

HOLIDAY FUN WITH BUNTER THE VENTRILOQUIST!

The Magnet 2^D



The VENGEANCE of BUNTER the VENTRILOQUIST!



By **FRANK RICHARDS**



—Featuring the World-Popular Favourites . . HARRY WHARTON & CO.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Makes History!

"BUNTER!"
"Oh!" gasped Billy Bunter.
And he bolted!

It was surprising.

It was, in fact, amazing.

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Greyfriars Remove stared blankly after the fat junior as he scudded across the quad.

"Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry.

Bunter did not heed. He hurtled on. It was not only surprising and amazing, it was astounding. For it was tea-time; and at tea-time Billy Bunter was always more anxious to be found than to be lost.

There was a cake in Study No. 1. Bunter knew that there was a cake—he had seen Harry Wharton take it in from the school shop.

So the Famous Five naturally expected to find Bunter haunting the vicinity of Study No. 1 at tea-time. Not finding him there, however, they came down to the quad to look for him. And immediately they sighted him, he fled as if for his fat life! Apparently, Billy Bunter, for the first time in history, did not want to be asked to tea!

"What's the matter with the fat ass?" asked Harry Wharton, in wonder. "Bunter!" he roared. "Bunter! You're wanted!"

"Cake!" shouted Johnny Bull; and the juniors chuckled.

It was a magic word—to Bunter! That ought to have stopped him, if anything could. But the magic seemed to have lost its power! Johnny's shout, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,477.

instead of stopping Bunter, seemed to spur him on. He flew!

"After him!" said Harry.

And the juniors cut in pursuit.

Billy Bunter was wanted—for once! It was seldom that Bunter was wanted—especially at tea-time. Still more seldom was he missing at such a time, whether he was wanted or not. Now, as it happened, he was wanted; and, instead of rejoicing thereat, he flew!

"Stop, you fat duffer!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Bunter, you fathead—"

Bunter tore on.

He was heading for the gates that stood wide open. He seemed to be bent on hitting the open spaces—to get away from the fellows who were going to ask him to tea, although he knew that there was a cake! It was really inexplicable.

"Stop him, Van Duck!" shouted Harry Wharton.

Putnam van Duck, the American junior in the Remove, was coming up from the direction of the gates. He had been there, chewing the rag, as he called it, with his gunman guardian, Poker Pike, who was sitting on his usual seat—the bench outside Gosling's lodge.

Van Duck was frowning—not, apparently, having derived much satisfaction from chewing the rag with Poker.

He glanced round as the captain of the Remove called to him, and stepped into Billy Bunter's way.

The next moment he wished he hadn't.

Bunter did not stop! He came on full-tilt, and crashed into the youth from Chicago like a fat cannon-ball.

"Aw, wake snakes!" gasped Van Duck, as he spun over backwards.

"Urrrrgh!" gasped Bunter, as he stumbled over Putnam.

He landed hard and heavy on the sprawling American junior. There was a horrible gurgle from Putnam, as every ounce of wind was driven out of him.

"Oh crikey!" spluttered the fat Owl.

He bounced up like an india-rubber ball and tore on, leaving Putnam van Duck on his back, gasping.

Billy Bunter was gasping, too. But he bolted on, reaching the gates well ahead of his pursuers.

"Stop him, Pike!" yelled Bob.

Billy Bunter was putting on unusual—indeed, amazing—speed. It really looked as if it was going to be a stern chase if Bunter got out of gates, and the chums of the Remove were not looking for a cross-country run! So they shouted to Mr. Pike to stop him.

Poker Pike rose from the bench and stepped into Bunter's way, as Putnam had done!

There was another crash! Bunter did not stop—he cannoned!! But this time he cannoned on an immovable object. The gunman stood like a rock, and did not even stir as he received Bunter's charge. Bunter cannoned on him like a billiards ball on a cushion. He flew off the rock-like Mr. Pike, and rolled over.

"Ooooooogh!" spluttered Bunter as he rolled.

"Got him!" gasped Bob.

The Famous Five came up with a rush and surrounded the sprawling, fat Owl. Poker Pike strolled back to his bench. Billy Bunter sat up, gurgling, and

blinked at the Removites over the spectacles that had slid down his fat, little nose.

"I—I say, you fellows," he gasped, "I never had it! I—"

"You howling ass!" roared Bob. "What are you playing the goat for? Don't you want to come in to tea?"

"Tut-tut-tea!" stuttered Bunter.

"Tea in our study, you blithering bandersnatch!" said Frank Nugent. "We've got a cake—"

"Kik-kik-cake!"

"What did you rush off for, you howling ass?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"I—I didn't!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I mean, I—I— Urrrh! I mean—" Billy Bunter staggered to his feet. "I say, you fellows, I—I don't want to come to tea!"

"You don't want to come to tea?" gasped Bob.

"No! I—I'm going out! Like that beast's cheek to stop me!" gasped Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to punch his head! I don't think the Head ought to let that ruffian stay in the school at all! I've said so before! I jolly well think—"

"Never mind what you think—if you think at all!" said Harry Wharton. "Come on, you fat duffer!"

"I'm not coming! Look here, you gerrout of the way!" gasped Bunter. "I'm not a fellow for stuffing—like some chaps I could name! Lemme pass!"

The Famous Five did not let Bunter pass. They stood round him in an amazed circle. When Billy Bunter did not want to come to tea, although there was a cake, it was time for the skies to fall!

"But we've got a big cake—" said Harry Wharton.

"I—I don't want any of it."

"And a bag of jam tarts, too!" said Nugent.

"Blow your jam tarts!"

"And ginger-pop!" said Bob.

"I don't want any!"

They could only gaze at him. If Billy Bunter did not want cake, and jam tarts, and ginger-pop, it was clear that the age of miracles was not past.

"Is he off his rocker?" asked Bob, in wonder.

"Is he ever on it?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Must have gone potty!" said Nugent.

"Terrifically potty!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Well, you look here," said Bunter. "You leave a fellow alone—see? I don't want to come to your study! Keep your measly cake! I'm going out for— for a walk! I never knew you were going to ask me to tea, of course, or I shouldn't have—"

"What?"

"Oh! Nothing! Look here, you clear off, and lemme get out!"

"I suppose this is some sort of a joke," said Harry Wharton, staring at the fat Owl of the Remove. "Blessed if I see it, if it is! Look here, Bunter, you're asked to tea—cake, and jam tarts, and ginger-pop! No larks! Honest Injun! Now come up to the study."

"Shan't!"

"We want you—we've got something to say—"

"Well, I don't want to hear it! Go and say it to somebody else," said Bunter. "I'm going out."

"Nobody else will do, as it happens," said Harry. "Come on!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter.

"Take his other ear, Bob!"

"Ear, ear!" said Bob, as he took it.

"Ow! Leggo! Beast! Leggo!" roared Bunter.

But the juniors did not let go. Any fellow, of course, was free to decline an invitation to tea, if he liked. But this change in Billy Bunter's manners and customs was altogether too sudden and surprising. The difficulty, generally, was to keep him away from a study at tea-time. It was quite a new experience to find difficulty in getting Bunter in to tea!

However, that difficulty was solved by taking hold of Bunter's ears. They were large, and gave a good hold.

"Will you leggo!" howled Bunter, as he was led by his fat ears back to the House. "Ow! Don't pull my ears off, you beasts! I won't come! See? I jolly well won't come! Beasts! Yaroooooh! Ow! Wow! I'm coming, ain't I, you beasts?"

And Bunter, reluctantly, came.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Ventriloquist Wanted!

"LOCO, I guess!" said Putnam van Duck.

The American junior followed the Famous Five and Billy Bunter into Study No. 1 in the Remove.

Bunter entered that study unwillingly. He blinked longingly at the door through his big spectacles. But Bob

Billy Bunter is chiefly famous for eating, drinking and sleeping. But there's no getting away from the fact that the fat and fatuous Owl of the Greyfriars Remove is a skilled ventriloquist!

Cherry spun the fat Owl to the arm-chair, into which he plumped.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Beast!"

Bunter's reluctance to join up at that study spread was as pronounced as ever—indeed, more so. He had been reluctant to enter the study—and now he was evidently only anxious to escape from it. It was absolutely inexplicable—unless Bunter was bent on making history! Unless he was "loco," as Van Duck called it, or off his rocker, as Bob put it, it was an unfathomable mystery.

"Now, you fat ass—" began Harry Wharton.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter. "Lemme out of this study!"

"Let him see the cake!" suggested Frank Nugent. "Perhaps the blithering idiot doesn't believe there's a cake."

"He saw me bringing it in," said Harry Wharton. "I thought he'd be after it as usual—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Well, I'll get it out," said Nugent. "We can talk to him while he scoffs cake."

"I say, never mind about the cake!" exclaimed Bunter hurriedly. "If—if you fellows want to talk to me, you can go ahead—but don't get out that cake! I don't want any."

Nugent, who was stepping towards the study cupboard, stopped in sheer amazement.

"The—the fact is," gasped Bunter, "I'd rather not eat while we talk. I—I never was a chap for guzzling, as you know."

"Ye gods!" gasped Nugent.

"If you've got anything to say, say it,

and let a chap clear!" said Bunter. "You can have your tea afterwards. Get it over, see! I—I've got to go and see old Quelch."

"You were going out of gates to see Quelch!" yelled Bob. "You jolly well know Quelch is in his study."

"I—I—I mean—" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"Oh! Nothing! Look here, you fellows, if you want to jaw, jaw, and get done with it. You can't expect me to sit here and watch you guzzling!"

"Don't you want any cake?" shrieked Bob.

"No, I don't—and I don't want to sit here while you guzzle cake, either! I've got no time to waste, with the Head expecting me—"

"The Head?"

"I mean Quelch—that is, I mean, I—I've got to go out! Look here, get it over before you start tea. What's it all about, anyhow?"

"Well, wonders will never cease!" said Bob. "No need to feed the fat ass if he doesn't want to be fed. But—"

"Some fellows are always guzzling," said Bunter. "I'm not that sort, I hope. Look here, what do you want? I've got to see Wingate of the Sixth, and you know prefects don't like to be kept waiting—"

"Right-ho," said Harry Wharton. "Now, look here, Bunter—"

"Cut it short!" said Bunter, with a longing eye on the door.

"Shut up and listen! We're taking the team over to Rookwood to-morrow, as I dare say you know, to play Jimmy Silver's lot—"

"Oh!" said Bunter. "Well, if you want me to play for the Remove, you needn't have dragged me up here to say so. It's all right—I'll play! If that's all, I'll be going."

"You howling ass!" roared Wharton. "We're going to play Rookwood at cricket, not at marbles, so you won't be wanted."

"You cheeky ass—"

"Van Duck's in the team for Rookwood," went on Harry.

"What rot!" said Bunter. "You'd better play me! Yankees don't know anything about cricket!"

"You pie-faced gink—" began Putnam van Duck.

"Yah!"

"Never mind that," said the captain of the Remove. "You're not wanted to help in selecting the team, Bunter. Van Duck's coming! Now, you know that Poker Pike is here to keep watch over him, because of the gangsters getting after him to kidnap him. Chick Chew—"

"I know all about Chick Chew! For goodness' sake get through, and let a fellow go!" snapped Bunter. "I can't keep Loder of the Sixth waiting long. You know what a beastly bully he is—"

"You can keep Loder waiting, along with Wingate, and Quelch, and the Head, as well as that walk out of gates!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean," said the captain of the Remove. "Shut up and listen! We don't want Pike over at Rookwood. Van Duck will be quite safe from Chick Chew and the kidnappers, along with a mob of Greyfriars fellows, and we don't want to spring that gunman on the Rookwood crowd. See?"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "I wonder what the Rookwood chaps would think of him, with his gun and all. He, he, he!"

"Well, we want to leave him behind

to-morrow," said Harry, "and we think you can help us."

"I'll say he won't be left," grunted Putnam van Duck. "I've just been chewing the rag with him about that very thing; and I guess Poker will be along!"

"We've been jawing it over, old bean," said Harry, "and we think Bunter can help to keep him here."

"You can jolly well leave me out!" said Bunter positively. "If you think I'm going to handle that hefty brute, you're—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. The idea of Billy Bunter handling Poker Pike made them howl. Poker was quite able to handle two of the biggest Sixth Formers at Greyfriars School, one with each hand. Billy Bunter would have had about as much effect on him as a fat fly on an elephant.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" grunted Bunter. "I dare say I could handle him all right—an athletic chap like me! But I'm jolly well not going to do it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, if you've got nothing to do but cackle at a chap, I may as well go!" hooted Bunter. "I've got to see Walker of the Sixth—I mean Loder—that is, Wingate—"

"They can all wait a bit," said Harry. "Now, this is the idea—Poker's got to have his leg pulled, and you're the only fellow that can do it. We've simply got to get off somehow and leave him behind—goodness only knows what might happen if he got an idea into his head that kidnappers were about, and started popping off his gun at Rookwood—"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"He won't stay behind if he knows that Van Duck is gone. But if he fancies that Van Duck is still here, he will stay. See? Now, Van Duck's going to slip over the Cloister wall, and pick up the charabanc in the road, when we go to the station. So Poker won't see him start. Poker's got to believe that he's still in the school, and that's where you come in."

Billy Bunter shook his head.

"You can wash that out," he said firmly. "I'm not telling him any lies! I'm surprised at you, Wharton! I've never told a lie in my life!"

"What!" yelled Wharton.

"Never," said Bunter; "and I'm not going to begin now. I'm surprised at you! I know you ain't so particular about such things as I am—"

"You fat villain!"

"You can call a fellow names!" said Bunter scornfully. "But I've always been truthful, and I'm keeping it up. Like that chap Abraham Lincoln, who couldn't tell a lie—"

"George Washington, you fat gink!" said Putnam.

"Was it?" said Bunter. "Well, I knew it was some beastly Yankee. He couldn't tell a lie, anyhow; and it's the same with me. I just couldn't! Ask Smithy! He wouldn't mind. Now I'd better go—I promised Coker of the Fifth to see him in his study—I mean Loder's waiting for me—that is, Quelch—"

"Shut up, you fat frog! I tell you, Poker Pike's got to have his leg pulled," hissed Wharton. "Your rotten ventriloquism—"

"My what?"

"Your putrid ventriloquism," said the captain of the Remove. "Poker's never heard of it, of course, so you can pull his leg with it."

"If you mean my wonderful ventriloquism—"

"Any old thing!" said Harry.

"You've been kicked up and down the

Remove passage for imitating fellow's voices, and playing rotten tricks with your putrid—I mean, your wonderful—ventriloquism. Now, you've often imitated Quelch's voice, and the Head's, and a lot of fellows—and you can pick up Van Duck's, see? You can lock yourself in a study or somewhere, and talk to Poker through the door. He won't see you, but will hear—"

"Oh!" said Bunter.

The fat junior sat up and took notice. He understood now why he was wanted in Study No. 1.

Bunter's ventriloquism, whether it was putrid or wonderful, was rather at a discount in the Remove. It had earned him more kicks than ha'pence.

But there was no doubt that the fat junior, who could do nothing else, could do that and do it in a very remarkable way.

Most of the Greyfriars fellows know about Bunter's weird gift. In the Remove they were fed-up on it, and discouraged Bunter promptly when he got going. A mysterious voice from behind a door, or the growl of an unexpected dog under a table, neither alarmed nor amused, but generally led to a boot being planted on Billy Bunter's tight trousers.

Poker Pike, as a stranger in the land, knew nothing of his ventriloquial trickery. It was certain that if Poker heard Van Duck's voice from a study, he would be assured that Van Duck was in that study. He would "keep tabs" on that study while Putnam got off to Rookwood with the Remove cricketers. And to the fat Greyfriars ventriloquist, such a jape was as easy as falling off a form.

And Bunter rather liked the idea of pulling Poker's leg. He had not forgotten how Poker had "fanned" him with bullets and made him skip.

It was like Bunter, however, to assume egregious importance as soon as he found that he was wanted. He was quite keen to pull Poker's leg and show off his wonderful powers. But he was not going to admit it. Not Bunter!

"Well, it's not a bad idea," he remarked. "I might do it, to oblige you fellows. I'll think about it, anyhow. Now I'll go—"

"If you think you can imitate Van Duck's voice—" said Harry.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter.

"What?"

"I can imitate any voice I've heard, especially if it's got anything queer about it—"

"Eh?" ejaculated Van Duck.

"Like yours, you know," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I suppose you call it a voice? Sort of yowl through the nose is what I call it."

Van Duck gave the fat Owl a very expressive look. Possibly he was aware that he had a nasal drawl, like many Americans. But he had never regarded his voice as a yowl through the nose!

"You slab-sided, two-cent remnant of—" he began.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Bunter. "If you fellows want me to oblige you with my clever ventriloquism, you'd better be civil about it. I'm not at all sure I can find time to-morrow. I'm generally rather busy on a half-holiday. A lot of fellows will be wanting me—"

"I guess this is N.G.," said Van Duck. "Mean to say that that fat gink can do anything except guzzle foodstuffs and snore half his time and tell fibs? I guess I want to know!"

"It's a fact," said Harry. "Of course, it isn't easy to believe that that fat idiot can do anything—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"But he can ventriloquise," said Harry. "Blessed if I know how he does it—it can't need brains, or, of course, he couldn't—"

"You cheeky beast!" hooted Bunter. "I guess I'll believe it when I see it!" said Putnam sceptically. "I guess that—"

He broke off suddenly as a voice barked at the door.

The door had been left ajar, and no one had noticed a footstep in the passage. But from the Remove passage came a sudden barking voice—the well-known metallic tones of Poker Pike, the Greyfriars gunman!

"Search me! You figure you can string me along that-a-way, you young guys? I'll say you better forget it! Surest thing you know."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, in dismay.

The whole Co. spun round, staring at the door. If Poker Pike had overheard the plot to pull his leg on the morrow, it was clear that the game was up before it started! In utter dismay the chums of the Remove stared at the door, while from Billy Bunter came a fat cackle.

"He, he, he!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Light on the Mystery!

"**H**E, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

The dismay of the Removites seemed to entertain the fat Owl. He sat in the armchair and chortled.

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows—he, he, he! There's nobody there!" chuckled Bunter. "I say, he, he, he! I—"

"You fat ass, it's Pike—"

"He, he, he!"

"I guess he's wise to the game now, if there was anything in it," said Van Duck, grinning. "Not that there was!"

"He, he, he!"

"I guess that gink couldn't work the riddle—"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

"Aw, can it, you fat piecan!" snapped Putnam. "Here, you Pike! Mosey in, you gold-darned geek! What are you sticking outside the door for, you big stiff?"

There was no reply from the passage. The door did not open. Billy Bunter's fat chortle sounded more explosively. And the Famous Five, looking at the chortling Owl, guessed! It was not Poker at the door at all! Nobody was there! It was a sample of Bunter's ventriloquism!

But Putnam van Duck did not think so for a moment. Bunter's voice-sliding stunt was a new one on him. He did not believe that Bunter could do it. Which was really rather natural, for the fat and fatuous Owl certainly did not give the impression of being able to do things that other fellows couldn't do. In every other respect, Bunter was a fathead, and the American junior was slow to believe that he was not a fathead in all respects.

"You hear me, Poker, you pesky piecan?" hooted Van Duck. "What you mean by crawling along without a guy hoaring you, and horning in that-a-way? I guess you want boating up a few, you scallawag."

"He, he, he!"

Van Duck, angry and impatient, strode to the door and dragged it wide open. For he gazed out of an empty doorway into an empty passage.

The Famous Five grinned. They had already guessed how the matter stood—though so exactly had Bunter picked up the nasal bark of the gunman,

that they had been quite deceived at first. But Putnam van Duck stared into the empty passage, his eyes popping with astonishment.

"Say, where's that guy Poker got to?" he exclaimed.

"Ho, he, he!" gurgled Bunter.

Van Duck put his head out at the door. On the landing at the end of the passage he could see Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing of the Remove. He called to them.

"Say, you! You see that gink Poker around?"

The two juniors glanced along the passage.

"Poker?" said Redwing. "No, he's not about, that I know of."

"He was here a minute ago, yauping in at this door."

"He jolly well wasn't!" said Smithy,

gink could get Poker's bark to the life, like that, and make me believe it was Poker yapping at the door? Forget it!"

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "It was my wonderful ventriloquism—"

"Aw, pack it up! I can't make out where Poker is, but—"

"I guess I'm here, buddy!" came the nasal bark of the Chicago gunman, and Van Duck stared blankly as the voice came from under the study table.

"How'd he get in here without me seeing him?" howled Van Duck.

"Aw, I guess you don't see a thing, you young bonehead," came the voice from under the table. "I'll tell a man, you're the world's prize boob from Boobsville."

Van Duck made a jump at the table, grabbed it, and dragged it to one side.

imitated Quelch's voice once, and gave me lines."

"I guess I don't believe that!"

Bob Cherry reddened.

"What the thump do you mean, Van Duck!" he exclaimed hotly. "I don't know the manners of Chicago, but I can jolly well tell you that at Greyfriars we don't call fellows liars—"

He broke off, staring at Van Duck's bewildered face.

"Great jumping frogs! Who was it spoke?" yelled Putnam.

"You did—"

"I did not!"

"You silly, cheeky ass—"

"He, he, he!"—from Bunter.

Johnny Bull gave a roar.

"Hold on, you men! It was Bunter! It was some more of his



"I'll take an ear!" said Harry Wharton. "You take the other one, Bob!" "Ear, ear!" said Bob Cherry, as he took it. "Will you leggo?" howled Bunter, as he was led back to the House. "I jolly well won't come! Beasts! Yaroooh! Ow! I'm coming, ain't I, you beasts?"

with a stare. "We've been standing here five minutes, and we should have seen him."

Van Duck, puzzled and mystified, looked in the other direction up the passage. Peter Todd was in the doorway of his study, No. 7, talking to Squiff and Tom Brown, who stood in the passage.

"You guys seen Poker go up the passage?" called out Van Duck.

"No; he hasn't passed us," called back Squiff.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Van Duck, and he turned back into Study No. 1, to stare at five smiling faces, and one grinning from ear to ear.

"It's all right, old bean," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "That was only a sample of Bunter's ventriloquism."

"Can it!" said Putnam derisively. "You want me to swallow that that fat

He almost fell down in astonishment as he stared at the blank space where the table had stood. No one was there.

"Search me!" stuttered Van Duck.

"He, he, he!"

Putnam turned to stare at the fat junior in the armchair. Belief was forced upon his doubting mind.

"Mean to say you did it?" he demanded.

"Yes, you ass!" grinned Bunter. "I'm a wonderful ventriloquist—really marvellous and wonderful, and—"

"I guess you know how to crack up your goods, at any rate!" grunted Van Duck. "But I'll say it's some stunt! I'd have told all Chicago that that was Poker's bark. Mean to say you could imitate my toot like that?"

"Bunter could do it on his head," said Bob Cherry. "The fat villain

putrid ventriloquism. Bump him out of that chair!"

"I say, you fellows, you keep off!" yelled Bunter, in alarm. "Van Duck said I couldn't imitate his voice, didn't he? I was only showing you—"

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry. His red face grew redder. "Sorry, Van Duck, I—I thought it was you speaking! I'll kick that fat rotter for playing such a rotten trick—"

"Beast! You keep off! I—"

"Waal, search me!" gasped Van Duck. "If that was Bunter, the stunt's the best I've heard in a month of Sundays! Poker will sure figure that it's me talking to him, if that fat gink can throw it like that."

"I could ventriloquise your head off!" said Bunter complacently.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1477.

"Tain't easy to imitate a commonplace voice—like Nugent's, for instance—but anything odd or weird, like your yowl through the nose, or Bull's grunt that he calls a voice, or Wharton's high-faluting way of speaking—"

"You silly ass!"

"You cheeky gink!"

"Bunter wants kicking!" said Johnny Bull. "He always wants kicking, and more than ever when he gets a chance of showing off! Let's kick him!"

"The kickfulness is the proper caper!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Bunter. "If you want me to do this for you—the only fellow at Greyfriars who's got the brains to do it—you'd better be civil, I can tell you! I don't mind obliging you—I think a clever chap ought to be willing to help silly asses when they can't help themselves—but—"

"Oh, ring off, you fat frump!" growled Bob Cherry. "I've a jolly good mind to kick you along the passage! Anyhow, you can see now that the fat bouncer can do the trick, Van Duck?"

"Sure!" agreed Putnam. "I'll say it's the elephant's side-whiskers!"

"That's settled, then!" said Harry Wharton. "Bunter will play up tomorrow. Now we'll feed him. He deserves a feed for what he's going to do. Let's have tea!"

The fat grin faded from Billy Bunter face, as if the mention of tea had alarmed him. He jumped hurriedly out of the armchair.

"I say, you fellows, I don't want any tea! I haven't come here to guzzle! If you're going to have tea, I'll clear!"

He rolled to the door.

"You howling ass!" exclaimed Wharton impatiently. "What are you playing that silly game for? You're always rooting after a feed. And you never do anything for nothing, either. Stay and feed, you fat ass!"

"Shan't! The—the fact is, I've had my tea—"

"You can always do with a second one, and generally a third!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "But if you mean it, get out, and be blown!"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study and slammed the door after him. His footsteps died away—hurriedly.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at one another. They utterly failed to understand the fat Owl. He seemed quite a new Bunter.

"Blessed if I make the fat idiot out!" said Frank Nugent. "Anyhow, if Bunter doesn't want any tea, we do, so let's get going!"

He stepped to the study cupboard and opened the door. He looked into the cupboard. Then he stood staring into it with a fixed stare.

"The fat villain!" he gasped.

"Hand out the stuff, old chap!" said Harry.

It was rather late for tea, and all the juniors were ready.

"It's not here!" yelled Nugent.

"Wha-a-t?"

"That fat scoundrel! That's why he didn't want to come up to tea!" yelled Nugent. "He's snaffled it already!"

There was a rush to the cupboard. Six juniors stared into it.

Blank space met their view.

There was no cake! There were no jam tarts! There were ginger-beer bottles, but they lay uncorked and

empty. The cupboard was in the same state as Mother Hubbard's. Only a litter of crumbs remained to show that somebody had stood at the cupboard feeding!

"The fat burglar!" roared Bob Cherry.

"So that was why—" gasped Wharton.

"The whyfulness was terrific!"

The mystery was explained now! Bunter had not wanted to come up for those good things, because they were already parked in his capacious interior. He had dreaded that the discovery would be made while he was on the spot!

That was why, for the first time in history, he had refused an invitation to tea—and fled from hospitality!

"The—the—the fat burglar!" gasped Wharton. "I—I—I'll burst him all over the passage! Get after him!"

There was a rush from the study. Up and down the passage half a dozen exasperated juniors sought the Owl of the Remove. But they found him not. Billy Bunter had had a good start, and he had vanished. And the cake, the jam tarts and the ginger-beer had vanished with Bunter—safely packed inside!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Case of Conscience!

"SAY, big boy!"

Harry Wharton & Co. smiled at Poker Pike.

It was the following morning—a bright and balmy summer's morning, giving promise of a scrumptious day for cricket.

When the Famous Five came out into the quad after breakfast, they were thinking chiefly of the journey to Rookwood School, and of the game there with Jimmy Silver & Co.

Members of the eleven had leave from second and third school. There was only one lesson that morning, for the fellows who were going over to Rookwood. All the arrangements were made, though the carrying-out of the same, so far as Putnam van Duck was concerned, depended largely on Billy Bunter.

Poker Pike, with his hickory face very wary and watchful, under his clamped-down bowler hat, came up to the juniors in the quad.

The Greyfriars gunman was well aware that Putnam did not want to arrive at Rookwood with his gunman guard. But that cut no ice with Poker.

Mr. Vanderdecken van Duck was paying him an enormous salary to guard his son from kidnappers; and Poker was going to earn that salary.

He had no doubt that Chick Chew, star kidnapper of the United States, would be on the watch, and would snap up the millionaire's son, if he went unguarded.

On that point the Remove fellows did not agree with Poker. They had no doubt whatever that Putnam would be quite safe, travelling with so numerous a party.

And they were quite fixed in their determination that Poker wasn't going to "horn in" at Rookwood. They liked Poker, and they respected his unbending sense of duty. But a Chicago gunman was quite out of place at a cricket match at another school.

Poker had caused a good deal of a sensation at Greyfriars. That could not be helped, so long as he was



He was a new Headmaster—he was a tyrant Headmaster—he asked for trouble, and he certainly got it when he tried his heavy-handed methods on Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood! How these cheery, sturdy fellows barred themselves in and defied their headmaster's repeated attempts to shift them, provides a book-length novel of school life far too good and exciting to miss.

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required to "keep tabs" on a junior menaced by kidnappers. But they did not want the sensation repeated at Rookwood. It was altogether too much of a good thing.

Poker was going to be left behind—and it was clear that he was suspicious. Van Duck had argued with him on the subject the previous day, producing no effect, except to make Poker extra watchful.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Nice morning, Mr. Pike."

"You said it!" agreed Mr. Pike. "Say, what time you hitting the railroad?"

"Ten o'clock at Courtfield!" said Harry. "We go to the station in a charabanc. Roll along and see us off!"

"I guess you'll make room for a guy in that hearse!" said Poker stolidly. "I'll mention that I'm travelling with that Putnam van Duck!"

"You fancy that Chick Chew will be waiting for us at Rookwood?" asked Frank Nugent, with a grin.

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

"Come in the charabanc, if you like," said the captain of the Remove. "Your company's always a pleasure, Mr. Pike."

"The pleasurefulness is terrific!" declared Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

Poker Pike looked at them. He was quite aware that the Greyfriars cricketers considered him superfluous at Rookwood. He had a strong suspicion that Putnam would dodge him if he could. So he was a little puzzled by this bland permission to accompany the party to the station.

"I guess I'll be around," he said. "And if you young guys figure that you can string me along, you got another guess coming!"

And the gunman walked back to the bench by Gosling's lodge, to wait and watch there till the charabanc started for Courtfield.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged cheery smiles.

Poker was wary and suspicious, but it was certain that he had not the faintest suspicion of the deep-laid plot for pulling his leg that morning.

"I guess he'll be on hand," remarked Putnam van Duck, when the gunman was out of hearing. "But he won't see this baby in the charabanc. I guess I—"

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the House, blinked round him through his big spectacles, and came up to the group of juniors.

"I'm rather sorry—" he began.

"Sorry you snaffled our tuck yesterday?" asked Harry. "It's all right, you fat spoofer. You're let off for that, as you're going to make yourself useful."

"Oh, really, Wharton, I never had the tuck! If you think I waited till you were gone down to the nets, and then went to your study, it only shows you've got a jolly suspicious mind! I never knew you had a cake—"

"You saw me take it in, you fat villain!"

"Well, I never knew you had any jam tarts," said Bunter. "I never knew anything about them till I saw them in the study cupboard. Not that I went to the study, you know. I wasn't in the Remove passage at all at the time. But, I say, you fellows, never mind that. I'm rather sorry that I shan't be able to oblige you, after all, to-day."

And Bunter shook his head.

Six separate and distinct glares were fixed on the Owl of the Remove.

This was Bunter all over. To the Remove cricketers, Billy Bunter was merely a pawn in the game. But that did not suit Bunter. It was seldom—very seldom—that Bunter was of any importance. When he was, he was the fellow to make the most of it.

"You fat ass—" began Johnny Bull, in a deep growl like that of the Great Huge Bear.

"You'd better not call a fellow names when you're asking favours of him!" said Bunter loftily. "I want to do the best I can for you fellows, of course. I always was kind and obliging; it's my chief fault. It's often taken advantage of. I never get any gratitude—"

"Is he wound up?" asked Bob.

"Beast! The fact is," said Bunter, "if I stick in your study, Wharton, I shall be late for second school. I can't very well do it."

"That's all right," said Harry. "Second lesson is French with Mossos, and Monsieur Charpentier never rags a fellow for coming in late. You've come in late often enough to know that."

"That's all very well," said Bunter. "But what about my conscience?"

"Your whatter?" yelled Bob.

Nobody in the Greyfriars Remove had ever supposed that Billy Bunter had a conscience. But it was like Bunter to develop one at an awkward moment.

"You fellows ain't very particular, I know," said Bunter. "But if you think you're going to bring me down to your level, you're jolly well mistaken. A fellow ought to be punctual for classes. Quelch keeps on telling us so. Well, he's right. I'm afraid I can't be late for French with Mossos. I don't think I ought, you know."

"You podgy spoofer—"

"If you're simply going to call a fellow names, that ends it!" said Bunter disdainfully. "I'm going to do what I think's right!"

"When did you start that?" asked Nugent.

"Beast!"

"I'm going to leave a tin of toffees in the study!" remarked Wharton.

"Oh!" Bunter's little round eyes gleamed behind his big round spectacles. "Of course, if you're going to do the decent thing, I shall do my very best for you. Anything beside the toffees?"

"No, you fat cormorant!"

"If you think you can bribe me with a tin of toffees, Wharton, I'm afraid you're rather unscrupulous!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "Wash it out! It's a fellow's duty to turn up on time for class unless he's unavoidably prevented, and you know I'm a whale on duty—"

"Kick him!" said Johnny Bull.

"You jolly well kick me, and I can jolly well tell you that you won't get any ventriloquism out of me!" said Bunter. "I might stretch a point, if you were really pally—"

"And a bag of doughnuts!" said Wharton.

"How many?" asked Bunter, very cautiously.

"Six!"

"If you're too jolly mean to stand a fellow a dozen doughnuts, you can't expect—"

"Well, a dozen!"

"Any jam tarts?"

Harry Wharton made a motion with his foot, and Bunter backed away promptly. But the captain of the Remove restrained his wrath. Billy Bunter for once was indispensable, and not to be kicked as he deserved.

"And a dozen jam tarts!" he said.

"Oh, all right!" Bunter became

quite affable. "My dear chap, rely on me! After all, we've always been pals, haven't we? And I'm the chap to stand by a pal, as you know. You remember how I stood by you when you first came to Greyfriars. You weren't here then, Van Duck. Wharton's rather changed since then; he was worse then than he is now! You remember scrapping with him in the train, Franky, the day he came— Yaroooooh!"

Bunter broke off with a roar as Frank Nugent's foot landed.

His cheery reminiscences of Wharton's early days at Greyfriars did not seem grateful or comforting to Harry Wharton's special chum.

"Ow! Wow! Look here, you beast—" roared Bunter.

"Have another?" asked Nugent, drawing back his foot.

"Beast!"

Bunter did not stop for another.

He rolled away in haste, wrathful and indignant, and very much inclined to refuse to oblige those ungrateful fellows, after all.

But toffee and doughnuts and jam tarts had an irresistible appeal. Bunter's final decision was that he would oblige the fellows, ungrateful as they were. As for his conscience, which had awakened so suddenly that morning, the prospect of a feed in the study seemed to have satisfied it. Billy Bunter's conscience, fortunately, was a very accommodating one!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Off to Rookwood!

MR. QUELCH had some rather inattentive pupils in first school that morning.

The Remove Eleven and a couple of lucky fellows who had leave to go over to Rookwood with the team were thinking very little of the poetical works of that great poet, P. Vergilius Maro, to which that lesson was devoted. Even Mark Linley handed out a very poor "con," and Bob Cherry's was as bad as Bunter's.

But Henry Samuel Quelch had been a boy himself in his time, though one would hardly have guessed it by appearances. He could make allowances for eager youth. To Mr. Quelch, cricket was very small beer compared with classical learning. But he could remember a time when he would have given all the works of all the classical poets to hit a sixer!

So he was patient with those eager youths who were thinking of cricket, and passed over mistakes that at other times would have brought down the vials of wrath on unthinking heads.

The Remove were dismissed after that lesson to go to Class-room No. 10, where Monsieur Charpentier was going to take them in French for second school.

They had five minutes for the change-over, and on such occasions they never hurried. Mossos was known to be a "good little ass," never calling a delinquent to account unless absolutely driven to do so. Any fellow who had business on hand could be late for Mossos's French sets. It was a sheer stroke of luck for the Remove plotters that second school that day was with the French master. Bunter had to be late, and it was a risky business being late with Quelch. With Mossos, it was safe as houses.

The Remove streamed cheerily out. The fellows booked for Rookwood rushed off to get ready for the trip. The charabanc was already at the gate to take them to the station.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,477.

Cricket bags were pitched in, and fellows took their seats, under the watchful eyes of Poker Pike. Never had the Greyfriars gunman been more keenly on the alert.

He knew that Van Duck was down to play in the Rookwood match. He expected to see him start for the station with the rest of the cricketers. But he was quite prepared to discover that Putnam was dodging off by himself—in which case, Poker was going to be very quickly on his trail.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, as he arrived at the gates. "Van Duck here?"

That question was asked purely for the benefit of the watchful gunman. Bob was well aware that Putnam was elsewhere.

"He hasn't come along yet!" grinned Herbert Vernon-Smith. The Bounder, like all the party, was in the little secret.

"Seen Van Duck, Poker?" called out Bob blandly.

"Nope!" answered Poker. "I guess I'm waiting to see him."

Frank Nugent came up, with Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Where's Van Duck, Franky?" called out Bob.

"He went up to his study for something. Where's Wharton?"

"Not here yet."

"Well, lots of time for the train," said Johnny Bull. "Here, make room for a chap! Hang one of your feet outside, Bob!"

"Fathead!"

"You coming, Mr. Pike?" called out Peter Todd.

"Surest thing you know," answered Poker.

"Well, hop in!"

Poker shook his bullet head and bowler hat.

"I guess I'm waiting till I see Putnam!" he answered.

And Poker waited and watched, while the cricketers packed in. Harry Wharton and Putnam van Duck had not yet appeared.

They were, as a matter of fact, in Study No. 1, in the Remove, at that moment. So was Billy Bunter.

While the cricketers were preparing for the journey to Rookwood, and less lucky fellows for French with Mossoo, Billy Bunter had rolled into that study, intent on things far more important than either cricket or French—to wit, toffee, and doughnuts, and jam tarts!

The fat Owl grinned with satisfaction at the sight of a heap of good things on the study table.

There was a tin of toffees, a bag of doughnuts, and another bag of tarts. Bunter beamed at them! It was worth while being late for French, to dispose of a snack like this!

"Lock the door, fatty," said the captain of the Remove, "and mind you put on Van Duck's voice when Poker comes up."

"Leave it to me!" said Bunter. He grabbed a doughnut, and started. "Easy as falling off a form! You couldn't do it, of course!"

"That's all right, so long as you can, old fat man!" said Harry. "Come on, Van Duck, all right now!"

"I say, you fellows—hold on!" exclaimed Bunter. "There's one thing I forgot—"

"Pronto!" rapped Van Duck.

Wharton gave the fat Owl rather a grim look. If Bunter was going to start more difficulties, at the last moment, he was in serious danger of getting the kicking of his life.

"Buck up!" said Harry curtly. "We've got to get off!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,477.

"I was going to say—groooogh! Ooooooh!" Bunter had packed in rather too much doughnut for easy speech. "I mean—urrrggh! I was going to say—woooooooh!"

"Is that all?"

"Groooogh! I mean—gurrgh!"

"Buck up, you fat ass, time's going!"

"Urrgh!" Bunter grunted his fat neck clear and resumed. "I believe I mentioned that I was expecting a postal order—"

"You howling ass!" roared the captain of the Remove.

He had no time to waste hearing anything more about Bunter's celebrated postal order.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Beat it!" said Van Duck. "I guess we got to burn the wind."

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "What I mean is, the postal order hasn't come. I suppose you could lend me five bob—"

There was a pattering of feet in the passage. Wharton and Van Duck were heading for the stairs, at a run.

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter put his head out of the study and yelled after them. "I say, about that postal order—"

They vanished down the stairs.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

They were gone!

The Owl of the Remove blinked after them wrathfully.

Toffee, and doughnuts, and tarts were all very well, but Billy Bunter did not see why his celebrated postal order should not be cashed, in addition. He was strongly tempted to follow them and explain that if they were too jolly mean to cash a postal order for a pal they could jolly well get somebody else to do their ventriloquism for them.

But it was already time for Mossoo's French class to be in Study No. 10, and the fat Owl could not risk being spotted out of class. That would have parted him from the toffee, the doughnuts, and the tarts!

So he expressed his feelings with an indignant snort, rolled back into Study No. 1, and shut and locked the door. A moment more, and he was travelling through the doughnuts at express speed.

Meanwhile, Wharton and Van Duck cut out of the House. They parted, Van Duck cutting off towards the Cloisters, where he was to drop over the wall, into the little side-lane, and join the charabanc on the road.

Harry Wharton walked down to the gates.

He grinned at the sight of the watchful Poker.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's Van Duck?" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Van Duck!" repeated the captain of the Remove. "He knows the time we've got to start; he can't be sticking in the study all this time."

He turned to the gunman.

"Seen Van Duck?" he asked.

"Nope!" answered Poker Pike. "But I guess I'm going to."

Wharton got into the charabanc. Everybody was present now, excepting Van Duck. The driver was ready to start. All the fellows looked back towards the House, as if in expectation of another arrival.

"Somebody had better go and call him!" said the Bounder. "We can't wait here for ever."

Poker Pike's hickory face was growing more and more grim and suspicious. There were a dozen ways by which a fellow might have got out of the school unseen by the watchful eyes at the gate. Poker was by no means blind to the possibility of the charabanc picking up Putnam on the road, after he had

dodged out unseen at some secluded corner.

"Say, you guys, what's this game?" he demanded gruffly. "I guess I want to know where that Putnam van Duck is."

"Cut up to his study, then, and call him!" suggested Wharton.

Poker grunted.

"And that young guy getting in while my back's turned!" he growled. "Not by a jugful!"

Evidently Poker was very suspicious.

Poker was in a difficulty. If he turned his back Putnam might clear off in the charabanc. On the other hand, he might already have got out, and started walking to the station. Poker was getting anxious. He wanted to spot the millionaire's son—and he wanted to spot him quick.

"Say, you pesky young scallawag," he grunted, "if that young guy ain't in the shebang, I guess I'll be arter you pronto."

And with that Poker walked off.

The cricketers grinned as they watched him go. There was plenty of time for Poker to ring up a taxi and follow the charabanc, if he failed to find Putnam in the House. That was the gunman's intention. But if the little scheme worked successfully Poker was going to be satisfied that Putnam was safe in Study No. 1.

"Time we got off!" remarked Bob Cherry, as the bowler hat disappeared into the House.

And the charabanc started. It rolled out of gates and along the road, to stop at the corner of the side-lane by the Cloisters, to pick up Putnam van Duck. And the plotters hoped that Poker was being kept busy by the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Two Voices!

"URRRRGGH!" gurgled Billy Bunter.

He jumped, and some jammy tart went down the wrong way.

The door-handle of Study No. 1 was grabbed from outside, and turned. As the door did not open, there came a heavy bang on it from a hickory fist.

Billy Bunter had been too busy to remember Poker Pike, or anybody or anything else. But he was reminded of him now.

Bang, bang! came at the door.

"Say, you there, you Putnam van Duck!" came Poker's angry bark. "Say, you let a guy in! What you got this door locked for, you gink?"

"Urrrggh!" gurgled Bunter, struggling with jam tart. "Groooogh!"

Bunter's cue was to answer in Van Duck's voice—an easy task to the Greyfriars ventriloquist. But the greatest master of the ventriloquial art could scarcely have got a good effect with his neck full of jam tart going the wrong way.

Instead, therefore, of imitating the voice of Van Duck, Bunter gave a very good imitation of a suffocating frog!

"Urrrggh! Ooooooh! Groooogh!"

"Say, that ain't Putnam!" barked the gunman. "I reckoned them young scallawags was stringing me along." He banged angrily on the door. "Say, is that young guy there?"

"Groooogh!" gasped Bunter. "Beast!"

"You pesky, young, land-faced geck!" roared Poker. Evidently he was wise to it that Bunter was there. "Is Van Duck there? Spill it, you fat gink!"

Billy Bunter coughed his fat neck clear.

"Oh, go away!" he snapped. "Don't

bother! Don't open that door, Van Duck!"

The fat Owl had given away his own presence in the study. But that made no difference, so long as the gunman believed that Putnam was there as well. So Bunter addressed an imaginary Van Duck, for Poker to overhear.

Having spoken to an imaginary Van Duck in his own voice, the fat ventriloquist answered in Van Duck's voice.

"I guess not, Bunter, old-timer."

It was Van Duck's voice to the last tone. Poker Pike, as he heard it out in the passage, could have no doubt that the gilt-edged junior was there.

He thumped on the door again.

"Say, you, Putnam van Duck!"

"Tell that fathead to go away, Van Duck!" said Bunter to space.

natural voice. "I can tell you; they're good!"

"O.K.!" answered Van Duck's voice.

Poker Pike, outside the study door, was puzzled and irritated. He had no doubt that Putnam van Duck was in the study. He could hear him in conversation with Billy Bunter there.

But he was quite perplexed by the American junior's unexpected proceedings. With the cricketers waiting to start, it was extraordinary for Van Duck to lock himself in a study and devote himself to tuck.

Poker banged on the door again.

"Aw! Will you beat it, you big stiff?" came a voice from the study, which the gunman had not the slightest doubt was Van Duck's.

"I don't get you!" snapped the

glimpse of the charabanc rolling away, obviously without Van Duck in it. "You pesky young geck, I want to know what this here game is. They're starting. You hear me toot! Them young gecks are going without you."

"I say, Van Duck! Are you really going to cut the cricket?" asked Billy Bunter, addressing empty space.

"Sure!" went on the fat ventriloquist. "I guess I ain't showing up at Rookwood with a gunman treading on my tail. If I can't go without Poker, I guess I ain't going none."

"Waal, I'll mention that you ain't going without this baby!" growled Poker through the door. "Not so's you'd notice it, you young gink. With Chick Chew, mebbe, hanging around and watching for you."



From the Remove passage came the well-known metallic tones of Poker Pike, the Greyfriars gunman. "Search me! You figure that you can string me along that-a-way, you young guys. I'll say you better forget it!" Angry and impatient, Van Duck strode to the door and looked out into the passage. But Poker Pike was not to be seen. "He, he, he!" cackled Bunter, the ventriloquist.

"Say, you, Poker, you beat it!" he followed up with the American junior's voice.

"I guess I ain't beating it," growled Poker. "I got to keep tabs on you, you pesky young gink!"

"Aw! Go and chop chips!"

"You big stiff!" barked Poker.

"Them young guys are waiting to start, and I guess they got a train to catch at the depot. Ain't you going?"

"Beat it! And tell them I'm coming!"

"I guess not," growled Poker. "Now I got you cinched. I guess I ain't losing you again. Unlock this here door!"

"Aw! Go round a corner and shake yourself, Poker!"

"I say! Have some of these tarts, Van Duck!" said Billy Bunter, in his

puzzled Poker. "Ain't you going with them young guys to play cricket?"

"Nope!" answered the voice. "I guess not! You beat it, and tell them I've changed my mind!"

"I ain't beating it any!" snapped Poker. "I guess you got some shenanigan game on, you young geck, though I don't get it. I ain't quitting this here door s'long's you're in that there room. Surest thing you know."

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"I say, Van Duck, tell that silly ass not to kick up such a row," he said. "We shall have a beak after us, at this rate."

"Say, you park it, Poker!" came the nasal tones from the study. "Pack up your chin-wag a piece."

"Search me!" muttered Poker. From the landing window he had a

"Have another tart, Van Duck?" grinned Bunter.

"Yep!"

Billy Bunter sometimes gave a ventriloquial dialogue, for the entertainment of the Remove—as often, in fact, as he could get an audience. Now he gave a dialogue for the entertainment of Poker Pike. It was quite easy to the Greyfriars ventriloquist. He made his remarks in the intervals of gobbling tarts and doughnuts.

Poker Pike rapped on the door again.

"Say, you, Putnam!" he barked.

"Aw, can it!"

"If you ain't beating it with them guys to play cricket, I guess you got to get into your class," said Poker. "Ain't that so?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 2,477.

"Sure! But I ain't honing for class," came the voice from the study. "I guess I'm sitting it out, Poker."

"I'll say you're a doggoned young scallawag!" exclaimed Poker warmly. "You get leave from school to play cricket, and you park yourself here and chew eats. That's a low-down game, young Putnam!"

"You pesky bonehead, will you pack it up before you bring some beak rubbering around?" snapped the voice from the study. "I guess my popper didn't hire you to be my schoolmaster."

Snort, from Poker. Certainly, if Van Duck had changed his mind about going with the cricketers, his Form-master would have expected him to turn up for the French set with the rest of the Form. Poker was not surprised that Putnam did not want to go over to Rookwood, with a gunman "treading on his tail." But he was rather surprised at Putnam cutting class, when he was no longer entitled to do so. Not for a moment did it occur to him that the American junior was not in Study No. 1 at all. His voice, at least, was there.

"Waal," he grunted, "I guess I ain't losing you till you're safe in your class, you Putnam van Duck. You ain't getting no chance of beating it after them guys, and leaving me fooled. Surest thing you know. I'll say I'm keeping tabs on your door till you come out."

And Poker walked along to the landing, and sat down in the window-seat. From that seat he could keep his eyes on the door of Study No. 1. And he was not going to take his eyes off that door till Putnam van Duck emerged. Which looked as if Poker was booked for a very long watch as the gilt-edged junior was not in the study at all.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Chick!

CHICK CHEW, Kidnapper No. 1 of the United States, had met with many surprises and shocks of one kind and another in the course of his career as kidnapper, boot-legger, gangster, and racketeer. But it was the biggest surprise of a hectic life that happened to him that morning.

Poker Pike, always wary, figured that it was very likely that Chick was around, watching for a chance to carry out his scheme of kidnapping the Chicago millionaire's son.

And Poker was right; Chick was around.

While the cricketers were packing in the charabanc, and Billy Bunter was scoffing tuck in Study No. 1, Chick was quite near at hand.

He was, in point of fact, leaning on the old Cloister wall in the little shady side lane that ran along by the Cloisters.

Even Poker Pike, probably, would not have recognised Chick, had he seen him. The fat gangster was an adept in disguises.

In his proper person he was well-known by this time to a good many people at Greyfriars School. But skill in disguises was a part of Chick's peculiar profession.

Now he was dressed in plus fours, with a wide-brimmed, shady hat, and sported an eyeglass and a moustache, and a complexion quite unlike his own.

He looked, at a glance, like a rather well-dressed tourist, and certainly nothing at all like a gangster.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,477.

Such a tourist could stroll about the lanes, and give his attention to old Cloisters and such things, and pause to admire the beauties of Nature without exciting anybody's suspicions.

That was Chick's occupation now.

Chick was a patient man. And he could afford to give plenty of time to a stunt which was to bring in half a million dollars in the way of ransom, if successful. Failure after failure had not daunted Chick, nor lessened his determination. As soon as one scheme failed, Chick started another.

His explorations that morning had shown him that there was quite an easy way into Greyfriars School by clambering over the old Cloister wall. An easy way in, and an easy way out. Half a dozen times he had peered over that wall, and seen nobody—it was a secluded spot. Now he was leaning on the wall, his hands in his pockets, a thoughtful shade on his fat face.

Chick was a man for bold ventures.

By entering at that unexpected spot he would escape the lynx eyes of the Greyfriars gunman.

Lurking among the old stone pillars, watching for Van Duck, spotting him, grabbing him suddenly and whisking him off before the alarm could spread—that was the idea that was working in the gangster's mind.

The very suddenness and unexpectedness of such a venture might spell success! Unless Poker Pike chanced to be on the spot!

Leaning on the old stone wall, half hidden by the clustering ivy, Chick turned it over in his mind.

There was plenty of time to think it over, for he knew the time of morning break, when Van Duck would be out of the House with the other schoolboys. That was more than an hour ahead.

It was a dubious matter, and Chick Chew realised that he had to think it over very carefully, in all its aspects, before he acted.

He had not made up his mind, when his cogitations were suddenly interrupted.

Chick hoped that Putnam van Duck might fall into his hands that morning. But he neither hoped nor dreamed that Putnam van Duck would fall on his head!

But that was precisely what Putnam van Duck did!

That a fat man was leaning on the outside of the old Cloister wall, at the spot where it was easiest to climb, naturally never occurred to Putnam. All he was thinking of was to get out of the school unseen by Poker, and pick up the charabanc on the road, at the end of the little lane.

After Harry Wharton had left him, the American junior lingered in the Cloisters, and from the cover of one of the old stone pillars, had the satisfaction of seeing Poker Pike hurry off to the House.

As soon as the gunman disappeared, Putnam got going.

With a cheery grin on his face, he went along to that particular spot of the Cloister wall, grabbed the thick tendrils of old ivy, and swung himself up and over.

Chick, below, heard the rustle of the ivy, and stirred. Even as he moved, the active junior swung over and down.

Putnam expected to land on the earth. Chick Chew being in the way, he landed on Chick Chew!

The gangster hardly knew what was happening for a moment. A boot crashed on his ear, another clumped in the back of his neck. Then he rolled over under Putnam van Duck.

Putnam sprawled, with a startled howl.

"What the great horned toad——"

"Aw! Search me!" spluttered Chick.

"Carry me home to die!"

Putnam was on his feet with a bound. He knew that rasping voice.

"Chick!" he stuttered.

He did not stay for even a glance at the gangster. He ran up the lane towards the road like a deer.

Chick staggered up.

The sudden and unexpected shock had startled him, and rather winded him. He stared after Van Duck with starting eyes.

"Jumping toads!" he gasped.

It was amazing to Chick! But he was quick on the uptake. It was Putnam van Duck—almost in his grasp!

He leaped in swift pursuit.

He had been considering a desperate venture into the school, to grab that very junior; and here was Van Duck coming out alone, dropping over the wall at the very spot where he stood!

It was such luck as Chick had never dared to dream of! It seemed too good to be true!

He tore after the American junior, gaining on him at every stride.

It was amazing to see the boy there, for he knew it was lesson-time! But Chick was not the man to lose such a chance!

He fairly bounded.

Van Duck ran his hardest. Once he reached the corner, where the little lane joined the high-road, he would be all right. The charabanc would be in sight.

Knowing nothing of the charabanc, or of the cricketers' arrangements that morning, Chick flew after him, gloating.

So far as he could see, the gilt-edged junior had fairly walked into his hands, by breaking school bounds in class-time!

At the corner he was only a yard behind Van Duck!

Panting, the American junior burst out of the shady little lane into the road. After him bounded the gangster.

At the same moment a charabanc, rolling along from the school gates, slowed down at the end of the lane.

A dozen pairs of startled eyes fixed on Putnam van Duck and the fat man charging after him.

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

"Van Duck!" yelled Harry Wharton.

"Look out!"

"What the thump——"

An outstretched hand was touching Van Duck as he leaped for the charabanc. Three or four of the Removites jumped down.

They did not recognise Chick. But his actions spoke for themselves. They rushed at him.

Chick had figured that it was too good to be true! And so it was! Only a swift, backward jump saved him from clutching hands.

Van Duck clambered breathlessly on the charabanc.

Chick Chew turned and crashed through a hedge. Kidnapping Putnam van Duck was a vain dream now. Chick was in danger of being "cinched" himself! He flew across the field faster than he had flown on the track of the American junior.

"Wake snakes!" gasped Van Duck, panting for breath in the charabanc. "I guess that was a close call! I'm telling you, I dropped on his cabaza——"

"But who——" gasped Bob.

"Chick!" grinned Van Duck. "I guess he's changed himself some, but I know his toot! I'll say it's Chick Chew!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The startled juniors stared across the field. Chick had already vanished beyond hedges.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Who'd have thought—All safe now, anyhow, and we've got the train to catch! Get on, driver!"

The charabanc rolled on to Courtfield. Nothing was seen of Chick Chew or of Poker Pike when the cricketers packed into the train; and they rolled away for Rookwood, forgetful of both gangsters and gunmen, and thinking only of the game with Jimmy Silver & Co.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Poker Keeps Tabs!

BILLY BUNTER finished the tarts and the doughnuts. He chewed toffee thoughtfully. Already a quarter of an hour late for class in Class-room No. 10, the fat Owl of the Remove realised that it was time to get a move on. The charabanc was long gone, Putnam van Duck was long gone. The scheme had worked like a charm, so far as the cricketers were concerned. But Billy Bunter, as usual, was thinking chiefly about his fat and important self.

He had heard Poker Pike tramp along to the landing and sit down there. He knew that the gunman was watching the study—keeping "tabs" on the door till Putnam should emerge. Putnam, already on the way to Rookwood with the Remove cricketers, was certainly not likely to emerge from that study! But Billy Bunter had to emerge, unless he was to cut the French set entirely—which he could hardly venture to do.

So far, Poker had no suspicion of the trick that had been played. But if he discovered it, Bunter could not help thinking that the results for him personally might be quite painful.

He had to get out of the study without Poker discovering that Van Duck was not there. It was quite amusing to think of the wary gunman going on watching an empty study. But it was necessary to be very cautious.

Billy Bunter chewed toffee, parked the remainder of the tin's contents in his pockets, to be devoured later at his leisure, and approached the study door on tiptoe.

Noiselessly he turned back the key. Opening the door about a foot, he put out a fat head, like a tortoise from a shell, and blinked along towards the landing at the end of the passage.

There, in the window-seat, a dozen yards from him, sat Poker Pike, in his bowler hat, which was a fixture on Poker, indoors as well as out.

The gunman's eyes were on his fat face at once. As the door opened inwards, the lock on it was out of Poker's sight, as he looked along the passage.

It was easy for Bunter to transfer the key to the outside of the lock, unseen by Poker, especially as the gunman, of course, had not the faintest idea that he had any motive for doing so.

Poker remained where he was. He was ready to get busy the moment he saw Van Duck; but Billy Bunter had no interest for him.

Bunter stepped into the passage. "You coming, Van Duck?" he called into the empty study.

"I guess I ain't coming down to class!" came the answer from the fat ventriloquist, loud enough for Poker to hear where he sat.

"Well, I'm going!" said Bunter, in his natural voice. "Mossoo will report us to Quelch if we don't turn up."

"Aw, I guess that cuts no ice! I ain't going!" came the life-like imitation of Putnam's voice.

"Please yourself!" said Bunter. And he jerked the door shut.

Poker Pike heard that brief dialogue without the remotest idea that only one person was speaking. He was keen and wary, but Bunter's ventriloquism was a new one on him.

Standing carefully to screen what he was doing from the gunman, Billy Bunter turned the key in the outside of the lock, drew it out, and slipped it into his pocket.

The door was locked now on an empty room; but Poker, assuredly, had not the faintest idea that the room was empty. So far as he knew, Putnam van Duck was still there.

Billy Bunter rolled down the passage. His fat heart felt a qualm as he passed the gunman on the landing. If Poker suspected that he was being tricked, a sinewy hand was certain to grab the fat junior as he passed.

But Poker had no suspicion. Bunter rolled past him in safety, and breathed more freely as he went down the Remove staircase.

(Continued on next page.)

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Poker watched him pass without interest. His keen eyes fastened again on the door of Study No. 1.

Billy Bunter grinned as he rolled cheerfully away to Class-room No. 10. He kept a wary eye open for Mr. Quelch, but the Remove master was occupied in his study during his rest from his Form. The fat Owl reached the French master's class-room unobserved.

Monsieur Charpentier gave him a severe glance as he rolled in. Mossos was very patient with fellows who came in late, but Bunter was more than twenty minutes late, and nearly half the lesson had elapsed.

"Buntair!" rapped the French master. "Pourquoi—vy for you come so late? Vingt minutes—"

"So sorry, sir!" said the fat Owl. "I've been looking for my French book, sir."

"Mais—but it needs to have ze book ready for ze class, Buntair!" said Monsieur Charpentier.

"Yes, sir, but I think a fellow must have hidden it, for a joke on me, sir," said Bunter. "I've been hunting everywhere."

Monsieur Charpentier gave him a very suspicious look.

"I zink, Buntair, zat I must give you fifty lines from ze Henriade!" he said.

"Oh, sir!" Billy Bunter assumed his most injured expression. "I've been hunting and hunting for my book, sir, all over the place—"

"I zink zat you have also been eating ze toffee, Buntair."

There was a chuckle from the French class! When Billy Bunter had been eating toffee, the skill of Sherlock Holmes was not required to trace the same. There was plenty of sticky evidence on Bunter's fat face.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Bunter. "I haven't tasted toffee this week at all, sir. I hardly ever touch it. I—I don't like toffee, sir."

"Zere is stickiness on your face, Buntair."

"Oh!" Bunter passed a sticky hand over a sticky mouth. "Is—is—is there, sir? Oh lor!"

"You vill take vun hundred lines from ze Henriade, Buntair!" said Monsieur Charpentier severely.

"Oh, really, sir!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "Mr. Quelch always takes a fellow's word, sir! I haven't been in Wharton's study, sir, and there wasn't any toffee there—"

"Vat?"

"You can ask Wharton when he comes back from Rookwood, sir! He knows, as he left the toffee there specially. I hope you don't doubt my word, sir," said Bunter warmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the class.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier. "Buntair, you vill take two hundred lines from ze Henriade. Now go to your place."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Taisez-vous!" snapped Monsieur Charpentier. "Be silent viz yourself, you bad garçon! Zat you sit down!"

Billy Bunter snorted and rolled to his place. He had not expected lines from Mossos, who was generally very easy-going. However, there was comfort in the toffees he had parked in his pockets—to which Bunter gave more attention, during the next half-hour, than to French verbs.

Meanwhile, Poker Pike continued to "keep tabs" on the door of Study No. 1 in the Remove. He was a patient guy, and he sat unmoved till a bell rang, and the Greyfriars fellows came out in break.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,477.

Then Poker at last rose from the window-seat and walked along to the study. He rapped at the door.

"Say, you Putnam van Duck!" he called out.

No answer.

Poker turned the door handle. As the door did not open, he supposed that Putnam had locked it on the inside after Bunter had left. Really, he could hardly suppose anything else.

"You pesky young gink!" exclaimed Poker. "I want to know what's this here game? What you sticking in there for, Putnam van Duck? I'm telling you the young geeks have come out of class. Say, what's the big idea in sticking in that there room?"

Still no reply.

"You hear me toot?" exclaimed Poker. If he was heard, he was not heeded. He banged at the door.

"You got a tongue in your bully beef trap, Putnam van Duck?" he roared. "Say, you sing out!"

Silence.

"Search me!" muttered the puzzled Poker.

Van Duck was surely still in the study! He could not have got out unseen by Poker. Yet, listening, the gunman could not hear the faintest sound within. But he was there—he had to be there!

"You pesky young gink!" snorted Poker, at last, and he went back to his seat on the landing.

If Van Duck had cut a class, he would surely emerge when the fellows were all out in break! But he did not! Break was over, and the Greyfriars fellows went in to third school.

All through third school Poker sat and "kept tabs" on that study. He was growing more and more puzzled by Van Duck's extraordinary behaviour; but he still did not doubt—he could not doubt—that the American junior was locked in that study.

The clang of a bell announced, at last, the end of morning school. A buzzing swarm of boys streamed out into the quad. Poker Pike had no doubt that Van Duck would come out now.

But he did not!

When the dinner-bell rang, Poker rose from his seat. The junior in the study had to come out for dinner. Poker was prepared to see him safe to Hall.

But, to his utter amazement, the door of Study No. 1 did not open.

He tramped along to the door and banged.

"You pesky young geck!" he roared. "You coming out?"

No reply.

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Poker, the most astonished gunman in the wide world. "What's got the young gink?"

Poker had his own dinner to think of. But he was not thinking of that. He was puzzled, mystified, and a little alarmed. Unless his ears had deceived him, Putnam van Duck was in that study. If he was there, he must have heard the dinner-bell. Why did he not emerge—or, at least, speak? It beat Poker Pike to a frazzle. A sorely puzzled man, Poker Pike went down the stairs at last, and headed for the Hall.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Drawn Blank!

MR. QUELCH, at the head of the Remove table, raised his eyebrows as Poker Pike tramped into Hall.

Every eye in Hall turned on the

bowler-hatted gunman as he came in. Billy Bunter grinned, and fixed his eyes, and his spectacles, on his plate. Mr. Quelch frowned as the gunman marched up to the Remove table. More than once Poker had "horned" into Hall to "keep tabs" on Putnam van Duck, regardless of frowns. But Van Duck was not there now, and the Remove master failed to see any reason whatever for this visit.

"Do you want anything here, Mr. Pike?" he asked, in his iciest tone.

"You said it!" agreed Poker. "I guess I'm worried a few about that Putnam van Duck."

Mr. Quelch's eyebrows, already raised, were elevated still more.

"Van Duck!" he repeated. "I do not quite follow you, Mr. Pike! It can hardly be necessary for you to keep watch over the boy while he is with so large a number of his Form-fellows; but if you desire to do so, there is nothing, so far as I am aware, to prevent you from going to Rookwood."

"Rookwood nothing!" grunted Poker. "Putnam ain't vamoosed out of this here shebang."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Pike," said the Remove master coldly. "Van Duck is a member of the junior cricket team, and he had leave to go to Rookwood with the others to-day."

"Sure, but he never beat it!" said Poker.

"I am assured that he did go with the others," snapped Mr. Quelch. "If any change in the arrangements had been made, and Van Duck had stayed behind, he would have been present in class. I have not seen him."

"You sure ain't!" said Poker. "I guess you wouldn't see him a lot, and him locked in a study."

"Locked in a study!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Surest thing you know."

Mr. Quelch's eyebrows really looked as if they would go over the top of his head at that startling statement.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"I'm telling you!" said Poker.

Mr. Quelch glanced at the staring juniors at the table.

"Does anybody here know whether Van Duck failed to accompany the cricket eleven to Rookwood?" he asked.

The Removites could only shake their heads.

"Has anyone here seen him since the cricketers left?"

Nobody had.

"I'm sure he went, sir!" said Kipps.

"He was in the team, and his name's still up in the list in the Rag."

"Must have gone, sir!" said Wibley.

"You hear, Mr. Pike?" said the Remove master.

"Sure!" said Poker. "But that Putnam van Duck never beat it, big boy. He sure was locked in his study, and I been talking to him at the door. He's sure parked himself in that room all the morning."

"But why—"

"It's got me beat," said Poker. "I reckon he didn't want this baby keeping tabs on him at another pesky school, and that's why he never went. But why he's parked in that study beats me to a frazzle. He won't answer a guy at the door! Mebbe he's throwed a fit or something."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch.

The Removites at the table were grinning. Putnam van Duck was as healthy as any fellow in the Remove, and certainly not likely to "throw a fit." But to Poker's puzzled mind that was the only possible explanation of the American junior's amazing self-imprisonment and silence in Study No. 1.



"I got away from Poker Pike by making Van Duck's voice come out of the woodshed—the silly ass thought Van Duck was there, you know, when I imitated his voice. That gunman is a silly fool—" "Sex you!" Bunter spun round in alarm to find a hickory face under a bowler hat looking at him. "Oh lor!" gasped the fat junior.

"I'll say he's there!" grunted Poker. "You being his schoolmaster, mebbe he'll answer you, and if he don't, mebbe you've got a key that'll work the riddle! I reckoned I'd put it up to you afore I cracked the door open."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Kindly do not think of doing anything of the sort. I will go with you to the study and ascertain whether Van Duck is there. I am perfectly certain that he is not. I have not the slightest doubt that he is at Rookwood playing cricket."

"Sez you!" grunted Poker.

Mr. Quelch rose from the table, his lunch unfinished, and followed the gunman from Hall. The Remove table was left in a buzz of surprise, and fellows at all the other tables stared.

Except for the cricketers, only Billy Bunter knew of that remarkable scheme for keeping Poker Pike away from Rookwood. Everybody else supposed that Poker was making some extraordinary mistake. The idea of a fellow locking himself in a study, instead of going to a cricket match was altogether too surprising.

Poker Pike tramped up the stairs again, followed by the frowning Remove master. They arrived in the Remove passage, and Mr. Quelch tapped at the door of Study No. 1, and turned the handle.

"Dear me!" he said. "The door is locked!" He rapped again, sharply. "If anyone is in this study, open this door at once!"

He did not expect an answer, for he had no doubt whatever that Van Duck was at Rookwood School—as, indeed, he was! But Poker Pike expected an answer. Unless Van Duck was in some

strange sort of a fit, he was bound to answer his master's voice. But no answer came.

"Van Duck!" called out Mr. Quelch. "Are you there?"

Silence.

Mr. Quelch turned from the door with a sound suspiciously like a snort.

"You can see for yourself, Mr. Pike, that no one is there," he snapped.

"I guess not!" answered Poker. "What's the door locked for?"

"It is certainly very odd that the juniors should have locked the study door," said Mr. Quelch. "It is not usual. Nevertheless—"

"I'm telling you that young guy is locked in that there room."

"Nonsense!"

Poker Pike's slits of eyes gleamed. "You getting that door open?" he asked.

"I guess I'm giving the inside of that room the once-over. Putnam van Duck is sure there, and I guess I want to know why he won't foot none."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"Van Duck assuredly is not there," he answered. "The very idea is absurd. You see that there is no key in the lock inside. The door must have been locked on the outside, and the key taken. Even if a boy locked himself in a study, which is absurd, he could have no reason for removing the key from the lock."

"He is sure there!" said Poker stolidly.

"I will obtain the key and open the door, and you may satisfy yourself!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"That goes!" agreed Poker.

He leaned on the study door, and waited while Mr. Quelch went down the stairs, in far from a good temper. It was only the absolute certainty that

Poker would force the door, if it were not opened, that caused the Remove master to trouble further with the matter at all.

It was several minutes before he returned, with the key in his hand. Poker Pike detached himself from the door and watched the key placed in the lock. Mr. Quelch turned it back and threw the study door wide open.

"Now, sir!" he snapped.

Poker Pike tramped into the study.

"You pesky young gink—" he began.

He broke off.

His slits of eyes opened wide as he stared round Study No. 1. The room was empty.

Poker stared blankly. He looked under the table, behind the screen in the corner—even into the study cupboard. He crossed to the window and examined it. It was twenty or thirty feet from the ground—but whether it was possible for Van Duck to have climbed down or not, he certainly had not done so, for the window was closed and fastened on the inside! Utterly bewildered, Poker Pike stood in the study, gazing round him blankly.

"Well, sir, do you find anyone in that study?" inquired Mr. Quelch's sarcastic voice from the doorway.

"Nope!" gasped Poker.

The Remove master walked away to finish his interrupted lunch, leaving Poker Pike to stare.

He stood and stared! Putnam van Duck had been in the study—had he not heard his voice there in talk with the fat gink, Bunter? He could not have

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,477.



(Continued from page 13.)

left it unseen! Yet he was not there! It was a complete puzzle to Poker Pike—and it had got him guessing!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Voice!

PUZZLE—find the Yankee!" grinned Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Many eyes were on Poker Pike in the sunny quad.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon. Harry Wharion & Co. were away, busily occupied with cricket at Rookwood. But the Remove fellows at home were provided with an unexpected entertainment.

It was the sight of Poker Pike searching for Putnam van Duck!

That Van Duck had gone over to Rookwood with the cricketers all the fellows knew. Poker was absolutely certain that he hadn't.

He had heard Van Duck's voice in the study after the cricketers had gone. He had kept tabs on Study No. 1 ever since, till dinner-time. Yet when the door was opened Van Duck was not there. Poker could come to only one conclusion—the American junior had slipped quietly out of the study, locking the door after him, while he had gone down to call Mr. Quelch.

He had been gone little more than five minutes. Still, that was ample time, if the junior had been in the study waiting for an opportunity to dodge out unseen. That seemed the only possible explanation to Poker. Evidently—to Poker—Van Duck was "stringing him along"—playing jokes at the expense of his watchful gunman guardian. He had been in the study—he had dodged out quietly when Poker went down to Hall—and now he was deliberately keeping out of sight to puzzle and worry the over-dutiful and faithful Poker!

With a grim brow, Poker hunted for him up and down and round about the school—without finding him. He dreaded that Putnam might have gone out of gates—in which case Poker had no doubt that Chick Chew and his myrmidons were on the watch, looking for a chance to grab him. Certainly he did not succeed in finding him within the walls of Greyfriars.

A good many fellows had gathered on the cricket ground, and Poker, after a vain search in the House, proceeded thither—interested juniors following him with grinning faces. But a search of the cricket ground failed to reveal Van Duck—or anybody who had seen him.

Poker came back to the quad grimmer than ever. He looked in the school shop. A dozen fellows were there, but Van Duck was not among them. Billy Bunter was blinking in at the window through his big spectacles. Bunter's postal order was still in an unarrived state; and Bunter was in his accustomed

hard-up state. Like a fat Peri at the gate of Paradise, he was looking at the good things he was unable to share, when Poker Pike came along.

The fat Owl gave a fat chuckle. Knowing what he did, Bunter was even more entertained than the other fellows by Poker's persistent search up and down the school for a fellow who was playing cricket at another school in another county.

Poker came out of the tuckshop again, puzzled and wrathful. A dozen grinning faces watched him. Poker frowned at them.

"You young guys ain't seen that Putnam van Duck?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, I've seen him!" answered Skinner.

"Where?" rapped Poker.

"In the Remove dormitory," answered Skinner airily.

Poker stared.

"I guess he ain't turned in to snooze—in the afternoon?" he ejaculated.

"Well, I saw him there," said Skinner.

Puzzled, Poker started off towards the House.

"What the dickens do you mean, Skinner?" asked Bolsover major.

"Van Duck's over at Rookwood. You never saw him in the dorm."

"I jolly well did!" answered Skinner. "I forgot to mention to Pike that it was last night I saw him there, though."

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

Poker went into the House. He reappeared in about five minutes, looking grimmer than ever. He glanced round for Skinner, but that humorous youth had judiciously disappeared.

Billy Bunter was still regarding the good things in Mrs. Mimbble's little window with a longing eye, when he felt a sudden grip of iron on his fat shoulder. He spun round with a startled squeak, and blinked at Poker Pike.

"Ow! Leggo!" he gasped. "Whar-rer you want, you beast? Leggo!"

"I guess," said Poker grimly, "that I want to know! You was in that study with Putnam this morning, you fat gink—"

"I—I wasn't!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean—"

"Aw, can it!" growled Poker. "I guess you're in this here game, you pesky piecan! Where's that Putnam van Duck? I reckon you know!"

"Ow! He's gone to Rookwood!" gasped Bunter, wriggling in the vice-like grip on his shoulder.

"Guess again!" growled Poker, compressing his grip, till the fat Owl of the Remove squeaked.

"Ow! Wow! I say, he's really gone to Rookwood!" spluttered Bunter. "Any of the fellows can tell you! Ask them, and they'll say—Wow! Ow! Leggo!"

"I guess I'll sure beat you up a few if you don't spill it!"

Bunter blinked at him in dismay.

Poker, certainly, was not wise to the trick that had been played—he did not begin to guess what had really happened; but he had a strong suspicion that Bunter knew something of the matter.

It was not often that Bunter told the truth—it was generally his last resource. This time he did—and it was no use. Poker was not going to believe that Van Duck had gone with the cricketers.

"I—I say, really!" gasped Bunter. "Really and truly—Wow! I say—"

Wow! He wasn't in the study when you heard him there!"

"What?" howled Poker.

"I—I mean, I don't know where he is—Ow! Wow! Leggo! I mean, I know where he is!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'll take you to him, if you like, if—if you'll leggo!"

"I guess I'll keep a cinch on you till I see him!" grunted Poker. "I reckon that pesky young guy is keeping doggo, just to string me along! Ain't that the how of it?"

"No—Ow! I mean, yes!" gasped Bunter.

"And you're wise to it?" hooted Poker.

"No—yes—Ow! He—he—he's hiding in Gosling's woodshed!" gasped Bunter. "You—you go and look for him there, and—and—"

"I guess you're going to take a little pascear with me, to that there woodshed!" said Poker.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

There was no help for it. Billy Bunter walked away to Gosling's woodshed with the gunman. But his fat wits were working as he went. Arrived at the woodshed, that building was found closed and locked.

Poker, holding Bunter's fat shoulder with one hand, tried the door of the shed with the other.

"You pesky 'young piecan—" he began.

"I—I say, he's really there!" gasped Bunter. "You—you call out to him, and you—you'll see."

Poker glared at him suspiciously. But he rapped on the woodshed door and shouted:

"Say, you there, you Putnam van Duck?"

He did not believe Bunter's statement that the American junior was there. But his doubts were dispelled the next moment, as a voice that Van Duck might have fancied was his own, answered, apparently from within:

"You said it, old-timer!"

Poker jumped.

"Aw, what's this game, you young piecan?" he roared. "What you hiding in that pesky shebang for, I want to know?"

"I guess I'm fed-up with you, Poker—go and chop chips!"

"Open this door here, you young geck!"

"Guess again!"

"Say, I guess you're going loco, young Putnam, playing this hero fool game!" exclaimed Poker.

"Aw, can it, you big stiff! You sure make me tired!"

Poker Pike released Bunter's fat shoulder. He had found Van Duck now—at least, he was assured that he had! Amazed as he was by Putnam's extraordinary proceedings, in locking himself in one place after another, Poker had no doubt that he had cornered him.

"Beat it, you!" he grunted to Bunter; and the fat ventriloquist "beat it" promptly. He grinned as he went, leaving Poker Pike leaning on the locked door of the woodshed.

It was half an hour later that Gosling came along for something from his woodshed. He stared at Poker Pike.

"O.K., old-timer!" said Poker. "That young guy Van Duck is in this here shebang of yours, and I guess I'm keeping tabs on him."

"He ain't!" said Gosling, staring. "How'd he be in there, and the shed locked, and the key on my bunch?"

"He sure is!" said Poker.

Gosling grunted, and unlocked the

shied. Poker Pike followed him in—and almost fell down as he discovered that the woodshed was unoccupied. He stared round the shed as he had stared round Study No. 1, but in still more hopeless bewilderment. This time he had not ceased to “keep tabs” for a moment; yet in some mysterious way, the junior whose voice he had heard was gone!

“Carry me home to die!” gasped Poker.

He almost tottered from the woodshed. It really began to look as if Putnam van Duck had vanished from Greyfriars, leaving only his voice behind him! His voice, certainly, had been there—Poker had heard it! But Van Duck wasn't! The mystified gunman began to wonder whether he was seeing things!

But he had no chance of getting further information from Billy Bunter. That fat youth had gone out of gates, sagely determined to give the Greyfriars gunman a wide berth for the rest of the day. And that afternoon, Poker Pike was a sorely puzzled and mystified gunman!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Puzzle for Poker!

“**N**ONSENSE!” said Mr. Quelch. “Sez you!” grunted Poker. Quelch was annoyed.

After tea, he had retired to his study for a quiet hour with his favourite author, Sophocles. At ease in his armchair, his feet on a hassock, a ponderous volume open before him, Henry Samuel Quelch was back in ancient Greece, and had quite forgotten the modern world and all its many worries. He was reminded of them by the arrival of Poker Pike, who walked into the study without knocking, and with his hat on. Poker was a good man in his own way, but he had not learned polished manners in the Chicago joints.

Poker had never heard of Sophocles, and would not have given ten cents for all his classical works, anyhow. He was deeply worried about Putnam van Duck. Quelch was fed-up on that subject.

“Nonsense!” he repeated. “The boy is at Rookwood. I have already told you so. He will be returning here shortly. You will see him—”

“Forget it!” said Poker. “I’ll say that young gu— is hereabouts, and he’s sure been playing hide-and-seek to string me along. Now I can’t spot him anywheres. I’m telling you, I want to know! I’ll mention that I ain’t sitting it out quiet while Chick Chew clinches that young geck! I’m shouting out to you that he’s got to be found!”

Mr. Quelch lay Sophocles on the study table.

“If nothing else will convince you, Mr. Pike, I will ring up Rookwood School on the telephone!” he said tartly. “Kindly be seated.”

Poker Pike remained standing. But he stood silent, while Mr. Quelch rang up and asked for a trunk call.

Quelch’s face wore a deep frown. Really, it was hard lines that a hard-worked Form-master could not be allowed a quiet hour, undisturbed, with so entrancing an author as Sophocles. When the answer came through, he almost yapped into the transmitter.

“Is that Rookwood School? Mr. Quelch speaking from Greyfriars. Will you ask Wharton—Harry Wharton—to come to the telephone, if he is not at the moment on the cricket field?”

“Certainly, sir.”

Mr. Quelch glanced round at Poker.

“No doubt you will be willing to believe my head boy’s assurance that Van Duck is with the cricket team!” he snapped.

“Sure!” said Poker. “But I guess he ain’t.”

Grunt—from Quelch. He turned to the mouthpiece again, as a voice came through.

“Wharton! Is that you, Wharton?”

“Yes, sir,” came the voice of the captain of the Remove. “Is that Mr. Quelch speaking? I was told—”

“Yes, yes. I understand that Van Duck is with you, Wharton. Is not that the case?”

“Oh, certainly, sir!”

“Mr. Pike, for some reason I cannot fathom, doubts it!” snapped Mr. Quelch. “Kindly hold on and speak to him.”

“Oh, my hat!”

“What—what did you say, Wharton?”

“I—I mean all right, sir.”

“Mr. Pike, if you will kindly take this receiver—”

Poker kindly took the receiver. His hickory face was sorely puzzled. He barked into the telephone.

“Say, you young guy! You there? You allow that that Putnam van Duck is along of you, playing cricket?”

“Yes, rather!”

“Search me!” gasped Poker. “Say, if that young guy’s there, when did he hit the spot?”

He was surprised to hear a chuckle over the wires; then the answer came:

“Van Duck travelled with the rest of the team this morning, Mr. Pike. We got here early. We took the first knock—”

“Eh?”

“Van Duck put up 30 runs in his first innings—”

“I guess I don’t want to know—”

“We were 15 ahead on the first innings,” went on Harry Wharton’s cheery voice. “Jimmy Silver’s lot knocked up 95 to our 110.”

“Look hyer—”

“In our second innings—”

Poker Pike snorted. This schoolboy, apparently, at least, fancied that he was keen to hear the details of the cricket match—in which Poker really was not interested at all, knowing as much about the great game of cricket as he knew about that great author Sophocles.

“I want to know—” he barked.

“Yes, I understand,” said Wharton, at the other end. “You’re keen to know how Van Duck turned out at cricket—”

“Nope! I guess—”

“He turned out first-rate! I was jolly glad to have him in the team. He’s taken to cricket like a duck to water—”

“I’m telling you—”

“He bagged 40 in our second innings, and—”

“Doggone your innings! I—”

“I can tell you the Rookwood men had to pull up their socks, but they never really had a chance after we put up 150 in the second knock.”

“I guess—” howled Poker.

“I bet you don’t guess how many we beat them by. They were 120 at last man in.”

“You pesky young piecan, I tell you—”

“Jimmy Silver and Lovell were at the wickets,” went on Harry Wharton, “and they may have fancied they were going to pull the game out of the fire. But Van Duck—”

“You allow that that young geck has been—”

“Van Duck brought off a catch—”

“Goldarn your ketches! I want to know—”

“He caught Jimmy Silver out—”

“You young piecan, I want to know—”

“We beat them by 45 runs,” Wharton rattled on cheerily. “The game’s been over only a quarter of an hour. You’ve rung up just right to get the news.”

“I guess I don’t want to hear nothing about your pesky cricket!” yelled Poker. “I’ll say I want to hear about that Putnam van Duck.”

“Oh, yes, I quite understand!” came the answer, with another chuckle. “You want to know how Van Duck did in the match.”

“Nope!” shrieked Poker. “I guess I want to know—”

“He did fine—ripping—better than I expected! You’d have liked to see his game. Why didn’t you trot over?”

Poker snorted.

“I guess I’d have come if I’d knowed he was there! You allow that that Putnam van Duck has been with you all day?”

“He couldn’t have played cricket here otherwise, could he? We wanted him chiefly for batting, and it was a bit of a surprise when he brought off that catch and pushed Jimmy Silver out. It was in the slips—”

“Doggone the slips! I tell you I want to know!” raved Poker. “I don’t get this! I heered that young geck talking here, behind a locked door, arter you was gone—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Pack up the snicker, doggone you! If he’s been with you all day, I don’t get it! It’s got me beat! You ain’t stringing me along?”

“Not at all! He played a ripping game—”

“Look hyer—”

“Thirty in the first innings, 40 in the second—and a catch at the finish that knocked Rookwood right out—”

“Park it!” howled Poker. “I’ll say I’m tired of hearing about your pesky cricket! Is that young guy Van Duck along with you now?”

“Oh, yes!”

“What’s he doin’?”

“Mopping up ginger-beer.”

“And he’s been along all day?”

“Certainly! He was third on the list, after Smithy and Bob Cherry, and—”

“I guess I’m coming along to see him safe home.”

“Better come by plane, then,” suggested Wharton. “We’re going for our train in a quarter of an hour.”

“Say, you young geck, you keep where you are till I arrive; you keep that Putnam van Duck there till I hit the spot and—”

“Good-bye!”

“I’m telling you—” roared Poker.

“See you later, old bean! Can’t miss our train!”

“I’m telling you—”

“Ta-ta!”

Harry Wharton, at the Rookwood end, rang off. Poker Pike stood staring at the telephone.

“Carry me home to die!” he ejaculated at last.

“Are you satisfied now, Mr. Pike?” asked the Remove master tartly.

Poker blinked at him.

“I don’t get it!” he said. “It’s got me beat! But I guess it’s the straight goods! I’m telling you, big boy, I don’t get it! This sure is the rhinoceros’ side-whiskers!”

Mr. Quelch sniffed and sat down with Sophocles again. Poker Pike, in a state of dizzy astonishment, tramped out of the study and left him to it. Unless his ears had deceived him, Putnam van Duck had stayed behind at Greyfriars that day. Yet it was clear that he had

been all day at Rookwood, playing cricket with the Remove team. It was a puzzle that even the hard-headed Poker could not possibly puzzle out.

All he could do was to tramp down to Courtfield and wait for the train to come in with the returning cricketers—which he did. And if a lingering doubt remained in his mind, it had to be dispelled when at last he saw Putnam van Duck step from the train with the Remove crowd. Evidently, obviously, and indubitably, the American junior had been at Rookwood with the cricketers—and how he had contrived to leave his voice behind at Greyfriars remained a mystery that the puzzled Poker could not possibly fathom.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Talks Too Much!

I SAY, you fellows—
“Roll out, Bunter!”
“If that’s what you call gratitude—” said Billy Bunter loftily and scornfully, his very spectacles gleaming with scorn.

“Oh, roll in!” said Harry Wharton. There was a study supper in Study No. 1 that evening.

The Remove cricketers had returned from Rookwood in great spirits. They had had a good game and a big victory. Putnam van Duck had more than justified his selection as a member of the eleven. Everybody was pleased and satisfied, and the study supper was a celebration, and Study No. 1 was crowded, not to say overcrowded, with cricketers playing the game over again as they disposed of good things. Billy Bunter, as usual, was superfluous; but, also as usual, his superfluity did not worry Bunter. He was not going to miss that spread.

There was not much room for Billy Bunter to roll in. But he wedged in at the doorway. All available seats were taken up, some of the chairs having two fellows seated on them. The fat Owl of the Remove blinked round in vain for a seat.

“I say, you fellows—”
“Shut up, Bunter!”
“Beast! I say, what am I going to sit on?” squeaked Bunter.

“There’s a rather nice oak floor—”
“Oh, really, Wharton! I say, Toddy, you might let me have that chair.”

“I might,” assented Peter Todd; “but then again, I mightn’t! The betting is on the mightn’t!”

“Inky, old chap, you might let me have that box—”

“The mightfulness is terrific!” grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

“If you fellows think I’m going to stand—” hooted Bunter. “Do you think I’m going to stand, Wharton?”

“Eh? I wasn’t thinking about you at all, old fat man!” answered the captain of the Remove. “Dry up, there’s a good porpoise.”

“Well,” said Bunter, in disgust, “I like that—after all I’ve done for you!”

“If you like it, what are you grouching about?” asked Bob Cherry.

“Yah!” snorted Bunter. “Pass me over the cake, anyhow!”

“Couldn’t possibly!” answered Bob, shaking his head. “I’m not a steam derrick, old podgy porpoise.”

“You silly ass, you can pass me over the cake, can’t you?”

“Of course I can’t! It would take three or four fellows, and jolly hefty chaps, to pass you over the cake, or anything else.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“You blithering idiot!” howled Bunter. “I mean, pass the cake over, you fathead—not me over the cake, you howling chump!”

“Oh, all right!” said Bob, who had evidently been joking—though it was no time for jokes, when Bunter was waiting for cake. “Here you are!”

Cake was passed over. Bunter leaned on the door, which was set wide open, and guzzled. Putnam van Duck, who was in the window-seat, glanced across the study to the door.

“Say, you cut off and cinch a chair, Bunter,” he said. “You’re nearest the door.”

“Oh, I’ll stand!” grunted Bunter, through a large mouthful of cake. “You needn’t worry about that!”

“I guess I ain’t!” grinned Van Duck. “I want a chair for Poker. We’ve asked him to come up to this supper.”

“Rot!” said Bunter. “You don’t want that rotten gunman here. I’m not going to fetch him a chair, anyhow.”

“I’ll get one from my study,” said Tom Redwing, who was near the door.

“Get one for me,” said Bunter. “That ruffian can stand, if he comes. I don’t see what you want him for, Van Duck.”

“There’s a whole lot of things you don’t see, even with your specs, old fat piecan!” answered Putnam.

“Yah!”

Redwing fetched a chair, which was planted just inside the doorway, ready for Poker when he came. Billy Bunter promptly sat in it.

Whether Mr. Pike was keen on a schoolboys’ study supper was perhaps doubtful. But after what happened that day, Putnam and his friends wanted to be nice to Poker.

Putnam had got back from Rookwood safe and sound with the cricketers. Poker and his six-gun had not been needed to guard him. And all the fellows certainly were glad that the Greyfriars gunman and his gun had not shown up at Rookwood to cause a sensation there. Still, they realised that Poker was a dutiful guy, and he had had rather a worrying day; so they wanted to be as nice as possible. Poker was going to be an honoured guest at the study supper, if he cared to horn in.

He did not seem in a hurry to do so. At all events, he had not yet arrived. Meanwhile, Bunter deposited his fat person in the chair specially fetched for the honoured guest.

“I say, you fellows—”

“It was a ripping catch,” said Frank Nugent. “Blessed if I thought Van Duck would bring it off!”

“Oh, do stop jawing cricket!” said Bunter peevishly. “I was speaking, Nugent.”

“You generally are!” remarked Johnny Bull.

“Beast!” I think you might let a fellow have a chance at the cream puffs, after all he’s done for you. I can tell you, that gunman would have come after you to Rookwood, if I hadn’t stopped him. I say, you fellows, he was rooting all over the school after Van Duck.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Hunting everywhere!” grinned Bunter. “I say, I made him believe Van Duck was in the woodshed, with my wonderful ventriloquism, you know. I say, I’m waiting for those cream puffs.”

Cream puffs were passed over to Bunter. For several minutes he was too creamy and sticky to talk, and cricket “jaw” was resumed. Three or four fellows talked at once, and there was plenty of noise in the study, and no

one noticed footsteps coming along the passage from the stairs.

“I say,” Bunter recommenced, “I say, if you won’t let a fellow get near the table, you might pass him things. Are you going to scoff all the jam tarts, Squiff?”

“Oh dear! Pass him all the tarts, and perhaps he’ll shut up for a minute or two!” said Bob Cherry.

“Oh, really, Cherry! I can jolly well tell you, you’d have had that gunman after you at Rookwood if I hadn’t pulled his leg!” snorted Bunter. “Fat lot of thanks I get for giving up my half-holiday to help you fellows. I say the beast suspected that I knew something about it, and he grabbed me—and I got away by making Van Duck’s voice come out of the woodshed. The silly ass thought Van Duck was there, you know, when I imitated his voice. That gunman is a silly fool—”

“Sez you!” said a quiet voice over Billy Bunter’s fat shoulder.

“Oh lor’!” gasped Bunter.

He spun round on his chair in the doorway, forgetful even of jam tarts. A hickory face under a bowler hat was looking into the study.

“Oh, my hat!” exclaimed Bob Cherry. “H’m! Trot in, Mr. Pike!”

“Trickle in, old bean!” said Harry Wharton.

Poker did not trot or trickle in. His hickory face was grim.

It was clear that he had heard what Billy Bunter had said, and had jumped, at last, to the solution of the mystery that had baffled him all that day.

No doubt it had already dawned on Poker’s rather solid brain that, as Van Duck certainly had been absent, the voice he had heard must have been a trick of some sort. Now he knew the trick that had been played.

“So that was the leetle game, was it?” said Poker grimly. “You fat gink, I knowed you was wise to it! So it was you putting up an imitation of that young geck’s toot, to string me along.”

“Oh! No!” gasped Bunter, in alarm. “Nothing of the kind! I’m not a ventriloquist at all, and as for imitating any chap’s voice, I simply couldn’t do it. You can ask any of these fellows—they’ve heard me lots of times.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Aw, don’t you get your mad up, Poker!” grinned Van Duck. “I guess your gun wasn’t wanted at Rookwood, and we jest had to pull your leg. Mosey in and sit down to supper, and smile a few.”

“I guess,” said Poker, “that I ain’t stopping for eats! I guess I’m going to lam that fat guy a few for stringing me.”

“I say, you fellows!” yelled Bunter.

Billy Bunter wished that he hadn’t rolled into that study supper, or, alternately, that he hadn’t talked so much! But it was too late for either wish. A sinewy hand grasped him, and hooked him off the chair. A swing of a sinewy arm whirled him over, face down across the chair. Then the gunman’s other hand rose, and descended like a flail, on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars.

Smack!

“Yaroooooh!”

Smack!

“Whoop!” yelled Billy Bunter.

“Help! I say, you fellows, help!”

“Hold on!” gasped Harry Wharton.

Smack!

“Stop!” yelled Van Duck. “Pack it up, you galoot!”

Smack!

“Yaroooooh! Rescue!” shrieked Bunter.

Smack!

"Pile in!" shouted Bob Cherry, and he led the rush.

Billy Bunter sprawled roaring on the floor, as the rush of the Removeites hurled Poker through the doorway into the Remove passage.

"Ow! Wow! You!" roared Bunter. "Aw! You pesky young piecans!" gasped Poker, as he whirled in the passage. "I guess—Aw, great jumping toads! I guess—yorrroooooop!"

Poker Pike had come as an honoured guest. But he looked like anything but an honoured guest as he departed—rolling down the Remove staircase. He came to a stop on the next landing—and his bowler hat, for once detached from his head, went rolling down the lower stairs.

"Aw! Carry me home to die!" spluttered Poker; and he followed his hat, gasping as he went. And the study supper finished without the Greyfriars gunman.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Knows How!

"JOLLY well rag him!" said Billy Bunter.

"Jolly well rats!" said Bob Cherry.

"I've been smacked!" roared Bunter.

"That's all right!"

"Is it?" howled Bunter.

"Right as rain!" said Bob cheerfully.

That was the sort of sympathy Billy Bunter received.

If ever a fellow had reason to feel wrathful and indignant, William George Bunter had.

It was the day after the Rookwood match. The sun had gone down and risen again, and Billy Bunter had let the sun rise on his wrath.

Bunter had often realised that it was an ungrateful world. Now this fact was borne in more than ever on his fat mind.

He had been smacked—hard! This was his reward for having helped the Remove fellows out of a difficulty with his wonderful ventriloquism. His view was that there should have been general indignation on the subject—and there wasn't!

Nobody seemed to think that it mattered very much whether Bunter was smacked or not. But to Bunter it mattered quite a lot.

His fat brow was morose in Form that morning.

When the Remove came out in break Billy Bunter's indignation intensified at the sight of the Famous Five and their proceedings. Poker Pike was taking a walk in the quad, and the chums of the Remove joined him, with smiling faces—just as if Poker mattered, and Bunter didn't!

Poker regarded the cheery juniors rather grimly.

"Sorry we had to roll you out of the study, old bean!" said Harry Wharton amicably. "But, you see—"

"Huh!" grunted Poker.

"You see, we couldn't let you smack Bunter. We put him up to pulling your leg yesterday," explained Wharton, "so we really couldn't let you go ahead. Sorry, all the same!"

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, my worthy and ludicrous Poker!" assured Hurree Janset Ram Singh solemnly.

"Huh!"

"So don't be shirty, old man!" said Bob Cherry.

"Huh!"

"Let not the frown of infuriated wrath replace the smile of idiotic friendship!" urged Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Poker grinned.

"O.K.!" he said. "I gupes I ain't got no grouch. You sure won't be able to string me again that-a-way, now I'm wise to it. Forget it!"

So peace was established—which was satisfactory to the chums of the Remove, who liked Poker, and not at all satisfactory to Billy Bunter, who didn't!

"I say, you fellows," began the fat Owl, when the juniors left Poker—"I say, if you think I'm going to stand a—"

"Bow-wow!" said Bob.

"If you think I'm going to stand—"

roared Bunter.

"Ring off, old fat man!"

"I'm not going to stand—" yelled Bunter.

"Right-ho! Sit down!" said Bob. And Bunter sat down suddenly in the quad, with a little assistance from the exuberant Bob. "That all right?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Beast!" roared Bunter.

Apparently, it was not all right!

"Well, if you're not going to stand, and you don't want to sit down, what do you want?" demanded Bob. "Some fellows are never satisfied!"

"Beast! I mean, I'm not going to stand—"

"You're repeating yourself, old fat"

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Skinner and Snoop have already come under the eagle eye and pen of our long-haired poet. Now comes the turn of the third member of this "select" trio...

WILLIAM STOTT,

another Black Sheep of the Remove.

(1)

The last two poems from my pen
Have dealt with Skinner and Snoop,
And now I've got to write of Stott,
And thus complete the group;
So let's get on with it, and then
We'll finish with their troupe.

(2)

The three Black Sheep of the Remove,
Are always more or less
Together, and I understand,
It's through that letter S.
The same initial well may prove
The same attractions—yes?

(4)

There's Hobson-Hoskins in the Shell,
There's Blundell thick with Bland;
But this is by the way, for I
Must keep my work in hand,
And William Stott's the subject—well,
Now ain't life really grand?



(6)

The Editor has told me I
Must interview this pest,
I'll say I won't, but if I don't,
He'll soon lose interest.
On second thoughts I think I'll try,
And second thoughts are best!



(7)

There's nothing much to say of him,
He's just a weedy tick,
Who often smokes until he chokes,
And finds he's feeling sick,
Then takes, in Quelch's study grim,
His medicine—the stick!

(8)

'Twas in the woodshed I espied,
Him smoking all his might!
I clapped a hand upon him, and
His smoke dropped out of sight!
That cigarette had dropped inside
His collar—still alight!

(9)

Then Stott began to dance and shout,
I watched him, with a grin,
He spun around with frantic bound,
Just like a Harlequin!
That cigarette had not gone out,
It rested on his skin!

(10)

To me the words he used were fresh,
They showed me that he felt
A sense of pain! He made that plain!
And as he danced I smelt
A smell resembling burning flesh,
And Stott began to melt!



(11)

"Yaroooh! I'm burning! Help!"
he screamed,
His voice like pistol shots!
He jumped and howled, he shrieked
and scowled,
He tied himself in knots.
I grew quite dizzy, for it seemed,
I saw a dozen Stotts.



(12)

I had to do my best, of course,
To save the wretched chap,
And so I rose, took Gosling's hose,
And screwed it to the tap!
The water, bursting out with force,
Wiped Stott clean off the map.

(13)

He rolled and grovelled in the pool,
That gathered on the spot,
I'd put him out without a doubt,
But grateful? He was not!
He trailed back dismally to school,
A drenched, but wiser Stott.

bean! Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the bell!"

And the juniors scampered away.

"Beasts!"

Billy Bunter's fat brow was wrathful as he followed the Remove into the Form-room for third school. Third lesson was Latin prose papers under the eye of Mr. Quelch. But, to the relief of the Remove, the Form-master, having set them going, glanced at the clock, and called to Wharton, his head boy.

"Wharton, I shall leave you in charge for a quarter of an hour," he said. "I have to see the headmaster."

Mr. Quelch left the Form-room.

There was a general relaxation at once. The papers had to be written, but the Remove did not exert themselves unduly in Mr. Quelch's absence. In such matters the master's eye was essential.

Bob Cherry and Smithy and several other fellows began to discuss the previous day's game at Rookwood—a more interesting subject to them than Latin prose. Lord Mauleverer closed his eyes for a gentle doze. Skinner manufactured an ink-ball to project at Mark Linley, the only fellow in the Remove who was still concentrated on Latin. Ogilvy handed round a packet of toffee.

Billy Bunter—wonderful to relate—did not heed the toffee. He rose to his feet and made for the door.

"Hold on, fathead!" called out Harry Wharton. "You can't go out of the Form-room!"

"I've forgotten my Latin grammar, and—"

"There it is—on your desk."

"Oh! I—I mean, I—I've left the tap running in the passage—"

"Not much difference!" said the head boy of the Remove sarcastically. "Well, whatever you've done, sit down and shut up!"

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter.

And he opened the Form-room door and rolled out.

"You fat ass!" roared Wharton. "Come back!"

"Yah!"

Bunter disappeared.

"Anybody left any tuck in his study?"

grinned the Bounder. "If he has, he won't see it again!"

And there was a chuckle. But, as it happened, Billy Bunter was not thinking of raiding tuck in the studies.

The fat Owl blinked round him cautiously through his big spectacles as he rolled down the passage. Cautiously he made his way to Mr. Quelch's study. Quelch was with the Head, the other masters were with their Forms, and the coast was clear.

No eye fell on Billy Bunter as he rolled into his Form-master's study and shut the door.

He rolled across to the telephone.

Poker Pike had declared that, now he was "wise" to the trick, it would not be possible to "string him along" again by such a stunt as imitating a voice. But the Greyfriars ventriloquist had his own ideas about that.

He rang up Gosling's lodge.

The ancient porter of Greyfriars answered.

"Mr. Quelch speaking!" Bunter barked into the telephone, in so exact an imitation of Henry Samuel Quelch's curt tones that Henry Samuel, had he been present, might have supposed that it was himself speaking.

"Yessir!" grunted Gosling.

"Tell Mr. Pike I desire to speak to him at once!"

"Yessir!"

Poker, who had his quarters in Gosling's lodge, generally sat on the bench outside that lodge while Putnam van Duck was in class. In less than a minute his voice came through.

"Yep!"

"Mr. Pike, I am called away from my class for some time this morning," barked the Greyfriars ventriloquist. "I should be much obliged if you would come to the Remove room and take charge of the Form during my absence."

"Sure!" said Poker.

"If you will kindly come at once—"

"Surest thing you know!"

"Thank you, Mr. Pike!"

"O.K.!"

Billy Bunter rang off and rolled, grinning, out of Mr. Quelch's study. His fat face was wreathed in grins as he rolled into the Remove Form Room.

"What have you been up to, you fat villain?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, nothing!" answered Bunter. "I say, you fellows—he, he, he!—I say, you remember how wild old Quelch was the time that beast Pike barged into our Form-room? He, he, he! He was as mad as a hatter! He, he, he! I say, you fellows, what do you think Quelch will say if he finds that gunman here when he comes back?"

"Pike won't come here again, you fat duffer!" said Harry, staring at him. "There was too much of a row about it last time."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

"Say, that pesky guy ain't horning in again, is he?" exclaimed Van Duck.

"He, he, he!"

"Have you seen him coming?" exclaimed Skinner. "My hat! There will be a row if Quelch finds him here again!"

"He, he, he!"

There was a heavy tread in the corridor.

The Form-room door opened, and a bowler hat and a hickory face dawned on the staring Removites. Lord Mauleverer opened his eyes; the cricketers forgot cricket; Mark Linley forgot Latin prose; all the Remove stared at Poker Pike. The Greyfriars gunman walked cheerfully in.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Poker you bonehead, you beat it!" yelled Putnam. "You honing for another rookus with our Form-master, you pesky piecan?"

"Aw, forget it," said Poker. "I guess I'm here to take charge of you young ginks!"

"For goodness' sake, clear off!" exclaimed Harry anxiously. "Look here, you don't want another row with Quelch—"

"O.K.!" said Poker. "I guess that guy asked me to come here and take charge while he was out."

"Quelch asked you?" gasped Wharton.

"Surest thing you know."

"Oh crumbs!"

"He, he, he!"

"But—but—but Quelch can't have asked you!" stuttered the head boy of the Remove.

"He sure did! Pack it up, you!" said Poker. "Go and sit down! I guess I'm put in charge of this bunch—and I don't want no back chat!"

"But—" gasped Wharton.

"I'll mention that I said pack it up, bo!"

And Wharton, in great astonishment, "packed it up," and went to his place. And the Greyfriars gunman, with his usual sedate seriousness, took charge of the amazed, staring Remove.

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THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Poker Pike—Form-master!

"QUIT chewing the rag!" barked Poker.

There was a buzz in the Remove. Mr. Quelch would have called out "Silence!" but Poker had brought his own variety of the English language to Greyfriars with him.

A ripple of merriment ran through the Form. Certainly, the Remove had no objection to being "up" to Mr. Pike instead of "up" to Quelch, for a lesson. It was likely to be much more entertaining.

Poker, as usual, was in deadly earnest. He saw no occasion for merriment. The juniors could not help thinking that some mistake had been made—some extraordinary misunderstanding—for it

was scarcely possible that Quelch really had requested the gunman to take his class in his absence.

But Poker, it was clear, was acting in good faith. He believed, at least, that that was what Mr. Quelch wanted. And it was not so surprising to him as to the Removites. In book-learning, certainly, Poker was no great shakes. But he had great stores of what he regarded as much more useful knowledge.

The blackboard stood on its easel before the class. Quelch had intended to chalk Latin verbs there. Mr. Pike knew nothing of Latin verbs—if, indeed, he had ever heard of the Latin language at all. When he picked up the chalk the juniors wondered what was coming.

"What you young guys been doing?" asked Poker, staring at the Latin papers on the desks.

"Latin prose!" grinned the Bounder. "Are you going to take us in Latin, Mr. Pike?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can it!" snapped Poker. "I guess I've got no use for snickering! Say, you fat guy, you want to pack it up, pronto!"

"He, he, he!"

Smack!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, his fat chuckle changing into a terrific bellow as a hefty hand smacked. "Ow! Wow! Beast! Yaroooooh!"

"I guess I'm keeping order while I'm riding herd on this bunch," said Poker. "Chew on that, you young ginks!"

"Ow! Wow! Ow!" gurgled Bunter.

Billy Bunter had expected things to happen when he played that trick on the unsuspecting gunman. But he had not expected the smacking of his own fat head to be an item in the programme. He rubbed his head and glared at Poker through his big spectacles.

The Remove suppressed their merriment. Poker's methods with a class were rather heavy-handed, and nobody else wanted a swipe from that hefty hand.

"I guess you can forget that guff," said Poker. "I guess it wouldn't help you none if you was crowded into a rookus."

If Mr. Quelch had asked Poker to take his class, certainly he would hardly have expected him to dismiss Latin prose as "guff." But the Remove fellows were quite prepared to dismiss Latin prose.

They watched Poker with great interest as he chalked on the blackboard.

Having, somewhat slowly and laboriously, chalked up a gem of useful knowledge, Poker stepped aside, to reveal it to the rapt gaze of the Lower Fourth.

The juniors fairly gasped as they read:

**"ALWAYS
BE QUICK
ON THE DRAW!"**

"Oh crikey!" stuttered Bob Cherry. "Oh, my only hat! I wonder what Quelch would think of that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pack it up, you 'uns!" roared Poker. "I guess you ain't got no call to snicker when you're l'arning in school! Ain't your schoolmaster guy put me in charge of this bunch, and ain't I teaching you?"

"Go it!" chortled the Bounder. "This is better than Latin!"

"The betterfulness is terrific!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll allow I ain't wise to Latin, whatever that might be," said Poker Pike. "But I guess a guy wants to learn to

be quick on the draw. Now you lissen! S'pose you was in a rookus in some joint, and maybe two or three hoodlums crowding you, like I've been a whole heap of times."

"Oh dear!" gasped Harry Wharton.

Poker was handing out instruction with great seriousness. But it was difficult for the Removites to take it seriously. They really could not quite imagine themselves in a "rookus" in a "joint" with "hoodlums" crowding them. Instruction on such subjects had been absolutely left out of the curriculum at Greyfriars School.

"Figure that you're fixed up that-a-way!" went on the learned lecturer. "I guess book-learning wouldn't help you none! Surest thing you know! A guy may not want his gat for weeks at a time—but when he wants his gat he wants it bad."

"Please, what's a gat?" inquired Smithy demurely.

"Hay? You been to school, and don't know what a gat is?" demanded Poker. "Carry me home to die! It's sure a gun. Now, you want to pack a gun handy in a pocket you can reach mighty sudden—"

"But a gun's too big to go in a pocket!" said Smithy.

"Search me!" gasped Poker. "What do you learn in this here school if you don't know that a gun's a revolver?"

"Only want to get it clear," said the Bounder, while the Remove chuckled. "A gat is a gun, and a gun is a pistol. What's a pistol?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smack!

"Yoop!" yelled Smithy.

"I guess I mentioned that I don't want no back chat!" said Poker. "We ain't here for funning. I'll say I'm teaching this bunch. Now you watch me and get it card-indexed."

The Remove watched as Poker slid his hand to his hip, and, in the twinkling of an eye, whipped out his six-gun. There was no doubt that Poker was quick on the draw!

There was a general jump as he levelled the revolver at the class, his finger on the trigger.

"Now—" he went on.

"Yarooooh!" roared Billy Bunter. "Turn that beastly thing another way, you silly idiot! It might go off!"

"I guess you'll be cinching another sockdolager if you don't quit chewing the rag, you pesky gink. Now, s'pose you was a gang of hoodlums, crowding me in a dive in Chicago, I got you covered!" said Poker. "You lissen! This here is a lesson for you young guys to chew on! Keep your gun handy, and always be quick on the draw—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never be in a hurry to start anything," went on Poker, "but if the other guy aims to start anything, get in first. Always aim low, and if you don't get him in the midriff you'll get him in the cabs!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Now you read over what I've wrote, and chew on it!" said Poker; and, using his six-gun instead of a pointer, he pointed to the valuable instruction chalked on the blackboard.

The Form-room door opened.

Mr. Quelch stepped in.

Poker's back was to the door, and he did not see the Remove master enter. Mr. Quelch stared blankly at the extraordinary scene that met his gaze.

"Chew on it!" went on Poker. "Always be quick on the draw—"

Mr. Quelch came round the blackboard. The Removites gazed at him, breathless. They wondered what the Remove master would think of the

extraordinary instruction his Form was receiving. It seemed to take Henry Samuel Quelch's breath away.

"Wha-a-a-a-t—" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

Poker glanced at him, and gave him a cheery nod.

"Say, I guess we're getting on fine, big boy!" he remarked genially. "You don't want to worry about this here bunch while I'm riding herd. I'll say these young geeks are learning a whole lot."

"What—what—what does this mean?" gasped Mr. Quelch. "How dare you enter this Form-room? I repeat—how dare you? Go away at once! Upon my word, this is too much! How dare you?"

Billy Bunter was still rubbing his head; but he grinned as he rubbed it. The thunderstorm was coming now.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

High Words!

POKER PIKE stared at the Remove master. Perhaps he had expected Mr. Quelch to thank him for having taken charge so efficiently during the Form-master's absence. Anyhow, he had not expected this. The genial expression faded from his hickory face.

"Say, what's biting you?" he demanded gruffly. "Ain't you satisfied with what I'm teaching them young geeks?"

"Satisfied!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Are you insane? Are you mad? I will tolerate no more of this! I shall insist that you leave the school. On the last occasion when you had the audacity to enter this Form-room—"

"Aw, can it!" snapped Poker. "What you getting at? I guess I ain't horned in without being asked."

"What! Van Duck did you venture—did you dare to ask this—this person to enter the Form-room—"

"Nope!" gasped Putnam.

"Wharton, you—"

"Oh, no, sir!" stuttered the captain of the Remove.

"I left you in charge of this Form, Wharton. You should have informed me immediately when this—this man came here. You should have—"

"But—but he said, sir—"

"It matters nothing what he may have said, Wharton!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "You are my head boy, and you are perfectly aware that I should allow nothing of the kind. I shall cane you—"

"Aw, pack it up!" hooted Poker. "That young gink knowed that you asked me to ride herd here."

"What!" stuttered Mr. Quelch. "I—I asked you to—to—to— How dare you make such a statement? Wharton, did this—this man tell you that I had asked him to come here?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Wharton.

"Upon my word! You actually made such a statement to my Form that—"

"Say, didn't you ask me, you pesky old geek?" roared Poker.

"Certainly not! Nothing of the kind! How dare you make such a statement?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"You allow you never asked me to horn in here, and ride herd while you was out?" roared Poker indignantly.

"Nothing of the kind! The statement is utterly false!"

"You calling me a liar!" howled Poker. "By the great horned toad, I guess if you don't take that back, I'll

sure beat you up a few! You dog-goned old geck, you sure did ask me—"

"I did not!" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "Nothing could have been further from my thoughts. I did not!"

"You sure did!" roared Poker.

"I repeat that I did not! How dare you pretend that I ever made such a request?" Mr. Quelch almost raved with wrath.

"Beat it, Poker, you gink!" shouted Putnam.

"Aw, can it!" snarled Poker. "You figure that I'm going to be called a liar by a doggoned guy of a school-master? I'll say I've shot up guys for less'n that! Here, you! Stick 'em up!"

Mr. Quelch jumped almost clear of the Form-room floor as the angry and indignant gunman thrust the six-gun almost in his majestic face.

"For a Continental red cent!" said Poker savagely. "I'd sure fill you so full of holes that you'd do for a colander! Yep! You ask a guy to come here and ride herd over your bunch—"

"I did not! I—"

"You sure did. And me being an obliging guy I horned in, like you asked me!" roared Poker. "And I guess I been teaching these young gecks more useful stuff than they ever got before, too. I guess their Latin and such wouldn't help them a lot if they was crowded in a rookus. Surest thing you know."

"Go!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Go! I shall place this matter before the headmaster. I—I shall—"

"Can it!" yapped Poker. "You can't call this baby a liar and get by with it. You're taking it back—get me?"

"Poker!" yelled Van Duck.

"Park it, you! I'm sure talking to this doggoned old piecan! You taking it back—you, Quelch—or you wanting me to beat you up till your Uncle George wouldn't know you from a carpet?" roared Poker.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

The Greyfriars gunman glared at him over the levelled six-gun. Poker's hickory face was crimson with wrath and indignation. There was a step in the doorway, and a gasp from the juniors.

"The Head!" breathed Bob Cherry.

Dr. Locke rustled in. Poker's angry roar had reached his august ears. Seldom did the headmaster of Greyfriars lose his calm, lofty composure. But his eyes almost bulged from his countenance at the scene in the Remove Form Room.

"What is this?" gasped the Head. "What—what—what—"

Poker Pike looked round.

At sight of the headmaster his lifted arm was lowered, and the six-gun disappeared as if by magic into his hip-pocket. Poker was as quick on packing a gun as pulling one. Poker was a tough guy, but he had a deep respect for the silver-haired headmaster of Greyfriars. The six-gun vanished, and the gunman looked a good deal like a schoolboy caught in a prank.

"Aw!" he gasped. "I'll say you don't want to horn into this here rookus, sir. Not by a jugful. I guess I wasn't going to shoot up that old guy none. I was jest handling my hardware promiscus—"

"Mr. Quelch, what—"

"That—that person," stuttered Mr. Quelch "that—that—that man declares that I requested him to take charge of my Form, and—"

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"You sure did!" howled Poker.

"Such a statement is, on the face of it, ridiculous!" exclaimed the Head. "You have made some extraordinary mistake, Mr. Pike."

"Don't I know his toot?" roared Poker. "Ain't it jest like the filing of a saw? That old geck sure asked me—"

"Impossible!"

"I cannot account for the man's delusion, sir," stuttered Mr. Quelch. "But, in any case, this ruffianly outbreak in my Form-room—"

"It is quite intolerable!" said the Head. "Mr. Pike, leave this Form-room at once! Immediately, sir!"

Poker Pike eyed the Head a good deal like a savage bulldog. It was clear that he was very keen on "beating up" the Remove master, unless he "took it back," as Poker expressed it. But there was a calm authority in the majestic headmaster of Greyfriars that was not to be denied. Slowly Poker turned to the door.

In the doorway he paused.

"I'm telling you—" he began.

"Please go at once!"

"That old guy spoke to me over the phone to the lodge, and he asked me to horn in and ride herd—"

"Please go!"

"I ain't starting no rookus with you, sir," said Poker. "I respect you a whole lot, and then some. But when you ain't around, I sure am going to beat up that guy a few for calling me a liar! I'll say that's a cinch!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Quelch.

And the Remove gasped.

"Kindly go!" rapped the Head.

"Mr. Quelch, you may rely upon it that no such scene will be repeated here. I shall dispatch a cable to Mr. Vanderdecken van Duck, in Chicago, requesting him to recall Mr. Pike immediately."

"Very good, sir!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

Dr. Locke followed the gunman from the Form-room. He closed the door after him.

Mr. Quelch wiped a spot of perspiration from his scholastic brow. There was a buzz in the Remove. Harry Wharton & Co. glared at the grinning fat Owl.

They had been quite puzzled by Poker's extraordinary misapprehension. But as soon as he mentioned that Mr. Quelch's request had been made over the phone to Gosling's lodge, they understood at once that the Greyfriars ventriloquist had been at his tricks again. They did not need telling now why Bunter had left the Form-room.

"You fat villain!" breathed Bob Cherry. "You've been pulling Poker's leg over the phone."

"He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Cherry! You are talking! Take fifty lines! Bunter! How dare you laugh? Take a hundred lines!"

"Oh lor!"

Mr. Quelch was very much disturbed. But he was not too disturbed to carry on with Latin prose. And during the remainder of that lesson his temper was tart—very tart indeed! Seldom had the Remove been so glad to be dismissed.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

After the Feast the Reckoning!

"BUNTER!"

"He, he, he!"

"You fat scoundrel!"

"He, he, he!"

"You burbling, blinking bander-snatch!"

"He, he, he!"

Bunter was amused. But the fellows who surrounded him in the quad, after the Remove came out, did not look amused. They looked wrathful.

The previous day Billy Bunter's ventriloquism had come in useful. On the present occasion it was too much of a good thing—altogether too much! A jape was a jape; but the consequences were altogether too serious.

The view of the Famous Five was that Billy Bunter ought to own up. But no such view presented itself to William George Bunter.

"You can't let this go on," said Harry Wharton. "Last time Poker rowed with Quelch, he was ordered to go, and Quelch let him off. This time he won't!"

"No fear!" grinned Bunter.

"If the Head sends that cable to my popper, in Chicago, it's U P with poor old Poker!" said Putnam van Duck.

"Jolly good thing, too!" said Bunter, grinning. "Who wants him here? I don't!"

"Waal, I guess I do!" said Putnam. "I'm sure tired of the gink treading on my tail, but I ain't got no hunch to be cinched by Chick Chew and his bunch! Poker's got to stick!"

"He, he, he!"

"Stop cackling, you fat frog!" growled Johnny Bull. "You've got to go to the Head before he sends that cable—"

"I'll watch it!" chuckled Bunter.

"And own up!" said Frank Nugent.

"He, he, he!"

"Quelch has gone to the Head now," said Harry Wharton. "Bet you they're concocting that blessed cable together. It's too rotten! You can see that you've got to own up, Bunter!"

"Shan't!"

"Or we'll jolly well rag you bald-headed!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, no larks!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm. "The fact is, I—I had nothing to do with it. If I had, of course, I—I'd go and own up like a shot! But I never went to Quelch's study this morning, and I never called up Gosling's lodge on his phone!"

"You did!" howled Bob.

"I didn't!" hooted Bunter. "You can ask Gosling, if you like! He knows, as he answered the phone."

"Oh scissors!"

"The fact is, I know no more about it than the man in the moon. I can't go to the Head and say I did it, when—I didn't! It wouldn't be truthful! I'm a bit more particular about that than you fellows."

"Oh, scrag him!" said Bob.

"You're not getting by with a rotten trick like this, you fat frump!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "Quelch is as mad as a hatter now, and the Head's in a bate, but they'll be all right as soon as they know that it was a trick on Poker. You've got to own up and set it right."

"Well, look here," said Bunter. "If you want somebody to own up, you can go and own up yourself—see? Go to the Head and own up that you did it."

"But I didn't!" howled Wharton.

"Well, I didn't, either!" said Bunter. "I never even thought of getting that beast into a row with Quelch, to pay him out for smacking me yesterday. I wasn't in Quelch's study at all when I did it—I mean, when I didn't do it! If you fellows can't take my word, I prefer to let the matter drop."

"Collar him!" said Bob.

"Yaroo!"

The matter did not drop. It was Billy

Bunter that dropped. He sat down on the quadrangle with a heavy bump.

"Ow! Beasts! Wow!" roared Bunter. "Are you going to own up?" demanded Bob.

"Beast!"

"Oh, kick him!"

"Yaroooop!"

Billy Bunter scrambled up and fled for his fat life.

Harry Wharton & Co. were left in a worried group. They knew what had happened, but the headmaster and Form-master had no suspicion of it. Giving Bunter away to the beaks was not to be thought of—it was against all laws, written and unwritten. And it was clear that Bunter wasn't going to own up. A flogging was due to a fellow who played such a trick as imper-

"He allowed he never asked me to ride herd over his bunch," said Poker. "And he sure did, over the phone!"

The juniors did not answer. They could not give the fat and fatuous ventriloquist away.

"I sure knowed his toot!" said Poker. "And I guess I was glad to oblige. I'll tell you, I was surprised some when he went back on it! I sure was going to beat him up a few—"

"You locoed geck!" growled Putnam van Duck.

"But I guess I been chewing it over," went on Poker calmly, "and I kinder reckoner that while that young gink Van Duck was away yesterday, his voice was left lying around. Mebbe I mentioned to you young guys that a galoot

awoke the echoes of the Greyfriars quadrangle.

It proceeded from Billy Bunter.

"Yaroooh! I Leggo!" yelled Bunter. "I say, you fellows! Help! Whooop!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Poker's got him!"

"He sure has cinched that fat guy!" grinned Putnam.

"Yoo-hooop!"

Billy Bunter, with a grip of iron on the back of his fat neck, was being propelled towards the House. He wriggled wildly as he went; but he had to go; the sinewy arm of the Greyfriars gunman was not to be denied. Dozens of fellows rushed up, to stare at the scene.

"I say, you fellows, rescue!" shrieked Bunter. "I say, I ain't going to the



"Can it!" yapped Poker Pike. "You can't call this baby a liar and get by with it. You're taking it back! Get me!" The Greyfriars gunman was glaring at Mr. Quelch over his levelled gun when Dr. Locke rustled into the Form-room.

"What is this?" gasped the startled Head. "Mr. Quelch—Mr. Pike—what is this?"

sonating his Form-master on the telephone and causing a shindy in the Form-room.

Bunter did not want to be flogged! He had the strongest possible objections to anything of the kind.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here comes jolly old Poker!" murmured Bob.

The Greyfriars gunman was walking in the quad, with a frown of deep thought on his hickory face, under the bowler hat. Some of the fellows who saw him wondered whether he was waiting for Quelch to come out, to carry out his dire threat of "beating him up."

Harry Wharton & Co. were silent as the gunman came up to them. Poker Pike eyed them thoughtfully.

"Say, you young guys," said Poker, "I guess I been chewing it over a few! That schoolmaster guy of yours ain't the galoot to tell lies, I reckon."

"Hardly!" said Harry Wharton.

couldn't string me along twice in the same way."

Poker nodded his bowler hat slowly.

"I'll tell a man, I'm sure wise to it, now I been chewing it over," he said. "Mebbe I'm a bonehead, and can be strung along like a rubo from Rubesville, and mebbe I ain't! That fat gink Bunter is sure spry at putting over another geck's toot. Mebbe if he could play young Putnam ahind a locked door, he could play the schoolmaster on the phone."

The chums of the Remove exchanged glances. Evidently Poker Pike had "chewed it over" with results.

"I reckon I got on to it," said Poker, with another nod of the bowler hat. "Surest thing you know! I guess that fat guy is going to cough it up!"

Poker walked away, looking for Billy Bunter.

A few minutes later a terrific howl

Head! I never did it! Besides, the beast smacked me! I say—Yaroooh!"

Still roaring, Bunter was propelled into the House!

"That's that!" remarked Bob Cherry. And that, undoubtedly, was that!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

O.K.

"WHAT!" ejaculated the Head. "W-what!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

They were in the Head's study, and the cable intended for Mr. Vanderdecken van Duck, in Chicago, lay on the table. The study door was pitched open all of a sudden, and the two masters stared round blankly as a fat, wriggling junior was projected into the room.

(Continued on page 28.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,477

CAPTAIN VENGEANCE!

A Secret of the Great War!

IN the chart-room of the pirate cruiser Vengeance, Von Eimar, arch-pirate and world's master-spy, bent over the chart table with a thoughtful frown, compasses and dividers in his plump hands.

The pirate cruiser ploughed through the calm sapphire of the sea, as her giant engines rolled and thundered at fullest pressure. Down in the engine-room, dials and gauges indicated that every ounce of steam was being harnessed in that fierce, intense race against time. In the chart-room with Von Eimar was Ronald Westdale, his English gunnery lieutenant, Killer Moran, an American, Dr. Nieuwe, and Luis Ramiro; and in the doorway, cap in hand, stood the stockily built German quartermaster, Dietz by name.

"This is the secret refuge for which we are heading," grunted Von Eimar at last, his monocle glinting as he glanced up and tapped the chart with podgy forefinger. "Inaccessible Island it is called. Dietz," he nodded his square, smooth-shaven head towards the quartermaster, "is the only man in the ship who has ever been there, and it is he who will guide us into its secret harbour."

Ronald Westdale, his brow corrugated by a puzzled frown, glanced interestedly at the dot marked by Von Eimar's compasses.

"Inaccessible Island!" he repeated thoughtfully. "But if this island is marked on all Admiralty charts, as it must be, how can we be safe there? All the warships in these seas are searching for us. They'll comb every island and lagoon before they give up the search."

Von Eimar grinned with the smile of superior knowledge.

Thick and fast had events crowded upon one another since that memorable night when Von Eimar had planned and led the uprising of convicts on Nemesis Island, the notorious penal settlement, and seized the Government cruiser which he had turned into a pirate man-o'-war. Already he had opened his piratical career by the sinking of the Australian luxury liner, Sylvia Bay, after taking the hundred thousand pounds' worth of bullion that she had on board. But on one event he had miscalculated. Just before she was torpedoed, the Sylvia Bay had managed to send out an SOS, and now cruisers and destroyers of half a dozen nations had joined in remorseless pursuit of the modern pirate.

Two hours before, with his usual masterly combination of bravery and cold-blooded, calculated cunning, Von Eimar had destroyed four Dutch sea-planes that had attempted to intercept his flight. But now, as every man aboard the cruiser knew, the pirates were nearing the end of their tether. At any moment a trail of smoke upon the skyline might herald the advent of pursuing warships. Gangs of convicts, slaving in relays, had piled up the fires in the furnaces, driving the cruiser at her utmost speed; but the coal in her bunkers was becoming ominously low, and so far as the others in the chart-room knew, they had no means of replenishing their depleted supplies.

Von Eimar smiled as he polished his

By **JOHN BREDON**



Armed with a lash, Killer Moran stood over the convict pirates while they got busy replenishing the coal bunkers of the cruiser Vengeance!

monocle, noting the anxiety that his lieutenants did not attempt to hide.

"My dear friends," he murmured in his low-pitched, guttural English, jamming the glass once more into his light blue eye, "I had really thought that you rated my intelligence at a higher scale. You may be sure that I did not organise our little insurrection at Nemesis Island without foreseeing the obvious; also, you may be assured that I did not leave so important a matter as an ultimate refuge to chance. As you say, my dear Westdale, Inaccessible Island is marked down on every Admiralty chart. What you may not know, however, is that no warship will trouble to search round it, for the simple reason that it will be deemed impossible for us to be in hiding there."

Delicately he dusted his nostrils with a scented handkerchief, enjoying to the full the fretting impatience of his subordinates.

"Inaccessible Island," he ran on, "has been known to geographers since the eighteenth century. From its first discovery it has always been described as a small island, five miles by four, bounded on all sides by high, inaccessible cliffs—hence its name—and that, what with strong and treacherous currents and cross-currents, and innumerable coral-reefs, it is impossible for a ship to get within two miles of it. Only a small

boat can approach the cliffs, and then only with the greatest danger. Consequently, all books of reference on the subject will tell you that Inaccessible Island has never been explored, and that no human foot has ever been set upon its shores."

Von Eimar smiled blandly and lit a cigar. The faces of his companions lengthened.

"Dios mio!" blazed Luis Ramiro excitedly. "You will lead us into the trap, Von Eimar? A barren island, inaccessible, without harbour? Is this the joke, senor capitán?"

The pale blue eyes of Von Eimar glinted like polished steel. The South American's torrential eloquence died away promptly and abruptly like the jamming of a machine-gun.

"If you do not mind, Luis Ramiro—I have not finished yet!" Von Eimar spoke with all that icy, gentle suavity that his hearers knew to be a danger signal; and Luis Ramiro wilted.

"That is Inaccessible Island, my friends, as it is known to the world," resumed Von Eimar. "But it happens that the world does not know everything. Some years ago—four years before the Great War, to be precise—a German vessel happened to be surveying these waters. The professor and hydrographer in charge paid particular

attention to Inaccessible Island. That attention amply repaid him.

"In brief, he discovered that Inaccessible Island, so long considered to be uninhabitable, had, in fact a most secure and natural harbour hidden from view by a projecting headland, and connected with the open sea by a narrow and intricate channel through the shoals and coral reefs. He found that, with care, a large vessel could be navigated into this unknown and unsuspected harbour, and that once inside it could remain absolutely lost to the outside world."

The others hung intently on his words.

"At this time I may say that this government vessel was surveying the seas in preparation for the Great War, which everyone then knew to be imminent. The German Admiralty at once decided to utilise Inaccessible Island as a secret naval base, and to that end large quantities of imperishable war materials, coal, oil, ammunition, and other stores, including, I believe, a seaplane in parts ready for assembling, were sent out and housed in one of the innumerable caves that honey-combed the island shores.

"As it happened, however, the need for this secret island base never materialised. Your British Navy," Von Eimar bowed stiffly towards Ronald Westdale, "remained unchallenged in the Southern Ocean. But the secret was still kept, and while I was engaged in Secret Service work during the War, I had full access to all charts, maps, and records of the island—the subject interested me. By a curiously lucky chance when on Nemesis Island, I found that Dietz, who is now our quartermaster, was one of the crew who surveyed and mapped that island in 1910."

With that he paused and looked grimly from one to the other, then let his clenched fist fall with a crash to the table.

"The secret harbour still exists upon Inaccessible Island. The stores are still there—the coal, for instance, which we so greatly need. Inaccessible Island shall be our secure bolt-hole until the naval hunt for us has died down."

There was a pause for one minute, and then came a loud hail from the look-out in the top:

"Land ahead!"

The Hidden Harbour!

IT was about four in the afternoon when the Vengeance, her engines now slowed down to five knots, steamed in under the lee of Inaccessible Island.

Ronald Westdale, coming forward on to the iron foredeck, which still bore the bomb-hole made by the Dutch war-planes, found young Roderick Drake, the son of Morgan Drake, Britain's master-agent, whom Von Eimar was holding as a hostage and prisoner, gazing intently upon the high, serrated peaks of the island etched against the blue skies.

"So this is Inaccessible Island, eh?" observed the English ex-naval lieutenant, resting his hand on Roy's shoulder as he followed the direction of his gaze. "A barren, lonely spot, it looks, doesn't it? Even now I can hardly believe in this secret harbour of which Von Eimar speaks."

"You're right, Ron." Roy Drake nodded.

With the exception of Hilarity Hinton, the cheery little Cockney ex-burglar, Ronald Westdale was the only one among that lawless, murderous crew for whom Roy Drake could have the slightest sympathy or regard.

Forward, crowding in a mass, with staring eyes, the convict pirates gazed upon the rugged, purple contours of the island before them.

Soaring high above the silver masses of foam that lashed its rocky base, Inaccessible Island towered upwards in sheer, perpendicular heights into the windy blue, four or five hundred feet at the lowest. Inexpressibly silent and lonely it looked amid the vastness of watery wastes. Here and there were clefts and narrow breaks in the precipitous bluffs and cliffs, but there was not an inch of beach; and sharp, jagged fangs of rock guarded its foot, like the teeth of sea dragons half submerged, bathed in thunderous waves and eternal spray. Little wonder that for two centuries it had been Inaccessible Island, in fact as well as by name.

With Von Eimar on the fore-bridge, in close consultation with Dietz at the wheel, and the little petrol launch leading the way with a man heaving the lead, slowly the Vengeance nosed its threading way between the mazes of sea shoals and treacherous undertow and sword-sharp reefs of coral. The slightest deviation from the proper course would have spelt disaster for the Vengeance and all her crew.

Fifteen fathoms, ten fathoms, five fathoms. Listening to the shouted calls of the leadsmen in the motor-boat, Roy Drake felt the hair on his scalp stiffen. In and out of the underwater labyrinth with its treacherous tidal races Von Eimar guided his pirate cruiser.

"Look!" exclaimed Westdale, catching Roy by the arm. "The harbour mouth. Would you believe it? It's like magic!"

Giant cliffs boomed with the echoes of the Vengeance's steam siren as the craggy portals of the harbour unfolded before them. A great, rocky promontory, curving seawards like a mountainous sickle, effectively hid the entrance from the most powerful binoculars of any ship that might be riding off-shore. As they glided in, it was just as if the peaked summits and precipices were swinging round upon a hidden pivot.

A deep, narrow, winding gorge, like a miniature Norwegian fiord, let the slowly steaming pirate cruiser into the inner mysteries of Inaccessible Island.

Utter astonishment found voice in the babbling cries of the convict pirates as they found themselves gliding into a calm, still, beautiful lagoon of sapphire blue shored in by steep cliffs and sandy coves, a shell of exquisite grandeur.

From the sea Inaccessible Island was grim, bare, sterile, a stony outcrop of rock breaking from the waters. Within, by a most amazing contrast, it was an island fairyland. Green, feathery coconut-palms clothed the slopes of the ringed hills in a garment of luxuriant verdure. Silver-white sands of dazzling brightness ran down to the breathless pool of sapphire waters that mirrored the grey, grim lines of the pirate war-ship as she glided to a full stop.

Yells rent the clear, warm, invigorating air. Even those hardened and calloused scoundrels from Nemesis Island could not fail to appreciate the beauties of the island forests and ravines as they dropped anchor with a reverberating boom that shook echoes from every rocky cliff and precipice, causing scores of brilliant tropical birds to rise, screaming, like handfuls of jewels tossed up into the bright glare of the sun.

"What a refuge!" cried Ronald Westdale. "All the navies in the world could be hanging about outside and never dream that a ship could be

hidden here. The only possibility of discovery is that of an aeroplane flying directly overhead, and that's one chance in a million!"

The Burying of the Bullion!

GREAT fires roared and crackled, red and smoky against the stars. Around, the serrated rows of hills forming the outer ring of Inaccessible Island looked on in hushed majesty, as the moon silvered their peaks.

"We're pirates now, and who cares how?"

Yo ho for a bottle, and let's have our fling.

We've got all the gold, secure in the hold,

So, ho for the bottle! And let it go with a swing!"

Leaping, flame-lit rays and inky shadows played upon the tanned, unshaven, villainous faces of the convicts and pirates as they lolled upon the crisp, warm sands, and sang their pirate song.

A little apart, resting his back upon the stem of a coconut palm, Roderick Drake sat aside and watched. The strains of a piano-acordion tinkled faintly through the riotous clamour. Near to him stretched Mikhail Lebedoff, sleeping heavily in spite of the uproar. For the past forty-eight hours the Russian ex-naval officer had superintended his pounding, flogging engines, dozing only in fitful snatches, during that nerve-straining flight after the sinking of the Sylvia Bay, and now he slumbered as only a man could who was utterly worn out by fatigue and tension.

A few yards away, too, squatted Governor Zarda, once prison-governor of Nemesis Island; and with him Admiral Merieski, former commander of the Vengeance, when she had been the cruiser Zernac, of the Varland republic. Both men were shackled by iron rings clamped round their legs, and stapled by a chain to a palm-tree.

Few who had known these two in their glory would have recognised them now, ragged, coal-black, and broken with the hellish toil and heat of the stokehold.

Roderick Drake, watching through the ruddy fire-flickers, beheld a stack of heavy, oaken, rope-handled cases piled on the fringe of the camp. These, he knew, contained the bullion taken from the ill-fated Sylvia Bay. Atop of them sat Killer Moran, speaking rapidly and in low, animated tones to Luis Ramiro and a group of others.

Just then the flap of a tent under the palms stirred, and Von Eimar, immaculate in white ducks, strolled towards the group.

Killer Moran did not notice the pirate captain until he was close upon the group, within a few feet of Roderick Drake, who sat on the sands.

When he did, he stopped speaking as though paralysed.

"Pray go on, Moran," said Von Eimar easily, waving a plump hand. "Don't mind me. I like men who speak their minds. A little meeting, I perceive. Well, well! I am glad that some of you, at least, take an interest in the enterprise, instead of swilling and wallowing like those pig-dogs yonder," and he jerked a fat thumb contemptuously towards the rowdy revellers in the firelight.

Ronald Westdale, Dr. Nieuwe, Hilarity Hinton, and several more, attracted by the scene, strolled up at this juncture, and Roy's view was blocked by the

gathering figures. Quite a crowd was ringed round in a few seconds.

Noisily Moran cleared his throat. His close-set little eyes were like those of a cat about to spring.

"It's about the durocks, boss," he said thickly and defiantly.

"I beg your pardon, Moran?" Von Eimar smiled indulgently. "You will have to speak in the English language. I fear I am not conversant with the American language."

"About the bullion, chief." Killer scowled at the subtle mockery and implied contempt in Von Eimar's steel-smooth tones, but he dared show no open resentment. He continued, expressing himself in English as best he could, banging thick, horny fingers upon one of the cases to emphasise his words. "This hyar bullion, boss. We wants you to put us wise. It's not what you'd call anyhow safe as the Bank of England on these hyar sands. How long will we be coolin' our toes on this pesky island, cap?"

Von Eimar reflected, pulling at his underlip with a fat finger and thumb.

"For a month at least, men. First"—he ticked off the items on his fingers, speaking loudly and clearly for all to hear—"the seas hereabouts will be thick with warships for weeks to come, until they come to believe our fake wireless message that we had struck a reef and were foundering. Secondly, until the alarm has been lulled, no other ships will we find to capture—at least, none with bullion and such-like aboard, which is what we want. Third, the damage caused by the Dutchmen's bombs must be repaired. Last of all, not one in ten of you is a trained seaman. Westdale and I must knock some idea of handling the guns into you, in case we meet with a warship in one of our future raids."

Killer Moran glared furtively out of one half-closed eye at Von Eimar.

"Thet bein' so, cap, I'd like to pass a suggestion. This hyar bullion! Let's park it—cache it somewhar in some likely hide-out. If the cruiser were sunk, an' we made a getaway in the boats—fur instance—it would be o' no manner o' use to us at the sea bottom. So I says, put it away somewhar, in secret. I'm sayin' nuthin' of any man in perticklar, but thar's men hyar I'd trust about as far as I could throw a ton o' coals with my li'l finger. You parks it, cap, an' twelve selected men o' the crew is witnesses. Is thet fair?" And he glanced over the massed faces of the pirate crew, most of whom were by now drawn to the scene.

A shout of approval greeted his inquiry.

Slowly Von Eimar nodded his straight-backed head.

"Excellent, Moran. As it happens, I was about to make some such suggestion myself. You have merely forestalled me. Let us choose the twelve witnesses, and we will set about locating a secret cache immediately."

Ronald Westdale, Killer Moran, Ramiro, Dr. Nieuwe, and Hilarity Hinton, the Cockney, were all among the twelve chosen by the crew. The cases of bullion were at once transhipped into the petrol-launch, and, with a hurricane lamp hoisted to the masthead, Von Eimar himself steered them under the shadowy arch of a cavern that burrowed far under the mountainous cliffs.

"The island is honeycombed with these sea caves," the leader said, as the lantern rays quivered over inky swirls and eddies as the motor-boat chugged

forward, diving into a maze of rocky arches and caves. "In one of them is hidden the secret supplies of coal and other stores which the German Government so thoughtfully provided many years ago. Choose one of these clefts in the cave walls, my friends, and we will duly bury the bullion and draw up the necessary map."

A spot was chosen, and deep in the sable shadows of the sea-cave they laboured, with clink of spade and pick, dragging the heavy bullion-cases over the rough rock in the lantern-light, and burying them deep in a dark fissure under piles of stones and boulders. The location of the hiding-place was carefully noted, and drawn up on a map by Von Eimar, eager, sweat-streaked faces peering over his broad shoulders as he scrawled in his note-book.

Like men with some guilty secret on their conscience, they sat silently as the boat throbbed and foamed once more on the inky, lapping waters to the outlet of the caves.

With his close-set, shifty eyes peering slyly upon Von Eimar as he sat at the tiller, Killer Moran lowered his bullet head and whispered something into the ear of Luis Ramiro, which might have interested the chief pirate had he overheard it. Significant, too, were the glances the pair exchanged as they fondled the holstered guns in their belts.

The motor-launch shot out from under the beetling cliff, and her bow-ripples flashed milky white under the radiant moon.

"I wonder if my friends entertain the same charming thoughts for me as I do of them?" Von Eimar soliloquised grimly, as, after the launch had been tied up by the beach, he stalked back to his tent under the twinkling stars. "Twelve men on this island, besides myself, know the secret of this treasure cache—that is, twelve men on this island know too much!"

The Monster of the Deep!

"**H**EAVE-HO, there! Heave! Steady! Careful with those sacks, now!"

Weird echoes rumbled and reverberated hollowly throughout the natural, rugged vaults and arches of the sea-cavern. Flaring torches illuminated the caves with flickering patterns of red and black, hovering and quivering over the pitchy, still water.

Tons of coal, intended for that German war raider that never came, were piled into the shadowy recesses of the caves of Inaccessible Island. Under the supervision of Killer Moran and Luis Ramiro, the convict pirates were shovelling out the black lumps and blocks, filling sacks to replenish the coal bunkers of the Vengeance, nearly emptied in that wild rush to the secret island harbour. Files of black, dusty, half-naked men ran to and fro, stooping as they balanced the hundredweight bags on their backs; and, one after another, they dumped them into the waiting boats that ferried them under the cave-arches to the cruiser in the lagoon.

It was heart-breaking work. The Killer, with a black cigar jutting out from his mouth, stood upon a jut of rock overlooking the cave passage, with a lash coiled in his big fist, and any convict that skulked or faltered felt its stinging knots cracking round his legs.

Luis Ramiro, his black eyes glittering,

stalked to and fro like a cat, playing with his long, slender stiletto.

Outside, in the blazing sunshine, Von Eimar was drilling some of the best fighting-men of the convicts; on the cruiser's gun-deck, Westdale was giving instruction in the loading and sighting of the long six-inch and eight-inch guns in the turrets. On a high, naked spire of rock that dominated the island a watchman was posted, ensconced in a hidden cleft, and sweeping the ocean rim with his glasses.

Roderick Drake rubbed his sore and blistered palms as he unshipped the oars and allowed the dinghy to float gently against the flat rock ledge in the cave that served as a landing-stage. At Von Eimar's orders he had been spared the task of handling the coal-sacks, though the rowing of the heavily laden boat was hard work enough.

"Whe-e-ew!" Hilarity Hinton, the Cockney, gasped stertorously, as he swung a hundredweight sack over his head and shoulders into the boat.

He paused a moment, rubbing his perspiring brow with a blackened hand, stretching his muscles and sinews as he gazed across the inky cave waters. Then his eyes rounded, and he let out a whistling gasp of surprise and confusion.

"Lor', lumme! W-what—is—it? Blow me, I've got the 'orrors! I'm seeing things! D—do you see wha-what I see?"

Surprised, Roy Drake slewed round on the thwart amidships, following the direction of the Cockney's pointed, shaking finger.

Then he, too, uttered a gasp of amazement and horror. His eyes started in his head. His hair stiffened, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

Coal-sacks crashed and clashed to the rocky, fissured floor; men yelled, staring and pointing into the shadowy depths of the water cavern. Killer Moran let the cigar fall from his dropped jaws, his fingers trembling as they fumbled for the guns holstered in his belt.

A strange, nightmare horror was uncoiling from the surface of the cave pool.

Peering through the half-light, Roy Drake saw, first, what appeared at one glance to be a huge, writhing sea-snake, but which afterwards resolved itself into a long, flexible, pendulous tentacle waving in the air; secondly, a metallic, globular head, topped with a horny protuberance between the round and glowing eyes. Before their startled and terrified gaze, this monstrous object floated on the inky swirls and eddies, and then the first tentacle was joined by others, five or six wriggling upwards, and jointed with curved spikes like claws.

The panic was indescribable. Hardened convicts threw themselves flat upon the rocks, cowering and babbling in their terror. Slowly the Thing swam towards the rocky platform, glassy eyes fixed upon the paralysed humans, barring the outlet to the lagoon. The claws wrenched a jut of rock from a ragged column, and, brandishing this boulder above its head, the Thing floated so close that the water ripples lapped against the rock of the landing-stage.

One man let out a screech that was hardly human, magnified a thousand-fold by the echoes of the dim cavern vaults.

That released the tension. In mad, unreasoning panic the pirates ran for the higher and dry caves, jamming

together in a hopeless confused mass at the narrow passage-ways. Men fell gasping, and were trampled underfoot. With the snapping of that tautened stillness, Roy Drake acted. Instinctively as the boat rocked with the wash of the slowly gliding monster, he tore a carbine from the nerveless hands of one of the guards, who was cowering like a jelly in the bows.

Crack! Cra-ck! Crack, crack! Thunderous echoing reports revolved around the caves as he pressed trigger. Flames spurted from the muzzle as he aimed for the monster's goggling eyes. Pi-ing!

Either his startled nerves had caused his hands to shake, or the rocking of the boat on its keel spoiled his aim. The bullets glanced off that smooth, round, metallic head as if it had been made of reinforced steel. None of the staring eyes were touched. Above him flourished one of those hovering tentacles, and, losing his footing, he pitched head-first into the water as the gunwale was crunched like paper.

Rising in a mist of dripping water he paddled for the rock ledge, gripping its rough, uneven surface with his fingers. A loud scream rang on his ears.

Glancing around as he hauled himself flat upon the rock, Roy was appalled to see a limp human form wriggling and dangling in the monster's grip. It was the convict from whom he had snatched the carbine. The man hung poised in mid-air, screaming in peals of terror as the clawing talons gripped him round the waist, arms and legs beating wildly and hopelessly.

Another tentacle shot out, swooping towards Roy. He ducked, darting into the inkiest shadows, scrambling over boulders and coal-sacks towards the cave openings high above the pool.

He reached it just in time. Over a barrier of rocks and stones he plunged, to stumble upon Killer Moran and Hilarity Hinton as they crouched in the narrow archway.

Killer Moran, who was a coward at heart, like most gunmen, simply groaned and grovelled in terror.

Coolly Roderick Drake picked up a magazine rifle that had been dropped in the panic flight of the convicts, and squirmed into a firing position between two boulders.

When he looked down into the cavern pool, it was to see that the monster had sunk under the surface, though the tentacles and the spiked protuberance between the eyes was still visible. The convict in its grip had ceased to scream and struggle. Either he had fainted, or he had died of fright.

Rapidly, and yet carefully, Roy Drake fired, emptying the magazine, with every buttress and dome of the great cavern ringing with the echoes.

Lowering the smoking rifle he gazed down into the disturbed pool, flashing an electric torch that he borrowed from Killer Moran.

The monster of the pool had disappeared. One solitary tentacle alone remained in sight, carrying the limp form of its victim aloft. That, too, began to descend. Slowly it sank from sight. In a revolving suction of waters it followed that hideous head, drawing the insensible figure of its victim to the depths, till at last only a few swirls and eddies remained to show that it was not some nightmare dream.

Roy shuddered, and felt sick, the rifle sagging in his loosened grip. Though the convict he had just seen dragged to his death-dive had been

guilty of a dozen crimes, culminating in treason and murder, he could not but feel for the wretch in his dreadful fate.

After a while, and very reluctantly, dismayed groups of convicts climbed down the rugged and natural steps from the coal-storage caves. Among them, at least, no word of pity or sympathy was heard for their lost comrade. All they were concerned for was the safety of their own valuable skins.

Killer Moran sprang from the rock platform into the petrol launch, which was tethered to a boulder.

"Cool on it, yuh bo's!" he snarled, his wicked eyes glinting, drawing and

cocking his long-barrelled Colts as the rest of the convicts made a rush. "I'll say yuh don't swamp this boat! I'm gonna fetch the boss. He's got all the grey matter in thet bonehead of his, so he kin deal with this—whatever it is. Start up thet engine, young Britisher."

Obediently Roy threw open the throttle, and, leaving the rest of the convict pirates in a halting mass on the rocky ledge, the motor-launch foamed through the shadowy sea caves out to the vivid sunlight of the lagoon, where Von Eimar was drilling his men on the sandy beach.

Von Eimar rubbed his nose, and
(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.

WELL, chums, I've just spent a pleasant hour going through my post-bag. Among the many letters is one from John Jefferies, of Horsham, who writes to ask if I can supply him with issues of the MAGNET dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton at Greyfriars. He says that he is willing to pay half-a-crown apiece for such copies. Evidently my chum is unaware of the fact that these stories are being republished in our companion paper, the "Gem." Save your money, John, by purchasing a copy of the "Gem" each week! I strongly urge all you fellows who have recently swelled the ranks of the happy band of "Magnetites" to take advantage of the opportunity of reading the splendid yarn dealing with:

"THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!"

now running in our champion school-story companion paper—the "Gem." You'll say thanks for the tip, believe me!

A query regarding an old superstition comes from "Magnetite," of Newark. He wants to know

ARE PEACOCK FEATHERS UNLUCKY?

Not any more than anything else. The superstition of peacock feathers being unlucky comes from the days when people believed in the "evil eye." Even now, in certain parts of the world, people believe that if the "evil eye" is cast upon them they will suffer a variety of ills. The opened tail of a peacock is dotted with many marks which have the appearance of eyes. Superstitious people believed that these were reflections of the "evil eye," and thus the peacock's feathers gained the reputation of being unlucky!

Here is an interesting item of news which I came across the other day.

DO YOU WANT TO BUY AN ISLAND?

If you do, now is your opportunity! And it will be a British island, too! There are three of them for sale—

Mingalay, Pabbay, and Berneray, and they are situated in the Outer Hebrides, sixty miles from the mainland. These three islands are owned by an Englishman, who is getting tired of the loneliness. And I don't blame him, for on Mingalay, where he lives, there is only a four-roomed cottage, a disused chapel-house, and one landing ground. A boat calls once a week in the summer, and once a fortnight in the winter. Occasionally, a shepherd lives on the island, and there are men tending the light-house on Barra Head. If any of you are feeling like living a Robinson Crusoe existence, you can do so—and have three islands to yourself instead of one! But it will cost you about £3,000, the sum the owner is asking for the islands!

Of course, you've heard the old saying:

"EVERY DOG HAS HIS DAY!"

Well, the dogs of a town in Hungary have certainly had their day! The local councillors decided to increase the tax on dogs. But dog-owners—and their dogs—weren't going to take that lying down. The owners held an indignation meeting. The next time the local council met, along went the dog-owners and their dogs. The dogs were let loose in the council chamber. Then the fun started!

The dogs chased the councillors round and round the room. One big Alsatian picked on the burgomaster, and finally chased him into a cupboard, where he was forced to lock himself in. The rest of the councillors took to their heels and were chased by the indignant dogs.

And the dogs won the day! In consequence of this, the council held another hasty meeting and altered the bye-law which they had made. So the dog tax remains the same as it was before the uproar! Three cheers for the dogs!

And now we come to next week's bumper bill-o'-fare. Although

"THE BOGUS BEAK!"

By Frank Richards,

is the last story in our present series featuring Putnam van Duck and his ever-watchful gunman guardian, Poker Pike, I feel fully justified in saying it is unquestionably the best. So far, Poker Pike has put "paid" to all Chick Chew's enterprises. But Kidnapper No. 1 of the United States is a stickler with a professional pride to study. His final scheme to bring about success is a real corker!

Our supporting features, too, are as good as ever; further exciting chapters of our modern pirate story, a topical issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," an effusion from our Greyfriars Rhymester, and lastly, another chat with

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,477.

turned to Westdale. Around them crowded the excited, uneasy convicts. In the light of electric flashlamps the cavern pool looked as calm and innocent as a mill-pond.

"What do you make of it, Westdale?" he asked.

Ronald Westdale shrugged his broad shoulders.

"It's hardly believable," the English ex-naval lieutenant said. "But obviously some queer creature has its existence at the bottom of this pool. There are strange things in the sea. Some underwater monster, perhaps, unknown to science, that normally lives at the bottom of the ocean."

Von Eimar thrust out his broad underlip and nodded.

"That is the likeliest explanation, Westdale," he agreed. "Donner! There is no safety for us on this island while this creature remains alive. We'll see what a depth-charge can do towards shaking it up."

"Hey!" Killer Moran let out a fervent protest. "That won't do, cap! Yuh're likely to bring the roof of this hyar cave down onta us."

Von Eimar turned on him with an ugly scowl.

"I want none of your timid suggestions, Moran!" he rasped harshly. "I have no use for cowards, either. Get ready with that depth-charge, Westdale."

The whole subterranean world seemed to rock as that depth-charge exploded at the bottom of the pool. The echoes stunned them. They watched intently. When at last the whispered echoes died away, and the agitated surface of the underground lake became still once more, there was not a sign of the monster or its victim.

Ronald Westdale drew in a deep breath.

"We called this island a paradise when we landed yesterday," he said aside to Roderick Drake. "But it seems as though the devil's got it with a complimentary ticket."

(Has the depth-charge destroyed the hideous, unknown sea-monster, or is it lurking under the surface waiting to strike again? Boys, you're booked for a real feast of thrills in next week's chapters of this powerful modern pirate yarn!)

THE VENGEANCE OF BUNTER THE VENTRILOQUIST!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Oooooogh!" gurgled Bunter, as he came.

Mr. Quelch jumped to his feet. The Head, more slowly, rose in majestic wrath. Poker Pike, still gripping the back of Bunter's fat neck, followed the Owl of the Remove in.

"What—" thundered the Head.

"Owl! Leggo! I didn't—I wasn't!" spluttered Bunter. "I—ow—leggo!"

"I guess I've brung this here guy to put you wise, sir!" said Poker calmly. "Mebbe you'll listen a piece!"

"This outrage—" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Aw, pack it up!" barked Poker. "This here gink has got a stunt of imitating other guys' toots, and he sure did string me yesterday about that Putnam van Duck. I guess it was this here fat gink what phoned me, making me believe it was Quelch—"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Head.

"Sez you!" grunted Poker.

"I cannot believe—"

"One moment, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, his eyes gleaming with a gleam that made Billy Bunter wish, from the bottom of his fat heart, that he was not so wonderfully clever a ventriloquist. "It is certainly possible that a trick has been played. This boy Bunter has an absurd trick of imitating voices—he has been punished for playing such tricks."

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

"Bunter, did you leave the Form-room during my absence this morning?"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Not for a moment, sir! And—and I couldn't have got on your phone, sir, in your study, without getting out of the Form-room, sir, could I? I never left the Form-room, sir, for a second! You—you can ask Wharton. He—he called me back."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"Then you left the Form-room?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir! I—I've just told you I didn't!" wailed Bunter. "Besides,

the beast smacked me yesterday, sir—"

"What?"

"He smacked me on my bags, sir," gasped Bunter, "just because I imitated Van Duck's voice for—for a joke, sir! But I never thought of paying him out! The idea never came into my head, sir! I didn't think you'd be frightfully wild if you found him in the Form-room again, after the row last time, and I never phoned to Gosling's lodge, sir."

"You may leave Bunter to me, Mr. Pike," said the Head, in a deep voice. "Mr. Quelch, as it is clear that a trick was played, and Mr. Pike was deceived into supposing that you had requested him—"

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "I am, indeed, very sorry that Mr. Pike has been the victim of an absurd, practical joke, played by a boy in my Form. So far as I am concerned, the matter is at an end. Mr. Pike, I express my regret—"

"O.K.!" said Poker, and, with a duck of the bowler hat, he walked out of the study.

The Head slid the cable into the wastepaper-basket.

"C-c-c-can I go now, sir?" stuttered Bunter.

"You may go with your Form-master, Bunter!" said the Head grimly. "Mr. Quelch, I think I can rely upon you to administer adequate punishment—"

"You can, sir!" said Mr. Quelch, with equal grimness. "Come with me, Bunter."

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

The Head's reliance on Mr. Quelch proved to be well-founded. From the terrific howls that proceeded from Quelch's study, a few minutes later, it was clear—painfully clear—that adequate punishment was being administered. To Billy Bunter it seemed more than adequate!

THE END.

(So much, then, for Billy Bunter and Poker Pike. But what's Chick Chew lying doggo for? You'll be surprised when you read: "THE BOGUS BEAK!" the final yarn in this exciting series. Be sure to order next week's MAGNET early, chums!)

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DOCTOR BIRCHEMALL'S
BANK HOLLERDAY!
By DICKY NUGENT

"Hurry up, you fellows!" cried Jack Jolly, as he burst into the Fourth Form dormitory at St. Sam's on Bank Hollerday morning. "The sharrabang waits without!"

"Hooray!" cheered the Fourth, as they started tumbling out of bed. Jack Jolly looked rather alarmed.

"Quiet, you asses!" he hissed. "Remember that we want to get away without Doctor Birchermall knowing! If he guesses we're going out for the day in a sharrabang, it's ten to one in doonutts, he'll want to come with us. Hurry up!"

The Fourth needed no further bidding. They started washing and dressing at lightning speed, grinning all over their faces at the mere thought of getting away for a day without arousing the Head's suspicions.

Little did they dream that the man they wanted to dodge was listening to every word they said! Nevertheless, it was so. Doctor Birchermall had seen Jolly going down to the gates that morning, and wondering what was in the wind, had hurriedly dressed and followed him up the stairs on his return.

A grim, sardonic smile appeared on the Head's face, as he heard what was said in the dormitory.

"Aha! So the disporting young rascals want to dodge me, do they?" he muttered. "It's like their cheek. I must say! Bank Hollerday or no Bank Hollerday, I'm going with 'em!"

Where Doctor Birchermall sneaked off to after that was a mystery not to be solved till a little later in the day.

There was no sign of him five minutes afterwards, when the Fourth Formers crept stealthily down the stairs, and the juniors were in grate glee when they manniked to reach the gates without running into him.

"There's the sharrabang!" cried Jack Jolly, pointing to a winking motor-coach that was drawn up at the side of the road. "All aboard!"

The Fourth swarmed into the sharrabang in a couple of jiffies, and Jack gave the order to the driver to start; and soon they were tearing through the country-side at a spanking speed!

The young hollerday-makers' spirits rose high, as the sharrabang took them further and further away from St. Sam's, and it wasn't long before their voices were ringing out in many a lusty chorus. Jack

Jolly, who was famous as an organiser, had brought mouth-organs for himself and his pals, and these added greatly to the musical efforts of the Fourth. Everything seemed set for a really ripping Bank Hollerday!

In their excitement, the fellows took little notice of the driver. Had they done so, they might have observed one or two peculiar features about him. To begin with, he was wearing goggles, although the wind-screen made them superfluous; then again, he had his coat-collar turned up, although it was a hot day; and as if these were not enough, he kept on larking to himself as though he was enjoying a secret joke of his own!

But it was not till afterwards that the fellows remembered all this about the driver. Consequently, a long interval went by without anyone suspecting a thing; and it was only when the sharrabang arrived at a big town and came to a stop outside a museum, that they got the first inkling that something was wrong.

"Look where we've stopped!" ejaculated Frank Fearless.

"Oh, crums! It's a museum!"

Everybody stared at the driver, who was just turning down his coat-collar and removing his goggles. Imagine their disgust when they recognised the sallybrated beard and familiar features of Doctor Alfred Birchermall himself!

"It's the Head!" gasped Jack Jolly.

"Little me!" nodded Doctor Birchermall, with a leer. "I thought I'd give you a pleasant little surprise, boys; so I sent the sharrabang driver to the school kitchen to have breakfast, and took his place myself. I hope you're all pleased to see me! We will combine business with pleasure by spending the day visiting various museums and studying fossils!"

"What-ah?"



The
GREYFRIARS HERALD
No. 191. EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON. June 6th, 1936.



TOM BROWN Calls for—
THREE CHEERS
FOR COKER!

"I know some topping museums where they keep awfully interesting fossils," rattled on Doctor Birchermall. "This is the first. Tumble out, boys, and we will go inside and see them."

"Oh, grate pip!"

The fellows tottered after the Head, with feelings that were too deep for words.

When they arrived inside the museum, their very worst fears were realised. Usually, when Doctor Birchermall gave a lecture, he could be relied on to entertain his listeners with frequent jokes and witty sallies; but this time he was fearfully boring and long-winded!

It wasn't long before the fellows were feeling in the mood for any move, however mad, that would get

fossils by himself for the rest of the day, if he liked!

Frank Fearless chuckled softly.

"It's a wheeze after my own heart, old chap! Let's pass the word round. I can drive the sharrabang all right!"

Jack Jolly nodded; and in the next few minutes the word was passed round for everybody to be ready to take to their heels on a given signal from the Fourth Form kaptin.

The Hollerday makers' chance came swiftly. All of a sudden, Doctor Birchermall broke off to bend down to tie up his shoelace. While he was engaged in this task, Jolly gave the signal.

In a couple of jiffies, the fellows were out of the room, fairly racing for the street. They heard a yell from behind them: "Hi! Stop, you young rascals!" But, heedless of the Head's order, they pored through the oggit and swarmed back into the sharrabang.

mannikid to hang on to a spare wheel tied to the back of the sharrabang!

Not till they reached the seaside resort of Winklow did Jack Jolly & Co. learn that. But they soon found it out, then, for the first person in the town to greet them was Doctor Birchermall! He looked more like a nigger minstrel than a headmaster. But he was still very much alive and kicking, and the hearts of the St. Sam's hollerday-makers sank right into their boots when they saw him!

"Boys!" cried the Head. "Oh, crums!"

"Please, sir, we thought—"

"You thought you'd let me behind in that museum, eh?" thundered Doctor Birchermall. "Well, yes, jolly well didn't, so there! Now hear your sentence!"

The dismayed Fourth Formers waited in fear and trembling. Was the Head going to order them to be birched and eggspelled? Or was he perchance going to make it even worse than that—something lingering with boiling oil in it, for instance?

But nothing like this was forthcoming. There was a peculiar glimmer in Doctor Birchermall's eyes—a strangely yowman and kindly gleam that belied his stern aspects! When he spoke again, they saw found out the reason for it.

"I sentence you all to said the Head, in slow, solemn tones, "TO ENTER THE REST OF THE DAY, ENTIRELY AT YOUR OWN EGGSPELSE TO A REALLY RIPPING BANK HOLLERDAY!"

TOP HAT CRICKET THRILLED CROWD
Declares LARRY LASCELLES

When I set out to convert my fellow-masters to the idea of an Old-fashioned Cricket Match between Masters and Boys in aid of the Courtfield Cottage Hospital, I had no idea I was organising a game destined to give the crowd the biggest thrill of the Summer Term. My first object was to provide laughs—not thrills. Unintentionally, I provided both!

"Eh?"

"And if you don't give me a really tip-top time, there's going to be trouble for you when we get back to St. Sam's!" added Doctor Birchermall. "Let me eggspain, boys! When I decided to join you today, I had two ideas. The first was to give you a scare by making you think you were in for a toor of museums. The other was to have a jolly good Bank Hollerday when the joke was over. Twiggy-woo?"

"Oh, grate pip!" gasped the Fourth.

"Now get bizzzy, boys!" grinned Doctor Birchermall.

It took the Fourth fully a minute to realise that the Head was in earnest. But once they did realise it, they were all out to give the Head a real good time! For the rest of that day it was one long round of merriment—and, strange as it seemed, the revered and majestic headmaster of St. Sam's threw himself into the fun and frolic and feasting with all the zest of a Second Form fag and enjoyed himself as much as anybody!

As they drove back to St. Sam's that night, everybody agreed—and Doctor Birchermall was the loudest in doing so—that the best and brightest day out in all history had been Doctor Birchermall's Bank Hollerday!

the Courtfield Cottage Hospital, I had no idea I was organising a game destined to give the crowd the biggest thrill of the Summer Term. My first object was to provide laughs—not thrills. Unintentionally, I provided both!

Certainly nobody could complain of any lack of fun. The mere appearance of the Masters' Team, of which, by the way, I had the honour to be captain, drew roars of laughter from the crowd. And no wonder! For we all wore top-hats and frock-coats—and to complete the picture, most of us wore flowing whiskers as well!

As for the boys, they were, as I heard Cherry of the Remove put it, a sight for sore eyes! Some wore top-hats and tails, and others military and naval uniforms of a century ago. Loder, incidentally, with a humour which we masters didn't altogether relish, strolled out smoking a long church-warden pipe!

The game was hilariously funny at the beginning. There were only two stumps to a wicket, and the space between them was sufficiently wide to allow the ball through without shifting the single ball between the two; and Wingate, with the first ball of the game, was thus able to "clean bowl" Mr. Twigg without getting him out! The crowd became almost hysterical over that, and the



laughter was continuous right through that over. Wingate and Mr. Twigg played to the gallery in fine fashion, Wingate bowling underarm and Mr. Twigg making very funny use of his bat. Others who followed them kept it up splendidly.

The game proceeded on these lines for most of the afternoon, and it was not until late in the day when the crowd had laughed till they were almost tired of laughing that the players sobered down to anything like serious work. What caused the change was Wingate's sudden waking up to the fact that his team were in danger of losing. It had been taken for granted that the boys, most of whom were regular First Eleven men, would beat the Masters without any difficulty. But we old stagers had taken advantage of the way the game was "guyed" to pile up the respectable total of 180 runs; and some determined bowling on the part of myself and Mr. Twigg had got the Boys out for a bare 115, and enabled us

No, I'm not joking, chaps. I really mean it. I believe in giving credit where credit is due; and if three cheers aren't due to Coker for what he did when those sneak-thieves got away with our clobber at the swimming pool last Wednesday, I'll eat my Sunday best topper!

Let's set out the facts in their stark simplicity, without any trimmings whatever. There was a whole crowd of us in the water. Coker, fresh from the changing-hut in a bright, new swimming costume, was standing on the bank yelling out advice to all and sundry on the art of swimming.

Suddenly the noise of a motor engine made Coker look round. He was just in time to see a stranger, wearing a hat pulled well down over his eyes, sling-

ing a load of clobber into a car that was standing by a changing-hut.

Coker yelled: "Hi! What are you doing?" and the man in the hat promptly jumped into the car, which then moved off down the cart-track towards the road.

Coker dashed to the hut and saw that every stitch of clothing we had left there had been taken. Without waiting even to sling a towel round his shoulders, he jumped on to his motor-bike and roared away down the cart-track after the clobber bandits!

Driving with his usual cheery recklessness, he caught up with the crooks on the road just before they reached Friardale. He then performed the acrobatic feat of jumping from his bike on to the running-board, gave the driver a sock on the chin that knocked him right out and brought the car to a stop. After that, he set about the man in the hat.

P.-c. Tozer, who rolled up just as Coker administered his second k.o., asked what was up, and was told. Five minutes later the crooks were driving back to the pool, with Tozer in the back and Coker bringing up triumphantly as the rear-guard on his still serviceable motor-bike. Not long after, we were all in possession of our stolen duds again, and the bandit pair were on their way to Courtfield police station!

Such are the bald facts about Coker's little adventure last Wednesday. Anyone who can read them and say it wasn't a brilliant achievement on Coker's part is jolly well prejudiced. The rest of you will doubtless be happy to join me in giving the old sport three rousing cheers!



WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



In a swimming gala held at Cliff House School, the winners were "Babs" Redfern for speed, Marjorie Hazeldene for style, and Phyllis Howell for endurance. Clara Trevlyn, the tomboy of Cliff House, unexpectedly won a prize for life-saving. Harry Wharton & Co. joined the girls at tea, and everything went "swimmingly"!

S. Q. I. Field, the Remove from New South Wales, has shown tremendous form this season at cricket. No matter how hot the sun, "Squiff's" fielding never loses its "edge." Against the Shell, he brought off a phenomenal catch which dismissed their best bat, Hobson. Hobson gasped and said "Squiff" was really the outside "edge"!

Horace Coker performed what was in reality a difficult trick when he was in the quad with the lariat put his motor-bike into a "broad" in the Courtfield High School. The authorities usually Street, and escaped with his life. But person intact! The bike looked when he inadvertently "roped a complete 'wreck,' and what up?" Mr. Front, Brownney's head Coker had listened to a "royal simply 'span' with horror! 'jaw' from the Head, he wished Apologising profusely, Brownney he had "rocked" the com was lucky to escape the "rope's" beforehand!

Tom Brown is very fond of practising in the quad with the lariat and has brought from his native New Zealand. The authorities usually Street, and escaped with his life. But person intact! The bike looked when he inadvertently "roped a complete 'wreck,' and what up?" Mr. Front, Brownney's head Coker had listened to a "royal simply 'span' with horror! 'jaw' from the Head, he wished Apologising profusely, Brownney he had "rocked" the com was lucky to escape the "rope's" beforehand!

Mr. "Larry" Lascelles, the maths. master, is a popular umpire in both senior and junior matches. "Larry" is never too busy—or too proud—to officiate on Little Side if he is needed. A "fin" damaged in the Great War prevents "Larry" from knocking up sixes as he used to do—but any Remove would give him a "glad hand"!

A quarrel between Skinner of the Remove and Angel of the Upper Fourth developed into a catch-as-catch-can fight. At one stage Skinner had his heel on Angel's neck. They were both scrambling on the ground when Mr. Capper arrived and severely cased them both. Harry Wharton & Co. were nearly "all in," too—with laughter!

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

THIS TALE RINGS TRUE!

On being told that Mr. Quelch had many "sterling" qualities, Skinner ruefully retorted: "Well, he's certainly a good 'tanner,' anyway!"

LOST!

Pump, Hoselines and Escape Ladder belonging to Remove Fire Brigade. Unless returned quickly in good order, we shall be "put out"—but the next fire won't. Apply, H. WHARTON, Hon. Sec.