

BUNTER BEATS THE GANGSTERS!

The Magnet 2^D



THRILLING SITUATIONS AND LAUGHS GALORE IN THIS GRAND COMPLETE SCHOOL
YARN OF GREYFRIARS!

BUNTER BEATS *the* GANGSTERS!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Important!

"VAN DUCK!" shouted Billy Bunter.

Putnam van Duck, the new junior in the Greyfriars Remove, did not heed. As he was standing at the wicket, with his bat in his hands, watching for the ball to come down from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, he had no attention to waste on Billy Bunter.

Two or three other fellows, however, called out to the fat Owl of the Remove:

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Buzz off!"

"Don't bother!"

Billy Bunter did not shut up. He did not buzz off. Neither did he cease to bother. Bunter had come down from the House at a run, and arrived breathless. Apparently it was an urgent matter that had brought him there. But to the Remove fellows, just then, the urgent matter was cricket.

It was only a practice at the nets. But Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, was watching Van Duck with a very keen eye. The American junior was taking to cricket like a duck to water. He wielded the willow like a fellow born to it. Now he was standing up to the bowling of Hurree Singh, the best junior bowler at Greyfriars.

Wharton was considering as he watched, whether Van Duck might not be a valuable recruit for the team going over to Rookwood the following week. Billy Bunter, always superfluous, was more superfluous than ever at the moment.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter.

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Get out!" hooted Harry Wharton.

"But I say—"

"Kick him, somebody!" snapped the captain of the Remove.

Billy Bunter jumped out of reach before anybody could oblige. His fat existence was forgotten at once. All eyes were on Putnam van Duck, as Hurree Singh sent the ball down.

It was a wily ball—one of the nabob's wildest. But the junior from Chicago seemed equal to it. He patted it away, and grinned cheerfully.

"By gum, he can bat!" said Bob Cherry.

"By gum, he can!" agreed Harry Wharton. "I fancy we shall want him at Rookwood. We—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, my hat! Is Bunter still there? Blow away, Bunter!"

"But I say—" yelled Bunter.

"Kick him!"

"Van Duck's wanted!" howled Bunter.

"Rot!"

"Wanted at once—important!" spluttered Bunter. "Think I've come down here for nothing, you silly asses? I tell you it's important!"

"Oh, blow!" growled Harry Wharton. "Here, Van Duck, this fat idiot says you're wanted!"

Van Duck came unwillingly away from the wicket. However, if his Form-master had sent for him, he had no choice in the matter. And he took it for granted that it was a summons from Mr. Quelch.

"Search me!" he grunted. "I guess Quelch might give a guy a rest on a half-holiday. What does the old gink want, Bunter?"

"Eh? 'Tisn't Quelch!"

"The Head?" asked Van Duck.

"'Tisn't the Head!"

"Who the great horned toad is it, then?" demanded Putnam.

"If it's some pesky prefect sent for me, you can tell him to guess again! I'll say I ain't chucking cricket to mosey around for any Sixth Form guy!"

"'Tisn't a prefect!"

"Then who—" roared Van Duck.

"It's a parcel!"

"A—a-a parcel!" stuttered the American junior.

"That's it!" gasped Bunter. "I came to tell you, at once, when I saw it taken to the House dame's room. You'll have to go to Mrs. Kebble for it, you know. It's tuck, of course."

"Tit-tut-tuck!" stuttered Van Duck, while the other Removites glared at William George Bunter as if they could have eaten him.

It was not a message from Quelch, or the Head, or even a prefect! Billy Bunter had interrupted the cricket—to bring the news that a parcel of tuck had arrived for Putnam, and awaited him in the House dame's room. That was the important matter that had brought the fat Owl scudding breathlessly down to the nets!

From Billy Bunter's point of view, it was, of course, a matter of the very greatest importance and urgency. Cricket, in comparison, was a trifle light as air.

On that point Harry Wharton & Co. did not agree with Bunter.

"Tuck, of course," said Bunter, heedless of ferocious glares. "What else could it be? 'Tisn't a hamper, though—too small for that! Looks to me as if it might be a box of chocolates. Anyhow, it's jolly certain that it's tuck, old chap, and I came to tell you at once. Come on!"

"Come on?" repeated Van Duck.

"Yes, come on, old fellow!" said Bunter.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Putnam.

"You fat villain!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You pernicious porpoise!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Slaughter him!" said Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, don't play the goat! Come on, Van Duck, old chap! I say, what are you waiting for? It's tuck!"

Evidently, Billy Bunter could not understand a fellow lingering, when he had news of the arrival of tuck! He blinked impatiently at Putnam through his big spectacles. Certainly, the Owl of the Remove was not wholly disinterested in the matter. He intended to be on hand when that parcel was opened—with an eye to the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Bunter was in a hurry for that parcel to be opened.

"You—you pesky piecan!" gasped Van Duck. "You all-fired bonehead! You two-cent remnant! You—— Oh, sit down!"

"I say—— Yaroooooh!" roared Billy Bunter, as the exasperated American junior prodded him with his bat.

The prod took effect on the widest part of Billy Bunter's ample circumference. It tapped him on the equator, as it were. Billy Bunter sat down quite suddenly, with a heavy bump.

"Urrrggh!" gasped Bunter.

"Now, you pack it up, you pie-faced piecan!" growled Van Duck, and he walked back to the wicket.

"Gurrrggh!" gurgled Bunter. "I—I say—— Oooooer!"

"Roll away, barrel!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Urrgh! Beast! Wurrghh!"

"Gather round, my infants!" said Bob. "All of you kick him together—first kick to me! Keep still, Bunter! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where are you going?"

Billy Bunter did not delay to reply; he went! Spluttering for breath, the fat junior burned the wind, as Putnam van Duck would have expressed it.

Harry Wharton & Co. turned their attention to cricket again. Inexplicable as it was to Billy Bunter, nobody cared two hoots, or one, whether there was a parcel of tuck unclaimed in the House dame's room, so long as cricket was the order of the day.

That parcel of tuck was immediately forgotten by everybody but Billy Bunter. But it was not the sort of thing that Billy Bunter could forget!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Luck—and Tuck!

"GO away, Master Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Mrs. Kebble, I——"

"Will you go away?" demanded Mrs. Kebble, with great asperity.

"Oh, certainly! But——"

"And shut the door, please!"

The House dame's room, surrounded by cupboards from floor to ceiling, was a nice cosy room. Mrs. Kebble, the House dame, was a nice, cosy old soul. But it was for neither reason that Billy Bunter had rolled in.

Half an hour had elapsed since Bunter's visit to the cricketers. During that half-hour he had paid no fewer than three visits to the House dame's room. Each time he had blinked at a

parcel that lay on the House dame's table, with a longing blink through his big spectacles.

It was all very well for Putnam van Duck to pass a parcel of tuck by, like the idle wind which he regarded not. Van Duck was a millionaire's son, and no doubt had all the tuck he wanted.

It was quite different with Billy Bunter. Bunter never had all the tuck he wanted. Certainly, his wants in that line were rather extensive.

If Van Duck did not care about that parcel, Bunter did. He was, indeed, prepared to save Van Duck all the trouble of dealing with it.

On his first visit to the House dame's room, Bunter had stated that Van Duck wanted him to take that parcel up to his study. That statement had no effect whatever on Mrs. Kebble. Probably she knew her Bunter too well! She had simply asked Bunter to shut the door after him.

On his second visit, Bunter had asked for a clean handkerchief. That was rather more plausible, for there was no doubt that Bunter was in need of a clean handkerchief.

He was provided with one; but Mrs. Kebble, unfortunately, did not turn her back, so there was absolutely no chance of snaffling the parcel that lay on the table.

On his third visit Bunter asked for a

In nine cases out of ten, William George Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, gets more kicks than ha'pence from his school-fellows. But, fat freak though he is, Bunter comes in useful sometimes, as is proved in this week's all-thrill school story of HARRY WHARTON & CO.

clean collar. This, also, was plausible. Bunter needed a clean collar as much as he needed a clean handkerchief. Bunter's needs, in these lines, were perpetual.

But Mrs. Kebble was getting rather impatient. Now, on Bunter's fourth visit, she bit, so to speak.

She was tired of Bunter as a visitor. New boys, lost and lonesome, often drifted to that cosy room, and were comforted, often with cake. But it was long since Bunter had been a new boy, though, certainly, he would have had no objection to being comforted with cake, like the newest of new kids.

"I say, Mrs. Kebble, I only came in for a clean handkerchief," said the fat Owl reproachfully.

"I gave you one not twenty minutes ago, Master Bunter!"

"I—I mean a clean collar——"

"I gave you one not ten minutes ago!"

"I—I mean——"

"Go away, Master Bunter!" said Mrs. Kebble severely. "I will report you to Mr. Quelch if you come here playing your little jokes!"

Mrs. Kebble did not seem to suspect that Bunter had designs on the parcel that lay on the table. She suspected a "rag."

"I—I say, what's that outside the window?" asked Bunter suddenly.

Mrs. Kebble turned her head to look at the window.

Billy Bunter made a swift movement towards the table.

But the House dame's head was turned back at once.

"There was nothing at the window!" she snapped. "And—and what are you doing, Master Bunter?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Nothing!"

"You must not touch Master van Duck's parcel! Go away at once! And if you come here again, I shall mention it to Mr. Quelch!" said the House dame, with intensified severity. "Shut the door after you, please!"

Billy Bunter suppressed his feelings, rolled out of the room, and shut the door after him with a bang. Which was very bad manners. But Bunter was feeling very angry and annoyed.

"Suspicious old cat!" murmured Bunter. "Looking at a chap as if she thought he was going to bag another fellow's parcel! Suspicious cat!"

As that had been precisely Billy Bunter's intention, the House dame's suspiciousness was really excusable.

But the fat Owl was annoyed.

Any minute now those beasts might come in from the cricket. They were going out of gates after cricket practice, Bunter knew, and they would come in and change. Then, no doubt, Putnam van Duck would consider it worth while to call for his parcel of tuck.

No doubt, if he was on the spot, he would be allowed a "whack." But with a lot of greedy fellows about, it would not be a large whack. Bunter liked the lion's share, when he could get it.

"Cat!" repeated Bunter, as he loafed morosely in the corridor, cudgelling his fat brains for another excuse to butt into the House dame's room.

"Bunter!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He spun round at the sound of his Form-master's voice. Mr. Quelch was coming up the passage, and he frowned at Bunter.

The fat Owl blinked at him. It really was annoying. Quelch had no business there, unless he was going to speak to the House dame. Of course, he had to butt in, just where he wasn't wanted—by Bunter! It was like a beak!

"Bunter, what are you doing here?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Cheek, Bunter thought—as if a fellow couldn't do as he liked on a half-holiday. But he did not say that to Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Nothing, sir!" he stammered.

"You should not be doing nothing, Bunter! I do not approve of boys loafing idly about the passages on a half-holiday!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I—I'm waiting for some chaps to come in from the nets, sir!"

"I do not see why you cannot join them at the nets, Bunter!"

"Tain't a compulsory day, sir," said Bunter, as if that settled that.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch. "You are idle, Bunter! You would be much better occupied on the cricket field, or taking a healthy walk. At all events, do not loaf about the passages. I disapprove of it!"

"Oh! Yes, sir! I mean, no, sir!"

Mr. Quelch walked on to the House dame's door, and tapped. Billy Bunter blinked after him, with a vengeful blink through his big spectacles. He would have enjoyed telling the Remove master what he thought of him. It was not a flattering opinion. But that opinion Bunter had to keep locked up in his own fat breast.

"Er—Mrs. Kebble," Quelch did not enter the House dame's room; he spoke at the open door. "Mrs. Locke would be glad to see you in the Head's house, as soon as you are at leisure."

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"Certainly, sir. I will go immediately!"

Billy Bunter heard both remarks. The wrath faded out of his fat face. He could have blessed Quelch. Quelch had come along just in time to solve his problem!

He rolled away, as Quelch came back down the corridor. But he rolled slowly, and the Remove master passed him and disappeared.

Once Quelch was out of sight, Billy Bunter stopped. He posted himself at a window in the corridor, and stood looking out. There was a view of the kitchen garden, and Mr. Mimble, the gardener, hoeing therein. Billy Bunter was, apparently, deeply interested in that view when, a few minutes later, Mrs. Kebble came rustling down the passage.

But when Mrs. Kebble had gone down the stairs, Bunter's interest in Mr. Mimble and his hoeing performance evaporated on the spot.

He gave one cautious blink round through his big spectacles, and rolled up the passage to the House dame's room.

Swiftness was not Billy Bunter's long suit! But on this occasion he was almost as swift as the swallow in its flight.

He whipped into the room, clutched the parcel from the table, and whipped out! He did the corridor almost at 50 m.p.h. On a half-holiday most of the fellows were out of the House, and no eye fell on Bunter as he bolted into the Remove passage with his prize. Breathlessly, he arrived in that passage.

Then, for a moment, Bunter paused, blinking at the parcel in his fat hand.

The label was addressed to Van Duck, in a "fist" that Bunter knew. It was the handwriting of Mr. Coot, an American gentleman in London, who sometimes wrote to the millionaire's son at Greyfriars. Bunter had seen that "fist" several times on letters put up in the rack. Van Duck had had a hamper from Mr. Coot on one occasion. This time it was a much smaller parcel—a box of chocolates, Bunter guessed.

Bunter was strongly tempted to roll on to Study No. 7, his own study, and devour his prey there. But he realised that it would not do. It always seemed to Billy Bunter that, if there was any tuck about, he had a sort of natural right to it. But he was aware that that view was not generally shared. It was, in fact, a rather serious matter to bag another fellow's parcel from the House dame's room.

Quelch had seen him in the passage, too! Mrs. Kebble would remember his many visits! He would be suspected!

Quelch, who did not approve of Bunter loafing about the corridor, would certainly have approved still less had he learned the object of Bunter's loafing.

On the other hand, though a fellow certainly couldn't snaffle another fellow's parcel, there was no reason why a fellow shouldn't take a fellow's parcel up to a fellow's study for him!

That was only good-natured.

There was no reason why he shouldn't open it all ready for him when he came in! That, too, was good-natured.

And, having good-naturedly done so much for a fellow, a chap might sample the contents of a parcel while he waited for a fellow to come in.

So Billy Bunter rolled into Study No. 1, the study that Van Duck shared with Wharton and Nugent. He shut the door, and in about a minute more, the packet was unwrapped on the study table.

It contained, as Bunter had already

guessed, a box of chocolates—not a very large, but a very handsome box, and evidently expensive. The fat junior removed the lid. Within, beautifully packed in silver foil, lay the layers of lovely, luscious chocolate-creams! Not merely luscious, but scrumptious—the sort that melted in a fellow's mouth, and made him realise that life, with all its worries, was really worth while!

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Good!"

Bunter's capacious mouth watered. He grabbed a couple of the luscious chocs and crammed them into that capacious mouth.

Bunter gobbled.

It was his intention to sample a few of those chocs. The rest were to be left for the owner. But the sender of that box of chocs had concentrated rather on quality than on quantity. They were of the very best—which was good—but there were only about a dozen of them, which was not so good. Big and fat as they were, a dozen chocolate-creams did not go very far with Billy Bunter.

In five minutes Bunter was blinking through his big spectacles at an empty chocolate box. And as he blinked at it, there was a sound of tramping footsteps and cheery voices in the Remove passage.

"Oh lor'!" ejaculated Bunter.

Bunter had intended, really and truly, to leave the major part of that box of chocs for the owner. Somehow they had gone! It was clear that, with nothing but an empty box to show, it would not be useful to explain to Van Duck that he had brought that box up to the study and opened it for him out of sheer good nature!

Already it seemed to Bunter that he could feel a boot on his tight trousers. He blinked at the empty box—he blinked at the door, about to open—and in sheer desperation he grabbed the box and the unwrapped wrappings from the table, shoved them into the armchair, and sat on them. As the chocolate box crumpled under his weight, the door of Study No. 1 was thrown open, and Harry Wharton & Co. came in.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Ginger-Pop for Bunter!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"I—I say, you fellows—" "How did Bunter know we were coming in for ginger-pop?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

Billy Bunter did not rise from the armchair. It would have been polite, no doubt, to rise, when the owners of the study came in. But the fat Owl had his reasons for sitting tight!

"What's that fat boulder doing here?" asked Harry Wharton, with a suspicious glance at the fat Owl in the armchair. "If you've been scoffing the ginger-pop, you fat burglar—"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I never knew there was any ginger-pop in the cupboard. If you think I've touched your ginger-pop—"

Bunter, for once, was not guilty! Certainly, had he been aware that there was a supply of that refreshing beverage in the study cupboard, it would not have remained untouched. All was grist that came to the fat gub-hunter's mill. But he had been too busy in Study No. 1 to think about the possible contents of the cupboard.

"What are you doing here, then?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"Oh! Just waiting for you chaps to come in!" said Bunter. "As you're

going out after the cricket, I—I thought you might like me to come?"

"What the dickens put that idea into your head?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"My hat! It's still here!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove, as he opened the door of the study cupboard, and beheld the bottles of ginger-beer therein.

Considering that Billy Bunter had been found in the study, it was rather a surprising sight.

"Wonders will never cease!" said Nugent. "Like some ginger-pop, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter promptly. A dozen large fat chocolate-creams had made Bunter thirsty.

"Go and scout for a glass, then," said Frank.

"Eh?"

"Get a glass from your study, fat-head! We haven't enough to go round."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter was lazy—the laziest man ever. But he was not too lazy to fetch a glass from a study a few yards up the passage, if the same was to be filled for him with fizzy ginger-pop on a warm afternoon.

But he did not move! He could not move from the armchair without revealing the ruins of Van Duck's box of chocolates.

Harry Wharton sorted out glasses. Study No. 1 was provided with six tumblers—quite an unusual supply for a junior study.

They were set out on the table, and the bottles lifted from the cupboard. After cricket practice in warm weather, ginger-pop was grateful and comforting; a pleasant refreshment before the juniors started to walk to Courtfield.

"I say, you fellows, you've got six glasses there," said Bunter. "No need to get any more."

"Van Duck's coming up, fathead—he's only cut off to the House dame's room to get his parcel."

"Oh crikey!"

"Is that what you're waiting here for?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh! Yes! No! I—I say, you fellows, are you sure there was a parcel for Van Duck at all?" stammered Bunter.

The Famous Five stared at him.

"Why, you benighted ass, didn't you come down to the nets to tell Van Duck so?" exclaimed Bob. "Didn't you get prodded for it?"

"Beast! I—I mean, I—I might have been mistaken!" stammered Bunter. "I—I think, on—on second thoughts, you know—that—that perhaps there wasn't a parcel, after all. I don't suppose old Coot has sent Van Duck a box of chocolates."

"Old Coot!" repeated Harry.

"Yes, that old bean who writes to Van Duck, you know! It was his fist—"

"His fist—on the parcel that wasn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean, you blithering owl?" asked Harry Wharton. "You can't have snaffled Van Duck's parcel under Mrs. Kebble's eyes, or, I should think—"

"I—I mean—that is—oh lor'!" Bunter broke off as Putnam van Duck came into the study. He came empty-handed, to the surprise of the Famous Five, though not to Billy Bunter's.

"Haven't you got it?" asked Bob.

"Nope! Kebble wasn't there, and I couldn't see anything of a parcel for me," answered the American junior. "I guess that fat gink was stringing me along."

"Oh! Yes! That's it!" gasped Bunter. "There—there wasn't a parcel,

old chap. It was just—just my little joke!"

"You pie-faced bonehead——"

"Oh, really, Van Duck! If you're going to call a fellow names after he took the trouble to come and tell you about your parcel——"

"Ain't you just allowed there wasn't a parcel, you locoed geck?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! I mean——"

"There jolly well was!" said Harry Wharton. "Bunter's seen Mr. Coot's list on the label. He's let that out!"

"If Kebble isn't there, that accounts for the milk in the coconut!" chuckled Bob. "Bunter's snaffled the parcel."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"By the great horned toad——" began Van Duck, with a glare at the worried Owl in the armchair.

"I—I haven't!" howled Bunter, in alarm. "What I mean is, there was a

"If you can't take a fellow's word, you'd better let the matter drop," said Bunter, with dignity. "I say, you fellows might let me have some of that ginger-pop. Chocolates make a chap thirsty."

"Chocolates!"

"I—I mean, I haven't had any chocolates! I—I wonder what made me say—c-c-chocolates!" stammered Bunter.

"I—I say, you might cut along to my study and get me a glass, Bob, old chap."

"You can't cut along and get one for yourself?" asked Bob.

"Nunno! I—I mean, I—I'm tired! I—I feel as if I couldn't get out of this armchair, old chap."

"That's all right! I'll help you out——"

"Keep off, you beast! I—I mean, I—I'm ill! I've got a pain!" gasped

"Only a dozen in it?" chuckled Bob. "That's all," said Bunter. "Not that I know what was in it, you know. How should I know?"

"Ain't he a cough-drop?" said Bob. "I suppose he's sitting on it now, and that's why he can't get out of that chair!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Nothing of the sort! If you think I bunged it into this chair and sat on it when I heard you fellows coming——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry stepped behind the armchair, grasped the high back, and heaved. There was a roar from Billy Bunter as the chair tilted and he shot out on the carpet.

Bump!

After Bunter shot a crumpled chocolate-box and crumpled paper wrappings. But there was no sign of chocolates.



"Go away, Master Bunter!" said Mrs. Kebble, severely. "I will report you to Mr. Quelch!" But Bunter had designs on the parcel addressed to Putnam van Duck. "I—I say," he said suddenly, "what's that outside the window?" As the House dame turned her head, Bunter made a swift movement towards the parcel.

parcel, just as I told you, but I haven't been anywhere near the House dame's room. I wasn't within a hundred yards of the place when I saw it there——"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I—I say, you fellows, if the parcel's gone, I—I fancy it must have been the—the cat!" said Bunter. "You know that cat of Mrs. Kebble's—always sneaking about the House pinching something. I haven't been in Mrs. Kebble's room at all. You can ask her, if you like—she will remember giving me a clean kanky——"

"Oh crikey!"

"It's a bit thick, the way fellows always think of me if any tuck's missing," said Bunter warmly. "Unjust, I call it. It isn't as if I was a greedy fellow, like some fellows I could name. You, frinstance, Cherry——"

"Why, you fat slug——"

Bunter. "A—a touch of pneumonia in my right leg——"

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

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! It's a fearful pain!" said Bunter. "My grandfather was lame with it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! Look here, I don't mind using the same glass as you, Wharton! I'll have it first—see?"

"Where's my parcel?" demanded Van Duck.

"How should I know?" retorted Bunter. "Tain't my business to watch over your parcels, is it? I came and told you it was there, and a fat lot of thanks I got! If you'd come back to the House with me then, it would have been all right. I know absolutely nothing about it—no more than the man in the moon! Rotten fuss to make over a dozen chocolate creams——"

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

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob, as he picked up the crumpled box. "You needn't look farther for your parcel, Van Duck! Here's what's left of it!"

"I'll sure lambaste that fat piecan!" roared Van Duck.

"I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. He scrambled to his feet and backed hurriedly to the door. "I—I say, I—I brought that parcel up here to—to—to oblige you fellows! I mean, I don't know how it got in that armchair! It—it's quite surprising! I—I think I can hear Toddy calling me——"

"You're not going without your ginger-pop, I guess!" said Van Duck. "Eh?"

Bunter was at the door, but he turned back at that. Van Duck picked up a

foaming glass of ginger-pop from the table.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, all right!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at Putnam van Duck. The American junior was a good-tempered and tolerant fellow, and, as he had heaps of money, no doubt the loss of a box of chocolates did not bother him very much. Still, it was rather surprising to see him take it like this. Few fellows, in the circumstances, would have offered Bunter ginger-pop in return for bagging a parcel of tuck, and that was what Putnam was doing.

Bunter was surprised. Still, he was going to get the ginger-pop, and that was the chief thing. He did not know yet how he was going to get it.

He halted in the doorway, and Van Duck stepped towards him, the glass of foaming fluid in his hand.

"I guess it's due to you, old-timer, after taking the trouble to bring that box of choes up, and saving me all the trouble of eating them!" remarked Van Duck. "Here you are!"

He grasped Billy Bunter by the hair with his left hand and jerked his head forward. With his right hand he tilted the glass of ginger-beer down the back of the fat Owl's neck.

"Oooooooooogh!" spluttered Bunter. "Ooogh!"

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

"Ow! I'm all wet! I'm all sticky!" yelled Bunter. "Ow! Ooogh! Why, you beast! Grooogh!"

"Hand me another glass!" said Van Duck. "Bunter's sure fond of ginger-pop, and I guess he can have all he wants!"

"Urrrrggh!"

Bunter did not stay for more ginger-pop. It was true that he was fond of that refreshing fluid, but he had had all he wanted—and more! A kangaroo had nothing on Bunter as he bounded out of Study No. 1.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

POKER PIKE, the Greysfriars gunman, rose from his bench by Gosling's lodge.

He gave his bowler hat a firmer clamp on his bullet head, and reached to his hip pocket to make sure that the six-gun was right and ready. Then he lounged down to the gates as six juniors arrived there in a cheery little crowd. After them rolled another—a very fat one!

Harry Wharton & Co. were starting on a ramble, which was to wind up in the bunshop at Courtfield. A walk up the towpath by the shining Sark, a short cut across Popper Court Woods, and tea at the bunshop seemed rather attractive on a sunny, fine half-holiday. To the fat junior who trailed after the party, the last-named item was the only attractive one—but that was very attractive indeed to William George Bunter.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the happy possessor of a handsome remittance, was standing tea at the bunshop. Several Remove fellows, who were out and about in various directions, were to gather there at the prescribed time; it was going to be quite a party. From such a party, of course, Billy Bunter could not be left out—at least, from his own point of view.

Certainly, the dusky Nabob of

Bhanipur had forgotten to include him in the list of guests. But that did not worry Bunter. That was a trifle light as air, or lighter.

Poker Pike, his hickory face serious as usual under his bowler hat, calmly joined the juniors as they went out of gates.

Harry Wharton & Co. smiled, though Putnam van Duck looked a little restive.

Putnam's popper, in far-off Chicago, had hired the gunman to keep watch and ward over his son at school, and Putnam admitted that he was needed there. The wives of Chick Chew, Kidnapper No. 1 of the United States, were many and various. There was no doubt that the kidnappers would already have "cinched" the millionaire's son but for the watchful Poker.

Nevertheless, Poker Pike often seemed too much of a good thing to the gilt-edged American junior. He tired of having the gunman perpetually treading on his tail, as he called it. It was necessary, but not nice.

"You young guys hitting the horizon?" asked Poker.

"Some!" said Bob Cherry gravely, answering Poker in his own language. "Just a few, old-timer! Moseying around a piece."

"Me, too!" said Poker briefly.

"Aw, can it, Poker!" said Putnam restively. "I guess I'm safe enough with this crowd, and we're meeting more guys in Courtfield. You want to sit this one out, Poker."

"Forget it!" said Poker, with his usual brevity. Poker Pike was a man of few words, but unlimited determination.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled out after the juniors. "I say, we don't want that dashed gunman! Look here, I don't want to show up at the best place in Courtfield with that blessed gunman, I can tell you!"

"You going to Courtfield, Bunter?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Going our way?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"If the esteemed Bunter does not like the absurd company of the ridiculous gunman—" began Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I jolly well don't!" grunted Bunter.

"Then the walkfulness in another direction is the proper caper!" suggested the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked down to the river. Behind them walked Poker Pike, apparently deaf to the objections of Bunter—at least, completely regardless of them. The fat Owl rolled along with the juniors.

Bunter seemed to have forgotten the episode of the ginger-pop in Study No. 1, though it was only half an hour ago. Bunter was not the man to bear grudges or to remember offences when a spread was in the offing.

The fact that he was superfluous did not worry Bunter. If the good-natured nabob allowed him to hook on, that was good enough. And it was for Hurree Singh, as the founder of the feast, to decide. Bunter did not need a pressing invitation. Anything short of the boot was all right for Bunter.

Poker Pike lounged along the towpath behind the party, his slits of eyes very keen and watchful.

It was quite likely that the school was watched by some of the gang of kidnappers, and that hostile eyes were on Putnam van Duck as he walked out with his friends. Poker, at least, had no doubt of it.



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He was not letting the guilt-edged youth out of his sight. He seldom, or never did.

"I say, you fellows, what's the good of walking?" asked Billy Bunter. "What about getting a car? I'll phone for one, if you like."

"Good!" said Johnny Bull. "You go back and phone for a car, while we keep on by the river."

"Jolly good idea!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"I'll stand the car, if that's what you're worrying about," said Bunter. "Inky can lend me a pound—"

"The lendfulness will not be terrific," grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Well, if you're going to be mean, I—"

"The meanfulness is going to be preposterous!"

"Beast!"

"You silly ass!" said Frank Nugent. "We're taking Van Duck for a ramble through Popper Court Woods. He's never been there yet. If you're too jolly lazy to walk, sit down and shut up!"

"I could walk you off your legs, and chance it," retorted Bunter. "But the fact is, I'd like a car, and I'm willing to stand one."

"Inky's blowing his cash on the feed at the bunshop," said Bob. "He can't afford to stand cars, old fat man."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snort, from Bunter. He rolled on after the Famous Five and the American junior—slowly. The juniors started on a walk of two or three miles, which was nothing to the heroes of the Remove. But two or three yards, as a rule, sufficed for Billy Bunter. He was more heavily handicapped than the other fellows in the matter of weight.

He lagged and lagged. The juniors quite expected the fat Owl to lag, and probably to conk out in the first quarter of a mile.

"Come on, fatty!" called back Bob.

"Wait for me, you beasts!" squeaked Bunter.

The juniors waited for him to come up. Bunter rolled on slowly.

"If we're going at this rate, we'd better look for a night club instead of a bunshop," remarked Johnny Bull sarcastically. "We shan't be in Court-field before midnight."

"I say, you fellows, there's no hurry," said Bunter. "The fact is I'm sleepy."

"Sleepy!" yelled the juniors.

"Yes," Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles. "Blessed if I know what's come over me; but I feel fearfully sleepy!"

"Do you ever feel anything else?" asked Bob.

"Well, look here!" said Bunter. "We've lots of time on a half-holiday. What about resting for half an hour, while I have a nap? You fellows can sit in the shade, and brush the flies off me—see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors; and even Poker Pike's serious visage wrinkled in a grin.

The Removites could not quite see themselves giving up their ramble to sit round Bunter, and brush the flies off him while he snored.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" snapped Bunter. "I can tell you, I'm awfully sleepy. I can hardly keep my eyes open."

"You seem to be able to keep your mouth open."

"Beast!"

"Sit down and take a rest, old fat bean," said Bob.

"Will you fellows wait for me?"

"Oh, no!"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter did not sit down and take a rest. Thick grass and shady trees looked very inviting. But Bunter did not want to arrive at the bunshop too late for the spread.

He rolled on. Behind the party walked the gunman, serious and sedate, and very watchful. But Bunter had forgotten the obnoxious gunman now. He was tired. That was nothing new, of course; but he was unusually tired, and he was sleepy, and growing sleepier.

Sleeping was Bunter's long suit. In the Remove dormitory his snore generally started as soon as his fat head was laid on the pillow, and continued, like a Wagnerian unending melody, till the rising-bell clanged out in the morning. And a nap after dinner was always welcome to Bunter. Still, it was very unusual for even Bunter to want to nod off while he was out for a walk in the afternoon.

But he did. He blinked, and blinked, and blinked, growing drowsier and drowsier. He came to a halt at last, and leaned on a tree as the juniors turned into the footpath through Popper Court Woods.

"I say, you fellows, hold on!" he squeaked. "I say, I'm really awfully, fearfully sleepy! I say, hold on!"

"What's the matter with the fat ass?" asked Bob Cherry. "He really looks sleepy." He stared at Bunter.

"Too much dinner," granted Johnny Bull.

"I never had enough dinner," yapped Bunter. "Quelch stopped me at the fifth helping of steak-and-kidney pie, and he wouldn't let me have more than four helpings of pudding. I should be hungry now, if I hadn't had those chocs—I mean, I never had the chocs—"

"I guess we haven't moseyed out to listen to that fat guy chewing the rag," remarked Putnam van Duck.

"Come on!" said Harry.

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter.

With a tremendous effort he detached himself from the tree, and rolled after the juniors as they went down the shady path. He blinked, and blinked as he rolled. That strange, inexplicable drowsiness was growing on him. Sleepy-head as he was, this was quite a new experience for Bunter, and he did not know what to make of it. But he knew that he was fearfully sleepy, and that every time his fat eyelids closed, it was more difficult to get them open again.

The footpath, shaded by great branches, banked by nodding hawthorns, was very shady and pleasant after the sun glare on the riverside. Bunter was more and more tempted to take a rest. He began to feel that, feed or no feed, he would not be able to help it. He was almost falling asleep as he walked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob suddenly, as he looked back at the fat Owl, who had fallen a good way behind. "What on earth's that game? Look!"

All the fellows looked. In fact, they stared blankly. Bunter was still coming on; but he was weaving his way blindly, like a fellow more than half-asleep. He lurched from side to side as he walked. He seemed hardly to know where he was going, and hardly able to keep his feet.

"What the dickens is the matter with him?" exclaimed Harry.

"Gammon!" granted Johnny Bull.

"Just gammon—to make us hang on for him."

Harry Wharton shook his head. They stood watching Bunter in amazement, and even Bull, after a few moments, doubted whether it was "gammon." But if it was not gammon—what was it? How could any fellow, even Bunter, be falling asleep as he walked in the middle of the day?

Poker Pike looked at him, and a strange expression came over the gunman's face. His look became very intent. But the amazed juniors did not notice the gunman. Their astonished eyes were fixed on Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" gasped Bob. "He's going over."

Billy Bunter gave another lurch, and went over in the grass. He was heard to grunt; then he lay still.

Harry Wharton ran back. He was rather alarmed, as well as astonished. He reached Bunter in a few moments. The fat Owl of the Remove lay still in the grass, fast asleep, and snoring.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Who Doped Bunter?

SNORE!
That sound, familiar in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars, now awoke the echoes of Popper Court Woods.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared down at the fat junior—in amazement, almost in stupefaction.

Poker Pike, standing with his hands on his hips, stared at him, his grim face setting grimmer and grimmer. His slits of eyes turned from Bunter to the amazed group of juniors, scanning face after face. Deep suspicion was written in Poker's look; and it would have made the chums of the Remove jump, had they guessed the thoughts that were passing in the Greyfriars gunman's mind. His glance lingered intently on the dusky face of Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"That's not gammon," said Bob.

"He's really asleep."

"Kick him, and see," suggested Johnny Bull.

Had Bunter been spoofing, that suggestion would have been enough to wake him up. He would not have waited for the kick. But he gave no sign. He lay like a fat log in the grass, snoring.

Harry Wharton stooped, and shook him by a fat shoulder.

"Wake up, you ass!" he exclaimed.

Snore!

"Wake up, you blithering fathead!" roared Johnny Bull.

Snore!

Bunter did not wake. His little round eyes were tightly closed behind his big spectacles. He slept, and he snored. Bunter was never easy to wake—but now it seemed impossible.

"He can't be ill, I suppose?" said Nugent.

"He doesn't look ill," said Bob. "Besides, illness doesn't make a chap go to sleep—more likely to keep him awake, I should think."

"The absurd Bunter beats the celebrated Seven Sleepers at their own ridiculous game," remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

Bunter slept on regardless. Certainly there was no sign of illness about him. His fat face was as ruddy as ever. He had simply been overcome by that extraordinary drowsiness. He slept soundly, and he snored loudly.

"Well, we've got to get on!" said Harry at last. "But—what about that fat duffer?"

"Can't carry him!" remarked Bob Cherry.

The juniors chuckled. They were no weaklings, but certainly their combined strength would hardly have been equal to carrying Bunter's weight the length of that long, winding footpath.

"I guess we ain't standing around rubbering at that sleeping beauty," said Putnam van Duck. "If he wants to snooze, let him get on with it!"

"Can't do anything else, I suppose!" said the puzzled captain of the Remove. "Bunter beats Rip van Winkle, but I've never seen him like this before. Blessed if I can make him out. But he will be all right."

"The rightfulness will be terrific."

"We can make him comfortable in the shade," said Bob. "When he wakes up, he can trot home. Nothing else to be done."

"All hands on deck!" grinned Nugent.

All hands were needed! Six pairs grasped the sleeping Owl and lifted him out of the grass.

He stood on his feet—held! It was really amazing that it did not awaken him. But it did not. He sagged heavily in the grasp of the Removites, and would have pitched over had they let go. They gasped under the strain.

"Here, horn in, Poker, you gink!" snapped Putnam. "Can't you lend a hand, instead of standing there rubbering like you was a rural rube seeing Broadway for the first time!"

Poker Pike had his eyes glued to the nabob's dusky face, though quite unnoticed by Hurree Singh. But he started and nodded, and put a sinewy arm round Bunter's fat shoulders, taking the weight, which was a tremendous relief to the gasping juniors.

"This way!" said Harry.

The sleeping Owl could hardly be left in the footpath. The loss of his fascinating society on the walk did not, perhaps, worry the Removites very deeply, but they were willing to do everything they could to make him comfortable while he had his sleep out.

Bob pushed a way through the hawthorns that walled the footpath, and the others followed with Bunter.

They carried him round the massive trunk of an ancient beech that stood a few yards from the path.

On the farther side of that beech the grass was high and thick, and made a comfortable couch.

Bunter was laid in it.

The massive beech and the hawthorns hid him from the footpath, so he was not likely to be disturbed. In that quiet and shady spot he could sleep as long as he liked.

Bob Cherry, always good-natured, gathered a bunch of foliage to make him a pillow, and spread a handkerchief over the fat face to keep the gnats off.

Bunter, still fast asleep, settled down, snoring, his fat figure almost hidden from view by the high, thick grass. Poker Pike stared down at him, the grim, suspicious look more pronounced than ever on his hickory face. The Greyfriars fellows were surprised, but there was more than surprise in Poker's grim face.

Often enough, Bunter had been badly in need of a nap on a warm afternoon. This was a sounder nap than usual, but that, so far as the schoolboys could see, was all.

They walked on, and the rumble of Billy Bunter's snore died away behind them.

Poker Pike followed, his brow deeply knitted. He tapped Putnam van Duck on the arm, and the American junior looked round at him.

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"Pull in a piece!" said Poker briefly. "I guess I want to chew the rag with you a few."

The schoolboys came to a halt.

"I'll say you guys can beat it!" added Poker.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him. Poker, it seemed, wanted to speak to Van Duck in private, unheard by other ears! They exchanged curious glances and walked on.

Putnam stopped unwillingly, with a frowning brow. But Poker Pike did not speak till the Famous Five were out of hearing.

"You pesky piccan!" exclaimed Putnam impatiently. "What's got you? Ain't you got no more manners than a grizzly bear, Poker?"

"I ain't worrying about manners none!" answered Poker. "I got to keep tabs on you, you Putnam van Duck, and I'll say that Chick Chew ain't cinching you by no shennanigan game. Nope! Ain't your popper, over in Chicawgo, paying me to keep you safe?"

"What the great horned toad—"

"You getting sleepy?" asked Poker.

Putnam jumped.

He did not look sleepy. He looked extremely wideawake as he stared at the gunman with wide-open eyes.

"Sleepy?" he ejaculated. "You gone loco, Poker? You figure I'm a guy to nod off to sleep a-walking, like that fat geek we've left in the wood?"

"You don't feel it coming on, like that fat gink?" asked Poker anxiously.

Putnam stared at him like a fellow in a dream.

"You gone loco?" he gasped.

"I guess you ain't got it!" said Poker, with a nod. "Mebbe they got that fat gink in mistake for you! The nigger, I reckon."

"You pesky piccan," said Van Duck savagely, "if you call Hurree Singh a nigger, I'll sure send the popper a cable to fire you!"

"Mebbe!" said Poker quietly. "But I ain't fired yet, and s'long's I ain't fired, I'm keeping tabs on you; and no darkey ain't going to play Chick Chew's game with me around. I ain't saying he's the nigger in the woodpile—I allow I don't know yet, but I sure don't like his colour a whole lot."

Poker Pike came from a country where the colour of a complexion was a matter of awful importance. He was aware, of course, that the Nabob of Bhanipur was an Indian, but in his own mind he classed him as "coloured."

So far, however, Poker had never allowed a hint of this absurd prejudice to escape him.

It astonished Van Duck. He could see that the gunman suspected Hurree Jamset Ram Singh of something, but he could not begin to guess what.

Poker made a gesture back along the footpath, in the direction where the sleeping Owl had been left.

"What you figure's got that fat gink?" he asked.

"He's gone to sleep—"

"Dope!" said Poker briefly.

"Great Jerusalem crickets!" gasped Van Duck. "You're sure loco! Who'd want to dope that geek?"

"Nobody, I reckon," answered Poker. "But he's sure doped! I guess they was arter you, and somehow that fat geek got it. I was feared that you'd got it along of him, but you look O.K. Anyhow, he's doped."

"Impossible!"

"He's doped!" said Poker calmly. "And I guess I'm wise to that brand of dope, too. I'll say I've knowed Chick

Chew use it afore in his kidnapping stunts. Surest thing you know."

Van Duck gazed at him, dumb-founded.

"Nobody's watching out to kidnap that gink, I reckon," went on Poker. "He got it—but it was sure meant for you, Putnam van Duck. That's a cinch—how'd he get it? I'm telling you there's some guy in your school on Chick's pay-roll, playing Chick's game. One of that bunch, I reckon—and I guess most likely the coloured piccan! You get me?"

Van Duck could not speak; he could only stare.

Poker was a wary guy—and a suspicious guy. His training in the Chicago joints had not endowed him with faith in human nature.

He was prepared to suspect anybody and everybody where Putnam's safety was concerned.

Chick Chew, who stood to gain a ransom of half a million dollars for the kidnapped millionaire's son, was ready to spend money like water in bribes—and on his own happy side of the Atlantic that was extensively his method.

Certainly it seemed improbable, even to Poker, that schoolboys at Greyfriars could be bribed to help the gangster in his lawless game. But Poker was taking no chances.

Bunter had been drugged—doped, as Poker called it. The juniors never dreamed of suspecting it, but Mr. Pike was sure of it. Obviously, he had been doped in the school, before starting on that walk. By whom?

Poker did not know. He was trusting nobody till he knew. It was absurd to suppose that dope had been intended for Bunter. It had got to the wrong address. There was a scheme on foot to dope Van Duck and place him at the kidnapper's mercy. That was clear to Poker!

Who could have handled the dope except one of the fellows he associated with? And of those fellows, who was most likely? The coloured guy, of course! Poker figured that he had it pat!

"I guess," said Poker anxiously, "you want to forget this trip and walk back with this baby, you Putnam."

"You locoed geek!" said Putnam, finding his voice. "I'm going out to tea with Hurree Singh!"

"I'll say he's the very guy—"

"Can it, you bonehead!" snapped Van Duck. "I ain't believing any that Bunter's been doped. And if he was, my friends don't know a thing about it, as you'd understand, if you wasn't loco! Pack it up! I guess you'll be suspecting the Head next of being on Chick's pay-roll!"

"I wouldn't put it past him, if Chick aimed to buy him!" said Poker calmly. "But I sure got my eye on the coloured guy this time. That dope was aimed at you—"

"Aw, forget it! Pack it up and sit on the lid!" howled Van Duck. "Go and chop chips! Don't spill any more, or I will sure lam you a few!"

And, leaving the gunman, Putnam ran after his friends, and rejoined them, with a ruffled brow. Poker Pike, once his suspicions were aroused, was prepared to suspect everybody at Greyfriars, from the revered Head, Dr. Locke, down to Gosling, the porter. But his extraordinary suspicion made Putnam half angry, half inclined to laugh.

Poker stared after him, frowning, and then, with a grim face, followed on.

If there was a scheme on foot to dope



Van Duck stepped towards Bunter, the glass of foaming ginger-pop in his hand. Grasping the fat junior by the hair, he jerked his head forward. Then he tilted the glass of ginger-pop down Bunter's fat neck. "I guess you asked for it, old-timer!" he said. "Ooooooooooogh!" spluttered the Owl of the Remove. "Beast—groooooooooh!"

the millionaire's son that day, Poker was the guy to put paid to it! And he had no doubt whatever that there was!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Not the Goods!

CHICK CHEW grinned—an expansive grin, that revealed his expensive American dentistry, gleaming in the shafts of sunlight that came through the foliage over the footpath in Popper Court Woods.

Chick Chew seemed in high feather.

His associate, or side-kicker, as Chick called him, walked by his side. The two gangsters were following the shady woodland path, the way the Greyfriars party had gone; but the latter were far ahead, out of sight. Had they seen Chick and Bud, however, they would hardly have recognised them. Chick and Bud were getting rather too well known in the vicinity of Greyfriars, and they had made some changes in their appearance. Except for Chick's extensive waist measurement, and Bud Parker's horn-rimmed glasses, they looked like their customary selves.

"I guess this journey is going to be the last trip, Bud!" remarked Mr. Chew, speaking in low, cautious tones.

"Sez you!" murmured Bud. Bud was pessimistic, as usual.

"I'll say you're some Dismal Jimmy. Bud!" granted Chick. "Ain't that bird safe doped? I'm inquiring of you!"

"Mebbe!" said Bud.

"When a schoolboy gets hold of a box of expensive chocolates, what does he do with them?" demanded Chick.

"Parks 'em!" admitted Mr. Parker.

"Sure! That packet was addressed to the young gink, in a fist that old

Coot, in London, would swear was his'n, if he piped it! He won't scent no mouse, that young gink won't! Soon's he parks them chocs, he's doped! There ain't no damage in that dope—but it's sure!" said Chick. "Didn't we use it on young Guggergummer, back in Noo Yark, and didn't he wake up where we wanted him?"

"You said it!" agreed Bud.

"It's holiday at that school," went on Chick, "and if young Putnam stayed in, he'd fall asleep there, faster'n Rip van Winkle, an hour after he parked that dope. Lying around to be picked up, Bud Parker."

"But—" murmured the more pessimistic Bud.

"But he started walking out afore the dope worked," went on Chick; "and I'll say nothing could have suited me finer. You want to know, Bud Parker, that I'd have picked him up, and walked his chawks, right in the middle of his school if it came to that! But I allow it comes easier with the young guy meandering around a mile out of the shebang."

"Poker's along of him!" muttered Bud uneasily.

"Aw pack that up!" growled Chick. "I allow I ain't honing for gun-play in this pesky country where a guy can't loose off an automatic without getting the whole pesky population rubbering around. But if Poker Pike stands between me and my bird he gets his sudden!"

Chick Chew slipped a fat hand into a pocket which sagged under the weight of his automatic.

"You keep your hardware ready. Bud! Mebbe it won't be wanted; but if it's wanted, it will be wanted bad! I'm telling you, that young guy Putnam

is walking around doped, and we only got to foller on, to pick him up. Poker'll be keeping tabs on him, and we got to put paid to Poker!"

Bud Parker nodded, but rather dubiously. Putting paid to Poker did not seem to strike the horn-rimmed man as an attractive proposition.

But Chick was full of confidence.

He had no doubt that the doped chocolates had been consumed. He had still less doubt that the dope would work. It was, from his point of view, a stroke of luck that the doped school-boy should have walked out of gates before the drug took effect; another stroke of luck that his walk should have led him to the lonely wood. When the drug overcame Putnam, the only difficulty in Chick's way was going to be the gunman guard.

That was, certainly, a considerable difficulty. But Chick was prepared to deal with it. If it came to gun-play, Chick was no slouch with a gun! The gangsters would be two to one, and the advantage of a surprise on their side.

"I'm telling you," said Chick. "It's pie this time! If we get Poker napping, he'll stick 'em up fast enough, with a gun lookin' him in the eye! Yep! And I guess he ain't wise to it that we're around."

"But—" murmured Bud.

"Lissen!" breathed Chick.

A rumbling sound from among the shady hawthorns reached the keen ears of the fat gangster.

It was a snore!

"You hear that?" breathed Chick.

"Sure!" whispered Bud.

"That's a guy asleep!"

"You said it!"

Chick's eyes gleamed; Bud's glistened.

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behind his horn-rimmed glasses. As they listened intently the sound of a snore from the shade came unmistakably. Evidently there was a sleeper there!

"By the great horned toad!" whispered Chick. "We got him! I guess that dope's got to work, Bud, and he's gone off—what?"

"Mebbe some hobo gone to sleep in the shade!" muttered Bud.

"Aw, can it!" growled Chick. He was not going to believe that that snore came from some tramp taking a rest. "Ain't we treading on the tail of them guys? Didn't they pass this way, just ahead of us? Now we come on a guy gone to sleep! It's sure the guy that got the dope!"

Bud nodded. There could really be little doubt of it.

"I guess," went on Chick, "that the other infants would walk on, and leave him to it, if he wanted to doze! They sure wouldn't want to stand around all day watching him at it, Bud!"

"Poker wouldn't mosey on," said Bud.

"Nope! I guess Poker's squatting by him, O.K.," admitted Chick. "We got to handle that hombre. But I guess we'll surprise him some, and get him covered afore he can pull his hardware."

"Looks good!" admitted Bud.

"You want to walk soft!" whispered Chick.

The fat gangster led the way, treading as lightly as a cat, in spite of his bulk. Still more lightly, the horn-rimmed man trod after him.

They wound silently through the hawthorn bushes, and reached the big beech that shadowed them.

From the other side of the massive trunk came the deep, continuous snore of a sound sleeper!

He was lying there, in the shade, as yet unseen! But he was there—the steady snore left no doubt on that point.

But no one was to be seen! Chick took it for granted that if Putnam van Duck wanted to go to sleep on that ramble, the other schoolboys would leave him to it. But Poker Pike, it was certain, would remain with Putnam. He might or might not suspect dope; but, in any case, he would remain on guard over the millionaire's son. But he was not to be seen.

Chick was puzzled.

Unless the gunman was standing on the other side of the beech, leaning against the trunk, he would have been visible. Chick concluded that that must be the case; though if Poker was there he was strangely silent, and obviously not on his guard as usual.

Snore!

So close to the spot Chick did not venture to speak, or even to whisper. He signed to his side-kicker what to do.

His automatic glimmered in his hand. Another glimmered in the hand of Bud Parker.

Poker, if he was there, was close up to the big trunk on the other side, standing by the sleeper. A sudden rush round the big beech, and Poker would be covered by two automatics before he had time to touch a weapon. Even the pessimistic Bud had to admit that this was "pie."

They rushed together—Chick on one side of the big beech, Bud on the other, automatics lifted.

"Stick 'em up!" rapped Chick Chew, as he came round the tree.

"Stick 'em up!" echoed Bud.

Two automatics were levelled at the hitherto unseen side of the big beech—and would have covered Poker had he been standing there!

But he was not there!

Chick stared—amazed! Bud's eyes

almost popped through the horn rims of his glasses! Poker was not there! Nobody was there—except the sleeper in the grass, with the handkerchief over his face to keep off flies.

Chick's fat face crimsoned.

Never in all his career as a gangster and kidnapper, had Chick Chow felt such a bonehead as he felt now, with his deadly automatic levelled at the trunk of a tree!

That automatic disappeared quickly into Chick's pocket. Bud's followed it out of sight. Chick was red with annoyance. Bud grinned. Automatics, it was clear, were not needed.

"Beats me!" gasped Chick.

"To a frazzle!" agreed Bud.

"Poker ain't around—"

"He sure ain't!"

"I reckoned he was up agin that tree as we couldn't pipe him! But—but he ain't!"

"Not hide nor hair of him!" said Bud.

Chick stared round among the nodding hawthorns. There was no sound save the twittering birds and the buzz of the gnats. No one was at hand—except the sleeper, half hidden in the thick grass, with the handkerchief over his face. The sleeper's cap showed that he was a schoolboy and belonged to Greyfriars. Obviously it was the doped schoolboy. But there was no sign of Poker Pike!

"It's got me beat!" muttered the perplexed Chick. "Old man Vanderdecken, over in Chicawgo, is paying that gunslinger whole wads to keep tabs on his son here. Poker ain't the guy to throw him down while he's drawing his pay! But he ain't here! He's sure moseyed on and left him to snooze."

"I guess this sees us through," muttered Bud. "I'll say I ain't honing to throw lead with Poker! This here is clam pie!"

"That ain't no dream!" agreed Chick. "We got the goods!"

He grinned with satisfaction. Amazing and utterly unexpected as it was, for the watchful gunman to have left the doped schoolboy unguarded, it was "pie" to the kidnappers! They had only to pick him up and walk him off to the car that was waiting at a safe distance, with Tug at the wheel. Chick Chew grinned—and chuckled! He had "got the goods."

Then, as he bent over the sleeper, the grin faded from his face. The thick grass half hid the slumbering figure—the handkerchief wholly hid the face. But on a closer inspection Chick realised that the ample lines of that figure were not exactly those of Putnam van Duck.

With a sudden misgiving, he snatched the handkerchief away from the slumbering face.

He gave a yell of rage and disappointment.

The face that was revealed was that of a schoolboy, sleeping deep under the influence of "dope." But it was not the face of Putnam van Duck! It was a fat face adorned by a pair of big spectacles! It was the face of William George Bunter, the ornament of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Great snakes!" howled Chick.

He stared at Billy Bunter almost petrified. Bunter slumbered happily on. Chick stared at him with unbelieving eyes. He gritted his teeth, grasped the fat junior by the shoulder, and shook him savagely.

Bunter's snore was changed into an uneasy grunt. But he did not awaken. It was clear that he was doped.

Chick's face was a picture as he rose again, leaving the fat Owl snoring once more! Bud gazed at Bunter open-mouthed.

"Carry me home to die!" murmured

Chick almost faintly. "I'll say this is the elephant's side-whiskers, and then some! How come it that fat gink has got the dope instead of young Putnam? I'm asking you, Bud Parker! That's why Poker ain't around! I guess he ain't keeping no tabs on that slab-sided piecar! But—"

"Search me!" said Bud.

"The dope's been took!" said Chick. "If it hadn't been took— But it sure has! You can see that that lard-faced gink is doped! Doped to a frazzle! And—and young Putnam ain't! I'm asking you, Bud Parker, for the answer to that one."

"You can search me!" answered Bud.

Billy Bunter was at the mercy of the kidnappers—if they wanted him! But they didn't! They wanted the millionaire's son; but they would not have taken Billy Bunter at a gift!

With feelings too deep for words, Kidnapper No. 1 of the United States turned his back on the sleeping beauty. Bud Parker followed him. So did Billy Bunter's snore—for quite a distance. Unconscious of the gangsters, unconscious of a fly that had settled on his fat little nose, dreaming happily of a spread in a Greyfriars study, Billy Bunter slumbered on!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Poker Takes No Chances!

"ESTEEMED and ludicrous friends—"

"Hear, hear!"

"The delightful pleasure of beholding your ridiculous countenances round the festive board is absurd and terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was quite a large and happy gathering at the bunshop in Courtfield. Hurree Janset Ram Singh had engaged his table by telephone earlier in the day, and a bowing waiter showed the Greyfriars party to it when they arrived. Other Remove fellows were already on the spot; Vernon-Smith and Redwing, Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, Tom Brown and Squiff and Hazeldene, and two or three more. It was a large table, but it was well packed.

On it were piled good things to eat—round it were packed the fellows to eat them. Hurree Janset Ram Singh, at the head of the table, had Putnam van Duck on his right hand, Bob Cherry on his left. Two or three waiters gave the numerous party their attention; even the manager, a very portly and important person, hovered round.

It was rather a special occasion. The Nabob of Bhanipur, being in great funds, considered it a good idea to stand a handsome spread to his friends in the Remove—and all his friends in the Remove approved heartily.

It was really unfortunate that Billy Bunter could not be present. The mere sight of the eatables on the table would have delighted his eyes.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh's graceful remarks were cheered. They also made the fellows smile.

In fact, all faces were smiling—except one! That was the hard-boiled, hickory face of Poker Pike.

Poker looked serious and grim. Politely the nabob had invited him to take a seat at the festive board. The juniors were prepared to make room for him. But the gunman curtly declined.

Probably Mr Pike did not care much, anyhow, for cakes and jam-tarts, cream puffs and eclairs and meringues. Probably he liked a stronger fluid than tea or coffee or lemonade or ginger-beer. In any case, Poker was there, not for

pleasure, but for business. He was "keeping tabs"!

Never since he had been at Greyfriars had the gunman been so watchful and wary and suspicious. Bunter lay asleep in Popper Court Woods—doped! Whoever had doped him would be looking for another chance at the gilt-edged junior—and Poker was on the watch for it. His suspicions concentrated on the dusky nabob. It was one of the young piecans, Poker reckoned, and the coloured guy was the likeliest. And the dusky schoolboy was standing this feed—providing the food and drink that Putnam was to partake of! What did it look like? It looked, to Poker, as if there was dope about!

Like a lynx, the gunman watched the Nabob of Bhanipur. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, after a time, had noticed that he seemed to have an unusual interest for Mr. Pike. But he never dreamed of suspecting the cause.

There were plenty of other customers in the bunshop. Many of them glanced towards the juniors' table. Many glanced at the stocky figure and hard-boiled face of the Chicago gunman.

Poker did not mind. He had no objection to publicity. Probably he did not observe that he was observed. His keen attention was fixed on Putnam and the suspected nabob.

Had Putnam been in the same state as Billy Bunter, miles from the school, he certainly would have been in danger from the kidnappers, even with his gunman guard to protect him. Poker did not intend to allow any risk of it.

"You won't want that here, old bean!" grinned Bob Cherry, as he noticed the gunman loosen the six-gun in his pocket, which looked as if Poker fancied that he might want it!

"Mebbe!" said Poker dryly. "And mebbe not!"

"Think Chick Chew is going to walk into a crowded bunshop and hook off Van Duck under our noses?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"I wouldn't put it past him!" answered Poker.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated the Bounder. "Look out for the gun-play, you men! Duck in time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Poker grunted—and watched, posted near Van Duck's chair. Putnam gave him a fierce scowl, which left Poker quite unmoved.

"Can't you beat it, you pesky guy?" breathed Putnam. "You want the whole shebang rubbering at you?"

"I guess that cuts no ice," said Poker. "Let 'em rubber, if they want. I'll mention that you ain't going to be doped none."

"Pack it up, you bonehead!"

"What's that?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, staring round. "Who's going to dope whom, Van Duck?"

"That pesky guy figures that Bunter was doped," growled Van Duck. "He sure fancies some guy was after me and got Bunter. The pesky bonehead is sure haunted by Chick Chew, like he was a ghost."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. He stared at Poker. "What on earth's put that silly idea into your head, Pike?"

Poker shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess that fat gink was doped," he answered, "and I'll say I'm going to see that Putnam van Duck don't get the same, from the same galoot! Surest thing you know."

"Mad as a hatter!" said Bob.

"Madder!" growled Putnam. "You park it, Poker! Keep it parked!"

Poker stood silent—but very watchful. Some of the fellows who had caught what was said, grinned at one another. Poker Pike was taken rather as a joke

at Greyfriars. But his extraordinary suspicion that the millionaire's son might be "doped" at a schoolboy tea-party in a bunshop seemed to the juniors a real shriek!

The spread proceeded merrily, fellows passing good things up and down the table. Putnam van Duck did as much justice to them as any other fellow—but Poker watched him so closely that he seemed to be counting the mouthfuls put away by the American junior.

So long as he received nothing from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the gunman appeared to be satisfied, though alert. Presently, however, the dusky nabob poured ginger-beer for the fellows who preferred that refreshing fluid to tea.

Foaming glasses were passed along, and Hurree Singh was handing one to Van Duck when suddenly he gave a jump as a grip of iron fastened on his dusky wrist.

"Forget it!" gritted Poker Pike.

The Nabob of Bhanipur stared at him in utter amazement. It seemed to him that the Greyfriars gunman had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

"My esteemed and absurd Poker—" he gasped.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"What the thump—" stuttered Bob.

Every face at the table was turned on Poker Pike. Every eye was fixed on him in amazement. He did not heed.

With a grip of iron on Hurree Singh's wrist he forced the tumbler down, and

WILL READERS PLEASE NOTE

that owing to the Whitsun Holidays next week's issue of the MAGNET will be on sale FRIDAY, May 29th?

it was set on the table. Then, releasing the dusky wrist, Poker picked up the tumbler. Hurree Singh, lost in astonishment, fairly goggled at him.

Poker jammed the foaming tumbler to the nabob's mouth.

"Swaller!" he rapped.

"Wha-a-t—" stuttered Hurree Singh.

"Taste it, you!"

"Tit-tut-taste it!" stuttered the nabob.

"Yep! And pronto! I guess you ain't handing no dope to that Putnam van Duck while I'm around."

"Did-dud-dope!" gurgled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "My esteemed and idiotic gun-slinging fathead, the ginger-pop is harmless and necessary—"

"You tasting it?" demanded Poker, knitting his brows grimly. "I'm telling you to swaller half that packet, and swaller it pronto! Get me?"

"You pesky piecan!" shrieked Van Duck. "Will you let up?"

"Nope! Swaller!" rapped the gunman, while the tea-party stared at him, transfixed, almost petrified. "I ain't waiting! By the great horned toad, I guess I got you card-indexed, you dopping guy! What's the harm in swallerin', if there ain't no dope around? Swaller!"

"B-b-b-but—" gasped the astonished nabob.

"Swaller, or you get yours sudden!" snarled Poker.

With his free hand he jerked the six-gun from his hip.

There was a gasp from the tea-party as the gun glimmered in the gunman's hand. There was a stutter of astonish-

ment from the waiters—a splutter of excitement from customers up and down and round about the bunshop. The portly manager almost fell down at the sight.

Headless of all, Poker Pike jammed the six-gun almost in the dusky face of the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Swaller!" he roared.

"Are you mad?" shouted Harry Wharton, jumping to his feet.

"Poker, you locoed gink—" gasped Van Duck.

"Swaller!" roared Poker. "By the great horned toad, you swaller instanter, or I'll sure spill your juice all over this here shebang! Surest thing you know."

He jammed the foaming glass at the nabob's mouth. A wave of ginger-beer went over the rim, and splashed into Hurree Singh's neck.

Utterly amazed and dumbfounded, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gulped at the ginger-beer. With the glass tilted at his mouth, it was a hurried and liberal gulp, and it was not surprising that some of the ginger-beer went down the wrong way. Hurree Singh gurgled wildly.

Poker slammed down the tumbler, now half full. He watched the gurgling nabob grimly.

"Urrrrggh!" came from Hurree Singh, as he choked. "Groogh! Wooooooogh!"

"I guess he's got it!" said Poker. "He's sure got his own dope! I'll say he's feeling it some! Surest thing you know."

"Groogh! Hoooooh! Ooooh!"

Bob Cherry thumped the nabob on the back. He choked, and gasped, and gurgled, and recovered a little.

Poker Pike watched him. He seemed disappointed. His first impression was that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had been immediately overcome by a liberal dose of "dope." Now he realised that it was simply a sudden gulping of ginger-beer that had made him choke. Whether dope was around or not, whether or not the dusky nabob was the doper, that ginger-beer, at all events, was quite innocuous.

"Gurrrrgh!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Wurrrgh! You esteemed and ludicrous idiot, what is the meanfulness of these absurd proceedings? Oooogh!"

Putnam van Duck, his face crimson with wrath, picked up the tumbler half full of ginger-beer. Poker gave him a reassuring nod.

"I guess you can swaller that safe now, bud!" he remarked. "I guess—Oooooogh! What—yoooooch!"

It was not Putnam's intention to drink the ginger-beer. He had another use for it! He glared at Poker, jerked his arm, and shot the ginger-beer fairly into the hickory face.

Splash!

"Gurrrrgh!" gasped Poker.

Taken by surprise, he staggered back. Bob Cherry kindly put out a foot, and the gunman stumbled backwards over it. Streaming with ginger-beer, Poker sat down suddenly and hard.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Painful for Bunter!

"H A, ha, ha!" The tea-party roared. Poker Pike sat blinking through ginger-beer. He was quite taken by surprise. Evidently he had not expected that from the gilt-edged youth he was protecting from the danger of "dope."

"Aw! Search me!" gasped Poker. "Groogh! What the John James!"

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Robinson— Ooogh! You pesky young piecan— Wooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Van Duck was not finished yet. The other fellows were laughing, but the American junior had got his "mad" up! He grasped a bottle of ginger-beer and poured its contents over Poker as he sat. Foaming ginger-beer splashed all over the gunman, dripping from the rim of his bowler hat, drenching him from head to foot. Putnam followed up the ginger-beer with a jam-tart! There was a loud squashing sound as he plastered it on the hard-boiled face of his gunman guardian.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Go easy, old bean!"

"You're wasting the tuck!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"I'll sure make that pesky guy skip!" howled Van Duck. "I'll give him dope! Take that, Poker, you locoed piecan!"

"That" was a large cream-tart! Poker, as he staggered blindly up, took it with his face.

He howled and gurgled.

The tea-party howled, too, with laughter. Poker's hickory countenance had disappeared, under jam and cream and pastry, mixed with streaming ginger-beer. His aspect was quite extraordinary.

"Urrgh! Say, what's the game?" gurgled Poker. "Let up, you young piecan! You want me to beat you up? Let up, I'm telling you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" The scandalized manager of the bunshop rolled up. "Gentlemen—I insist—this disturbance——"

"Kick that man out!" called out Temple of the Fourth, who was teasing with his friends, Dabney and Fry, at another table. "Kick 'em all out!"

"Rowdy lot, the Remove!" said Fry.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Turn him out!" shouted Temple.

"This disturbance—really—I insist——" gasped the manager. It was a large and profitable tea-party, and Indian princes and American millionaires were more than welcome at the bunshop. But there was a limit.

"Now you beat it, Poker, you guy!" howled the exasperated Van Duck. "You hear me, you galoot? You beat it, and beat it pronto!"

Poker dabbed a sticky face, and spluttered.

"I guess not!" he gasped. "I sure ain't leaving you here to be doped by a coloured guy on Chick Chew's pay-roll."

"My only esteemed hat!" ejaculated the Nabob of Bhanipur. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh understood, at last, what was the matter with Poker Pike.

A flush came under the dusk of his cheeks, and his dark eyes flashed. He stepped towards the gunman.

"You ludicrous and preposterous fat-head!" he exclaimed. "The absurd dopefulness exists only in your idiotic imagination——"

"Aw, can it?" said Poker, still dabbing. "I guess you ain't passing that Putnam van Duck nothing without tasting it first, and you can chew on that."

The gun was still in Poker's hand. But the Nabob of Bhanipur paid it no heed. Inky was the best-tempered fellow in the Remove—seldom or never was his Oriental calm ruffled. But it was ruffled now, with a vengeance. He clenched a dusky fist, and hit Poker Pike fairly on his pimple of a nose. It was a hefty knock, and that pimple of a nose felt as if it had been pushed through the bullet head.

Taken by surprise again, Poker Pike sat down, for a second time.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Harry Wharton.

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"Keep cool, Inky!" gasped Bob.

Poker sat and spluttered.

"I been knocked over!" he gasped. "Jumping toads! I sure been K.O.'d by a doggoned nigger! I guess I'll hand him a few!"

He scrambled up. With one accord the tea-party rushed on him. They piled on him right and left. Putnam van Duck swiftly annexed the six-gun. Other fellows flattened Poker Pike out. The portly manager of the bunshop almost danced round the scene. His expression indicated, quite plainly, that he was tired of that tea-party in his establishment.

"Go away!" he shrieked. "Get out! All of you! Stop this at once! I will send for the police! I will report you to your headmaster. Turn them out!"

Poker heaved and struggled furiously. Everybody in the bunshop was on his feet now, staring and buzzing. It was the wildest excitement that had ever been seen in that bunshop. Poker, not for the first time since he had been located at Greyfriars, had made a sensation.

"Fire him out!" roared Van Duck.

Heaving and struggling in the midst of the mob of schoolboys, Poker was heaved to the door. In a gasping heap he was hurled out on the pavement of Courtfield High Street.

Putnam brandished a fist at him from the door.

"Now beat it, you geck!" he roared. "Beat it, or you'll get run in! You want to be canned, you gink? Beat it!"

Poker staggered up.

"I guess I ain't beating it any, and leaving you here to be doped!" he gasped. "Not by a canful! I'm sure coming back!"

"Pack the goal!" grinned Bob Cherry.

The tea-party blocked the doorway, ready for Poker. Obviously, he was not going—he was coming back. Poker was a dutiful guy, and no odds could turn him from the path of duty. A crowd was gathering in the street—in the distance, loomed a policeman's helmet.

"Hold on!" gasped Van Duck. "I guess I'll beat it with the pesky guy—he sure won't let up without!"

Van Duck ran out and joined Poker. He grabbed him by the arm, and dragged him along the pavement.

"Step out, you gink!" he hissed. "There's a cop coming along——"

"I guess a cop don't worry me none!" answered Poker. "I'll say——"

"Come on, you pesky bonehead!" hissed Van Duck.

With Putnam along with him, Poker was quite ready to come on. Dabbing his sticky face, he accompanied the American schoolboy down the High Street.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "What an afternoon!"

"Nice man at a tea-party!" chuckled the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My esteemed chums, now that that deplorable and disgusting gunman has departfully mizzled, let us resume the ludicrous spread," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

The bunshop manager had to be placated, before the spread could be resumed. However, as Poker was gone, that was effected—especially as considerable items for damages were going to appear on the nabob's bill. The tea-party, rather breathless after their exertions, sat down round the table again—the cynosure of all eyes in the bunshop.

Meanwhile, Putnam van Duck hooked Poker Pike into a taxi, and eliminated him from the public gaze of Courtfield. Even Poker, indifferent as he was to

publicity, was rather glad to get his sticky face out of the public view. All the way to Greyfriars Putnam filled in the time by telling Poker what he thought of him—Poker listening with an unmoved wooden face—the American junior's remarks having exactly as much effect on him as water on a duck.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Poor Old Bunter!

"BUNTER!"

Mr. Prout's rich and fruity voice boomed in Hall.

The Fifth Form master was taking roll.

But when Prout boomed "Bunter!" there came no answering "adsum." Remove fellows glanced round. Bunter was not present.

"Bunter!" came a deeper boom.

But it booted not. Billy Bunter was not there, and could not, therefore, answer to his name. Prout marked him absent.

Harry Wharton & Co., in the ranks of the Remove, exchanged rather startled looks. They had returned from the bunshop in ample time for calling-over, and had not seen Billy Bunter about when they came in. But, so far as they had remembered him at all, they had supposed that he was about somewhere.

They had taken it for granted that when he awoke from his nap in Popper Court Woods, he would roll homeward. He had not looked like awakening in time to arrive at the bunshop for the spread; but it had never occurred to them that he would not awaken in time to return to Greyfriars for calling-over. Yet he had not turned up.

Harry Wharton glanced at the big oak doors—closed while roll was taken. It was not infrequent for fellows to squeeze in at the last moment, and hurry into their places. But there was no sign of Bunter.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Bunter can't still be snoozing!"

"Not after hours of it, I should think," said Nugent.

"The snoozefulness would certainly be rather terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed and idiotic Bunter is not here."

"Must be about somewhere," said Johnny Bull. "Perhaps he's found somebody's tuck in somebody's study, and it's kept him too busy to hear the bell."

Harry Wharton nodded. It was possible, and he could hardly believe that the Owl of the Remove was still out of gates, sleeping in the wood. If he was, it could hardly be a natural slumber. All the juniors had laughed at Poker's suspicion of "dope," but if Billy Bunter was still asleep out of gates, that put rather a different complexion on the matter.

The Famous Five were rather anxious now to ascertain whether Bunter had come in or not. As soon as the school was dismissed from Hall, they looked for the fat junior.

He was not to be seen.

"Seen Bunter?" they inquired up and down and round about the House, of every fellow they met.

"No!" was the general reply.

"Too often!" was Skinner's answer to the question; which was not a helpful variation.

Nobody had seen Bunter! Harry Wharton ran down to Gosling's lodge, to ask the porter whether he had seen Bunter come in. Gosling hadn't.

It was soon clear that Billy Bunter had not come back to the school. It was almost unimaginable that he was still



Hurree Jamset Ram Singh started the ball rolling, and the whole Form followed suit. Pudding after pudding, in sticky chunks, fairly rained on the Greyfriars gunman. He staggered and stumbled, blinded and choked by treacle-pudding. "Boys!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Cease this riot at once!"

asleep, under the shady beech where the juniors had left him. But if not, where was he?

"What the jolly old dickens—" said Bob Cherry. He gave his friends an uneasy look. "I say, there can't be anything in what that idiot Pike was jabbering—"

"How could there be?" said Harry. "How could Bunter be doped, as that fathead calls it? Who would play such a mad trick on him?"

Putnam van Duck whistled.

"I've sure called that guy Poker all the names I could remember," he remarked, "but I guess it looks as if he was on that mark. That gink Bunter is some sleeper, I allow, but if he's asleep now, he's sure been doped."

"But who—how—" exclaimed Nugent.

The chums of the Remove were uneasy and alarmed. "Dope," to their minds, was almost unthinkable. But where was Bunter?

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face set a little, and he did not speak. The gunman's suspicion of the nabob, absurd as it was, was neither grateful nor comforting to him.

"We can't leave it at this!" said the captain of the Remove abruptly. "Bunter's got to be fetched in. It—it looks to me as if he's been drugged, somehow—goodness knows how. It looks as if Pike was right there—"

"But who—and how—"

"Goodness knows! But I'd better go to Quelch and let him know about Bunter."

That, it was clear, had to be done. Whatever was the truth of the matter, Billy Bunter could not be left out of gates, and the dusk was already falling.

The Co. nodded assent, and the captain of the Remove went at once to his Form-master's study.

"Bunter hasn't come in yet, sir?" asked Harry, with a lingering hope that the fat Owl might have turned up.

"No, Wharton!" answered Mr. Quelch. Wharton noticed that a cane lay on the Remove master's table—evidently ready for Bunter when he did come in!

"I—I'm afraid there's something wrong with him, sir!" faltered Harry. Mr. Quelch looked at him.

Hurriedly the captain of the Remove explained how Bunter had been left. Mr. Quelch's eyebrows rose, and rose more and more, as he listened in astonishment.

"But the boy cannot have remained asleep, out of doors, all this time!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Absurd, Wharton!"

"I—I know, sir! But—that man Pike has an idea in his head that dope has been used—"

"Dope!" repeated Mr. Quelch blankly.

"I—I mean, a drug, sir! He thinks that it was meant for Van Duck, and Bunter got it somehow by mistake! The kidnappers—"

"Absurd!" said Mr. Quelch.

But he knitted his brows and looked very thoughtful.

"It is very singular that the boy has not come in," he said. "Very singular indeed! I think, Wharton, that I had better give you leave out of gates, to fetch him in, before it is quite dark."

"If he's unable to walk, sir—"

"I can scarcely think so. But"—Mr. Quelch paused—"I think you had

better guide two Sixth Form prefects to the spot where he was left."

"Very well, sir!"

Five minutes later Harry Wharton left the school with Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth. A crowd of fellows watched them go.

By that time everybody knew that Bunter was missing, and that he had been left asleep, hours ago, in Popper Court Woods.

Skinner declared that, once asleep, Bunter was not likely to wake till morning; but that was only Skinner's little joke. There could be no doubt that if the fat Owl was still asleep it was the result of drugging—quite an exciting idea to the juniors—especially to those who had been present at the party in the bunshop.

Poker Pike's amazing suspicion was not, after all, unfounded. Had Bunter, in some incredible way, fallen the victim to "dope" intended by the kidnappers for the American junior? It looked very much like it—and, in that case, it became a burning question whose hand had administered the dope? It seemed impossible that it could have been administered by anyone outside the school.

An eager crowd waited at the big doorway of the House for the return of Wharton and the prefects. If they had to carry Bunter home, they were not likely to return in a hurry. Skinner suggested that a breakdown gang would be required to go to their aid. But Skinner was frowned upon on all sides; it was no time for Skinner to be funny.

It was nearly time for prep, when, at

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BUNTER BEATS THE GANGSTERS!



(Continued from page 13.)

last, the tinkle of a bell was heard at the gate.

"They're coming!" said Bob Cherry. Through the dusk of the quad, the returning party loomed up. Wingate and Gwynne were carrying a fat figure between them. Harry Wharton followed.

There was a buzz of excitement as they came up the steps. It was Bunter—and he had to be carried! The question of dope was settled now.

An eager swarm of excited fellows surrounded the prefects as they came in. Panting for breath, Wingate and Gwynne set Bunter down on his feet—still holding him, or he would have fallen.

Every eye was glued on the fat face. Billy Bunter's eyes were tightly closed behind his spectacles. He grunted and snored alternately. It was strange, startling, almost unnerving, to see the fat junior standing there fast asleep; but there was no doubt that he was deep in the deepest slumber.

"You found him there?" asked Bob, as Wharton followed in.

"Just where we left him," answered Harry. "Fast asleep under the beech. The handkerchief had slipped off his face, but that was all. He doesn't seem to have stirred."

"Poor old Bunter!"

"Is—is—is that Bunter?" Mr. Quelch rustled up with a startled face. "Bless my soul! He appears quite unconscious—"

"Quite, sir!" said Wingate.

"Please take him to his dormitory! I will telephone for the doctor immediately."

Plenty of willing hands helped to get Bunter to the Remove dormitory, where he was laid on his bed. A quarter of an hour later, Dr. Pillbury came buzzing from Friardale in his car.

Prep. that evening, claimed little attention. The fellows had to go to the studies—but the studies buzzed with excited conversation. Billy Bunter, in the Remove dormitory, lay unconscious—sleeping like Rip Van Winkle. The doctor's report was reassuring; he seemed to have suffered no harm, and could only be left till he came out of that strange slumber. He was still asleep when the Remove went to bed, and it was not till the rising-bell was ringing in the morning that Billy Bunter's eyes opened at last.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

No Clue!

THAT day Billy Bunter had the spotlight.

The Owl of the Remove was the cynosure of all eyes.

His strange adventure had caused astonishment all round, but the most astonished fellow of all was Bunter himself!

He declined, at first, to believe that

he had remained asleep in Popper Court Woods, and had been carried home by two Sixth Form prefects, unaware of what was going on.

But the fact that he awakened in bed in the Remove dormitory, and remembered nothing after falling asleep under the beech, convinced Bunter at last that it really had happened.

He had awakened feeling quite normal; the dope seemed to have left behind no effect whatever.

There was only one thing that mattered with Bunter. He was fearfully hungry, and more anxious for breakfast that morning than he had ever been before! And the breakfast he packed away was a record.

Mr. Quelch, who breakfasted with his Form, was very tolerant that morning with Bunter! Bunter was allowed a free run of the table.

As he had missed both tea and supper the previous day, he had a lot of leeway to make up. He did his best to make up for it.

At his tenth rasher and eleventh egg, however, Mr. Quelch called time, as it were. He was tolerant, kind, and sympathetic, but perhaps he was beginning to fear that Bunter might burst.

Bunter did not realise the danger! He blinked reproachfully at his Form-master through his big spectacles.

"I'm still hungry, sir!" he pointed out.

"You may have a little toast and marmalade," said Mr. Quelch, relenting.

Bunter did not have a little toast and marmalade—he had a lot! Again his Form-master called halt.

"I'm still hungry, sir!" ventured Bunter.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch.

And that was that!

But it was not quite "that," so to speak, for the fat junior annexed toast from Bob Cherry on one side of him, and a grape-fruit from Van Duck on the other. They grinned, and let him go ahead. But Skinner gave the fat Owl a warning whisper.

"Look out, Bunter!"

"Eh!" Bunter blinked round in alarm, fearful of Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye. But the Remove master had turned away at the moment to speak to Mr. Hacker.

"Better leave Van Duck's prog alone!" grinned Skinner. "That's how you got the dope, old fat man!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

There was a chuckle up and down the Remove table.

Nobody doubted that the dope the day before had been intended for Van Duck. Somehow or other it had been introduced into something the American junior was expected to consume, and which Bunter must have consumed instead—not at all an uncommon happening!

Bunter blinked at the tempting grape-fruit uneasily. Then, slowly and reluctantly, he pushed it away from him.

For the first time on record Billy Bunter refused foodstuffs!

"O.K., you fat gink!" said Van Duck. "Get on with it!"

"No fear!" said Bunter.

"You silly ass!" said Bob. "Do you think somebody's been doping the grub at the brekker-table?"

"Somebody doped something yesterday!" answered Bunter. "I don't know what it was, but I must have got it! No more for me, thanks!"

Van Duck, grinning, proceeded to deal with the grape-fruit himself. "Dope" had been about the previous day; but he was not feeling uneasy. Although far from being as keen on foodstuffs as William George Bunter,

he was not likely to miss his meals for fear of dope!

But Billy Bunter had made up his fat mind to be very careful. For the present, at least, Van Duck's ample tuck was safe from the grub-raider of the Remove.

In Form that morning Billy Bunter began to feel rather glad that he had been through that strange adventure.

Quelch was very kind. Having done no prep the previous evening, Bunter could not be called on for his "con." Neither was he called on for anything else. Quelch gave him a very easy time in first and second lesson. Stiff and stern as Quelch looked, he could be very considerate when he saw just reason to be so.

Slacking in Form was sheer happiness to Billy Bunter. He could only hope that this would last.

He rolled out, in break, with a cheery grin on his fat visage.

And, in break, he realised what an important person he was. Fellows of all Forms came up to him in the quad to ask him about his weird experience. Fellows he hardly knew by sight were quite interested in him.

Even prefects of the Sixth, great men who lived in quite a different and superior world, gave Bunter a word. Even Coker of the Fifth, who regarded the Lower Fourth simply as troublesome microbes bestowed on Bunter some minutes of his valuable time.

Bunter found the spotlight rather agreeable.

He rolled back into the Remove-room for third school, feeling quite bucked. Quelch was still going easy.

He even affected not to notice that Bunter was sucking toffee—a gift in break from some sympathiser whose sympathy had taken a practical form.

Billy Bunter began to feel that he almost liked Quelch.

After morning school, he was called on to stay behind, when the Remove were dismissed. Such a summons would, at any other time, have filled Bunter with alarm. Now, however, he stopped quite cheerfully at his Form-master's desk. He wondered whether Quelch was going to give him an extra holiday or something of that sort!

Mr. Quelch stopped short of that. Bunter had been called up for questions to be asked.

The Remove master wanted to know about that dope! It was, of course, a matter that had to be investigated. The surreptitious hand had to be traced.

"Now, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, "I wish you to answer me very carefully. There appears to be no doubt that some drug—fortunately, harmless—was introduced into something you ate or drank yesterday. No doubt you can remember what you may have eaten?"

"Oh, yes, sir! I don't eat much—"

"Eh?"

"I'm not always stuffing, like some fellows, sir," said Bunter. "I can remember everything I ate yesterday."

"It appears probable," said Mr. Quelch, "that the drug was intended for Van Duck—there appears to be no other way of accounting for it. Did you eat anything intended for Van Duck?"

"No, sir!" said Bunter promptly.

"You are sure, Bunter?"

"Oh, quite, sir! There are some fellows in the Remove who aren't a bit particular about snaffling another fellow's tuck, sir, but I've always been very careful about that sort of thing."

Mr. Quelch gazed at him. He was not so well acquainted with Billy

Bunter's manners and customs as the Removites were. But he had his doubts about the accuracy of that statement!

"This is a very urgent matter, Bunter," he said quietly. "Please try to remember carefully and answer truthfully."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

"Van Duck's food or drink must, I think, have been tampered with yesterday, by some unknown means," said Mr. Quelch. "If you took anything—ahem!—in a—thoughtless moment, belonging to him—"

"Oh, no, sir!"

Bunter's answer was prompt—too prompt! He was beginning to feel alarmed.

"C-can I go now, sir?" he asked.

Clearly it was not going to be an extra holiday. Bunter was anxious to get out of the Form-room.

His eye lingered on the cane on the desk. Certainly, Quelch had been very kind and considerate that morning; but Bunter doubted whether the kindness and consideration would last, if it came to light that he had snaffled a parcel from the House dame's room. Quelch was awfully strict about such things.

Fortunately—from Bunter's point of view—it was not likely to come out. Mrs. Kebble would naturally conclude that the American junior had taken the parcel addressed to him—unless she was informed otherwise.

Nobody was likely to inform her, of course. Van Duck had dealt with the grub-raider in his own way, and the matter was at an end.

Still, Bunter was not feeling easy in his fat mind. A whopping was due to him, and he did not want to be whipped.

"You are sure," said Mr. Quelch, "that you did not—h'm—consume anything that Van Duck might have been expected to take?"

"Absolutely certain, sir!"

"Did Van Duck, by any chance, give you anything that he might otherwise have taken himself?" asked Mr. Quelch, puzzled and perplexed.

"Only the ginger-beer, sir."

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch was alert at once. "Van Duck gave you some ginger-beer. Might he otherwise have drunk it himself?"

"I suppose so, sir, only—"

"A drug might very well be introduced into ginger-beer. This may be the clue of which we are in search!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You drank the ginger-beer that Van Duck gave you, and—"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"You did not!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir! You see—"

"I do not see!" snapped the Remove master. "If Van Duck gave you his glass of ginger-beer, why did you not drink it?"

"He—he put it down my back, sir—"

"What?"

"My b-b-b-back, sir!" stammered Bunter.

Mr. Quelch gave something like a snort. He had found a clue—to a schoolboy practical joke, apparently!

"Absurd!" he snapped.

"Can I go now, sir?" gasped Bunter.

"If you can remember nothing else—"

"Oh, no, sir—nothing!"

"You may go!"

Bunter went—gladly! There was no danger now of the affair of the snaffled chocolates coming to light!

And it did not occur to the fat Owl's podgy brain, for a moment, that it was the chocolates that had been doped! Mr. Quelch was left perplexed—without a clue to the mystery!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Pudding for Poker!

"PIKE!" "The absurd Pike!" exclaimed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Jolly old Pike!" grinned the Bounder.

Some of the fellows laughed. Some stared. Poker Pike, as he walked coolly into Hall at dinner-time, drew the general attention.

The gunman's hickory face was sodate as usual; almost expressionless. Poker was displaying his usual disregard for publicity!

He marched into Hall; glanced round him, and marched up to the Remove table, where that Form were already sitting down. Mr. Quelch, taking his seat at the head of the table, regarded him with surprised inquiry.

Fellows stared from the other tables. Even from the high table, where the great and glorious prefects of the Sixth sat in state, came curious stares and surprised murmurs.

The Removites grinned. Hurree Janset Ram Singh frowned. Putnam van Duck looked at Poker as if he could have bitten him.

Headless of all, the Greyfriars gunman stood there, giving the long table the "once-over."

"Do you—h'm—want anything, Mr. Pike?" asked the Remove master.

Mr. Quelch had never liked Poker's presence in the school; but of late he had been very civil indeed to Poker. That was since the gunman had got him away from Chick Chew, who had "roped-in" the Remove master, in one of his many schemes for getting hold of the gilt-edged American.

Even now, Quelch could not quite think that a Chicago gunman was in his proper place at a Public school; but after that eminent service from Mr. Pike, he could scarcely be anything but civil, and, indeed, grateful.

So now he addressed him with polite inquiry, instead of snapping at him as he would have done once upon a time.

"Sure!" said Poker, with a nod. "I guess I want to keep tabs on that Putnam van Duck!"

A ripple of merriment ran along the Remove table. It was checked by a gimlet-eye glare from Mr. Quelch.

"But, really, Mr. Pike—" said the Remove master.

It was true that Poker saw kidnappers in every shadow, but he had not hitherto figured that it was necessary to watch the millionaire's son at meals.

"I reckon there's dope around, sir," explained Poker. "I got to see that that baby ain't doped none."

His slits of eyes rested for a searching moment on the dusky face of Hurree Janset Ram Singh. The Nabob of Bhanipur was sitting only one or two places away from the American junior.

A flush came into Hurree Singh's dusky cheeks. That searching look, brief as it was, did not escape him.

"Dope!" repeated Mr. Quelch, with a start. He understood now why Poker considered it necessary to appear at meals. He coloured with vexation. "Really, it—there is not—cannot be—any danger!"

"Says you!"

"You can hardly suppose, Mr. Pike, that here, at the school dinner, anyone could possibly administer—"

"I guess I ain't taking no chances with that Putnam van Duck, sir!" said Poker stolidly. "His popper is sure paying me high to see him safe. I got to see that he ain't doped!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Mr. Pike, if you desire to lunch at this table, I will direct a chair to be placed for you."

"I guess I ain't moseyed in for eats!" answered Poker. "I jest want to keep tabs! I'll say there's dope around in this here shebang, and I'll tell a man that it ain't going down young Putnam's neck!"

Mr. Quelch breathed hard and deep. "You may stand there if you so desire!" he snapped.

"Surest thing you know!" said Poker.

Mr. Quelch desired to be considerate to the gunman. He could not forget the service Mr. Pike had rendered him, but undoubtedly he was very much perturbed and annoyed.

The bare idea of a suspicion that "dope" might be administered at the school dinner was really intolerable. Yet it could not be denied that dope had been handed out somehow the previous day. Bunter had got it instead of Van Duck, that was all.

How, when, and by whom was still an impenetrable mystery. But to suspect a Greyfriars servant or a Greyfriars boy of being a tool in the hands of the gangsters was absurd.

Absurd as it was, no other explanation was forthcoming. Mr. Quelch had to admit that. Poker's vigilance was justified, so far as that went.

Anyhow, he was going to keep "tabs."

The school dinner proceeded, with ripples of laughter. Poker stood like a statue, watching. He scanned everything that was passed to Van Duck. The American junior glared at him—without producing any effect. So long as Putnam was helped by a servant from the same supply that was handed out to the other fellows, Poker was satisfied. Wary and suspicious as he was, he did not figure that anybody was going to dope the whole Remove.

But when a dusky hand passed Van Duck the salt, Poker woke to sudden life. He reached over the table and knocked the salt-cellar out of Hurree Janset Ram Singh's hand.

Crash!

"What—" gasped Mr. Quelch. "You dog-goned geek!" roared Putnam van Duck.

"Silence! Mr. Pike, what—"

"O.K., sir!" said Poker calmly. "I guess I ain't taking no chances!"

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly.

"You howling fathead!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Silence!"

Poker, once more immovable, watched. Many curious eyes turned on the dusky face of Hurree Janset Ram Singh. The scene in the bunshop had not been forgotten, and Poker's action now was too pointed to be misunderstood. His suspicions centred on the dusky nabob.

"Mr. Pike," gasped the Remove master, "is it possible—is it imaginable—that you suspect a Remove boy?" Quelch choked with indignation.

"I ain't accusing no guy," said Poker calmly. "I'll say I don't know who handed out the dope. It was sure some guy that was around that Putnam van Duck, though the fat goob got it by

mistake. Seeing that there ain't no pointer to no guy more'n any other guy, I guess it looks like it might be the darkie."

"How dare you suggest such a thing!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, red with indignant wrath.

"I ain't taking no chances!" said Poker stolidly. "It was sure some guy in this bunch!"

"Nonsense!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Absurd!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rose to his feet.

Pudding was being served round the Remove table now—treacle pudding. Billy Bunter got busy on it at once. He was anxious to get through the first helping and bag a second, with an eye on a third. But no other fellow at the Remove table heeded the pudding. Most of the juniors were laughing, but the Co. were glaring at Mr. Pike in great wrath.

"My esteemed and idiotic Pike," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, his dark eyes gleaming, "the suspectfulness of any Remove man is absurd and ludicrous, and the suspectfulness of my humble self is terrifically offensive! The apologise is the proper caper!"

"Forget it!" said Poker.

"Please sit down, Hurree Singh!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I recommend you to take no heed of this absurd, ridiculous, nonsensical——"

"With all respect to you, esteemed sahib, I am bound to take notice of the ridiculous and offensive insinuation!" said the nabob. "The absurd Pike has asked for it!"

Hurree Singh picked up his plate, on which lay a generous helping of treacle pudding.

Before even the wary gunman could guess his intention, the chunk of sticky pudding whizzed across the table and landed in the hickory face.

It was sticky, it was juicy, and it was hot! Poker Pike gave a roar as he received it on his wooden features.

"Good old Inky!" gasped Bob. "Go it, you men! Give him some more!"

Whiz! went Bob's pudding. It landed on Poker's right ear. It was instantly followed by Wharton's, landing on his left.

"Boys!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

But for once the Remove master was unheeded by his Form. Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull followed the lead of their comrades, and two generous helpings of treacle pudding squashed on Poker Pike.

"Go it, you men!" roared Bob.

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yurrrroooooogh!" gurgled Poker, staggering, and clawing wildly at hot, sticky pudding. "I'll say—Yrroogh!"

Squash! Squash! Squash! came chunk after chunk of pudding. The Bounder landed his on Poker's chin; Peter Todd's caught him in one eye. Squiff's in the other. Nearly all the Remove were on their feet now, hurling pudding.

Whiz, whiz! Squash, squash!

"Boys!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Boys! I command you——"

There was a buzz from the other tables. Seniors and juniors were on their feet, staring. Even the prefects were standing up to look. Hall was filled by shouts of laughter.

Mr. Quelch waved his hands and hooted in vain. Every man in the Remove except Billy Bunter clutched up pudding to hurl. Poker's belief that the doper was "one of the bunch" might be ridiculous, but it was exasperating, too.

The Removites made it clear to

Poker what they thought of him and his suspicions. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had started the ball rolling, and the whole Form followed suit as one man. It was quite unusual for the Remove to disregard their Form-master, but they disregarded him now.

Pudding after pudding, in sticky chunks, fairly rained on the Greyfriars gunman. He staggered and stumbled, blinded and choked by treacle pudding. Pudding bunged up his eyes and nose and ears and mouth; it plastered his bowler hat, which Poker had not taken off in Hall; it ran down his neck; it stuck all over him from head to foot!

There was a howl of protest from Billy Bunter as Bob Cherry grabbed his plate away. Ammunition was running short, and Bunter was only half through his helping. It was needed for Poker Pike!

"I say, that's my pudding!" shrieked Bunter, in dismay. "I say—Beast!"

Bunter's wild shriek was unheeded. His pudding squashed on Poker Pike. Then the Bounder grasped the pudding itself from the dish. About two-thirds of it had been served to the juniors. A third remained on the dish. Smithy seized it, and hurled it, amid yells of laughter.

"Gurrrroooooogh!" gurgled Poker, as it spread all over his face, masking him with treacle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boys!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Cease this riot! Cease——"

"Pelt him!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Give him the plate!" shouted the Bounder.

"Hurrah!"

"Go it!"

"Gurrrroooooogh!" gurgled the hapless gunman. "Urrrggh! I guess—wurrgh! Ooooooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A plate cracked on his bowler hat. Poker dabbed and clawed treacle from his eyes, blinked round him wildly, and lurched for the doorway. He was in no state to keep tabs now! Even Poker realised it! He was a pillar of sticky treacle pudding from head to foot! Treacle was oozing down his neck. He lived, moved, and had his being in a world of treacle. Gasping and gurgling, spluttering and choking, Poker made for the door.

Howls of laughter followed him, and whizzing crockery. Poker tottered out of Hall, gurgling wildly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed from one end of Hall to the other.

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Sit down! I order you to sit down at once! Resume your places! Silence!"

The Remove resumed their places. They had put paid to Poker, and they did not regret it; but now that the shindy was over, they rather expected a thunderstorm. After the feast came the reckoning; and they would not have been surprised at whoppings all round.

But Mr. Quelch surprised his Form. He astonished them. He opened his lips—and the Removites listened, waiting for the storm. But there was no storm. Mr. Quelch directed another pudding to be brought. Which was a great relief to his Form, especially Billy Bunter.

No doubt the Remove master shared his Form's indignation, and made allowances for it. Possibly he was even pleased to be relieved of the gunman's presence in Hall, even by such extraordinary measures.

Anyhow, he said nothing further on the subject, to the surprise and relief of the Remove.

When they came out after dinner they

saw nothing of Poker Pike. He was not seen before they went in to afternoon school. Had Chick Chew "horned in" at Greyfriars just then, he would, for once, have found Poker off his guard. Poker Pike was very busy cleaning off treacle—and it kept him busy for a long, long time!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Tries It On!

"**B**EAST!" murmured Billy Bunter.

Shocking to relate, he was alluding to his Form-master. Needless to say, he did not let Mr. Quelch hear that remark.

It was the following day; and the Remove were in Form. It was a warm May afternoon, and Bunter was not the only Remove man who felt that there were nicer places than Form-rooms on a sunny day, and nicer things than Latin prose.

Bunter was peeved—very much peeved.

For a whole day, after his dope adventure, Quelch had been very considerate. He had slacked in Form as much as he liked.

It had seemed too good to last! And so it had proved! The next day Quelch was his old self again. Bunter was called on to construe in the morning, and handed out his "con"—for which he received a hundred lines. It was borne in on his fat mind that the happy period of slacking was over.

Which peeved Bunter very considerably. His fat brow wore a frown when he rolled in for afternoon school with the Remove. Latin prose had no attractions whatever for Bunter. Either in verse or prose, he loathed Latin. It seemed all the more putrid, after a happy day of slacking.

The day before Bunter had sucked toffee in class, unheeded. Now, when he ventured upon a single, solitary bulls-eye, Quelch was on him at once. He rapped fat knuckles with a pointer, and made Bunter throw a bag of bullseyes into the wastepaper-basket. No wonder the fat junior murmured "Beast!" It was quite a mild expression in the harrowing circumstances.

Now Bunter had a Latin paper before him—and never had a Latin paper seemed to him so weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter.

A thoughtful wrinkle came into his fat brow. But he was not thinking of his Latin paper. Great thoughts were working in Bunter's podgy brain.

His eyes gleamed, behind his spectacles.

If anything could set Billy Bunter's podgy intellect going at full pressure, it was the hope of dodging work. And Bunter had thought of a dodge.

A couple of days ago he had been doped. The doping was still a mystery. Poker Pike, at least, was expecting something of the kind to be tried again. So it might be! True, it was unlikely that another packet of dope, intended for Putnam van Duck, would get to Bunter's address. Still, it was possible! How was Quelch to know?

Quelch had been kind and sympathetic for a whole day, after Bunter's last doping. Now, if he was kind and sympathetic for a couple of hours, it would be all right.

And so the Remove, busy with Latin papers, were suddenly startled by a sound unaccustomed in the Form-room—a deep and resonant snore!

Every fellow jumped and looked round.

Mr. Quelch jumped, too!
Snore!
Quelch was quite unaware that his valuable instruction sometimes had a drowsy effect on his pupils. Certainly he never expected to see any fellow in his Form go to sleep at his desk!
"Oh crumbs!" breathed Bob Cherry.
"That ass Bunter—"

There was a suppressed chuckle. The juniors supposed that Bunter, under the combined effects of Latin and warm weather, had nodded off to sleep. They had no doubt that Quelch would soon wake him up.

Bunter's fat head leaned on a fat arm on his desk. His little round eyes were glued shut behind his big round spectacles. And he snored.

Mr. Quelch gazed at him, transfixed, for a long moment. Then he hooted:

"Bunter!"
Snore!
"Bunter!"
Snore!
"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Boys! Cease laughing at once! Do you imagine that this is a laughing matter?"

The grinning Removites looked as if they imagined that very thing. But Mr. Quelch saw no cause for merriment. He was deeply annoyed.

He strode over to Bunter's desk. Within a yard of the fat Owl he roared:

"Bunter!"
Snore!
Mr. Quelch had thoughtfully picked up his cane. Now he gave the fat junior a rap across his podgy shoulders.
"Oh!" spluttered Bunter.
"Bunter, how dare you go to sleep in class!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Snore!
Mr. Quelch gazed at that hopeful pupil as if petrified. The Removites gazed at him, gasping.

If Bunter had been asleep, that whack with the cane certainly had awakened him, to judge by the howl he had uttered. But now he was going on snoring, as if still asleep. If Bunter hoped to get away with that, it showed that he had a very hopeful nature.

"Bunter!" gasped Mr. Quelch.
Snore!
"Bunter, you are not asleep!" stuttered Mr. Quelch. "What do you mean, Bunter, by this palpable pretence? Are you in your right senses?"
Snore!

"Upon my word, Bunter, if you do not sit up immediately, I shall cane you!" hooted Mr. Quelch. The cane swished in the air. "How dare you pretend to be asleep when I am speaking to you? I am perfectly aware that you are wide awake, Bunter!"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter, alarmed by the swish of the cane in the air. "I—I—I'm fast asleep, sir!"

"Wha-a-a-t?"
"I—I can't open my eyes, sir!—I—I—I'm sound asleep!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Remove.
"Silence! Bunter, how dare you!" roared Mr. Quelch. "How dare you make such a ridiculous statement!"

"Tain't, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm asleep, sir. I—I can't wake up. I've been doped!"

"Doped!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Same as I was the other day, sir! I—I—I'm absolutely unconscious, sir."

The Removites fairly rocked. But Mr. Quelch did not share their mirth. For a moment or two he stared at Bunter; then the swishing cane came down, across the fat shoulders, with a mighty swipe.

Whack!
"Yaroooop!" roared Bunter.

He bounded.
If he had been asleep, he was awake now! He was wide awake! He bounded up from the form, roaring.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Owl! Wow! Yaroooo! Whoop!" roared Bunter.

"Bunter, you absurd, prevaricating boy—"

"Yooo-hooop!"
"Bend over that form, Bunter!"
"Oh crikey! I—I say, sir— Wow!"
"Bend over!" thundered Mr. Quelch. Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow! Whoooooop!"
"Now," said Mr. Quelch, "you may take your place, Bunter, and write your paper."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"
Bunter sat on the form again. He wriggled there painfully. And he did not go to sleep again! Brainy as that great idea was, evidently it failed to work with a downy bird like Quelch! For some reason—Bunter did not know why—Quelch hadn't believed that it was dope! That great idea was an absolute

frost, and Bunter was sorry that he had tried it on! And dismal as Latin prose was, he did not think of trying it on again!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

From Jest to Earnest!

"THE ludicrous ass!" growled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. And the Co. frowned.

They were walking in the quad after class, when Poker Pike appeared in the offing. The chums of the Remove were heading for the school shop, to refresh themselves with ginger-beer after Latin prose. Had the Famous Five been on their own, Poker would have taken no heed. But Putnam van Duck was with them, and Poker appeared suddenly from nowhere in particular and followed on.

Putnam breathed hard.
"I'll say I'm getting fed-up to the back teeth with that guy!" he said.
(Continued on next page.)

(1)
To save myself trouble, I'll tell you at once
That Snoop is a toady, a weed and a dunce!
His will-power is weak and he's easily led
By any black sheep fairly strong in the head.
He hasn't the character, you will agree,
Of Smithy or any such fellow as he.
He follows their lead in their underhand
stunts—
In fact, he's a toady, a weed and a dunce!

(2)
Once he decided to make a fresh start,
To turn a new leaf and be decent and smart.
That soon petered out, but we're glad to
recall
That Snoop had the courage to try it at all.
Deep down in him somewhere he has a
soft spot.
He's sometimes not happy with Skinner
and Stott,
But not very often—the spot is too deep,
And usually Snoop is a thorough bad sheep.

(3)
In class-work he shines, but he shines the
wrong way;
And Quelch says that Snoopey is turning him
grey.
He's almost a genius at making mistakes
And, in his opinion, Canute burnt the cakes.
King Henry the Eighth told the waves to
retreat,
And then walked barefooted to Cripplegate
Street
Where Becket was waiting to kill the Black
Prince,
Who died where he stood and has never
smiled since.

(5)
I looked at the paper that Quelchy had
set,
And some of his answers I'll never forget!
The first word was "ferret," which Snoopey
had styled,
"A thing that eats rabbits!" No wonder
I smiled.
Said I: "You will call it, if you've any
sense,
A third person, singular verb, active tense,
The imperfect conjunctive of 'fero, I
bear!'"
To which he replied with a gasp of despair.

**GREYERIARS
INTERVIEWS**
Our long-haired poet is on the war-path
again. This week his victim is
SIDNEY JAMES SNOOP,
one of the black sheep of the Remove.



(4)
With views such as these you'll discover, no
doubt,
Why Snoop spends more time in detention
than out.
And that's where he was when I sought him
to-day—
In detention again in the usual way.
I stole in the class-room when Quelch had
gone out,
For it's risky, of course, when a master's about.
Said Snoopey: "Trot in! You can give
me a hand
With one or two things which I don't under-
stand!"

(6)
I grinned and continued: "And 'possum'?
methinks
Is not a 'wild creecher resembling the hinx'!
D'ye think it's a paper on nature, old man?
No, 'possum' is first person present, 'I
can'!
And here again, 'ire' isn't 'anger,' you
know!
But present imperative—'ee—I go!'"
And that word, at least, poor old Snoop
understood,
For he brokenly murmured: "I wish that
I could!"



(7)
I went on, with Snoop sitting silently glum,
"And 'venio' means—"
said: "I come!"
"Twas Quelchy! He glared and said:
"Thank you, my lad,
For construing Snoop's paper! Snoop
ought to be glad!"
He tore up the paper (to Snoopey's content)
And, turning, said: "Snoop, you may
go!"—and he went.
"And you," he remarked, with a frown
on his face,
"Can write out irregular verbs in his
place!"



(NOTE: The remainder of this poem, which consists of highly irregular adjectives about Quelch, is censored—Ed).

"He sure does get my goat. Here, you Poker, you beat it!"

The juniors came to a halt. Clearly the Greyfriars gunman was going to keep an eye on them in the tuckshop, wary of dope.

They liked Poker! With all his weird manners and customs they had taken a liking to him. But they were wrathful now. That the doping was a deep mystery, they admitted; but that Poker should suspect Greyfriars fellows of having a hand in it was the limit.

"Clear off, fathead!" said Harry Wharton.

"I guess not!" said Poker stolidly. "Nobody here ain't going to dope that Putnam van Duck with me around."

"You unspeakable idiot!" said Johnny Bull. "Do you think a Greyfriars man could be tipped by a kidnapper to dope anybody?"

"You said it!" agreed Poker calmly.

"You terrific fathead—" hooted the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"You can pack that up!" said Poker Pike. "I guess it was one of your bunch—I guess nobody else had no chance. And I'll mention I got suspicion that you was the guy. Mebbe you've got dope in your pocket this minute! You ain't passing it up on Putnam van Duck."

"Do you want some more treacle?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Aw, can it!" growled Poker. "I guess I'm a good-tempered guy, or I'd sure beat you up a few for treacling me that-a-way!"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

Heedless of those compliments, Poker Pike walked after the juniors as they walked on.

"Say," whispered Putnam, "you guys get on, and you come along with me, Inky. I guess I got a stunt for pulling that geck's leg a few."

The Co. went on to the tuckshop, and Hurree Singh changed his direction and walked down to the gates with the American junior.

After them walked Poker.

If Van Duck was going out of gates—especially in company with the dusky junior whom Poker distrusted—Poker

was going to keep tabs on him, even more carefully than usual.

The two juniors walked out of gates and down the lane towards Friardale. The Greyfriars gunman hovered watchful in the rear.

"My esteemed Van Duck," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "what is the whoozy idea?"

Putnam grinned.

"That pesky bonehead figures that you're in cahoots with the kidnappers," he answered. "I'll say he's sure suspicious that you're leading me now right where they're waiting to rope me in."

The nabob chuckled. He was exasperated, and at the same time amused, by Poker's suspicions.

"Waal, let him think so," said Van Duck. "We're going to lose this baby in the timber and give him a jolt. He sure will get mad with you when he comes on you alone and finds me missing—and it will surprise him some when I drop on his head from a branch. I'm telling you, that guy is going to have a lesson."

Hurree Singh grinned and nodded. They sauntered on down the lane, followed by the watchful Poker. They reached the stile that gave admittance into Friardale Wood. A man in a carter's smock, with a whip under his arm, was leaning on the stile.

He stepped aside for the juniors to pass, his eyes lingering on them as they went. They gave him no heed—men in carter's smocks were numerous enough about the village. And a shaggy beard and a quantity of grime quite hid the identity of Tug Keary!

They walked on by the footpath. The man in the carter's smock moved on towards the village as Poker came up, and his back was to the gunman. But he did not go far. He turned back again when the gunman had stepped over the stile.

Putnam and Hurree Singh walked some distance down the footpath, and then the American junior suddenly turned off into the wood.

Hurree Singh followed him, grinning.

They pushed a rapid way through hawthorns and bracken, and reached a

big oak-tree a hundred yards or so from the path.

With a light bound Putnam caught a low branch and swung himself into the tree.

He was immediately out of sight in the foliage.

"Stick there, bo!" came his voice from above. "Wait till that pesky guy comes cavorting around! I sure am going to give Poker the surprise of his little life."

"The surprisefulness will be terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

He waited under the tree.

Poker was not long in coming. His suspicions, already aroused, were very keen now. The juniors had disappeared from his sight in the bracken—and Poker was in a hurry to spot them again.

A bowler hat appeared among the thickets, and Poker came panting up, his face alert with suspicion. He gave the dusky nabob a searching look, and stared round for the American junior. A glitter came into his slits of eyes as he failed to sight him.

"Say, where's that Putnam van Duck?" he barked.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh leaned on the trunk of the oak, his hands in his pockets, and regarded the gunman with a cheery, dusky smile.

"The seefulness of the esteemed Van Duck is not great," he drawled. "He is not on this ridiculous spot."

"Where's that young guy?" barked Poker.

"The lookfulness is the proper caper," suggested the nabob, "and perhapsfully the findfulness will be the happy result."

Poker Pike's face set like iron. There was no sign of Van Duck—no sound to be heard from him. He had vanished. He had been out of the gunman's sight only two or three minutes—and in that short space of time he had disappeared.

"By the great horned toad!" breathed Poker. "I'll say I'm wise to your game, you doggoned ducky! You got that young geck here for them kidnappers to cinch, and they got him! They sure got him!"

"The surefulness is not terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Poker."

"Park that!" snarled Poker. "Where's that young guy? You gotter lead me straight to him, or I guess I'll fill you so full of holes you'd do for a colander."

Poker Pike whipped out his six-gun.

"Now!" he snarled, gun in hand.

There was a rustle in the bracken behind the gunman, and he half turned. Before he could wholly turn there came a crashing blow.

With his attention fixed on the dusky schoolboy, the Greyfriars gunman was taken, for once, completely off his guard.

He had a glimpse of a man in a carter's smock, and at the same moment the butt of a revolver crashed on his head, and he spun over.

The six-gun went flying from his hand, dropping into the grass. Poker Pike went down with a crash, half stunned by that sudden, crashing blow which crushed in his bowler hat and banged like a hammer on the bullet head within.

It was such a blow as might have stunned any man. But Poker's head was hard—and he was not knocked out. He crashed over on the ground, his senses spinning, sprawling, but making an effort to rise.

But the man in the carter's smock leaped on him like a tiger.

Poker Pike was crushed down under a knee that was planted in his ribs, and the man in the smock threw up his right hand, with the revolver clubbed in it, for another smashing blow.

"THE BOY WHO KNEW EVERYTHING!"



Every 'Magnet' reader knows the one-and-only Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior of Greyfriars. In the sparkling long school yarn in this week's GEM, Fish pays St. Jim's a visit with the intention of showing Tom Merry & Co. what a cute guy from the 'Yewnited' States can do. But all he proves is that he is full of gas—and then some! Read about the fun and frolic Fish's visit causes—a visit which ends in his arrest!

There's also a fine tale of the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. in this number

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Had that terrible blow landed, it would have been the finish for Poker Pike for some hours to come; his dizzy senses would have been completely scattered.

But Hurree Jamset Ram Singh leaped forward.

It had all happened so suddenly that the dusky schoolboy, leaning on the oak, had been taken utterly by surprise. The assailant probably had not noticed him there; anyhow, his hands were full with Poker for the moment, and he had no time to attend to the schoolboy. A moment would have been enough for Tug; he needed no more to deal the blow that would have put Poker to sleep if it had not cracked his tough skull.

But in that moment the nabob leaped on him. Barely in time Hurree Singh grabbed the descending arm.

He was unable to stop the forcible descent of the blow, but he dragged the arm aside, and the heavy metal pistol butt crashed on the ground, inches from Poker Pike's head.

With a fierce snarl, Tug wrenched his arm loose and struck at the schoolboy. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gave a pantiing cry as the pistol butt struck his dusky forehead, and he went over backwards, crashing.

Poker Pike heaved up, and Tug rocked. The gunman was hard hit, but he was still game. But the clubbed revolver was up again.

"I got you, Poker!" hissed Tug. "I got you, you big stiff! And I reckon I got that gilt-edged bird! You get yourn, Poker!"

There was a rustling and brushing in the branches of the oak above. A figure shot down, landing on the shoulders of the gangster, and Tug rolled off Poker Pike, grappling wildly with Putnam van Duck.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Poker Takes It Back!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH strove to scramble up, but his senses were spinning.

A big lump was forming on the nabob's dusky forehead. With a spinning brain, he sank back helplessly. Poker—less damaged, though he had had a harder knock—lurched to his feet.

The man in the carter's smock was rolling over in the grass, fiercely clutched by the American junior.

Tug had been taken quite by surprise by Putnam falling on him from the branches of the oak. That surprise had been intended for Poker Pike, but the game had changed suddenly from jest to earnest.

Putnam was strong and wiry, and he gave the gangster a tussle. Tug had dropped his revolver as he was hurled over, but his sinewy hands grasped at Putnam, and the struggle could not have lasted long. Putnam put every ounce into it, fighting like a wildcat, but the powerful gangster rapidly gained the upper hand.

There was no help from Hurree Singh; he was unable to get on his feet. Poker Pike heaved up and stood lurching, his head aching and spinning under the crunched bowler. But he pulled himself together with iron determination. He lurched towards the spot where his six-gun lay in the grass and stooped for it, almost pitching over as he stooped.

But he got hold of it and managed to straighten up. He lurched over to the gangster.

Crack! came the barrel of the six-gun on Tug's head.

The man in the carter's smock yelled and tore himself away from the breathless and almost exhausted American junior; he leaped clear, panting. The beard had been torn from his face in the struggle.

"Tug, you pesky scallawag!" panted Poker, and he fired as he spoke.

The report of the six-gun roared through Friardale Wood. But, for once, Poker's aim was not good; he was swaying as he pulled trigger. The bullet missed Tug by a yard.

Poker lurched towards him, pulling trigger again. The man in the carter's smock leaped away into the bracken. His own weapon lay in the grass, and Poker's dizzy eyes glared at him over the roaring six-gun. Tug sprang away just in time, missed by inches.

Poker Pike leaned one hand on the gnarled trunk of the oak to steady himself and pumped bullets after the gangster as he ran.

There was a wild crashing in the bracken as Tug fled for his life; bullets searched after him as he went, and some of them went close.

Bang, bang, bang! roared the six-gun. The hot lead tore screeching through bracken and bramble, speeding the gangster in his flight.

The rustle died away in the distance. Tug was gone. Poker loosed off his last shot and stood panting, leaning on the oak.

"Carry me home to die!" he gasped.

"Inky, old man!" Putnam scrambled over to the Nabob of Bhanipur and bent over him breathlessly with anxiety. "Inky, you're sure hurt!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sat up dizzily, supported by the American junior's arm; his dusky hand went to his bruised forehead, and he grinned ruefully.

"You're hurt, old man!" panted Van Duck.

"The hurtfulness is not terrific," gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Ow! There is an absurd bruise on my—ow!—idiotic napper, that is all."

Van Duck helped him to his feet. Hurree Singh leaned on the oak, tenderly rubbing his forehead. He was pulling himself together now, though he was still dizzy.

Poker Pike reloaded the six-gun; that was his first care. He packed it, and took off his crunched bowler and rubbed his aching head; then he punched out the bowler into a semblance of a hat again. When he replaced it he did not jam it down quite so tightly as usual.

Tug was gone; the sudden danger was over. Poker was more than alert now, ready for the whole gang of gangsters if they had turned up; but the wood was silent after the rustling of the fleeing Tug had died away.

There was a rather extraordinary expression on the hickory face of the Greyfriars gunman. He looked curiously and uncertainly at the Nabob of Bhanipur. Hurree Singh was in pain, but the look on the gunman's face made him smile.

"Putnam, you young guy, what was you doing in that tree?" growled Poker. It was dawning on him that the juniors had been "pulling his leg."

"You pesky piecan," retorted Putnam, "I was sure fooling you, like the ornery bonthead you are; and I'd sure have dropped on your cabeza if that guy hadn't horned in."

"You young gink!" grunted Poker. "You don't want to play no fool jokes on the guy what's keeping tabs on you. That galoot Tug was hanging around, watching for a chance—and I guess he came near getting by with it this time."

He sure did surprise me some when he handed me that packet."

"Yep!" snapped Van Duck. "And who stopped him from plastering your fool brains all over this location?"

Poker Pike made no reply to that.

"Me, I got busy as fast as I could!" snapped Van Duck. "But it was this guy that horned in and stopped that galoot cracking your nut. Was it, or wasn't it, you pie-faced piecan?"

"Surest thing you know," admitted Poker.

"And you figuring that he was in cahoots with Chick Chew!" snorted Van Duck. "Say, you want to go round a corner and shake yourself."

Poker Pike nodded slowly.

He was slow to convince. But he had to be convinced. It was clear to even Poker's solid brain that it was Hurree Jamset Ram Singh who had defeated the gangster. But for his prompt help, Poker would have lain in the grass like a log, stunned and senseless—leaving the gangster free to deal with the schoolboys. And, plucky as they were, they would have had no chance against an armed and desperate ruffian. Putnam van Duck would have been "cinched"—walked off by Tug—while Poker lay stunned, and probably the nabob stunned beside him. It was a surprise to Poker, but he had to chew on it and get it down.

"I guess," he said slowly, "that it wasn't that guy handled the dope. Nope! It sure was not that young guy. I'll tell that kid I 'ake it back."

"And I'll tell you that you're the goob from Goobsville, and then some!" snapped Putnam. "Inky, old man, I guess we want to be hitting home—and hitting it quick. You want to doctor that prize-packet you got on your cabeza."

Poker Pike followed the two juniors back to the footpath and then to Friardale Lane. His hickory face was very thoughtful as he went. He did not speak a word till they reached the school gates.

Then, as they went in, he tapped the Nabob of Bhanipur on the elbow. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh glanced at him, with a faint grin on his dusky face.

"I'll say I'm sorry, big boy," mumbled Poker. "You sure did horn in like a little man, and you got a packet to show for it. And me figuring that you was in cahoots with them kidnapping hombres! I'm telling you I'm feeling jest now like a two-cent remnant."

"It is all right, my esteemed and idiotic Poker," grinned the nabob.

"I'll say I do feel like a piece that the cat brought in and left around," mumbled Poker, "and then some. I allow that you wasn't the doping guy—nor yet any of your bunch, I reckon. It's got me beat—but I guess I got to look farther for that doping guy."

"Mebbe you'll suspicion the Head next," suggested Van Duck sarcastically.

"Mebbe," said Poker.

"Oh, my esteemed hat!" ejaculated Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Me suspicioning you, and you getting that packet on my account, it sure does make me feel a cheap skate," said Poker, who was evidently remorseful for his distrust of the nabob, now that the dusky schoolboy's good faith had been so indubitably proved. "I'm asking you to forget it, bud."

"The forgetfulness will be immediate and terrific," the nabob assured him. "The frown of absurd hostility and preposterous indignation will be replaced by the smile and friendship and kind regards."

"Search me!" gasped Poker. "You sure do spill a bibful when you start the machine."

And Poker went into Gosling's lodge, and the two juniors hurried to the House, where Mrs. Kebble's skilled services were called upon to deal with the nabob's bruise. But with all the House dame's skill and care that bruise was big and black and prominent, and it was likely to be a long time before Hurree Jamset Ram Singh got rid of the "packet" that Tug had handed him.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last.

"LOOK out, Bunter!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles.

"That's Grimey," said Harry Wharton, with a glance at the stocky official figure that was crossing from the gates to the House.

A good many glances turned on Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield. Most of the fellows concluded that he had visited Greyfriars in connection with the activities of the kidnappers. But the spirit moved Bob Cherry to pull Billy Bunter's fat leg.

"Wonder who Grimey's after?" remarked Bob, with a wink to his friends, unseen by the fat Owl. "Looks bad for Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The badfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "If esteemed Quelch has sent for honourable inspector to investigate mystery of missing grub—"

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"It was bound to come," said Johnny Bull gravely. "Tuck missing up and down the Remove passage—"

"I hear that Coker of the Fifth has missed a pie, too," remarked Frank Nugent, entering solemnly into the game.

"Well, if Quelch has called in Inspector Grimes, it's a pretty serious outlook for Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "As a first offender, they might let him off with a caution."

"Beast!" howled Bunter. "You jolly well know that old Grimey ain't come here for me! I never touched Coker's pie—measly thing, too, with hardly any gravy in it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess you had my packet from old Coot," grinned Putnam van Duck.

"And if Quelch has got wise to it—"

"I didn't!" roared Bunter. "I never knew you had a parcel, and I never touched it. And that was two or three days ago, anyhow. They can't be raking that up now."

"Three months' hard for poor old Bunter," sighed Bob Cherry. "But I believe it's jolly good exercise on the treadmill. It will bring down his fat."

He may come out only weighing a ton."

"Yah!" snorted Bunter.

Billy Bunter had many sins on his fat conscience—more sins than conscience, really. But he did not quite believe that a police inspector had been called in to handle the mystery of missing tuck in Remove studies. Still, he blinked rather uneasily after Mr. Grimes, as that portly official gentleman went into the House.

A few minutes later Trotter, the page, appeared, looking round. He came over to the group of Removites.

"Are they sending for Bunter?" murmured Bob.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

The fat Owl eyed Trotter with great apprehension as he came up.

"Mr. Quelch wants—" began Trotter.

"Oh crikey! Is old Grimey with him?" exclaimed Bunter.

"Yes, sir. He wants—"

"I'm not going!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, Trotter, you tell Quelch that I'm out of gates—sec? I'll tip you half-a-crown when—when my postal order comes."

Trotter stared at him.

"Mr. Quelch wants—" he repeated.

"I—I won't go—"

"Master Van Duck—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"And Master Bunter—"

"Oh lor'!"

Trotter grinned, and went back to the House. Billy Bunter blinked at the juniors in great dismay.

"I—I say, you—you go, Van Duck," he stuttered. "Tell Quelch I've gone out. Tell him I've been run over. Say to him—Owl! Leggo my arm, you beast! Stop dragging me along, you rotter! I won't go! I mean, I'm coming, ain't I?" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter went reluctantly. Evidently he had to go. He arrived at Mr. Quelch's study with Van Duck in a very uneasy frame of mind.

Inspector Grimes was in the study with the Remove master. Bunter gave him a dismal blink through his big spectacles.

"I say, it—it wasn't me—" began Bunter.

"What do you mean, you foolish boy?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Be silent! Van Duck, as no discovery has been made with regard to the—the drug that was used last Wednesday, I have asked Inspector Grimes to make an inquiry into the matter. He has kindly consented to do so."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, in great relief.

He realised that it was only the mystery of the dope that had brought the Courtfield inspector to the school. He was not on the track of missing tuck.

"Bunter is sent for, as he chanced

to be the victim of the drug," said Mr. Quelch. "Both of you will answer Mr. Grimes' questions."

"Sure, sir!" said Putnam.

"Now, Master Van Duck," said Inspector Grimes, "your Form-master thinks, and I agree, that the drug must have been for you, and that this boy, Bunter, became its victim by some mischance."

"I guess so, sir."

"Master Bunter must, therefore, have eaten or drunk something intended for you," said Mr. Grimes. "This article, whatever it was, must have been drugged. It is scarcely possible that any person can have penetrated into the school, and tampered with the food. I think we may dismiss that, Mr. Quelch."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"Surely, sir, you do not suspect, like that ridiculous gunman, that any Greyfriars boy could possibly have—" he began.

"No, sir!" said Mr. Grimes, with a faint smile. "That would be the last idea to enter my mind."

"I am glad of that, sir! Yet, if you exclude the possibility that some extraneous person—However, proceed, sir."

Inspector Grimes proceeded.

"Now, answer me carefully, Master van Duck! I understand that boys at school sometimes receive—hem—tuck, I think it is called—tuck by the medium of the post. Such as a hamper, or a cake! Hem! Have you received anything of the kind by post this week?"

Mr. Quelch started a little. He saw at once the drift of the Courtfield inspector's thoughts.

"There was a parcel on Wednesday, sir," said Van Duck.

"On Wednesday!" The inspector's eyes gleamed. "That was the day the drug was used. What was in the parcel?"

"A box of chocolates, sir, from Mr. Coot."

"Who is Mr. Coot?"

"An old friend of my popper, sir, who lives in London. He sends me things sometimes."

"You are sure that this parcel came from Mr. Coot?"

"It was his fist on the label, sir."

"Handwriting may be imitated," said Mr. Grimes. "Did you eat the chocolates?"

"N-n-nope!" stammered Putnam.

"Who did?"

"I didn't!" gasped Bunter, as Van Duck's eyes turned on him. "I never knew that Van Duck had a parcel on Wednesday. I never went down to the nets to tell him. You can ask Wharton, sir—he was there."

"Wha-a-at!" ejaculated Inspector Grimes.

"Bunter!" came Mr. Quelch's deep voice.

"Oh, yes, sir! I'm absolutely innocent, sir!" gasped Bunter. "You couldn't possibly suppose that I would snaffle a fellow's parcel, sir! You—you know me too well!"

"Bunter, I warn you to answer Mr. Grimes truthfully. Otherwise—"

"Oh, of—of course, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I hope I'm not a fellow to tell fibs. I haven't tasted chocolates this week, sir! I—I've almost forgotten what they taste like, it's—it's so long since I had any."

"I think, sir, that we are getting near the facts," said Inspector Grimes, with a faint grin on his official visage. "If Master Bunter consumed the chocolates sent by post to Master van Duck—"

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter.

"Bunter, speak the truth at once!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

WHO

wouldn't play football
defied his headmaster
was ragged by his Form fellows

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"I got you, Poker!" hissed Tug, raising his clubbed revolver. "I got you, and I reckon I got that gilt-edged bird, too!" There was a rustling and brushing in the branches of the old oak above as Putnam van Duck shot down!

"Yes, sir. I—I always do, sir. I—I've often got into trouble for being so truthful!" groaned Bunter. "I never went anywhere near the House dame's room on Wednesday afternoon, sir! Mrs. Kebble will tell you so, if you ask her—she's sure to remember giving me a clean handkerchief—"

"Bunter!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "You went to the House dame's room and—"

"Oh, no, sir! I went nowhere near the place," moaned Bunter. "I wasn't in the passage when you passed me, sir—you remember—"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I remember now that I saw you in that passage, near the House dame's room on Wednesday afternoon, Bunter, and spoke to you. I remember clearly. And you were there for the purpose of—"

"Oh lor'! No, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Nothing of the kind! I never knew there was a parcel on Mrs. Kebble's table. Besides, I only took it up to the study to oblige Van Duck. You see, sir, he was at the cricket, and—hadn't time to fetch the parcel himself, and being a good-natured chap—"

"Then you did take the parcel?"

"Oh, no, sir! I never touched it," stammered Bunter. "I—I wouldn't! Some fellows in the Remove would, sir—but not me."

"Bless my soul!" gurgled Mr. Quelch. "This boy's stupidity and prevarication—"

"Oh, really, sir! I—I assure you I never touched the parcel! And it was all through my being good-natured, and wanting to oblige a chap! I knew Van Duck wouldn't mind me taking one or two, sir—and I was going to leave the

rest for him, but—but somehow they all went! I—I was quite surprised, sir, when I saw the box empty. Not that I had them!" added Bunter cautiously. "I told Van Duck I never had them, and instead of taking a fellow's word, he shoved the ginger-beer down my back and—"

Inspector Grimes coughed. He was trying not to laugh. Mr. Grimes had questioned all sorts of offenders in his time; but the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove was a new one on him!

"It appears, Van Duck," gasped Mr. Quelch, "that this box of chocolates, intended for you, was wholly consumed by this greedy and untruthful boy."

"He's told you so, sir!" said Putnam.

"I haven't!" yelled Bunter in alarm. "I've told Mr. Quelch I didn't, you beast! Don't you get making out that I had your chocs! As if I'd touch a fellow's tuck! I don't know how the box got in the study at all! I sat on it entirely by accident! I—"

"Be silent, Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir! But I never—"

"Silence!"

"It seems fortunate, sir, that this—this extraordinary boy acted as he did," said Mr. Grimes, willing to put in a word for the hapless Owl. "Had Van Duck eaten the chocolates, as no doubt he would have done entirely without suspicion, he might have fallen helplessly into the hands of the kidnappers."

"That is quite true!" said Mr. Quelch. "You are then, assured that the chocolates—"

"Doped chocolates by post, sir, is an old trick, though doubtless new in the experience of a schoolmaster," said the inspector. "But a telephone call to

this Mr. Coot will establish the fact beyond doubt."

"Quite!" said Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, I will deal with you later. You may both go for the present."

"I—I say, sir, I—I never—"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

And Bunter jumped, and went.

The Owl of the Remove had one satisfaction, however—he had succeeded in beating the gangsters!

The mystery was elucidated at last; in fact, what had been a very deep mystery to Greyfriars School was rather a simple proposition to a police-inspector.

A telephone call to Mr. Coot, in London, drew from that gentleman a total denial of any knowledge of any box of chocolates sent to Putnam at Greyfriars.

Evidently that box of chocolates had not come from Mr. Coot; so there was no doubt that Mr. Coot's "fist" had been imitated by some person unknown—and there could be no doubt that that person was Chick Chew, star kidnapper of the United States! It was one more of the gangster's many wiles, and it had failed—through Billy Bunter!

For which Billy Bunter claimed the credit, as soon as he understood how the matter lay. According to Bunter, he had suspected those chocolates, and had snaffled them out of pure friendship for Putnam—really an act of devotion! Sad to relate, nobody believed Bunter.

THE END.

(The next yarn in this grand series is entitled: "THE VENGEANCE OF BUNTER THE VENTRILOQUIST!" Be sure to purchase your copy of the MAGNET next Friday!)

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REVEL IN THE THRILLS OF THIS MODERN PIRATE STORY, BOYS!

CAPTAIN VENGEANCE!

"Your Fate is Sealed!"

WEARILY, and with his hands fettered, Roderick Drake lay in his narrow bunk in Ronald Westdale's cabin, listening to the throb and whir of gigantic engines as they lashed into fullest pressure, driving the pirate cruiser through placid seas.

Night shrouded the Indian Ocean. For twelve hours—twelve ages of mental agony, as it seemed—from the sinking of the Sylvia Bay, Roy Drake had been a prisoner in the gunnery lieutenant's cabin. In his mind's eye, he could still see the foundering of the giant Australian luxury liner, the passengers, lately so light-hearted and carefree, crowded into the lifeboats or struggling in the shark-swarming sea; on the bridge of the Vengeance, implacable as Fate, he saw Von Eimar, coolly surveying the scene of horror through his powerful binoculars.

Mentally the boy reviewed the sensational events that had taken place with such breathless rapidity since Von Eimar had organised the mutiny of convicts on Nemesis Island, and by stratagem captured the Varland cruiser which he had turned into a pirate warship. Already Captain Vengeance, as the world's master-spy now called himself, had shown himself to be capable of the tigerish ruthlessness so necessary to his desperate new trade.

One crumb of comfort alone remained to Roderick Drake. The Sylvia Bay had managed to flash out an SOS before the torpedo had shattered a breach in her keel-plates. By now the world would be aware that, for the first time for a hundred years, a pirate man-o'-war was out on the seas. Nor would it be long before Roy's father, Morgan Drake, the brain of Britain's Secret Service, would be engaged on the task of rescuing—or avenging—his kidnapped son.

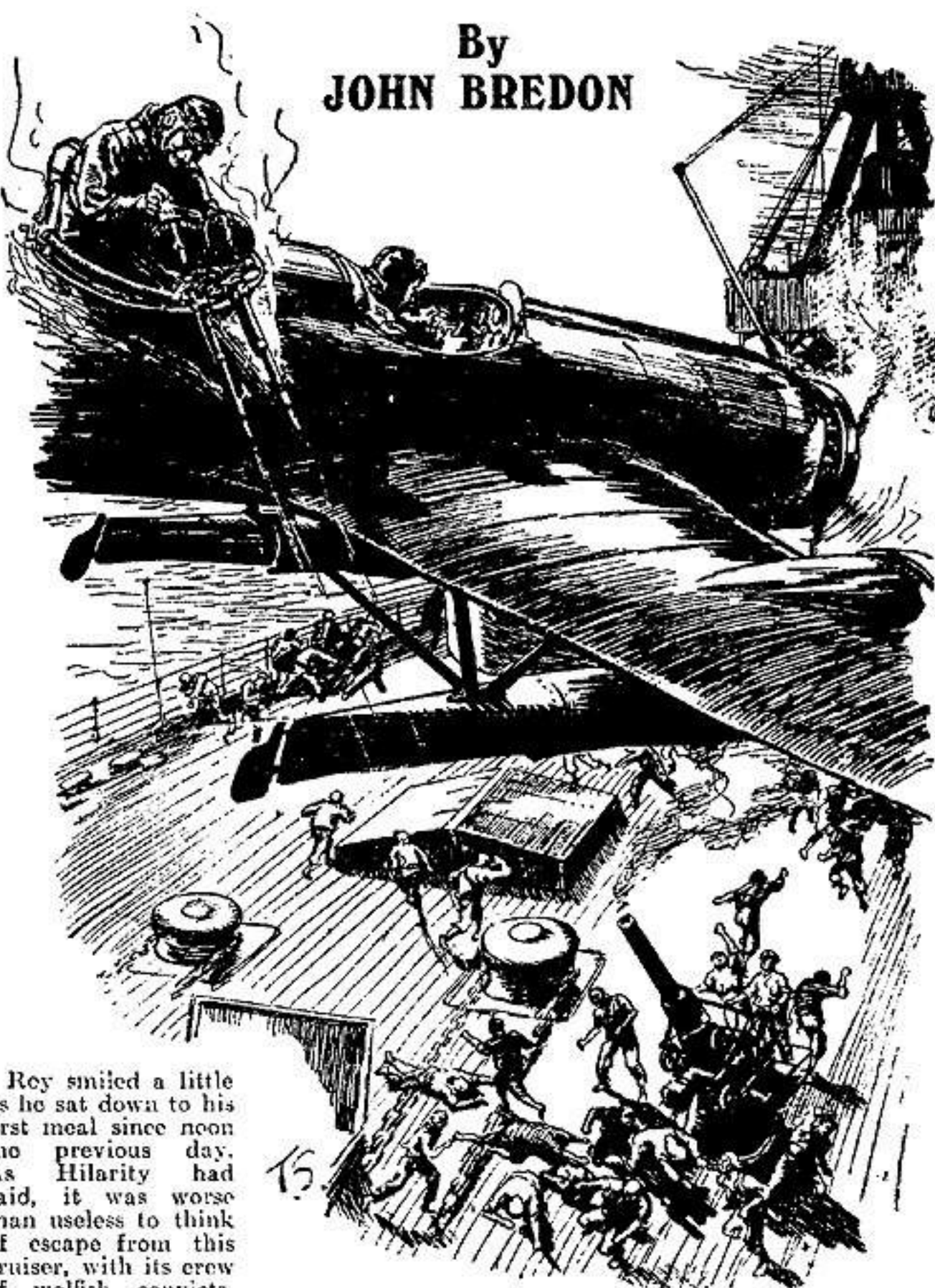
A door clicked open in the tiny cabin, and the electric bulb blazed into life. Twisting in his berth, Roy saw Hilarity Hinton, the little Cockney ex-burglar who was Ronald Westdale's general factotum. In one hand he balanced a tray with a plate of sandwiches and a mug of steaming coffee.

"Ow do?" asked the Cockney. Observing the boy's white, strained countenance, he grinned sympathetically. Laying the tray on a hinged table, he drew a tiny key from the pocket of his dingy white, reefed jacket. "It's huncaccommodatin' to wear the rings, chum," he added, fitting the key into the lock of the handcuffs. "I knows that from hexperience. 'Ere y'are, my bucko!" The steel bands clicked open, and thankfully Roy crept out from the bunk, rubbing his chafed wrists and stretching and flexing his cramped muscles.

"No, I wouldn't, if I were you, son," warned Hilarity, slipping a gun from his pocket, as instinctively Roy measured the Cockney's diminutive stature against his own well-developed limbs, for Roy was only a lad of fifteen. "I'm a nervous chap myself," Hilarity ran on, "an' if anything 'appened to you because of me I'd never recover from the shock. Park it, cocky! What's the good, anyway? You've a three-hundred-mile swim between you and the nearest land!"

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By
JOHN BREDON



Roy smiled a little as he sat down to his first meal since noon the previous day. As Hilarity had said, it was worse than useless to think of escape from this cruiser, with its crew of wolfish convicts. Later on, perhaps, when they made land—if ever they did—he would watch his chance.

Hungrily Roy devoured the supper before him—or breakfast it should be called, for it was within an hour to dawn. As he demolished the last crumb, and swallowed the final mouthful of coffee, Hilarity unlocked the cabin door and motioned him to follow.

"Now for a nice, quiet little constitutional in the moonlight," grinned the Cockney, following Roy up a vertical iron ladder to the gun-deck. "You takes your hexercise by moonlight, like the howls. The Big Bug, Von Eimar, wants a pleasant little chat with you in his cabin. Feels sociable, he does. Only mind how you speaks, cocky; he's got a nasty temper, he has!"

With this friendly warning, Hilarity Hinton led the way across the shadowed gun-deck.

Stars flashed bright in the dusky, purple vault. Through the placid swells where phosphorescent blue fires danced and flickered like will-o'-the-wisps, the Vengeance lunged her iron stem, spark-

Trrr-rrr-rrrh! Flame spurted from the depressed muzzles as the airman pressed his trigger, threshing the decks of the pirate cruiser with red-hot streams of lead. Screeches of sheer panic volleyed from the demoralised convicts!

lit smoke pouring from her squat, red-hot funnels.

Down in the blistering Gehenna of her stokehold, black and yellow firemen were toiling, naked, perspiring, staggering from one gaping, white-hot furnace maw to the other, clanging fire shovels, furnace rakes, and clinker bars to keep up the pressure of steam. Only men seasoned to the sun-heat of Africa and South China could have stood the strain.

In the engine-room, Mikhail Lebedoff, Russian renegade engineer, stolidly chewed a rank cigar as he swabbed his matted brow with a piece of oily waste and kept a bloodshot eye upon his dials and indicators.

"Full speed ahead" Von Eimar had ordered, and pistons pounded, valves and steam-pipes hissed, boilers strained and jumped on their bed-plates, while gasping, half-dead greasers squirmed in and out of the mazes of machinery as they oiled couplings and bearings.

Roy Drake, pacing behind Hilarity Hinton in the clean, fresh tang of the sea air, understood fully the reason for Von Eimar's haste. Like invisible waves, the S O S sent out by his victim was spreading across the world. For hundreds of miles every ship and wireless station would be flashing out the sensational, almost incredible news. Warships in Singapore, Colombo, and in the Dutch East Indies would be getting up steam. In a few hours retribution would be loosed in the wake of the daring modern pirate who had defied every sea law and tradition of the past hundred years.

Not a light was to be seen on the Vengeance from stem to stern. The bright starlight, glimmering ghostly upon her metal deck-plates and superstructure, provided the sole illumination; nor was there any of the song-roaring and drunkenness that had prevailed among the convicts during the first hours of the voyage. Von Eimar kept his crew of rascals and ruffians under an iron hand.

As they passed the inky blotch of shadow cast by the gun-shield of a big six-incher, Roy made out the close-cropped, bullet head of Killer Moran, and the gold ear-rings of Luis Ramiro as they squatted under the massive gun-breech.

They had been talking rapidly and in muttered tones, but at the approach of the two newcomers they became suddenly mum.

Roy wondered. Neither the American gangster nor the Argentine half-breed would he have trusted an inch. To see those two in secret conclave was a sinister sign. It boded mischief for someone!

Removing his peaked cap, Hilarity rapped his knuckles upon a steel-sheeted door, and as it was opened in response to a deep, strong, familiar voice, Roderick Drake found himself once more in the presence of the master-spy and master-pirate, Von Eimar.

With the inevitable cigar jutting from one corner of his tight-lipped mouth, Von Eimar sat at his ease in a swivel-chair, before a handsome oak desk in the cabin that had once belonged to Admiral Merieski, of the Varland navy. The admiral did not require it now, having changed his quarters to the stokehold, in company with Governor Zarda of Nemesis Island.

With the new captain sat the notorious Dr. Nieuwe, distinguished Brussels surgeon—and poisoner!

Roy Drake set his lips in a firm line as he met the suave and mocking glance of his father's sworn enemy.

"Be pleased to take a seat, Master Drake!" Von Eimar smiled blandly as he nodded towards a padded armchair, removing the black, strong cigar from his lips. "A drink? No? Well, there are some chocolates on the table. Help yourself. Hinton, you may wait within call."

Sedulously Von Eimar polished his monocle with a handkerchief, while Roy sat defiantly in the armchair.

"Murderer and pirate," I think you called me some hours ago," began Von Eimar, screwing his monocle once more into a pale blue eye. "A pithy exposition of my character, Master Drake, though you make no allowance for my other and better qualities. Almost I am inclined to like you. You are possessed of a truthful and refreshing candour, and you do not lack for spirit—two qualities which I have always admired. If you were not the son of Morgan Drake, I could wish that you were my own." Significantly he paused, to add: "It is a pleasing stroke of irony that

has thrown into my hands the son of the man who sent me to Nemesis Island!"

"And so you intend to work your revenge upon me?" smiled Roy bitterly, as, squarely and directly, he looked Von Eimar in the face. "Well, get on with it! I shan't give you the satisfaction of seeing me snivel."

"You are mistaken, my dear boy." Dryly Von Eimar took a biscuit from the tray and snapped it between his white, gold-filled teeth. "With you, personally, I have no quarrel. It is your father who is my enemy, not you. You are merely the instrument of my vengeance. It is Morgan Drake, not his son, whom I wish to see squirming and snivelling."

"You mean to strike at my father through me?" asked Roy contemptuously. "To break my father by murdering me—is that it? Well, snivelling and squirming doesn't run in our family—"

Von Eimar raised a ringed, podgy hand.

"Who said you were to be killed, my impulsive young friend?" Smiling, he shook his square, shaven, straight-backed head. "I do not take so crude and clumsy a revenge. My methods are more subtle."

The smile upon his broad Teutonic features became coldly sinister, infinitely devilish in its mockery.

"I wonder what my old friend Morgan Drake will feel when he learns that his own son has joined my pirate crew?" he continued pleasantly. And with that he leaned back in his swing-chair, drawing at his cigar with intense satisfaction.

Roy felt puzzled. From Von Eimar he glanced to the Belgian doctor, who had taken no part in the discussion, and whose black, beady eyes glittered maliciously behind his pince-nez.

"I am a prisoner; not a member of your pirate crew!" Roy pointed out contemptuously and not a little surprised.

"So you say, my boy. And it is true. But truth does not always prevail in this sinful world."

Blandly suave, Von Eimar drew a handsomely bound book from a drawer in his desk, and rustled the leaves.

"Here are the laws and articles of my pirate crew, drawn up by myself and signed by every man under my orders. Your name occupies a prominent position on the list. You are surprised? But we have several most consummate forgers among us, and in your baggage we found several letters and documents with your signature to serve for a model. See for yourself!"

With amazed eyes Roy saw his own name, so skilfully imitated that he himself could not tell the difference, among those of the pirate leaders.

"If we should ever come to trial," Von Eimar purred softly, "that signature ought to be good hangman's evidence!"

Coolly he checked the hot words with which Roderick Drake would have interposed.

"I have no intention of allowing myself or any of my confederates coming to trial, if I can help it," he added. "But at times we shall take prisoners. I intend that they shall see this book. Perhaps I shall contrive it that one shall escape with this incriminating evidence. At all events, they shall see you, apparently holding an important post aboard this ship—with a gunman to watch you so that you have to play the part! Should you escape from us, your denials might be accepted; but I doubt it—emphatically I doubt it! If we should be captured, make no doubt but that every man of this crew will swear that you were one of us—out of spite, if for no other reason. Your fate

is sealed. Better accept your destiny, and enlist with Von Eimar, the pirate."

Roderick Drake felt cold inwardly, and sick. In spite of the warm colour that burned in his cheeks, fear gripped at his heart-strings with icy fingers. This was a revenge fitting to the cold, calculating nature of Von Eimar. He knew the master-spy's devilish cunning, and how he could make it appear that Roy had actually and voluntarily joined the pirate crew.

As for Von Eimar's infamous proposal, he disdained to answer. Rather would he have followed the hapless wretches of the Sylvia Bay than joined that crew of outlaws, pirates, and murderers.

"How long do you think you will be able to play out this game?" he asked, in a burst of impulsive bitterness. "That S O S from the liner has done for you! There's not a port in the world where you can take this cruiser, and her coal and supplies won't last for ever. There will be warships on your track this very hour. All the navies in the world will be after you. You'll be sunk or forced to surrender within a week!"

Von Eimar shook his head.

"My dear lad, you really do not suppose that I embarked upon this desperate venture without calculating the immediate consequences? I am not so rash as all that. No! That S O S from the Sylvia Bay, I own, was an item outside my calculations; or, rather, a risk I had considered to be negligible. I did not suppose that Captain Cooper wished to commit suicide."

"But, all the same, if you were to look into our radio cabin at the present moment, you would see our operator giving out the message that the Vengeance has struck a sunken reef, and is foundering rapidly. That message may be believed or not at present. Probably not. The navies of the world, as you so aptly remark, will doubtless continue the hunt. But when they fail to find us, they will be forced to the conclusion that it is correct, and the search will be abandoned."

"But they are bound to find you!" Roy pointed out. "They'll rake every square mile of the seas, every island you can reach, every creek and lagoon!"

Again Von Eimar shook his head.

"I have provided for that contingency, my dear Roy Drake," he said. "I am not so poor a sea-fox that I have not my secret burrow. Where is it? Your curiosity will be satisfied within a few hours, my boy. The only thing I fear is that I may be intercepted before I reach it. It's a race against time!"

As he was speaking, Roy noticed a flush of rosy light upon the thick, glazed "bullseye" of the cabin porthole, which betokened coming day. It was as he noticed this circumstance when there came a sudden, startled shout from the Vengeance's control-top, the loud, insistent clangor of a ship's bell, and then the brazen peal of a bugle.

The door was swung violently open till it clashed on its hinges, and into the cabin plunged Hilarity Hinton.

"I say, capt'n," cried the Cockney frenziedly, as Von Eimar glared, "it's all up with us! Haireyplanes! Four of 'em. They're coming up to meet us, an' hevery one's a whopper!"

Forced to Surrender!

WITH a face like that of a balked devil, Von Eimar swung up the iron ladder to the cruiser's forebridge. Beneath him, under the forward gun—
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turret, the hastily aroused pirates swarmed in dismayed groups, all staring eastwards where the flaming half-disc of sun hove slowly over the gilded sea rim.

Ronald Westdale handed his chief a pair of binoculars, and with a grunt in his square, thick throat, Von Eimar leaned upon the bridge rail, focusing the lenses into the dazzling glare.

Out of the ruddily lit clouds swung four black specks, droning sonorously towards the solitary cruiser.

"Ach!" Von Eimar muttered an angry exclamation. "This is what I feared, Mr. Westdale. Bombers! Dutch, I make them out to be! Fokker fighting planes from Batavia, probably. This is bad!"

He swung round as a wireless-room orderly touched him on his sleeve.

"Well?" he grunted shortly.

The man handed him a slip of paper. Von Eimar glanced at it, uttered a short laugh, and crumpled it in a podgy fist, tossing it over the lee bridge-wing into the wind.

"From the Dutchmen!" he said to Westdale. "They want to know who we are. They'll find out soon enough." Briskly Von Eimar uncapped the engine-room speaking-tube. "I want every atom of speed you can give me, Mikhail Lebedoff! What's that?" he added, as a murmur floated up the pipe. "The boilers will blow up if you put on another ounce of steam? Let them! It's the nearest you'll ever get to heaven, Lebedoff, if they do. We'll have one or two messages of brotherly love dropping on to us from the sky before long."

He swung round on his heel to give sharp, guttural orders to the quartermaster at the wheel, a short, stocky German with a crooked scar on his cheekbone. Westdale had already descended to the deck where the Varland master-gunner and one or two of his mates were unfixing the weather-proof covers from the twin anti-aircraft guns. In a few brusque words the ex-lieutenant of the British Navy gave his orders.

Unnoticed and forgotten in the general bustle, Roy Drake stood apart, watching the swift approach of the four Dutch battleplanes. To and fro in the wildest confusion ran the convicts of Nemesis Island, arming themselves with rifles from the racks, falling up and down upright ladders, and impeding those few of the pirate crew, chiefly Varland navy deserters, who knew what to do.

Von Eimar, from the bridge, rapped out a few orders in stinging, caustic tones, and the convicts rallied a little, fumbling, however, as they rammed clips of cartridges into the magazines of rifles, with hands that shook with alarm and terror.

By now, with a thunder of powerful triple motors, the four Dutch Fokkers were almost upon them. The silence of the cruiser to their inquiries, and the hustled preparations on the gun-deck, no doubt convinced them that here was the modern pirate cruiser whose exploit of yesterday was already ringing round the world.

Larger they loomed, like giant bees hovering round a dog that had disturbed their hive—but with this difference, that their sting was far more powerful and deadly.

Through his lenses, Von Eimar could see the goggled and helmeted heads of pilots and gunners, the machine-guns swivelled above the cockpits, and the

bomb-racks slung below. They were sea-planes, and, powerfully armed as she was, the Vengeance was especially vulnerable from the air.

Coolly and methodically, stripped to his shirtsleeves with the cuffs rolled up, displaying his muscular forearms, Ronald Westdale superintended the gunners as they slid a copper-cased shell into the oiled breech-chamber. Then, as the breech-block clamped shut, he took over the gun, tilting the long, lean barrel at a trajectory angle, till he focused the first-coming war-plane in his sights.

In silent rage he gritted his teeth, blinking his eyes as the fierce, blazing sunrays flooded the sights and blinded his vision. The Dutchmen knew their business. Not only did they come swooping out of the sun's eye, as it were, but they dipped, rolled, and soared as they zoomed along, sunlight flashing on their wings, offering the most difficult of targets.

Trrr-rrr-rrrh!

The foremost plane suddenly let out a rattle of machine-gun fire. It was only a preliminary warming-up, as the gunner gave warning of his hostile intentions, but it started another panic among the unsteady convicts. Down swooped the avenging angels from the sky.

Oblivious of the terrified howls, screeches, and yells of the pirates who were screaming at him to fire, Ronald Westdale waited, coolly, then calmly pressed the firing-push.

Crash!

A flower of smoke, petalled with flame, blossomed into view and obscured the enemy squadron.

Westdale suppressed an exclamation. The sun had baffled him. His aim had been all right, but he had misjudged the range by fifty yards. Except for one flying ribbon of canvas that flapped from a wing, the four Fokkers were undamaged.

The frightened convicts howled curses at him; but Von Eimar, up on the bridge, said not a word, knowing full well the difficulty that his English gun-lieutenant had to face.

Shrugging his massive shoulders, the captain rapped out an order to that stocky German helmsman, who had served aboard a raider in these seas during the Great War.

Over swung the cruiser to port, just as the leading Dutchman flattened out, zooming low over their smoking funnels and tripod masts.

Trrr-rrr-rrrh!

Flame spurted from the depressed muzzles as the gunner pressed his trigger, threshing the decks with red-hot streams of lead. Screeches of sheer panic volleyed from the demoralised convicts.

A few fired a ragged, futile fusillade; most threw themselves flat on the deck-plates.

Later on, Roy Drake smiled to think of the terror of these half-hearted sea-scum. At the moment he had other things to think about.

Pi-i-ing!

A bullet struck a ventilator cowl just beside him, glancing aside, and then flattened itself against the armour-plating. A smouldering flake from the ventilator spun upon the boy's jacket, burning a hole in his sleeve. With a musical twang a wire backstay swung to the deck, severed by a remarkable shot.

"Oly 'orrors!" gasped Hilarity Hinton, ducking instinctively beside

him. "F'ree shies a penny! It's like 'Appy 'Ampstead, only we're the cokernuts!"

One after the other, the Fokker war-planes thundered over the helpless cruiser, raking her decks with a zone of fire. A gunner beside Westdale slumped to the base of the gun-pivot, groaning as he nursed a broken shoulder. The steel deck-plates were splashed and dented in rows with stars of lead.

The convicts scampered in a mad rush for the hatches. A few flesh-wounds were the sole result of that continuous machine-gun fire, but one man was stunned and another broke a leg as they jumped for the 'tween decks.

"Stand to quarters, you scum!" thundered Von Eimar through a speaking-trumpet, to the few who remained. "We're not beat yet! Mein blut! You fools, are you afraid of their bombs? They won't drop them if they can help it!"

His vigorous contempt infused some life into them as the Dutchmen ceased fire and wheeled. Grunting in his bull throat, he switched the glare of his light blue eyes on to Killer Moran, who stood on the bridge beside him, gnawing his trembling lips with fear.

"Have up our colours, Moran!" snapped Von Eimar curtly. "If we go under this time it will be with Jolly Roger flying to show our contempt for the world!"

Gulping something down that threatened to choke him, for he was a coward at heart, like all his murderous kind, the American plug-ugly did as he was ordered. As though to show the supremest contempt for the Dutchmen's fire, the sable flag with the death's head flapped to the morning breeze.

Standing exposed as he was on the pirate warship's deck, Roderick Drake experienced a curious sense of detachment. That he himself stood the chance of being killed by the fire of those who were really his friends, or of being drowned if the Vengeance was bombed and sunk, hardly occurred to him. It was as if he had been sitting in a comfortable seat, watching an exciting episode on the films.

Again the anti-aircraft gun exploded in smoke and flame. Tensed, and with grey eyes narrowed, a smear of cordite smudging his keen, clear-cut features, Ronald Westdale had aligned his sights upon the bombers as they circled overhead.

Von Eimar clapped a fist upon his open palm.

"Good shooting, Westdale!" he grunted, in guttural approval.

One of the Fokker planes suddenly lurched in her gliding flight, hovered, then swung completely over as one of her wings crumpled like paper. A flying piece of shrapnel had caught it as the Dutchman banked. Down she fluttered like a great wounded bird, rested upon the smooth sea-surface a minute, then slowly filled and sank.

"First blood!" croaked Westdale, his throat hoarse with sulphur and saltpetre, as he wiped the sweat and smoke from his face. "But it was more luck than anything else. Here come the mynheers again."

From three different directions at once the Hollanders converged upon the pirate cruiser, intent to avenge their fallen comrade. First to starboard, then to port, the Vengeance zig-zagged, a corkscrew of silver surf marking her erratic course.

Again and again Westdale pumped shells into the gold-and-blue of the tropic

sky. It was like trying to hit mosquitoes with tennis-balls, with one's eyes dazzled with the sun's radiance. Still the Dutchmen wheeled and hovered in the blazing zone of the sun, every now and then breaking away to swoop over the decks of the cruiser with a murderous storm of machine-gun fire.

As yet they had dropped none of the high explosive bombs slung to their carriages. Von Eimar surmised correctly that the Dutchmen would reserve those terrible projectiles for a last resort. For one thing, they wanted to recover the bullion stolen from the Sylvia Bay, and to bring the pirates to trial, if possible. For another, they did not wish for complications with the Varland republic, to whom the cruiser belonged.

But at last their impatience mastered them. Roy saw a plane thundering out of the golden dazzle, and then like flashing meteors, two bright objects came

hurtling and whistling down.

Boom! Boo-oo-oom!

Like a toy steamer the cruiser rocked, as with muffled thunder, pillars of spouting water hurled fountains of spray to lash upon the decks.

Disregarding the terror and dismay of his crew, Von Eimar drove the long grey cruiser about its winding course.

Deliberately the Dutchmen had refrained from dropping the bombs directly on to the cruiser. It was a threat and a warning; nothing more. Shouts of surrender came from the few convicts still remaining on deck, but Von Eimar stood like a statue, inexorable on the upper bridge.

Next time it was a grimmer warning they got. In vain, Westdale fired, the shell exploding over the tail of the plane as it volplaned down upon them from the sky. The glare foiled his aim again.

A steel bolt came hurtling from the

overhead plane on to the cruiser's fore-deck.

Losing his balance, Roy Drake was flung violently on to the metal deck-plates as the Vengeance groaned and shivered in every rivet and girder. His ears were stunned by the reverberating crash of high explosive. Flame, smoke, and showers of bent, twisted, smouldering iron volcanned from the bows.

When at last he scrambled to his feet, ears numbed and ringing, so that for the moment he thought himself deaf for life, it was to see with misted, water-filled eyes the smoke drifting away and the fore-castle revealed as a tangle of wreckage, with a blackened and perforated crater in her forward deck.

An engine-room bell clanged, and Von Eimar threw over the telegraph to "Stop!"

(Continued on next page.)

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

BEFORE getting down to real business this week, I must thank hundreds of you fellows for your letters expressing your genuine delight at being able to read the stories dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars—now appearing in our great companion paper, the "Gem," published every Wednesday. These yarns, written in the early days of Frank Richards, are real gems. Are you reading them? If not, you're missing the finest treat ever!

From one of my Welwyn readers comes a query regarding

THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

He wants to know how long it is possible for anyone to live without salt. Not very long, I can assure my chum of that. The exact time is not known, because, as far as is known, no one has deliberately killed themselves by abstaining from salt. A little while ago some students decided to find out if it was possible to exist without salt. They lived entirely on food from which all salt had been excluded. Even their vegetables were boiled three times to extract every particle of natural salt from them. The results were amazing. They soon found that all food became absolutely tasteless. Then they began to suffer violently from cramp. After that they became so tired that it was too much of an effort for them to shave. Without doubt they would soon have died if they had not abandoned the experiment and built up their strength again on food which had extra large supplies of salt to counteract the lack of it in their bodies.

Salt is one of the most valuable things in the world. There are still many places in the world

WHERE SALT IS MONEY.

Blocks of salt are used as money in the Sahara desert, and also in certain parts of Abyssinia. Every year large caravans set out across the mighty desert, making for the salt pans. Here salt water, obtained from ponds in the desert, is placed in shallow pans. The water is evaporated by the sun, and the salt remains. It is then made into blocks

of a certain size. There is a definite currency value for these blocks of salt, and when anything is purchased which is only worth a half or a quarter block of salt, the blocks are split up accordingly. By the time the year is out all the salt currency is used up—so off go the caravans again on their long march over the desert to renew the supply of currency for the Bedouin dwellers in the desert.

ALITTLE while ago I mentioned, in my chat, the smallest book in the world. A Manchester reader has now sent me particulars of **THE SMALLEST WRITING IN THE WORLD**

—so small, in fact, that it seems hardly believable. It is just another case of the invaluable work that can be done by microscopy. Would you believe that the entire contents of the Bible could be so reduced that the whole lot could be reproduced fifty-nine times in the space of a square inch? A microscopical writing machine, invented by the late William Webb, a Fellow of the Royal Microscopical Society, could condense matter even to these infinitesimal proportions. Needless to say, a very high-powered microscope was necessary to read the writing. Webb destroyed his machine some time before he died, but many of the slides, containing the writing, still exist.

Although this apparatus has not been taken up by our own museum authorities, it is interesting to note that Russian scientists are now experimenting on the same lines. They can already reduce a whole page of an ordinary newspaper on to a microscopic slide, where it will only take up a square third of an inch. When anyone wishes to consult this, the slide is magnified and thrown on to a large screen, where it can be read with ease!

From one of my Manchester readers, who signs himself "Film-fan," comes a query concerning cinemas. He wants to know

HOW MANY CINEMAS ARE THERE in the whole of the world? The United States Government have recently compiled a report on cinemas, and they estimate that there are no less than 87,299 cinemas in the world. These cater for a total population of 1,808,705,017. I don't know how they work out the presumed population of the world, but, anyway, those are their figures. This means that there is one cinema for every 20,718 people.

In Europe we have 60,150 cinemas for 557,608,191 inhabitants. The United States possesses 15,378 cinemas for a population of 127 million people. The country with the smallest number of

cinemas in proportion to its population is China. There are only three hundred cinemas in China, and it is estimated that this means only one cinema per 1,582,624 persons!

Here are a few

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to various readers' queries:

What was the First English Newspaper? A journal called "Nathaniel Butter's Weekly News." The first issue was published on August 2nd, 1622.

What is the Greatest Depth that Men have Descended into the Sea? Three thousand and twenty-eight feet. Dr. William Beebe and Mr. Otis Barton reached this depth in a bathysphere in August, 1934. They remained at that depth for five minutes.

Is it True that there is a Country with only one Millionaire? Yes. There is only one man in Austria whose income is above a million Austrian schillings, about £40,000 in English money.

Can One Hire Umbrellas at Railway Stations? There is one railway station which hires out umbrellas on rainy days for the use of passengers. This is Streatham Station. A season ticket holder pays 2d. per day for the use of an umbrella. Ordinary passengers must leave a deposit of 2s. 6d.

What is "Sheet Lightning"? The same as "forked lightning," but seen at a distance or obscured by a cloud. Thus we only see the glare of the reflection, and not the actual striking of the lightning flash such as we see in "forked lightning."

I think you will be extra pleased with next week's issue of the MAGNET, chums. Frank Richards has written some rattling good yarns in the past, but I think that next week's yarn,

"THE VENGEANCE OF BUNTER THE VENTRILOQUIST!"

is easily the best he has ever written. Most of you fellows know about Bunter's gift of imitating fellows' voices and to what purposes he has put it to in the past. Well, the fat ventriloquist has not forgotten how Poker Pike "fanned" him and made him skip, and the idea of pulling Pike's leg by way of revenge is something not to be missed. Thrills and laughs simply tumble over each other in this ripping yarn, and if you don't vote it great you're real hard to please.

Next we come to Captain Vengeance and his convict crew who meet with more thrilling adventures aboard the pirate cruiser, Vengeance.

Of course, you can rely on the usual big bag of laughs in the "Greyfriars Herald," and plenty of pep in the Greyfriars Rhymester's verses written around William Stott.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,476.

In a sea of white, scared faces the convict pirates massed under the bridge. Knives and rifles were brandished. Firemen and greasers came scrambling out of the engine-room hatch.

"Surrender! Haul down the flag! Surrender before they blow us out of the water, captain!"

Killer Moran, flourishing a long-barrelled Colt, led the panic-stricken rush, standing on the bridge-ladder, baying like a frightened dog, but still cowed by the fierce, white glare of Von Eimar.

"Dutchy's got us beat, cap'n! We've gotta throw in!"

Sweat beaded the American's brow. Clearly he was torn between two fears, but the backing of the crew helped him to face the ruthless arch-pirates.

"We've got no kick comin', Von Eimar," he insisted frantically. "Better to go back to Nemesis Island than be blown up like this!"

Roy Drake stood aside, looking on contemptuously. Westdale, lighting a cigarette with smoke-stained fingers, leaned against the breech of his gun. Wildly clamoured the mob. Plainly if Von Eimar did not surrender they would tear him to pieces.

Stolidly Von Eimar drew a whistle from his pocket. The hubbub died to a mutter as he blew a piercing blast.

"Strike the black flag, Moran," said the chief pirate, quietly and distinctly. "The Dutchmen have us by the throat. We surrender!"

Von Eimar Turns the Tables!

SHUTTING off her engines as she glided down, a big Dutch seaplane skimmed gracefully along the smooth sea-surface until she rested within a few yards from the surrendered pirate cruiser. Out of her cockpit leaned an officer with a megaphone.

"Send us a boat!" he roared across the short stretch of water. "I want to come aboard!"

Silently Roy Drake watched as Krumow, the Finn bo'sun, piped hands to man and lower one of the warship's boats.

The pirates, now that their first shock and terror was over, hung about moodily and in groups, scowling and muttering as they watched Von Eimar on the bridge. Evidently they wanted a scapegoat upon whom to wreak their rage and disappointment, though no one had the hardihood to speak a word to that grim, implacable figure who stood with one podgy hand resting on his sheathed revolver, monocle glinting in the sun.

"This is a rummy go," muttered Hilarity Hinton to Roy and Westdale. "We've fell out o' the fryin' pan into the fire! What'll they do to us when they get us nice an' safe back on Nemmy-sis Island, I wonder?"

Neither of them answered. Watching

Von Eimar as he stood lighting a cigar, Roy wondered what was passing in the pirate captain's mind. Knowing how utterly such tame surrender was at variance with Von Eimar's crafty, tigerish nature, the boy wondered vaguely whether some dark scheme was hatching in the master pirate's mind.

The Dutch flying officer, a big, middle-aged man with a thick moustache, elbowed his way through the throng of pirates at the gangway and clambered briskly to the bridge. From his manner it was plain that he intended to stand no nonsense.

"You are the leader of this gang of—of pirates, I presume?" he said, addressing Von Eimar, and hesitating a little at the word that, in the twentieth century, verged upon the grotesque.

Von Eimar saluted, with the faintest flicker of irony.

"I call myself Captain Vengeance," he replied, as Killer Moran and Ronald Westdale joined him on the bridge.

"Well, whatever your name may be, you are captain no longer." The Dutchman spoke loudly and clearly for all to hear. "You and all the men in this ship are prisoners. From now on you will steer a course for Batavia. A Dutch cruiser is coming to meet us. And—be sure of this—at the first sign of treachery we'll blow you out of the sea!"

Whatever may have been Von Eimar's thoughts, his hard features remained inscrutable. He even smiled.

"I am at your orders," he answered, shrugging his shoulders. "But will you not come into the charthouse to advise me? I fear I am but a faulty navigator, and I am not altogether sure of the right course."

For a moment the Dutchman hesitated. Then, reflecting that even these desperate fellows, now driven to complete and ignominious surrender, would hardly dare to injure him, he nodded and followed Von Eimar into the chart-room.

A minute or two later a muffled and goggled figure descended the accommodation ladder and was rowed back to the waiting plane.

A thunder of triple engines, the suction of powerful air-screws drawing the giant seaplane through the water, and presently she soared aloft to rejoin her consorts circling above.

Westdale gave orders to the crew. It happened that the bomb had not done any irreparable damage to the Vengeance's forecastle. The bows were badly crumpled, but her underwater plates were still sound. Smoke volleyed through the twin funnels, the screws churned, and the surrendered cruiser commenced to surge forward on her altered course.

Westdale's gaze followed the big sea-

plane as it swung aloft and took up station at the rear of the other two Dutch aircraft, all three whirring along in V formation, circling round the cruiser.

"What is it, Ron?" asked Roy, struck by the Englishman's look.

"You'll see presently," countered Westdale, and strained interest, not un-mixed with anxiety, was in his eyes as he watched.

Roy, glancing up to the bridge, was surprised not to see the stocky figure of Von Eimar. Was he hiding his chagrin and mortification in the charthouse, he wondered.

The next moment he nearly jumped out of his skin.

Scarcely able to credit his ears, he heard the sudden, continuous rattle of machine-gun fire. Then, with amazed eyes, he saw one of the foremost Dutch bombers suddenly crumple, burst into flame, and fall, spinning, in a swift death-dive to the sea.

Startled exclamations broke from the watching convicts.

"Wha-what-what—" stuttered Roy Drake dazedly.

Westdale caught him by the shoulder. "It's Von Eimar!" he cried excitedly.

"That Dutchman who boarded us. Von Eimar stuck him up with a gun, bound, and gagged him, and then took his place, disguised in his uniform and goggles!"

"But—but the Dutch pilot?" asked Roy, catching his breath.

Westdale shrugged his shoulders and bit his underlip.

"Can't you guess? Von Eimar couldn't take chances. The plane's fitted with dual controls, of course. Look!"

Fascinated, Roy Drake watched the duel between Von Eimar and the last remaining Fokker. It was short and sharp. Staggered by that sudden and unlooked-for development, the Dutch pilot and gunner were taken completely at a disadvantage. Von Eimar was upon their tail, shooting wings, fuselage, and propellers to pieces.

Before the gaze of the babbling convicts and Roderick Drake's horrified eyes she plunged to destruction in the wake of her consorts.

In a few minutes Von Eimar had returned to the bridge of the cruiser.

"Full speed!" he called down the engine-room tube, ignoring the delighted vociferations of his crew, who a short while before had been ready to rend him limb from limb. "Let her rip, Mikhail Lebedoff! We've got to find secret anchorage within twenty-four hours!"

(Von Eimar got out of that difficulty very well! What will be his next move? You'll be surprised when you read next week's exciting chapters of this stirring adventure yarn, chums!)



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VICTORS and VANQUISHED

Last Laughable Spasm of Dicky Nugent's
Serial:

"THE SPARTANS OF ST. SAM'S!"

When Doctor Birchmell appeared on the St. Sam's Sports Ground, the excitement was at fever-pitch, though the cheers were not at all measly (jock!). Behind the Head came the rest of the judges; and behind them the athletes who were to compete in the day's events. Teams from St. Bill's and St. Pete's as well as St. Sam's marched side by side; and the mysterious newcomers from St. Alf's—a skool nobody had ever heard of before—added just that spice of uncertainty to the results which was needed to complete the enthusiasm of the spectators!

Defining cheers rent the air as Doctor Birchmell led the procession down the track to the starting-post. "Bash 'em, St. Bill's!" "Smash 'em, St. Sam's!" "Punish 'em, St. Pete's!"

The only skool that drew no cheers at all was St. Alf's; but the crowd were far too excited to notice that peculiar feature.

The Head, who was official starter as well as leading judge, soon got to bizzness.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he cried through a megaphone, "the first event on the programme is the Senior Hundred Yards race. Competitors will kindly line up immediately—or even sooner than that if they can!"

Four white-clad figures detached themselves from the rest. The St. Sam's supporters groaned when they saw that Weekling, one of the puniest of the Head's so-called Spartans, was going to run for the home side. But Doctor Birchmell, who could see nothing wrong with the fellows he had trained himself, fairly beamed as Weekling crawled up to the start.

"Bravo, my brave Weekling!" he cried, clapping his bony hands enthusiastically. "You look every inch a champion! Why, you ought to wack these mizzierable-looking specimens hollow!"

Mr. Lickham, who was one of the Head's fellow-judges, scoffed rather loudly and gave his chief a warning dig in the ribs. "Not so loud, sir, or people won't like it!" he whispered. "The judges are supposed to be strictly impartial, sir!"

"Pooh! What does it matter on a day like this?" grinned the Head. "It's plain that none of

the others stand a chance against the St. Sam's Spartans—as plain as your face, Lickham, if you don't mind my saying so!"

Mr. Lickham was not eggactly an artist; nevertheless, Doctor Birchmell's remark made him culler furiously.

"Really, sir—" he began furiously.

But the Head had no intension of delaying the start for the pleasure of listening to Mr. Lickham. Seeing that the runners were ready, he projected an old blunderbuss he had brought along from the skool armoury and fired.

Bang!

Like unleashed greyhounds, the runners leaped away from the start—or, at least, three of them did. The exception was Weekling. Weeks of strenuous training under Doctor Birchmell had made poor old Weekling an even weaker weakling than he had been before the Head had enrolled him as a

Spartan; and all he could do was to totter feebly along the track at the speed of a broken-down old cab-horse!

The Head, who had only partly recovered from the shock of the blunderbuss going off, didn't notice this at once and cheered wildly, under the impression that Weekling had won the race!

"Go it, Weekling! Attaboy! Look at his speed! Greased listening isn't in it with him! He's winning! He's winning! He wins! Hooray!"

The Head grabbed his nearest neighbour, who happened to be Sir Gouty Greybeard, and started waltzing him round and round out of sheer happiness!

It was Mr. Lickham who stepped in and explained how matters really stood. "Pull yourself together, sir!" he urged, pulling the Head back by the seat of his trousers. "Weekling hasn't reached the half-way line yet. St. Sam's

haven't won, sir; it's St. Alf's!"

Doctor Birchmell soon stopped his capers at this announcement. A garstly pallor spread itself over his cheeks.

"Impossible!" he said, horsely.

"I'm afraid it's only too true, sir," sighed Mr. Lickham. "If you ask my opinion, this is only a four-taste of what we may expect right through the programme. But, be that as it may, St. Alf's have won the first race!"



No. 190.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

May 30th, 1936.

Hundred Yards race. St. Alf's—disqualified for fowling. St. Bill's—ditto. St. Pete's—ditto. Winner:—Weekling of the St. Sam's Spartans!

A mermer of indignation ran through the assembled multitude.

"Shame!" "Play the game, Birchmell!"

"Don't be a beastly rotter, sir!"

Then Sir Gouty Greybeard stepped in. Seeing the Head's megaphone, the venerable old gentleman addressed the crowd himself.

"Ladies and gentlemen! Please—hah!—keep your seats!" he yelled, in his refined, aristocratic voice. "As one of the—huh!—governors of this—hah!—historical old skool, I take the responsibility of over-riding Doctor Birchmell's verdict! I award the race to St. Alf's, egad! Three harty cheers for the winner!"

Doctor Birchmell fairly nashed his teeth with rage, as the crowd broke into frenzied cheering. But

it was impossible to do anything but bough to the will of an important gentleman like Sir Gouty Greybeard. His word was law, and the Head realised that if the Spartans were to win the day now, they would have to win on their merits.

After a moment's reflection, he went off to the House. When he reappeared a little later, he was armed with two big birchrods! It was pretty

obvious that for the rest of the day the Head was not going to spare the rod and spoil his Spartans!

From that moment onwards Doctor Birchmell feebled prominently in every event. In the Senior Quarter-mile and the Junior 220-Yards he followed the Spartan candidates half-way round the course, flogging them like the very dickens to wave their lagging footsteps.

When the Junior Hundred Yards came on, he stood behind Littlegrub mitor, the Spartan runner, with a pitchfork, and jabbed it violently into Littlegrub's rear to make sure that he got away smartly. In the Tug-of-War, he charged his plan a little and lyly stuck pins into the suttermies of the Spartans' opponents to put the off their stroke.

But all he did was to avale. His vawnted Spartans simply could not get a win, despite his efforts.

It was the mistery team that carried off all the honours—the team that was supposed to have come from St. Alf's. As they went from triumph to triumph, the crowd cheered louder and louder. The more they cheered, the more they wondered who these supermen were, for nobody had ever heard of St. Alf's before.

At the end of the day St. Alf's had won the sports by a huge margin of points over all the others combined. And it was then they went up to receive their trophies of victory from Sir Gouty Greybeard that the mistery of their identity was at last cleared up.

As they marched up to the platform, they started removing false wigs and eyebrows and rubbing off greasepaint; and by the time they were mounting the steps, they were revealed for what they really were. A yell of sheer amazement went up from the crowd as they recognised their faces.

"Burleigh!" "Tallboy!" "Jolly and Fearless!" "It's the St. Sam's team! The team the Head struck out in favor of the Spartans!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The crowd shrieked.

At first, when he knew the truth, Doctor Birchmell looked awfully waxy. But it wasn't long before he had recovered his usual song-froid.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" he grinned, when the larfter had at last died away. "I expect this is a grate serprize to most of you. But, of course, so far as I am concerned, I must say I guessed it all the time!"

"Wha-a-a-t?" "You did it very well, Burleigh—very well indeed!" said the Head. "But you have to get up early in the morning to hoodwink a wily old bird like me! I knew it all along! But now that you have come out in your true cullers, let me be the first to congratulate you! You have brought credit to St. Sam's to-day—and natchally the credit is all mine!"

For a moment the St. Sam's fellows could only gasp. Then there was a yell. "Bump him!" Although it was not eggactly the thing to bump

Maully Lazy?—Never!

Says HARRY WHARTON

Anyone who tells me that Lord Mauleverer is lazy after what happened last Wednesday is in for a warm argument. Maully is the very reverse of lazy when you get down to it; and last Wednesday proved it up to the hilt!

Mind you, one might have been excused for thinking he was, in the first part of the afternoon. We had to drag him out of the House to get him to come down to the river with us; and we had the dickens of a job to get him to do a little poling when we got into our punt.

In fact, the idea that he's lazy was rather confirmed when he fell asleep over the job and landed himself in the water!

But after that—well, you should have been there to see him!

When we got to Popper's Island, Maully changed into a bathing-costume Bob lent him and lit a fire to dry his clobber.

Later, when we left him to go exploring, Ponsonby & Co. from Highcliffe arrived in a motor-boat and a headmaster, the crowd wouldn't be denied. They bumped Doctor Birchmell again and again.

Which made a very happy ending to the Sports at St. Sam's and also made it a pretty safe bet that Doctor Birchmell would be jolly wary of poking his nose into skool athletics for a long, long time.



collared our tuck-hampers, and Maully fought the whole crowd of 'em on his own!

Beaten by the overwhelming odds, he still mustered up sufficient energy to dive in after them and cling on to a rope that trailed from the stern of their boat. In this way he was drawn through the water with them till they landed at a spot farther up the river. Then he cheerfully climbed up on to terra firma again and waded into them once more!

What's more, he was able to draw them so far away from the bank as to give him a chance to race back ahead of them to the motor-boat, which he boarded and pushed off before they could catch up to him!

And so it was that Maully returned to Popper's Island in triumph in Pon's motor-boat with our tuck-hamper intact! And didn't we give him a welcome!

After all this, perhaps you can understand why I'm going to disagree with the next man who tells me Maully is lazy.

Maully lazy? Never!

Or, at any rate, not always!

Look out for Laughs— Says BOB CHERRY IF QUELCH STARTS WRITING FICTION!

Rumour has it that the Quelch-bird is actually writing a detective thriller. It sounds almost too good to be true. But if it is true, I'm buying a copy the day the book comes out, I can tell you! Quelch's describing gangsters ought to give the Rag the biggest laugh of the year! Can't you imagine it, kids?

"The great detective burst into the gangsters' den."

"'Boys!' he thundered. 'Hold out your hands!'"

"At the sound of that dreaded voice, a cry of terror went round the room like wildfire."

"'Cave!'"

"'Gracious goodness! It's the constable!'"

"Then the criminals recovered from their first shock of surprise and began to fight like cornered rats."

"'Pray assist me to engage the constable in fistcuffs, dear friends!'" cried out one murderous crook. But the great detective forestalled the move. With a cat-like spring, he flung himself at the rebel and gave him a good hard slap; and the gangster, bursting into tears, desisted. Then another of the criminals struck a fighting attitude; but our hero rapped him sharply on the knuckles with the handle of his umbrella, and the gangster slumped to the floor, weeping bitterly. The rest then gave in before further damage was done.

"'Boys!' cried the detective, as his eyes swept triumphantly over his cringing captives. 'My task is done. Remorselessly, relentlessly, I have pursued you till at last I have you all in my grip. Now, wretched and depraved youths, you must pay the penalty!'"

"'Take fifty lines!'"

Oh, yes, it ought to be great stuff, Quelch's detective thriller! I wouldn't miss it for worlds!

Fags' New Demands Are Too Modest!

Declares TOM BROWN

Listening-in to the open-air meeting of the newly formed Fags' Protection League under the elms the other afternoon, I couldn't help feeling that their demands are far too modest. Young Dicky Nugent, who was speaking, really surprised me by his moderation.

"Are we raising the banner of rebellion?" his shrill treble asked. "The answer is NO! All we want is justice!"

Loud applause, varied by louder arguments between members of the audience, greeted this statement.

"We ask for an end to tyranny and bullying!" said Dicky. "We ask for just a few modern comforts—a radio-gramophone in the Form-room, tickets for the pictures twice a week and a free tuckshop!"

More loud applause, varied by one or two free fights.

"Just grant us these few simple wants and abolish prep and we shall be satisfied!" declared Dicky. "Is there anything unreasonable about that?"

No fear! If you ask me, the fags are being a jolly sight too reasonable!

After all, the fags might well be asking for free motor rides and aeroplane trips and weekends at the seaside and liveried footmen and no lessons at all!

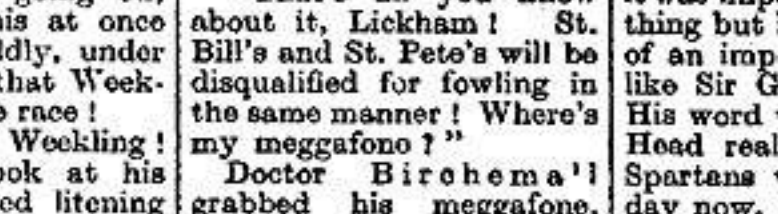
They're too modest altogether—that's what's wrong with 'em. If the powers that be are wise, they'll agree to the requirements of the Fags' Protection League without a moment's delay!

What do you think?

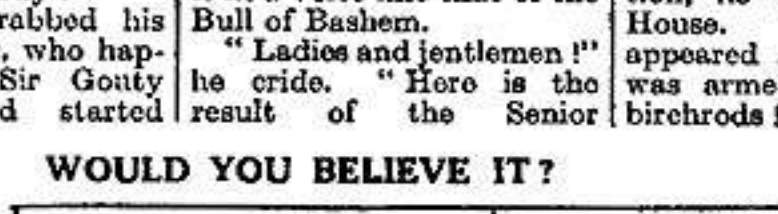
(For the benefit of those who don't quite fathom the depths of Brown's sarcasm, we ought to say that he's really advocating that someone should go along to dust the fags' trousers with an ashplant! This is just his funny way of saying it!—Ed.)



WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



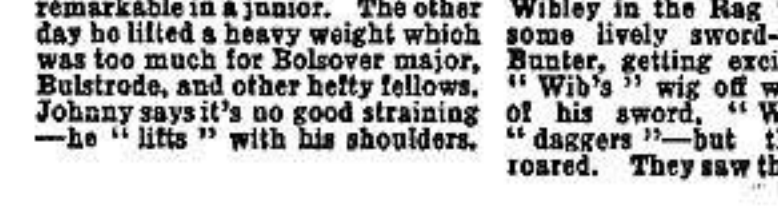
Johnny Bull is justly proud of his physical development, which is remarkable in a junior. The other day he lifted a heavy weight which was too much for Bolsover major, Bulstrode, and other hefty fellows. Johnny says it's no good straining—he "lifts" with his shoulders.



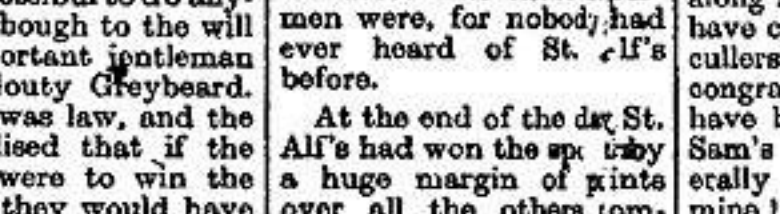
A version of "The Three Musketeers," produced by William Wibley in the Rag "produced" some lively sword-play. When Bunter, getting excited, knocked "Wib's" wig off with the point of his sword, "Wib" looked "daggers"—but the audience roared. They saw the "point"!



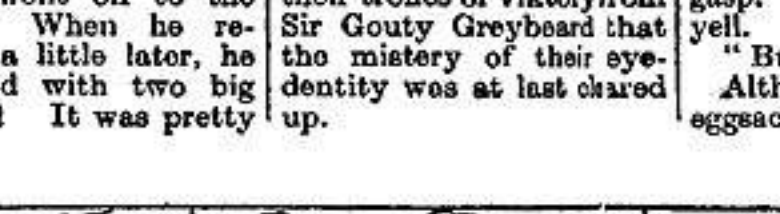
Running the 440 yards' race in 57 seconds, Peter Todd narrowly defeated Wharton and Hurst Singh. Toddy has the longest and gawkiest—legs in the Remus, but his spare frame conceals a reserve of power. His comrade Alonzo, though, couldn't run 440 yards if he tried!



Bob Cherry, the athletically minded, thinks "gym" classes on the sands at the seaside a splendid idea—a stride forward, in fact. Billy Bunter, who is not fond of stride-jumping, is likely to take "strides" in the opposite direction if he spots a holiday class!



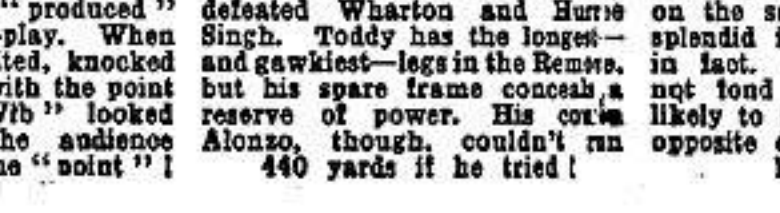
Mrs. Mimble says Billy Bunter has put up a new record by calling in at the tuckshop seventeen times in one day to try to get some tarts "on tick." For the sake of peace, Mrs. Mimble let him have them. But she will have to "watch" Bunter—his idea of "tick" is limitless!



A game of handball on the sands at Pegg Bay settled a dispute between Remove and Upper Fourth. Harry Wharton & Co. showed themselves much "handier" with the ball than Temple & Co., however—with the result that the Upper Fourth "bit the sand" by 10 goals to nil.



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