Jolliff, who writes to me from Polperro, in Cornwall. He asks me for the secret of success in football. The secret really consists of getting down to it, giving the game all possible attention, both in the physical and the playing sense, and concentrating on the task in hand.

One of my Sheffield readers, Arthur Broadbent, tells me that in a recent junior game near that city, the goalkeeper, who had advanced to repel an attack, took up the ball when it went out of play and threw it in. The referee, so I am informed, gave a free-kick against the goalkeeper for handling the ball outside his area, and I am required to give my opinion as to whether this was a correct decision.

With all due deference to the referee—I should be quite willing to discuss the problem with him—I think he was wrong. It is true that the rules say that if a goalkeeper handles outside the penalty area a free-kick should be given to the other side, but this was never meant to apply to a "dead" ball.

After all, a half-back is not allowed to handle the ball unless it has gone out of play, and the goalkeeper is the same as a half-back in this respect. Whether it is wise for a goalkeeper to throw the ball in from touch is another question altogether.

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"I know!" said Snoop.

"Regardless of expense—Smithy all over! The stuff's to be delivered at Redwing's cottage at Hawkscliff. I dare say it's delivered there already. They get off classes, and walk up to Hawkscliff and enjoy themselves! I don't call it fair on the other fellows."

"Hardly!" said Snoop.

"It ought to be an extra half-holiday all round," argued Skinner. "Just rotten rank favouritism, I call it!"

"Nothing else!" agreed Snoop.

"They're keeping it dark. I shouldn't have known anything about it, only I spotted Smithy on the phone, giving the order at Clunkley's stores for the things to be sent up to Hawkscliff. I've a jolly good mind to cut class and get along after them."

"Well, Quelch couldn't come down very heavy, when he's let seven fellows off class!"

"That's what I was thinking."

Skinner and Snoop moved on. A cautious backward glance, a few moments later, revealed to them Billy Bunter standing up, blinking after them through his big spectacles. Evidently Bunter had heard—and heeded!

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Snoop. "Do you think that fat ass swallowed it all?"

"Of course he did!"

"Think he's blithering idiot enough to cut class and go up to Hawkscliff after that feed?" asked Snoop.

"Sure of it!" answered Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner, in great spirits, walked on, looking for fresh victims. He was not finished yet, by any means. He had had great success so far; but like Alexander of old, he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer.

But, as it happened, Skinner's successful career as a leg-puller was just on the point of coming to a sudden end!

Hazel came out of the House, with a white, furious face and burning eyes. Snoop had hinted that the joke on Hazel was rather thick, and there was no doubt that Hazel thought so, now he had discovered the spoof. He stared round for Skinner, and, spotting him, rushed across at him.

He did not speak! He hurled himself at Skinner, hitting out right and left.

Skinner roared.

Crash on crash came Hazel's furious fists, and Skinner went down in the quad, yelling wildly. Snoop jumped away, and Hazel jumped after him, and Sidney James, feebly defending, was knocked over, landing across Skinner with a crash.

"Now get up and have some more!" yelled Hazel.

In Hazel's present infuriated state, neither Skinner nor Snoop was anxious to get up and have some more! They had had enough already—or, rather, too much! They remained where they were, gasping, and Hazel, with a final glare, stamped away and left them.

"Ow!" groaned Skinner, as he dragged himself to his feet. "Wow!"

"Urrrgh!" mumbled Snoop.

"Oh, here you are!" Coker of the Fifth came up, with a grim brow. "Prout wanted me and my atlas, did he? Well, Prout never knew anything about it, and he's jawed me! And now I'll—"

Without explaining what he was going to do, Coker of the Fifth proceeded to do it. He grasped Skinner by the collar with one hand, and Snoop by the collar with the other. Two heads were brought together, with a terrific concussion.

Bang!

"Yaroooooop!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

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Bang!

"Now perhaps you'll pull a Fifth Form man's leg again!" remarked Coker genially, as he strowed Skinner and Snoop in the quad, and walked away.

Skinner and Snoop were not feeling like pulling anybody's legs now! They rubbed their damaged heads, and moaned.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here they are!" roared Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five came up with a rush. Their visit to Quelch's study had not pleased them!

"Ow! Keep off!" howled Skinner. "Can't you take a joke, blow you? First of April, you silly idiots! Ow!"

"Keep off!" moaned Snoop. "That brute Hazel—that ruffian Coker—ow! Look at my nose! Wow!"

The Famous Five looked at them, and grinned. Skinner and Snoop did not seem to have prospered in their career as practical jokers! They did not seem to need any more. Alternately rubbing their heads, and dabbing their noses, Skinner and Snoop trailed away to the House, done with leg-pulling for the present at least.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter, Too!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

After dinner Billy Bunter spotted five fellows going down to the gates. He rolled after them at once.

"Stop!" he hooted.

But Harry Wharton & Co. did not stop. It was exactly one hour before they had to turn up to French with Mossos in Class-room No. 10, French coming first on the list in the afternoon. That hour they were going to enjoy out of gates, in a trot down to the woods and back again. Naturally, they did not want to waste any of it on Billy Bunter.

But Bunter accelerated, and overtook them at the gateway.

The Famous Five that morning had fallen victims to Skinner's April-fool japing, to the extent of being sent on a fool's errand to their Form-master's study. But they were, of course, quite unaware that Bunter's fat leg had been pulled to a much greater extent. They had not the remotest idea that Bunter believed that they were going up to Hawkscliff that afternoon.

Gladly, indeed, they would have gone, had it been practicable. The tiny village of Hawkscliff lay miles along the coast, perched among the chalk cliffs; and it was there that Tom Redwing had his home—the cottage where his father lived, when John Redwing was home from the sea. But it was seldom that Reddy's sailorman father was home. Sometimes on a half-holiday Reddy would go up to the cottage, to let in fresh air and light fires, keeping it aired and clean against his father's coming. But excursions of such extent could only be made on half-holidays—the distance was very considerable.

Every member of the famous Co. would rather have rambled up the cliffs to Hawkscliff than have sat in Class-room No. 10, mugging up French with Monsieur Charpentier. But it was not to be, though Bunter firmly believed that it was to be; and had no doubt that they were even now starting on that expedition.

So Bunter trotted out of gates after the five. In Friardale Lane they trotted, and Bunter trotted, too.

Bob Cherry glanced back at him, in surprise.

It was so unusual for Billy Bunter to

put up exertion of any kind unless driven to it, that Bob could not help being surprised.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed.

"Coming for a run, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, don't go so fast!"

"We haven't come out to crawl!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Put it on a bit, you fat slacker, if you want to come along!"

"Beast!"

"Oh, slow down a bit!" said the good-natured Bob. "If Bunter's taking up exercises, more power to his elbow! It will do him a lot of good."

The chums of the Remove slowed down, to give Bunter a chance. The fat Owl kept pace, puffing and blowing. He was not likely to keep pace for long, however. A little exertion went a long way with Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, you're not walking all the way to Hawkscliff?" he asked breathlessly.

"Eh? No!" answered Harry Wharton, surprised by the question. "We're not bad walkers, old fat bean, but we could hardly do it in the time."

"Taking a taxi?" asked Bunter.

"What?"

"Or is Smithy standing a car?"

"Eh?"

The Famous Five all stared round at Bunter. There seemed to be a misunderstanding somewhere.

"We're not going to Hawkscliff at all, fathead!" said Harry. "How could we go, when it's not a half?"

"You could if you got special leave from Quelch!" grinned Bunter.

"I can see Quelch giving us special leave," said Bob.

"The seefulness is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"We're going as far as the old priory, and we're going to trot," said Johnny Bull. "Put it on, and don't jaw, if you want to come."

"Gammon!"

"What is the fat ass driving at?" asked Frank Nugent in wonder.

"I think it's pretty mean to leave a pal out of a spread," said Billy Bunter warmly. "Rotten, I call it—after the splendid spread I stood you the other day at the bunshop, too! Lot of mean sneaks, if you ask me!"

"You howling ass!" said Bob. "Do you live and move and dream in feeds, and imagine feeds all day long? There isn't any feed!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Have we come out for a trot, or to listen to Bunter's chin-music?" demanded Johnny Bull sarcastically.

The Famous Five accelerated a little. Bunter had to puff and blow to keep pace. Perspiration trickled down his fat face.

That the chums of the Remove wanted a little run before class, and did not want to waste time, Bunter was not likely to believe. His view was that they wanted to shake him off before they headed for Hawkscliff. Only too often had it happened that fellows wanted to shake Bunter off when there was a feed ahead. Bunter was not easy to shake off.

"I say, you fellows," he gasped, "slow down a bit! I say, have Smithy and Redwing started yet?"

"Smithy and Redwing? Are they going anywhere?" asked Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Put it on," said Johnny Bull.

"Beast!" gurgled Bunter. "I'm out of breath! Look here, you fellows, I jolly well know you're having a car; you wouldn't walk all that distance, and Smithy likes swanking about his money—standing cars, and all that!"



"It isn't nonsense, sir!" said Bunter. "The burglar seized me by the throat, drew his knife, and fired——" "F-i-fired?" stuttered Mr. Quelch. "Nunno—I—I didn't mean to say he fired!" gasped the unhappy Owl. "I—I mean, he slashed at me with his revolver—I mean the knife!" Mr. Quelch rose to his feet and picked up his cane.

Look here, tell me where the car's waiting and I'll follow you. I can't keep on racing about like this."

"There isn't any car!" shrieked Wharton.

"What's the good of trying to pull my leg?" hooted Bunter. "Think I don't know you've got leave out this afternoon?"

"Wish we had!" grinned Bob. "I'd like nothing better than a run up to Hawkscliff."

"Rotten favouritism, I call it!" said Bunter. "Still, there it is! And I'm not going into class if you fellows don't. Quelch can't say much when he's given other fellows leave, can he?"

"Wandering in his mind, I suppose," said Nugent.

"If any!" said Bob.

"I say, you fellows, stop!" howled Bunter.

But the Famous Five did not stop. They were out for a run, not to crawl along at a snail's pace, listening to mysterious and cryptic remarks from William George Bunter. They drew ahead, and farther ahead, and Bunter panted and puffed and blew after them in vain.

"Beasts!" gurgled Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. disappeared from view up the winding, leafy lane.

Billy Bunter leaned against a tree and panted for breath.

It was intensely irritating to be shaken off like this when fellows were bound on an excursion with a handsome spread at the end of it. But it had happened to Billy Bunter so often before that he had got rather used to it. He was angry and offended, but not to the extent of chucking the fellows who had chucked him. The fellows themselves did not matter, but the spread mattered a whole lot. Spreads were not to be lightly chucked.

Bunter pondered over it and he panted. He knew from Skinner that the Bounder, whose lavishness in such

matters was well known, had ordered a great supply to be delivered at the Redwing cottage from Chunkley's Stores. That had happened several times before, to Bunter's knowledge, so there was nothing surprising in its happening again. That it had not happened on this special occasion Bunter did not know.

The Bounder was practically certain to order a car for the trip. Bunter had supposed that the party would start from the school as they had leave, but the Famous Five had started on foot. He had seen that with his own eyes and spectacles.

Evidently, to Bunter, the Bounder was going to pick them up in his car. Perhaps, while Bunter was pursuing the elusive five, Smithy had gone to Courtfield for the car. It was very likely.

Fortunately, Bunter knew the destination of the party. All he had to do was to get to Hawkscliff—and then they would jolly well see whether he was going to be left out!

The Owl of the Remove was prepared to risk cutting class. French with Mossos, and maths with Mr. Lascelles, had no attraction for him; a spread had an immense attraction, especially at a time when resources were low. Skinner had said that Quelch couldn't say much about it when he had already given seven fellows leave—and Bunter hoped that Skinner was right.

But a walk to Hawkscliff was worse than French with Mossos—almost worse than mathematics with Lascelles. That walk was a lion in the path!

The Famous Five were out of sight. Whether they were going to walk it, or whether Smithy was picking them up on the road in a car, mattered little—Bunter had lost them. How was he to get to Hawkscliff? Once there, it would be all right; getting back would be up to the other fellows. But how was he to get there?

Walking it being impossible, Bunter

had to consider other means. There was a railway station only two miles from Hawkscliff. A walk of two miles was, no doubt, awful—but a fellow might get a lift. Billy Bunter began to sort through his pockets for cash.

His financial resources were low, but he was not absolutely stony. Certainly he objected to spending his own money, if it could be helped; he would have preferred a seat in the Bounder's car. But it could not be helped now; and the fat Owl made up his mind to the sacrifice.

He had sufficient to pay a single third-class fare to Chalke, the nearest railway point to Hawkscliff. Bunter did not like travelling third-class; he had aristocratic prejudices on the subject. But, again, it was a thing that could not be helped.

Having had a good rest, and having made up his fat mind, the Owl of the Remove rolled on to Friardale to take the train.

Sitting in the train, Bunter grinned. He was booked for Hawkscliff now—and the spread at Redwing's cottage!

Even those beasts were not likely to kick him out when he rolled in—and, short of kicking out, Bunter did not mind what his reception was like. Skinner's attractive list of dainties floated before his fat mind, and he grinned—little dreaming that that list of dainties existed only in Harold Skinner's imagination. Bunter, with so many other things to think of, had forgotten the date.

He certainly would not have grinned had he been aware that while he was sitting in the train the Remove were going into class as usual. Harry Wharton & Co. had got back from their ramble in time for the bell; Vernon-Smith and Redwing had not been out of gates at all. All of them were in with the rest of the Remove; only one member of that Form was missing from

Monsieur Charpentier's French class—and that one was Billy Bunter! Of which circumstance Monsieur Charpentier made a note, for report later to Bunter's Form-master.

Plenty of the fellows wondered what Bunter was up to, cutting class in that reckless way. Skinner and Snoop knew, and they grinned. Evidently Bunter had set out to be the biggest fool on All Fools' Day—which was a consolation to Skinner for a pain in his nose and an ache in his napper.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Terrifying Surprise!

"O O O O O G H!" gasped Billy Bunter breathlessly, as he rolled into the rugged street of Hawkscliff.

The tiny hamlet perched among the chalk cliffs consisted of not more than a dozen cottages and cabins scattered about, most of them out of sight of one another.

John Redwing's cottage lay at some little distance from the rest, back against a high chalk cliff that towered over it. Bunter knew the place well enough; he had been there more than once before, and he headed for the little cottage as soon as he reached the village.

Bunter was tired, and anxious to get in and sit down. He had been rather in luck, for at Chalke a kindly man with a cart had given him a lift most of the way up to Hawkscliff. The fat junior had been left with only a quarter of a mile to walk; but the going was stiff, and a quarter of a mile was quite enough for Bunter.

He puffed and he blew as he came to a halt at last outside the cottage that belonged to John Redwing, and was locked up while the sailorman was away at sea. Nobody was to be seen about, except an ancient mariner in a blue jersey, leaning on a post at a distance, chewing tobacco and meditatively watching the sea; and as Bunter approached the Redwing cottage a jut of the cliff hid even that solitary figure from his sight.

Outside the cottage was a stone seat,

on which Tom Redwing had often sat mending nets in the days before luck came his way and he became a Greyfriars fellow.

Bunter turned the door-handle, and as the door did not open he concluded that the party had not arrived yet. So he plumped down on the stone seat to wait.

His journey had taken up a considerable time but it was not yet tea-time. Bunter, however, was hungry! That was his usual state; and the keen air up at Hawkscliff seemed to give his unearthly appetite a sharper edge. He was glad of a rest; but he watched with impatient eyes and spectacles for a sign of the expected party.

But there was no sign of them.

There was no sign of anybody. The Hawkscliff men were probably out at sea, fishing—he could see brown, patched sails far off on the waters. Two women in shawls passed in sight, without glancing at Bunter.

A quarter of an hour—half an hour—glided past—and still there was no sign of Harry Wharton & Co. Which was really not surprising, as at that identical moment they were leaving Class-room No. 10, after French with Mossoo, to go to their own Form-room for maths with Lascelles!

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter.

In a car they ought to have been ahead of Bunter. No car could get up to Hawkscliff; it would have to be left down below, while the party came up on foot from the lower road. So Bunter had not expected to see the car in the village street. He had quite expected to find the juniors at the cottage—but the place was locked up, silent, deserted! But was it? Bunter, as he sat on the stone seat under the window was suddenly aware of a sound within!

He started and listened.

Someone was moving in Redwing's cottage!

The fat Owl's eyes gleamed with wrath behind his big spectacles. He saw it all—or he fancied that he did!

They had, after all, arrived first! They were there—in the cottage! They were keeping doggo just to pull his leg!

Really, it was rather improbable! But it seemed certain to Bunter! For someone was inside the cottage—and who could it be, if not those beasts? Only Tom Redwing had a right to enter that cottage while his father was away at sea—so evidently Tom and his friends were there! Bunter had no doubt about it—and he rose from the stone seat breathing wrath.

He clutched the door-handle again and turned it. But the door did not open—it was either locked or bolted!

Bunter rattled the door-handle.

"Let me in, you beasts!" he squeaked. "I jolly well know you're there! I say, you fellows, let me in, see?"

There was no answer.

Bunter's eyes glittered through his glasses. There was no knocker on the door, but there were lumps of rock scattered about. He picked up a chunk and heaved it at the door.

Bang!

That bang made the door shiver and shake, and rang through the little cottage. It showed that Bunter was in deadly earnest, and he had no doubt that the fellows within would open the door. If not, he was prepared to bang, and bang again.

The door opened suddenly. Whoever was within the cottage did not want the attention of all Hawkscliff drawn to the spot by another such terrific assault on the door.

Bunter gave a snort.

"I jolly well knew you were here, you beasts! Keeping a fellow waiting half an hour for nothing! Making out you hadn't got here, you beasts! I say, you fellows, where are you?"

The fat Owl rolled in.

Inside, the cottage was rather dim, after the bright sunlight without.

Billy Bunter blinked round him. There was no sign of the Greyfriars fellows he had expected to see! There was no sign of a feed on the table—there was no fire in the grate!

The place seemed utterly lonely and deserted. That it could be deserted, however, was impossible, for some hand had unbolted the door and thrown it open.

Bunter rolled towards the little staircase at the back. He blinked up the dusky stair and yelled:

"I say, you fellows!"

There was no answer.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "I know you're here! Wharton, you beast—Smithy, you rotter—Redwing, you cad—"

Only the echo of his voice answered him. Breathing wrath, the fat Owl started up the staircase. The ancient timbers creaked under his weight.

There was a little landing above. Off it two small rooms opened. Billy Bunter grabbed the nearest door-handle and turned it. He was certain that he heard a sound in the room within.

Evidently—to Bunter's fat mind—the beasts had retreated to that room, still for the purpose of pulling his fat leg—no doubt they were all there, grinning among themselves!

The door did not open. It was not locked; a slight yielding as he pushed told that a foot was pressed against it within.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "Gerr-away!"

He threw his weight on the door.

At the same moment it was released within and flew open. With a gasp, the fat Owl of the Remove flew in headlong. He gave a howl as he landed on his podgy hands and knees.

"Ow! Beasts! I say—"

Bunter's howl broke off in a gurgle of sheer terror as he was grasped.

He did not even see who was in the

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THE
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room, but he was aware that the Greyfriars fellows were not there.

Only one person was in the room—and it was not a boy at all; it was a man, as he knew only too well by that fierce and determined grasp that fastened on him from behind.

"Urrrgh!" gurgled the terrified Owl.

He was jammed down, face downward, on the floor. A knee was planted in the small of his back, pinning him there.

He wriggled with terror.

Into whose hands had he fallen? He could not begin to guess, unless it was that some wandering tramp had lodged in the cottage, or broken in to steal. Anyhow, he knew now that the Greyfriars fellows were not there—it was not the juniors he had heard—it was this man—this awful unseen enemy, who was gripping him and cramming his fat features into the hard planks of the floor! The hapless fat junior squealed like a frightened rabbit.

As he squealed something was drawn over his head and tied. Then the grinding knee was removed from his podgy back. Bunter, blindfolded, lay gurgling on the floor, almost fainting with terror—unconscious of the rapid retreating footsteps that died away into silence!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"MARJORIE!" said Clara Trevlyn.

"Yes," said Marjorie Hazeldene.

"Ever heard of Bunter Court?"

Marjorie smiled.

"Yes; lots of times."

"Ever heard of the magnificent Rolls-Royce car at Bunter Court?"

"Lots of times!" answered Marjorie again.

"Well," said Clara, lifting one hand from her handlebars and pointing, "there it is!"

Marjorie looked.

The two girls had gone out on their bicycles after class at Cliff House. They had ridden some miles, on the road towards Hawkscliff, when Miss Clara pointed out the vehicle which she described as the magnificent Rolls-Royce belonging to Bunter Court.

Of that palatial abode, and that superb car, they heard as much in the Fourth Form at Cliff House, from Bessie Bunter, as the Remove fellows at Greyfriars heard from brother Billy. So when Miss Clara spotted Billy Bunter's fat face in a vehicle on the hilly road she playfully assumed that that vehicle was the Bunter Rolls!

Marjorie laughed.

The vehicle that came jogging down the road was a pedlar's little cart.

The pedlar drove a bony horse. With the pedlar and his goods in the little cart, there was not much room for a passenger—especially such an extensive passenger as Billy Bunter! But the fat face and the big spectacles of William George Bunter could be seen, over the side of the cart, as he sat wedged among tin cans and pails and bundles of firewood and whatnot.

It was certainly not the conveyance that Bunter would have chosen. But it was a case of any port in a storm! Lifts on the lonely Hawkscliff road were few and far between, and the Owl of the Remove was glad of what he could get.

"We'll tell Bessie we've seen the family car when we get back, what?" said Miss Clara. "What do you think of the Bunter chauffeur, Marjorie?"

Clink, clink! Clank! Clang! came

from the pedlar's cart as it jogged down the road.

Billy Bunter blinked through his big spectacles at the two graceful figures on the bicycles approaching him, and his fat face crimsoned. Bunter preferred to look posh, his very poshest, when he met the bright eyes of the Cliff House girls! He could not fancy that even he, handsome and distinguished as he undoubtedly was, looked posh in his present painful circumstances!

Bunter's first thought, as he saw Marjorie and Clara, was to duck down out of sight. But there was no room for ducking, as he sat wedged among the pedlar's assorted goods. Moreover, he saw that they had already spotted him.

On second thoughts—proverbially the best—he waved a fat hand to the Cliff House girls, and called to the pedlar to stop. He had promised the pedlar half-a-crown for a lift as far as Friar-dale Lane. As his cash at the present moment was limited to three-halfpence, there was a possibility of a disagreeable argument when he reached that lane. Bunter, of course, was not to blame—he never was to blame. He had to have a lift! Still, it seemed quite likely that the pedlar might cut up rusty when he found that there was no half-crown forthcoming.

"I say, hold on!" squeaked Bunter, and the two girls dismounted from their machines beside the cart as it halted. "I say—"

"Lucky man!" said Miss Clara.

"Eh?" ejaculated Bunter. He was not feeling very lucky at the moment.

"Did you phone to Bunter Court for it?" asked Clara.

"Eh? For what?" asked the puzzled Owl.

"Your car!"

"What car?"

"Isn't that your Rolls?" asked Clara. Bunter blinked at her.

"Oh, really, Clara! I say, I've had a beastly time!" said Bunter pathetically. "I say, a beast took me in, and I went up to Hawkscliff, thinking there was a picnic at Redwing's cottage there, you know, and there wasn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" trilled Miss Clara.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter. "I say, I left most of my money in the study at Greyfriars, and had only just my railway fare. I say, I had to walk back, and got this chap to give me a lift. Of course, I thought I should be coming back in Smithy's car, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cackling!" said Bunter crossly. "I don't see anything funny in it! I say, I had a fearful time. I got to Redwing's cottage, thinking that the fellows were there, you know, and I was attacked by a fearful tramp—"

"A tramp, in Redwing's cottage?" exclaimed Marjorie.

"Yes, some awful rotter, you know, who must have got in, finding it empty," said Bunter. "He sprang at me like a tiger! I fought like anything—I'm a pretty good fighting man, you know—I wish you wouldn't keep on giggling, Clara Trevlyn—but he was six foot at least—a fearful, enormous ruffian—and he got me down on the floor, and blindfolded me with a sheet he pulled off the bed, and then—"

"Then you woke up?" asked Miss Clara.

"I'm telling you exactly what happened!" roared

Bunter. "He left me with my head tied up in the sheet, and I never saw him, you know, as he jumped on me from behind—"

"You noticed that he was enormous, six feet high, without seeing him?" asked Clara gravely. "Aren't they clever in the Greyfriars Remove, Marjorie? Silly girls like us could never see how tall a man was without seeing him at all, could we?"

But Marjorie did not laugh. A strange, startled look had come over her face.

She caught her breath. The news that some unknown man had been lurking in an unoccupied cottage, in a lonely place like Hawkscliff, brought startling thoughts into the mind of the niece of John James Hazeldene.

"Then he ran!" said Bunter. "I didn't know he was gone for some time—"

"Too scared to move?" asked Miss Clara sympathetically.

"No!" roared Bunter. "The fact is, I mean to say I jumped up at once, and got the sheet off my head, but he was gone! Bolted, you know! He knew what to expect if I'd got at him!"

"You did not see him?" asked Marjorie, in so low and shaken a tone that Clara looked at her curiously.

"How could I see him, with my face jammed in the floor, and then a sheet tied over my head?" demanded Bunter. "But he was a gigantic ruffian—simply enormous—"

"How do you know?" Marjorie would have been glad to be sure of that, for her uncle, John James, was anything but gigantic.

"Because he was able to handle me," explained Bunter. "I'm a pretty good athlete, you know—no ordinary man would find it easy to handle me."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Miss Clara.

"And he couldn't have, only he took me by surprise!" continued Bunter. "He was jolly glad to get away, I can tell you! One of those ruffianly tramps, you know. They ought to be run in! I say, I've promised this chap half-a-crown to take me down to Friar-dale Lane, and I've just remembered that I left all my money in my study at Greyfriars—"

"Time we moved on, Marjorie!" remarked Miss Clara, putting a foot on a pedal.

"I say, Marjorie, you might lend me half-a-crown, and ask Bessie for it—Bessie will settle like—like a shot!"

"I don't think!" chuckled Miss Clara. Miss Bunter was not greatly given to settling her own debts, and Clara could not quite see her settling brother Billy's.

But Marjorie sorted out half-a-crown, and passed it into the cart to Billy Bunter, and turned to her bike. The pedlar's cart rolled on with the hapless Owl of the Remove. Marjorie remounted her machine, and rode on in the direction of Hawkscliff—silent, troubled. Clara glanced at her several times, and finally remarked:

"A penny for them, old thing!"

Marjorie started, and coloured a little. She was thinking of her uncle,

(Continued on next page.)

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John James Hazeldene—wondering whether, since he had disappeared from the cottage in Lantham Wood, he had found a new place of concealment in the lonely and almost inaccessible hamlet of Hawkscliff. Bunter evidently had no idea what the man was like who had seized him in the Redwing cottage—and Marjorie knew that John James clung to the hope of getting a passage across the Channel, and escaping into France—for that reason he was likely to linger on the coast, if he could.

"Shall we ride on as far as Hawkscliff, Clara?" asked Marjorie.

Clara stared.

"Miles out of bounds," she answered. "You're dreaming, Marjorie! We should get into a fearful row—we couldn't be back in time for roll!"

"But—"

"Bosh!" Clara looked at her wrist-watch. "Look here! We'd better turn back now, or we shall be late! The Bull's taking the roll, and we don't want to make her roar."

Marjorie was silent; but she nodded, and the two schoolgirls turned back. Marjorie hardly spoke a word during the ride back to Cliff House. Was it, or was it not, the fugitive John James who had been lurking in the Redwing cottage up at Hawkscliff? She had to know—she had to discover—but for the present, at least, she had to remain in ignorance.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Trying It On!

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

"Here he is!"

"Jolly old Bunter!"

"Turned up like a bad penny!"

Billy Bunter trailed in wearily at the gates of Greyfriars. He was only just in time. It was close on lock-up. The pedlar had landed him within half-a-mile of Greyfriars, and—thanks to Marjorie's half-crown—there had been no unpleasant argument. Billy Bunter was tired, hungry, and peeved! He was anticipating a painful interview with Mr. Quelch.

It had dawned on the fat junior's brain by that time that Skinner must have been pulling his leg. No Greyfriars fellow but himself had been up to Hawkscliff that day—there had been no picnic party at Redwing's cottage—the whole thing had been spoof. Evidently that frightful beast, Skinner, had deliberately talked in his hearing to make a fool of him. Too late, Bunter remembered that the date was the First of April!

Nobody had had leave for that afternoon! Bunter had taken French leave! He could not plead that he had gone because the other fellows had gone!

He had taken the hopeful view that Quelch couldn't say much, having given seven fellows leave, if another fellow took leave also. But Quelch hadn't given anybody leave! That was clear now! Bunter had absolutely no excuse to plead, except that he had been fooled on the First of April. Which was not of much use.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped, as the Famous Five met him in the quad. "I say, you never went up to Hawkscliff, after all?"

"How could we, fathead, when we had to go into class?" asked Wharton.

"That beast Skinner said you had leave!" groaned Bunter. "I heard him say so to Snoop! Of course, I can see now that he knew I heard him—"

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"Oh, my hat! You've been to Hawkscliff?" roared Bob.

"Yes!" groaned Bunter. "Oh dear!"

"But what the thump did you go for?" asked Harry. "Even if we'd gone, there was nothing up at Hawkscliff to make you go there!"

"That beast Skinner said it was a feed—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, is Quelch ratty?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Well, he doesn't seem pleased!" said Bob, with a grin. "Mossoo reported you absent from French, and Larry reported you absent from maths. I believe Quelch is rather anxious to see you!"

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

"Skinner seems to have done a lot of leg-pulling to-day," remarked Nugent. "But you must be a howling ass, Bunter, to be taken in like that."

"Beast! I'll jolly well punch his head!" groaned Bunter.

"He's had a few punches already!" said Harry, laughing. "You'd better cut in and see Quelch, old fat man. The longer he waits the more ferocious he will be."

"I—I say, you fellows! D-d-do you think Quelch will go easy if I tell him that I've had a narrow escape of being murdered?" asked Bunter anxiously.

The Famous Five jumped.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob. "I'd stop short of that, old fat man! If you feel bound to tell whoppers, make 'em a bit more probable."

"But it's true—"

"Better not tell Quelch!" grinned Johnny Bull. "He won't believe that kind of truth. That's the sort of truth that's stranger than fiction."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But it's really true, you fellows!" urged Bunter. "There was a man in Redwing's cottage when I got there, and he seized me and—and hurled me to the floor, and—and—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Reddy!" roared Bob Cherry, and Tom Redwing, who was in the quad with the Bounder, came up. "Hear this! What do you mean by keeping tame murderers in your pater's place up at Hawkscliff?"

"What?" gasped Tom.

"Bunter's been nearly, or quite, murdered!" explained Bob. "Did you say nearly or quite, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"It doesn't matter which you say—we shall believe one as much as the other!" said Bob. "But you'd better settle which it was before you tell Quelch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has the fat Owl been up to Hawkscliff?" asked Smithy, staring at Bunter. "Is that why he cut classes?"

"I tell you there was a man—a fearful ruffian—in Redwing's cottage!" howled Bunter. "He rushed on me with a revolver—"

"And shot you dead?" asked Smithy.

"No, you silly ass! How could I have come back if I was shot dead?" booted Bunter. "The—the bullet missed—and—and before he could—could fire again, I—I knocked him down—"

"You're not going to tell Quelch that?" shrieked Bob.

"Why not, when it's true?" demanded Bunter. "I think he might go easy with a chap when he's had a narrow escape like that."

"He won't go easy with a chap who spins a yarn like that!" grinned the Bounder. "Hardly!"

"Cut out the revolver, at least!" suggested Nugent.

"Well, perhaps it was a knife!" said

Bunter, realising that the revolver might, perhaps, be a little too lurid.

"A tramp might have a knife!"

"And the bullet from the knife missed you?" asked Smithy.

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

"Better cut out the bullet, too!" said Redwing, laughing. "In fact, I'd advise you to cut out the whole story, Bunter."

"But it's true!" wailed Bunter. "There was a man—a gigantic ruffian—in your cottage at Hawkscliff, Redwing, and—"

"Don't be an ass, old chap! The cottage is kept locked up, and nobody can have been in it," said Tom. "You'd better stick to the truth with Quelch—he's ratty enough already."

"Bunter!" Mr. Quelch put his head from his study window. "So you have returned. Bunter! Come to my study at once!"

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

He rolled into the House, leaving the juniors laughing.

Not one of them had the faintest idea of believing that the fat Owl had encountered a tramp or anybody else in Redwing's cottage at Hawkscliff. They did not believe that he had been in the cottage at all.

Had Bunter told a plain, unvarnished tale, no doubt he would have been believed. But plain, unvarnished tales were not in Bunter's line.

The revolver and the knife were rather too much for the credulity of the Removites. And knowing that that part of the story could not be true, they put the rest down as equally fanciful. It was Bunter's way to invent improbable yarns, and they only supposed that in his anxiety to pull through with Quelch, he had invented a more improbable one than usual. For the fat Owl's own sake they hoped that he would not spring such a yarn on a wary bird like Henry-Samuel Quelch.

Bunter rolled dismally into his Form-master's room. The cane lying ready on the table did not comfort him.

Mr. Quelch fixed a grim, gimlet eye on his fat, dismayed face.

"You have been absent from classes this afternoon, Bunter!" he said. "Tell me at once where you have been."

"I—I—I've been to Hawkscliff, sir!" mumbled Bunter. "I—I—I've been murdered, sir—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, nearly murdered!" gasped Bunter.

"Are you in your right senses, Bunter?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Then what do you mean by talking such nonsense?" thundered Mr. Quelch. Bunter quaked.

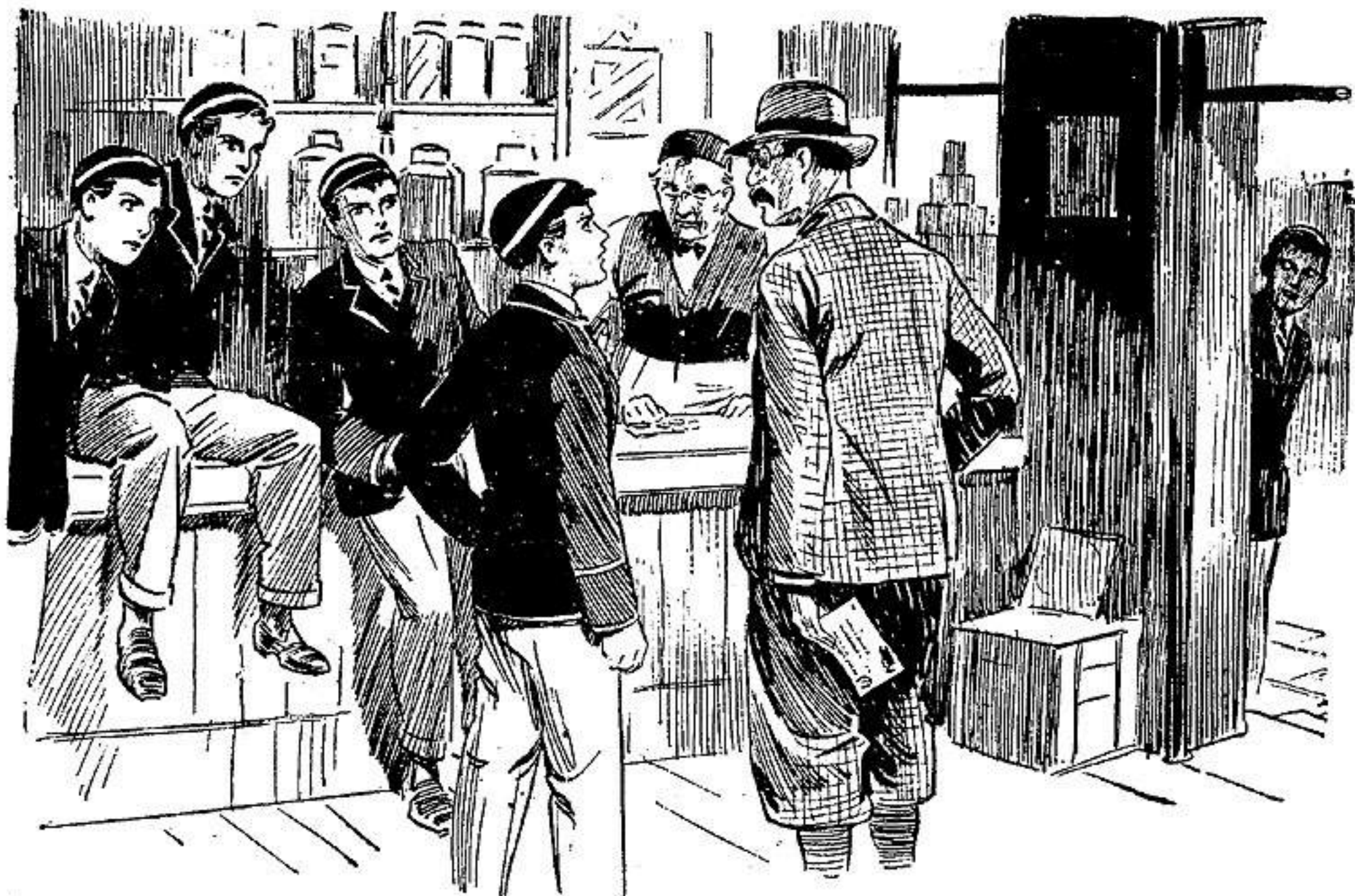
But he stuck to his guns! He had no excuse to offer for cutting class—his only chance was to touch Quelch's heart, with the story of his awful peril.

He realised that that peril had to be improved a little, as it were—the actual facts were not sufficient to touch a stony heart like Quelch's. He did not realise that the more he improved on the story the less probable it sounded.

Quelch might have believed that some tramp had been in the Redwing cottage and had knocked Bunter over while he made his escape. But revolvers and knives smacked rather too richly of the films!

Bunter, however, feeling that this was his only chance, went ahead.

"It—it isn't nonsense, sir! It—it's true! I—I heard somebody moving in Redwing's cottage, sir, and—and went in to—to investigate. I thought it might be a burglar, and—and I wasn't



"Will you let me see the number of that note, sir?" asked Wharton quietly. "Certainly not, you impertinent young jackanapes!" snapped the man in plus fours. "What business is it of yours?" "This much!" said Wharton steadily. "I believe you to be the same man who passed a stolen note on us, and if you refuse to show that banknote, I shall be certain of it!"

going to let him get away with old Rodwing's things, sir—"

Bunter paused. Mr. Quelch's look was discouraging. The Remove master knew his Bunter! He was well aware that if the fat Owl had supposed that a burglar was in any place, his footsteps would have led him, at the greatest possible rate of speed, directly away from that place!

"And—and I—I went in, sir, and—and he sprang at me like a tiger—"

faltered Bunter.

"Who did?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"The burglar, sir, and seized me by the throat and bore me to the earth!" gasped Bunter. "I—I fought him, sir, but—"

"Upon my word!"

"But—but he drew his knife—"

Hastily Bunter decided to leave the revolver out as Frank Nugent had advised. Unfortunately he had no better luck with his knife!

"His—his—his knife!" gurgled Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir, and fired—"

"Fired!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Nunno! I—I didn't mean to say he fired!" gasped the unhappy Owl. "I—I mean, he slashed at me with the revolver—I mean, the knife—"

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet and picked up his cane.

"Bunter! You have been absent from class without leave, and for that I should cane you. I shall cane you still more severely for having told me this string of absurd and palpable falsehoods. Bend over that chair!"

"But—but—but, sir, there really was a man—"

"Bend over that chair!" Mr. Quelch swished the cane.

"N-n-now I think of it, sir, he hadn't a knife—"

"Bend over!" said Mr. Quelch, in a voice compared with which the voice of

the Great Hugo Bear was a cooing whisper.

Billy Bunter bent over. It was clear that he was not going to touch Quelch's heart with his tale of deadly peril!

The cane rose and fell! Mr. Quelch had intended to give Bunter "six." He gave him six—but with much more vim than he had intended. Every one of them was a terrific whop. Every one drew a fearful howl from the hapless Owl of the Remove. By the time Quelch had finished, Billy Bunter looked as if he was trying to tie himself up into a sailor's knot.

Mr. Quelch pointed to the door with his cane.

"You may go!" he hooted.

Bunter rolled away. He wriggled as he rolled. He was still wriggling at calling-over; he was wriggling at prep; and when he turned in that night in the Remove dormitory, he was yet wriggling. The First of April was not Bunter's lucky day!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. The Man Who was Wanted!

"WHO says ginger-pop?"

Bob Cherry asked that question.

Four voices answered.

"Ginger-pop!"

The April day was warm. Harry Wharton & Co. had walked down to the village of Friardale after class on the day following Billy Bunter's wild adventures at Hawkscliff. And as they sauntered past Uncle Clegg's little shop the happy thought occurred to Bob that ginger-pop would be grateful and comforting.

So the Famous Five turned into the little doorway and down the step, into the ancient village tuckshop.

Often a customer at that establishment had to rap and stamp for several minutes before old Mr. Clegg emerged from dark regions at the back. But on this occasion Uncle Clegg was in the shop, being engaged in serving another customer.

A man in plus fours, with a thick, dark moustache, wearing smoked glasses, was standing at the counter, with a five-pound note in his fingers, while old Mr. Clegg slowly and painfully totted up an account, with a stamp of pencil, on a fragment of wrapping-paper. Arithmetic was a slow and laborious business to Mr. Clegg. A little pile of goods on the counter showed that the man in the smoked glasses had made rather extensive purchases.

"I make it seventeen-and-six, sir," said old Mr. Clegg, as the Greyfriars fellows came in.

"Very well. Change this for me, please," said the man in plus fours; and at the sound of his voice Harry Wharton gave a start.

It was a young man's voice, brisk and clear. But there was a strong resemblance in its tones to a voice he remembered—the high-pitched voice of a venerable gentleman in white whiskers and a top-hat, on the bank of the Sark, a few days ago.

The man at the counter glanced over his shoulder in a rather sidelong way at the sound of other customers coming in. And he, too, gave a little start, as if he recognised the newcomers. Harry Wharton noted that.

Immediately, however, the man in plus fours moved, so that his back was to the juniors.

"I have a train to catch," he said. "Please give me my change."

"I'm a-counting of it out, sir!" said Mr. Clegg, groping in his old till. "I

don't often have to change a five-pound note, sir."

Harry Wharton felt his heart beat.

Some man, it was known, was in the neighbourhood, getting rid of the five-pound notes stolen at Brighton some weeks ago. That man was more than suspected to be John James Hazeldene.

Whoever he was, there was little doubt that he worked in disguise. Was this the man?

Wharton glanced at his companions.

He caught a startled look on Hurree Singh's dusky face, and he knew that the nabob also had caught that familiar tone in the stranger's voice. The other fellows had noticed nothing.

The man at the counter was evidently in a hurry for his change. But Mr. Clegg was slow—very slow. He counted out grubby ten-shilling notes, and half-crowns, and shillings, making a little pile on his own side of the counter. The captain of the Greysfriars Remove watched the man in plus fours keenly.

He looked nothing at all like that venerable old gentleman on the river bank. But if that venerable aspect had been a disguise, that, of course, was to be expected. Was his present get-up another disguise? A thick moustache and smoked glasses, under a shady Homburg hat, might have hidden any man's identity, if assumed for that purpose.

Was it the man? He was changing a five-pound note! The bundle of notes stolen at Brighton were all fivers. Since the affair of the bunshop several more had turned up, in various shops. Was this the man? And if it was the man was he Marjorie's uncle?

He did not look like Marjorie's uncle, John James, except that he was about the same height. But neither did he look like the venerable stranger! If he was one, he might well be the other!

Bob Cherry sat on the counter, waiting for his turn to be served. Nugent and Johnny Bull leaned near him. They were taking no interest in the man in smoked glasses.

Wharton made a sign to Hurree Singh and stepped out of the shop. The nabob followed him.

"You noticed?" breathed Wharton.

Hurree Singh nodded.

"The notice was terrific!" he murmured. "I should like preposterously to see the number of that esteemed banknote."

The juniors had learned, in their interview with Inspector Grimes, that the numbers of the stolen notes ran in a regular series, from 00002220 onwards. Any number between 00002220 and 00003219 was, therefore, one of the missing Brighton notes. A glimpse at the note would have been enough.

"You think—" muttered Wharton.

"I have a terrific strong suspicion."

"If it's the man, we can't let him get away—and swindle poor old Uncle Clegg, too!" whispered Harry.

The Nabob of Bhanipur shook his head.

But both the juniors hesitated. If the man was Marjorie Hazeldene's uncle—Marjorie believed that John James was innocent, in which case the catching of the man who was passing the notes would clear him. But if she was mistaken, was it for her friends to overwhelm her with disgrace by proving her relative's guilt?

It was a bitter thought to Harry Wharton. But his hesitation was brief. For nobody's sake could a thief be permitted to escape with his plunder. For nobody's sake could old Uncle Clegg be put to such a loss—a heavy loss to a

small village tradesman. If their suspicion was well founded the schoolboys had their duty to do.

Wharton stepped back into the shop. Hurree Singh remained in the doorway, his manner casual, but his dusky eyes alert. He was there to stop a sudden rush to escape, if it came.

They had been less than a minute outside. Old Mr. Clegg had now finished counting the change, and was pushing it across the counter to his customer.

He had not yet wrapped up the man's purchases, but if the juniors were right in their suspicion the man in plus fours was not likely to bother about those. If the banknote was a stolen one the purchases had evidently been made only as a pretext for changing it.

Harry Wharton stepped to the counter. He was feeling a good deal of suppressed excitement, but his manner was cool.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, very civilly, and, to Uncle Clegg's astonishment, he pushed back the heap of change. "Will you kindly allow me to see the number of that note?"

A pair of sharp, angry eyes gleamed at him through the smoked glasses.

"What? What do you mean?" barked the man in plus fours. "Mind your own business, boy!"

"Sorry to barge in, sir," said Wharton politely, "but there have been a lot of bad notes passed in this district lately, and that may be one of them."

"Nonsense!"

Uncle Clegg blinked. At the mere mention of the bad note his horny hand closed over the heap of change and jerked it back, clattering to his till.

Bob Cherry and Nugent and Johnny Bull all jumped at once, staring at Wharton.

"Harry!" exclaimed Nugent, in amazement. It was so unlike Wharton to butt into what did not concern him, that his friends were utterly amazed.

Wharton's eyes were fixed on the man's face now. It seemed to him that he could trace in the features a resemblance to the venerable old gent of the Sark, though none to John James Hazeldene. There was no mistaking the fierce anger and alarm in the man's face. That leaped to the eye. Quickly the man in plus fours thrust the five-pound note back into his pocket.

"Will you let me see the number, sir?" asked Harry quietly.

"Certainly not! How dare you meddle, you impertinent young jackanapes!" snapped the man in plus fours. "What business is it of yours?"

"This much," said Harry Wharton steadily. "I believe you to be the same man who passed a stolen note on us one day last week, and if you refuse to show that banknote I shall be certain of it."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Wharton, old man—"

"And you will not be allowed to leave this shop without showing that banknote," went on the captain of the Remove steadily. "Stand ready to collar him, you men, if he tries to bolt!"

"Great pip!" said Johnny Bull.

"But, Harry," stammered Nugent, "he isn't anything like the man!"

"I'm pretty certain of what I say, and Inky thinks the same," answered the captain of the Remove quietly. "Let him hand the note to Mr. Clegg, and Mr. Clegg can tell me the number. Will you do that, sir?"

"My eye!" said Uncle Clegg blankly.

"Certainly not!" snapped the man in plus fours.

"Then you'll stay in this shop while one of us fetches the village constable!" said Wharton determinedly.

The man in plus fours made a movement. Five fellows stood ready to seize him if he bolted. For if he bolted there could be no further possible doubt. He stopped and burst into a laugh, which, to the ears of all the juniors, rang false.

"You are an impudent young rascal, whoever you are!" he said. "I have never seen you before. But if, as you say, there are bad notes in circulation about here, certainly I will allow the shopkeeper to examine my banknote. Here, take it, and tell these officious young fools what the number is!"

His hand came out of his pocket, and he threw the five-pound note across the counter to Uncle Clegg.

Mr. Clegg picked it up, adjusted his glasses, and blinked at it, peering at the number.

Harry Wharton & Co. waited breathlessly. If the number was that of one on the Brighton list, the matter was settled.

But while their attention was for the moment fixed on Uncle Clegg, and while the old man was still peering at the banknote, the man in plus fours made a sudden movement.

He leaped at Wharton, and with a violent shove sent him staggering across the shop. A backward swing of his arms knocked Nugent over. Barely eluding the clutch of Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, he bounded to the door.

Too late it was clear that he had only handed over the note to distract attention for a moment, and gain a chance of escape. His fierce leap carried him into the doorway, and but for Hurree Singh his way would have been clear.

But the nabob tackled him in the doorway, grasping him and clinging to him like a cat.

The man struggled out to the pavement, with the nabob hanging on to him like a hound on a stag, yelling to his comrades. The four juniors in the shop rushed out after them in a bunch.

But the man in plus fours, with a desperate wrench, broke loose from the Nabob of Bhanipur before they could reach him. He bounded away, with the Famous Five tearing after him.

"Stop thief!" roared Bob Cherry.

The man leaped at a bicycle that was standing against the old shady oak outside the shop. He ran it on and leaped on it as he ran.

Even so, he barely escaped the grasping hands behind him. Harry Wharton's outstretched fingers glided over the rear mudguard as the machine shot away, and he tumbled forward on his knees.

Like an arrow from a bow the bike shot up the village street. There were shouts and running footsteps on all sides.

"Stop him!"

"Stop thief!"

But the bicycle went almost like lightning. In a flash, as it seemed, the desperate rider was out of the village, and had vanished into the open lanes. The juniors ran on, joined by a dozen excited villagers; but they stopped at last. It was useless; the rider was out of sight.

Breathlessly they walked back to Uncle Clegg's shop. The man in plus fours was gone, but the banknote remained.

Uncle Clegg handed it over for Wharton to see. He read the number. It was 00002226—one of the missing series!

"My hat!" breathed Bob Cherry. "It was the man right enough! The bank robber from Brighton. But—but was it—was it—" He broke off. He was thinking of John James Hazeldene.

Wharton shook his head.

"I'm almost certain not," he

(Continued on page 28.)



THE SEA SPIDER

By GEORGE E. ROCHESTER

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Ulverst, the greatest U-boat commander Germany ever had, accompanied by a competent crew, sets out aboard the Sea Spider to wage war against the world. The first vessel to fall a prey to this deadly underwater craft is the bullion carrier Minneapolis, from which is transferred bullion to the value of £200,000. Driving on through the surging seas in mid-Atlantic, the Sea Spider eventually reaches the lost city of Atlantis. Here Ulverst discovers treasure worth more than £1,000,000. Content with the ill-gotten gains, some of the crew demand that the loot be shared and the base at Ice Rock abandoned, but the mutineers are silenced once and for all by Ulverst. Following this, Ulverst boards a plane and sets out for the mainland with a view to making arrangements for the disposal of the treasure. He is forced down in the Arctic Ocean, whence he is picked up by Serge Tarka, owner of a Russian whaler, and taken to Paxa, on the White Sea. Learning of a deadly feud between Tarkas and Rakovs (White Russians) on the one side and Vikroffs and Vinas (Red Russians) on the other, Ulverst offers to assist the former, and suggests a scheme whereby they might defeat their enemies.

(Now read on.)

A Crushing Defeat!

A LONG the narrow strip of hedgeless coast road, through the inky blackness of the moonless night, marched the rabble army of the Vikroffs and the Vinas.

At their head strode old Petroff Vina, tall, thin, bearded and wolfish, his deep-set eyes smouldering with hate. It was his son who had died by Rakov steel, and terrible indeed was to be the reckoning.

He was glad that his demand to have the killer handed over to Vikroff and Vina justice had been refused, for it gave him ample excuse—if excuse was needed—for bringing death and destruction to Tarkas and the Rakovs.

Behind Petroff Vina marched grim-faced, bearded men, their guns on their shoulders, their knives slung in their belts. For when the fighting came to close quarters a foot of slashing, stabbing steel was better by far than any clubbed rifle.

They knew all about the use of the knife did the Vikroffs and the Vinas, and there was a vast and full enjoyment to be found in the slitting of Tarka and Rakov throats.

There were women with the rabble, dirty-faced, foul-mouthed vicious slatterns, some of whom carried rifles, and others knives. The same were to be found in the revolutionary rabble of France when the guillotine was slicing off aristocratic heads, and the same will always be found where hate and spite ride on a tide of blood.

A mile from the village Petroff Vina commanded silence, and as every voice was stilled, the quick, determined march slowed down to a wary and cautious approach.

Guns were unslung from shoulders, and held at the ready; knives were loosened in belts so as to be near at hand, and stealthily through the darkness the Vikroffs and the Vinas approached the village of Paxa.

In a few of the cottage windows feeble

lights glimmered yellow through the night, but apart from that there were no signs of life at all.

Suddenly, however, Petroff Vina halted, standing with head thrust forward, and eyes peering into the darkness.

"They've got a barricade erected at the entrance to the street," he said. "We will keep together and rush it. Forward!"

The advance was resumed, every eye straining towards the barricade which none but the hawk-eyed Petroff Vina could discern through the inky darkness.

They were within fifty yards of it, forty yards, twenty-five yards, then, without warning, a revolver shot crashed through the night.

Instantly, as though that shot had been a signal, the darkness behind the rabble, and on each side of the road, was split by jagged sheets of livid flame, to which echoed and re-echoed the crash of guns.

From the barricade also came a withering fire, and hemmed in by blazing guns the bullets from which tore awful, devastating way through their disordered ranks, the Vikroffs and the Vinas were thrown into terror-stricken panic and confusion.

Men screamed in agony as they went down before the hail of bullets from the ambushade, and above the roar of the guns sounded the shrieks of the female warriors, who had marched with their men on Paxa.

If there had been someone to rally them, perhaps they could have rushed the barricade, and won through to the vantage of the narrow street. But Petroff Vina was down with a bullet between the eyes, and with such amazing swiftness and deadly precision had come the fire of the ambushers that as far as the raiders went it was now a case of every man for himself.

Never for one moment had they dreamt of anything like this. Never for one moment had they given the stolid and slow-thinking Tarkas and

Rakovs credit of planning such a trap as this.

And they, fools that they were, had walked right into it. As they marched along the road, every man intent on the village ahead, the villagers themselves had been lying flat on their stomachs in the darkness on each side of the road. And as the rear of the raiders had passed, those on the flanks of the ambushade had quietly risen and closed in behind them.

As a trap it was perfect, and yelling, screaming, shouting, the Vikroffs and the Vinas turned and fled desperately back the way they had come.

The rear of the ambushade dropped a score of them with volley after volley, and, hemmed in by that blazing cordon of ragged flame and singing lead, the raiders flung away their own guns which were useless to them in the screaming, jostling mob they had become, and whipped out their knives in a desperate endeavour to fight their way out at close quarters.

Strangely enough they met with little opposition. Strange, that is, to them, but not to the Tarkas and the Rakovs, who saw little point in risking serious hurt for the sake of killing a few more of the desperate and defeated raiders.

Those who had survived the withering fire of that dreadful ambushade were permitted to depart, and they fled down the road, leaving their dead and dying to lie where they had fallen.

The Lie!

BURNING with rage at their crushing defeat the survivors of the ambush determined to enlist the aid of the Government in punishing those whom they themselves had set out to kill.

Reaching their village of Lydok, they dispatched one of their number on a horse to report the affair to the local Commissar of Police at Novaia.

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The individual selected was Ivan Vikroff, and he flogged his mount mercilessly on through the night, and made such good time along the rough, uneven roads that he reached Novaia by one o'clock in the morning. Clattering along the deserted main street, he pulled up in front of the police barracks.

Dismounting, he reeled rather than walked into the dimly illuminated and sparsely furnished office where an unshaven guard in a nondescript and unbuttoned uniform was sprawled asleep in a chair by a glowing stove.

"Here, you, wake up!" snarled Ivan Vikroff, shaking the fellow roughly by the shoulder.

Starting into alarmed wakefulness, the guard blinked up at Ivan, then scrambled to his feet.

"What do you want here?" he demanded roughly. "Who are you? And who gave you the right to walk in here?"

"Be silent!" cut in Ivan. "I must see the Commissar, and at once! Go and awake him if he is abed!"

"Oh, yes; very likely; and get cells for my pains!" retorted the guard. "Who are you, I want to know? Why, there's blood on your blouse!"

"Yes, there's blood on my blouse," replied Ivan grimly. "But there's more on the Paxa coast road. Over thirty Vikroffs and Vinas have been massacred to-night by those dogs of Tarkas and Rakovs. Go rouse your Commissar!"

The guard stared at him wide-eyed. "Over thirty slain, do you say?" he gasped.

"Yes, and we want justice!" replied Ivan harshly. "We want the murderers arrested. Will you rouse the commissar, or am I to do it myself?"

"No, no; wait here!" replied the guard, and, thrusting forward the chair for Ivan to seat himself, he went hastily off and ascended the rickety staircase which led to the rooms above.

He was absent some few minutes, and when he returned, he beckoned to the pallid-faced and weary Ivan.

"Come, you are to follow me," he said. "The commissar will see you at once!"

The guard led the way up the rickety staircase and into a bed-room furnished with a table, a chest of drawers, a cupboard, and a big, old-fashioned bed, on which the commissar was sitting, pulling on his socks.

Roused from slumber, the commissar was not an attractive sight, his little red-rimmed eyes still blinking, his thin, sandy hair ruffled and tousled, and his sharply featured face unshaven.

"What's this?" he demanded of Ivan, when the latter had been ushered into his presence. "What has happened? That fool of a guard tells me there has been a massacre—"

"Yes, there has!" cut in Ivan. "And in the name of justice we demand the arrest of the murderers!"

"Yes, yes; but tell me about it!" cut in the commissar impatiently. "How the devil do you think I can administer justice when I don't know the facts? You're from Lydok, aren't you? What's your name?"

Ivan supplied the information, and then plunged into an account of the night's disaster.

"When young Rakov killed Vina we demanded that he should be handed over to us to be dealt with," he said. "The Tarkas and the Rakovs refused to hand him over, so we went to-night to get him. We went peacefully and

without any hostile intent. But they knew we were coming, and they ambushed us. We left more than thirty of our dead lying on the road outside Paxa!"

"You don't say so?" exploded the commissar, heaving himself from off the bed. "Thirty dead, and by the hand of those cursed Tarkas and Rakovs! Very well, you do not appeal in vain to me for justice. I ride at once!"

Crossing to the door, he pulled it open and bellowed for the guard.

"I want a dozen men and horses!" he ordered. "We ride at once! Inform Sergeant Zobel!"

Obediently the guard clattered away, and the commissar turned again to Ivan.

"It will afford the Government of this country great satisfaction to teach these dogs of Paxa a lesson," he said. "We have long suspected them of sympathies with the disbanded White Army and with those who have fled the country, but they have trodden warily, and it has been difficult to prove anything against them. But I think we have them now. Yes, I think they will be hard put to it to explain away this night's work."

He looked hard at Ivan.

"That is," he added, "if you are all of the same mind and all tell the same story."

"We'll all tell the same story, which is the truth," said Ivan. "They massacred us when we went peacefully and without any evil intent!"

"That's fine, that's fine!" beamed the commissar, rubbing his bony hands as though he were washing them. "Can you manage the ride back, do you think?"

"Yes," replied Ivan, through set teeth.

The ride back would cost him all he knew to remain in the saddle, for he had been wounded through the shoulder, and had lost a lot of blood.

But he was grimly determined to be present at Paxa when the commissar rode in, for it was up to the Government now to demand a reckoning for this night's work.

Ten minutes later he, together with the commissar and a troop of twelve mounted police, were galloping back through the night in the direction of Lydok.

Reaching that village, the commissar heard anew the tale the Vikroffs and the Vinas had to tell, and satisfied that he would not lack for witnesses against the Tarkas and the Rakovs, he rode on towards Paxa.

It was dawn when he and his men clattered into the little main street of the village; but few were abed, for the tragic events of the night had banished all thoughts of sleep.

The clatter of hoofs and the rattle of accoutrement brought peering faces to windows, and men and women shrank back in fear at the sight of the mounted police. They knew what sort of justice they would get if this meant that an inquiry was to be held into the affray.

White Russians they were at heart, every one of them, simple, God-fearing people who, that night, had slain so that they themselves should not be mercilessly butchered.

But that would not be taken into account by the harsh and prejudiced judges who would hold the inquiry. Even when their church had been burned down, and they had complained,

they had been brutally informed that they had no need of a church.

The commissar had brought a guide with him, and, reining in in front of the door of Tarka's cottage, he dismounted and beat on the panels with his riding-crop.

The door was opened by Serge Tarka himself, and, pushing past him, the commissar strode into the kitchen, followed by half a dozen of his troopers.

Standing with his back to the stove was Ulverst, and the commissar stared at him hard, for those clean-cut features and stern blue eyes were not those of a Russian.

"Who the devil are you?" demanded Ulverst, returning the stare with interest. "And what do you want here?"

"I am the Police Commissar from Novaia," answered that individual harshly. "I am seeking the perpetrators of last night's merciless and murderous attack on the Vikroffs and the Vinas."

Ulverst laughed shortly.

"Oh, so that's the way of it, is it?" he said. "Having been beaten off, they've run whining to you. Well, any arrest you make in this village you make at your peril!"

"What do you mean?" rasped the commissar.

"I mean," retorted Ulverst, "that it was I who led the defence of the village against those murderous beasts from Lydok. It was I who, knowing the facts, planned the ambush to save the village from being razed to the ground and the inhabitants slaughtered. And you cannot arrest me, for I am a British subject"—deliberately he chose the most powerful country in the world—"and my arrest will mean serious trouble for you and your Government."

"Oh, indeed?" sneered the commissar. "You seem to forget that you are in Russia, and amenable to Russian law."

"I do not forget I am in Russia," replied Ulverst harshly. "But if I am arrested there must be a proper trial, and the facts of the case will come out. What sort of figure do you think your Government will cut in the eyes of the world when it becomes known that these innocent people have been arrested merely for defending their lives and homes?"

"That," returned the commissar promptly, "is a matter for my Government to decide. My duty is to arrest everyone in the village who took part in the fight. And that includes you!"

The commissar motioned to two of the soldiers.

"Handcuff him," he said. "He looks the sort who will give trouble!"

A Clever Ruse!

THE prison at Novaia, to which Ulverst and forty of the men-folk of Paxa were conveyed, was a miserable and gloomy building of dark, damp cells, and echoing corridors.

Ulverst had not resisted arrest. To have done so would have meant his being shot down. Neither had any of the others offered resistance to the police, for such resistance would have been hopeless in the end.

Sitting on his low, three-plank bed, shivering with the bitter tomblike chill of the cell, Ulverst pondered the position.

He had no regrets for what he had done. In fact, he failed to see how he

could have acted otherwise. He owed his life to Serge Tarka, and if he had not planned the ambush which had beaten off the raiders, Serge and the other inhabitants of the village would have been killed.

Had the Vikroffs and the Vinas emerged victorious, there would have been no official inquiry into the affray. But they had been defeated, and the result was that Ulverst found himself seated in a cell in a Russian prison, with, at the best, a long sentence to the convict mines of Siberia in front of him.

There was one thing for which he was thankful. His handcuffs had been removed to enable him to eat the black bread and drink the dried vegetable soup which was brought him twice daily.

As he sat there on the plank bed, listening to the tramp of the sentry out in the corridor, there came into his mind the first faint glimmerings of a plan to escape.

For an hour or more he sat with chin cupped in hands, turning the details over in his mind, and twice during that time the light was switched on in his cell and the little steel shutter in the door drawn back by the guard, who peered into the cell to make certain the prisoner was all right.

This was Ulverst's second night in the prison, and, knowing the guard was changed at midnight, he stretched himself out on the plank bed, and, pulling over him the thin, verminous, and solitary blanket with which he had been supplied, he dropped off into slumber.

Promptly at the end of an hour he awakened, refreshed in mind and body. He judged then that the hour must be somewhere around eleven-thirty, and in the darkness he set to work tearing his blanket into long strips.

He remained lying on the bed as he worked, and at midnight he heard the rumble of voices out in the corridor, and knew that the guard was changing over.

Ulverst lay, quiet then, the torn blanket crumpled beside him. A few minutes later the light snapped on in his cell, and the guard peered in at him. Then the shutter snapped back into place, the light was switched out from the corridor, and Ulverst was in black and inky darkness once again.

Swiftly he went to work, knotting together the lengths of blanket he had torn. Having done this, he took off his boots, and, exerting all his strength, wrenched the heel off one of them and tied it to the end of his improvised rope to weight it.

That done, he rose softly to his feet, and stood for a few moments staring up at the barred window high in the wall, through which he could see the faint square of a starry sky. Judging his distance, he flung the weighted end of the rope up towards the window. Six times in all he tried before the heel went through the bars, leaving the rope dangling down.

With a soft exclamation of triumph, Ulverst dropped on his hands and knees, and, lying flat on his stomach, wormed his way under the plank bed.

The stage was now all set for his desperate attempt to escape. When next the light was switched on by the guard and the fellow peered into the cell, he would see no sign of the prisoner, but would see a rope dangling from the window high up in the shadows.

What would he do?

Would he at once sound the alarm, or would he be so startled that, before rushing away to give the alarm, he would dash into the cell to satisfy his



With bullets tearing through their disordered ranks, the Vikroffs and the Vinas were thrown into terror-stricken panic and confusion!

own eyes that what he had seen was correct?

Knowing human nature as he did, Ulverst was inclined to think that the fellow would adopt the latter course. It was the most natural one, and the one upon which Ulverst was banking.

And it was precisely what happened. The minutes dragged slowly by on leaden feet; then suddenly the light went on in the cell, and the shutter in the door snapped back.

To Ulverst, lying prone beneath the plank bed and listening with straining ears, there came a sharp exclamation. Next moment the bolts of the door rattled back, the key grated in the lock, and heavily booted feet rushed into the cell.

Ulverst had a glimpse of a booted ankle near the bed. Whipping out his hand, he grabbed it, and jerked with all his strength. The guard lost his balance and went down, with a startled cry. As he did so Ulverst sent the planks of his bed flying as he leapt from cover and pounced upon the guard.

Savagely and with all the power he could muster, he smashed his fist full to the point. Again and again he struck with a dreadful ferocity until the guard lay limp, out to the wido. Springing to his feet, Ulverst then dashed to the door and softly closed it.

Swiftly retracing his steps, he set to work gagging and trussing the man, after divesting him of his uniform and great coat.

Ten minutes later Ulverst stepped out of the cell in the uniform of the guard. Locking and bolting the door, he

switched out the light and set off along the corridor. The rest was ridiculously easy. With hands plunged in the pockets of his greatcoat and the collar turned up, he looked just like any other guard coming off duty, and the sentry on duty outside the prison called a civil "Good-night!" to him as he walked through the little wicket gate set in the big iron doors.

Making his way to the stables which he had seen when at exercise in the prison yard, he accosted the sleepy trooper on duty there.

"The Commissar wants a horse," he growled, "and wants it quickly!"

"What, more night riding?" grumbled the trooper, taking a lantern down from its hook. "How many does he want?"

"Just his own, if it's here," replied Ulverst. "I don't know! I'm new here. 'You,' he said to me, as I was coming off duty, 'go to the stables, and tell the fool there I want my horse!' He said I had to take it across to his quarters."

"All right! This is the brute!" said the trooper, entering a stall and proceeding to saddle a big, restless, and rangy black. "He's the best in the stables, this fellow. But, there, you'll always find a riding commissar well mounted!"

The trooper led the horse out of the stall and handed over the reins to Ulverst.

"I've got to take it round to the front of his quarters," said Ulverst. "Are the yard gates open?"

"Yes," replied the trooper. "They're

always open. This isn't the State prison of Leningrad, you know?"

Ulverst grinned, and, leading the horse, slouched away. But, once outside the gates, he swiftly swung himself up into the saddle, and next moment was riding furiously for Pasa.

Ulverst's Promise!

ULVERST rode like a madman through the darkness and over the treacherous roads, sparing neither himself nor his mount. Time and again he was nearly down; but he was a magnificent horseman, and the powerful black responded to the master touch on the reins.

It wanted an hour to dawn when Ulverst clattered along the little main street of Pasa. Dismounting outside Serge Tarka's cottage, he beat on the panels of the door.

A few moments later the door was opened by Tarka's wife, who shrank back in affright at sight of the hated uniform of the new regime.

"Have no fear!" said Ulverst quickly. "It is I, your friend!"

He stepped quickly past the woman into the kitchen, where the daughter, Marieng, was standing staring at him with frightened eyes.

"Close that door quickly!" said Ulverst.

When the woman had obeyed, he explained in a few terse and comprehensive sentences what had happened and how he had escaped.

"I must put to sea at once!" he said. "Is it possible to get a crew to take the Nordyck out?"

The woman looked dubious.

"Where would you be wanting to take her?" she asked.

"Never mind that," replied Ulverst.

Taking the woman by the shoulders, he stared into her haggard eyes and weary, care-lined face.

"Listen to me," he said gently. "I am going to ask you to trust me. I require the Nordyck to reach certain

friends of mine, and if it is humanly possible I promise you that not only will I save your husband and his friends, but I will take you to a country where you will be able to live free from this cruel and endless persecution, and I will also see that you have enough money to keep you in comfort for the rest of your life."

The woman looked at him in wonderment.

"You speak strangely and promise strange things," she said. "What country is this of which you speak?"

"Finland," replied Ulverst. "You will find sanctuary there. I will not fail you, I promise. Now tell me, can you find me a crew for the Nordyck?"

For a long moment the woman stared into Ulverst's level blue eyes, then nodded, as though satisfied.

"I think it can be managed," she said, "though most of the men folk are in the Novaia prison."

Turning, she spoke in low tones with her daughter, who afterwards darted into her bed-room, hastily dressed, slipped on a coat, and ran out into the night.

Before half an hour had elapsed the girl was back with five youngsters, make boys.

"They're hard and they're sturdy," said the woman, noting Ulverst's grim survey of his youthful crew, "and they're born to the ways of the sea. They'll handle the Nordyck for you as well as any men."

Realising that this was the best scratch crew to be found, Ulverst took the boys aboard. The moorings were then cast off, the auxiliary engine started up, and the whaler set out for the open sea, bound for Ice Rock.

(Will Ulverst and his youthful crew succeed in reaching Ice Rock, the lair of the Sea Spider, or will—Boys, you're booked for the most thrilling chapters of this grand adventure yarn in next week's MAGNET. Don't miss 'em, whatever you do!)

FOOLED ON THE FIRST!

(Continued from page 24.)

answered. "The man you're thinking of could never have put up a tussle like that. This sportsman is a younger man than Hazel's uncle. I feel certain of it."

"Let's hope so, anyhow!" said Bob. "Keep that note, Mr. Clegg, till you see Inspector Grimes," said Harry. "We'll phone him from the post office. Lucky you never changed it, after all, old bean."

"The roog!" said Mr. Clegg. "Many thanks to you, Master Wharton! The roog!"

The chums of the Remove had forgotten their ginger-pop. Neither did they remember it now. They hurried away at once to the post office, where Wharton rang up Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield, to give him the news.

Hazel was loafing in the quad when the Famous Five came back, and Harry Wharton lost no time in telling him what had happened at Mr. Clegg's, adding his belief that the man in plus fours was not John James.

Hazel listened, with a scowling face. "You silly ass!" he grunted. "What did you let him get away for, you fool?"

To which there seemed no adequate reply, except punching Hazel's nose, which Wharton, with an effort, refrained from doing.

Inspector Grimes was getting busy, and the chums of the Remove hoped to hear of a capture. But, whether he was John James Hazeldene or not, there was no news of the wanted man.

THE END.

(Be sure you get next Saturday's MAGNET, chums, and read the final yarn in this popular series. It's entitled: "FACING THE MUSIC!" and shows Frank Richards at the top of his form!)

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OLD STYLE ALL FOOLS' DAY

When April the first comes round, I always wish we lived in the Good Old Days. They must have had some jolly good sport then.

A favourite trick at Greyfriars, I believe, used to be to heat a poker white hot, then drop it on the floor with a pair of tongs and send for a fag to pick it up. It must have been awfully funny to hear the kid's agonised yells as he burnt his fingers.

Another stunt was to call out of your study window to a pal—and when he stopped underneath to hear what you said, to tip a load of bricks on to his head. What a howl he must have given!

Yet another idea was to challenge some well-known prizefighter to a scrap, using your pal's name instead of your own. The prizefighter would turn up, ask for your pal and start battering him unconscious before he had time to ask what the little game was. Fearfully funny!

One wheeze that always tickled me was the one where you creep up behind your headmaster, knock him down with a bludgeon, then run away, taking care to leave behind you some article that is likely to incriminate the pal you are japing. I'll bet they used to hoot with laughter when they watched their pals being flogged for something they hadn't done!

Yes, there's no doubt about it, when you come to think of it, life must have been worth living when All Fools' Day was carried out in the old style!

(The only snag being apparently that Bolsy always thinks of himself as the japer and not the japed! But what if the roles were reversed?—ED.)

FRANK NUGENT says—

YOU CAN'T FOOL LARRY

On looks, Larry Lascelles is as simple and unsuspecting as you could wish a master to be. But he wouldn't melt in his mouth when he takes us in maths, and there's a wide-eyed look about him when he's explaining physics and chemistry that's very boyish. BUT—

He was lecturing on magnetism in the physics lab on Monday, looking more wide-eyed than ever. And a number of fellows who'd come prepared to celebrate All Fools' Day properly were so impressed by his outward simplicity that they decided to start right away.

"Here," said Larry, motioning us to gather round the bench where his apparatus was set out, "is a mariner's compass. Left by itself, as you see, it points to the magnetic north."

Then he started slightly. Contrary to his expectations the needle was pointing due east.

"Um!" he said dubiously. "Well, anyhow, if we place a sufficiently strong magnetic influence to the east, it will point in that direction."

Amazing Ventriloquial Show

If you'd like a good exhibition of ventriloquism, take our tip and trot along to Alonzo Todd's lecture on "The Tearful Story of the Onion" next week. You'll hear him talk out of the back of his neck in a masterly fashion!

Feeling "Peckish"?

Then why not crash into Masters' Common-room? They're holding a special meeting for BEAKS there!



THE NEW Greyfriars Herald



No. 131 (New Series.)

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

April 6th, 1935.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

Dr. Alfred Birchamall, the revered and majestic headmaster of St. Sam's, stood in Big Hall and bawled out the warning at the top of his voice.

The response was immediate. As if by magic, juniors, seniors, and masters of all shapes and sizes came rushing pell-mell out of studies, Form-rooms, and common-rooms, and simply tore out of the House. There was the very dickens to pay for a couple of minnits.

At the end of that time, the entire skool had assembled out in the bright spring sunshine. Only then did it occur to anyone to ask anything about the fire.

"Eggseuse me, sir," said Burleigh, as the Head trotted out of the Skool House.

THE HEAD'S DAY OUT!

By DICKY NUGENT

"Would you mind telling us eggseactly where the fire is?"

Dr. Birchamall's answer, given out between gurgles of laughter, drew a gasp of astonishment from the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha! The fakt is, Burleigh—ho, ho, ho!—there isn't a fire at all!"

"Eh?" gasped Burleigh.

"No fire at all!" howled Dr. Birchamall, wiping the tears of merriment from his eyes. "It was—ha, ha, ha!—only—ho, ho, ho!—a joak all the time! Ha, ha, ha!"

"M-m-my hat!"

Burleigh fairly blinked, while the rest

the skool eyed their respected head rather grimly. The meer idea of the Head scaring them with a false alarm of fire was enuff to make them burn with anger.

That incident, eggstraordinary as it was, was only the first of a regular crop of weird happenings in which Dr. Birchamall figured that morning.

The Fourth had hardly begun their first lesson before he came dashing in, wearing a look of terror on his dial.

"Look out! Look out!" he cried hoarsely. "He's coming!"

Mr. Lickham and the Fourth Formers concluding from the Head's terrified fix that an escaped convict or blud-thirsty bandit was at large, promptly dodged under their desks to escape the rain of bolts that mite have been eggpected to follow. And all that walked through the doorway was Yawnington, the slacker of the Form, who was, as usual, five minits late!

Shrieks of laughter from Dr. Birchamall brought the fellows out from under their desks again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roared. "I had you that time, and no mistake! You all thought a man-eating tiger at least was coming—instead of which it was only Yawnington! My, what a joak!"

"Grate pip!" gasped Jack Jolly of the Fourth. "Is that what you call funny?"

"What-ho!" grinned Dr. Birchamall. "I challenge you to think of anything funnier, Jolly, anyway!"

"What about your face, sir?"

This time it was the juniors' turn to laugh, and they did so with grate hartiness, the Head, meanwhile, glaring as though he had a good mind to wade in and wallop them. Luckily for them, he had a fresh branewave that turned his mind in other channels first.

"Barrell!" he cried suddenly. "You're fond of grub, aren't you?"

Tubby Barrell's eyes almost popped out of their sockets.

"Yes, rather, sir!" he said. "What about it?"

The Head's slitley greenish eyes twinkled.

"I notissed some grub in my green-house this morning, Barrell," he said. "If you like, you may run down and help yourself to it!"

"M-m-my hat! I'll do that with



plezzure, sir!" gasped Tubby Barrell, rising immediately. "Thanks awfully, sir!"

And he rolled out of the Form-room in a dickens of a hurry. No sooner had he gone, than the Head started larking once again.

"I really must tell you that joak, boys," he cackled. "Barrell thinks I mean grub of the kind you scoff—edible grub, as the vulgar mite put it. Little does he realise the truth! The fakt is, I was referring to a yung caterpillar! Ha, ha, ha!"

During the remainder of the day the Fourth wondered whether Dr. Birchamall was quite all there. He knocked on the door of Masters' Common-room and ran away fully half-a-duzen times, pinned a card, containing the printed words "Kick Me" on the school porter's back and contributed the first kick himself, and, in brief, behaved just as though he had taken leave of his senses!

"Something will have to be done about it," remarked Jack Jolly of the Fourth, when afternoon skool was over. "He's a menace to the community in this state. There's no telling what he'll be doing next!"

"What about sending for help from the Muggleton Mental Home?" suggested Frank Fearless.

Jack Jolly nodded.

"That's just what I was going to suggest myself, old chap. But we'll have to keep it dark. If the Head suspected we were thinking of putting him in an asylum, he'd be awfully mad!"

"Let's go and phone them up and describe the case, anyway," said Fearless.

As a result of that call, an ambulance rolled up to St. Sam's a little later and several stalwart-looking attendants rolled out. Jack Jolly led them into the House and sought out the Head.

(Continued at foot of next column.)

"BE ORIGINAL THIS YEAR!"

Coker on April Jokes

"We've heard that you have some highly original ideas for April the First, this year," our interviewer said to Coker of the Fifth. "If you'd like to give our readers an indication—"

"I don't mind helping you kids out, certainly," said the great man of the Fifth, graciously. "Naturally, you can't be expected to think out anything very original yourselves. Only a chap with brains could do that—a chap like me, for instance."

"Well, my idea about All Fools' Day is, for goodness' sake be original this year! The old japes are played right out. Let's have something new, for a change!"

"For instance, one idea which I'm sure has never been heard of before is to point up in the air and say: 'Oooh! Look at that aeroplane!' Chaps will immediately look up, and then you can say 'April Fool!' There's one original jape, to begin with!"

"Here's another," grinned Coker, after he had finished laughing over that suggestion: "Go up to a chap and say: 'What's that on your nose?' He'll bring out his hanky at once and start rubbing away, thinking you're referring to a smut. Then, after he's been doing it for a minute or so, you can say: 'Oh, I see what it is now—it's your nose! April Fool!'"

Coker screamed.

"Here's another brilliant new idea I've just thought of," he said, when he had recovered: "Ask a chap if he's seen that awful-looking ape that's wandering about the school. He'll look very surprised and answer that he hasn't. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that all?" our interviewer asked blankly.

"Oh, no!" Coker gurgled. "After he has said that, you say 'Well, go and look in the mirror, then!' Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!"

And that was all our interviewer could say. Coker's Highly Original ideas for April the First had temporarily deprived him of the powers of speech!

(Continued from previous column.)

They couldn't, it seemed, have come at a more fortunate time. There was Dr. Birchamall, standing on a pair of steps at the entrance to his study, calmly fixing up a booby-trap of tremendous proportions. The attendants from the Muggleton Mental Home didn't need to be told where their man was after that.

"Come on, boys! This is the chap!" they cried, fairly flinging themselves at Dr. Birchamall.

With a feendish yell, the Head tumbled down the steps, bringing the booby-trap crashing down on top of himself. A moment later, to his grate surprise, he found himself tightly locked up in a strait-jacket!

"Wh-wh-what are you doing-of?" he shrieked, his grammar, despite his eggseitement, as faultless as ever. "Reskew, St. Sam's!"

"Sorry, sir," said Jack Jolly sadly. "But this is all for your own good. A short rest in the Mental Home will probably cure your insanity, and—"

Dr. Birchamall drew a deep breath.

"Insanity?" he eggclaimed bitterly. "And to think that my efforts at adding to the gaiety of St. Sam's have been interpreted like this! Didn't it occur to your-empty head, Jolly, that there was an eggplanation of my unusual actions?"

"Can't say it did, sir!" confessed Jack Jolly, in surprise. "Was there, then?"

"Of course there was! It was the simplest eggplanation imaginable, too! I played all those joaks because it happened to be April the First—All Fools' Day! Now do you see?"

Jack Jolly and his pals gasped. Then they looked at each other and yelled.

"Well, what are you larking for?" asked the Head crossly, as the grinning attendants released him from the strait-jacket.

Jack Jolly wiped his eyes.

"Only because of your little mistake, sir," he said. "April the First, you see, was yesterday. To-day is April the Second!"

"M-m-my hat!" stuttered the Head.

And then he fled—completely overcome by the thought of the idiot he had made of himself through being a day out with his day out!

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT



The girls of Cliff House School are keen cricketers, and have beaten several strong girls' sides. Marjorie Hazeldene and "Babs" Redfern are the star batswomen. When Marjorie hit up fifty-seven the other afternoon Bob Cherry, who was with the Famous Five, cheered loudest of all!

Hobson, of the Shell, attempted to learn the piano under the tuition of his chum, Hoskins—but Hobson's fingers were all thumbs! When Hoskins suggested Hobson should give up cricket practice for a music lesson, Hobson rebelled. Hoskins had "struck the wrong note!"

When Billy Bunter sat next to Lord Mauleverer in class, T. Pab's big glasses are a piece of the best-groomed and the least-brushed heads at Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch drew Bunter's attention to the fact, but weekly under his desk. Fishy Bunter soon "brushed" the matter from his mind!

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