

"JIMMY THE FOX!" Thrilling Long Complete Story of **HARRY WHARTON & Co.!**
Schoolboy Adventure Featuring . .

The Magnet

2nd



Midnight Visitors!



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.

NOWADAYS, everybody seems to be claiming speed records. Just for a change, what about the "slowest" record? Do you know which is the

SLOWEST TRAIN IN THE WORLD,

and not only the slowest, but the smallest? It was constructed some time ago by a watchmaker in Walthamstow, Essex. He made it entirely of gold and silver. The engine is less than an inch and a half long, and runs by clockwork on a track four and a half feet in length. It takes two and a half hours to run this distance. If you work it out for yourselves, chums, you will find that the actual speed of this smallest and slowest train in the world is not more than three miles per year! Now it's up to Fisher T. Fish's country to beat that—if they can!

This year, as you all know, is

THE SILVER JUBILEE,

which means that our present king, George V, has been on the throne for twenty-five years. One of my Wolverhampton readers wants to know whether it is correct to fly the Royal Standard on this occasion. The answer is "No." The Royal Standard is purely a personal flag which belongs to the Royal family alone. It is only flown from the Royal palace when the King is actually in residence there. No one else has the right to fly the Royal Standard.

The same reader asks me quite a number of questions about flags, and the answers may be of interest to other readers. For instance, do you know the difference between

THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE ENSIGNS?

The Red Ensign, which is carried by all ships of the Mercantile Marine, is actually the oldest of them all, and was in existence before the Union Jack came into being—but, of course, in those days it had not the Union Jack in the top left-hand corner. At one time our Navy used to be split up into three fleets. The first—and senior—fleet flew the Red Ensign, the second fleet flew the White Ensign, and the third flew the Blue Ensign. There was so much confusion, however, that it was decided that all naval ships should fly one particular flag. As the Red Ensign was the oldest, it was adopted as the national ensign. The Navy proper took the White Ensign, and the Naval Reserve was given the Blue Ensign.

No ship other than a naval ship is allowed to fly the Union Jack. But sometimes you may see a Mercantile Marine vessel flying at the prow a flag which consists of a Union Jack with a white border around it. Do you know what flag this is? It is called

THE PILOT JACK,

and if it is hoisted at the foremast it means that the vessel needs a pilot. If, however, it is hoisted at the "jackstaff"—which is the little flagstaff right in the bows of a vessel—it is simply an additional flag to show to which country the ship belongs. Most countries use a similar "Pilot Jack,"

which consists of a national flag with a white border around it. Mercantile Marine vessels use a large variety of flags, and they generally fly on their foremast a flag which is known as a "house flag." This is a special flag which is used only by the ships of one particular company. Thus all ships flying that flag belong to the same shipowners.

HERE is an interesting query which comes from a Manchester reader. He asks me:

WHAT IS "VOODOO"?

This is a species of alleged "magic" which is carried out in the negro republic of Haiti. The Haitians are very superstitious, and they still believe in "witch doctors." The name "voodoo" is that which they give to the various manifestations which these witch doctors are said to produce. They have "voodoo" drums, and claim that by beating these drums they can kill a man fifteen miles away. An English hypnotist, although he does not claim to be able to kill anyone by means of these drums, says that he can throw people into a trance at a distance of five miles by means of "voodoo" drums.

But many explorers and scientists who have penetrated into the interior of this little-known republic have different ideas. In their words, "voodoo" simply means "bunk!"

Here is a little bit of information that might interest anyone who wants to emulate the example of William George Bunter. It concerns

THE DOUGHNUT-EATING CHAMPIONSHIP

of the world. Believe it or not, but some American schoolboys decided to put up a stake—of twelve doughnuts—to settle who was the champion doughnut-eater. The winner ate twenty doughnuts in eighteen minutes and fifty seconds! He lives in Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.A. I wonder what Billy Bunter would say to that? Probably he would be willing to travel to the United States and match himself against this champion—if only someone would pay his expenses and cash his postal orders so that he might fortify himself for the journey, and put in a little bit of training for the event! Somehow or other, I think this American schoolboy would find it hard to beat Billy Bunter on his own ground. What do you say, chums?

SOME time ago, in this little chat of mine, I mentioned the fact that

RED SNOW

has often been experienced in different parts of the world. Now comes another report of "red snow" which fell recently in Turkey. There was intense cold

eighty-five degrees below zero, followed by a blizzard. Then crimson snow began to fall. The population were panic-stricken, while cattle were terrified.

They need not have been, however. Red, yellow, and golden snow have often been experienced in various parts of the world. It is due to the presence of meteoric dust or sand particles in the atmosphere. Sometimes, however, it is caused by insects which exude a coloured liquid. At the end of last century there was a fall of red snow in Sweden, which was found to be due to the presence of millions of tiny scarlet worms.

DO you keep goldfish? If you do, here is a paragraph that may interest you. Have you ever heard of

THE MAN WITH TWO MILLION GOLDFISH?

Over in Indiana, in the United States, there is a man who runs a goldfish farm. He claims to have more than two million goldfish. What is more, he says that they eat three thousand tons of food each year! It costs fifteen thousand pounds per year to feed them. The man came over to England a little while ago and brought eight thousand samples of his fish with him. He is hoping to sell thousands of goldfish over here, and says he will have special tanks built on Atlantic liners to bring his fish over to his English customers.

I wonder how many of my readers would like to attempt

A ROCKET-FLIGHT INTO THE STRATOSPHERE.

That is the latest idea of scientists. They believe that rocket machines will be able to attain a height greater than anything yet achieved by balloons. A secret stratosphere rocket-machine is even now being built. It will be winged like a super-speed plane, and will use liquid oxygen as fuel. An attempt will be made to reach a height of twenty thousand feet, and if this is successful, much greater altitudes will be attempted. The rocket-machines will only carry one man apiece, and volunteers have been asked to risk the ascent. Already hundreds more volunteers than are required have put in their names!

It's time I was getting down to business, and telling you something about the treats in store for you in next Saturday's issue of the MAGNET. The piece de resistance is undoubtedly

"AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR!"

By Frank Richards.

You'll expect to find a real first-class yarn from this popular author, and you won't be disappointed. One of the advantages of being an Editor is that you can read the stories before your readers can do so. I have already read this yarn, and I can tell you, chums, you've got something extra-good coming along. Still, you all know that Frank Richards never lets you down, and I expect most of you have already ordered your copy of the MAGNET, and are looking forward to it with enthusiasm.

Thrills you'll find in plenty in the "Sea Spider!" the final instalment of which will appear in this issue. But rest assured, chums, I've got another super adventure story to follow on with, further particulars of which will appear next week. You'll have lots of chuckles when you read the special Greyfriars Herald supplement, and if I've had to hold over any replies to queries which you may have sent in to me, you can be sure that I'll deal with them as soon as space permits. Cheerio, then, until next week.

YOUR EDITOR.

JIMMY the FOX!



By **FRANK RICHARDS**

—RE-INTRODUCING AN OLD FAVOURITE IN JACK DRAKE.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Magic!

"GET out!" snapped Billy Bunter. "Shut up, Bunter!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Shan't! What does that gipsy beggar want here?" grunted the Owl of Greyfriars. "Kick him out!"

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Greyfriars Remove were standing in the gateway of Wharton Lodge, in Surrey.

An argument was proceeding. The Famous Five were going for a walk, which seemed to them quite an attractive proposition on a sunny April day.

It did not seem in the least attractive to Billy Bunter.

Bunter preferred a car. There was no car available. Hence the argument.

There was only one car at Wharton Lodge, and Colonel Wharton had taken it out. Billy Bunter remarked bitterly that at Bunter Court he would have had the choice of half a dozen cars. To a suggestion from Johnny Bull that he should take the next train for Bunter Court, however, he replied only with a snort!

Bunter wanted to know why they couldn't phone for a taxi. Bob Cherry pointed out that they couldn't walk far in a taxi. But that did not appeal to Bunter, who preferred to take his walks sitting down. The argument was going on when a gipsy boy looked in at the gates, glanced at the Greyfriars juniors standing on the drive, and came in.

Billy Bunter promptly told him to get out—an injunction to which the stranger

paid no heed. The other fellows, as well as Bunter, wondered what he wanted. He was poorly clad, but he did not look like a beggar. His dark, swarthy face was clean, his clothes, though poor, neat and tidy. The chums of the Remove, however, were rather more polite about it than Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton made a step towards him.

"Want anything, kid?" he asked civilly. Civility cost nothing, and

As a general rule, William George Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, gets more kicks than ha'pence from his Form-fellows. But, fat freak though he is, Bunter has his uses, as he proves in this week's thrilling school yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.

Wharton did not share Billy Bunter's lofty and aristocratic prejudices.

The gipsy touched his cap. There was a glimmer of amusement in his eyes, which were blue, uncommon enough in a gipsy's swarthy face.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Frank Nugent.

"Beast!"

"I will tell your fortune, young master, if you will cross my palm with

silver!" said the gipsy boy, in a low, pleasant voice.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'll cross your palm with silver, old bean, if you're hard up!" he said. "But never mind about the jolly old fortune."

He took a half-crown from his pocket. Various relatives had shelled out various tips in the Easter holidays, and Wharton had a half-crown to spare for a lad who was down on his luck.

Billy Bunter gave an angry snort.

"Wasting money on beggars!" he grunted.

"Will you shut up, you fathead?" said Wharton sharply. "The kid isn't a beggar, and it's no bizney of yours, anyhow!"

"If that's how you talk to a guest, Wharton—"

"Well, you're such a jolly weird guest, old fat bean," said Harry. "But do shut up! It will do your chin good to give it a rest!"

"Yah!"

Wharton dropped the half-crown into the gipsy's swarthy palm. The blue eyes in the dusky face glimmered at him.

"You do not believe in the gipsy's fortune-telling powers, young master?"

"Well, hardly!" said Harry, with a smile. "But you can go ahead if you like."

"Suppose that I tell you your name?"

"You couldn't!"

"Your name is Harry Wharton!" said the gipsy.

Wharton looked surprised. So far as he knew he had never seen the gipsy before.

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"How the dickens do you know that?" he asked.

"Somebody's told him!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You're pretty well known about here as Colonel Wharton's nephew, fathead."

"I suppose that's it!" assented Harry.

"But I can tell you more, young master!" said the gipsy. "You belong to a school called Greyfriars, and you are captain of your Form there."

"Somebody's told him that, too!" said Johnny Bull. "Look here, kid, don't gammon! Nobody's going to believe that you can tell things you don't know."

"I can tell you your name, also!" said the gipsy, his blue eye glimmering at Johnny. "Your name is Bull—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "How the dickens did the kid know that? Perhaps you can tell me my name, too, young 'un?"

"Certainly, young master! Your name is Cherry!"

"Well, I'm blowed!"

"And yours is Nugent—"

"Right!" said Frank, staring.

"And what is my esteemed name, my extraordinary and idiotic young friend?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The gipsy boy grinned.

"You are Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, and you learned to speak English from the moonshee Mook Mookerjee!" he answered.

"My only esteemed hat!" ejaculated the nabob.

The Famous Five stared in blank amazement at the gipsy.

That he might, from local gossip, have picked up the names of the Greyfriars fellows staying at Wharton Lodge, was possible enough. But the details he gave could hardly have been picked up in that way.

Certainly there were few people in Surrey who had ever heard of Mook Mookerjee, the wise moonshee of Bhanipur, from whom Hurree Singh had learned his wonderful English. Fellows at Greyfriars School had heard about him, but few outside Greyfriars.

"Well, this beats Banagher!" said Bob Cherry.

Sniff from the Owl of the Remove.

"Bet you he can't guess that my name's Bunter!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! What's my name, if you're so jolly clever?" demanded the Owl of the Remove.

The gipsy grinned again.

"Your name is William George Bunter, generally called Billy, also the Owl!" he answered. "You are the fattest fellow at Greyfriars, and you eat as much as the rest of the Form put together."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He knows Bunter!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The knowfulness is terrific!"

"Cheeky beast!" hooted Bunter. "Look here, if you fellows think I'm going to be insulted by a gipsy beggar, you're jolly well mistaken, see? I'm jolly well going to punch his cheeky head!"

"Chuck it, Bunter—"

"Stop, you fat ass—"

"Hold on—"

Unheeding, Billy Bunter barged at the gipsy with his fat fists up. Billy Bunter was wrathful. His fat fist shot out towards the handsome dusky face of the gipsy boy.

But it did not reach that face.

The gipsy's hand shot up swiftly, and

he grasped the fat Owl's podgy wrist. Bunter brought his other fat fist into play, and his other podgy wrist was instantly grasped.

"Ow! Leggo!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, make him leggo!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The gipsy pulled at Bunter's wrists, jerking him off his feet. Then he swung the fat Owl of the Remove round him.

He looked no older than any of the Greyfriars juniors. But it was evident that he had plenty of strength. Billy Bunter, swung off his feet, whirled round in a circle.

He gasped and spluttered wildly as he whirled.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Whoop!" roared Bunter. He whirled dizzily. "I say, you fellows—Yaroooh! I say—Yooop! Leggo! Yoo-hoop!"

Round went Billy Bunter, his feet flying in the air, held at armslength by the grinning gipsy. The grip on his fat wrists was like iron.

His hat fell off, his spectacles slid down his fat little nose, and there was a pop as a button flew.

"Urrgh! Leggo! Wurrgh!"

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

It was quite an unexpected entertainment. They backed out of reach of Bunter's spinning feet, and roared with laughter.

Bunter roared also, though not with laughter.

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Beast! Will you make him leggo? Yurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

The gipsy let go at that, and Bunter plumped down. He sat and gurgled for breath. Bunter was always rather short of breath; and now he had barely enough left to gurgle with.

"Urrgh! Gurrgh! Wurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Beasts! I say, you fellows, kick that brute out! Gurrgh!"

The gipsy turned to Harry Wharton, with a cheery grin.

"May I go up to the house?" he asked. "I have a message for your uncle, Colonel Wharton."

"My uncle's out now," said Harry.

"I will wait for him."

Wharton eyed him rather dubiously. He was not sure what sort of a greeting so very curious a caller would receive from Wells, the butler. But he nodded.

"Right-ho," he said. "Trot on up the drive. It's not far to the house."

The gipsy touched his cap again, and walked on up the drive. The juniors all looked after him curiously. The knowledge of them that he had displayed was strange and surprising, and really looked rather like magic. They could not help wondering, too, what business he could possibly have with the master of Wharton Lodge.

"Well, let's get out," said Bob Cherry. "Coming, Bunter?"

"Groooh! I say—urrgh!"

Bunter was still gurgling and spluttering.

"Are you coming?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Gurrgh! Beast! Urrgh!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Urrgh! Beast! Ow! Wurrgh!"

Bunter apparently was not coming. The Famous Five walked out at the gate, leaving the fat Owl of the Remove to gurgle and splutter at his leisure.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Man with the Automatic!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! That sportsman seems to have lost himself!" remarked Bob Cherry.

The chums of the Remove were sauntering up the road towards Winford, at a little distance from Wharton Lodge. At a point where a shady Surrey lane intersected the road at right-angles, a car had halted. The motorist had stepped down and was looking about him—scanning the four ways from the cross-roads in turn.

The schoolboys' impression was that he was uncertain which road to take—in which case they were more than willing to give him his direction. But they scanned him rather curiously as they came up. He was a small, slim man with a narrow face and sharp eyes set close together—a set of features that gave him a foxy expression. His face was dark with anger—or, rather, with rage! It was easy to see that he was in a savage temper, for he took no trouble whatever to conceal the fact. And as they had a closer view of him, the Greyfriars juniors decided not to speak to him, but to pass on their way.

But as they came by, the man with the car glanced at them, and raised his hand. Little as they liked his looks, they were willing to oblige, and they stopped.

He came quickly towards them. They noted that his eyes flashed, as if in recognition of their caps, and wondered whether he knew the Greyfriars colours.

"Please stop," he said.

His voice was sharp and unpleasant, though he was evidently forcing himself to speak civilly.

"Certainly," said Harry Wharton. "If you've missed your way we can set you right easily enough."

"You live hereabouts?" asked the man.

"Yes."

"You are Greyfriars boys, I think?"

"Right on the wicket!" said Bob Cherry. "We are!"

"The arcfulness is terrific!" added Hurree Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

The foxy-faced man stared at him for a moment. He seemed surprised; but he did not smile, as strangers often did on hearing the Nabob of Bhanipur's wonderful English for the first time.

"You know the school colours, I suppose?" said Harry.

"Yes, yes! As you are Greyfriars boys, you may be able to tell me what I want to know. Very likely you know a boy named Drake—a lad of about your own age—"

"Drake!" repeated Harry. "Yes, rather! He's left Greyfriars, but we knew him while he was there."

"I am looking for him now."

"You're not likely to find him here," said Harry, with a smile. "He's in business in London."

"Quite a celebrated sportsman in his way," said Bob Cherry, with a laugh. "Have you ever heard of Ferrers Locke?"

"The detective? Yes!"

"Well, Jack Drake is his assistant, and if you want to see him, you'd better call at Mr. Locke's house in Baker Street, London."

The man's thin lips came together hard. His narrow, greenish eyes seemed to glitter at the Greyfriars juniors. There was sharp suspicion in his look. That was clear to all of them, though what he suspected they did not know. But they liked his looks less and less.

"You were friends with Jack Drake at Greyfriars School?" he asked.

Wharton knitted his brows a little.



"Yaroooh! Leggo! Whoop!" roared Bunter, as he whirled dizzily. "I say, you fellows—yaroooh! I say—yoop! Leggo! Yoo-hoop!" Round went the fat junior, his feet flying in the air, held at arm's length by the grinning gypsy.

"I don't see that that's any bizney of yours," he said, rather curtly. "But it is true."

"And you live near here?"

"Yes."

"Where do you live?"

"Find out!" answered Harry Wharton coolly. "What the dickens do you mean by questioning a perfect stranger?"

The man's lips set harder.

"I am looking for Jack Drake!" he said. "I have an important message to deliver to him, from his master, Ferrers Locke. Now do you understand? Where is he?"

"How should we know where he is?" asked Harry, puzzled. "We haven't seen him for ages."

"You have not seen him to-day?"

"Eh? No!"

"Is Drake in these parts?" asked Bob, in astonishment.

"Not that I have heard of," answered Harry Wharton. "I'd be jolly glad to see him if he had time to run down in the holidays, but I haven't had a word from him."

"He might come without sending you word!" said the foxy-faced man. "Are you telling me the truth?"

Wharton stared at him blankly.

"That's the sort of question you might get your nose punched for asking!" he retorted. "Come on, you men—I've had enough of this fellow."

"Stop! You have seen Drake—you are lying to me!" snarled the man with the car. "He came down to Wimford by train this afternoon, and left the town by this road! I have that certain! I am looking for him! I have told you that I have an important message for him."

Wharton's lip curled.

"We should want proof of that before we told you where Drake was if we knew!" he answered.

"Then—you know?"

"No, we don't know; but if we did, we shouldn't tell you," said the captain of the Greyfriars Remove coolly.

The narrow eyes glittered at him. That the man was looking for Jack Drake, once a Greyfriars junior, and now the assistant of the celebrated detective, Ferrers Locke, they did not doubt. But they doubted very much whether he was looking for him with friendly intentions.

The man choked back his rage and spoke calmly.

"You are Greyfriars boys. Drake was once a Greyfriars boy!" he said. "It is pretty certain why he came down to this part of the country. You know where he is—and you will tell me."

"Come on!" said Harry, and he turned his back on the man with the car.

"Stop!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Look out!"

The juniors fairly jumped—or, rather, bounded. They stared at the foxy-faced motorist with popping eyes. He had suddenly whipped an automatic pistol from his pocket and levelled it. His narrow eyes glared over the barrel.

"Now answer me!" he snarled. "You know where Jack Drake is, and you will tell me, or—"

Harry Wharton faced him, cool and contemptuous. But his heart was beating hard.

It was incredible that the man would dare to use the weapon, in the broad daylight, on the open highway.

But the savage face, glaring over the barrel, looked as if he was capable of it. It was surely only a threat—the bullying threat of a reckless crook. But—

As Wharton faced the levelled weapon his comrades stared, in almost petrified amazement. Bob Cherry, slipping a little aside, slid his hand into his pocket. Bob had an apple there.

His fingers closed on it, and he drew it quietly from his pocket.

"Answer me, you!" The man with the automatic snarled at Harry Wharton.

"I've nothing to tell you!" answered Wharton. "If I knew where Jack Drake was I would not tell you. But I do not know."

"You lie! Tell me, or I will shoot you where you stand!" snarled the foxy-faced man savagely.

Whiz!

Bob Cherry's arm jerked and the apple flew. It crashed on the side of the man's head as he stood glaring at Wharton over his levelled weapon.

He gave a startled gasp and staggered sideways, his arm sagging. With the spring of a tiger Hurree Jamset Ram Singh leaped forward and struck the automatic from his hand.

The weapon flew through the air and dropped, splashing, into the ditch beside the road.

"Collar him!" shouted Johnny Bull.

The juniors rushed at the foxy-faced man, now disarmed. He was swept off his feet and hurled headlong in the road.

"Chuck him in the ditch!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Good egg!"

"Go it!"

"Send him after his jolly old gun!" grinned Bob.

Five pairs of hands grasped the foxy-faced man together. Whether he had, or had not, intended to use the deadly weapon he had displayed, he had asked for punishment, and he got it.

He struggled fiercely in the grasp of the Famous Five. But they swept him to the ditch and hurled him in.

He splashed in a foot of water and a foot of mud.

Muddy water rose almost in a water-spout as he crashed in. He scrambled

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to his feet, streaming, and stuttering with rage.

Leaving him to it, the chums of Greyfriars walked on towards Wimford.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets His Own Back!

"BEASTS!" grunted Billy Bunter. The fat Owl of the Remove picked himself up at last.

He was still breathing spasmodically, and his fat face was red and wrathful.

He plugged slowly up the drive.

Bunter was not feeling disposed to follow the Famous Five. Walks had no appeal for the fat Owl. If he could not go on wheels, he did not want to go. An armchair by the fire had more attractions for the fat slacker of Greyfriars.

It was like the cheek of those beasts, of course, to clear off and leave him on his own. It was also like their cheek to let that gipsy ruffian handle him like a fat humming-top. Bunter felt that he was not treated with the respect due to so distinguished and charming a guest. Indeed, he would have been tempted to take the next train home, but for the fact that Bunter Court, magnificent abode as it was, had no attractions for him, and he felt no yearning whatever for the society of his brother Sammy and his sister Bessie. He was angry and indignant, but not to the extent of shaking the dust of Wharton Lodge from his feet.

His little round eyes gleamed behind his big round spectacles at the sight of the gipsy boy again.

The gipsy was coming round the path by the side of the house.

Apparently he had been to the back

entrance, and was now coming away again. It was quite right and proper, of course, for him to go to the servants' door—Bunter approved of that. But he did not approve of the look and manner of the young gipsy. The fellow was strolling along with his hands in his pockets, whistling, looking altogether too free and easy and independent to please so aristocratic a youth as William George Bunter.

Bunter rolled away from the drive to intercept him.

The gipsy ceased to whistle and smiled as he found the fat Greyfriars junior in front of him.

Bunter frowned.

"What are you grinning at?" he demanded.

"A fat duffer!" answered the gipsy.

Bunter breathed hard.

This sort of answer from a gipsy vagrant would have justified him in knocking the fellow down.

Which Bunter would have proceeded to do, but for the circumstance that he did not want to be spun round again like a humming-top.

Knocking that gipsy down was too strenuous a task for the Owl of the Remove. It was more prudent to treat him with the contempt he deserved.

"Look here, young fellow-me-lad!" said Bunter. "Take my tip, and don't be cheeky to your betters!"

"Why not take your own tip?" asked the gipsy.

"I've a jolly good mind—" roared Bunter, his wrath breaking out at that impertinent reply.

"Where do you park it?" asked the gipsy.

"Eh?"

"You've given no signs of having a mind at all, let alone a jolly good one," explained the gipsy.

"You—you—you cheeky tick!" gasped Bunter. "Have you pinched anything while you've been up at the house?"

"No. My name's not Bunter."

The Owl of the Remove gasped with wrath. He seemed to be getting the worst of this war of words. Once more he was tempted to knock the cheeky fellow down. Once more the remembrance of his experience as a teetotum enabled him to resist the temptation.

"Well, get out!" he snapped. "See? Buzz off!"

"I'm staying here, thanks!"

"You're trespassing here."

"Not at all, old fat bean! I've been given permission to wait till Colonel Wharton comes home," explained the gipsy civilly. "I prefer to wait out of doors. So here I am!"

"You gipsies prefer hanging about in the open air, I know," sneered Bunter. "What are you grinning at now? I've a jolly good mind—"

"Gammon!"

"I've a jolly good mind to kick you out!" roared Bunter.

Once more Bunter was tempted. Once more he resisted the temptation. Instead of kicking the gipsy out, Bunter looked him up and down.

This was a frightfully contemptuous proceeding. Bunter expected it to have a crushing effect.

He fixed his eyes on the gipsy's grinning brown face and let them fall slowly to his feet. Then he raised them again to the grinning face.

At the same time his fat lip curled with scorn.

Looking the gipsy up and down, however, did not seem to crush him. His grin expanded.

"I say! That's funny!" said the gipsy.

"Eh?"

"Do it again!" said the gipsy. "Never saw a fellow make such funny faces."

Bunter turned away from him, his feelings too deep for words. That scornful process of looking the gipsy up and down only seemed to the victim a comic process of making funny faces. Evidently there was nothing to be done with such a fellow!

The gipsy, laughing, walked on.

Bunter blinked after him.

Now that the young scoundrel's back was turned Bunter was powerfully tempted to rush after him and deliver a kick.

It was easy enough! But, on the other hand, what was going to happen afterwards? The fellow, evidently, was cheeky enough to turn on Bunter and kick him also! It was not good enough!

The gipsy, apparently dismissing Bunter from his mind, sauntered on, his hands in his pockets. His manner, decidedly, was not that of a poor vagrant walking about a gentleman's estate. His coolness and self-possession naturally irritated an aristocrat like Bunter.

Regardless, and even forgetful of Bunter, the gipsy strolled on. He stopped on the edge of the ornamental pond on the lawn and stood looking across the water towards the trees of the park farther on.

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

He made a step towards the gipsy. He made another. The dusky youth did not look round.

Billy Bunter was not a light stepper. But his footsteps made no sound on the grass.

He approached the gipsy unheard as well as unseen.

He suppressed his breathing.

The sweep's bag burst, the soot gushed out.
The sweep never heard the old gent shout:
He'd seen a good thing. "My word!" said he,
"I reckon that yarn would just 'soot' me!"



—and
this
is
the
yarn—

THE SIX-GUN MANAGER

by Walter Edwards

Leedspool United were "down on their uppers" when "Nails" Fargo, the American booster and sports promoter, was appointed general manager. "Say, listen, you guys!" he told them. "This club's going

to lift the F.A. Cup—and I don't mean maybe!" He set to work with six-gun and stock whip. And did he win through? Read all about "Nails" in this rousing football yarn. It's a winner! Ask for No. 473 of

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Nearer and nearer, almost on tiptoe, soundless on the soft grass, Billy Bunter approached his intended victim.

His eyes glittered through his spectacles.

The gipsy did not glance round—he was evidently quite unaware of Bunter's stealthy stalking.

He seemed interested in the view of the sweeping park, against the blue Surrey hills, and it was clear that he had dismissed the fat Owl of Greyfriars from his mind.

Unconscious of danger, he stood on the edge of the pond, while Bunter crept and crept, closer and closer.

Really, he was asking for it. Having checked and offended Bunter, it would have been judicious to keep an eye on him. Instead of which, the gipsy had forgotten him, just as if it did not matter.

Bunter hardly breathed as he stepped close behind the gipsy. He raised both fat hands, and suddenly, with all his strength, shoved. If ever a cheeky tick deserved a ducking, that young gipsy did—and Bunter was going to give him one!

His sudden shove took the gipsy by surprise. He toppled forward, made a frantic effort to recover his balance, failed, and pitched face down into the pond.

Bunter blinked after him as he splashed in, and chuckled.

"He, he, he! How do you like that? He, he, he!"

It was quite a happy moment for Bunter.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Suspicious!

"H E, he, he!" cackinnated Billy Bunter.

"Urrgh!"

"He, he, he!"

The water in the ornamental pond, on the lawn at Wharton Lodge, was hardly more than a foot deep. The gipsy was on his feet again in a moment. He stood with the water swishing round his legs, rubbing it out of his eyes with his knuckles, and panting.

Shallow as the water was, the gipsy had fallen in full length, and was drenched from head to foot.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

"That's for your cheek, you cheeky young tick—see? He, he, he!"

"You fat idiot!" yelled the gipsy.

He knuckled the water out of his eyes and scrambled towards the bank.

Bunter ceased to chortle, and stared at him blankly, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

Where the gipsy had knuckled the water from his eyes the brown complexion of his face had disappeared!

Each of his eyes was surrounded by a circle of white, contrasting oddly with the rest of his face.

Bunter fairly goggled at him.

The fat Owl had intended to cut off at top speed before the gipsy got out of the pond. That was only judicious. The fellow was cheeky enough to pitch Bunter in, in his turn! Prompt retreat was prudent.

But that amazing change in the gipsy's face held Bunter spellbound with astonishment.

A real complexion, obviously, could not rub off when it got wet! The gipsy's complexion was not real! He was not a gipsy at all, but in some sort of disguise!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

The gipsy, perhaps unaware, in the excitement of the moment, of that startling change in his appearance, scrambled out of the pond.

Then Bunter woke to danger—amazement giving place to apprehension. As the drenched and dripping gipsy jumped towards him, he jumped back, turned, and fled.

"You silly ass!" yelled the gipsy. "You howling fathead! You potty porpoise! By gum, I'll give you a jolly good kicking!"

His words, no more than the white patches on his dusky face, were not in keeping with his character of a gipsy. He addressed Bunter, in fact, as a Greyfriars fellow might have addressed him.

But Bunter was not thinking of that. He was thinking of escape! He flew.

It was fearfully undignified, of course, for a Public school man, and so aristocratic a one as Bunter, to flee from a common person. But it was better than being kicked! Bunter fled for his fat life.

After him rushed the gipsy.

Bunter had simply no chance in the race. He had too much weight to carry. The handicap was too heavy.

In a dozen yards the gipsy overtook him. He let out a foot.

Thud!

Bunter roared, as the boot landed on the tightest trousers in the county of Surrey.

"Whoop!"

Thud!

The gipsy let out the other foot!

"Yaroooooh!"

Bunter raced. The gipsy kept pace. As he could do about three yards to Billy Bunter's one, that was easy enough. He let out his feet alternately, as he kept pace behind Bunter, dribbling the fat junior like a fat football.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter, as he flew.

Thud, thud, thud!

"Yow! Wow, wow!"

Bunter reached the terrace in front of Wharton Lodge. The door was open, and Wells, the butler, stood there, staring out, with astonishment in his plump, clean-shaven face.

Perhaps the sight of Wells caused the gipsy to desist. He ceased his pursuit, turned back, and scudded from the terrace.

Bunter, unaware that he was not still pursued, raced on to the door, spluttering for breath and yelling wildly:

"Yow-ow-ow! I say, help! Yaroooooh! Keep him off! Whoop! Help!"

He rolled breathlessly in at the portal. Wells surveyed him with cold disapproval. Of Master Harry's other guests the butler of Wharton Lodge was pleased to approve, more or less. Of William George Bunter he did not approve—and now less so than ever!

"Ow! Keep him off!" roared Bunter, as he rolled in.

"No one is following you, sir!" said Wells icily.

"You silly fool!" gasped Bunter.

"Wha-a-t?"

"Keep that beastly gipsy off! Turn him out!" spluttered Bunter. "Shut the door, you silly idiot!"

"I decline, sir, to listen to such expressions!" said Wells calmly.

"Oh! He—he—he's gone!" gasped Bunter, blinking round and making the interesting discovery that the gipsy was not in sight. "Oh! Urrgh! I—I knew he wouldn't dare follow me! He knew what he'd get, the rotter! Oooogh!"

Bunter gurgled for breath.

"I say, Wells, keep an eye on that chap!" he gasped. "He's in disguise!" Wells jumped.

"What?" he ejaculated.

"I expect he's a burglar of some sort!" gasped Bunter. "He's got his face stained brown—"

"Gipsies generally have somewhat brown complexions, sir," said Wells, staring.

"You silly idiot, he's not a gipsy! I tell you he's got his face painted brown, and some of it washed off—"

"Really, sir—" said Wells.

"You fathead, don't you believe me?" hooted Bunter.

"No, sir!" said Wells calmly.

"You silly fathead, I tell you—"

"I regret, sir, that I cannot listen to such epithets!" said Wells, and he walked away and disappeared by the service door.

"Beast!" snorted Bunter.

This, of course, was check on the part of Wells. The amount of cheek Billy Bunter had to put up with in the course of his fat career was really painful!

The fat junior blinked from the hall window. The gipsy was not to be seen.

Bunter wondered whether he had cleared off now that he had been spotted. Obviously—to Bunter—the fellow was some sort of suspicious character, hanging about Wharton Lodge for no good! Possibly, however, he had only gone off somewhere to dry his clothes.

That seemed probable, for, about an hour later, Bunter, blinking out again, spotted him coming from the direction of the garage. Likely enough Brown, the chauffeur, who had rooms over the garage, had allowed him to dry his clothes there. Anyhow, he was still at Wharton Lodge, and Bunter saw him, large as life, strolling about the lawns in the bright April sunshine.

Bunter rang for Wells.

"That fellow's still here, Wells!" he snapped, when the butler appeared.

"Quite so, sir!" said Wells. "He is waiting for the master to return."

"He's a bad character, Wells."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Some sort of a crook in disguise!" said Bunter impressively. "You'd better have him kicked out before he pinches something. I don't care to soil my hands on the fellow myself, but a couple of the footmen—"

Wells glanced from the window at the gipsy strolling in the sunshine.

"I do not think, sir, that he is likely to pinch, as you express it, anything on the lawn," he said, with smooth and almost imperceptible sarcasm. "The sun-dial is certainly too heavy for him to move!"

"Will you have him clucked out or not?" roared Bunter.

"No, sir!" said Wells.

"I shall report you to your master."

"Thank you, sir!"

"And I shall jolly well tell Colonel Wharton that you've allowed a thief to hang about the place. If anything's missing, you'll be held responsible, see?" hooted Bunter.

"I trust not, sir," said Wells. "For it happens that something is missing already."

"Oh!" Bunter's eyes gleamed. "I jolly well told you so! He's been pinching already! Well, I warned you, Wells! You'll very likely get the sack for this!"

"I hope not, sir."

"It's your fault, letting a sneak-thief hang about the place!"

"Not at all, sir! It is not for me to concern myself about the actions of Master Harry's guests."

"Eh? That gipsy fellow isn't a guest, you idiot! What do you mean?"

"I mean, sir, that what is missing is a pie from the pantry!" answered Wells, with an immovable face. "And it was certainly not the gipsy who abstracted the pie, sir."

Bunter gazed at him.

"You—you—you idiot!" he gasped at last. "Who's talking about a pie?"

"I am, sir!" answered Wells.

"You're a fool, Wells!"

"Thank you, sir!"

"You can go!" snorted Bunter.

"Very good, sir!"

Wells went.

"Cheeky beast!" grunted Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove could only make up his mind to wait till Colonel Wharton came in, and report the matter to him. He hoped to get more serious attention from the colonel than he had received from the colonel's butler!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Jack Drake's Danger!

COLONEL WHARTON stepped from his car, in a shady lane a couple of miles from Reigate.

Leaving the car under the trees by the roadside, the old military gentleman paced to and fro under the branches.

There was a slightly puzzled expression on his bronzed old face as he paced there. Every now and then he glanced up and down the lane, as if in expectation of an arrival.

But when there was a footstep at last it came from the wood bordering the lane, and he turned to face a rather tall and athletic figure that stepped from the trees.

Well he knew that sinewy figure and the cool, clear-cut face under the Homburg hat.

"My dear Locke!" said Colonel Wharton.

He shook hands with the celebrated detective of Baker Street.

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"I fear that I have mystified you a little, sir!" he remarked.

"I admit it," said the colonel. "You asked me on the telephone this morning to meet you here, and here I am, Locke. I need not say that I am at your service, if I can serve you in any way. But—"

"But you do not see why I could not come to Wharton Lodge?"

"I should be very glad to see you there, at all events," said Colonel Wharton. "And my nephew and his friends would be delighted to meet you again."

"I had my reasons, sir," said Ferrers Locke.

"I have no doubt of that, of course. Shall we get in the car?"

"I would rather step into the wood, if you don't mind."

"You mean that you may be watched?"

"I do not think so; but it is possible."

"As you like, Locke."

Colonel Wharton followed the Baker Street detective into the trees. Locke came to a halt where a felled trunk lay, and leaned on a beech. Colonel Wharton sat on the log.

"I am going to ask you to do me a service, Colonel Wharton!" said the Baker Street detective, quietly and gravely.

"You have only to ask!"

"The matter concerns the safety of my assistant, the boy Drake. You remember him?"

"A fine lad!" said Colonel Wharton. "My nephew was very friendly with him when he was a schoolboy at Greyfriars. I like the boy."

"I am glad of that, for if you accede to my request you will see a good deal of him during the next few weeks."

"You are sending him to Wharton Lodge for a holiday? Good! He will get a warm welcome from the Greyfriars boys there."

"Not exactly a holiday," said Ferrers Locke gravely. "Certainly, it will be

a holiday for him, and he has more than earned one. But it is a question of his safety. To you, of course, I must state the facts; but your nephew and his friends will not know him by his own name—"

Colonel Wharton stared.

"They will know him at a glance," he said. "It is not so very long since he was a schoolboy with them at Greyfriars."

"They will not know him at a dozen glances," said Ferrers Locke. "He has my instructions to make some changes in his appearance before arriving at your place, sir. He will not pass under his own name or under his own looks. Neither will he appear as a guest. I should like you to give him some job about the garage or the stables. You need not"—Locke smiled—"make the work too hard!"

"Good gad!" said the colonel. He tugged at his grey moustache. "I will do anything you like, Locke, of course. But I don't understand."

"This may make it clear to you," said Ferrers Locke.

He drew a paper from a pocket-book and passed it to Colonel Wharton. It was a dirty, crumpled sheet of common paper, typed on. Colonel Wharton stared at the typed words:

"Ferrers Locke!"

"You've got the Dandy! You'll change him for Jack Drake—alive or dead!"

"J."

The colonel looked a little bewildered.

"Who is the Dandy?" he asked.

"You do not follow the newspapers?" said Locke, with a smile. "The Dandy is the leader of a gang of dangerous crooks, coiners, and cracksmen. I have been on his trail for a year or more. He is now in prison."

"Oh!" said the colonel.

"He is remanded, in custody, for a month," said Ferrers Locke. "The police have sufficient evidence for that. They know more than they can, at present, prove, and it is simply a matter of accumulating evidence. When the Dandy stands his trial he will go to Dartmoor for seven years."

"Oh!" repeated the colonel.

"His right-hand man, factotum, and general jackal, is a man known as Jimmy the Fox!" went on Locke.

"J," said the colonel, glancing at the single typed letter that was all the signature to the document. "This letter, then, is from Jimmy the Fox?"

"Exactly."

"And it means—"

"It means this," said Ferrers Locke. "Whether conclusive proof is brought home against the Dandy depends largely upon me. I have the case in hand, working in conjunction with Scotland Yard. If it suited me, I could so arrange matters that no proof would be forthcoming at the Dandy's trial."

"Then this is a threat?"

"And a dangerous one!" said Ferrers Locke. "Jimmy the Fox, rascal and crook as he is, is devoted to his leader, and will stick at nothing to serve him."

"Why not arrest him also?"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"For a very simple reason," he answered. "There is no evidence of any kind against Jimmy the Fox, and the police cannot act without it."

"No doubt. But this letter—a threatening letter—"

"Typed—with no clue to the sender."

"True! But do you mean that the boy's life is in danger?" asked the colonel.

"At present, no. His liberty is in danger," answered Ferrers Locke. "Jimmy the Fox and his friends—he has many in the underworld—intend to get Drake into their hands, and trade his safety against the release of their leader. That is what the rascal means by exchange. Once they have succeeded in kidnapping him, they will hold him till the Dandy is released, at the expiration of his remand—"

"And if he is not released?"

"Then, I fear, the boy would never be seen alive again," said Ferrers Locke.

"But—they have not got him?"

"Three attempts have been made so far, and Drake has had three narrow escapes!" said Ferrers Locke. "The boy is plucky, and hardly knows the meaning of the word fear; and he would prefer to remain with me and take his chance. But in the work I have now to do, I do not need his aid, and I am very keen to place him in safety while I complete the working-up of the case against the Dandy. It will be a relief to my mind, and leave me more free for action if he disappears entirely for a time."

"I understand that!" assented the colonel.

"The idea then is, that he should come to Wharton Lodge," said Ferrers Locke. "He has worked hard of late, and a rest in the country will be good for him. But it is fairly certain that Jimmy the Fox knows that he was once a Greyfriars boy—he may even know, or find out, that he was a friend of your nephew's. The chance may be remote—but I desire to take no chances in such a matter. If there should be spying eyes at Wharton Lodge, sir, I do not desire them to spot Drake. But a gipsy boy to whom you give a job about the garage, will hardly be spotted, even by Jimmy the Fox."

"I understand! It is very easily arranged!" said Colonel Wharton. "Certainly I should prefer to receive the lad as a guest, and see him on friendly terms with my nephew. But safety first, of course."

"It will be safer to tell no one! Not even Harry—though I would trust his discretion. Least said soonest mended."

"It is settled! When will the boy arrive?"

"Probably you will find him there on your return, sir! He went on in the train after I left it. As likely as not, he was watched—but he knows the game," Locke smiled. "After leaving the train at Wimbford, he will disappear from sight in some obscure spot, and will emerge from it looking like anybody but Jack Drake."

"A clever lad!" said the colonel. He rose from the log. "Then—if I find a gipsy boy at Wharton Lodge—"

"You will call him Joe Jones," said Ferrers Locke.

The colonel smiled.

"I will remember Joe Jones, and I will see that Brown, my chauffeur, makes him useful about the garage," he said. "As it happens, in a few days the boys will be going on to Major Cherry's place in Dorset, and in the meantime, Joe Jones must keep out of their way. Is that all you have to tell me, Locke?"

"Only this further," said the Baker Street detective. "I have work to do, and from this day I disappear, to work in secret. Communication with me will be difficult, if not impossible, for some time to come. But if it should chance that danger should come—that the crooks should track Drake out—in that case he must leave you, and trust to his own devices. I place every reliance on him, and have little doubt that he will take care of himself. But—so far as



"You know where Jack Drake is!" snarled the foxy-faced motorist, whipping an automatic from his pocket and levelling it at Harry Wharton. "Tell me, or I will shoot you where you stand! Now——" He broke off suddenly, as Hurree Singh leaped forward, and struck the automatic from his hand.

one can foresee—he will be safe at Wharton Lodge."

"I have no doubt of it," said Colonel Wharton. "Now, can I give you a lift anywhere, Locke?"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"I made an appointment in this secluded spot, sir, in order to avoid being seen with you, lest spying eyes should be on me," he said. "I will walk back to the station through the woods and lanes. Not till after you are clear, though. One cannot be too careful."

"True!" agreed the colonel.

And after a few more words, he shook hands with the Baker Street detective, and walked back to his car. His bronzed old face was very thoughtful as he drove back to Wharton Lodge.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Denounced!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter was in the hall, frowning in a deep chair before the log fire, when the Famous Five came in from their walk. He heaved his weight out of the chair, and blinked at them through his big spectacles.

There was a serious, not to say tragic and mysterious, expression on Bunter's fat face, that made the chums of the Remove waste a second glance on him.

"Anything up?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter impressively.

"Give it a name!"

"That gipsy crook's still here!" said Bunter.

"You fat ass!" said Bob Cherry. "Is a fellow a crook, because he won't stand your silly check?"

"Beast!"

"Have you been kicking up a shindy with that kid again, you fat duffer?" asked Harry, frowning.

"I've thrashed him!" answered Bunter with dignity. "He was impudent, and I thrashed him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the five. From what they had seen of that sturdy and sinewy young gipsy, they fancied that it would have required five or six Bunters, at least, to thrash him.

Bunter blinked at them angrily.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," he grunted. "A Public school man can hardly be expected to take lip from a gipsy beggar. He was cheeky, so I thrashed him!"

"Left him for dead?" asked Bob. And the chums of the Remove chortled again.

"Was the deadfulness terrific?" grinned Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

"I knocked him down!" said Bunter. "He fell into the pond on the lawn! That's how I found out that he was in disguise——"

"In which?" ejaculated Frank Nugent.

"Disguise!" repeated Bunter firmly.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the fat Owl. He had succeeded in astonishing them, at least. They did not believe a word that Bunter said, of course. They never had; and they were not going to begin now. But they were surprised.

"You see, he rubbed the water out of his eyes," explained Bunter, "and in doing that he rubbed a lot of the brown off his face. Now, a brown complexion doesn't rub off, does it?"

"Not as a rule!" gasped Bob.

"So that shows that he had it painted on," said Bunter. "He's in disgust—I mean disguise—and that means that he's some sort of a crook, you know. He's here to rob the place."

"After your gold watch, perhaps!" suggested Bob Cherry gravely. "He may have heard that it's worth four-pence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I wish you'd be serious! What does it look like when a young scoundrel hangs about the place in disguise?" demanded Bunter. "He's after the old fossil's safe, of course."

"The whose?" exclaimed Wharton.

"I mean Colonel Wharton——"

"If you mean Colonel Wharton, Bunter, you'd better say Colonel Wharton! Otherwise, you may get kicked."

"Oh, really, Wharton! I don't suppose your uncle's got much in his safe—he's not rich, like my pater, of course," Bunter sniffed. "Still, there must be something in it—and that's what that gipsy is after. Spying out the place, you know, to break in at night. Plain, isn't it?"

"The plainfulness is not preposterous!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, really, Inky! What do you fellows suppose he's in disguise for?" demanded Bunter.

"We don't suppose he's in disguise at all," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We suppose that you're a silly ass, as usual, old fat man."

"The supposefulness is terrific."

"Well, I'm going to speak to the old——" Bunter stopped short of the word "fossil," as he caught a glint in Wharton's eyes. "I mean, I'm going to speak to the colonel, when he comes in. He may have sense enough to take notice of a warning. Otherwise, he'll be robbed to-night! How'd you like to wake up in the morning and find the safe cleared out?"

"Not likely to happen," grinned Bob. "Much more likely to wake up and find the larder cleared out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!"

With that scornful, if not elegant, retort, Bunter deposited his weight in the armchair again. Harry Wharton & Co., laughing, went away to make themselves tidy for tea. They had no doubt that Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, had deceived him, if he fancied that the gipsy's complexion had changed, after a tumble in the water. Indeed, they were not sure that he had tumbled in the water at all, for they certainly did not believe that Bunter had knocked him down. Bunter had not explained the

masterly strategic method by which he had got away with that!

There was a sound of a car in the drive, when the juniors came downstairs again. It stopped, and Brown came to take it away to the garage. Wells opened the door for the colonel.

By Colonel Wharton's side, as he entered, walked the gipsy. Evidently the gipsy had seen the car arrive, and lost no time in making his presence known to the old soldier.

"Follow me, Jones!" the colonel was saying.

"Yes, sir!" answered the gipsy.

He came in, with his cap in his hand. Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"Hold on, sir!" exclaimed Bunter.

Colonel Wharton glanced round at him in surprise.

"What! What! Do you want to speak to me, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!" answered Bunter emphatically. He rolled directly into the colonel's way. Raising a fat forefinger, he pointed at the astonished brown face of the gipsy. "I denounce him!"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped the colonel.

"You blithering fat ass, shut up!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Bunter, you dummy!" exclaimed Harry.

"My esteemed and idiotic Bunter——"

Bunter did not heed the juniors. He stood in front of the astounded colonel, the fat forefinger raised in denunciation.

To Bunter's mind it was quite a dramatic scene. It was reminiscent of things he had seen on the films.

It was, in fact, altogether too much like the films to please Colonel Wharton. After a stare of astonishment, he snorted:

"You young ass! What do you mean?"

"I denounce him!" repeated Bunter.

"He's a crook!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"He's in disguise!"

Colonel Wharton started violently.

"That complexion of his washes off!" declared Bunter. "Look at him! Some of it washed off when I ducked him in the pond——"

All the juniors were looking at the gipsy. Had any of his dusky complexion been missing, certainly they would not have failed to note the strange circumstance.

But the swarthy brown hue of his face was unbroken. If, as Bunter stated, some of the complexion had washed off, it had been replaced since.

Not that they believed for a moment that it had washed off. It looked perfectly natural, and they had no reason to suppose it otherwise. No reason, that is, except Bunter's statement, which weighed less than a feather-weight.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He discerned now that the gipsy's complexion was unimpaired. "I—I say, he's painted it on again!"

"You howling ass!" exclaimed Nugent.

"You footling fathead!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Beast! I tell you——"

"For goodness' sake shut up, Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "I tell you that gipsy is in disguise, and he's here to rob the house, and——"

"Be silent, sir!" roared Colonel Wharton.

"But I tell you——"

"Nonsense!"

"I say, make him wash!" yelled Bunter. "You make him wash, and

you'll jolly well see that that complexion comes off!"

"If you say another word, Bunter, I shall box your ears!" snorted Colonel Wharton. "Be silent!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, jumping back.

"Jones, follow me!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Joe Jones, the gipsy, followed the colonel into the library. The heavy oak door shut on them. Billy Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles.

"I—I—I say, you fellows——" he gasped.

"You frabjous ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You footling frump!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "I tell you——"

"Ring off!"

"I tell you——" shrieked Bunter.

"Can it!"

"I tell you——"

"Fathead!"

The gong sounded for tea. Harry Wharton & Co. headed for the drawing-room, where Aunt Amy presided over the tea-table. And Billy Bunter at last shut up. A meal-time called—and Bunter was never deaf to such a call. His startling discovery of the gipsy's disguise, and his deep and dark suspicions of the gipsy's intentions, were important—but not so important as tea! Billy Bunter guzzled cake, and his fat chin—being otherwise occupied—ceased to wag!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

"W HITHER bound, old fat man?"

"That's telling!"

"Eh?"

Harry Wharton & Co. were strolling on the terrace after tea, when Billy Bunter rolled out in hat and coat.

Bunter, apparently, was going out. But in reply to Bob Cherry's question, as to whither he was bound, his reply was non-committal.

His destination, it seemed, was a secret.

"Perhaps you'd like to know!" he added, blinking at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles, with quite a mysterious blink.

Bob Cherry laughed. If Billy Bunter chose to be mysterious, nobody had the slightest desire to penetrate the mystery.

"Not at all, old fat bean!" he answered.

"Well, I'm not going to tell you!" said Bunter.

"Don't!" agreed Bob. "The less you talk the better."

"Beast! I dare say you'll hear about it later!" said Bunter, still more mysteriously. "I can tell you this much—I'm going to take steps."

"You mean you're going for a walk?" asked Bob, puzzled.

"I mean I'm going to take steps!" said Bunter mysteriously. "I'm not going to see an old donkey robbed."

"Wandering in your mind?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yah!"

"What on earth have you got in your idiotic noddle now, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"That's telling!"

"Fathead!"

"Beast!" retorted Bunter.

And—still mysterious—he rolled away, and disappeared down the drive. The Famous Five stared after him.

"That fat idiot's up to something!" said Nugent.

"But what?" asked Bob.

"Goodness knows!"

"Luckily, it doesn't matter!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The matterfulness is not terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

And the fat and fatuous Owl was dismissed from mind. The chums of the Remove had, in fact, a more important matter to think about than Billy Bunter, and whatever antics he might be "up to."

They were discussing the strange episode of the foxy faced man on the Wimford road, and debating whether Colonel Wharton had better be told about it.

They went on discussing it, and so it happened that when the colonel came out to take a turn on the terrace, he was rather startled to hear a name uttered by one of the juniors—the name of Jack Drake!

That name, of course, was very much in the colonel's mind, since his interview with Ferrers Locke, and since he had found the gipsy boy at Wharton Lodge.

The gipsy boy was now at the garage, and, so far as the colonel knew, none of the Greyfriars schoolboys had come into contact with him—except, unluckily, Billy Bunter.

"Good gad!" ejaculated the colonel, as he caught the name, uttered by Bob Cherry. He strode towards the group. "What's that? What were you saying, Cherry?"

"I was speaking of Jack Drake, sir," answered Bob, little guessing what was in the colonel's mind. "A chap we knew at Greyfriars——"

"Yes, yes! What of him?" exclaimed the colonel. "You have not seen him—lately, I mean?"

"Oh, no, sir! Haven't seen him since last hols," answered Bob.

Colonel Wharton smiled. Evidently his nephew and his school friends were still quite unaware of the identity of the gipsy boy who had passed them in the hall before tea, and whom Billy Bunter had so dramatically denounced.

He was relieved, but he was still puzzled. It was an odd coincidence that the juniors should be speaking of Ferrers Locke's assistant, when, at that very moment, he was within a hundred yards of them.

"There's something we think we ought to tell you, uncle!" said Harry. "It happened this afternoon while you were gone out——"

"Nothing concerning Jack Drake, surely?" exclaimed Colonel Wharton.

"Well, yes!"

"Tell me at once!" said the colonel curtly.

Wharton related what had happened on the Wimford road. Colonel Wharton listened with a deep attention that surprised the juniors. He asked them to give a description of the man with the automatic, and started when they described him as a man with a foxy face. He remembered the curious nickname of the imprisoned Dandy's faithful henchman—Jimmy the Fox! Was it Jimmy the Fox who had been so near to the trail? There could be little doubt of that in the colonel's mind.

"You saw nothing more of the man?" he asked.

"Nothing, uncle," answered Harry. "The car was gone, and he was gone, when we came back from Wimford later."

"He had the impression that you knew where Drake was?"

"Yes, he seemed sure about that."

"He may have watched for your

return, and ascertained that you came back here!" said Colonel Wharton, gnawing his lip.

"If he did, he kept out of sight," said Nugent.

"He would keep out of sight!" said the colonel grimly. He stood with a knitted, thoughtful brow, the juniors exchanging rather curious glances. It was clear that the incident had made a deep impression on the old military gentleman. Why, they could hardly understand. It would have been alarming enough, certainly, if Jack Drake had been at Wharton Lodge; but, so far as they knew, he was a hundred miles away.

Colonel Wharton had doubted, after his interview with Ferrers Locke, whether the disguise, and the assumed name, were really needed to keep Jack Drake safe in his refuge.

He realised now that Locke had been right.

Had Drake been staying under his own name, as a friend of the Greyfriars fellows, in the house, obviously, it would not have been long before Jimmy the Fox would have known where to lay a finger on him.

It was clear that Drake's safety lay in keeping his name and his presence at Wharton Lodge a dead secret.

"You are sure you saw no more of the man?" asked the colonel at length.

"Quite!" said Harry. "If he was watching for us, he never let us see him at it. No harm if he was, I suppose, as Drake's nowhere about here."

The colonel made no reply to that.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"If he's after Drake, it's rather a lark for him to be wasting his time pottering about after us, just because we knew the chap at school!" he remarked.

"He is a dangerous character!" said the colonel abruptly. "If you see anything more of him, or of other suspicious characters, about the place, please let me know immediately. In fact, if you have nothing better to do, you might take a walk round and keep your eyes open."

"Certainly!" said Harry.

The juniors, rather surprised, but quite willing to do as the colonel asked, fetched their caps and went down the drive, in a cheery bunch. Colonel Wharton stared after them, tugging at his grizzled moustache.

When they were gone he walked round to the garage. Over the garage were two comfortable rooms, hitherto occupied by Brown, the chauffeur. Brown had now been accommodated with quarters in the house, and his rooms over the garage handed over to Joe Jones, the gipsy. A brown face looked from a window as Colonel Wharton came into the garage yard.

Colonel Wharton stopped under the window, which was open. The gipsy leaned out.

"Comfortable here, my boy?" asked Colonel Wharton.

"Quite, thanks!" answered Ferrers Locke's assistant. "It's awfully good of you, sir!"

"Nonsense!" grunted the colonel. "But I've something to tell you, Drake—er—"

"Jones, sir!"

"I mean Jones!"

In a few curt words the colonel told what he had just heard from the juniors.

"Jimmy the Fox!" said the gipsy. "I fancied we were watched on the train. He got a car at Wimford and followed me—I dare say in the hope of getting me as a passenger in the car." He laughed. "I think it's all right, sir. The questions he asked the Greyfriars fellows show that he was looking for me

in my own name and character, not for a gipsy boy named Jones."

"True!" said the colonel. "Ferrers Locke was right. It was unlucky that that stupid boy, Bunter—"

"Bunter is not likely to pass on information to Jimmy the Fox!" said Ferrers Locke's assistant, with a smile.

The colonel smiled, too.

"No," he agreed. "That is not likely."

Neither of them guessed that, unlikely as it was, it was happening in those very moments.

Bunter uttered his dark warnings unheeded.

Yet Bunter knew, if nobody else did, that that young gipsy was in some sort of a disguise—that he was keeping up some sort of a deception.

Probably Bunter would not have given the matter so much attention, but for the fact that the gipsy had been so disrespectful to him personally.

But a fellow who had swung Bunter round like a humming-top, who had chased him, and kicked him, was a fellow to be severely dealt with.

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

— 1 —

Each time I go to interview

The lads of whom you're reading,
I silently admit it's true

That names are most misleading.

Thus "Rake" treads not the downward path

Which is to "Angel's" liking,

And "Tubb" won't venture near a bath,
While "Walker's" fond of biking.



— 3 —

By Captain Blundell's side he walks
When there are plans or plots on,
And listens while old Blundell talks,
Like Holmes and Dr. Watson;
He backs his chum through thick and thin,

The chief of his supporters—
In fact, they call him "Blundell's twin"

In certain junior quarters.



— 4 —

I called on Bland and said: "Good day!

I'd like some information;

You're fond of footer, I daresay,

But not of conversation?

And Virgil—you would punch his head

Without the slightest warning?"

Bland looked at me and calmly said:

"Yes! No! Yes! Quite! Good morning!"



— 6 —

I soon was sorry I had scoffed

At such a strong first-rater:

He said: "I'll show you if I'm soft!"

And did—a moment later I

My hoko hit the passage floor

With terrible concussion,

And then Bland slammed his study door—

This ended the discussion!



— 5 —

"I've not gone yet," I pointed out;

"Is Blundell your protector?"

They say when Blundell's round about

You're nothing but a spectre!

He treats you, so it seems to me,

Just like a bag or bundle;

You must be rather soft to be

The satellite of Blundell!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Means Business!

BILLY BUNTER tramped up the road towards Wimford with a determined expression on his fat face.

It was just as well for Bunter, perhaps, that he had been so very mysterious, and had refused to reveal what his mysterious errand was. For had Harry Wharton & Co. been aware of his intention, it was probable that the Owl of the Remove would have been yanked back by his fat ears. Billy Bunter was bound for Wimford—and the police station there!

Nobody had taken any notice of Bunter's warning. The juniors had laughed at it; the colonel had told him to be silent. Like Cassandra of old, prophesying woe in doomed Troy,

Bunter had no doubt that he was a law-breaker.

Law-breakers ought to be run in—especially law-breakers who kicked Billy Bunter on his right trousers!

Moreover, Bunter had a natural desire to prove that he was in the right, and the other fellows in the wrong.

He realised, too, that it meant kudos for him if he was the means of showing up a crook and getting him nabbed.

That the gipsy was a crook he did not doubt. Why else was he hanging about Wharton Lodge in disguise?

That old ass—that old fossil—that old fathead—the colonel, had actually given him a job!

Instead of taking Bunter's tip, kicking the young rascal out, or handing him over to the police, Colonel Wharton had given him a job about the garage and

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allowed him to take up his quarters in Brown's rooms over that building.

Such fatuousness excited Bunter's deepest contempt. The old donkey, evidently, had less sense in his head than Bunter had in his little finger. He was fairly asking for it!

For Bunter had not the slightest expectation that the gipsy would be still there in the morning. He was firmly convinced that Joe Jones was at Wharton Lodge for purposes of robbery, and that he would carry out that purpose during the night and vanish before cockcrow.

It was all so perfectly clear to Bunter that he could only wonder at the obtuseness of other fellows, who could not see it so clearly as he did.

But he was going to put a spoke in the young scoundrel's wheel! The police-inspector at Wimford would listen to him, if nobody else did! And that cheeky young villain, who had dribbled him like a fat football, would have to explain to the police why he wore a complexion that came off when it was washed! He would get at least three months as a suspicious character, frequenting with felonious intent! That was little enough—he deserved three years, for kicking Bunter!

With his determination firmly fixed, the fat Owl of the Remove plugged up the Wimford Road. But the farther he progressed the more and more slowly he went. Walking was not Bunter's long suit.

He blinked round incessantly through his big spectacles in the hope of picking up a lift.

Any sort of a lift would have been welcome to Bunter. Two or three cars whizzed by him, and he blinked after them longingly.

He was watching anxiously for a lift, but he was not watching for anything else, so he was happily unaware that ever since he had rolled away from the gate of Wharton Lodge a pair of keen, foxy eyes had been on him.

Once or twice, when he blinked round, he noticed that a slim man, in a spotted muffler, with a dark moustache, was strolling in the same direction, a little distance behind him. But he gave him no special heed.

Jimmy the Fox, on the other hand, was heeding Bunter.

As the colonel had suspected, the Fox had watched for the return of Harry Wharton & Co., had traced them to Wharton Lodge.

Whether Jack Drake was there with his old school friends the Fox did not know, but he thought it very likely. The juniors, certainly, had told him that they knew nothing of Drake's whereabouts, but Jimmy's was not a trusting nature.

He had left his car parked in a woodland path, out of sight, and hung about Wharton Lodge ever since, having donned the spotted muffler and the dark moustache to change his appearance a little, in case he was seen.

Now he was shadowing Bunter.

He had never seen the fat junior before, but he saw him come out of Wharton Lodge, and he could see that he was a schoolboy. Obviously, he was staying at the place, and could tell Jimmy the Fox what he wanted to know—if he chose.

The Fox was prepared to use any methods, from persuasion to neck-twisting, to elicit information. So he kept on Bunter's track till he was at some distance from Wharton Lodge, and then quickened his pace and overtook the fat junior. Billy Bunter blinked round at him as he heard his footsteps close behind.

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"Looking for a lift, sir?" asked Jimmy the Fox.

He had easily guessed the meaning of Bunter's longing blinks at passing vehicles.

"Yes, rather!" answered Bunter.

"I've got my car just handy, if you're going my way."

"I'm going to Wimford."

"That's my way," said Jimmy the Fox agreeably. "I left my car to take a little stroll, but it's time I got back. Wait here a few minutes, and I'll be along in a brace of shakes."

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter, in great relief. "Much obliged!"

"Not at all!" answered Jimmy politely. "Pleasure, sir!"

He spoke the truth. Bunter was anxious for a lift, but not so anxious as Jimmy the Fox was to give him one!

Thankfully the fat Owl sat on the lower step of a stile, while Jimmy the Fox hurried into a woodland path. Twice the slim man glanced back, to make sure that Bunter was not going on. But he need not have been uneasy—nothing would have induced the fat Owl to hoof it when there was a chance of a lift.

Five minutes later the slim man with the foxy eyes came whizzing back in a two-seater. He pulled in, and Bunter gladly clambered in and sat down by his side. It was a long, long walk to Wimford, but in a car it was only a matter of ten minutes or so.

Bunter blinked round as the slim man turned from the road.

"I say, it's straight on to Wimford!" he said.

"Road's up outside the town, sir!" answered Jimmy the Fox. "Have to go round."

"Oh, I see!"

Jimmy was in no hurry to reach Wimford. The car turned through a lane into a country road, and glided on—away from that town. Bunter was in no hurry, if it came to that. His chief desire was to make the trip sitting down—and he was sitting down! Nothing else mattered very much. And he was quite pleased with his companion. He had rather a foxy look, perhaps, but he was well dressed, he had a car, he was giving Bunter a lift, and he addressed him as "sir"—evidently realising that Bunter was no common sort of person! And when he began to talk, he allowed Bunter to do nearly all the talking! Bunter liked to do nearly all the talking!

Seldom or never did Bunter come across anybody who was willing to listen with polite interest while he wagged his fat chin. But he had come across such a person now! For once, Billy Bunter had a keenly interested listener who was glad to hear him talk and talk and talk!

And Billy Bunter, of course, talked and talked and talked!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

On the Track!

JIMMY THE FOX was puzzled.

He had been prepared, as afore-said, to use any methods of extracting information from the fat schoolboy who had dropped so easily into his hands.

But he did not find it necessary to use any method except lending an attentive ear.

Bunter was only too willing to talk, and his chief topic, of course, was William George Bunter, a topic of endless and infinite interest to W. G. B. himself.

Jimmy the Fox had the pleasure, such as it was, of learning all about Bunter. He learned that he was in the Remove at Greyfriars; that he would have been captain of the Form, but for a general jealousy; that he was the best junior footballer at Greyfriars, but had been kept out of games by jealous fellows who envied his powers; that he was the best cricketer, but did not expect much better luck next term in the summer game, for the same reasons.

He learned that Bunter was passing the Easter holidays with his school friends at Wharton Lodge, and was going on with them later to Cherry Place, in Dorset; that this was an act of kindness on Bunter's part; that he was sought after by nearly every fellow in his school, especially Lord Mauleverer, and Hilton of the Fifth, and Vernon-Smith, the son of the millionaire city man; but that he felt bound to give these fellows some of his time.

He learned the names of the Greyfriars fellows who were at Wharton Lodge, and that each of them was rather a beast.

All these particulars Bunter rattled off, in great enjoyment of his favourite occupation of chinwagging.

Wherefore was Jimmy the Fox puzzled?

That that fat and fatuous young ass was chattering like a parrot, and had no idea of concealing anything, was clear! Yet he made no mention whatever of Jack Drake. Obviously he would have mentioned Drake, as well as the rest, had Ferrers Locke's assistant been at Wharton Lodge.

Jimmy the Fox began to wonder whether he was on a false scent after all.

Certainly he had tracked Drake to Wimford that morning, and lost him afterwards. Coming on the Greyfriars fellows he had jumped to the conclusion that Drake had come there to join up with friends from his old school. It had seemed very probable—indeed, certain! Drake must have had some reason for coming there—he must have intended to put up somewhere. And the question "where" seemed to be answered by the discovery of his school friends in the vicinity.

Yet it was certain that if Drake was at Wharton Lodge this fat young ass would know—and evidently he did not know.

If he was wasting time on a false scent Jimmy the Fox was anxious to get away and hunt for the right scent. But he wanted to be sure first. So, as Bunter did not introduce the subject of Jack Drake, Jimmy the Fox came to that subject himself, at last.

"Speaking of Greyfriars, sir," he remarked, in the civil, respectful way that pleased Bunter so much, "I've seen something in the newspapers about a Greyfriars boy. Name of Drake. Ever heard of him?"

"What-ho!" answered Bunter. "Great pal of mine!"

"Oh, you knew him at school, sir?"

"Yes, rather!" answered Bunter. "In fact, I protected him a good deal when he was a new kid at Greyfriars! He left to go into business with a detective. I dare say you've heard of Ferrers Locke."

"I've seen the name in the papers," answered Jimmy the Fox.

"He's a relation of our headmaster, Dr. Locke," explained Bunter. "We've often seen him at the school. Well, young Drake's his assistant now—in the detective business, you know. I dare say that's how you came to see his name in the papers."



Bunter stepped close behind the gipsy, raised both fat hands, and shoved. His sudden shove took the gipsy by surprise. He toppled forward, made a frantic effort to recover his balance, failed, and pitched head-first into the pond. "How do you like that?" chuckled the Owl of the Remove. "He, he, he!"

"Now I come to think of it, it was!" assented Jimmy the Fox. "I dare say you've seen him recently, sir?"

"No, not since last holidays—that is, the hols before last!" answered Bunter. "Of course, our social positions are rather different now."

"Eh?"

"I'm friendly with him, of course," said Bunter. "But a chap in my social position, naturally, doesn't see a lot of a fellow in business."

"Oh! I—I see! He's not staying at Wharton Lodge with his friends, then?" asked Jimmy the Fox, coming out with a plain question at last.

"Oh, no!" answered Bunter. "I jolly well wish he was, really! Being a detective, he would know a suspicious character when he saw one, I fancy!"

Jimmy the Fox gave the fat Owl a sidelong glance. He wondered whether Bunter had heard the other fellows speak of the man with the automatic! If so, however, it was clear that Bunter had no suspicion of him!

"Still, I fancy I can spot a rogue when I see one!" added Bunter complacently. "The rotter can't take me in!"

Jimmy smiled faintly. Considering who was sitting by his side at that moment, Bunter's capacity for spotting rogues did not seem very pronounced. Jimmy was glad, however, that he was now sporting a moustache. If the juniors had described the man—

"A suspicious character!" he repeated. "Who's that, sir?"

"A young gipsy!" answered Bunter.

"A gipsy!" repeated Jimmy. He was not interested in gipsies. But he understood now that the suspicious character to whom Bunter alluded was not himself.

"At least, he makes out that he's a gipsy!" explained Bunter. "But when

a gipsy's complexion washes off, I fancy it's a bit suspicious, what?"

Jimmy gave him his keenest attention now. This was quite unexpected; but Jimmy was "on it" like a hawk on his prey. The merest hint of anybody in disguise at Wharton Lodge was sufficient to open up a new train of thought in the crook's cunning and wary mind.

"A young gipsy, did you say, sir?" he remarked. "Maybo I've seen him about? A lad of about your own age, perhaps?"

"About that!" agreed Bunter. "And no more a gipsy that I am, I can tell you. He's taken all the fellows in, and the old colonel, too, but he jolly well can't take me in. I'm jolly well going to show him up. I jolly well know why he's sticking at the Lodge."

"Staying there, sir?" said Jimmy.

"The old donkey—I mean, Colonel Wharton—has given him a job in the garage!" explained Bunter. "Mind, that was after I warned him that the gipsy's complexion came off when he was ducked in the pond. Mind, I saw it—white patches where he rubbed the water from his eyes after his ducking. He patched it up again before the colonel saw him. But I'd jolly well spotted him. And he's pitched the old donkey some yarn and got a job about the place." Bunter sniffed with contempt. "I jolly well know the job he's got in mind! Burgling the house to-night, of course."

"But I dare say the colonel knows him, as he's given him a job!" suggested Jimmy the Fox.

"I don't see how he could!" answered Bunter. "Wharton never knew him, I know that—he was a stranger in the place. He's just pulled the old donkey's leg and got a job. A cheeky rotter, you know! He checked

me, that's why I ducked him in the pond. And then some of his complexion washed off!" I jolly well spotted him! He, he, he!"

Jimmy the Fox felt his heart beat quicker.

"And they've let him stay in the house?" he asked.

"Not in the house—over the garage! The chauffeur's changed his rooms, to make room for him!" explained Bunter. "But I fancy he'll get into the house all right to-night, and rob it, too, if he's not stopped."

"I wonder if I've seen the fellow hanging about?" said Jimmy the Fox musingly. "Did you say he had black eyes?"

"I didn't mention his eyes. But they're blue, not black. Gipsies don't often have blue eyes, either—any more than they have complexions that wash off. He, he, he!"

Jimmy's own eyes snapped. He was certain now.

The Greyfriars fellows had told him the truth—so far as they knew it. Jack Drake had not come to Wharton Lodge as Jack Drake.

But he had come. A boy of his age—a gipsy with blue eyes, who was not a gipsy at all—had turned up there.

Colonel Wharton had given him a job in the garage—had he? Jimmy the Fox grinned. He did not know the old colonel; but he doubted very much whether he was donkey enough, as Bunter believed, to give a job about the place to a wandering gipsy he did not know.

The Fox breathed hard and deep. He knew now—all he wanted to know. He had had bad luck with the other Greyfriars fellows. He had been a long, long time cleaning off the mud of the

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(Continued from page 13.)

ditch, and his automatic still reposed at the bottom of that ditch. But he had struck lucky in this fat fellow.

He turned the car towards Wimford again.

He had no further use for Bunter.

Bunter rattled on—his topic now the gipsy boy. Jimmy the Fox was keen to hear all that he had to say on that subject. Having said it all, Bunter said it all over again. Jimmy, realising that he had pumped the fat schoolboy dry, ran the car into Wimford High Street, and pulled in.

"Here we are, sir!" he said.

Bunter stepped out.

"Much obliged!" he said.

"Not at all, sir. You don't know what a pleasure your conversation has been to me," answered Jimmy the Fox.

And he drove on.

Bunter blinked after the car. He thought he had never met such a thoroughly pleasant and agreeable man as the man who drove that car, foxy as he looked. Bunter was feeling very pleased with himself and things generally as he blinked round for the police station, and started for that building, where he had quite a startling piece of information to hand over to an astonished police inspector.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Limit!

"THE telephone, sir!" said Wells. Colonel Wharton glanced up from his newspaper.

"Inspector Stacey, sir, speaking from Wimford," said the butler. "He desires to speak to you personally, sir."

"Very well."

Considerably puzzled to know why Inspector Stacey desired to speak to him personally, the old colonel went to the telephone in the cabinet opening off the hall of Wharton Lodge. Harry Wharton & Co. were in the hall, having come in from an extensive ramble, during which they had seen nothing of the foxy-faced man.

"Colonel Wharton!" came a portly voice over the wires, as the old military gentleman took up the receiver.

"Speaking!"

"I have just heard an extraordinary statement, sir, and I thought it better to consult you immediately. A young gentleman of the name of Bunter—"

"Bunter!" repeated Colonel Wharton.

"From what he says, I understand that he is a friend of your nephew at school, and is staying with him for Easter."

"The boy Bunter is certainly staying here for Easter," said Colonel Wharton. "He has gone out now, I believe. I hope that nothing has happened to him."

"Nothing, sir. He is here now."

"Indeed!" said the puzzled colonel.

"But why—"

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"He has made a very odd statement, sir. It is the fact that a gipsy boy—a stranger to you—is now at Wharton Lodge."

Colonel Wharton jumped, and almost dropped the receiver.

"A—a—a gipsy boy!" he stuttered.

"A boy called, I think, Jones—Joe Jones."

"Good gad! Yes, there is such a boy here!" gasped the colonel. "But what about it? How does it concern Bunter?"

"Master Bunter, sir, seems to entertain very strange suspicions of the boy."

"Good gad!"

"He tells me that, as his warning on the subject was disregarded, he felt it his duty to inform the police—"

"The young ass!"

"Hem! His statement is certainly very peculiar, sir. According to what he says, the boy, Jones, is not a real gipsy, but is disguised as one. Bunter states that he knows this for a fact."

"The young idiot!"

"Hem! He states that you have engaged the boy to assist in the garage to—"

"That is correct."

"And it appears to be his firm belief that the boy is a shady character of some sort, with felonious designs—"

"The young imbecile!"

"Hem! I thought it my duty, sir, to communicate with you," said Inspector Stacey. "Of course, I take no heed of this absurd statement, but—"

"I should imagine not, sir," grunted the colonel. "You will oblige me by boxing the silly boy's ears."

"Hem! You are, of course, acquainted with the character of the gipsy lad you have engaged?"

"I am not likely, sir, to repose confidence in any person with whom I am unacquainted!" snapped the colonel.

"Of course not, sir—of course not!" The Wimford inspector coughed. "I felt it my duty to mention the matter to you."

"Quite so," said the colonel. "Oh, quite so! But the boy, Bunter, as you have doubtless observed, is a fool."

"I had rather that impression, sir."

"He is also a meddlesome and inquisitive young ass, and seems incapable of minding his own business. Please turn him out, and tell him that I shall box his ears for his impertinence when he returns here."

"Hem! Certainly Good-bye, Colonel Wharton!"

"Good-bye!"

Colonel Wharton hung up and tramped out of the telephone cabinet, with his eyes glinting under his grizzled brows.

The juniors glanced at him rather curiously. They could see that that talk on the telephone had exasperated the old soldier.

"Harry!" barked the colonel.

"Yes, uncle."

"Why did you ask that meddling, prying, stupid boy, Bunter, here?"

Wharton looked rather uncomfortable.

"Well, you see—" he stammered.

"You are well aware, Harry, that all your school friends are welcome here—more than welcome," said Colonel Wharton. "I am always glad to see them, as you know. But this—this Bunter is not a friend of yours."

"Well, you see—"

The other fellows stood silent. It was evident that Billy Bunter had been "up" to something that had exasperated Wharton's uncle intensely. Bunter, as a guest anywhere, often had an exasperating effect. But it was clear that this was something more serious than usual.

"The stupid, meddling, prying young ass!" fumed the colonel.

"What has he done, uncle?" asked Harry dismally.

Snort from the colonel.

"The young fool is pleased to think that I am stupid enough to take doubtful characters into my house, and he has gone to the police to tell them so," he growled.

"Oh, my hat!"

"That gipsy kid—" ventured Nugent.

"Yes!" snorted the colonel.

"The blithering idiot!" breathed Bob Cherry. "So that's what he was so jolly mysterious about. If we'd known it—"

"He has gone to the police station about that kid!" exclaimed Harry Wharton blankly.

"Yes!" roared the colonel.

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors could understand that the old colonel was exasperated by Bunter's fatuous meddling.

But they did not understand why his anger was so intense. With Jack Drake staying in disguise at Wharton Lodge, obviously the less that was said about the gipsy boy in the garage, the better. Now Bunter was proclaiming from the house-tops, as it were, that he was there, and that he suspected him of being in disguise. True, Jimmy the Fox was not likely to get any news from the police at Wimford. But it was deeply and intensely exasperating, all the same.

Colonel Wharton made up his mind on the spot. Bunter's chattering might, or might not, spell danger to the assistant of Ferrers Locke. But the remotest chance had to be guarded against. Having demonstrated that he could not mind his own business, Bunter had to go. There was no room at Wharton Lodge for both Jack Drake and the tattling Owl.

"I am sorry, Harry," the colonel went on in a gentler tone. "But something is expected of a guest as well as a host. It appears impossible for this extraordinary boy Bunter to mind his own business. His action in going to the police places me in a ridiculous position."

"I know."

"I am sure you will see that after what he has done he cannot remain here. The position is intolerable."

"I see that, uncle."

"I leave the matter in your hands, Harry."

"Very well," said Harry dismally.

Colonel Wharton stalked away. The chums of the Remove exchanged glances.

"That's torn it!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"The tearfulness is terrific."

"If I were your uncle, old bean, I'd kick him out with a jolly hefty kick!" said Johnny Bull. "The cheeky fat idiot!"

"Dash it all, it's too thick!" said Frank Nugent. "I suppose the silly fat ass doesn't understand what a cheeky, meddling idiot he is—"

"Does he ever understand anything?" said Harry.

"Well, the colonel can't be expected to stand it!" said Johnny Bull. "Making him look a fool!"

Harry Wharton nodded. It was clear that Bunter had to go. The parting was not likely to be painful if it came to that. Bunter had hooked on to the Co. for Easter, as he always hooked on to somebody. Still, it was rather unpleasant to tell a fellow that he had to go. Bunter had asked for it—begged for it, in fact—but that did not make it

agreeable to give him that for which he had asked.

But there was no help for it. Everybody bore, with more or less patience, Billy Bunter's innumerable faults and failings, but he had gone over the limit this time. Even Bunter might have realised that he could not quite be allowed to take the management of Wharton Lodge into his fat hands while he was honouring that establishment with his distinguished presence.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Order of the Boot!

"WELLS!"
"Sir!"
"Pay the taxi."
Bunter rolled in.

The taximan from Wimford was waiting for his fare. Had any other Greyfriars fellow at Wharton Lodge told

Wells to pay the taxi, no doubt Wells would have done so as a matter of course.

With Bunter, however, it was not a matter of course. Any other fellow would have reimbursed Wells; Bunter wouldn't.

So, instead of paying the taxi, Wells gazed at Bunter. He gazed, however, only at the back of Bunter's head. Bunter, apparently regarding that trifling matter as settled, rolled into the hall, where he found the Famous Five.

Shortsighted as he was, even the fat Owl of the Remove could see that the juniors were looking very serious. He blinked at them.

Bunter was not feeling in a good temper himself. His interview with Inspector Stacey, at Wimford, had not been exactly gratifying.

Indeed, Mr. Stacey had quite annoyed Bunter. Instead of listening open-mouthed to his dramatic communication,

instead of acting promptly on "information received," the inspector had rung up Wharton Lodge, and then dismissed Bunter very curtly, almost gruffly.

"I say, you fellows—" began Bunter.

Wells hovered behind.

"The taxi, sir—"

Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles as if annoyed by this persistence on the part of a menial.

"Taxi? What about the taxi?" he snapped.

"The driver is waiting to be paid, sir," said Wells.

"I told you to pay him."

"Quite so, sir."

"Well, haven't you paid him?" snapped Bunter.

"No, sir."

"Pay him, then—and don't bother!" snapped Bunter.

(Continued on next page.)



Who will win the F.A. Cup this season—Sheffield Wednesday or West Bromwich Albion? It is the question the whole football world is asking. This week "Linesman" reviews the two teams for the special benefit of MAGNET readers.

THE "OLD INVINCIBLES"!

WHO wins the Cup this season—Sheffield Wednesday or West Bromwich Albion? That is the question which will be hotly debated during the few days preceding the big struggle at Wembley, and the real answer is, of course, that nobody knows. I have seen over thirty Cup Finals myself, and looking back on those games, the surprises I have had, the one definite impression left in my mind is that anything may happen.

Even before the days when I was old enough to take an interest in Cup Finals it was true that anything could happen. In this connection, and remembering that West Bromwich are in the final this season, a story of one of the earliest appearances of this club in the final tie may be recalled. In 1888 Preston North End had a wonderful side. They had become known as the "Old Invincibles," and it was generally conceded that they just could not be beaten by any side of their period.

They had to meet West Bromwich Albion in the final tie, and the players and officials of Preston North End were so confident of victory that the request was actually made that they should have the Cup lent to them before the match so that the whole party could have their photographs taken with the Cup in their midst.

The request was refused, and the question put to them: "Don't you think you had better win it first?" As events proved, it was a most pertinent question, for West Bromwich sprang a surprise on the football world by beating Preston North End by two goals to one.

There was a young player in that West Bromwich side named Billy Bassett, an outside-right, who afterwards gained much fame on the football field. This same Billy Bassett will be at Wembley

at the week-end to watch West Bromwich make another effort to win the English Cup. He is now chairman of the board of directors who run the West Bromwich club.

Probably the player Mr. Bassett will watch most closely of all, because his first Cup Final will come back to memory, will be Arthur Gale, the West Bromwich outside-right. He is quite a young player, and rather a remarkable fellow. Although he is a professional, he follows his occupation of a school teacher during the week, doing his bit of training in the evenings, and only came into the Albion's side this season when the man who skippered the team in the final four years ago—Glidden—was injured. Gale certainly lives a full life. Immediately after one of the Cup-ties which the Albion played this season he hopped into an aeroplane and flew from West Bromwich to Manchester to take his part in an amateur theatrical performance.

A PLAYER TO BE WATCHED!

ACCORDING to present arrangements, eight of the West Bromwich players out of the eleven who will play against the Wednesday are already holders of Cup winners' medals. They were in the team which won the trophy four years ago. And that, of course, may be considered a point in favour of the Albion, because nerves play a most important part in Cup Finals, and fellows who have been there before are less likely to be nervous than those who have never been through the trying ordeal.

Strange that in the Albion side there are two players whose names are the same—William Richardson. One plays at centre-half, and the other at centre-forward. Those who are privileged to go to Wembley for the final tie will notice, when they look at the programme that the centre-forward has been given two initials—W. G. There is no G in his name really. It is just put in to distinguish

him from the centre-half, and nobody knows what the G stands for. The suggestion is made, however, that it stands for "ginger" and there will certainly be ginger in the play of the centre-forward.

There are interesting people in the Sheffield Wednesday side, too. Take, for instance, Ellis Rimmer, the outside-left. He has played for England in the past, but this season his claim to fame mostly lies in the fact that he has scored in every Cup-tie in which the Wednesday have played this season.

Will he do it again at Wembley, and thus keep up the record? He will certainly have to be watched. There have been instances in the past of one player scoring in every round of a Cup series, even including the final. David Jack did it for Bolton Wanderers. But I can't recall a case of an outside wing man scoring in every tie.

EVENLY MATCHED!

CONSIDER, too, the strange experience of centre-forward Jack Palethorpe. He is certainly having a thrilling life. Just over two seasons ago he was transferred from Reading to Stoke City, and scoring some goals for them, helped Stoke to win promotion from the Second Division. During last season he was transferred to Preston North End, scoring a goal in the last match of the season for that club, which enabled the North End to climb into the top class. Having thus helped two teams to gain promotion in successive seasons, Palethorpe has a chance of doing a unique "hat-trick" by helping Sheffield Wednesday to win the Cup.

Coming back to the question of who wins, I have to confess that I can't tell you. Quite apart from the fact that a Cup Final is in any case a great leveller, Sheffield Wednesday and West Bromwich seem so evenly matched that a bit of luck either way may make just the difference.

My own view is that the Albion will be slightly better in attack, but that the Wednesday will be more solid in defence. And such a view leads me to the suggestion that extra time, and perhaps even a second match may be necessary before the destination of the trophy is decided.

We have not yet had an extra half-hour at Wembley. People tell me that the law of averages is the one dependable thing. If that is so, surely then the law of averages points to extra time this season.

"LINESMAN."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,419.

"The sum is four shillings and sixpence, sir."

"So you had a taxi back, had you?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I wasn't going to walk," answered Bunter, blinking at him. "I got a lift going, but I had to have a taxi back. What are you waiting for, Wells?"

"Four shillings and sixpence, sir," said Wells urbanely.

"You encourage the servants to be impertinent here, Wharton," said Bunter scornfully. "We manage them better at Bunter Court, I can tell you!"

"You fat Owl!"

"Tell your butler to pay the man, and let's hear an end of it!" said Bunter impatiently. "If you fellows were staying with me at Bunter Court you wouldn't have to hire a taxi; there would always be a car! I don't expect that here; but, at least, Wharton, I think you might tell your butler to pay the taximan, and not bother a guest of yours."

"Pay him, Wells," said Harry quietly.

"Very good, sir."

Wells retired from the scene.

Billy Bunter sniffed.

"That manservant's cheeky, Wharton!" he said. "He was acting just as if he fancied he would lose the money if he paid the taxi."

"No fancy about it!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter dropped his weight into an armchair. As a matter of fact, he was rather glad to get rid of the taxi question so easily.

He had calculated that if he arrived home at Wharton Lodge in a taxi somebody would have to pay the taximan. Still, he had not expected it to be so easy as this. He had rather feared that there would be some sordid argument first.

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter blinked round at serious faces. "What are you all looking like moulting owls for?"

"Hem!"

"Anything happened?" asked Bunter.

"That gipsy pinched something already?"

"Fathead!"

"I—I say, I—I believe that idiot Inspector Stacey rang up the old fossil—I—I mean the colonel—when I called on him," said Bunter. "I never supposed he would do anything of that kind, of course."

"You might have," remarked Bob Cherry. "What the dickens else was the man to do?"

"Well, I thought he'd have some sense and act on the information I gave him," answered Bunter. "But—but if he rang up, I suppose you fellows know where I've been."

"The knowfulness is terrific."

"The man seems an utter fool!" said Bunter peevishly. "He's taken no notice whatever of what I told him. Far as he's concerned, that gipsy may burgle the house to-night and get away with it."

"Ass!"

"Well, I've done my best!" said Bunter. "Not my fault if we're all robbed to-night. I shall put my purse under my pillow, I can tell you. I—I say, Wharton, was your uncle waxy when Stacey phoned?"

"Yes."

"He hasn't much sense, has he?" said Bunter. "That's his gratitude, I suppose, for a fellow trying to save him from being robbed and burgled. Well, it's his own look-out now. If there are burglars to-night I shan't come down. And if anything of mine is taken, Wharton, I shall hold you responsible!"

"You howling ass!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,419.

"Oh, really, Wharton!" Bunter sat up and gave the captain of the Remove a severe blink. "Look here, if you can't keep a civil tongue in your head, Wharton, you can hardly expect me to remain your guest here. You see that?"

Wharton glanced at his friends, who strolled away. What he had to say to Bunter was better said in private.

"Look here, Bunter—" he said.

Bunter raised a fat forefinger and wagged it at him.

"I mean what I say!" he declared. "I don't expect to find manners like my own here; that would be expecting too much. But there's a limit. Just keep that in mind!"

"There's a limit certainly, and you've gone over it," said Harry. "I'm sorry, Bunter. But what train would it suit you to catch in the morning?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"What train?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"In the morning?"

"Yes."

"He, he, he!" echinnated Bunter. "My dear chap, I was only joking! Can't you take a joke? Forget all about it, old fellow! I'm not leaving you!"

"I'm afraid——"

"Not a bit of it!" said Bunter breezily. "I promised to stay with you for the Easter vac. I'm a fellow of my word! Rely on me."

Wharton breathed hard. It was not a pleasant task, but he had to get through it.

"Look here—Bunter—" he recommenced.

"Say no more about it, old fellow!" said Bunter. "I say, how long is it to dinner? I'm rather hungry."

"My uncle's very waxy——"

"Bit of an old tartar, what?" asked Bunter sympathically. "I understand, old chap—it's rather thick! I can stand him for a week or two, but how you stand him all the time is a mystery to me. Ill-tempered old blighter, what?"

"You cheeky fat idiot!" roared Wharton.

"Oh, really, you know——"

"You've made him waxy by going to the police station about that gipsy kid, and meddling in what doesn't concern you," said Harry. "If you weren't a born idiot, you wouldn't expect anybody to stand it. And the fact is, my uncle won't stand it! Got that?"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You're going to catch a train in the morning," said Wharton, driven to plain English. "Do you want to look one out in the time-table?"

"No!" answered Bunter. "I don't!"

"Then I'll look one out for you."

Bunter favoured him with a fat sneer. "You needn't trouble," he said. "If I'm not welcome here, I'll go. I—I'll telephone to Bunter Court in the morning for the car."

"I'll look out a train, in case the car doesn't turn up, then," said Harry.

"Beast!"

"I'm sorry, but——"

"I'm not!" said Bunter calmly. "I can see now that I made a mistake in coming to this sort of a show for the hols. Hardly up to my social weight, if you know what I mean?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"All serene," he said.

"After what you've said, I'd clear off this evening," said Bunter, with dignity. "But, I shall have to make some arrangements first. As you know, I turned Lord Mauleverer down to come with you. You know that."

"I don't!"

"And Smithy, too—you know how

anxious Smithy was that I should join him in that trip abroad——"

"Not at all!"

"Beast! Well, I can see now that it won't work—this isn't the sort of place for me," said Bunter. "I shall make arrangements for staying with Mauly, or Smithy, at the very earliest possible date. It may take a few days——"

"It won't!" said Wharton.

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton went after his friends. Billy Bunter blinked after him, with a dismayed blink. He realised that he had "done it" now.

Wharton, no doubt, would have relented; but the grim old colonel had evidently told him to get shut of Bunter, and the colonel would not relent. Bunter had always doubted whether old Colonel Wharton liked him. Now there was really no doubt left on the subject. Bunter had to go.

"Oh lor'!" murmured Bunter.

Really Billy Bunter might have expected the "boot." But he hadn't, and it came as an unpleasant surprise to him. From Billy Bunter's light and airy conversation, any fellow—who did not know him!—might have supposed that innumerable palatial establishments were open to him, and that he had only to pick and choose.

But the sad fact was that his choice lay between Wharton Lodge and Bunter Court, which on close inspection, diminished to Bunter Villa, the fleet of motor-cars to one wheezy old Ford, and the army of liveried menials to a cook and a housemaid.

Bunter did not want to make the exchange.

He was not going if he could help it.

But how could he help it?

That, as Hamlet remarked, was the question. And it was a perplexing problem over which Billy Bunter wrinkled his fat brows, during the remainder of that evening.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

More Mysterious!

HARRY WHARTON & CO.

They were gathered in Wharton's "den," for half an hour before going to bed. Wharton had put the wireless on, and, at the moment, a fruity voice with a Kensington accent was announcing that a deep depression was spreading from Iceland to other parts. This was not very interesting in itself, but as the wireless announcer pronounced all his "I's" as if they were "A's," a certain amount of entertainment was to be derived from it.

But it was not the elegant accent of the wireless announcer that caused the chums of the Remove to smile. It was Billy Bunter's fat countenance.

Bunter had been thoughtful all the evening.

Now he was more thoughtful than ever.

Sitting by the fire in Wharton's den he gave no heed to the wireless; he was too deep in meditation.

The subject of his meditations was no mystery to the juniors. They were aware that Bunter, having begged for the order of the boot, and received the same, was now deeply and intensely occupied in considering by what imaginable means he could dodge the boot.

Judging by the expression on his fat countenance, on which the firelight played, he had thought of something.

He nodded, as if in answer to his inward thoughts.

Then he grinned.



"I wasn't going to walk," said Bunter, "so I had a taxi back!" "You fat owl!" exclaimed Wharton. "Tell your butler to pay the taximan, and let's hear an end of it," said Bunter impatiently. "If you fellows were staying with me at Bunter Court, you wouldn't have to hire a taxi. There would always be a car!"

Then he nodded again.

After which he blinked round through his big spectacles, and started a little as he found five pairs of eyes fixed on him.

He had not been aware that his prolonged mental gymnastics had attracted attention. Now he was aware of it.

"I say, you fellows! Shut off that row, will you?" said Bunter.

Wharton politely shut off the wireless.

As Bunter was going in the morning, everybody wanted to be as nice to him as possible. But was he going?

Some of the fellows could not help doubting it. Bunter, in holiday time, was sticky, and hard to get unstuck.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Go it!"

"Lend me your electric torch, will you?"

"Eh? Oh! Yes! What on earth for?" asked Harry, in surprise.

"Oh! Nothing!"

"You want to borrow my electric torch for nothing?"

"Yes! I mean, no! Exactly!" said Bunter.

"Well, there it is, on the shelf, if you want it," said Harry, in wonder, and Bunter blinked round at the shelf.

"Hand it to me, old chap!" said Bunter.

"You can't get it yourself?" asked Johnny Bull, with sarcasm.

"I'm sitting down," said Bunter, with calm dignity.

Wharton was sitting down, too. However, he rose, picked up the electric torch, and handed it to Bunter, who slipped it into his pocket.

"The battery's all right?" asked Bunter.

"Right as rain; nearly new."

"Good! I don't want the blessed thing to go out and leave me in the dark."

"There's light in your room, and a switch by the bed," said Harry blankly.

"I know that!"

"You're not going out at this time of night, I suppose?"

"Oh! No! Nothing of the kind!"

"Then what the dickens do you want my torch for?"

"Oh! Nothing!"

Which was mysterious, to say the least. Something of a rather extraordinary nature, it appeared, was working in Billy Bunter's fat mind, which moved in mysterious ways its wonders to perform.

Bunter blinked at the surprised faces of the juniors.

"After all," he remarked, in a very thoughtful way, "there's such a thing as gratitude."

"Gratitude?" repeated Wharton.

"I don't mean that you fellows know much about it," said Bunter, with a touch of scorn. "I never expect any gratitude from you, after all I've done for you. Never saw such an ungrateful lot."

"What about shoving on the wireless?" asked Johnny Bull. The charms of Bunter's conversation seemed to have palled on Johnny.

"Don't turn that row on," said Bunter. "Your uncle's rather a savage old tartar. Wharton, if you don't mind my saying so—"

"I do!" said Wharton.

"But after all, he would be bound to be grateful," said Bunter. "I mean, even a bad-tempered old blighter would be grateful, if a fellow saved him from a heavy loss, what?"

Wharton gazed fixedly at the Owl of the Remove. The description of his uncle as a savage old tartar, and a bad-tempered old blighter, called for a kicking. But if Bunter was going in

the morning, Wharton wanted him, if possible, to go unkickd!

"Is Wharton's uncle in danger of losing anything?" asked Bob Cherry, wondering whether Bunter was wandering in his mind—such as it was!

"Well, yes, rather!"

"What is it, then?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Potty?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The pottiffulness seems to be terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky! Of course, it would serve him right," said Bunter. "No doubt about that—it would serve him jolly well right! Still, I should think he would be grateful."

"What do you mean—if you mean anything?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Oh, nothing!"

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob.

"Does it run in your family?"

"Eh! Does what run in my family?"

"Lunacy!"

"Beast!"

"Oh, turn on the wireless, for goodness' sake!" said Johnny Bull.

"Right-ho!" said Harry.

"I think you might keep that rotten thing quiet when a fellow wants to take a nap!" said Bunter peevishly.

"A—a—a nap!" gasped Wharton.

"A nap—just before bed-time!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

He really began to wonder now whether Bunter was wandering a little. A fellow who proposed to take a nap half an hour before going to bed really seemed to be rather in need of being taken care of.

"Well, a fellow wants some sleep!" said Bunter.

"Why not go to bed, if you're sleepy?"

"I mean—that is—look here, don't make a row!" said Bunter.

And with that he leaned back in his armchair, rested his feet on the fender, and closed his eyes behind his big spectacles.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another. They were feeling quite concerned. It really looked as if Billy Bunter was going off his rocker—and it was certain that he had not far to go!

Snore!

Bunter was asleep!

"Well, my hat!" said Harry.

He turned on the wireless. Strains of jazz, and American crooners crooning through their noses, failed to awaken Bunter. His snore formed an accompaniment—not very musical—to the crooning.

In holiday-time the juniors were a little later to bed, sometimes, than at school. It was nearly ten when Wharton turned off the wireless at last, and the chums of the Remove said good-night to one another and dispersed to their rooms. Wharton, the last to leave, shook Bunter by the shoulder to awaken him.

"Bunter—"

Snore!

Shake, shake!

"Groogh! Beast! 'Tain't rising-bell! Lemme alone!"

"Bed-time, fathead!" said Harry. He shook again, and Bunter's eyes opened behind his big spectacles, and he blinked. "It's nearly ten."

"Beast!" grunted Bunter. "I was dreaming about a feed in Mauly's study at Greyfriars! You've spoiled it, you beast! Leggo!"

"Well, roll off to bed!"

"Can't I go to bed when I like?" demanded Bunter. "Lemme alone!"

"Well, yes, I suppose so!" said Harry, puzzled. "Do you mean to say that you want to sit up here by yourself?"

"Better than your company!" grunted Bunter.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Oh, all right! Please yourself!"

"Turn off the light when you go," he said. "Good-night, old fat man!"

"Yah!"

With that valediction, Bunter closed his eyes behind his spectacles again. He was snoring by the time Wharton left the den, and closed the door behind him.

Why Billy Bunter chose to sit up by himself was a mystery to the captain of the Remove. However, if Bunter wanted to, he was welcome, so far as that went, and Wharton went to his bed-room, and to bed, and left him to it.

And when all Wharton Lodge settled down to slumber that night, Billy Bunter was still sprawling in the armchair in the den, before the dying fire, snoring. And it was not till the fire had gone out, and midnight had struck, that the fat Owl of the Remove awoke, shivering, and sat up.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter on the Watch!

BILLY BUNTER heaved himself out of the armchair.

He blinked at the clock on the mantelpiece.

It was a quarter-past twelve.

He removed his big spectacles, rubbed his sleepy eyes, and replaced the spectacles on his fat little nose.

Had the fire been still burning bright and warm, it was probable that Billy Bunter would have settled down in the armchair again. He had had a rather long "nap"; but he was sleepy.

But the fire was out; the night was chilly; and Bunter was wide awake. These circumstances helped him to keep to the resolve he had formed before settling down for that nap.

The other fellows were long in bed and fast asleep. If they were dreaming, they certainly did not dream of Bunter's mysterious proceedings.

Harry Wharton, when he turned in, had naturally supposed that Bunter would do the same when he tired of sitting up alone.

That was far from being Billy Bunter's intention.

Bunter had great plans to carry out that night!

Bunter had pondered, and pondered, and pondered; and he was satisfied that he had pondered to some purpose!

Instead of proceeding to his own room, to go to bed, Billy Bunter stepped to the door, opened it a few inches, blinked out, and listened.

All was dark and silent.

At that hour of the night the last light had been extinguished in Wharton Lodge, except the light in Wharton's "den," and the whole house was still.

Bunter listened intently.

But no sound came, and he closed the door again. Then he crossed to the communicating-door that led to Wharton's bed-room, and opened it a few inches, as he had done with the door on the corridor, and listened again.

He heard the steady breathing of a sleeper.

"Fast asleep, the beast!" murmured Bunter, and he closed the door.

Next he crossed to the french window, which gave on the balcony outside, whence there was a stair down to the garden.

He drew aside the hangings at the windows, and blinked out into the starry April night.

Then, remembering that the light would shine out into the night, he hurriedly switched it off.

He opened the french window and stepped out on the balcony.

This was at the side of the house; and from it, in the starlight, Billy Bunter could see the garage at a little distance.

He fixed his eyes, and his spectacles, on that building.

There was no light there, and anyone else looking at it might have supposed that the gipsy boy, who now occupied the chauffeur's quarters, was in bed and asleep.

But Billy Bunter did not suppose so. He did not suppose so for a moment! Bunter knew better than that—or, at all events, he was convinced that he did!

Unless Bunter was mistaken—which seemed improbable to Bunter—that young villain of a gipsy was wide awake that night!

He was a doubtful character! He was there in disguise! He had imposed on the foolish old colonel to the extent of being allowed to stay in the place! For what reason? Obviously—to Bunter—to rob the House! What else could his object be?

Bunter had no doubt about that!

And Bunter was going to "put paid" to him! That was the meaning of his mysterious remarks which had made the chums of the Remove wonder whether he was wandering in his mind. That was why he had stayed up in Wharton's den, while the other fellows went to bed. That was why he had taken a nap in advance, and was now stirring while everybody else slept!

Bunter was on the watch!

There was, as he had said, such a thing as gratitude. It was clear—to Bunter—that the gipsy's object was robbery! There was nothing to stop him—unless Bunter did! And if Bunter frustrated his knavish tricks, surely the least that Colonel Wharton could do would be to thank him gratefully, and admit that he had been in the right all along!

The proof of the pudding was in the eating! If Bunter actually spotted the rogue at his nefarious work, it would prove that Bunter was right! And if

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he saved the old colonel from a heavy loss at the hands of that young villain of a gipsy, obviously the "order of the boot" would be washed out! Instead of catching an early train in the morning, Bunter would remain—a distinguished and honoured guest!

Bunter, certainly, would not have given up a night's rest merely to prevent a burglary. But it was worth it to avoid that early train in the morning. Billy Bunter, as usual, was thinking wholly and solely of his fat self.

It was rather pleasant to look forward to the morrow, when everybody would acknowledge that he had been right, all along the line, and that everybody else had been a silly ass!

It was also pleasant to think of that villainous young gipsy, who had kicked Bunter, being led away, like Eugene Aram, with gyves upon his wrists!

Most pleasant of all was the prospect of continuing his Easter holidays where he was, instead of departing for Bunter Court.

With watchful eyes and spectacles, Bunter blinked into the starry night, and considered his next step.

His first idea had been to keep watch within the house and give the alarm when the burglar came. But though he was certain that the burglar was coming, he was quite in the dark as to when and where he would come. It would be rather a fizzle if he kept watch and ward in one spot, while the gipsy was burgling and getting away in another!

So his next idea was to keep watch from the balcony outside Harry Wharton's den—where he stood now.

From that point he could see the garage, where the suspected bad character had his quarters. But starry as the night was, the garage was only a dim mass at a distance, and Bunter realised that the gipsy, or a dozen gipsies, might steal out of it unseen by him. And there was no doubt that it would be a wretched "fizzle" if the burglary took place in the house, while he was blinking from the balcony.

So the third idea came into his fat mind, on which he acted. He crept quietly down the steps from the balcony to the garden.

If he was going to watch the gipsy at all, he had to watch him closer at hand, and it was easy enough.

It was important, of course, to keep in cover. Bunter did not like the idea of running into the gipsy and risking getting knocked on the head.

About that, indeed, Bunter was very particular! "Safety first" had always been Bunter's motto.

So he was very, very cautious as he tiptoed away from the house. He blinked to the right and he blinked to the left, and his fat ears were on the strain all the time.

But he saw nothing but shadows in the starlight; he heard nothing but the sigh of the wind in the trees.

It was not likely that the thief-in-the-night was yet "on the go." The small hours were the time for burglaries. The young villain, of course, would wait till he was sure that all was safe. Bunter was in ample time to catch him when he started.

The garage, of course, was closed and locked and dark. The rooms above were reached by a stair from a door at the side of the building.

Outside that door was a porch. Bunter crept into the porch. He groped over the door, and found that it was shut and immovable. Evidently the occupant of the chauffeur's rooms had not come down yet.

Satisfied of that, the fat junior looked round for cover. The idea was to watch the young villain when he started, follow him—at a safe distance—and give

the alarm when he began burgling. Safe cover was required. Luckily, it was there, right at hand.

Bunter turned on Harry Wharton's electric torch and blinked in its light round the porch. One side of the porch was occupied by a large oaken bench. Under that bench was ample room for Bunter.

"Good!" murmured the fat Owl.

He shut off the light again.

But he did not immediately squeeze his fat person under the bench. It was safe cover—perfectly safe; and from under it Bunter could not fail to spot anyone passing. But it was rather cold and uncomfortable there. It was not a recess in which any fellow would have chosen to pass an hour or more, if he could have helped it.

Bunter decided to sit on the bench and listen in the dark. At the first sound he would pop out of sight.

He sat down.

Long minutes passed in silence and gloom. Bunter was sleepy. But he did not dare to close his eyes behind his spectacles.

The bare thought of being caught there by the villain when he came, was enough to keep even the sleepy Owl wide awake.

He had not the slightest doubt that the gipsy, if he caught him on the watch, would knock him on the head without scruple or ruth. Bunter had a naturally strong objection to being knocked on his fat head. There was little, perhaps, of an intellectual nature to be damaged. Still, Bunter was very particular about his fat napper. So far from closing his eyes, he kept them very wide open indeed, and his fat ears on the alert. The slightest sound would have been sufficient to send him scuttling into cover like a fat rabbit.

But there was no sound from within. The long, long minutes passed—and they seemed very long indeed!

What the time was Bunter did not know. His watch was not a going concern. But he knew that it was past one in the morning—perhaps nearer two—when from the deep silence of the night a sound came to his twitching fat ears.

Footsteps!

Soft, stealthy, but unmistakable footsteps!

Bunter's fat heart gave a bound. The next instant, Bunter himself gave a bound. Palpitating, he crammed himself under the oaken bench and huddled there, silent, with thumping heart.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Discovery!

BUNTER held his breath.

Footsteps!

Footsteps in the dark porch, only a yard from his fat little nose, as he crouched under the bench.

For some moments sheer funk dominated Bunter. But even then he realised that the footsteps came from without, not from within.

That was utterly unexpected.

Bunter was on the watch for the gipsy to come out at the door on the porch. But there was no sound from within the building; the door had not stirred. The footsteps came from outside. And they were the footsteps of more than one! Dark as it was in the porch, Bunter could dimly make out two pairs of boots and trouser-ends, passing close to the bench under which he was crammed.

His fat brain was unable for the moment to deal with the unexpected situation. But the certainty that his presence there was not suspected, revived him a little. Whoever these men were, it was plain that they had not the

faintest suspicion that anyone but themselves was in the porch.

Who—what—were they?

Burglars—if they were burglars—would hardly want to burgle rooms over a garage. But that they were something of the sort was clear, from the fact that they were there at all.

Confederates of the gipsy—who had come to help him in his nefarious work. That was it, of course! Bunter, as soon as he was able to think, had no doubt of it. Hardly daring to breathe, he listened, expecting to hear a tap at the door, or a signal whistle.

But all he heard was a sound of groping as if a hand was feeling over the outside of the door. The feet shuffled faintly as the two men moved. A long minute passed—a very long minute. Then a whispering voice came:

"What about it, Biter?"

Bunter barely repressed a jump. Whispering as it was, that voice was familiar to his fat ears. He had heard it only that afternoon. It was the voice of the agreeable stranger who had given him a lift in the car to Wimford, and had been so politely and pleasantly interested in his conversation! The man with the foxy features!

A deeper, huskier voice answered, also in a whisper:

"Easy as pie, Jimmy! I'd open it like a blooming oyster."

"Get going, then."

Bunter had no doubt—he could have no doubt—that these prowlers of the night were confederates of that rascally young gipsy. If so, their proceedings were odd enough. Instead of signalling to the gipsy within, they were going to force the door by stealth.

He heard a faint click, and knew that the lock was open. He knew that one of them was pressing on the door. But it remained shut. The husky voice of Biter whispered again:

"Bolted!"

He heard the other man mutter an oath.

Biter was groping and pressing at the door, with an experienced hand. His husky voice whispered:

"One bolt—at the bottom! It'll take time."

"Get at it!"

"Leave it to me, Jimmy! Burn a glim!"

Bunter shuddered.

If they turned on a light—

But it was the merest glimmer from a tiny electric torch that broke the darkness, and the beam was directed on the foot of the door.

The man called Jimmy—that obliging and agreeable motorist—was standing in a bending attitude, holding the light. The other man—a burly, thick-set man—was on his knees, taking tools from a deep pocket. Bunter heard a low, grinding sound.

He was safe! Their backs were to him, and they were concentrated on the task of cutting a section out of the woodwork to release the bolt within. A well-oiled brace and bit ground its way through. The sound was faint, hardly breaking the silence. Bunter heard the voice of the leaning man with the light.

"We'll get him, Biter!"

"That there bolt won't stop us, Jimmy, anyhow. I ain't betting on him being the covey you want! But we'll see!"

"I'm banking on it! Who can he be—a boy of Drake's age, disguised as a gipsy?"

"If you got it right from that fat covey—"

"I did! The fat fool babbled all he knew! Drake came in this direction from Wimford—and disappeared! He has friends here—old school friends."

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That put me on a false scent at first. But—"

"If it's Drake, we got him!"

"It is Drake!" breathed Jimmy the Fox. "He is an old school friend of the boy Wharton, so it is certain that Wharton's uncle must know him. I found out to-day, too, that he knows Ferrers Locke. Locke is a relative of his nephew's headmaster at school. Locke has sent the boy here for safety. I tell you, as soon as that fat fool babbled about a boy coming here disguised as a gipsy, I knew."

"Well, we got him!"

"Quick!" muttered Jimmy the Fox.

"Five minutes will do it."

Bunter concentrated on his task in the glimmer of the light held by the foxy-faced man.

Bunter, under the bench, felt his head turning round.

His fat brain was in a whirl.

Even the fatuous Owl, after he had heard, could not imagine that these men were confederates of the gipsy boy.

It was plain, even to Bunter, that they were forcing a stealthy entrance into the gipsy's quarters with hostile intent.

It was the name of Drake that gave the bewildered owl a clue to the truth. He remembered the talk he had heard among the juniors that day on the subject of their meeting with the man with the automatic.

He had given it little attention at the time; but it came back into his fat mind now.

This man, within two or three feet of him, this agreeable motorist who had given him a lift, was the man with the automatic! That awful fact dawned on Billy Bunter's fat brain.

No doubt he had an automatic about him at this very moment! The Owl of Greyfriars shivered at the thought.

They were after Drake!

The gipsy!

Slowly, but surely, Bunter began to understand. It was bewildering, but his fat mind grasped it at last.

The gipsy was, as he knew, in disguise, and no real gipsy! But he was not a crook—he was not a cracksmen, designing to crack the colonel's safe! He was anything but that! He was, in fact, Ferrers Locke's boy assistant, Jack Drake, and these prowlers of the night knew it!

That, of course, was how the gipsy had known the juniors' names and all about them, and had so astonished them with his knowledge! Of course he knew, if he was Jack Drake, once of the Greyfriars Remove!

There was a faint grinding of a keen saw. It worked in a circle from the hole bored in the door.

They had been there, perhaps, ten minutes. It seemed ages, centuries to the fat Owl of the Remove.

There was a movement, and he knew that Biter had removed a section of wood. Another faint sound, and he was aware that the cracksmen's hand, thrust through the aperture, had withdrawn the bolt.

A low creak and the door opened.

"All clear now, Jimmy!" came the Biter's husky whisper. "If it's Drake, we got him, and you can bank on that!"

"It's Drake!"

"You got the chloroform-pad?"

"Did you think I should forget it?"

"Get on, then!"

Silently the two dark figures disappeared within. The door was closed after them, and left unfastened.

Silence!

Billy Bunter gasped.

Slowly, cautiously, fearfully he put his

head out from under the bench, like a tortoise putting its head out of the shell.

They were gone—into the building! Jack Drake was at their mercy! If his bed-room door was locked that would not stop the Biter long!

Slowly, with the perspiration trickling down his fat face, Bunter crawled out from under the bench. A shout would have awakened Drake and put him on his guard. It would also have drawn the attention of the two cracksmen to Bunter. The fat Owl did not think of uttering a sound!

He crept out of the porch and tiptoed away! At a distance he broke into a run, and bolted back to the house! He scuttled up the steps to the balcony, rolled in at the french windows of Wharton's den, blundered across it in the dark to the door of Wharton's bed-room, and blustered in, panting.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Removites to the Rescue!

HARRY WHARTON awoke suddenly.

A fat hand, clawing over his face in the dark awakened him, and he started out of slumber with a gasp.

"Oooogh! What— Urrgh!"

"Oh dear! Oh crikey! Oh lor!" came a gasping voice from the darkness.

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

"You howling idiot!"

"Oh dear!"

"You blithering owl, what's this game?" Harry Wharton sat up in bed.

"You benighted bandersnatch!"

"I—I say—"

"What have you woke me up for?" hissed Wharton. "What are you doing up in the middle of the night? What—"

"Oh crumbs! I say—"

"Wait till I get hold of my pillow!" said the captain of the Remove, in concentrated tones. "Just wait a tick!"

"I—I say, you silly ass, they're after him!" gasped Bunter. "I say, they're in the garage now—"

"Wha-at?"

"I—I found them out. I—I came to tell you. I tell you they've got a chloroform-pad for him—"

"They—him—who—what?" stammered Wharton. "Are you potty, or is this a nightmare, or what?"

"Drake—Jack Drake!" panted Bunter.

"Drake! What about Drake?"

"The gipsy—"

"What about the gipsy?"

"He's Drake!"

"What?" howled Wharton.

"I mean, Drake's the gipsy!"

Harry Wharton stared blankly at the fat figure beside his bed in the gloom. The juniors had suspected that evening that Billy Bunter was going "off his rocker." The astounded captain of the Remove could only conclude that he had now gone!

A fat hand grabbed him by the shoulder.

"Ain't you getting up?" gasped Bunter.

"Look here, Bunter—"

"I tell you they're after him!" howled Bunter. "Both of them—in the garage—and they know he's Drake!"

"Who's Drake?" gasped Wharton.

"That gipsy kid! I—I thought he was a burglar, and was watching for him; but he's Drake, and they're after him!"

"Drake! That gipsy kid Drake! You're potty—"

"Are you getting up?" howled Bunter. "You'd better wake the house!"

Call your uncle! Call Wolls! Call everybody! I say—"

Harry Wharton groped for the switch at the head of his bed, and turned on the light. It gleamed on the white, perspiring, terrified face of the Owl of the Remove. Bunter gave a squeak.

"Don't turn on the light, fathead! They'll see it, perhaps—"

"The blinds are closed," said Harry. He turned out of bed, and grasped Bunter by a fat shoulder. "Now, you piffling idiot, tell me what's happened, if it's not a nightmare."

Bunter babbled it out.

Wharton listened in mingled amazement and incredulity. It sounded to him more like nightmare than sober fact.

But he realised that it had to be looked into, and without the loss of a moment. Leaving Bunter to gasp, he ran out of the room, to awaken his friends.

That was very quickly done. The Co. turned out, in great astonishment, in their pyjamas. They fairly blinked at what Wharton told them.

"Utter rot!" said Johnny Bull.

"The rotfulness is terrific!"

"Sounds like nightmare!" said Frank Nugent.

"Too much supper!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Hold on, though!" said Bob. "That gipsy kid knew a lot about us—I couldn't make that out! If he was Drake—"

"Pulling our leg!" said Nugent. "Drake was always a bit of a joker! But it doesn't seem—"

Wharton cut in:

"If it's only Bunter's rot, we'll jolly well kick him! But he looks as if he's had a scare! We've got to go and see—"

"Where's my bags?"

"Where's my shoes?"

"Get hold of something, in case it's true," said Harry. "There's a bag of golf clubs in my den—take one each—"

"And I'll jolly well lay one round Bunter, if he's spoofing us at this time of night!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Never mind that—buck up!"

Harry Wharton was already almost convinced. Startling as Bunter's tale was, a dozen little circumstances flashed into his mind that seemed to lend it colour. Anyhow, there was no doubt that it was necessary to ascertain, without the loss of a moment, whether anything was going on at the garage.

Staying only for trousers and shoes, the Famous Five hurried to Wharton's den, where they equipped themselves with a golf club each. If there were two crooks at work at the garage, it was clear that weapons might be needed.

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter came through from Wharton's bed-room, as they dragged the clubs from the bag. "I say, I—I'm rather out of breath—I—I'll come after you—"

"Stick where you are, fathead!" answered Bob Cherry.

"No need to tell him that, if there's any danger!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

The Famous Five, clubs in hand, hurried out to the balcony and ran down the steps into the garden.

Quietly, but very swiftly, they ran across to the garage, and stopped at the porch at the side of the building.

All was dark and silent there.

Johnny Bull gave a grunt.

"All rot!" he said. "Nightmare—or pulling our leg—"

"Quiet!" whispered Wharton.

He groped to the door in the porch, and tried it with his hand. It pushed open at his touch.



"Aren't you getting up?" gasped Bunter, grabbing Wharton by the shoulder. "I tell you the cracksmen are after him, and they know he's Drake—" "Drake?" ejaculated Wharton. "Who's Drake?" "The gipsy kid!" howled Bunter. "I thought he was a burglar, but he's Drake, and they're after him!"

His heart beat! Obviously, the gipsy could not have gone to bed leaving the door open.

Bunter's tale was true!

The next moment, Wharton had proof of it, as he groped over the door, and felt the aperture where the section had been sawn out to get at the bolt.

He stepped back, and rejoined his friends.

"It's right!" he whispered. "The door's open—it's been forced! They—they're inside!"

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Nugent.

In the starlight, outside the porch, the Famous Five looked at one another, with beating hearts. They gripped the golf clubs hard. Billy Bunter's tale, amazing as it was, was true. At least, it was certain now that an entrance had been forced into the building, by prowlers of the night! On that point, at least, there was no shadow of doubt.

"Hark!" breathed Bob Cherry.

There was a sound from within. The juniors, with throbbing hearts, listened. It was a sound of soft footsteps.

"They're coming!" breathed Wharton.

"Then—they've got him!" whispered Harry. "If—if it's Drake—they've got him—chloroformed."

He said no more, but he signed to his comrades to take up their stand on either side of the porch. Standing back from the entrance, they were invisible to anyone coming out. Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh stood on one side—Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull on the other! And they gripped their clubs and waited.

Footsteps came through the porch. They came softly and stealthily; but the tread told of men who were carrying something heavy. What were they carrying? The Greyfriars juniors knew only too well!

There was a whispering voice:

"Quick, when we get outside, Biter! There's too much starlight to please me—"

"Nobody's about, Jimmy!"

"No—but lose no time getting to the car." There was a low chuckle. "By gum, we've got him—we've got him safe! Ferrers Locke sent him here for safety—and played right into our hands. The Dandy will be out in a month from now, Biter, if Ferrers Locke wants to see his boy alive again. Get on!"

Two dark figures emerged from the porch, moving swiftly. They were carrying between them a still form, rolled in a blanket. They moved swiftly—but not so swiftly as five waiting figures, that leaped forward as if moved by the same spring, and slashed at them with whirling golf clubs.

There was a yell of startled rage.

The figure in the blanket dropped to the ground. Jimmy the Fox, and Biter reeled and staggered under the crashing clubs. Blow after blow rained on them. Jimmy the Fox, reeling, dodged, and darted away, howling with pain and rage as he went. But his comrade was not so lucky. The Biter went down stunned, and lay like a log. Harry Wharton & Co. rushed after the foxy-faced man as he fled; but Jimmy the Fox vanished into the shadows of the night; and they ran back and gathered round the still form in the blanket.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Saved!

"Is it Drake?"

Harry Wharton rolled back the blanket, swathed round the still figure that lay on the ground. The brown face of the gipsy was revealed, in the April starlight. The face was quite unconscious; the

eyes closed. There was a faint sickly scent lingering about the insensible boy; the scent of chloroform. The chums of the Remove gazed down at the still face. Wharton, in silence, pointed to the brown cheek—where the brown had been rubbed away, leaving a clear white patch. It was a proof that, as Bunter had stated, the gipsy boy was in disguise—that the swarthy complexion was the work, not of Nature, but of art. They could guess that the boy, taken by surprise in his sleep, had fallen helpless into enemy hands; and after the chloroform had reduced him to insensibility, Jimmy the Fox had made sure that there was no mistake—by cleaning that patch of the brown cheek, and revealing the white skin beneath. It was proof.

"It's Drake!" said Harry. "I'm sure of it, though I can't say that I recognise him in that rig—but you can see that his brown colour comes off. Let's get him to the house."

"What about—" Bob Cherry made a gesture towards the stunned cracksmen, lying huddled on the earth.

"Never mind him—let's look after Drake."

The juniors picked up the insensible boy, and carried him away towards the house. Drake was in his pyjamas, as the kidnapers had lifted him from his bed, and they rolled the blanket round him again, to carry him.

He was carried up the steps from the garden to the balcony outside Wharton's den, as the quickest way into the house. As the juniors bore him through the french windows, there was a squeak within.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter, old fat bean! You've lost your share of the scrap!" grinned Bob. "Put on the light, fatty."

Bunter switched on the light.

He blinked through his big spectacles at the insensible gipsy. Drake—if it was Drake, as the juniors no longer doubted—showed no sign of returning consciousness.

"I say, you fellows, he doesn't look like Drake," said Bunter. "I—I thought he was a burglar, you know, being in disguise."

"Fathead!"

"Well, what was a fellow to think?" demanded Bunter warmly. "And it was jolly lucky for him I was on the watch, anyhow."

"That's so," admitted Bob. "You've been useful for once, Bunter. Fellows who can't be ornamental ought to make themselves useful."

"Beast!"

"Take him to my room," said Harry. "We'll put him in my bed, and then I'll call my uncle."

"Rather a surprise for him to find Drake here," said Nugent.

Wharton shook his head.

"He must have known," he answered. "Drake couldn't have played this game without my uncle knowing—and he wouldn't, either."

"Oh!" said Bob. "Of course! Ferrers Locke must have had some reason for sending him here like this. And, of course, he fixed it up with Colonel Wharton. That was how the kid got a job in the garage so easily." He chuckled. "I wonder what on earth the game is?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, do you think the old fossil—I mean the colonel—knew that this kid was Drake?"

"Of course he did, ass!"

"Oh lor! I—I suppose that's why he was so ratty when I went to the police station about him!" gasped Bunter. "Still, what was a fellow to think? I thought—"

"You didn't," answered Bob. "You never have, and you can't!"

"Yah!"

Drake was carried to Wharton's bed, and placed therein. Although he was sunk in deep unconsciousness, it appeared that he had not been hurt. It was only a question of waiting for the effects of the drug to wear off.

But for the intervention of the Greyfriars fellows, Drake would have awakened from that drugged sleep in the hands of the kidnappers—in some hidden den, where he was to be held as a hostage for the "Dandy."

There was no doubt that Billy Bunter had come in useful.

He had been wrong all along the line, of course—mistaken in every single idea he had formed on the subject. That was only to be expected from Bunter. Nevertheless, proceeding from one stupidity to another, Bunter had undoubtedly caused Drake to be saved from the clutches of the Dandy's gang.

The Co. remained with Drake, while Harry Wharton hurried away to call his uncle.

Bunter stayed with them.

Billy Bunter's fat brain was at work. Even Bunter realised now how egregiously he had been mistaken. As the facts did not reflect very much credit on Bunter, he decided in favour of fiction.

"I say, you fellows, perhaps you'll admit that I was right now," said the fat Owl.

"Bow-wow!"

"I'd like to know what would have happened if I hadn't been here?" said Bunter. "Who watched over that chap's safety, while you were snoring in bed?"

"You fancied he was a burglar, you blithering idiot!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Did you know he was Drake?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Well, perhaps I didn't exactly know that he was Drake," admitted Bunter cautiously. "But I knew that he was in danger. That's why I watched over him at the risk of my life."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Chuck it, fathead!"

"You can call a fellow names," said Bunter, with dignity. "But if I hadn't been on the watch they'd have had him. I'd like to see you fellows keeping watch in the middle of the night, with desperate crooks creeping about. You fellows would have been scared out of your wits. I wasn't—"

"Have you any to be scared out of?"

"Beast!"

There was a hurried footstep, and Colonel Wharton came in, half-clad, in a dressing-gown, followed by his nephew. The old military gentleman's face was very startled.

"Drake!" he exclaimed.

"Here, sir!" said Bob.

"He's all right, sir!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I was watching over him, and I shaved his wife—I mean saved his life!"

Unheeding the fat junior, the colonel stepped to the bedside. He fixed his eyes on the unconscious face of Ferrers Locke's assistant. Then he glanced round at the juniors.

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"You know now that—that—"

"We know he's Drake, sir," said Bob. "Bunter got it from those blighters who came after him!"

"I was watching over him."

"Who gave the alarm?" asked Colonel Wharton.

"I did!" howled Bunter.

"Be silent!" snapped the colonel.

"Oh, really, sir—"

"But—but Bunter did, uncle," said Harry. "The silly ass was keeping an eye on the gipsy for some fatheaded reason, and so—"

"I was watching over him!" roared Bunter indignantly. "I thought he was going to burgle the house—I mean that I knew that he was in fearful danger, and so—"

"You absurd boy!" snapped the colonel. "Say no more!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

The colonel gave a snort. Useful as the fat Owl had been, he did not seem to have risen very much in the colonel's estimation.

"Remain with Drake, my boys," said Colonel Wharton. "I will go down to the garage with Brown."

He hurried away; but by the time he arrived at the garage with Brown the Biter was gone. The stunned cracksmen had recovered his senses by that time, and disappeared into the night. Far away on the dusky roads the sound of a car came faintly back. The kidnappers were gone; but they had gone without Jack Drake.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

No Train for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER did not catch an early train in the morning. He did not catch a train at all.

He did not, as a matter of fact, turn out of bed till past noon—having a good deal of leeway to make up in the way of sleep.

When Bunter came down at last, it was close on lunch-time. Almost for the first time in history Bunter had missed a meal.

He rolled out on the terrace, in the bright April sunshine.

Harry Wharton & Co. were there, and with them was another fellow; easily recognised now as Jack Drake.

The gipsy disguise was gone. It was useless now that it was evident that Jimmy the Fox was "wise" to it.

Drake was glad enough to be done with it. It was not by his wish that he had adopted a disguise to conceal himself from the enemies of Ferrers Locke.

His handsome face was a little pale, but otherwise he looked fit and well enough, and he was dressed in a suit of Harry Wharton's, which fitted him pretty well. All the Co. were with him, they had already fixed it that they were not going to let Drake out of their sight.

"We're going to be your jolly old bodyguard, old bean!" Bob Cherry was saying as Bunter blinked out on the terrace through his big spectacles. "Though I've a jolly good mind to punch your head, too, for pulling our leg as you did yesterday!"

Jack Drake laughed.

"You'll be safe here, Drake!" said Harry Wharton. "And you're going to stay, old fellow—it will be ripping to have you for the holidays—"

"The ripfulness will be terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Drake!" declared Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh.

"And when we go on to my place, you'll come with us!" said Bob Cherry. Drake's face became grave.

"I'd like it, no end," he said. "I wasn't keen on taking cover in a disguise, but Mr. Locke was anxious for my safety, and orders are orders. But it's turned out a fizzle; though I can't guess yet how Jimmy the Fox got wise to it. As for staying, I'd like it no end—but—"

"Bother your butts!"

"I mean the Dandy's gang won't stop at this," said Drake quietly. "They've failed this time, as they've failed before; but so long as Jimmy the Fox is loose, I'm in danger—and there might be danger for you fellows, too."

"Who cares?" said Bob.

"The carefulness is not terrific."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! How did that porpoise get here all the way from the Zoo?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Beast! I say, Drake—"

Drake turned to the Owl of the Remove with a smile. The juniors had told him the part that Billy Bunter had played in defeating Jimmy the Fox.

"Glad to see you, old fat bean!" he said. "What's made you turn out so early?"

"Oh, really, Drake—"

"Sorry I booted you yesterday, old fat man," said Drake. "But you really asked for it, didn't you?"

"I'm not going to thrash you for that, old chap—"

"Not really?"

"No, old fellow—I was going to, but now I won't!" said Billy Bunter, reassuringly. "It's all right, Drake."

"I breathe again!" said Jack Drake gravely.

(Continued on page 28.)



THE SEA SPIDER

By GEORGE E. ROCHESTER

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

Ulverst, the greatest U-boat commander Germany ever had, accompanied by a competent crew, sets out from Ice Rock aboard the Sea Spider, a deadly underwater craft, to wage war against the world. Following the sinking of the bullion-carrier Minneapolis, from which is transferred bullion to the value of £200,000, the Sea Spider reaches the lost underseas city of Atlantis where treasure worth more than £1,000,000 is discovered. Boarding a plane, Ulverst leaves for the mainland with a view to making arrangements for the disposal of the treasure. He is forced down in the Arctic Ocean, but luckily succeeds in getting back safe and sound to Ice Rock. Later, a British gunboat arrives and sends a landing party ashore. Hopelessly outnumbered, the naval men are taken prisoners, after which Ulverst gives orders for the gunboat to be sunk. Fearing that other vessels may be sent to search for the missing gunboat, Ulverst discusses with Wesel, his second-in-command, ways and means of getting his men away.

(Now read on.)

Attacked!

"WE can make plans now for an immediate evacuation of the base," said Wesel, "and take them to the mainland in as big a party as possible."

"Yes, but I do not wish to evacuate the base until the last possible moment," said Ulverst doggedly. "Another thing, an evacuation now would throw those left behind into a panic. In any case, perhaps we are meeting trouble which does not exist. The base may not be visited by other vessels at all."

Wesel shook his head.

"It will," he said. "I am certain of that."

For some considerable time Wesel and Ulverst talked, the former advocating an immediate evacuation, whilst Ulverst stuck grimly to his point of keeping the base as long as they possibly could.

It was dawn before their discussion ended, and by then they had agreed to get the Spider ready for sea immediately and to carry out one more raid before abandoning the base.

In the meantime, nothing about their fears that Ice Rock would be visited by other vessels searching for the gunboat was to be mentioned to the men.

"I suppose by this time the men will have finished their carousing," said Ulverst, as he and Wesel made their way wearily towards the main cave. "We'd better see how many are left on their feet."

Reaching the main cave, the two looked in. The atmosphere was thick and foul, the electric bulbs of the lamps shone yellow and feeble through the murk, and men lay about asleep on the hard rock floor or with their heads pillowed on their arms on the long trestle table which ran almost the whole length of the vast cave.

"Beat to the wide, every one of them," commented Wesel, with grim contempt. "There'll be some thick heads to-day!"

He was turning away when he suddenly became tense and rigid.

"Look!" he gasped.

Ulverst wheeled, and his hands clenched convulsively as through the greying light of the Arctic dawn he saw the huge and shadowy bulk of an immenso vessel standing in towards the island.

"A warship!" rasped Wesel. "Mein geist, Ulverst, we're done!"

"An aircraft carrier," said Ulverst. "The gunboat must have got a wireless message off before she sank. Come on, you get to the Spider whilst I rout out everybody capable of getting aboard!"

"But an aircraft carrier!" gasped Wesel. "What can she be doing in these waters?"

"How the blazes do I know?" flared Ulverst. "She's there, isn't she? Get to the Spider, man, and don't ask questions! We'll take her out! We'll have to!"

Ulverst was correct in his assumption that the doomed gunboat had sent out a wireless message before she had gone to the bottom.

That message had been picked up by H.M. Aircraft Carrier Hawk, which had been cruising up the coast of Greenland whilst its fleet of aircraft surveyed that lonely and desolate land with a view to the establishment of landing grounds and fuel dumps for aircraft flying from Canada to the Far East.

The wireless message had been terse and dramatic. Having first given the location of Ice Rock it had concluded:

"We have been torpedoed and are sinking fast. Our boats have been launched, but are being fired on—"

There the message had abruptly terminated, and all efforts to get in touch again with the ill-fated gunboat had failed. It was obvious, therefore, that she had gone down, probably carrying her gallant wireless officer with her. Having relayed the message to the Admiralty, the captain of the Hawk had ordered the aircraft carrier to be

turned in the direction of Ice Rock, and as hour succeeded hour the mighty vessel had driven on through the lonely sea as fast as her powerful turbines could drive her.

Now that she had arrived and was offshore, the captain decided to herald his arrival with a shell. He was in a difficult position, for he did not know what he was up against, or what was required of him.

The message from the gunboat had merely said that she was lying off Ice Rock and had been torpedoed.

By whom?

Had there been a hostile submarine lying off the island, or was the island the base of some nefarious enterprise?

What the captain did not know was whether the island was occupied or not. But he did know that if it was, then they must be particularly tough customers who were on it.

So he gave the order to fire a single shot, and the heavy boom of the gun broke the deathly hush of those desolate Arctic wastes.

The shell screamed over the heads of Ulverst and Wesel, and the former made for the officers' quarters and the latter for the ladder which led down into the cave where the Spider lay at rest.

It made them spurt desperately, but the boom of the gun had already roused those who had taken no part in the overnight carousal.

Falze, Stuxberg, Zutloss, and Dubowsky came running from their quarters to stare in dismay at the giant hull now becoming more clearly discernible in the greying light of dawn.

"What is it?" babbled Dubowsky, clutching Ulverst by the arm. "What is it, Ulverst?"

"It's the end for us if we don't clear out at once," replied Ulverst grimly. "You, Falze—and you, Stuxberg, rouse everyone you can and get them down to

the Spider. Leave those you can't wake. They'll have to take their chance!"

"Look!" screeched Dubowsky, suddenly pointing seawards. "Look there, they're sending boats!"

"Yes, and aircraft as well!" replied Ulverst, as from the long flat flying deck of the Hawk came the sudden roar of high-powered engines.

Six boatloads of armed men had quitted the Hawk and were creeping shorewards. The sight was enough to galvanise Ulverst's officers into the swiftest of action, and leaping for the alarm bell, Stuxberg sent it's brazen clangour ringing out through the stillness.

That the noise of the bell was heard aboard the Hawk was evident, for again a gun boomed thunderously into life and this time the shell burst full against the seaward cliffs, sending a great shower of rock and fragments hurtling high into the air.

From the flying deck, six fast fighting scouts roared up into the grey-ness, and banking, came thundering low over the island.

The six boats converged on the flat and natural jetty of rock. But before they could reach it and land their crews, Ulverst and all who could be roused, were scrambling frantically down the ladder which led to the Sea Spider.

Waiting until the last man was aboard, Ulverst swung himself up into the conning-tower and then descended to the control-room.

"Close all hatches!" he ordered.

"Wait!" begged Stuxberg. "There are more coming down the ladder. They are from the main cave!"

"We cannot wait!" said Ulverst harshly. "The landing parties will be already ashore. Close all hatches!"

The hatches were closed. Then again Ulverst's voice rang harshly through the control-room:

"Clutch up!"

Through the voice-pipe which connected with the engine-room came the reply:

"Crank gear in clutch!"

Again Ulverst spoke:

"Slow speed ahead!"

The dull vibrating rumble of the crank gear echoed through the Sea Spider, and slowly she heaved her vast, glistening body from off the rocky floor which was awash with water.

Then, with that horribly life-like movement, she commenced to crawl slowly forward, the water steadily mounting about her as she descended the sloping floor of the cave, making towards where it emerged on the ocean bottom, sixty fathoms beneath the sea.

Every man aboard the Sea Spider was strangely silent, wondering what the end of this fateful cruise would be. For the Sea Spider was far from being ready yet for a long voyage. Yet she could never return to the lair from which she was now being driven.

Even if the Sea Spider sunk the

Hawk—and none knew if Ulverst meant to attack—there were still the aircraft to be reckoned with. And no matter how quickly the aircraft-carrier went down there would be survivors.

The Spider would not dare surface to deal with these, for if she did, she would at once be exposed to the bombs of the circling aeroplanes.

In fact, it seemed to Wesel and Dubowsky that she would be forced to hug the ocean bottom if she was to avoid being spotted from the air.

On she went, wading slowly down into deeper water like some huge, nightmarish creature. Then, slowly, she disappeared from view as the water closed over her vast rounded bulk.

Behind, in the empty cave, men, blood-shot of eye and still three-quarters drunk, sent oaths and curses after her until realising the futility of it, they turned to each other and began to discuss what was to be done.

Holed!

MEANWHILE, the landing parties from the Hawk were ashore, advancing with rifles at the ready while the supporting aircraft circled low overhead.

That there was life on the island the men from the Hawk knew, for they had seen the figures of Ulverst and his men running towards the cave which contained the ladder that led down to the lair of the Sea Spider.

But there appeared to be no one prepared to offer them resistance as slowly and cautiously they advanced up the path which led to the caves.

Then, suddenly in the entrance of the main cave there appeared the figure of a man. He stared at the advancing sailors, then at the huge grey bulk of the aircraft-carrier.

Wonderingly, he passed his hand across his eyes as though to clear his vision and then stared again. The sailors were still advancing and the aircraft-carrier was still where he had first seen it.

It wasn't a mirage, after all. The thing was real. With a cry, the man dashed back into the cave and seized the nearest of his sleeping comrades.

"Wake up, wake up!" he shouted. "Wake up, you fools, all of you! We are attacked!"

One or two of the men stirred restlessly, but none answered the hopeless call to arms.

Snatching a knife from his belt, the man turned to face the sailors who were now at the entrance of the cave.

"Drop it, chum!" advised a gruff voice.

Realising the futility of resistance, the man allowed the knife to fall from his nerveless hand.

"Where have you come from?" he demanded hoarsely.

An officer stepped forward.

"You are under arrest," he said.

"You and every man here!"

And thus fell Ice Rock.

There was no resistance, save by the pitiful handful of men left down in the lair of the Spider. They were armed, and, scaling the ladder, they opened fire on the sailors in a hopeless attempt to evade arrest which they knew would mean the gallows.

Five of them were shot dead before the scared remnant surrendered. It was a tragic ending for them, and bitterly the prisoners cursed Ulverst for abandoning them.

They turned King's evidence at once and their tale, being corroborated by Lieutenant-Boyne and his companions who were duly released, caused the officer in charge of the landing party to return hurriedly to the Hawk. For who knew but what the madman, Ulverst, might attempt to destroy the Hawk with this under-seas monster with which he had already worked such terrible havoc?

And that is exactly what Ulverst had decided to do. In spite of Dubowsky's almost tearful entreaties, in spite of Wesel's growled warning, he stated his intention of sinking the Hawk.

"She has driven us from our lair," he said harshly, "and we will never be able to return. But neither will she return to her home port!"

His face was very drawn and grim as he took the Spider crawling along the ocean floor in the direction he knew the Hawk to be lying at anchor.

He did not have to be warned of the peril which faced the Sea Spider should he rise to anywhere near the surface. The scouting aircraft overhead would spot him and bombs would hurtle down on the squat-bellied monster which he loved so well.

Ulverst knew also that he had neither fuel nor stores to reach his second base, which lay in the lonely Hebrides of Scotland.

True, he could attempt to waylay some liner or big freighter for stores, but to find a tanker he would have to go far down into the Atlantic, and perhaps spend days lying beneath the main trade routes looking for his prey.

No; in his heart of hearts, Ulverst knew that this was the end. Not the end if he cared to leave the Hawk alone, for he could reach the Russian mainland, abandon the Sea Spider, and escape, he and his men separating.

That way out, however, did not appeal to Ulverst. He would take it, certainly, if he still lived after his attack on the Hawk. But he was determined to avenge himself on those who had at long last driven him from his lair.

"Take the boat to eight fathoms!"

His voice rang harshly through the control-room, and the babbling Dubowsky seized him by the arm.

"You can't, Ulverst—you can't!" screeched the old man. "It's madness!"

Roughly Ulverst thrust him aside, and Dubowsky reeled back against a bulkhead listening with horrified ear

to the hissing of the compressed air driving the water out of the ballast tanks.

"Two fathoms more!" ordered Ulverst. "Take the boat to six fathoms and run out the periscope!"

The men hesitated, and in an instant Ulverst's revolver was out of its holster and in his hand.

"I'll shoot the first man who refuses!" he barked.

The boat rose to six fathoms and the periscope was run out. Wesel, standing silently by Ulverst, drawn revolver in his hand, saw his leader peer into the periscope.

"She's right ahead of us, Wesel," said Ulverst, then, raising his voice, he cried: "Take her down to twelve fathoms! Keep her slowly cruising at that depth. Stand by to stop all engines!"

Slowly the Sea Spider sank lower into the depths, moving stealthily forward to her prey. But already the circling aircraft overhead had seen her huge, shadowy bulk beneath the water, for suddenly there came a muffled explosion, and she rolled and plunged like a mad thing.

"They're bombing us!" screamed Dubowsky. "For Heaven's sake, Ulverst, go down!"

The enraged man leapt at Ulverst, but Wesel's outstretched foot tripped him up and sent him sprawling, face foremost, to the damp, iron floor, where he lay a pitiful, sobbing heap.

Dubowsky was almost hysterical with terror, for now the explosions were all around the Sea Spider, which was wallowing in the depths as remorselessly the white-faced Ulverst kept her heading towards the Hawk.

Then suddenly there came a roar louder than all the others, and from the engine-room a man screamed:

"She's holed! We're taking in water!"

"Close all bulkhead and water-tight doors!" shouted Ulverst. "Stop all engines!"

The rumble of the engines died away, and in the sudden stillness that followed could be heard the gurgling inrush of water.

"Centre vertical torpedo tube, stand by!" shouted Ulverst.

The torpedo officer leapt to the firing-push, his face white and set.

"Centre vertical torpedo tube, fire!" ordered Ulverst.

The officer's thumb pressed on the firing-push, and next moment there came a terrific explosion from just overhead.

With a smile on his livid lips, Ulverst turned to Wesel.

"We've got her, Wesel," he said grimly. "That's her keel plates gone!"

"And it looks as though they've got us, too!" growled Wesel. "Can we give them another?"

Ulverst barked out an order, and swiftly a second torpedo was slid into the tube. Again his voice rang out above the bubbling inrush of water: "Centre torpedo tube, fire!"

The torpedo officer's thumb pressed hard on the firing-push, and another terrific explosion from overhead thundered through the Sea Spider.

"That will have torn the very bowels out of her!" said Wesel, with



There came a muffled explosion, and the Sea Spider rolled and plunged like a mad thing as the bomb from the circling aircraft overhead found its target!

grim satisfaction. "We're sinking, Ulverst!"

The commander of the Sea Spider looked at the depth indicator. Already the pointer was sliding slowly back as the water-logged craft settled lower and lower into the depths.

Taking his sombre gaze from the gauge, Ulverst glanced at Wesel.

"If we surface, and are taken prisoners, every one of us will hang!" he said. "If it must be death, then let us die down here like men!"

The Decision!

SILENT and haggard of face, the crew of the Sea Spider waited whilst the monster sank lower and lower until, with an almost imperceptible jar, it settled on the ocean floor.

The bulkhead and water-tight doors were holding, and, although it was obvious that some compartments of the Sea Spider were completely flooded, the full extent of the damage had yet to be ascertained.

Not a man in the control-room moved or spoke as Ulverst turned to the voice pipe.

"Electric motors!" he said harshly. There came no response. The electric motor-room was silent as the tomb.

"Is anyone alive in there?" called out Ulverst.

More than one man shuddered as the commander asked that grim and

fateful question. But there came no answering voice from the motor-room, and, his face hard and set, Ulverst turned to the voice-pipe connecting with the Diesels.

"Are you there?" he demanded, his voice rasping through the hushed stillness of the control-room.

"Yes," came the voice of the engineer.

"What compartments are flooded?"

"The stern torpedo chamber and the electric motor-room, as far as we know!"

"Are your bulkhead doors holding?"

"Yes."

"Can you pump the water out of the torpedo chamber and motor-room?"

"Not until emergency plates have been rigged!"

"That'll mean surfacing," muttered Ulverst to Wesel. He turned to the voice-pipe connecting with the crank gear.

"Anyone alive in there?" he demanded.

"Yes; but we've got two feet of water here," replied the engineer. "Our air is bad!"

"Can you start your crank gear?"

"Yes; but unless we have oxygen we can't last for more than half an hour!"

"Your bulkhead doors secure?"

"Yes."

"All right! Stand by for further orders!"

Turning from the voice-pipe, Ulverst addressed the silent men around him.

"We've still got a chance of life," he said. "Our Diesels are undamaged and we can use the crank gear for a limited period. It will be enough to get us away from here. We can surface after nightfall, let air into the boat, and then carry out temporary repairs which will see us as far as our emergency base at Black Bay on the coast of Greenland."

"Have we the fuel to take us there?" demanded one of the men.

"I cannot say," answered Ulverst. "We must risk that. The alternative is to surface and be taken prisoners."

"How long will it be before we can surface?" growled another voice.

"Five hours at the earliest," replied Ulverst. "It will be suicide to surface before we are well clear of the island and until darkness has fallen. We have enough oxygen to last us until then!"

He paused a moment, then went on:

"There is another thing. As you know, I have merely commanded this boat. Dubowsky was her designer—the man who created her. It will be impossible to carry out anything but temporary repairs without the aid of the plans from which the Sea Spider was built. Those plans are secreted in the cave used by Dubowsky. It is my intention to go ashore and get them."

"Are you mad?" gasped Wesel. And the men stared at Ulverst dumb-founded.

"No," said Ulverst. "The risk is not so great as you think. I will leave the Sea Spider in one of the diving suits after nightfall and will get ashore unobserved."

"But even supposing you're successful," protested Wesel, "how will you get back?"

"By swimming," replied Ulverst tersely. "You will surface at midnight on the other side of the island. You've enough compressed air in the cylinders to bring you up. Wait for me until twelve-thirty. If I do not reach you by then, you will know I have failed, and you will take the Sea Spider to Black Bay. When you reach there, I suggest you abandon the craft, as the temporary repairs you will be able to carry out will not be sufficient for further long-distant

cruising. Blow up the Sea Spider first, then scatter and save yourselves."

"I don't like it, Ulverst," said Wesel slowly. "It's madness to go ashore. The island'll be overrun with sailors and marines. It's suicide!"

"We can do nothing effective without the plans of the Sea Spider!" said Ulverst grimly. "I must get them, Wesel. And if I fail to turn up at twelve-thirty, you are to take the boat to Black Bay. I mean that, Wesel. I know you will feel tempted to come in search of me, but these men's lives are in your care, and I forbid you to lie off here a moment after half-past twelve!"

"I understand," said Wesel.

Ten minutes later, the oxygen cylinders were turned on for a few moments, and in the revitalised atmosphere the men's spirits rose considerably.

By means of a hydrogen-oxygen flame the engineers in the crank gear engine-room succeeded in cutting a hole through the structural plates which separated them from the control-room, and the life-giving oxygen seeped through to them.

They wondered, did those men in the Sea Spider, what was going on above them and on the island. Had the aircraft-carrier been mortally crippled, or had she by some miracle kept afloat after receiving those two high-explosive torpedoes in her bowels?

"There's one thing," said Ulverst to Wesel. "Those boys from Paxa will be safe enough now!"

"Yes, they're in better hands than ours!" agreed Wesel grimly.

Slowly the time dragged past, and at long length, when Ulverst knew by the control-room chronometer that the Arctic dusk would be creeping in across the desolate waste of waters, he donned a light but strong diving-suit and entered the diving-chamber.

With a strange sinking at his heart, Wesel pressed the switch which controlled the steel door of the chamber, and as it slid shut, cutting Ulverst off from the control-room, he felt that he had looked his last upon the man who had been a brave leader and gallant comrade along many a perilous path.

(For the concluding chapters of this great adventure yarn, chums, see next Saturday's MAGNET.)

JIMMY THE FOX!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I'm jolly glad to see you, old fellow, and glad I saved your life," said Bunter. "I suppose these fellows have told you—"

"Yes, they've told me—"

"How, knowing you were in danger, I kept watch in the dead of night—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Facing desperate crooks, and things, without turning a hair!" said Bunter. "Don't you fancy I took you for a burglar, you know, and meant to catch you in the act. Nothing of the kind. As for something over that old fossil, by saving him from having his house robbed, I never even thought of it. The actual fact is, I knew all along who you were."

"Oh!"

"And that's why I did it!" said Bunter. "The right man in the right place, and all that. I was leaving this morning, old chap, but now you're here, I think I'll stay on."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's all right, old fat bean! Stay as long as you like. I've fixed it with my uncle—"

"Well, the fact is, I've got a lot of other invitations," said Bunter. "Mauly is fearfully keen for me to join him at Mauleverer Towers—"

"In that case, of course, cut off!" said Harry. "Don't mind me."

"Only I've decided to turn down Mauly. Smithy's written to ask me to join him in France—"

"Then we'll see you off. When—"

"But I shan't go!" said Bunter. "Drake being in danger, I feel that it's up to me to stand by him, and see him through. He would be hardly safe here without me. What I mean is, in a moment of danger, you fellows wouldn't be much use, would you?"

Drake grinned. The Famous Five gazed at Bunter. Bob Cherry uttered a sudden startled exclamation:

"Who's that coming up the drive? Is that an automatic he's got in his hand?"

"Yaroooooh!"

Bunter streaked for the nearest door. It was a gardener in the drive, with a pair of shears in his hand! But Billy Bunter did not delay to ascertain that fact. The mention of an automatic was enough for Bunter. He bolted into the house like a rabbit into a burrow, and a roar of laughter followed him in.

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, be sure to read the next yarn in this exciting series featuring Jack Drake and the chums of Greenjackets. It's entitled "AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR!" and it's a winner all the way!)



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A SKOOLBOY'S RESOLVE!

By DICKY NUGENT

Crash!
A deafening din suddenly shattered the silence of the Fourth Form room at St. Sam's. Morning lessons were in progress and Mr. Lickham was taking his usual mid-morning nap. The Fourth, meanwhile, quietly pelted each other with ink-pellets and all was peaceful and barny until that sudden crash from the doorway. But the crash ended it. It was as though a bombshell had fallen into the Fourth!

Crash! Bang! Wallop!
"What the merry dickens—"
The Fourth stared at the doorway in astonishment, wondering what it could be. Then their wonderment gave place to merriment. The door flew open suddenly, and in came the most comical sight imaginable. It was Dr. Birchomall, the Head, and he was staggering wildly under the tremendous weight of a big grandfather clock!

"Look out, sir!" yelled Jack Jolly, as the Head staggered forward towards Mr. Lickham's desk. But the warning came too late. Before he could stop his onward rush, Dr. Birchomall had reached the snoozing master of the Fourth.

Bang! Crash! Wallop!
"Yarooooooo!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
The Fourth yelled. The site of Mr. Lickham being knocked off his stool by a grandfather clock was too much for them.

"Sorry!" gasped the Head, as he allowed the big timepiece to roll off his back at last. "I must have known that carrying a clock about would have produced a striking result! Hurt, Lickham?"
"Ow! Yes, sir!" groaned Mr. Lickham. "My dial's almost busted!"

"So's mine!" remarked Dr. Birchomall, with a few glances at the damaged front of the clock. "But let's forget it, Lickham, and get on with the washing. I have come here with a very definite purpose!"
Mr. Lickham sniffed disapprovingly.
"A purpose involving the use of a grandfather clock, sir?"

Dr. Birchomall smiled slightly.
"Strange as it may seem, Lickham—yes! You see, I've just been checking the examination papers from your boys, and they're so bad that I decided to come here at once and tick them off. I brought the clock along to assist me in doing so. See?"

"I see, sir!" gasped Mr. Lickham.
"As the clock no longer appears to be working, I must now tick them off as well as I can without it," said the Head. "Here goes!"

The Head then turned and faced the class, glaring. During the next five minutes the Fourth had a really hot time of it. Dr. Birchomall lashed them with his tongue and poured scorn over them, and grumbled and served them with scorching sarcasm, then chewed them up completely. When he started, the boys belonged to St. Sam's, but by the time the Head had finished with them they felt as though they were Eton!

There was one junior who particularly drew forth the violence of the Head's wrath. That junior was Frank Fearless—a fellow on whom the shadow of a grate trouble had recently fallen.

"You are a dunce and a dunderhead, Fearless!" the Head concluded breathlessly, after slanging Fearless for fully a minute. "And I would say a lot more than that about you, but for one reason. That reason is that your father, Mr. Ferdinand Fearless, has just lost all his munny and will consequently have to withdraw you from St. Sam's. It's lucky for you, Fearless, that you will therefore be shortly leaving the school!"

The rest of the Form looked at Fearless with sympathy. But, gratefully to their surprise, they found that Fearless was not looking at all in need of it; on the contrary, he was grinning. They wondered why. Then Fearless answered the Head and the mystery was cleared up.

"Don't worry your fat, sir," he said. "I'm going to stay on after all!"
The Head started violently.
"Stay on, Fearless? How is that possible when your father is now a pauper?"
Fearless' ringing answer to that question made the Fourth gasp.

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REMOVE PLEAD WITH BUNTER

Deputation in Tears

Regularly at the end of each term, Mrs. Mimble finds that Bunter's use of her stools has brought them to their last legs. This term has been no exception. There isn't a stool left in the tuckshop which can be sat on with any feeling of security.

And this time Mrs. M. has asked. The worthy tuckshop dame told a crowd of Remove customers that she didn't see why she should be expected to keep on replacing stools which should last for years and that someone should do something about it.

So someone did. Wharton, to be precise. He called together a committee of leading Removites and formed a deputation to see Bunter.

Bunter listened to their statement with a frown.

"I say, you fellows, you're not suggesting that my weight's having the effect of busting up the tuckshop stools, are you?" he asked. "Because if you are—"

"We are, old fat bean!"

"Then I shall jolly well complain about it!" snorted Bunter. "I'm not going to take that sort of thing lying down!"

"We don't want you to, old sport. We want you to take it standing up in futuro—and give the tuckshop stools a chance of surviving longer than a term!"

"Look here, you fellows, this is just the sort of thing I can't stand."

"So long as you don't sit, old chap, we shan't mind!"

There was quite a lot of backchat of that kind. But Bunter wouldn't budge. The deputation appealed to him from all angles. They even painted a lurid picture of Mrs. Mimble being brought down to selling matches in the street as a result of her abnormal expenditure on the replacement of stools weakened by Bunter's weight.

Several members of the deputation were visibly affected and shed copious tears—much to Bunter's annoyance.

Bunter remained adamant. Making full use of his rich vocabulary, he said that if the old cat wasn't prepared

"Mr. Swotter? Ah, I am egg-specting him. I will see him immediately."

Dr. Birchomall went, followed by a sigh of relief from the Fourth.

The Fourth had quite egg-spect-ed him to conclude his lecture on egg-saminations with wackings all round, and they were jolly glad Mr. Swotter had come along in time to turn the Head's thoughts into other channels.

They would have been surprised to know what channels they were—Frank Fearless especially.

The fact was that Mr. Swotter had come to offer Dr. Birchomall a bribe, in return for making the scholarship a cert. for young Swotter of the Fourth. The idea was for the Head to give Swotter minor special training and at the same time handicap the others by making it as hard as possible for them to learn anything at all.

It was a fowl scheme—the sort of thing that would have made Dr. Birchomall recoil in horror in the usual way. But just at this particular time he happened to be very hard up, and the unscrewfulous Mr. Swotter had offered him a sum, payable immediately his son had won, that would have tempted a greater man than Dr. Birchomall—to wit, fifteen shillings.

Dr. Birchomall fell. But Frank Fearless, of course, knew nothing of that. He returned to his lessons with a zest, resolved on winning the scholarship or busting—and blissfully ignorant of the vile scheme that had been hatched for bringing his resolve to naught!

(The plot thickens with pea-soup intensity in the next hair-raising yarn in this series! Make a point of reading "The Rê d's Tretchery!" in next Saturday's all-star number!—Ed.)



to provide proper stools for her best customers, then the old cat deserved all she got and he'd jolly well do his best to smash up the old cat's furniture in future.

So the deputation withdrew—defeated.

But only temporarily. Outside Bunter's study, Tom Brown had an awfully bright idea. This was to replace the existing stools with even more decrepit stools which would be certain to collapse the moment the Porpoise parked

his podgy person on them—then invite Bunter down for a little treat.

The wheeze worked wonderfully well. Bunter fell for it beautifully—once at each end of the counter. Now he swears he'll never use a stool again!

Next term's stools, we fancy, stand quite a sporting chance of surviving!

HOW SHALL I SPEND EASTER?

BILLY BUNTER: Eating Easter eggs—and revelling in being free from the "yolk" of oppression!

GEO. BULSTRODE: Mostly in running shorts, I trow, sir!

BOLSOVER MAJOR: Just knocking about generally.

C. R. TEMPLE: I'll indulge my greatest passion—to be in the latest fashion!

H. SKINNER: Obtaining "inside" information about the geo-geos. (In other words, being a rank "outsider"!)—Ed.)

DICKY NUGENT: Writing literary MASTERPIECES—from the point of view of the BOYS!

D. OGILVY: Hiking, I hope.

LORD MAULEVERER: Mikin', I trust!

ANSWER to CORRESPONDENT

DUTIFUL FAG—What's the best thing to do when I'm caught pinching someone else's coal for my fagmaster? Just sentle away, of course!

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!



Billy Bunter ate so many Easter eggs last year that Bob Cherry said he would soon look like one. Peter Todd says Bunter is egg-shaped already about the waist-line! Bunter says he needs no "egging on"—but he will endeavour to beat his own record of 30 eggs at one sitting!

Most of the Removites rather "look down" on Easter eggs, but they are immensely popular among the fags, who have besieged Mrs. Mimble's tuckshop. Mrs. Mimble says she has sold enough "egg shells" to "blow out" all Greyfriars! Egg-sactly!

Coker's doting Aunt Judy sent her "dear Horace" a huge hamper crammed with Easter eggs and hot cross buns! Coker thought them far beneath his dignity—till Potter suggested giving them to the fags. Coker did so—and felt much less "hot" and "cross."

Peter Todd states that to his certain knowledge, Billy Bunter ate 259 hot cross buns last Easter. The Owl of the Remove remarks that his appetite is twice as good this year, and he hopes to eclipse this record—if anybody feels equal to keeping count!

Bob Cherry is glad Easter comes in the spring, because you can go hiking. Lord Mauleverer only shuddered when Bob suggested hiking to him. Mauly prefers what his study-mate, Sir Jimmy Vivian, would call "miking"—in other words, forty winks on the sofa!

Harry Wharton & Co. spent a camping holiday one Easter. Wharton points out that as the weather is liable to be chilly, fellows who may develop "cold feet" should not try it. Although they could not "freeze" Bunter out of the party, the weather very nearly did it for them!

FRANK NUGENT TELLS— HOW REMOVE SAVED FOURTH

The unending rivalry between Remove and Upper Fourth at Greyfriars was rounded off in a most unexpected manner in the last week of term by the Remove saving the Fourth from a frightful row.

This unlooked-for happening arose out of Smithy's suggestion for a grand pillow-fighting raid on the Fourth dorm., two nights before Breaking-up Day. It was a popular suggestion. We were all in favour of giving the Fourth something to remember us by during the hols. Preparations for the raid were advanced with great enthusiasm soon after lights out.

We had a bit of a shock on our way to the Fourth dorm., when we saw Loder descending a flight of stairs at a spot quite near the scene of our intended raid, but, concluding that the Sixth Former had just made an inspection of the dorm and was not likely to return, we carried on.

The Fourth dorm. was in darkness. Not a sound came from the inmates. We took it for granted they were all fast asleep, and crowded in with great glee, scenting a chance of catching them all well and truly napping!

On a given signal from Wharton, we attacked. Two dozen or more pillows came into action over the Fourth beds, and the dorm. resounded with hofty thuds. We all piled in merrily.

Then suddenly, by a common impulse, we stopped. We had all realised simultaneously that there was no response whatever from the Fourth.

An examination of the beds soon told us why. Not one of them was occupied! The shapes under the bedclothes which we had taken to be sleeping Fourth Formers were only bolsters!

"Loder!" Wharton exclaimed suddenly. "We might have known something was wrong when we saw him. He must have found out about this!"

"And ten to one in doughnuts he's bringing Capper up right now," added Smithy. "Listen!"

We listened—and heard the sound of footsteps coming up the stairs!

There was no time to escape. Wharton made a quick decision.

"Jump into the beds, chaps!" he said. "For preference, the beds nearest the door!"

We obeyed the command—feeling by no means happy about our position as we did so, I can assure you. Two dozen or so of us yanked out the bolsters, put them where they belonged, and tumbled into the beds. That still left several beds at the end of the dorm. untouched, but they were a long way from the door, and we had to take a chance with them.

Half-a-minute later, the dorm. door opened and Loder and Capper looked in.

"Here we are, sir!" we heard Loder say. "You'll see what I say is correct. The whole lot of them have gone out, leaving bolsters in their beds to look like—oh!"

"I do not wonder at your monosyllabic termination, Loder!" chimed in Capper's voice sternly. "You are, as I suspected, a victim of your own imagination. The beds are obviously occupied by boys—not bolsters! Pah!"

"But when I came up before, sir, I'll swear that—"

"Silence, Loder! I refuse to have the boys of my Form awakened at this hour to satisfy your appetite for scenes! Turn out the light at once!"

And the light went out—and Loder and Capper disappeared—and we all sat up in bed chuckling!

And that's how we saved the Fourth Form a frightful row! It turned out that they really had gone out of the House—to a session of their potty Form secret society in the crypt. Now that the term's ended, there's no harm in revealing the truth about it.

We hope Temple, Dabney & Co. will be properly grateful!

URGENT APPEAL

Some fathead has gone for his holidays taking the key of the woodshed with him. Will he please return it at once? If Gosling doesn't get the door open soon his mind will be "unhinged!"