

"The Boy Who Couldn't Run Straight!" Grand Greyfriars Yarn Inside

The Magnet 2^d

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



"STOP THIEF!"

PICKING POCKETS IS AS EASY AS SHELLING PEAS TO—

The Boy Who Couldn't RUN STRAIGHT!

By FRANK RICHARDS



Introducing HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS, and Bad Lad "SKIP."

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Very Peculiar Prank!

"ELP!" Billy Bunter blinked in sheer astonishment.

It was enough—more than enough—to astonish any fellow. And Billy Bunter's eyes almost popped through his spectacles with amazement.

The fat ornament of the Greyfriars Remove was sitting on a fence, under the shade of a tree, beside the Wimford road in Surrey, near Wharton Lodge.

The holidays were near their end.

Harry Wharton, and the fellows staying with him, had gone for a walk that afternoon. So had Bunter. But after a quarter of a mile, laziness had supervened. Bunter sat on the fence while the other fellows walked on. They were going to pick him up again on their way back. Bunter did not miss them. He had a bag of toffees to keep him company; and better company Bunter did not desire.

Bunter was expecting them along soon. He was blinking up the road, through his big spectacles. He had finished the toffees, so he was thinking of tea.

He did not see the Greyfriars fellows on the road. But he did see something that caused him to blink, and blink, and blink again, in great surprise.

From the wood on the other side of the road, a boy emerged. He stood looking up the road towards Wimford.

He did not observe Bunter under the shade of the tree across the road. He did not even glance in his direction. He stood motionless for several minutes; and Bunter, without much interest, supposed that he was looking for somebody coming from the direction of Wimford.

But when the stranger moved at last, his next proceeding amazed the fat Owl of Greyfriars.

By the roadside, where the boy stood, was a deep ditch, dry in the hot weather. The boy stepped to it, and jumped in.

That, in itself, was a peculiar proceeding. Billy Bunter stared at a check cap, which was all he could now see of the stranger. But the next proceeding was still more peculiar. From the deep ditch came the stranger's voice, calling

for help—or, to be more exact, for 'elp! The aspirate was conspicuously missing from the word.

"'Elp! 'Elp!"

Bunter could only blink in amazement.

Lazy as he was, a cry for help would have made Bunter move. But he was certainly not going to move now. The fellow had deliberately dropped into the ditch, under Bunter's eyes. He had jumped in, and obviously could have clambered out again, if he had wanted to do so. Had he fallen in by accident, he might, of course, have hurt himself, and been unable to climb out. But that was not the case, as Bunter had seen with his own eyes, and his own spectacles.

Why a fellow should jump into a ditch, and stay there and call for help, was a deep mystery to Billy Bunter. But it was not a mystery that he cared to exert himself to elucidate. He sat where he was, blinking.

"'Elp!" came the shout from the deep, dry ditch.

"Potty!" murmured Bunter. "Must be potty! Right off his rocker, I should think!"

"'Elp!"

There was a sound of running feet on the road.

From the direction of Wimford, six fellows came at a rapid trot. They were the Famous Five of the Remove,

and Wun Lung, the Chinese junior of Greyfriars.

It dawned on Bunter that the boy in the check cap had seen them coming in the distance before he jumped into the ditch, though they had not then been visible to the short-sighted Owl of the Remove.

Clearly, Harry Wharton & Co. had heard the cry for help, and put on speed, to arrive on the spot and see what was the matter.

Bunter grinned.

The fellow in the check cap was evidently pulling their leg. But why, was still a mystery.

Why a perfect stranger should jump into a ditch, where there were stinging-nettles, and make himself dusty and grubby, for the sake of an absolutely idiotic joke on a party of schoolboys, was quite a puzzle.

But it rather amused Billy Bunter to see the juniors taken in.

They were pelting up the road at great speed, going all out, to arrive on the scene, and render help if required.

Bob Cherry was in the lead, running like a deer. Close behind him was Harry Wharton; then came Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, running neck and neck—behind them, Johnny Bull, and after Johnny, Wun Lung. It was hot, that September afternoon, and Bunter grinned at the sight of six fellows pelting along in a blaze of sunshine—for nothing! Grinning,

the fat Owl of the Remove sat and watched.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he heard Bob Cherry roar. "What's up? Where are you?"

"Ere!" came the answer from the ditch. "Elp!"

Bob, panting for breath, came to a halt at the side of the deep ditch. He stared down at the boy half-hidden in ferns and nettles.

"Here you are, you fellows!" shouted Bob. "Chap fallen in the ditch! Can't you get out, kid?"

"I've 'urt my leg, falling in, sir! I slipped on the edge and fell in backwards!" was the reply.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Billy Bunter. Every word reached the fat Owl across the road.

Billy Bunter was a fairly good hand at prevarication; but this fellow in the check cap had nothing to learn from Bunter in that line. Even Bunter was startled to hear any fellow roll out barefaced untruths in that style.

But Bob Cherry, of course, had no doubts on the subject. He had not seen what Bunter had seen. Bob was only thinking of helping a fellow who had had such an awkward accident.

"We'll have you out in a jiffy!" he said. "I hope you're not much hurt! Come on, you fellows!"

All the juniors arrived on the spot. They looked down at the boy in the ditch with sympathetic looks. He was not a bad-looking fellow, with a rather chubby face and extremely keen dark eyes and curly brown hair. He was well-dressed, though in rather loud taste—his check cap could have been seen a long way off, his waistcoat had coloured stripes, and he wore a tie-pin that might almost have been a paper-weight.

Those details, however, did not matter to the Greyfriars fellows. They were all ready to help.

"Sorry you're hurt, kid!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll jolly soon have you out of that."

"The soonfulness will be terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; a remark that made the boy in the ditch blink.

Harry Wharton and Bob, regardless of the knees of their trousers, knelt on the edge of the ditch, and reached down, grasping the boy's hands to pull him out. The boy gave a yelp as he moved, as if of pain.

"Hold on a minute," said Bob. "You take my place, Johnny—I'll jump down and give him a bunk!"

"Right-ho!" said Johnny.

Dried mud, and nettles, were not attractive; but Bob jumped down into the ditch without hesitation.

He proceeded to give the stranger a "bunk"—and the boy in the check cap was helped up.

Hurree Singh and Frank Nugent got hold of him by the shoulders from above, as well as Wharton and Johnny Bull and little Wun Lung lent a hand. With a heave from below, and a combined pull from above, the boy was extracted from the ditch and landed on the road.

Bob scrambled out after him, rather dusty, and rather scratched. The boy in the check cap stood on his left leg—the other, apparently, was injured—and he swayed—and the juniors all gathered round him to give him support.

"Look here, you can't walk like that!" said Harry Wharton. "We shall have to get you a lift of some sort. Do you live near here?"

"If you young gents will 'elp me into that footpath, sir, it will be all right. I got a pal coming along soon, and he will 'elp me 'ome!" was the answer. "All

right if I jest sit down in the shade till he comes along."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors helped him along into the footpath, from which Billy Bunter had seen him emerge a quarter of an hour ago.

They all disappeared from Bunter's sight; and the fat Owl, grinning from ear to ear, got off the fence and rolled into the road, to meet them when they emerged from the wood again.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Doughnuts for Bunter!

"He, he, he!" That unmusical cackle greeted Harry Wharton & Co. as they came out of the wood into the sunny road.

They had left the boy in the check cap sitting on a log in the shade of the trees. Though rather breathless and dusty after their exertions, they were glad that they had arrived on the spot to render aid.

Why Billy Bunter greeted them with a cackle, grinning all over his fat face, they did not know.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you're rather duffers! Anybody could take you in! He, he, he!"

Some light-fingered person has relieved Harry Wharton & Co. of their cash and other possessions. Suspicion falls upon Wun Lung, the practical joker of the Greyfriars Remove, until Billy Bunter puts his schoolfellows wise!

"What does that mean, if it means anything, fathead?" asked Bob.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "You see, I saw it all!"

"You saw us help that chap out of the ditch? Anything funny in that, you cackling image?"

"He, he, he! Yes, rather! You see, I saw him jump in!" chortled Bunter. "He was pulling your leg all the time! He, he, he!"

The Famous Five stared at Bunter blankly.

"You saw him jump in?" repeated Harry.

"He, he, he! Yes."

"You potty ass! He fell in!" grunted Johnny Bull. "He told us so. Besides, his leg was hurt—"

"He, he, he!" howled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you take the cake! A lot of Simple Simons! He, he, he! That chap was watching you come up the road, and I suppose he saw the green in your eyes! He, he, he!"

"You gurgling gargoyle!" said Bob. "Are you trying to pull our leg, or what?"

"That chap was—and he got by with it!" roared Bunter. "He, he, he! Never saw fellows so easy to stuff! He, he, he! He never fell in—he jumped in—and he could have got out if he'd liked! He, he, he!"

"What utter rot!" said Frank Nugent. "Why should any fellow play such a fatheaded trick as that?"

"The rotfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, I dare say he noticed you

looked a silly lot, and thought it would be rather funny to pull your leg!" grinned Bunter. "I can tell you, I've been enjoying it. He, he, he! As good as a play to watch you! He, he, he! I'll bet you that chap is laughing no end! He, he, he!"

"You blithering, blethering, bloated bandersnatch!" said Bob Cherry. "That chap is sitting in the wood, hardly a dozen yards away, with a game leg!"

Bunter chuckled.

"Bet you he isn't!" he said. "Why should he stay there, when he can walk all right if he likes? Bet you he walked off the minute your backs were turned! He, he, he!"

"He couldn't walk," said Harry.

"He, he, he!"

"Fattee ole Bunter velly silly ass!" said Wun Lung.

"Bet you, if you like!" grinned Bunter. "I've got a packet of butterscotch in my pocket. I'll bet you that packet of butterscotch to a dozen doughnuts the day we go back to school that that chap's gone already."

The juniors glared at Bunter. That any fellow, an utter stranger to them, could or would have played such a silly trick, for no imaginable object, they did not believe for a moment. Billy Bunter's statement that they had been taken in, and been made fools of, was distinctly irritating.

"Done!" said Bob Cherry grimly. "We'll pin you down to that, Bunter! Show up the butterscotch, though!"

Bunter, grinning, extracted a large packet of butterscotch from his jacket pocket and held it up to view. The fact that it was still uneaten was due to the other fact, that the toffees had lasted Bunter till the episode of the boy in the check cap had drawn his attention.

"Right!" said Bob. "You're talking silly rot, and you know it! You can't help being a fool—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"But you can help being a cheeky fool! If you're right, I'll stand you a dozen doughnuts on the first day of term. If you're wrong, I'll put you to the torture."

"Eh? Wharrer you mean?"

"I mean, I'll take that butterscotch off you. Taking grub away from you is putting you to the torture, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! Mind, I shall jolly well hold you down to it!" said Bunter, slipping the butterscotch back into his pocket. "A dozen doughnuts on the first day of term at Greyfriars—"

"Yes, if that kid's gone! I know he isn't, as he couldn't walk with a game leg, and he's waiting for a friend to come along."

"He, he, he!"

"Easy enough to prove," said Harry Wharton. "Come on!"

The whole party turned off the road and entered the shady footpath in Winford Wood. From the road the thick trees hid the boy in the check cap from sight, but as soon as they entered the wood they had not the slightest doubt of seeing him where they had left him, sitting on the log in the shade, in full view.

They looked—and stared!

They saw the log on which they had left the boy. That, at least, was in full view. But it was untenanted. Nobody was sitting on it now. The boy in the check cap was gone—game leg and all!

"Why—what—where—?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Ho, he, he!"

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"He's gone!" stuttered Bob.

"The gonefulness is terrific!"

It was really startling. Only a few minutes ago the whole party had helped the boy along to that log, and he had hung on them heavily, apparently unable to put his damaged leg to the ground. Obviously, if he was as damaged as he had appeared to be, he could not have gone. But he was gone!

"Oh crumbs!" said Johnny Bull blankly.

"I—I—I dare say he's just stepped into the trees, or—or something!" said Bob. "I'll give him a yell!"

"He, he, he!"

"Shut up, Bunter, you cackling ass!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. His powerful voice rang far through the wood. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Are you there? Show up, kid—we want to see you!"

The echo of Bob's roar answered, booming among trees and thickets. But there was no other answer. Plainly the boy was gone.

"Well, my only hat!" breathed Bob.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

"It—it looks—" stuttered Wharton. "But—but why should any fellow, in his seven senses, play such an idiotic trick?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Oh, he spotted you for a set of goats, you know!" grinned Bunter. "He, he, he! I say, Cherry, don't forget those doughnuts when we go back to Greyfriars. He, he, he!"

Bob Cherry compressed his lips.

He was dusty, and he was rather scratched with thorns, and he owed Bunter a dozen doughnuts—because some born idiot had played a fat-headed practical joke with no sense in it!

Most irritating of all was Billy Bunter's grinning triumph. Bob would have liked very much, just then, to punch the head under the check cap. He barely resisted the temptation to punch Bunter's. In silence he tramped back to the road.

His friends followed him—puzzled, irritated, and annoyed. They had been made fools of—for no imaginable reason—and Bunter had watched them being fooled and enjoyed the scene—and now he was cackling with derision.

Faces were frowning as they walked on towards Wharton Lodge—with one exception. Bunter's was wreathed in grins, and he cackled incessantly, rather like an alarm clock that would not run down. At every stop on the way the Famous Five had to exercise great self-control—to resist the temptation to plant their boots on Bunter's tight trousers.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Following Bunter Home!

WUN LUNG closed a slanting eye at the Famous Five as he stumbled, and fell against Billy Bunter.

As he righted himself, he held in his little yellow hand a packet of butterscotch, behind Bunter's fat back.

Whereupon five frowning faces broke into smiles.

Bunter gave a grunt, and blinked round at the little Chinese. The butterscotch was behind Wun before Bunter's eyes, or spectacles, could fall on it.

"Clumsy ass!" grunted Bunter.

"Me failer 'long fat ole Bunter—"

"Well, fall on somebody else next time!" grunted Bunter. "You jolly nearly shoved me over, fathead."

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And the fat Owl of the Remove rolled on.

The Famous Five walked on, grinning—Wun Lung with the packet of butterscotch held behind him.

It was absolutely certain that Bunter would miss that butterscotch before long. Then, it was certain, there would be loud and anxious inquiry for the same—and an end, at least, of Bunter's derisive cackling.

The fat junior had not the remotest idea that it had been taken from his pocket. Wun Lung was clever at conjuring and sleight-of-hand tricks—almost as clever, in that line, as Kipps of the Remove. Bunter had not a suspicion.

The juniors wondered what Wun was going to do with it. They soon saw.

Walking a little behind Bunter, the Chinese junior, unseen by the fat Owl, tied a short length of string to the packet.

To the other end of the string he fixed a pin. Then, stumbling again, he fell against Bunter, and, in doing so, fixed the pin to the back of the fat junior's jacket.

Bunter gave a snort of annoyance.

"You clumsy heathen, will you stop walloping against me?" he howled.

"Velly solly, Bunter—"

"Yah! Clumsy fathead!"

"Me no walkee 'long Bunter any mole—me walkee 'long nicee old Bob Chelly," said Wun; and he moved round to the other side of the party.

The Greyfriars fellows walked on—all of them grinning now except Bunter.

Bunter was irritated.

However, the fat grin soon returned to his face. The Famous Five had been made fools of, and Bunter was not the fellow to let them forget it. Rather was he inclined to rub it in and keep up the subject till every fellow was fed up to the back teeth, and a little over.

"I wonder where that kid is now?" grinned Bunter. "Laughing like anything, I'll bet you. I say, you fellows, if you knew what a lot of fools you looked, yanking him out of that ditch, when he could have got out any minute, you—"

"Oh, give us a rest!" growled Johnny Bull.

"He, he, he! You got rather dusty, Bob—you've got some scratches! He, he, he! Of all the blithering asses! He, he, he!"

"Shut up!" roared Bob.

"He, he, he! You can't expect a chap not to be amused, when you make a set of blithering, dithering goats of yourselves!" chuckled Bunter. "Bet you that chap's killing himself with laughing! He, he, he!"

Bunter chortled—and, to his surprise, the other fellows chortled, too.

Bunter was still highly amused by the episode of the boy in the check cap. The Famous Five were amused by the sight of Bunter's butterscotch hanging down his back. So they were all amused.

"I say, you fellows!" Having covered about a hundred yards, Bunter was tired, and he came to a halt, diving his hand into his pocket for the butterscotch. "I say, no need to hurry in; 'tain't tea-time yet. Let's sit down and rest a bit—that bank looks nice and shady."

Six fellows came to a halt. They were not going to sit down and rest, but they were interested in Bunter's search for the butterscotch.

He groped in the pocket in which he had placed it, looked puzzled, and groped in another pocket. He failed to find it.

"I say, you fellows, did you notice

which pocket I put that butterscotch in?" he asked.

"Right-hand jacket pocket," said Bob, with a cheery grin.

"It doesn't seem to be there," said the perplexed fat Owl. "I say, I must have dropped it!"

"Feel in your other pockets," suggested Nugent.

Billy Bunter proceeded to do so. He felt in jacket pockets, waistcoat pockets, and trousers pockets. The sight of the packet of butterscotch, whisking at the end of the string behind him, was rather entertaining as he did so, and the juniors chuckled.

Bunter did not chuckle. He did not grin. His fat face was fearfully serious. The loss of foodstuffs was a serious matter!

"I say, you fellows, it's gone!" gasped Bunter. "I say, I must have dropped it. 'Tain't in any of my pockets! I must have left it behind!"

"Yes, I fancy it's behind you, old fat bean," agreed Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" snorted Bunter. "I'm not going to lose it! Look here, come back and help me look for it."

He turned round, to blink up the road, the packet of butterscotch whisking round behind him as he turned.

There was a yell of laughter from the other fellows.

"Oh, shut up cackling, and come back!" hooted Bunter. "I suppose you're not too lazy to walk back a few yards—even you!"

And the fat junior rolled back up the road, his eyes and his spectacles fixed on the ground, in search of the lost packet.

The Famous Five and Wun Lung cheerfully followed him, chortling as they watched the lost packet whisking at the tail of the fat Owl's jacket.

"I say, you silly, cackling asses, look for it!" yapped Bunter. "You may be able to see it before me."

"I'm afraid we couldn't possibly see it before you, Bunter!" said Bob, and his chums yelled.

Certainly, they were not likely to see that packet before Bunter, as it was tied on behind him!

"Well, look!" yapped Bunter. "I must have dropped it between here and the footpath. It must be somewhere on the ground."

"Think so?" asked Bob.

"You silly ass, where else could it be? Think it's hanging about in midair, or what?" snapped Bunter.

"I shouldn't wonder," chortled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be a silly chump! Look here, help a chap look for that butterscotch!" hooted Bunter. "We shall be late for tea, at this rate."

"Awful!" gasped Nugent. "Anything but that! Pile in, you fellows, or we might be late for a meal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. kindly helped Bunter scan the road for the lost butterscotch. Seven pairs of eyes, as well as a pair of spectacles, scanned the road, but no packet of butterscotch was to be seen on the earth.

Slowly they retraced the distance they had covered, as far as the footpath. Somewhere in that distance, Bunter had no doubt that he would spot the packet. But he did not spot it! Indeed, as he had no eyes in the back of his fat head, he had no chance at all of spotting it.

"Oh lor!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, it—it's gone! Some beast must have come along and picked it up! That cad you got out of the ditch, very



"I say, you fellows, my packet of butterscotch has gone!" gasped Bunter, turning out his pockets. "I must have left it behind!" "Yes, I fancy it's behind you, old fat bean!" agreed Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!" The fat junior was unaware of the fact that the butterscotch was fixed to his jacket by a length of string!

likely! Some beast! I say, some putrid cad has got my butterscotch!"

"Right on the wicket!" agreed Bob Cherry. "An absolute rotter is hanging on to that butterscotch!"

"An utter worm!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"A terrific toad!" chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"A flabby, frowsy frump!" said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove in surprise. The worst names he could think of were too good for the fellow who had his butterscotch. But he hardly expected the other fellows to think so!

Still, it was clear that they had the lowest possible opinion of the fellow who was hanging on to that packet of butterscotch.

"I wish I'd eaten it now," groaned Bunter. "I should have eaten it, really, only I was watching you fellows being made fools of after I'd finished the toffee. Now it's gone! I'd like to kick the beast that's got it!"

"So would I!" said Bob.

"Same here!" chuckled Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Me likee kicke that beastee velly muchee!" chuckled Wun Lung. "Me tinkee that beastee velly nastee beastee!"

"Absolute rotter!" said Bunter. "Filthy toad! Worm! Well, it's no good looking for it any longer. Let's get in to tea!"

"Let's!" agreed Harry Wharton.

They resumed their way to Wharton Lodge. Billy Bunter was silent and morose for some time. The loss of the butterscotch was a blow.

Silence was never so golden as when William George Bunter was silent, and

the chums of the Remove were duly thankful for the relief. But by the time Wharton Lodge came in sight Bunter re-started after the interval, so to speak.

"He, he, he! If you fellows knew what absolute fatheads you looked—he, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "I'd like to see any fellow pull my leg like that! Not so jolly easy to make a fool of me!"

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

"I'm wide, you know," said Bunter.

"You are!" agreed Bob.

"The widefulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "If the idiotic Bunter was not so preposterously wide he might have spotted the absurd butterscotch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh? Wharrer you mean?" yapped Bunter. "I should have spotted it if it had been there. That butterscotch is gone!"

"Suppose it followed you home?" suggested Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at him.

"You blithering idiot!" he said.

"How could a packet of butterscotch follow me home?"

"Bet you it does!" said Bob. "Bet you a dozen doughnuts to the dozen I owe you that it does."

"How could it?" shrieked Bunter. "Look here, I'll jolly well take that bet! That makes two dozen doughnuts you owe me!"

"Not yet!" grinned Bob. "It may make none I owe you, old fat man—if that packet of butterscotch follows you home."

"Oh, don't be a jabbering idiot!" growled Bunter. "Think it can walk, you fathead? Mad!"

The fat junior snorted, and rolled on. To Billy Bunter, at least, it appeared an absolute impossibility that the lost

packet could follow him home. To the fellows who saw it hanging at the tail of his jacket, it did not seem impossible!

They walked in at the gate of Wharton Lodge, and walked up the drive to the house—the lost butterscotch undoubtedly following Bunter home!

Colonel Wharton was in the hall when they entered.

The old military gentleman gave the schoolboys a nod and a kind smile. Then, as he spotted the packet hanging behind Bunter, he stared.

"What the dooce—" he ejaculated.

"That's Bunter's butterscotch, sir," explained Bob Cherry. "He lost it on the Wimford road, and I bet him a dozen doughnuts that it would follow him home."

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

Colonel Wharton stared, and then smiled.

"Well, it has certainly followed him home," he said. "No doubt about that."

"Eh!" ejaculated Bunter. "I've lost my butterscotch, sir! Some absolutely rotten cad has got it now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter plumped down in an armchair. The next moment he squeaked, and rebounded.

"Ow! What's that? I've sat on something!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the thump is in that chair?" howled Bunter. "It felt like a cardboard packet. Why—what—"

Bunter blinked in amazement into an empty chair. The packet he had sat on had, naturally, risen with him, and was whisking behind him.

"I—I say, you fellows—" he gasped.

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

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle

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at! I say, I sat on something, and—and there's nothing there!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh gad!" gasped Colonel Wharton. "You sat on the butterscotch, Bunter. It is tied on behind your jacket."

"Wha-at!" stuttered Bunter.

He whirled round, like a kitten chasing its tail, to look behind him. Then he groped and grabbed.

The look on Bunter's fat face as he stared at the packet of butterscotch in his fat hand was really excruciating. It made the juniors howl with merriment.

Colonel Wharton walked away, laughing. The juniors stayed where they were, laughing.

"Mum-mum-my bib-bib-butterscotch!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How—how did it get there?"

"The howfulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the yelling juniors. He blinked at the packet. He blinked at the yelling juniors again. Then it dawned on him.

"Beasts!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pulling a fellow's leg——"

"My dear porpoise, you're too wide to have your leg pulled!" chortled Bob Cherry. "Nobody could make a fool of you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! Beasts!"

Billy Bunter's glare of wrath almost cracked his spectacles. It was not till he ate the butterscotch that his fat brow cleared.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Three in the Ditch!

"BLOW!" Bob Cherry made that remark after tea.

The juniors were going out to the tennis court, when Bob came to a halt in the hall and ran his hands through his pockets, and ejaculated:

"Blow!"

"What's up?" asked Harry.

"I must have dropped it when I was helping that spoofing blighter out of that ditch!" grunted Bob. "My notecase——"

"Oh, my hat! Much in it?"

"Less than a million pounds, luckily," said Bob. "To be exact, there was a pound note, and a ten bobber, and some stamps; but I can't afford to lose it, especially as it was all I had left. You fellows go and play tennis, and I'll cut back and look for it."

"He, he, he!"—from Bunter.

Bob gave him a glare.

"Anything funny in a chap losing his notecase, image?" he demanded.

"He, he, he! Perhaps it will follow

you home!" grinned Bunter. "He, he, he!"

"You silly owl!"

"Hold on, though!" said Johnny Bull. "Before you fag a quarter of a mile, old bean, you'd better ask Wun Lung whether he's been larking again."

"Oh!" said Bob, with rather a start.

"Rot! Wun Lung isn't ass enough to lark with a fellow's notecase! A packet of butterscotch, but——"

"I'd ask him before I walked it!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Might as well," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "That weird little Chink is as full of tricks as a monkey."

"Here, Wun!" called out Bob. The Chinese junior was in the doorway. "You haven't been larking with me, the same as you did with Bunter, have you?"

Wun Lung glanced round, and nodded.

"Oh!" exclaimed Bob. "You have?"

"No larkee 'long old Bob Chelly!" answered Wun, nodding again.

And the juniors remembered that a Chinese nod meant the same as a shake of the head in Europe.

"You haven't?" asked Bob.

"No! Larkee 'long ole fat Bunter—no larkee 'long ole Bob Chelly!"

"I knew he hadn't," said Bob. "I dropped it in the ditch, of course. I'll cut along!"

"I'll come with you," said Harry. "Wun will make up four, for the other fellows to play."

And Johnny Bull, Nugent, Hurrea Singh, and Wun headed for the tennis court, and Wharton and Bob Cherry went down the drive together to the gates.

Billy Bunter grinned after them as they went. Bunter's butterscotch had followed him home; but it was highly improbable that Bob's notecase would do the same—which rather amused Bunter.

The two juniors walked quickly up the Wimford road. If Bob had dropped that notecase in the ditch, it was probably still there, as the ditch was deep and thick with nettles and ferns. No passer-by was likely to have spotted it there.

But Bob was puzzled and Wharton rather doubtful.

Bob certainly had rather exerted himself in heaving that mysterious practical joker out of the ditch. Still, the notecase had been in an inside pocket, and it was odd enough if it had fallen out unassisted.

Wun, with his sleight-of-hand trickery, could have "lifted" it easily enough, as he had lifted the butterscotch from Bunter's pocket. And the Chinese junior, though quite a good fellow and very much liked in the Remove, was not exactly like other Greyfriars fellows in many ways. He had rather an Oriental

disregard for the facts sometimes, and, in the matter of playing practical jokes, he would roll out lies as recklessly as Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton could not help suspecting that this was more likely to prove a practical joke on Wun's part than anything else, and he had, therefore, little expectation of finding the lost notecase in the ditch.

"That silly ass, with his silly tricks!" grunted Bob, as they tramped up the road in the blaze of the September sun.

"Well, Wun's a Chinee, and they stretch it a bit in the East," said Harry. "Wun's never been able to understand quite that fellows don't tell fibs, even to pull off a joke."

"Eh—I wasn't speaking of Wun, fat-head! I was speaking of that spoofing fool in the check cap!" grunted Bob. "What the dickens could any chap have played such a potty prank for?"

"Oh, that chap!" said Harry. "Goodness knows! If we find him hanging about again, we'll bump him for it!"

"I'll jolly well punch his silly head if I ever see him again—I know that!" growled Bob, little dreaming at that moment where and when he was destined to see that peculiar youth again.

They reached the spot, close by the opening of the footpath in Wimford Wood, where the mysterious practical joker had been helped out of the ditch. It was easy enough to locate the exact spot from the trampled ferns and nettles.

Looking down, only nettles and ferns were to be seen. If the notecase was there, it was well hidden from view.

There was nothing for it but to jump down and root about among the thick growths in the ditch—not a pleasant task among the stinging nettles.

"Leave it to me," said Bob.

"Rot!" answered Harry.

And they both jumped in.

Bob's blue eyes were glinting with wrath as he searched and rooted and stung his hands with nettles.

He did not, like his chum, doubt Wun Lung's denial of having played a trick on him, so he was convinced that the notecase had dropped from his pocket during his hefty work in the ditch.

Had such an accident happened while he was helping out a fellow who was really damaged, Bob would not have minded at all; his good nature was unlimited. But to be given this unpleasant and worrying task because a perfect stranger had played an idiotic practical joke on him and his friends was intensely annoying.

Bob was very keen to find the notecase, as he was not over-blessed with cash; but he would almost rather have spotted the check cap and punched the head that wore it.

For a good half-hour the two juniors

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rooted in that ditch, making themselves dusty and grubby, and collecting any number of stings from the nettles and a good allowance of scratches from thorns. Even that would not have been so bad had they found the notecase. But they did not find it.

"Oh, chuck it, old man!" said Bob, at last. "Goodness knows where the beastly thing dropped! I'm fed-up if you are!"

Wharton was more than willing to chuck it, as he had less doubt than ever, by that time, that the notecase was in the keeping of Wun Lung.

He had very little doubt that Bob would find it later, certainly not in that ditch, but probably in his hat, or tied to the tail of his jacket, or folded up in his pyjamas when he went to bed.

Perhaps Bob shared that suspicion now, for it really seemed impossible that that meticulous search could have failed to unearth the notecase, had it been there.

Both were glad, at all events, to be done with the hot, dusty, unpleasant task of rooting through the ditch, where they had stirred up a myriad insects that buzzed and hummed about them.

They gladly turned back towards the road, to clamber out of the ditch.

Honk, honk, honk!
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob. "Look out!"

A dozen or more cars and motor-bikes had passed, during their dip in the ditch, unheeded. But they had to heed the motor-bike that came in sight as they lifted their heads above the level of the road.

For one thing, the rider thereof was known to them—being no other than Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars School. For another, the motor-bike was careering wildly.

Whether it had skidded, whether some deep rut in the road had disconcerted Coker, or whether Coker fancied that this was the way to handle a stink-bike, they did not know, but as they looked at the machine roaring towards them they were thankful that there was no other traffic on the road just then.

The motor-bike shot across to one side of the road, and then zigzagged across to the other. It narrowly missed the edge of the ditch, and roared out into the middle of the road again.

"Stick here till he's passed!" gasped Bob.

"You bet!"

With Coker on the road on that zigzagging bike, the ditch was the safest place at the moment. Coker seemed to want all the road, and a little over.

It was only cautious to remain in the ditch till he was past. But even that caution did not, as it turned out, save them. The motor-bike roared across the road and roared back, and this time it did not miss the edge of the ditch!

Exactly what happened the juniors could hardly see, it happened so quickly. But there was a crash and a wild splutter, and Coker flew off the bike—almost somersaulting.

Where the bike went, Wharton and Bob did not know. But they knew where Coker went—for he landed on them with a terrific crash, knocked both of them backwards into the bottom of the ditch, and sprawled on them there!

Spills on his motor-bike were no new thing to Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth. His pals in that Form—Potter and Greene—had a fixed belief that there was such a thing as fool's luck, and that old Horace had an inordinate share of it—otherwise, it was impossible to account for Coker coming back in one piece after a spin on that bike!

Coker at this thrilling moment was still in one piece, but he felt as if he was in several. He sat up and gasped.

At such a moment of wild and dizzy confusion he was not likely to notice what he sat on. But Bob Cherry could not help noticing it, as it happened to be Bob's face.

There was an agonised gasp under Coker, as Bob's head was driven deeper into dry mud and nettles, ants and earwigs.

Bob kicked and struggled wildly.
"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker. "Oh crikey! Oh!"

"Gerroff!" shrieked Wharton.
Coker's long legs were across his face, and Coker's large feet resting on his waistcoat.

Coker blinked round dizzily as he made the interesting discovery that he was not alone in the ditch.

He staggered up.
"You potty chump!" gasped Harry Wharton, struggling to a sitting position. "You mad jabberwock! Ow!"

"Urrggh!" gurgled Bob. "Gurrgh! Oooogh!"

Coker stared at them. He realised, with great relief, that he was still in one piece, though he had an ache or a pain in nearly every section of his bulky and burly person.

"Greyfriars fags!" he said breathlessly. "My hat! What the thump were you sticking in this ditch for?"

"Keeping out of the way of a dangerous lunatic!" gasped Harry.

"Urrggh!" grunted Bob. "Wait till I gerrup! I'll knock your silly face through the back of your silly head! Ooogh!"

"Don't be cheeky!" said Coker.

He scrambled out of the ditch. He uttered a series of yelps as he scrambled. No bones were broken, fortunately; but every one felt as if it was broken in three or four places. Coker limped and tottered as he moved on towards his wrecked jigger.

He was anxious about that jigger. He had reason to be anxious! It lay half-in the ditch, a dozen feet away, and had ceased to splutter.

What Coker did not know about motor-bikes would have filled huge volumes. But even Coker could see that that jigger required a lot of attention before it became a going concern again. He gazed at it with knitted brow.

Wharton and Bob Cherry were slower in getting out of the ditch. They were winded, and had as many aches and pains as Coker. They were feeling badly damaged—but conscious chiefly of a wild desire to grab Coker of the Fifth and reduce him to a state of cats'-meat.

"Oh! Ow! Wow!" gasped Bob as they dragged themselves into the road. "Oh, my hat! Oh crumbs! Oh scissors! Jevver see such a mad idiot?"

"Wait till I get my wind!" gasped Wharton. "We'll strew the blithering idiot all over the shop!"

Coker did not heed them. Forgetful of the juniors, forgetful, apparently, of his own aches and pains, he gazed sorrowfully at the disabled jigger.

The Remove fellows rubbed damaged places and gasped for breath.

Coker looked round at them at last.

"That fool!" he said. "That ass! A fellow who can't drive a bike oughtn't to be allowed on the road! Did you see him?"

"We saw a fool and an ass, and we jolly well think he oughtn't to be allowed on the road!" gasped Bob.

"Well, he nearly ran into me," said Coker. "Just because I happened to be on the wrong side of the road, you know! No end of a narrow shave! Getting out of the silly fool's way, I skidded! Now look at my jigger!"

"Oh!" said Harry. "You skidded?"

"Didn't you see me?"

"I thought you fancied that was the way to drive a stink-bike."

"Don't be cheeky, Wharton!" said Coker frowning. "We're not at school now, but if you think you can cheek a Fifth Form man in the hols, I'll whop you, just as soon as if you were at Greyfriars! Mind that!"

Coker looked at the bike again. It seemed to worry him.

"Are we anywhere near a town?" he asked. "I suppose you know this part of the country, as you're here! What?"

"About a couple of miles from Wimford," answered Harry. "That's by the road! You can save half the distance by taking that footpath."

"Oh!" said Coker. "Thanks! I shall have to hoof it! I shall have to send a man from a garage for that jigger. I can't leave it here alone, though. You kids can stay and watch it for me till I get back."

"Eh?"

"What!"
Wharton and Bob Cherry were considering just then to exactly what extent they were going to slaughter Coker as soon as they recovered their wind. Certainly they were not thinking of sitting round keeping watch on Coker's jigger, while old Horace went to fetch a man from a garage to render first aid. They blinked at Horace Coker.

"Don't you understand?" snapped Coker testily. "Make yourselves useful! I want you to say here and keep an eye on this bike till I get back from the garage. See?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob.

"Oh scissors!" gasped Wharton.

"Don't leave it for a minute," said Coker. Apparently Coker considered the matter settled. "Don't wander away and forget it, like the silly, thoughtless fags you are! Some tramp might come along and pinch things off it. That footpath? All right!"

Coker turned away briskly to tramp into the shady footpath—leaving the two juniors to mind the dismantled jigger.

They stared blankly at his burly back. Then Bob yelled:

"Hold on, Coker!"

"Eh, what?" Coker turned back irritably. "What is it? I've got no time for silly jaw! What—"

"You've got it a bit wrong!" explained Bob. "We're not going to sit here watching your tank! We're going in, as fast as we jolly well can, to get some embrocation to rub on the bumps and bruises you've covered us with. But before we go, we're going to up-end you into the ditch, as a lesson to you!"

"Why, you cheeky little rotter!" gasped Coker. "I'll—I'll jolly well—Yaroo! Yoo-hoo!"

The juniors rushed together.

Coker was standing on the plank, by which the ditch was crossed, to reach the footpath. He could not have been more favourably placed for their purpose.

Before Coker quite knew what was happening, he was barged off the plank, and went backwards into the ditch—settling down gracefully among nettles, thorns, and the myriads of insects that

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Cheeking Coker!

"OH!"
"Ow!"
"You mad idiot!"
"Gerroff!"
Coker sat up dazedly.

Wharton and Bob had been stirring up for the last half-hour.

"Yoo-hoop!" came a roar from the ditch. "Ow! I'm stung! Wow! Blow these dashed nettles! Ow! I'll smash you—I'll spifficate you! I—I—I'll—Ow! Wow! Ooooooogh! Ow!"

Wild rustling and scrambling was heard in the ditch.

Wharton and Bob did not stay to listen to it, however. They had more bruises than they could have counted, without going into high figures, and they were anxious to get some embrocation. They walked quickly away in the direction of Wharton Lodge, leaving Coker to wrestle with the nettles and the insect world.

"I—I—I'll—" gasped Coker, as he scrambled, at long last, out of the ditch.

He glared round for the juniors. They were already at a distance, and fading out of the picture. Coker made a stride in pursuit—but stopped. With a limping leg, and innumerable other casualties, Coker was not in condition for a hot chase. And there was his bike to think of.

So he shook a big fist after the vanishing juniors, in lieu of pursuit, leaving their just punishment over till the first day of term at Greyfriars. Then, red and wrathful, breathless and limping, Horace Coker plunged into the shady footpath, to tramp a weary mile to Wimford.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

By Whose Hand?

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH glanced into Wharton's "den," and his dusky eyebrows were lifted in surprise.

There was a scent of embrocation in the air, and two juniors were rubbing bruises.

"That ass Coker!"

"That blithering chump Coker!"

"I'm glad we barged him into the ditch, anyway!"

"Yes, rather! Blow him!"

The two juniors were making these remarks alternately, as they rubbed bruises.

"My esteemed chums," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur, "has there been a lamentable and ludicrous accident?"

"Oh! That you, Inky?" Bob Cherry looked round. "That dummy, Coker of the Fifth—"

"That dangerous maniac, Coker of the Fifth—" said Wharton.

Between them, they told the nabob what had happened.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh listened with sympathy. But the two juniors, occupied as they were with their own damages, could see that there was some other matter on his mind. He was moving about the room, glancing to and fro, as if in search of something.

"Did you come in for something special, Inky?" asked Harry. "Looking for anything?"

"I seem to have lost my absurd wallet," murmured the nabob. "I have looked everywhere, and thought that perhaps it had dropped in this room—"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob. "You, too! When did you lose it?"

Hurree Singh shook his dusky head.

"I missed it when I took off my jacket to play absurd tennis," he answered. "It was in the pocket after lunch, but I have not seen it since."

Wharton and Bob Cherry exchanged a glance.

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"Well, Inky never dropped it in that ditch, if you dropped yours there, Bob," said Harry, "and it's pretty clear now that you didn't. I'm afraid there's a practical joker about."

"Wun wouldn't be such a fool!" said Bob uneasily. "He larked with Bunter's butterscotch, but he wouldn't lark with fellows' wallets."

But Bob spoke without conviction.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh continued to look round Wharton's sitting-room. But he did not really expect to find the wallet there—and he did not find it.

Johnny Bull and Nugent came in, and threw down their rackets. Johnny had a frown on his face.

"I don't like this sort of lark!" he announced.

"What?" asked Harry.

"My purse is gone!" grunted Johnny.

"Oh crikey!"

"It was in my pocket this afternoon," said Johnny Bull. "I never dropped it helping that ass out of the ditch, even if Bob dropped his notecase—and I don't believe he did, now!"

"That idiotic Chinee!" said Harry.

"You lost anything, Frank?"

"I don't think so," answered Nugent.

"Not that I know of, at any rate."

"Better make sure, I think," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, all right!"

Frank Nugent ran his hands through his pockets. A peculiar expression came over his face.

"Oh crikey! You lost a notecase, too?" asked Bob.

"No. I hadn't one about me. But I—"

"What is it?" asked Harry quietly.

"I had a fountain-pen in my jacket pocket! And—and some half-crowns in my waistcoat pocket."

"Are they gone?"

"Yes," said Nugent, with a grimace.

"You'd better go through your pockets, Wharton," said Johnny Bull. "Somebody seems to have been making a clean sweep."

"Oh, my hat! I had that fiver my uncle gave me—"

Harry Wharton began a hasty search. An expression of intense annoyance came over his face.

"Gone?" asked Bob.

"Yes!"

"A fiver?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yes!"

"I'll jolly well lick him!" said Johnny. "A lark's a lark; but playing tricks with money isn't a lark. Even Bunter would have too much sense for that!"

"Well, it's only a lark, though a fat-headed one," said Harry. "I suppose the young ass will play some trick with the things, as he did with Bunter's butterscotch. They will turn up all right."

But it was hardly possible to help feeling annoyed. Even the cheery Bob was irritated. That misadventure in the ditch, and a collection of bumps and bruises, was due to the search for Bob's missing notecase—which it was quite clear now that he had not dropped by accident. Obviously, five fellows would not have dropped their valuables by accident at the same time.

"Hold on, though," said Bob slowly. "I can't quite make it out. We all saw Wun snaffle Bunter's butterscotch—he pushed against him on purpose. He never pushed against me, that I know of."

"Well, it seems pretty clear," said Harry. "He's as light-fingered as a monkey. He's been with us all the afternoon, and he must have had a lot of

chances. Anyhow, where are the things, if it wasn't Wun?"

"I say, you fellows." Billy Bunter rolled in and blinked round inquisitively through his big spectacles. "What are you all looking so jolly savage about?"

"The savagefulness is not terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh mildly.

"I say, is there anything up?" asked Bunter. "I've just seen Wun Lung downstairs, and he was grinning like a Cheshire cheese—I mean cat."

The Famous Five exchanged glances. In the circumstances, they could guess what Wun had been grinning at.

"Look here! We'd better speak to Wun!" growled Johnny Bull. "I had some pounds in my purse, and that's not the sort of thing I want tied on to the tail of my jacket!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hero he comes!"

The little Chinee came in.

The juniors looked at him in silence. Wun was grinning all over his little yellow face, as if in enjoyment of a joke. His slanting eyes twinkled at the chums of the Remove.

"Plenty good jokee," he remarked. "Samee jokee me playee on ole fat Buntce. Tinkee velly funnee."

"Well, you may think it funny—" began Johnny Bull.

"Chuck it, old man!" interrupted Bob. "A joke's only a joke, after all. But you're rather an ass, Wun, to lark with money."

Wun's slanting eyes opened wide.

"Me no larkee," he said. "You fellee larkee!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Tinkee findce 'long tail 'long jacket," said Wun. "No findce! What you do 'long wallet b'long me?"

The Famous Five simply blinked.

Wun gave them a perplexed look.

"You fellee takee wallet b'long me?" he asked. "Playee jokee all samee me playee 'long ole fat Buntce."

"You—you—you've lost a wallet?" gasped Bob.

"No losee—no can find. Wallet 'long pocket blong me. Fellee takee—'long playee jokee 'long this li'll Chinee."

There was a dead silence in the room. Even Billy Bunter was silent, blinking at the little Chinee through his big spectacles.

Wun's little yellow face was growing very perplexed. He stared at one fellow after another.

If he were to be believed, he had missed his wallet, like the other fellows, and had been grinning over what he regarded as a practical joke on him.

But, in the strange circumstances, it was a little difficult to believe him. In the party at Wharton Lodge there was no fellow except Wun Lung who had the peculiar skill to relieve fellows of their possessions undetected. And only too well, they knew that, on the subject of veracity, Wun's ideas savoured of the East rather than of the West.

In more important matters he was the soul of honour; but in carrying out a practical joke he would utter the most barefaced fibs with an innocent face. Somehow or other, he never could get it into his Oriental mind that it was wrong to tell untruths in any circumstances whatever.

"You fellee no takee?" asked Wun, at last.

The juniors hardly knew what to answer. They did not believe that Wun's wallet was gone, for certainly there was nobody at Wharton Lodge



"Hurt your leg, have you?" said Coker, glaring down at the man in the grass. "I'll give you all the help you need. Take that, my pippin!" Coker kicked Jimmy the Rat on the thigh, and the unscrupulous rascal let out a fearful yell. "Ooooooh!"

"That helped?" asked the Greyfriars Fifth-Former genially. "Try another!"

who could have relieved him of it. How could it be gone?

"You no takee?" repeated Wun. His face was grave now. "If you no takee, 'long jokee, mo loseec."

"Look here, Wun!" said Johnny Bull grimly; and this time Bob did not interrupt him. "This has gone far enough. You can lark with a fellow's tuck, or his hat, or his handkerchief, but you ought to have sense enough to leave his money alone. Hand over the things, and don't play the fool any more—see?"

"Me no savvy!" said Wun, staring. "We've all had our pockets picked, Wun," said Harry Wharton quietly. "We know it's only a joke, of course, and we're not shirty about it. But hand over the things, old chap, and chuck it!"

"Me no savvy," repeated Wun, looking bewildered. "You no tinkce this li'll Chinee pickce pocket blong you?"

"Well, we don't think we did it ourselves," said Johnny Bull sarcastically. "Your joke on Bunter was funny; but this isn't funny. This is fatheaded! Look here, I want my purse, and I'm not going to wait till I find it pinned to the tail of my jacket—see?"

Wun looked at him, and at the other fellows in turn. His little yellow face was as serious now as that of a graven image.

"You tinkce me pickce pocket?" he asked.

"We think you've been larking," said Bob hastily.

"Me tellee you me no larkce?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Last term you got Wibley's hanky off him, and when he asked you, you told him you'd never touched it. You hid Quelch's cane, and swore you'd never been in the

Form-room. You put an inkpot into Wingate's pocket, and he never licked you, though he jolly well knew you did it, because you said you didn't."

Wun's lip quivered.

"Tellee plenty big lie, 'long jokee," he said. "But me never tell lie 'long fliend blong me. Ole Bob Chelly no tinkce this li'll Chinee tell him lie!"

Bob breathed rather hard. To the other fellows the thing looked as clear as daylight. So, in fact, it did to Bob. But, at the same time, the distressed pleading in Wun's face went to his heart.

"No," said Bob. He said it with an effort, but he said it, and meant it. "If you give me your word, Wun, I believe you."

"Me givee word. 'long ole Bob Chelly."

"That's good enough," said Bob.

It was good enough for Bob, because he was determined that it should be good enough. It was not good enough for the other fellows, and their looks expressed as much, very plainly.

Wun gave each face a look in turn; then, without speaking again, he went quietly from the room.

There was a grim silence, broken by Billy Bunter.

"He, ho, he!"

Five fierce glares were turned on the cackling Owl.

"You gurgling grampus, what are you gurgling at?" hissed Bob.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "Serve you jolly well right! You cackled when Wun played that rotten trick on me. It's my turn now. He, he, he!"

"Shut up!" roared Johnny Bull.

"He, he, he!"

"It—it's only a fatheaded joke," said Harry Wharton. "The things will turn up. I wish that young ass

would pick up the difference between truth and lies, though."

"I've taken his word," grunted Bob.

"Then where are the things?"

"What's the good of asking me? I don't know."

"I do," said Johnny Bull. "Wun's got them. I've no doubt they'll turn up sooner or later. He's not a thief, I suppose? We can't do anything here; but if we were at Greyfriars now, I'd jolly well boot him up and down the Remove passage till he shelled out!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Shan't! I say, if Wun's been picking your pockets, and doesn't give you the things back, that's pinching," said Bunter. "You can jolly well scowl as much as you like, Bob Cherry; but I say it, and I mean it! I don't want to miss my watch. My uncle gave twenty-five pounds for this watch—"

"He was done out of twenty-four pounds seventeen-and-six, then," growled Johnny Bull.

"Beast! A fellow doesn't expect to have his pockets picked, staying with a school pal on a holiday," said Billy Bunter loftily. "It's not the sort of thing that happens at Bunter Court, I can tell you. I don't want to be unpleasant, Wharton, but I'm bound to say that I don't like this."

"Will you shut up?" asked Harry.

"No," said Bunter firmly; "I won't! No good telling me that that heathen's larking with your money, when he's got it and won't give it back, and tells lies about it!"

"He hasn't got it!" hissed Bob.

"All these fellows know he has," answered Bunter calmly. "And it's as plain as your face—which is plain
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enough—he, he, he!—that he's going to stick to it. Well, I don't want my watch to follow your money. I'm expecting a postal order, too."

"Give us a rest!"

"I'm bound to speak out plainly. Wharton, in these circumstances. I'm booked to stay here till the end of the holidays. I've said I would, and I will. But I can't stay in the same house with a pickpocket. You can't expect it. I'm not going to risk losing my gold watch that my father gave thirty guineas for!"

"Oh crakey!"

"Either Wun leaves the house, or I do!" said Bunter firmly. "I'm sorry, and all that, but I can't say anything else, and you can't expect it."

Harry Wharton gave the fat Owl of the Remove a look. Then he glanced round the room.

"Chuck over that time-table, Franky!" he said.

"Keep to the point, please," said Bunter. "You needn't bother about time-tables now, Wharton. This has got to be settled."

"The time-table will settle it," said Harry. "I'm going to look out a train—"

"Oh, that's all right!" assented Bunter. "If you're going to look out a train for Wun—"

"I'm not!" answered Wharton grimly. "I'm going to look out a train for you, Bunter."

"Eh?"

Wharton glanced over the time-table.

"Will the six-thirty suit you?" he asked.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. He looked as if the six-thirty would not suit him.

"Oh, really, Wharton! If you mean that you're keeping Wun here—"

"I do."

"Well, look here, if you fellows can take Wun's pocket-picking as a joke, I—I suppose I can," said Bunter. "I'll ask your uncle to lock up my things for me in his safe."

"If you say a single word on the subject to my uncle," said Harry Wharton deliberately, "I'll kick you all the way to Wimford to catch your train!"

"What I mean is, I think it would be better to keep this disgraceful sort of thing to ourselves. After all, that wretched heathen doesn't know any better," said Bunter. "If I can make allowances for him, I suppose you fellows can do the same, as you're not so particular as I am. Better let the subject drop, I think. It's not the sort of thing I care to discuss, really."

And Billy Bunter rolled out of the room, evidently anxious to keep clear of that time-table and six-thirty trains.

The Famous Five were left looking at one another in grim, glum silence.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Precious Pair!

"SKIP!"

Horace Coker stared round him.

He had supposed himself to be alone in the deep, dusky wood, and that sudden voice close at hand rather startled him.

Coker had covered about half the distance along that shady footpath to Wimford when he stopped to rest. Coker, as a rule, was no end of a walker—a mile was nothing to him, and five miles very little. But circumstances

alter cases. Coker was brawny, and Coker was tough, but even Coker could not be pitched headlong off a spilled motor-bike without getting hurt.

Coker had limped half a mile with a pain in a damaged knee.

He had other pains and other aches, but the one in his right knee was really the limit.

That brawny leg was bending under him and almost collapsing. For half a mile Coker plugged on grimly; but the twinges grew altogether too severe, and he sat down to rest at last and caressed his knee.

He sat in thick grass beside the footpath leaning back against the gnarled trunk of an ancient and immense oak.

All Coker noticed about that oak was that it was convenient as a support for his burly back, he did not notice that it was a gigantic tree, overtopping the whole wood, a landmark visible miles away—and he would not have been interested had he noticed it. That, being so conspicuous, it might very likely be used as a place of appointment easily found in the wood might have occurred to Coker had he thought about it—which he did not.

Coker was thinking of his game leg—which was quite sufficient as food for thought. He had been rubbing it gently for about a quarter of an hour when that voice from the other side of the oak fell on his large ears.

He stared round, seeing only the big trunk of the oak. Someone had stopped on the other side of it and was speaking to someone else, that was clear; but why that someone was telling the someone else to skip was a mystery to Coker. On the narrow footpath, encroached upon on both sides by branches and twigs, there was not much room for skipping even if a fellow had a fancy to skip—which was unusual.

It was a man's voice that spoke; it was a boy's voice that answered.

"Oh, 'ere you are, Jimmy!"

"Here I am, Skip."

Then it dawned on Coker that Skip was a name—or, at least, a nickname that belonged to the boy.

Both voices were strange to Coker's ears. But had Harry Wharton & Co. been there they would have recognised the voice of the boy in the check cap.

"Had any luck, Skip?"

Coker heard a chuckle.

"Jimmy, old man, I struck the most innocent party you ever 'card or dreamed of," said Skip. "'Arf a dozen schoolboys, they was; well-off blokes, by the way they panned out. 'The wust off of the lot 'ad a fountain-pen and three 'arf-crowns in his rags."

Coker gave a start.

Horace Coker had no desire whatever to hear conversation not intended for his extensive ears. He had been going to give a cough or a grunt to apprise the speakers that he was there; now he neither coughed nor grunted.

"Same old game," went on the chuckling voice of the young rascal called Skip. "I 'ad a tumble and 'urt my leg, and they all 'elped me—like the kind-'carted coves they was. They 'elped me out of a ditch and 'elped me to a log to sit down, they did—and they never knowed I was 'elping myself all the time."

Coker heard another chuckle—this time from the man.

He knitted his brows.

Coker was not quick on the uptake, but it was quite clear to him that he was listening to a couple of rascally pickpockets.

He stretched his neck and looked round the tree-trunk.

Hardly ten feet from him, on the other side of the oak and half-hidden by bracken, he saw the two rascals.

Neither of them was looking in his direction, and Coker glared at them unseen.

The man was a horsey-looking fellow with a bowler at a rakish angle on a shiny head and little sharp, black eyes that looked like a rat's.

The boy looked about fifteen with a chubby and rather good-looking face, bright eyes, and a check cap, striped waistcoat, and a tie-pin of such massive structure that it must have been worth a lot of money if it were worth anything at all—which was doubtful.

On his looks Coker would rather have liked the boy; but the man looked what he evidently was—a furtive scoundrel at his best, a bullying footpad at his worst.

Coker had never seen him before, but there were a good many detective officers all over the kingdom well acquainted with Jimmy the Rat. But after what he had heard Coker could hardly have doubted what the man was even if he had not looked the part.

"Well, come on Skip," the man said; and even as Coker stared at them they turned away and went up the footpath together.

In a few moments they were lost to Coker's sight.

Coker grunted.

"Precious pair! That kid ought to be at Borstal and that man in chokey!" grunted Coker. "Pickpockets, by gum!"

Clearly the pair were pickpockets, who had doubtless been working at their peculiar trade in different places and had met at the big oak by appointment afterwards.

Coker frowned.

That young rascal who was called Skip evidently had stolen money on him at that very moment, and there was little doubt that the man he called Jimmy was a similar case. Any law-abiding citizen's duty in such circumstances was to point them out to the police.

They had gone up the footpath towards Wimford. That was Coker's destination. His leg was still painful, and he had intended to give it a longer rest. Now, however, Coker heaved himself to his feet.

If they went as far as the town Coker knew what he was going to do; he was going to stop the first policeman he saw and draw that policeman's attention to the pair of rascals.

So Coker limped along the footpath as fast as his game leg would allow. They had a start, and it was hard going for Coker, but he was not going to lose them if he could help it.

The undergrowths were so thick along the footpath, almost meeting over it here and there that Coker made an almost continuous rustle as he went.

He had no doubt that two such wary rascals would hear it and know that someone was following them along the path.

But they could not, of course, guess that Coker had been sitting on the other side of the oak when they talked under its branches; they had not seen Coker and knew nothing of him.

Not that Coker would have cared. His leg was damaged, but there was nothing the matter with his fists. He was quite prepared if necessary to pitch into that rat-eyed man and knock him into a cocked hat, and the boy after him.

He tramped on, and noted that while his own rustling accompaniment went

on, the rustle of the walkers ahead had ceased.

They had stopped. If they were, for some reason, waiting for him to come up, Coker did not mind; he was keen to keep an eye on them.

The footpath, a little farther on, crossed an open glade, where the vegetation fell back, leaving plenty of space.

In that open space Coker sighted the two again.

To his surprise, the rat-eyed man was lying on the ground, and the boy was bending over him as if to help him—with a very keen eye on Coker as he came at the same time.

"Elp!"

Coker jumped.

"Elp!" called out Skip again. "It's all right, uncle, there's somebody coming." He rose to his feet and looked towards the advancing Fifth Former of Greyfriars. "Oh, sir, 'elp! My uncle's fallen down and 'urt his leg, sir! P'r'aps you'd be so kind, sir, as to 'elp me set him up!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Rough on a Rat!

HORACE COKER stared at the scene in the glade.

It was quite a well-staged scene.

The rat-eyed man lay on an elbow groaning; the boy's face, under his check cap, was earnest and distressed.

Had Coker come on the scene as a stranger—as the two rascals supposed—he would have been taken completely in, even more easily than Harry Whar-ton & Co. in the scene on the Wimford road earlier that afternoon.

Undoubtedly, Coker would have helped to raise the young rascal's "uncle" from the ground and done all that he could for him—while the unscrupulous Skip was picking his pockets as a reward.

But Coker, so to speak, knew what he knew. Having heard Skip describe exactly how he had taken in a party of schoolboys that afternoon and robbed them, Coker knew just what to think of the scene that met his eyes now.

He marched on, his eyes glinting, his look growing grimmer and grimmer.

Coker, who was a wealthy fellow, had more money about him than the Famous Five. He would have been an extremely rich prize for the unscrupulous Skip and his still more unscrupulous and rascally associate. But, in view of what Coker knew, they were not likely to get his wallet from him; they were going to get something much less agreeable from Coker.

"You'll 'elp me, sir!" said Skip, rather puzzled, with all his artfulness, by the look on Coker's face. "My pore uncle, sir—"

"I'll help you!" said Coker grimly.

Skip watched him warily. He could see that Coker was suspicious, though he could not guess why. Coker looked wealthy, and he also, in Skip's opinion, looked a fool. He was, in fact, exactly the kind of fellow that Jimmy the Rat and Skip liked to meet when they were playing this game. But the wary young rascal could see that something was wrong, somehow.

"Hurt your leg, have you?" asked Coker, glaring down at the man in the grass.

"Yes, sir," answered Jimmy the Rat faintly. "Caught my foot, sir, and my ankle sort of turned. If you'd help me to my feet, sir, I dare say my boy could help me home."

"I'll lend a 'and, sir," said Skip. "Uncle's too 'eavy for me on me own, sir, but I'll lend a 'and."

"You keep clear," said Coker. "I'll help him up. I can give him all the help he needs, you young scoundrel! Try that, my pippin!"

Coker kicked the rat-eyed man on the thigh with his undamaged leg.

Coker had a large foot and a heavy one. It landed on the astonished trickster rather like a coke-hammer.

"Oh smoky 'addocks!" gasped Skip.

There was a fearful yell from the rat-eyed man as he rolled over.

"That helped?" asked Coker genially.

"Try another!"

He kicked again with his sound leg, hard.

Jimmy the Rat bounded to his feet, as if made of india-rubber. Keeping up the pretence of an injured leg was really not practical politics, with Horace Coker kicking him on the leg.

He bounded up and bounded away from Coker, panting with pain and rage.

Coker grinned at him.

"I fancied you could get up if I helped you," he said, still genial. "But if you want some more help, just sing out."

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Skip. "'Ow'd that fat'ead get wise to it, I'd like to know? A fool like 'im!"

Jimmy the Rat rubbed his painful thigh and panted. His little black eyes glittered with rage at Coker, more like a rat's than ever.

His tobacco-stained teeth shut hard.

Trickery to pick Coker's pocket had failed. But Jimmy the Rat noted two things—one was, that Coker looked wealthy; the other, that he had a game leg, though certainly he had kicked hard enough with the sound one.

When circumstances were propitious, Jimmy was always ready to pass from trickery to violence, and circumstances looked propitious now. Two to one, in a lonely wood, against a fellow with a game leg—that looked a safe proposition.

The Rat made a sign to Skip, who nodded and grinned. Then, with a spring rather like that of a tiger, he hurled himself at Coker.

At the same time, his younger confederate jumped behind Coker to grab him and trip him.

In any scrape where brains were required to get a fellow out, Coker was always at a loss. But when brawn and muscle and pluck could do it, Coker was all there. And they did it now!

With a swift back-hander, Coker sent Skip spinning, to crash down on his back.

That occupied a second, during which Jimmy the Rat got in a couple of punches, one of which drew a spurt of claret from Coker's rugged nose.

But the rat-eyed man had no time for more than that. Coker let him have left and right like two steam-hammers.

(Continued on next page.)

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Crash, crash! went Coker's fists on the rat-like face.

Jimmy the Rat staggered back, spluttering. He did not get in one more blow. All his energy was required in defence. And it did not save him.

Crash, crash, crash! went Coker's hefty fists.

The Rat's sharp, pointed nose was flattened and streaming crimson; both his eyes were already blackening; his mouth had a list to port; his ears grew bulbous.

Coker hit hard and hit often, knocking him right and left.

From the point of view of wealth, Coker was the man any footpad might have liked to meet. From other points of view he was not. Jimmy the Rat had been knocked about in his time more than once, but never had he had so awful a thrashing as this. Even when, in the welshing line, he had been mobbed on a racecourse, he had not been quite so hardly handled.

Coker's fists came on him like lumps of iron driven by steam. They crashed and they smashed. But for the fact that Coker's game leg incommoded him a good deal, and enabled the wretched Rat to dodge some of the punishment, matters would have been still worse. As it was, they were fearfully bad!

Skip had picked himself up dizzily. He made one attempt to rush in to the help of his confederate. Another back-hander lifted him farther than the first, and he went down with his head spinning and his nose streaming. This time he stayed down.

Jimmy the Rat followed his example at last.

Crashed and bashed and smashed, the rascal threw himself on the ground, howling for mercy.

Coker, panting, glared down at him. Except for sharp twinges in his game leg, and barking his knuckles on the rat-eyed man's features, Coker had hardly suffered at all in that strenuous combat. He was breathless, but only from the exertion of hard and continuous punching.

"Had enough, you sneaking rotter?" gasped Coker.

A groan was the only answer.

Coker surveyed him grimly.

"I was going to get you run in, at Wimford," he said; "but I can't carry you there, and you don't look like walking at present. You've had a lesson, I think. If you want any more, get up and say so. I fancy you'll remember this for some time, you pocket-picking scoundrel!"

The man lay panting, a heap of damages, his rat-like eyes swollen, but gleaming like pinpoints at Coker, with such malevolence and rage in them, that Coker need not have doubted that Jimmy the Rat would remember.

Coker looked round.

"As for you, you young scoundrel—"

Skip made one bound into the thickets and vanished.

Coker stared after him, gave the groaning man one more contemptuous glare, and limped on his way to Wimford.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Not Nice!

BILLY BUNTER put his hand to his watch, pulled it out of his waistcoat pocket, looked at it, and put it back again.

Always leisurely in his movements, Bunter was more than usually leisurely as he performed that performance.

In fact, it occupied him a full minute.

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which, for such a simple action, was rather a large allowance, even for a fellow who habitually moved like an old tired snail.

It was the following morning.

That morning Johnny Bull was going home to put in the last few days before the new term with his people, and as Johnny's home was up in Yorkshire, he had to catch a fairly early train.

His friends went to the station with him to see him off at Wimford. Wun Lung stayed behind.

Bunter went—chiefly because Colonel Wharton drove the party into the town in his car, and Bunter preferred to take his morning exercise sitting down.

Also, perhaps, Bunter found a little harmless and necessary entertainment in worrying the other fellows.

They had laughed like a lot of hyenas when Wun played that trick on Bunter with the butterscotch. Now it was Bunter's turn.

That little Chinese beast had pulled his leg, and the other fellows had roared with laughter; so now that they were the victims, the fat Owl had an amiable desire to rub it in.

He mentioned before they started that he thought he'd better come, because Wun Lung was staying in, and he didn't want to be left alone with a fellow who picked pockets.

In the car he dared not mention the matter for the colonel to hear, because he was aware that if he did he would catch a train that day as well as Johnny. But he kept the fellows on tenterhooks on the subject. A dozen times, at least, he began and stopped short.

It was a relief to the Famous Five when the colonel dropped the party at the station, said good-bye to Johnny, and drove away.

It was then that Bunter performed his performance with his watch. He was examining that valuable article to make sure that it was safe, and he went on examining it till he was sure that all the juniors had noticed the action. This was Bunter's pleasant way of drawing attention to the fact that he did not consider his personal possessions safe at Wharton Lodge. It was meant to cause general annoyance, in which it succeeded perfectly.

Harry Wharton breathed hard and deep. Bob Cherry half-lifted his foot and dropped it again. The other three glared at Bunter.

"It's safe," said Bunter.

"You fat idiot—" began Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! You mayn't mind losing your notecase with a miserable thirty bob in it, but a twenty-guinea gold watch is rather different. I'm not going to have this watch pinched, if I can help it."

"Let's get in," said Harry abruptly.

"I'll wait here," said Bunter cheerfully. "I suppose we're having a taxi back, as your uncle's gone—and I suppose you won't expect a guest to pay for it."

The Famous Five went into the station without replying.

Billy Bunter, never the jolliest of company, was rather getting on their nerves since the unpleasant affair of the missing property. What had happened was bad enough, without Bunter making the very worst of it.

Johnny Bull was rather grim and glum.

The juniors had expected, before this, to see the missing property turn up. Bob took Wun's word on the subject, because he was resolved to do so—but even Bob, at the back of his mind, rather expected to find his wallet in some absurd place—rolled up in his pyjamas, or stuck in his hat. None

of the missing articles had reappeared, however; and Wun had said nothing on the subject—or any other. Since that little scene in Wharton's den the previous day, the Chinese junior had exchanged no word with his friends—he had not even said good-bye to Johnny Bull.

Johnny, a practical youth, wanted his purse before he left. He did not think much of practical jokes, anyhow; and practical jokes with money seemed to him merely silly. And keeping up a joke to this length, and telling lies about it, put Johnny into his grimmest mood. There were several pounds in his purse, and Johnny had not the slightest doubt that the purse was in Wun's pocket. He did not think that Wun meant to "pinch" it—but Billy Bunter did, or affected to do so—and really, it was hard to know what to say in reply to Bunter. A fellow who bagged another fellow's money, and denied that he had it, was surely open to suspicion.

"I'm sorry for this, Johnny, old man," said Harry, as they walked on the platform with plenty of time for the train. "I can't understand Wun keeping it up like this. I'm afraid my uncle would be fearfully annoyed if he heard of it—thanks for saying nothing about it, anyhow."

"I'm not Bunter," grunted Johnny. "All the same, I don't like it. I suppose that potty young ass is going to give it back to me at school, next term—it's only a few days now. If he calls that a joke—"

"The jokefulness is not terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh with a shake of his dusky head.

"Anyhow, it's only a joke, potty as it is," said Nugent.

Grunt from Johnny.

"Is it?" he said.

"Oh, don't be an ass like Bunter, old man," said Bob rather sharply. "You can't think that Wun would pinch, I suppose."

"I hate thinking like Bunter on any subject whatever," answered Johnny. "But—well, no, I don't think so. But if it were anybody else, but that queer little heathen, I should jolly well know what to think."

"Wun's all right," said Harry. "We've had a holiday with him, and we jolly well know he's as good as gold. He can't help playing tricks, like a monkey—and he can't understand that a chap shouldn't tell whoppers. But that's all there is to it."

"Why hasn't he let me have it back, then?" grunted Johnny. Evidently dark doubts were lurking at the back of Johnny's mind.

"I dare say you'll find it in your study at Greyfriars when we go back, or something of the sort," said Harry.

"Well, I'm not going to make a row about it, anyhow," said Johnny Bull. "I didn't come here to make myself a general nuisance like Bunter. If it's gone, it's gone, and that's that. Let it drop."

The train was signalled, and the disagreeable topic was dismissed.

Johnny got into his carriage, with his suitcase, and his friends stood round the door till the train started. Then the four walked rather slowly to the platform exit.

All of them were worried. The affair was annoying and disturbing—and still more annoying, perhaps, was the fact that Wun had retired into a shell of silence, seeming to regard himself as an injured party.

In the station vestibule Bob glanced at a fat figure lolling at the entrance, and came to a halt.



"Hold on, old chap!" said Harry Wharton, as the Removites came racing along the platform. "It's all right, Wun Lung, we've found out the chap who picked our pockets, and we're sorry." "You no tinkee any more this li'll Chinese take?" asked Wun Lung. "Me velly glad to heal it!"

"You fellows mind if I clear?" he asked. "I can't stand any more Bunter this morning! I must give him a miss or dot him in the eye!"

"I was just thinking the same," remarked Nugent.

"The samefulness is preposterous."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Same here," he said. "I can't boot Bunter as he's staying with me; but if he keeps on asking for it, I shall have to boot him. Let's give him a miss."

It was easy enough to give Bunter a miss. Near the station entrance was an automatic chocolate machine. Bunter was standing in front of it, going through all his pockets, one after another, evidently in search of coppers.

Grinning, the four juniors walked past, behind his fat back, and left the station. They walked away rather quickly down Wimford High Street, leaving the fat Owl contemplating the machine and searching his pockets—in vain—for coppers!

In a few moments they were out of sight, if Bunter had looked round. Then they strolled cheerily down the High Street, and walked home to Wharton Lodge, happy in the knowledge that they would not behold William George Bunter again till lunch.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Going of Wun Lung!

WUN LUNG came out of the telephone-cabinet in the hall at Wharton Lodge, as Harry Wharton & Co. came in.

He glanced at the four juniors, with his slanting eyes, with an immovable face, and then went up the stairs.

The four juniors looked after him,

and then looked at one another, all of them feeling extremely uncomfortable.

"I—I say, the kid looks cut up!" muttered Nugent. "I—I say, let's go and tell him we don't mind!"

"Look here, he said he never—" began Bob.

"Well, we know he did!" said Harry. "But—dash it all, he's a guest here, and he's a queer little sweep—let's take it smiling. It's absolutely impossible that he means more than an idiotic joke, so I don't see why we can't take it in a good temper."

The four juniors followed Wun Lung up the stairs. They overtook him at the door of his room.

He did not glance at them. He went into the room, and they noted that a suitcase was open on the bed, with the process of packing already started. They did not need to ask what that meant.

"Not thinking of cutting, old man?" asked Bob with forced cheerfulness.

Wun glanced round then.

"Mo goey," he answered. "Me telephone 'long Gloyfliers, goey back 'long school. Allee light."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"Allee light," said Wun. "Fishee stop 'long school, 'long holidays: mo stoppee all sameo Fishee."

"Fisher T. Fish isn't jolly company!" said Bob. "He will sell you a clock that won't go, or a pocket-knife that won't cut, if he gets you to himself."

But Wun Lung did not smile. With a stony look on his face he began packing.

The juniors stood uncomfortably silent.

It was odd enough, and irritating enough, for the offender to take offence: but it was clear that Wun had his Oriental back up.

Certainly they did not want him to go to the school, to share Fisher T. Fish's solitude there till the fellows came back.

His minor, Hop Mi, was with a Chinese family in the country, and no doubt Wun Lung could have joined him there: but perhaps he did not desire Hop Mi to know that he had had any trouble with his friends in the Remove. Apparently he had been on the phone to Greyfriars, and made arrangements to return there a few days before the term.

"Look here, kid, don't be an ass, you know," said Harry, hardly knowing what to say. "We've had a jolly holiday together, and it was fixed up for you to stay here with me till the new term. We—we don't mind a joke—"

"Not at all, old son!" said Frank Nugent, as truthfully as he could.

"The mindfulness is a total absentee, my esteemed and idiotic Wun!" declared Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

Wun's lip quivered.

"You tinkee me takeo things b'long you," he said. "Buntsee tinkoo me pinchee."

"Bunter's a blithering fool! What does it matter what Bunter thinks?"

"No mattee; but mo tinkee Johnny Bullee tinkoo samee."

"He doesn't!" said Harry. "He thinks you're a silly fathead, and you are, old chap, really! That's all!"

"Ole Bob Cholly believe this li'll Chinese speak thuth!" said Wun Lung. "You no believee?"

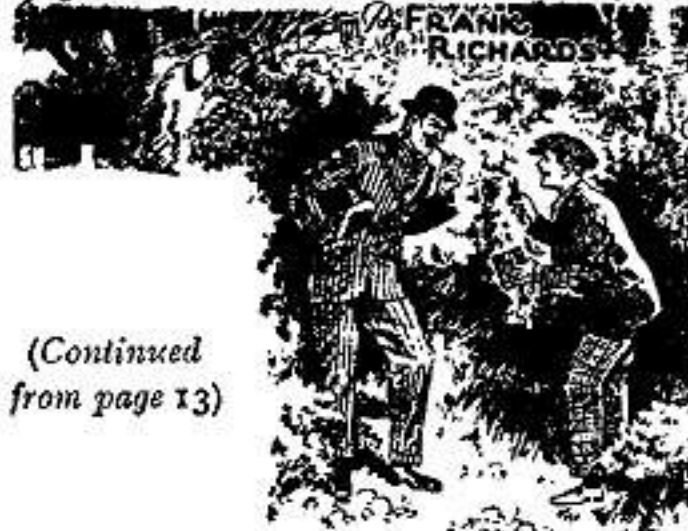
"Hem!"

"Chinese tellee plenty big lie, 'long makeo jokee. No tollee big lie 'long friends b'long him!" said Wun. "Ipossee

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The Boy Who Couldn't Run Straight



(Continued
from page 13)

me takee things, 'long jokee, all samee Buntie buttelscotch, ine givee backee. No takee, no can givee."

Silence followed.

Three of the four Removites, at least, firmly believed that the missing articles were in Wun's keeping. If he really meant that he were not going to give them back, it meant that he was going to keep what he had taken. They could only look at him in silence.

"S'possee me no givee backee, you tinkee pinchee!" said Wun.

"Oh, don't be an ass, old chap!" said Harry. "Of course we know jolly well that you will give us our things back, some time or other."

"No can, 'long me no takee."

Silence again.

Bob Cherry broke it.

"Look here, you men," said Bob. "Wun's given us his word, and we're bound to take it! I believe him, for one."

"Old Bob Chelly velly nicey, 'long this I'll Chiney," said Wun, with an affectionate grin at Bob. "Ole Bob Chelly savvy plenty."

"But—but—" said Harry. "If it isn't a fatheaded joke of Wun's, where are the things gone?"

Bob could not answer that.

"Nobody here could play such tricks, except Wun," said Nugent. "Bunter might be fool enough, but he could no more pick a fellow's pocket than he could tell the truth. I suppose old Wells, the butler, hasn't taken to larking in his old age? Look here, Wun, don't be an ass!"

"I—I suppose Bob really might have dropped his note-case helping that chap out of the ditch yesterday, though we couldn't find it when we looked for it there," said Harry slowly. "But we couldn't all have dropped our things—a regular shower of them, without noticing it! That's rot!"

"The rotfulness is preposterous."

"Me no takee!" said Wun stolidly. "Takee Buntie buttelscotch, 'long jokee 'long fat ole Buntie. No takee things blong fiends. Me loseee wallet blong me, all samee you fellee. Me no tinkee you takee."

"Look here, that's gammon, you know," said Harry.

Wun gave a shrug of the shoulders.

"If Wun's lost his own wallet—" said Bob.

"Me loseee, 'long money Uncle O Bo givee this I'll Chiney," said Wun. "Me no savvy where that wallet goey."

The little Chinese looked very earnest. But the juniors had seen him looking equally earnest, at school, when he was rolling out the most barefaced fibs.

On one occasion, he had actually owned up to Mr. Quelch that he had done something that he had not done, because Quelch thought he had, from a motive of Chinese politeness to an elder, which other fellows found it very hard

to understand. Believing Wun, in the face of what looked like convincing evidence, was not easy.

"Well, look here, I believe him," said Bob sturdily. "I can't understand what's happened, unless there's another potty practical joker about. But I'm taking Wun's word on it."

"Othee fellee no takee?" said Wun.

"Well, it's no good humbugging," said Harry Wharton. "I can't believe you, Wun, and that's that! I know you don't mean any harm, but I believe you lifted those things for a joke, and that you're pulling our leg."

"Nuffee said! Me goey!"

"Now, don't be a young ass," said Harry soothingly. "No need for you to get your back up, if we don't! You've played the trick, not us!"

"No playee tlick."

Harry Wharton breathed hard. He would not have been so patient as this with any other fellow, but he felt bound to make wide allowances for the queer little heathen. But he was getting to the end of his patience now.

Wun gave him a long look, and turned to the suitcase again, and proceeded stolidly with his packing.

"Well, if you've made up your mind, you're your own master, kid," said Harry at last. "I'm sorry! You'll stay over lunch—my uncle will be back then."

"No wantee! Me goey!"

"Please yourself!" said Harry curtly, and he walked out of the room, followed more slowly by Nugent and the nabob, and more slowly still by Bob Cherry.

A quarter of an hour later, Wun Lung came down with a suitcase in his hand. He stepped into the telephone cabinet, and rang up for a taxi to take him to the station.

On the whole, Harry was rather glad that he was not staying till the colonel came in, and that Miss Amy Wharton was out that morning. He did not want the elders to get wind of this exceedingly unpleasant state of affairs.

Wun Lung sat with a stony face till the taxi came along from Wimford.

When it stopped on the drive, he rose, and picked up his bag.

"Good-bye, ole Bob Chelly!" he said, and without a word or a look to the others, he walked out to the taxi.

"I—I say, this is awfully rotten, if—if—" muttered Bob, his face clouded dismally.

"Is there any 'if' about it?" said Harry, rather tartly. "That young ass is walking off with our things—unless he's left them somewhere for us to find unexpectedly after he's gone."

"But he says—"

"You've heard him tell lies often enough."

"I know. But—but he makes a distinction with his friends. I—I don't believe he would tell us lies."

"Then where are the things?"

"Oh, don't ask me!" rapped out Bob. "What's the good of asking a fellow riddles?"

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

In silence they watched the taxi drive away, and saw it pass another on the drive.

Wun Lung was gone!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Stop Thief!

BILLY BUNTER grinned.

A moment ago, he had been frowning. He had waited long for the juniors to come out of the station—and it dawned on his fat mind at last that they had gone out unseen, leaving him standing there.

Which was very annoying to Bunter! He had been thinking out quite a lot of unpleasant remarks to make on the subject of Wun Lung and pinching. He had been going to insist on a taxi back to Wharton Lodge, in case something had happened to his suitcase during his absence. As he was too lazy to walk, he would have wanted a taxi, anyhow; but this, to Bunter, seemed a nice, pleasant reason to give!

And it had to remain bottled up, as it were, in Bunter's own fat breast, as he made, at last, the discovery that the juniors had walked on and left him there. No wonder Bunter frowned.

But the frown was replaced by a grin, as he blinked at a boy who was coming up the High Street at an easy saunter, with his hands in his pockets.

Bunter knew the chubby, rather good-looking face under the check cap; he knew the striped waistcoat, and he knew the dazzling tie-pin.

This was the fellow who had pulled the leg of the Greyfriars fellows the previous day, to Bunter's huge entertainment, and the sight of him recalled that entertainment, and made Bunter grin.

Skip did not glance at Bunter. He had never seen him before, and had no idea that Bunter had ever seen him. The fat schoolboy in spectacles had no interest whatever for the young pick-pocket.

Skip's interest was in others. A train had come in, and a number of people were leaving the station.

Bunter, watching the boy in the check cap, through his spectacles, noticed that he loitered about, looking at the people who came out of the station with a keen eye.

That only led Bunter to conclude that he was waiting for somebody who had come by the train just in. Certainly it never occurred to him that a crowd leaving a station meant business to the boy in the check cap.

Among the passengers was a plump old gentleman wearing an overcoat and gold-rimmed glasses, whose prosperous look caught Skip's calculating eye at once.

Skip made a sudden forward movement, slipped over, and fell, landing right at the old gentleman's feet.

The latter almost walked on him.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. Had he not been watching the boy, and had he not seen his trickery of the previous day, he would have supposed that it was an accidental fall, as the old gentleman supposed.

But Bunter did not, in the circumstances, suppose anything of the kind. Bunter was not fearfully bright, but he was bright enough to see that the young rascal was up to trickery again.

"Oh! Sorry, sir!" gasped Skip, looking up at the old gentleman, who had stopped just in time to avoid treading on him. "I slipped, sir. Oh! Wow! Ow! I've 'urt my leg! Oh!"

Billy Bunter grinned.

"Dear, dear!" said the old gentleman. "I am sorry, my boy—come, let me help you!"

He stooped, and helped the boy to his feet.

Bunter grinned—but he was puzzled! This was exactly the fellow's trickery of the previous day over again.

Playing an absurd joke on a party of schoolboys was one thing—but hanging about the entrance of a railway station, to play it on a white-whiskered old gentleman was quite another. He was befooling the old gentleman, just as he had befooled the Famous Five on the Wimford road—but why he should take the trouble to play such silly tricks was a mystery to Bunter.

But the next moment, he knew—and he jumped!

It was only because he was watching the boy, interested in him, and puzzled by his actions, that he saw what he did. No one else at hand noticed it, least of all the kind old gentleman who was helping the young rascal up.

But Bunter saw it—and his eyes almost popped through his spectacles at what he saw—a thievish hand slipping into a pocket, and a fat notecase slipping up the young rascal's sleeve.

It was done so swiftly, so neatly, so cunningly, that Billy Bunter almost doubted the evidence of his eyes and his spectacles.

But what he had seen, he had seen. He knew now the meaning of that strange trick in the ditch on the Wimford road. He knew where the articles had gone that had been missed by the Famous Five. In a flash Bunter understood the whole thing as he saw that notecase pass swiftly from the old gentleman's pocket into the pickpocket's sleeve.

"There, there! All right now?" asked the old gentleman, as the boy in the check cap was on his feet again.

"Yes, thank you kindly, sir!" gasped Skip. "My leg's a bit 'urt, sir. I can manage all right. Thank you, sir!"

"Not at all, my boy!" said the old gentleman kindly. "Why, what—what is—"

Bunter shot forward. "I say, he's picked your pocket!" bawled Bunter.

"What—what?" "I saw him!" yelled Bunter. "I say, he's got your notecase! I saw him!"

"Goodness gracious! What—?" Skip—injured leg and all—made a bound; but Bunter was grabbing him. A fat hand clawed him by the arm and fastened on his sleeve.

"Stop thief!" roared Bunter. "Leggo!" hissed Skip, wrenching at his arm.

"Look!" yelled Bunter. From the sleeve, as Skip wrenched, slipped a fat notecase, falling at its owner's feet under his astonished eyes.

The old gentleman's benevolent face quite changed in expression. He grabbed up the notecase, and glared.

"Young scoundrel!" he gasped. "Pickpocket! Thank you, my good lad! Hold him—hold the young rascal! Police! A constable! Police!"

"I've got him!" gasped Bunter. "I've got—Yaroooooh!"

Bunter was feeling tremendously bucked. He, and he alone, had spotted the pickpocket; he, and he alone, had collared him. A crowd was gathering round, all staring at Bunter. Bunter loved the limelight. Now he was getting it. But a moment more, and he was getting something that he liked much less.

A fist jabbed suddenly under his fat chin.

Bunter let go the pickpocket's sleeve quite hurriedly. He roared.

Skip bounded away. "Stop him!" shrieked the old gentleman. "Stop thief!"

A dozen hands reached out to stop the boy in the check cap. In desperation, he dodged and ducked and leaped.

"Stop him!" "Stop thief!"

It was a roar all through the High Street. The old gentleman, venerable as he was, rushed in pursuit; a dozen or more people joined in the rush; and a police-constable appeared from nowhere and rushed faster than anyone. The chase swept hot at the heels of the fleeing pickpocket up the High Street,

Billy Bunter was left nursing his fat chin, which felt as if it had been kicked by a mule.

"Ow! Yow! Wow!" moaned Bunter. "Wow! Yow! Ow!"

He lost his interest in the pickpocket. His interest was concentrated in his fat chin.

Hard and fast after the fleeing young rascal rushed the crowd. At the corner of an alley he turned. The constable was close behind, and would undoubtedly have grabbed him, but a rat-eyed man who was running with the crowd got in the officer's way just in time.

The constable shoved him roughly aside and rushed on, but the moment had been enough for Skip; he had vanished round the corner, and was gone.

The chase swept on; but the young rascal, running like a hare among a network of narrow streets and alleys, was not seen again.

Billy Bunter almost forgot him in his interest in his chin. There was a bruise on that fat chin, and a pain in it.

Bunter had done his duty as a law-abiding citizen, and no doubt he was glad that he had prevented a robbery; but he was not feeling much gladness as he rubbed that chin.

"Ow! Yow!" said Bunter. "Wow! Ow!"

He had no inclination whatever to follow the chase. Bunter was no running man—unless, indeed, there was danger behind him, in which case Bunter could put on quite a creditable turn of speed. Pursued and pursuers vanished in the distance from Bunter's eyes, unregarded.

"Beasts!" grunted Bunter.

It was the fault of Harry Wharton & Co. that he had captured that bump on

his chin—sneaking off and leaving a fellow waiting for nothing.

Bunter waved a fat hand to a taxi. He was not going to walk back to Wharton Lodge—not if Bunter knew it!

If that beast Wharton, whose guest he was, fancied he was going to walk, that beast had another guess coming. The great advantage of travelling by taxi was that you paid at the end instead of the beginning; and at the Wharton Lodge end, it would be up to Wharton to pay. Bunter, at all events, was prepared to roll in and leave that sordid detail to anyone who chose to deal with it. Even those beasts, beastly as they were, could hardly let a taxi-man kick up a row at the door for his fare.

So Bunter rolled off in the taxi from Wimford, and rubbed his fat chin as he rolled, and arrived at Wharton Lodge, where he passed a taxi coming away as he rolled up the drive.

He blinked at Wun Lung in the other taxi, surprised to see the Chinese junior going off by himself, especially as it was getting near lunch-time.

Wun did not look at him. He drove away, with a clouded little yellow face, taking the road for the station.

Bunter drove on to the house, got down, and rolled in, leaving the driver waiting.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

What Bunter Knew!

"I SAY, you fellows!" None of the juniors answered Bunter. Wun Lung was gone, and they were feeling worried and disturbed. The sight of Billy Bunter's fat face brought them no comfort whatever.

The Boy Who Wanted The Sack!

By
MARTIN
CLIFFORD

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They had not expected to see Bunter so soon, and they were not glad to see him now.

"You left me waiting at the station!" said Bunter accusingly. "If that's the way you treat a guest here, Wharton, I—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Harry quietly. "Don't worry now!"

"Leaving a fellow standing about!" hooted Bunter. "If you think I'm going to stand that kind of thing—"

"Ring off!" snapped Nugent.

"Shan't! Do you call it treating a fellow decently to leave him waiting about for nothing while you walk off?" hooted Bunter.

"Not any other fellow," said Harry. "But you can't expect fellows to stand too much of you, Bunter! Now shut up! I don't want to boot you, but I shall do it if you don't shut up!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him, in surprise and wrath.

It was true that he had invited himself to Wharton Lodge; still, being there, he was a guest, and this really was not the way for a host to talk to a guest. Generally, Harry Wharton contrived to keep patient; but at the present moment he was worried and troubled, and felt that he could not stand any more Bunter.

"Well," said the fat Owl, "that's the limit! Manners! My hat, that isn't the way I talk to guests at Bunter Court! What the thump are you all scowling about? Been rowing with that Chinese?"

"Cheese it!" said Bob.

"He looked like it when he passed me in the taxi!" sneered Bunter. "Looked fearfully down in the mouth! Been treating him as you treat me? You've really got awful manners to a guest, Wharton!"

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove breathed hard and deep.

"Has he gone?" asked Bunter.

"Yes!" snapped Harry.

"Well, I'm not surprised, if you've been talking to him as you talk to me!" said Bunter scornfully. "You can't expect a fellow to stand it, Wharton! I say, my taxi's waiting—"

"Take it to the station!" said Harry.

"Wha-at?"

"Or else shut up!"

"Well"—Bunter gasped with wrath—"I'd jolly well clear off this minute, only I've turned down Mauleverer's invitation, and lost Smithy's address, and—and the painters are in at Bunter Court! Otherwise—"

"Otherwise shut up, or I'll pitch you into that taxi head first!" said the captain of the Remove.

Three fellows grinned. The Co. had wondered, every now and then, how Wharton contrived to keep patient with the fat Owl. It was clear that he had at this moment no patience left for Bunter.

Billy Bunter fairly gasped.

"Well, that's the limit!" he said. "Unless you apologise, Wharton, I don't see how I can stay here any longer!"

"That's enough! Shut up!"

"Are you going to pay that taxi?" roared Bunter.

"No!"

"Oh, all right! Let him wait—and let him kick up a row!" said Bunter. "I'm not going to pay him! In fact, I can't, as I've been disappointed about a postal order!"

Harry Wharton did not answer that. He was worried and distressed about Wun Lung, and fed-up to the back teeth with Billy Bunter.

"I suppose you can lend me a few bob for the taxi-man, Cherry?"

"No!"

"Was that thirty bob in your note-case all you had?" sneered Bunter.

"What about you, Nugent?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Inky, old chap—"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh turned his back. Even the good-natured nabob had no patience to waste on Bunter just then.

"Well, the man will want to be paid!" said Bunter. "If you choose to diddle a taxi-man, Wharton, you must expect him to cut up rusty. I wash my hands of the whole thing."

"Wash your neck, too, while you're about it!" suggested Bob.

"Beast! Leaving a fellow hanging about! Look at my chin! I've got a bump as big as an apple! All your fault!" Bunter rubbed his chin. "Has your uncle come in yet, Wharton?"

"No!"

"Well, the taxi-man can wait till he comes in. I decline to take any further notice of the matter at all. Blessed if I know how you get any fellows to stay with you in the hols at all, Wharton! You ask a fellow here—"

"I don't remember asking you here."

"Beast! You asked poor old Wun here, at any rate, and then you make out that he picks your pockets! Yah!"

"You fat scoundrel!" said Harry.

"Wun's been playing idiotic fool jokes, but nobody's suggested anything worse, except you—and I've a jolly good mind to kick you out for having done it!"

"I suppose that's why he's gone!" said Bunter. "I'm not surprised! Making out that he pinched things out of your pockets! Yah!"

The four juniors looked at Bunter. This was rather a new line for the fat Owl to take.

"What do you mean by that, you irritating fat idiot, if you mean anything?" asked Harry. "You know Wun took our things, and you've been making out that he meant to keep them."

"Well, what was a fellow to think if he had them and wouldn't give them back?" said Bunter. "But I never said he had them, did I? You did!"

That certainly was true enough. The Co. believed that Wun had lifted their property; Bunter had only placed the very worst possible construction on that action.

"If he had them, and wouldn't hand them back, it was pinching," said Bunter. "No good talking to me about practical jokes if a fellow bags money and won't give it back. Of course I thought he'd pinched the things when you fellows made out that he had them. What else could a fellow think? If I'd known he hadn't got them I shouldn't have thought so."

"You babbling bandersnatch, you know he took them!" hissed Wharton.

"I jolly well know he didn't!" grinned Bunter.

"You know he didn't!" howled Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he! Yes, rather!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Bunter.

"And how do you know?" demanded Bob.

"He, he, he! Because I know who did!" chuckled Bunter.

"You know who did?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes, I jolly well do! He, he, he!"

"I suppose that fat fool is gabbling rot, as usual," said Bob, with a deep breath. "If he is I'll boot him all over the house!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You say you know who did! Who was it, then?"

"That young rotter who pulled your leg yesterday," grinned Bunter. "The

kid in the check cap and the tie-pin! He, he, he!"

Four fellows jumped. They had forgotten the boy in the check cap, and certainly had never dreamed for a moment of connecting him and his peculiar pranks with the loss of their property. Neither did they believe Bunter's statement now.

"That kid?" said Bob. "You gurgling idiot, what had he got to do with it?"

"He, he, he! He's a pickpocket!" chuckled Bunter. "That's how I know! That's why he pulled your leg yesterday—to get a chance at picking your pockets!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"I—I suppose it may be possible!" said Harry slowly. "I never thought of anything of the kind, or of that kid at all. But I don't believe it. He was rather flashy, and he played the fool, but he looked decent enough."

"He, he, he!"

"Bunter can't know anything about it, anyhow!" said Nugent.

"He, he, he!"

"Well, what do you know about it?" roared Bob.

"I jolly well know this much," chuckled Bunter. "I know I saw him picking an old bean's pocket at Wimford Station while I was there, and I know I collared him, and he hit me on the chin and got away—with a crowd after him yelling 'Stop, thief!' He, he, he!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Wharton. "Is that the truth?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Tell me the truth!" exclaimed Harry. He grabbed Bunter by a fat shoulder and shook him, his eyes flashing. "You lying fat toad, tell me the truth for once, or I'll—"

"Ow! Leggo! If you make my specs fall off—"

"Tell me what's happened, if anything has!" shouted Harry. "Tell me a single lie and I'll boot you! Now, then!"

"Ow! Beast! Leggo!" gasped Bunter. "I'm telling you as fast as I can, ain't I? You can ask them at the police station, if you like—they'll have his description there by this time—half Wimford was after him. He may be there himself—they were right at his heels when I lost sight of him. Leggo!"

"Tell me—" hissed Wharton.

Billy Bunter gasped it out.

The expression on Harry Wharton's face warned him to come to the point and to come to it quickly.

The four juniors listened to him, almost dumbfounded.

"Oh!" gasped Harry, when it was out. "Oh! Poor old Wun—"

"If that young rascal's a professional pickpocket that settles it," said Bob. "Blessed if I should have guessed it on his looks. But—"

"We shan't see our things again, then!" said Nugent. "But that doesn't matter—blow the things! But poor old Wun—"

"I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

"He can't be at the station yet!" exclaimed Harry. "We can get after him and tell him we know. But—uncle's got the car out—"

"There is the esteemed taxi—" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, good!"

"I say, you fellows—"

Nobody heeded Bunter. The four juniors rushed out to the taxi.

The driver thereof was getting a little impatient by this time. If he was not wanted he wanted to go. But he was wanted—badly!



"You'll hand me over to the peelers, will you?" said the Rat, between his teeth. "Then take this——" The weapon was descending on Coker's unprotected head, when Skip suddenly grasped the villain's arm with both hands and dragged it back. "Hold on!" panted the boy. "You shan't, Jimmy—you shan't!"

"You saw a taxi leaving as you came?" exclaimed Harry.

"Yessir!"

"It's gone to the station! Get after it! A quid if you catch it before it reaches the station!"

"Op in, sir!" said the Wimford driver briskly.

"I say, you fellows——" yelled Bunter from the doorway. But he yelled unheard and unheeded as the taxi shot away.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Just in Time!

WUN LUNG stood on the platform at Wimford Station, his suitcase beside him and a deep cloud on his little yellow face. He was feeling extremely dismal.

The little Chinese had spent those holidays with the Famous Five, and all had been calm and bright—till now.

Now all was dark and dismal.

Wun was not feeling angry. He was a sensible little fellow, in his own way, and could see the matter as other fellows saw it.

A fellow who played practical jokes could not complain of being suspected of having played a practical joke. A fellow who told fibs could hardly expect his word to be taken on trust. Wun realised that, and so he had to realise that he was not entitled to indulge in indignation or resentment.

But, though he was not angry, he was miserable and wretched. In his own queer little mind he made a distinction between the different sorts of people to whom he told fibs. To some he would roll out fabrications quite in the style of Billy Bunter. To others nothing would have induced him to lie. In the Greyfriars Remove he would have lied to pull off a joke, with an innocent face,

to Wibley, or Toddy, or Vernon-Smith, or Skinner, or almost any fellow. But to fellows he liked, and who had befriended him, he would not have lied—and the Famous Five, especially Bob Cherry, came under that head. But he could hardly expect this distinction, clear enough in his own mind, to be equally clear to other fellows.

Moreover, what had happened at Wharton Lodge was as inexplicable to Wun as to the others. His own wallet had gone with the rest, and he had not the remotest idea what had become of it. He had not missed it till several hours after the encounter with the boy in the check cap, and never even dreamed of that youth in connection with it.

As somebody, utterly unknown, had made a clean sweep of the whole party's cash, he had to conclude that there was some dishonest servant in the house—the only explanation he could think of.

But he could scarcely blame the Co. for what they thought, in the circumstances, especially as Harry Wharton was quite assured that there was no dishonest person in the household.

Not angry or resentful, but miserable the little Chinese stood on the platform and waited for his train to come in.

It was already signalled, when there was a sudden trampling of feet at the entrance to the platform, and four fellows rushed breathlessly on.

Wun glanced round, and his little face set.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Here he is!"

"Wun, old man!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Wun, old chap!" gasped Nugent.

"Esteemed and ridiculous Wun, thank the absurd goodness that we have catchfully copped you in time!"

exclaimed Hurree Jamsat Rain Singh.

They came up with a rush and surrounded him. The Wimford taximan had earned his "quid"—never had a taxi covered the ground at such a rate. But Wun had had a long start, and his train was due—and the chums of the Remove were only just in time.

The train came in and stopped.

Wun picked up his suitcase.

"Hold on, old chap!" exclaimed Harry.

"Me goey 'long tlain blong me!" said Wun stolidly.

"You're not going, fathead! It's all right now!" gasped Harry. "We've found out who did it——"

Wun blinked at him with his slanting eyes. He let the suitcase drop again.

"You findee out?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, yes, and we're sorry——"

"The sorrowfulness is terrific."

Wun's little face brightened.

"You no tinkee any more this li'll Chinees takee?" he asked.

"No; we know who did."

"The knowfulness is——"

"Terrific and preposterous!" declared Bob.

Wun Lung grinned.

"How you savvy?" he asked.

"When me goee, you tinkee——"
"That blithering idiot Bunter found it out by accident——"

"Fattee ole Bunter?" asked Wun, his almond eyes opening wide in astonishment.

All speaking at once, the four juniors explained.

Wun's little face was very bright as he listened.

"Me velly glad," he said. "You tellee old Johnny Bullee."

"I'll phone him as soon as he gets in at his home," said Harry. "Thank

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goodness it's come out, kid! We—we're sorry, but—but— Look here, you've got no kick coming, as Fishy would say—so wash it all out, see?"

"Me washeel!" said Wun cheerfully. "Nother time you believe me no teller lie 'long friends blong me. Teller plenty lie 'long otheo feller. What you tinkee?"

"Why not cut out the fibs altogether, old son?" said Bob. "Anyhow, it's all right now—you're coming back."

"Me come!"

Bob picked up the suitcase, and the little Chinese trotted cheerfully out of the station with the four.

The police station was near at hand, and Harry Wharton stepped in to inquire whether the pickpocket had been captured. If so, there was a chance, at least, of the juniors' property being recovered.

He learned that the young rascal had escaped, though narrowly.

But his description was taken down—and that description was that of the boy in the check cap who had been helped out of the ditch the previous afternoon.

If Wharton had had any doubt of Bunter's story, he could have had none now—it was clear that that young rascal was a professional picker of pockets, and equally clear why he had pulled the juniors' legs. Obviously he had cleared out their pockets while they were helping him.

But, in their relief at having found out the facts, the juniors did not worry very much about that.

They packed into the taxi to return to Wharton Lodge, and on the way Bob Cherry talked to Wun Lung rather like a Dutch uncle.

He explained to him that a fellow never should, under any circumstances whatever, tell fibs, and advised him most seriously to give up practical joking—or, at the very least, letting his practical jokes take the form of picking pockets!

Wun listened meekly, and shook his head in assent—that being his Chinese way of nodding.

Bob flattered himself that he had made quite a deep impression on the little Chinese, which was very satisfactory.

"Where's my hanky?" asked Nugent suddenly.

"Isn't it in your pocket, fathead?"

"Well, it was," said Nugent, puzzled. "It isn't now! Must have dropped out, I suppose. Lend me yours, will you—there's a smut on my nose."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! I seem to have two!" ejaculated Bob, in surprise.

He stared as he drew two handkerchiefs together from his pocket.

Wun Lung was looking out of the window, with an expressionless face.

Bob stared at the two handkerchiefs and noted that one had an "N" in the corner. That one he handed to Nugent.

The four juniors looked at one another. They looked at Wun Lung. Then they looked at one another again.

"You blithering little heathen idiot—" said Bob.

He realised that, while he had been delivering his homily on the subject of practical joking, and especially of picking pockets for that purpose, Wun had abstracted Nugent's handkerchief, unseen, and transferred it to Bob's pocket.

"Whattée mattee?" asked Wun innocently.

"You jolly well know!" growled Bob. "Fat lot of good talking to you!"

"You go on talkee," said Wun. "Me

likee you talkee 'long this li'll Chineel! Velly nicey 'long ole Bob Chelly!"

Bob gave it up.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Tit for Tat!

"COMING out, Bunter?"

"No!"

"Hem!"

Billy Bunter blinked suspiciously and morosely at the chums of the Remove. It was hot that afternoon, and Bunter, having done very well at lunch, was reposing his fat person in the hammock on the lawn, under a shady tree.

He was—as per usual—disinclined to move. Likewise, he was in a state of offended dignity.

No fellow, staying with another fellow, could be expected to be pleased by the way Bunter's host had talked to him that morning.

Some fellows, in such circumstances, would have shaken the dust of Wharton Lodge from their feet on the spot.

Bunter was not going to carry his offended dignity to that length. Whether or not the painters were in at Bunter Court, that magnificent residence had no attraction for Bunter. Bunter was staying on—but he was staying on in a state of offended dignity.

Moreover, when four juniors came up to the hammock with smiling faces, Bunter did not trust to appearances. He suspected a rag!

"It's a picnic!" said Harry.

"Is it?" said Bunter sarcastically. "Not thinking of leaving a fellow hanging about while you walk off?"

"Hem!"

The fact was that Harry Wharton & Co. had planned a picnic that afternoon with a large basket packed full of the most delightful things, specially for Bunter's behoof.

It had been by chance, certainly, but still there was no doubt that it was Bunter who had cleared up the painful misunderstanding with Wun.

But for Bunter, Wun would have gone off, to spend the last few days of the vac with no company but Fisher T. Fish's, at Greyfriars. And his friends would have been left feeling worried and troubled.

Bunter's discovery that that young rascal in the check cap was a pickpocket had cleared up the whole trouble.

For which reason the juniors felt that it was up to them to make it up to Bunter. How, was an easy question. There was one sure and unmistakable trail to Bunter's fat heart—which a blind man could not have missed! Food was the idea!

True, the meals at Wharton Lodge were good and ample; and Wharton's other guests felt no urge for meals between meals. Bunter, on the other hand, was always good for a snack, and the more substantial the snack, the better he liked it!

As it was now more than an hour since lunch, Bunter's thoughts were, naturally, dwelling on tea—that being the next meal to come.

A picnic between lunch and tea was the sort of suggestion to make Bunter sit up and smile.

Instead of which he neither sat up nor smiled. He sprawled and sneered.

"Tons of grub, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry temptingly. "A cake nearly as big round as your waistcoat—"

"Bags of jam tarts!" said Nugent.

"A terrific quantity of cream puffs!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ginger-pop galore!" said Harry.

"Nice shady spot in the wood!" said Frank.

"Only a short walk!" said Harry.

"And I'll carry the basket!" declared Bob.

"I know that!" said Bunter. "Don't I know it? And you'll walk off, same as you did this morning. Think you can pull my leg twice the same way?"

"No walkee off, and leavee fat ole Bunter!" said Wun Lung. "Likee fattee ole Bunter plenty too much!"

"Yah!"

"Look here, old fat bean, roll out of that hammock and come!" said Harry.

"Oh, I'll come!" said Bunter, still suspicious and sarcastic. "I'll come if you'll show me the tuck before I get out of this hammock!"

"Oh, all right!"

Bunter, left to repose in peace again, sneered a fat sneer. These beasts, of course, fancied that they could pull his fat leg to any extent. Bunter was going to show them that it wasn't so jolly easy.

"Isn't he nice?" murmured Bob, as the juniors went away for the picnic basket. "Isn't he the kind of chap a fellow loves to have about?"

"The nicefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the upfulness of our esteemed selves is also great."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"We owe Bunter something," he said. "Feeding him is the thing. Sitting round watching him eat isn't exactly the way I should choose to spend an afternoon—but in the jolly old circumstances—"

"Might bung the basket in on him in that hammock and leave it at that!" suggested Bob. "I'd rather go on the river than watch Bunter eat."

"Well, yes, but—dash it all, we owe it to Bunter that we've got matters set right with old Wun—and it's really up to us."

"Oh, all right!" said Bob. "I'll sit round watching him eat if you fellows will, and lend a hand rolling him home, like a barrel, if he can't move afterwards."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ten minutes later, the party arrived at the hammock again. Bob Cherry held up a large basket, evidently heavy. He opened the lid, and Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his big spectacles at the sight of the luscious contents.

"Coming, old fat bean?" asked Harry.

Bunter sat up.

"Well, look here," he said. "I'll come—if I carry the basket!"

"Bit heavy for you, Bunter."

"Oh, pile it on!" sneered Bunter. "I'm the most athletic chap here, and chance it! Think I don't know you mean to walk off with it? Yah!"

Harry Wharton & Co. restrained a natural desire to roll the fat Owl out of the hammock, and plaster some of the jam tarts down his fat neck. Bunter, for once, had to be given his head. What he had done, whether by chance or not, required acknowledgment; and they were going to acknowledge it.

As they had no desire to eat, even of the excellent things in the picnic basket, it was rather a dismaying prospect to sit about watching Bunter scoff the tuck when they might have been playing tennis or pulling a boat on the river.

But it was up to them, and they were going to do it!

"You carry the basket, old bean, if you like!" said Harry mildly.

"Oh!" said Bunter.

He rolled out of the hammock.

That basket was large—and it was

(Continued on page 22.)

WHO'S WHO and WHAT'S WHAT at GREYFRIARS . . . MEET—

The GREYFRIARS GUIDE



A TOUR OF THE SCHOOL. (The Woodshed.)

(1)
This place was built, so Gosling says,
For chopping wooden faggots;
It comes in useful nowadays
For spiders, flies, and maggots!
Here Skinner, Snoop, and Smithy, too,
Have come for secret smoking,
And many a cheerful fellow who
Needs solitude for joking.

(2)
Here Wibley, bent upon a lark,
Puts on his quaint disguises,
And steals out softly through the dark
To give us all surprises.
Here secret meetings have been held
By grave and youthful plotters,
And games for which they'd be expelled
Have been played here by rotters.

(3)
Here Fishy comes upon the sly
To do his money-lending;
Here secretly we build a guy
When Bonfire Night is pending.
Here Bunter's sometimes known to
bring
A bag with stolen food in;
It's used, in fact, for everything
Except for chopping wood in!



A WEEKLY BUDGET OF FACT AND FUN

By
THE GREYFRIARS
RHYMESTER

THE GREYFRIARS ALPHABET

HORACE JAMES COKER
(The Fathead of the Fifth Form)

C is for COKER—Horace James,
Who thinks he's very good at games.
Amid loud laughter from the school
He takes the field and plays—the fool!
He's big and brawny, full of pluck,



And really it is rotten luck
That by some oversight, no doubt,
His brains were left completely out!
He thinks Removites can be whacked
And tries it on, despite the fact
That every time, a perfect wreck,
He goes downstairs upon his neck!
He says he's quite the greatest man
At Greyfriars since the place began.
If he had said "the greatest dunce,"
We'd all agree with him for once!

ANSWER TO PUZZLE

He added 4d., and we got 72d. each.

GREYFRIARS GRINS

The latest news of the Remove's "Ugliest Face" competition is that the fellows all refuse to enter unless Bolsover major gives them a start. Bolsover is doing this by handing out thick ears and black eyes to all concerned.

When Coker tries to spell in class it nearly always spells trouble—for Coker.

Medical authorities are puzzled by the mysterious illness which visits William George Bunter on compulsory games practice days. It is believed that a diet of bread and water might effect a complete cure.

Why is Mauly like the back of a clock?—Because he's always behind time.

How does Bunter keep his tuck in safety?—He bolts it down!

PUZZLE PAR

Sir Hilton Popper offered a £1 note as a prize for the Remove fellow who could answer his questions without a mistake. The whole Form—31 of us—answered 'em right away, so old Popper decided to add as little as possible to the £1 in order to divide it equally between us. How much did he add?

Answer at foot of column 2

Why does Bunter always keep his word?—Because he can't get anyone to take it.

Mossoo was much alarmed when Bulstrode stood up in class and began to make queer choking, gurgling, and grunting noises. It turned out he was speaking French.

Fisher T. Fish announces that he's a "cute guy." He'll come in handy on November 5th.

AFTER SCHOOL HOURS A Visit to Chunkley's

Whenever we want anything
From Chimpanzees to china,
We go to Chunkley's Mammoth Store
For things we've never seen before;
They're stocked with articles galore,
And none could well be finer.
For socks or clocks or peppermint rocks
Or a whacking great box of assorted choes,
For hats or spats or cricket bats,
We go to where they sell 'em, that's
Old Chunkley's great emporium.
The cafe, too, is good to view,
The waiters wait to wait on you;
It's just the place to feed your face,
And there's a doctor there in case
Your little bill should make you ill.
They'll serve a powder or a pill
In Chunkley's sanatorium.
For every customer admits
He feels like having forty fits
When Chunkley's bill arrives, and it's
As well to be in readiness.
And Bunter, needless to remark,
Could stay from dawn till after dark
In Chunkley's cafe for a day
(Provided Mauly's there to pay).
We bet the Owl would roll away
With terrible unsteadiness!
At any rate, I shan't shop there
Till I'm a multi-millionaire!

undoubtedly heavy. Bunter did not like carrying anything weighty. But when the weight was the weight of foodstuffs, that, of course, made a great difference. In the present circumstances, Bunter was prepared to carry twice the weight, or thrice.

"Mind, I'm going to carry it all the way!" he declared cautiously.

"You're going to carry it all both ways!" said Bob affably. "Outside going, inside coming back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!"

Bunter picked up the basket and they started.

Bunter was already getting a little hungry, and the sight of the gorgeous supplies in the picnic basket made him hungrier. He rolled away quite cheerfully, heavy as the basket was.

The juniors walked out into the road and crossed it into the wood. They followed a shady footpath.

Billy Bunter blinked at the other fellows through his big spectacles. There was an artful glimmer in his eyes, behind those spectacles. Deep thoughts were working in Bunter's fat brain.

Those beasts had walked off and left him that morning. It would serve them jolly well right to play the same trick on them—with the picnic basket!

Bunter grinned at the idea. It was going to be "tit for tat."

It required strategy, of course.

Bunter had no doubt that they were as keen on the tuck as he was. But Bunter was the man for strategy.

He dropped behind

On a hot afternoon, and carrying a heavy basket, it was natural enough for Bunter to drop behind. Still, the juniors, though prepared to sacrifice that afternoon to Bunter, did not want to move at the pace of old, tired, ailing tortoises. Two or three voices urged Bunter to buck up.

"I say, you fellows, don't wait for me," said Bunter. "You keep on and I'll catch you up. You can sit down and wait for me."

"Oh, all right!" said Harry

They walked on.

A couple of minutes later, Bob Cherry paused.

"Look here, I'll go and give the fat ass a hand with that basket," he said. "It's really heavy for that fat slacker."

The good-natured Bob turned back.

Bunter had already dropped out of sight on the winding footpath.

Bob cut back, expecting to sight him in a few moments.

He did!

But what he sighted was a fat back. He stared at that fat back! Bunter, his podgy back to the footpath, was rolling off into the wood—evidently with no intention whatever of following the fellows he had so artfully sent on ahead.

Bob stared.

Then he gurgled.

He turned again, and rejoined his chums, walking on ahead.

His face was wreathed in grins as he rejoined them.

"Where's Bunter?" asked Wharton.

"Weren't you going?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob.

"What on earth's the joke?" asked Nugent, puzzled.

"Ha, ha, ha! We were going to give up this afternoon sitting round and watching that fat cormorant scoff grub—" gurgled Bob.

"So we are," said Harry. "It's up to us, considering."

"We're not!" chortled Bob. "Bunter's dodging us!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"That's why he dropped behind! He's just cut off into the wood with the picnic basket!"

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Bob's chums stared at him blankly for a moment. Then they burst into a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ain't he a deep card?" gasped Bob. "Ain't he a cunning old fox? Ain't he a giddy strategist? He doesn't know that the tuck was all for him, and that we'd have given twice as much to get shut of him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now he's left us in the lurch—"

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

"And now," grinned Bob, "we can go on the river, after all!"

And the chums of the Remove, chortling, went!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Coker!

COKER of the Fifth snorted.

He was annoyed

It was the first day of the new term at Greyfriars, and Coker was on his way to school—like swarms of other Greyfriars fellows.

Lantham Junction was the general meeting-place, where trains landed Greyfriars men in their legions from all quarters of the kingdom, to take the train for Courtfield and the school.

Horace Coker was on his way to Lantham.

After Lantham Junction, Coker expected to travel in a crowd. But on the way to Lantham he did not. Coker had got into a carriage which was empty, and, having deposited bags and things on one side of that carriage, and himself on the other, he hoped to keep it thus, till Lantham was reached.

Important fellow as Horace was, in his own esteem, at least, he did not exactly expect the railway company to run special trains for him, or even special carriages. Still, when he had settled down and made himself comfortable, he did not want the public butting in.

Occupying nearly all the carriage, with his legs stretched across it, resting on the opposite seat, and a newspaper open, Coker would have preferred the public to leave that carriage alone.

So he gave a snort of annoyance when the door, which he had carefully closed, was pulled open, and a man stepped in, followed by a boy.

It was all the more annoying, because that man had, for the last minute or two, been standing on the platform, with his back to the carriage door, and had thus had the effect of barring off other passengers. That he was going, at the last moment, to turn round and nip into the carriage himself, Coker had naturally not known. But that was what the man did.

Coker had to shift his long legs and his large feet, which he did, with an ill grace.

The man and the boy sat down opposite him, the door slammed and the train started almost at the same moment.

As it was a non-stop run of half an hour to Lantham, Coker had to say good-bye to the idea of having that carriage to himself.

He glanced with disfavour at the passengers opposite.

Then he gave a jump as he recognised them.

The man was a flashily dressed fellow, with black little, rat-like eyes, that showed signs of recent punching, as well as his nose. The boy had a chubby and rather good-looking face, which Coker had already seen.

Coker simply stared.

Several days had elapsed since that meeting with Jimmy the Rat and Skip

in the wood near Wimford, and Coker had almost forgotten them. If he had thought of them at all, it was with satisfaction at the recollection of the terrific thrashing he had handed out to the rat-eyed man.

It was natural that the recollection afforded no such satisfaction to Jimmy the Rat. He was still feeling—and showing—the effects of that terrific thrashing.

"You!" exclaimed Coker.

The rat-eyes glittered at him.

"You know me agin?" said Jimmy the Rat.

And Skip grinned.

"I'd know your gaolbird face anywhere!" answered Coker agreeably. "And I'll tell you what, my man—I'll hand you over to the police as soon as this train stops at Lantham!"

The Rat laughed—and Skip chuckled.

Coker stared at the two of them. He could see nothing humorous in the prospect of being handed over to the police. Clearly, however, they were amused.

"You think you'll be able to, Mister Coker?" asked the Rat banteringly.

"How the thump do you know my name?" exclaimed Coker in astonishment.

"Oh, I found it out!" said the Rat venomously. "I been looking for you since our last 'appy meeting. I been picking up the news. That's why I'm here."

"Well, my hat!" said the astonished Coker. "Mean to say that you've butted into this carriage on purpose, because I was here?"

"You got it!" assented the Rat. "Been watching for days, for the chance—and now you've just walked in and asked for it."

Coker could only stare. He realised that the scoundrel was savagely revengeful, and he looked as if he would stick at very little to repay that terrific thrashing. But Coker had handled him once, with ease, and was ready to handle him again. He was, in fact, more than ready.

"Well," said Coker, "I'm going to give you in charge. But if you want another hiding first you've only got to say the word. I wouldn't let you off being run in, if it was only to get that kid away from you. He's a precious young rascal, but I've no doubt you're the rotter that taught him to be what he is."

Skip looked at Coker rather curiously. "That kid," went on Coker, with a nod towards Skip, "might be taught to be decent yet, if he was got away from a scoundrel like you and given a few thrashings. And I'll jolly well see that he has a chance."

"Oh, smoky 'addocks!" murmured Skip.

"You're a precious little rascal," said Coker sternly. "How a chap can steal, without going and hanging himself immediately afterwards, is a thing I can't understand. Don't you feel a dirty little cad, unfit to breathe the same air as a decent fellow?"

"Not so's you'd notice it," said Skip, staring.

"Well, you ought to," said Coker, "and you'll be jolly well taught when they put that rascal in chokoy, and you're quit of him. And I'm going to see that they do it as soon as we get in at Lantham."

Jimmy the Rat laughed again—a low, unpleasant laugh, that made Coker start a little, so full of savage and triumphant malice was it.

"You had the best of it last time, Mister Coker!" said Jimmy. "I don't



Bob Cherry produced a penny from his pocket and held it out to Bunter. The fat Owl took it, and blinked at it. "What's that?" he stuttered. "What I said I'd lend you—my last penny!" answered Bob affably. "You silly idiot!" shrieked Bunter.

sort of fancy you're getting the best of it this time! Going back to school to-day, are you?"

"Oh, you've found that out, too, you spying scoundrel?" said Coker contemptuously.

"Yes, I found that out, along with the rest," assented the Rat, "and I sort of fancy they'll 'ardly know you agin when you get to your school."

"Look 'ere, Jimmy—" said Skip uneasily.

"You pack it up, Skip!" said the Rat. "All you've got to do is to lend a hand and hold your row!"

He rose to his feet—and Coker did the same.

Schoolboy as he was, Coker was rather an outside in schoolboys, and he almost towered over the rat-like man.

"So you want some more?" said Coker grimly. "Well, I'm the man to give it you. I won't leave much kick in you, to bother the bobby at Lantham. I'll—"

Coker got no farther.

A brighter fellow than Coker might have guessed that foul play was coming. But Horace Coker, with all his eminent qualities, was far from bright.

Jimmy's hand was behind him—and it whipped out suddenly, with a weapon in it. The weapon was a length of gas-pipe, wrapped in a sock—the favourite instrument of men like the Rat.

Before Coker knew what was happening the gas-pipe cracked on his head, and he staggered back, half-stunned.

He fell into his seat again, plump.

He did not remain there. The Rat's grasp was on him instantly, and he went sprawling on his back in the bottom of the carriage.

In a split second the Rat's knee was planted on Coker's broad chest, pinning him down. The deadly gas-pipe was raised for another blow, and the

Rat's eyes glittered down at Coker's dazed face.

"You 'ound!" said the Rat, between his discoloured teeth. "You got it coming! You'll hand me over to the peelers at Lantham, will you? I fancy they'll pick you out of this carriage at Lantham and walk you off to the hospital—and if you get out of it under six months it will be because I've forgotten how to crack a nut! Got that?"

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

He stared up dizzily. He was utterly at the mercy of the ruthless rascal, and a shudder ran through him from head to foot as he saw the deadly blow coming.

Coker had tons of pluck, but the coming crash almost froze his blood.

The Rat's teeth shut hard, his eyes gleamed, and every ounce of his strength was put into the blow, which was already descending on Coker's unprotected head, when Skip suddenly grasped the villain's arm with both hands, and dragged it back.

"Old on!" panted the boy. "You shan't, Jimmy—you shan't!"

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Protege!

JIMMY THE RAT uttered a howl of surprise and rage.

He wrenched at his arm, and almost tore it loose. But Skip held on to it desperately, and dragged it farther back.

The ruffian's eyes turned on him with a deadly glare.

"Leago, Skip! What you mean, you little fool? Leago my arm!"

"I tell you I shan't!" panted Skip.

"Old on, I tell you! I ain't standing for it, Jimmy, I tell you!"

"Leago!"

"I won't!"

The rage of a demon was in the rat-eyed man's face. He swung round his left arm, and the clenched fist struck the boy on the side of the head with savage force.

Skip gave a yell—but he still held on to the ruffian's right arm.

Again the savage fist pounded at him, and again Skip yelled; but still he held on.

A streak of red ran down the boy's cheek, from a cut made by the savage knuckles. But he still clung to the arm like a cat.

That was a chance for Coker.

The blow had dazed him, and his head was singing. But he only wanted a chance, and he had it now.

Jimmy's savage attention was turned on Skip, and Coker heaved under him, making a Herculean effort to throw him off.

The Rat's knee slipped from his chest, and Coker half-rose.

Had Jimmy got his right arm free a stunning blow would have stretched Coker down again, fast enough. But with Skip clinging to his arm the ruffian was at a disadvantage.

He rocked, and went against the carriage seat sideways; and then Coker got a fist into action.

That fist caught the Rat under his chin, rather like the hind leg of a mule. It almost lifted the rat-eyed man's head from his shoulders.

He gave a gasping howl, rocked over, and Coker threw him off.

Panting, the Fifth Former of Greyfriars scrambled up.

Jimmy, active as the rodent from which he derived his nickname, was up at the same time.

Skip was hanging on to his right arm desperately, or even yet the gas-pipe would have done its work.

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With his clenched left the ruffian struck at the boy, so fiercely that Skip fell, losing his grasp.

But it was too late for the Rat.

Even as Skip went down, Coker's brawny fist crashed, and the ruffian fell across Skip.

"Now, you rotter—" panted Coker.

His powerful grasp was on the Rat at once. The gas-pipe was wrenched away and flung in a corner of the carriage. Then the Rat crumpled. In a fair fight with the hefty Horace he had no chance whatever. He crumpled up, howling, in Coker's mighty grasp. Twice Coker punched—then he pitched the ruffian to the floor.

Jimmy the Rat collapsed there, half-senseless.

"By gum!" gasped Coker.

He stooped and lifted the boy to the seat.

Skip sprawled there dazedly. He had stopped several savage punches, and every one of them had told on him. He blinked dizzily at Coker.

"Look out, sir!" he gasped. "If he gets 'old of that gas-pipe agin, you're a goner—and me, too, arter what I done!"

The Rat was stirring.

Coker picked up the length of gas-pipe.

"Stick where you are, you cur!" said Coker. "You get on your legs, and I'll crack your head as soon as look at you!"

The Rat remained where he was, his glittering eyes burning up at Coker. Then he turned them on Skip.

"You"—his voice was hoarse and broken with rage—"you double-crossing young 'ound, you've turned on me! You've landed me for the stone jug! Wait till I get a chance at you, Skip!"

"That's enough from you," said Coker. Coker was not observant; but he could not fail to see the terror in the boy's face at the ruffian's threat. "Any more of that, and I'll give you another punch!"

Jimmy the Rat panted, and was silent.

"Don't you mind that brute, kid!" said Coker. "The police will take care of him. They want that sort to take care of."

Coker sat down again. He held the gas-pipe on his knee, ready for immediate use if Jimmy the Rat gave further trouble.

But the crouching scoundrel had no intention of trying further conclusions with Coker.

The train was slowing down at a level-crossing, half-way to Lantham.

The Rat's eyes were on Skip's face.

He had planned—after dealing with Coker—to jump from the train when it slowed down at that level-crossing. It was not Jimmy's game to arrive at Lantham on the same train on which a schoolboy lay with a cracked head.

Now that he had failed with Coker, and was booked for instant arrest as soon as the train reached the station, the Rat was more anxious than ever to escape at the level-crossing.

He did not speak, but his rat-like eyes told volumes of threats as he looked at the boy. A word or a sign from Skip would have apprised Coker of his intention, which Coker could have frustrated easily enough.

Skip made no sign.

The train slowed.

Jimmy the Rat was on his feet; and Coker, on his guard against an attack, swung up the gas-pipe.

But Jimmy the Rat was not coming for Coker. He tore open the carriage

door, swung out with it as it went, and leaped.

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

He jumped to the open door. He had a glimpse of the rat-eyed man rolling in grass; then the rascal was on his feet, and running.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker.

He stared after the running figure that vanished in a few seconds among trees and bushes.

Coker gave an angry grunt and slammed the carriage door. He was deeply annoyed by the rascal's escape.

Skip grinned faintly.

At their former meeting he had set Coker down, on his looks, as a fool. The present happenings had not caused him to modify that opinion.

"He's gone!" growled Coker.

"Jimmy's spry," remarked Skip. "Jimmy's a rat what it ain't easy to ketch in a trap."

Coker gave a snort, and sat down again. He pitched the length of gas-piping under the seat.

"They'll look for him, when I report this at Lantham," he said.

"They'll get him all right—don't you worry!"

"They won't get Jimmy in a hurry," said Skip.

"Don't argue!" said Coker.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Skip.

Coker sat regarding the boy with a frowning and thoughtful brow. He rubbed his head, which had an ache inside, and a bruise outside. It had been rather a hard knock; but it was nothing to what Coker had so narrowly escaped.

Coker had plenty of nerve, but he still shivered at the remembrance of that deadly weapon about to descend on him in a savage and merciless hand. This young rascal of a pickpocket had saved him from that—from spending the next term in a hospital ward, instead of in the Fifth Form at Greyfriars. In doing so, he had provoked the savage resentment and vengeance of his associate.

Coker regarded him in thoughtful and dubious silence.

Skip looked anxiously from the window as the train rolled on to Lantham.

"You letting me 'op, sir?" he asked.

"Eh!" ejaculated Coker. "What?"

"Jimmy'd cracked your nut, sir, if I 'adn't got 'old of 'im!" said Skip.

"You wouldn't put a covey in quod after that?"

Coker stared at him.

"You little ass!" he said. "Of course not."

"Oh!" Skip was evidently relieved. "Not that it might be a bad thing if you did, sir, 'cause Jimmy'll crack my nut for me if he ever gets 'old of me for what I did—same as he would 'ave cracked your'n. I s'pose I was a fool to stop 'im, but I couldn't see 'im crack a bloke's 'ead like that there. I couldn't stand for that, sir."

"I should think not!" gasped Coker.

"Look here, kid! What's your name?"

"Skip!"

"I mean your real name, you young ass!"

"Jest Skip, sir. Ain't got any other."

"What utter rot!" said Coker, staring. "Of course, you must have a name. What's your father's name?"

"Never knowed 'im."

"Your mother's, then?"

"Never knowed 'er."

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Where have you lived, then?"

"Slummock's Alley chiefly, 'fore I joined up with Jimmy," answered

Skip. "Old Barney the Binger taught me to pick pockets."

Coker gazed at him.

"Have you ever been to school?" he gasped.

Skip made a wry face.

"I 'ave, on and off," he answered. "No bloke ain't safe these days from them school board inspectors. But they can't make me go now. I'm out of that."

"Where are you going, when I let you get out at Lantham?" asked Coker.

Skip grinned.

"I'm 'opping it jest as fast as I know how, to keep away from Jimmy," he answered. "My eye, if he cops me—" He rubbed his head, as if in anticipation of feeling a gas-pipe cracking there.

"What are you living on?" asked Coker.

"Guess," grinned Skip.

"You awful young scoundrel!" gasped Coker. "Mean to say that you're going on picking pockets?"

"Sort of," admitted Skip. "Not if they makes me Prime Minister, or Lord 'Igh Admiral of the Fleet. Hutherwise, yes."

"You've saved me from getting pretty badly hurt," said Coker slowly.

"You're not going on picking pockets, you little beast! I'm going to see that you don't. I shall have to think this out. Stick to me when we get out at Lantham."

"What for?" asked Skip.

"Because I tell you to," said Coker, frowning. "I'm going to see what can be done for you. It will want thinking out. I suppose you'd rather be honest, if you had a chance, wouldn't you?"

"Ain't thought about it," answered Skip.

"Well, the sooner you think about it the better!" said Coker sternly. "I know I'm not leaving you to go on being a beastly little thieving scoundrel, after what you've done for me. Now I shall have to report this at the police station at Lantham, so that they can go after that scoundrel; but I shan't mention you. You stay where I leave you till I come back—see?"

"Orlright," said Skip.

And when the train stopped at Lantham Junction, Coker alighted with Skip, planted him in front of an automatic chocolate machine where he would be able to find him again, warned him severely not to stir therefrom, and left him.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Penny!

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

"Ow!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Lantham Junction was crowded with Greyfriars fellows going back to school.

On the thronging platform Billy Bunter stood, blinking up and down and round about through his big spectacles, looking for his old pals.

One of them, grinning, stepped behind him, unseen by the fat Owl, and roared suddenly in his fat ear, with a voice compared with which that of the celebrated Stentor was a mere whisper.

Bunter jumped almost clear of the platform. He would have jumped quite clear of it if he had had less weight to lift.

"Oooogh!" he gasped. He blinked round at Bob Cherry. "You silly chump, making a fellow jump out of his skin! I say, where are the other silly idiots?"

"I've only seen one silly idiot, so far," answered Bob cheerily.

"Which one?"

"Bunter."

"You silly fathead!" snorted Bunter. "Look here! Hold on, Cherry! Don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you. Hold on, I say!"

"Oh, all right!" assented Bob. He grasped Billy Bunter by the back of his fat neck in a grip like a vice. "That do?"

"Owl! Leggo!" yelled Bunter, wriggling. "Wharrer you up to?"

"Holding on!" answered Bob. "You asked me, didn't you?"

"You blithering idiot!" howled Bunter. "Leggo!"

Bob Cherry grinned cheerfully. Bob seemed to have turned up for the first day of term in high spirits.

"Isn't that all right?" he asked.

"Beast! Leggo my neck!"

"Is that better?" asked Bob, shifting his grip to a fat ear.

"Yaroooh! Leggo!" shrieked Bunter.

"Well, I'm blessed if I make you out!" said Bob. "You ask a fellow to hold on, and squeak like a little pig when he does it. There's no satisfying some fellows! Shall I hold on to your nose?"

Billy Bunter jerked his little fat nose out of the danger zone just in time. He glared at the exuberant Bob.

"You—you—you fatheaded hippopotamus!" he gasped. "Stop playing the goat, will you? Look here, you beast—I mean, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, old fellow, I've left my money at home!" said Bunter. "There was rather a rush getting off with Sammy and Bessie in the car, you know, and a lot of my titled relations saying good-bye, and I left my notecase, with all my banknotes in it, on the grand piano in the blue drawing-room—"

"Rough luck!" said Bob sympathetically. "Did you leave your sack of currency notes on the brass band in the pink dining-room, too?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"And all your half-crowns, and bobs, and tanners, on the whatnot in the terra-cotta boudoir?"

"Oh, don't be an ass! Actually, I've come away without any money," said Bunter. "I've got my ticket, and that's all. Lend me—"

"My dear chap, if you're really short of cash, I'd lend you my last penny!" declared Bob.

Billy Bunter beamed.

"That's jolly decent of you, old chap," he said. "You're not mean, like Wharton and Inky and the rest. I can manage on ten bob—"

"Sure?"

"Well, I'd rather have a pound, old fellow, if you can spare it," said Bunter eagerly. He could scarcely believe his good luck.

"I could spare a pound as easily as ten bob—or a couple of pounds, for that matter," answered Bob.

"My dear old chap!" gasped Bunter, with visions of unlimited tuck at the buffet dancing before his dazzled eyes. "Make it two quid, then! I'm expecting a postal order as soon as we get in, and I'll square, of course."

Bob groped in his pockets.

Billy Bunter watched him, his eyes glistening behind his big spectacles.

From one pocket Bob produced a penny.

He held it out to Bunter.

The fat Owl took it and blinked at it.

"What's that?" he stuttered.

"What I said I'd lend you—my last penny!" answered Bob affably.

"You silly idiot!" shrieked Bunter. "I thought—"

"Gammon! You couldn't! You've got nothing to do it with!" And Bob, chuckling, disappeared in the crowd to look for his friends, leaving Billy Bunter blinking at his last penny, with an infuriated blink.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

He came near hurling Bob Cherry's last penny at the back of Bob's head as he went. But he refrained.

A penny was not a large sum, but it was current coin of the realm, and something in the eatable line, though not a large quantity, could be obtained in exchange for it. There were automatic machines that could be worked by that humble coin; and all was grist that came to Billy Bunter's mill.

Instead, therefore, of hurling that penny in indignant disdain at the back of Bob's head, Billy Bunter clutched it in a fat hand, and blinked round him for an automatic machine.

He spotted one, and wriggled through the surging crowd.

A boy was standing directly in front of it, and did not stir as Bunter rolled up.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Let a chap get at that machine, will you?" he yapped. Then, as his eyes and spectacles fixed on the boy, he jumped. "You!"

Skip looked at him.

He jumped, also. He recognised the fat fellow in specs who had grabbed him the day he had picked the old gentleman's pocket at Wimford.

"Oh, smoky 'ad-docks!" ejaculated Skip.

"You!" gasped Bunter.

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Skip glared at him.

"Well, face, what do you want?" he demanded aggressively. "I don't know you! Git out of it!"

Bunter got out of it fast enough. He had not forgotten that jolt on his fat chin. He lost his interest in the automatic machine, with the owner of that hefty punch standing in front of it. Bunter was glad to disappear into the crowd again.

Skip was left waiting—with a worried look on his face.

Coker had told him to wait there, and he had been waiting a long time. Now that he had been recognised by a fellow who had seen him picking pockets, he was not keen on waiting there longer.

However, Bunter had sheered off—and the former associate of Jimmy the Rat continued to wait.

Bunter, in a state of great excitement, was hunting up and down for the Famous Five. He had surprising and welcome news for them when he found them.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Caught!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Blow away, Bunter!"

"I say, Wharton——"

"Roll away, barrel!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had gathered together, and were heading for the Courtfield train, to bag a carriage, when Billy Bunter spotted them.

Little Wun Lung was with them, having come up from Surrey with Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

None of them seemed fearfully bucked to see Bunter—perhaps feeling that they had seen enough of him in the holidays, if not even a little too much.

"I say, I've been looking for you!" hooted Bunter.

"Go and look for somebody else!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Beast! I say, you fellows, he's here!" yelled Bunter.

"Who's he?" asked Bob.

"That blighter——" gasped Bunter. "That pickpocket! That fellow in the check cap who picked all your pockets that day in the hols——"

"Oh!" said the Famous Five, all at once.

They stopped. Like most of the fellows, they wanted to bag a carriage in the first train. But they forgot all about the train now.

If this information was correct, it was exactly what they wanted to hear. They had not forgotten, by any means, that young rascal in the check cap, who had robbed them right and left, and caused still more serious trouble that he knew nothing of.

Certainly, they had no hope of ever seeing again the cash that the young rascal had annexed. Neither, indeed, did they entertain much hope of seeing the young rascal himself. But they were extremely keen to do so—and to give him instruction on the subject of common honesty.

The Famous Five were not the fellows to remember grudges; but they really did want to get hold of that young rascal, and hand over a little of what he so richly deserved.

Attention was fixed on Bunter at once. "You've seen him?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes, rather!" grinned Bunter. "Hanging about here to pick pockets, of course, same as he was that day at Wimford station, when I caught him."

"I suppose that sort of a rotter would pick a crowd like this for his business!" said Johnny Bull. "By gum, I want to see him! Where is he, Bunter?"

"I saw him, hardly five minutes ago, leaning on an automatic machine—this way!" trilled Bunter.

"Come on, you fellows!" said Harry. "Never mind the train now. If we've got a chance of collaring that young scoundrel——"

"The collarfulness will be terrific!"

"Give him in charge?" asked Nugent doubtfully.

"Well, I don't know about that," said

Harry. "The little beast ought to be in chokey, I suppose; but—but he's only a kid. He must have been brought up fearfully badly to be such a young scoundrel. But——"

"Give him a jolly good hiding!" said Johnny Bull. "He's spent our money long before this; but we can make him sorry that he ever touched it!"

"Anyhow, let's bag him!" said the captain of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, there he is!" squeaked Bunter.

The crowd on the platform was clearing off now, Greyfriars fellows cramming into the train for Courtfield.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, leaning out of a carriage, shouted to the Famous Five:

"This way, you fellows, if you want seats!"

But the Bunder's call passed unheeded, and the seats were promptly bagged by others.

Harry Wharton & Co. were missing that train.

Leaning on the automatic machine, with his hands in his pockets, and whistling through his teeth, was the boy who had worn a check cap when he had played that trick on them in the holidays. He was not wearing a check cap now, but they knew his rather good-looking face at once.

His eyes, keen as a hawk's, were on them, as they came up—and he ceased to whistle, an extremely wary look coming over his face. He recognised the party of schoolboys at once, and scented danger. But if he had thought of dodging, he had no chance—the Greyfriars fellows were all round him.

"So here you are, you young rascal!" said Harry grimly.

"Allo! What's biting you, old covey?" asked Skip. "What you calling a bloke names for?"

"Think we don't know you?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Well, where's the 'arm?" asked Skip. "I'm the cove what you 'elped out of a ditch when I 'urt my leg! Much obliged I was—that there leg was 'urt, and so I tell you."

"Hasn't it occurred to you that we missed our money afterwards?" asked Harry.

"Did you?" said Skip. "I 'ope you don't fancy I knowed nothing about it, arter you was so kind, 'elping of a cove with a game leg."

"We never thought of you in connection with it, till we found out that you were a pickpocket!" said Harry quietly. "Are you going to deny that this chap, Bunter, caught you picking pockets the next morning?"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Never seed that fat covey afore!" said Skip coolly. "I'd remember 'im if I 'ad, with a face like that!"

"Why, you cheeky beast——"

So cool and self-possessed was the young rascal, that the Greyfriars juniors might have had a doubt—had a doubt been possible. Bunter, certainly, was the fellow to make mistakes.

But there was no room for a mistake. It did not depend on Bunter's evidence—though that was good enough, in the circumstances.

At Wimford police station, Harry Wharton had seen the description of the young pickpocket who had been chased in Wimford High Street—and it was the accurate description of the boy they had helped out of the ditch—check cap and tie-pin and striped waistcoat and all. There was absolutely no doubt whatever that the boy they had helped out of the ditch was the boy who had

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picked pockets at Wimford station; and the same, therefore, who had relieved them of their valuables. But the young rascal's coolness was rather staggering, all the same.

They stood looking at him while the train rolled away with a crowd for Greyfriars.

Skip began to whistle again.

"Well, that young rotter's got a nerve on him!" said Johnny Bull, at last. "But we'll give him something to cure all that! Look here, young shaver, you say you're not the pickpocket who was chased at Wimford last week?"

"Course I ain't!" said Skip. "Never picked a pocket in me life! Shouldn't know 'ow to."

"All right!" said Johnny grimly. "We'll walk you round to the police station and ask them to ring up Wimford. If you're not the chap, you've got nothing to be afraid of. Come on."

"Can't!" said Skip, shaking his head. "I'm waiting here for a young gentleman what may be coming back any minute."

"One of us will wait here, if you like, and tell that young gentleman, whoever he is, that his pal's been run in for pinching!" said Bob Cherry.

"Couldn't think of troubling you," said Skip. "I ain't the bloke you want. If that fat covey thinks he's seen me before, he wants some noo specs."

"I say, you fellows, let's call a hobby!" exclaimed the indignant fat Owl. "I dare say his pockets are full of purses and watches this very minute."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Johnny Bull. "That's what he's here for, I've no doubt. Now, you cheeky little tick, you can own up on the spot, or we'll keep you here and send a porter for a policeman. You can explain to the bobby that you're not yourself but somebody else."

Skip breathed hard.

If he had hoped to "bluff" the school-boys, he could entertain no hope of bluffing an officer of the law. A policeman arriving on the scene meant the end of things for the pickpocket.

He made a sudden spring to escape.

So swift and sudden was that spring, that the juniors, watchful as they were, were taken rather by surprise.

The Famous Five grabbed at him, too late. Another second, and the young rogue would have been clear—but in that second, Wun Lung put a foot in his way. Skip stumbled over it, and came down with a bump.

He was up again in a twinkling, but hands were on him then. Harry Wharton & Co. grasped him on all sides.

The young rascal struggled and fought like a wild cat. Even for five fellows, he was not easy to hold.

But they had him, and they kept him; and Skip, wild cat as he was, was gripped and safely held. He was still struggling furiously, but without the least chance of getting away, when there came a sudden interruption.

"What the thump— Let that kid alone!" came an angry roar. "By gum! I'll whop the lot of you!"

And Coker of the Fifth, in great wrath, rushed in, hitting out right and left.

Coker had returned just in time for Skip!

ask questions. He just rushed in and hit.

Coker's methods were always rather those of a bull in a china shop.

Still, there was some excuse for Coker. He saw the fellow who had helped him out of danger, and whom he had resolved to befriend somehow, struggling in the grasp of a mob of Greyfriars juniors. Unaware that they had ever seen Skip before, or ever heard of him, he could only suppose that it was a "rag"—and an unusually rough and inexcusable rag. The Greyfriars fellows ragged one another sometimes, but they were not supposed to bestow such attentions on members of the outside public.

Angry and indignant, Coker rushed to Skip's rescue—and Coker was a useful rescuer. His fists were rather like legs of mutton, and there was a lot of force behind his punches.

Wharton and Bob Cherry were sprawling on the platform before they knew what was happening—Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh went rolling over them, and Johnny Bull, clutching at Coker, was swept off his feet, still clutching. Billy Bunter and Wun Lung jumped back out of reach.

Skip had to be released—indeed, he was forgotten, in the middle of that sudden earthquake.

He did not lose the chance.

Like an arrow from a bow, Skip shot away down the platform, and vanished from sight.

"I say, you fellows, he's cutting!" yelled Billy Bunter.

Wun Lung made a jump in pursuit; but at that moment Coker hurled Johnny Bull off, and he crashed into the little Chinese, sending him sprawling.

Coker, in great wrath, glared at the gasping juniors, strewn round him like fallen leaves in autumn.

"Oh crikey!"

"Ow! My nose!"

"Oooooooooogh!"

"Urrggh!"

"You mad idiot!"

"Oooooooooop!"

"You cheeky young sweeps!" roared Coker. "Ragging at a railway station, what? Can't you keep it for the Remove passage? Eh? By gum—"

Bob Cherry was the first to scramble up. His hat had fallen off, his nose was streaming red. But he gave no thought either to his hat or his nose. He hurled himself at Coker of the Fifth like a thunderbolt.

"Back up, you men!" yelled Bob.

They backed up fast enough.

Why Coker had barged in, unless it was his usual fatheaded swank, the juniors did not know, or care. They did not know that Coker had ever seen Skip before, any more than Coker knew that they had ever seen him. Certainly it never occurred to them that Coker was the young gentleman Skip was waiting for.

All they knew was that Horace had barged in like a battering-ram and knocked them right and left.

That was enough for them to know. They hurled themselves at Horace Coker.

Coker's charge, taking them by surprise, had carried all before it. But it was a different tale now.

Coker, hefty as he was, was no match, or anything like it, for five enraged Removites.

They collared Coker on all sides, and brought him down on the platform with a terrific bump.

Coker struggled and roared; but his struggles were futile, and his wild roars were not heeded.

"Scrag him!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Bash the blithering idiot!" gasped Nugent.

"Rag him! Bump him! Spillicate him!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Scrag him terrifically!"

"Jump on him!"

"Bang his cheeky head!"

"Makee silly old Coker plenty

solly—"

"Ow! Oh! Wow! Yow! Yaroooooh!" roared Coker of the Fifth, as he was banged and bumped and thumped till he hardly knew what was happening to him. "Gerroff! Leggo! I'll smash you! I'll—yaroooooop!"

"I say, you fellows, that young cad's gone!" gasped Billy Bunter. "I say, give him jip! I say, let a fellow get a punch at him!"

"Leggo! Gerroff! Gerraway! Yoo-hooooop!"

Coker of the Fifth had been ragged before. He was the kind of fellow to ask for it, and to get it. But never had Coker of the Fifth been so thoroughly ragged as now.

If Coker fancied that he could barge in on a party of Remove men and knock them spinning at his own sweet will, it was time, in the opinion of the Remove men, that he had a lesson on that subject.

So they gave him one.

Coker, overpowered by so many foes, went through it as if he were going through a threshing-machine.

Banged and bumped, rolled and rumbled, thumped and clumped, Coker gurgled for breath, and his wild roars were reduced to feeble squeaks.

"Oooooooooogh! Ooooooooooch! Woooooooooh! Moooooooooh!" came in gasping, gurgling accents from the great Horace.

"Stick his hat on," gasped Wharton, "and smash it over his ears!"

Crunch!

Coker's head almost disappeared into a smashed hat. His collar and tie were crammed down the back of his neck.

His coat was split up the back, and hardly a button remained on his waistcoat. With hardly a kick left in his breathless person, Coker wriggled and moaned.

Greyfriars fellows, who had been left behind by the train, gathered round to watch the scene, with howls of laughter. Members of the public, unacquainted with Greyfriars manners and customs, stared at it blankly.

The Famous Five did not heed their audience. They gave all their attention to Coker, and to reducing him to a dilapidated wreck.

Vigorously they got on with the good work, and did it thoroughly.

Not till they were tired did they relax their efforts. By that time Horace Coker lay on the platform, a mere heap of wreckage, moaning feebly.

"There!" gasped Bob Cherry, wiping a perspiring brow. "I think that will do for Coker!"

"Had enough, you potty bargee?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Oooooooooogh!" moaned Coker.

"What did you butt in for, you howling ass?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Oooooooooogh!"

"If Coker's come back this term to be as cheeky as he was last, that's a good tip for him to begin with!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows, the train's coming in!"

Leaving Coker for dead, as it were, the Famous Five proceeded to make themselves tidy after that wild combat—they rather needed it. Then they went for the second train, which was now in the station.

There was no chance now of recapturing the young pickpocket. Coker's surprising and unexpected intervention had

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,545.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Handling Horace!

"LOOK out—"

"What the dickens—"

"That mad ass, Coker—"

"Oh, my hat!"

Coker of the Fifth did not stop to

saved Skip, though it had had such harrowing results for Horace himself.

Still breathless from their exertions, Harry Wharton & Co. packed into the train.

But Coker did not pack in. Coker was not thinking of trains or Greyfriars, or anything else, just then, except getting his second wind. Coker sprawled and gurgled. He sat up as the train moved out of the station, and blinked dizzily at a window packed with grinning faces.

Bob Cherry waved a hand to him.

"Lots more, Coker, when you get in, if you ask for it!" he bawled.

"Ooooooogh!" gurgled Coker.

The train disappeared down the line, leaving Coker of the Fifth sitting on the platform, gasping and gurgling. The last view the Famous Five had of him, he was still sitting there, the most dilapidated Fifth Former ever beheld by the human eye!

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

The Watch That Went!

BILLY BUNTER jumped.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped.

Bunter's fat features registered dismay.

The other fellows in the carriage stared at him.

The Famous Five were fanning themselves with their hats. It was warm weather, and making things warm for Coker of the Fifth had been warm work. Little Wun Lung, sitting in the corner next to Bunter, looked half asleep, with his slanting eyes half-closed, as he gazed from the window.

Bunter had been going through his pockets in search of a forgotten bullseye or an overlooked aniseed-ball, when he suddenly ejaculated with dismayed alarm.

"My watch!" he gasped. "It's gone!"

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry. "I know that watch—it never goes!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "It's been pitched! I say, you fellows, that young villain must have had it at Lantham! It's gone! My thirty-five guinea watch!"

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "I should have thought we were keeping that young rascal too busy for picking pockets."

"He had it!" wailed Bunter. "I say, you fellows, pull the cord! Stop the train! We've got to go back! I can't lose a forty-guinea watch!"

"We'll have a whip-round and buy you a new one like it," said Bob Cherry reassuringly. "A tanner each from the five of us will do it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you beast," roared Bunter indignantly, "my Uncle Reginald gave fifty guineas for that watch!"

"Is it really gone?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Look!" Bunter showed an empty pocket. "I say, you fellows, I've had that gold watch all the while I've been at school! My Uncle George bought it for me on a birthday, you know. He gave thirty—I mean forty—that is to say, fifty guineas for it—"

"Same as your Uncle Reginald gave Temple of the Fourth. 'Look! New way of wearing a watch, what? Setting a new fashion, Wharton?'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you beasts—" hooted Bunter. "My watch is gone! Can't you be serious about a serious matter?"

But the Famous Five declined to be fearfully serious about it. Billy Bunter's celebrated gold watch was worth, at the most generous estimate, five shillings.

Instead of registering dismay at Bunter's loss, the Famous Five went through their own pockets, to ascertain whether the light-fingered youth at Lantham had relieved them of anything.

Luckily nothing was gone. Really, it was puzzling now the young rascal had found an opportunity of annexing Bunter's big watch. But the watch, which had never gone before, had gone now!

"I—I suppose we can't stop the train!" said Bunter. "But as soon as we get out at Courtfield we shall have to go back. I simply can't lose that watch—how can I let my Uncle William know I've lost it, when he gave it to me for a Christmas present?"

"Oh crikey!"

"You can cackle," said Bunter, wrathfully.

"Thanks, we will—ha, ha, ha!"

The train stopped in Courtfield station.

Wun Lung opened the carriage door and jumped out, followed by the famous Five and William George Bunter.

The little Chinese flicked the back of Harry Wharton's jacket, and Wharton, supposing that he was flicking off some dust gathered in the hectic encounter with Coker, gave him a nod. Then he followed his companions down the platform.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a sudden roar as he passed Peter Todd of the Remove.

Wharton looked round.

"Hallo, Toddy! You seem to have come back merry and bright," he said.

Toddy chortled.

"Somebody after you?" he asked.

"Eh? No, why?"

"Oh, I thought there might be as you're keeping a watch behind."

Wharton stared at him.

"What do you mean, you ass? I'm not keeping a watch behind. Gone off your dot, fathead?"

Wharton walked on, leaving Peter chortling.

Another howl of laughter greeted him as he passed Ogilvy and Russell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Again the captain of the Remove stared round, his cheeks reddening.

"Well, what's the cackle about?" he demanded.

"What's the big idea?" asked Ogilvy. "Trying to get in ahead of time?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Russell.

Wharton stared at them—and then hurried after his friends. He could see that some joke was on, though he could not guess what it was.

Billy Bunter was squeaking as he rejoined the Co.

"I say, you fellows, we shall have to go back for my watch—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a howl from

Temple of the Fourth. "Look! New way of wearing a watch, what? Setting a new fashion, Wharton?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton's face was red and wrathful. A dozen fellows were staring at his back and laughing as if they saw something entertaining there.

"Is there anything on my back, you fellows?" asked Harry. "Dusty, or anything?"

"Let's look!" said Bob.

The Co. looked! Then they gave a sudden yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You sniggering fatheads!" roared Wharton. "You, too! What's the joke, I'd like to know?"

"My watch!" roared Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, that silly idiot Wharton's got my watch—got it pinned on his back!"

"What?" yelled Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gimme my watch!" howled Bunter. "If you call that a joke, you silly ass, bagging a chap's watch and sticking it on your back—"

"Your watch—on my back!" gasped Wharton. "How the howling thump could your silly watch get on my back?"

"Rotten trick, making me think a pickpocket had got it—"

"You fat chump—"

"Well, it's there," grinned Bob Cherry. "It's pinned on." He unhooked the celebrated gold watch and held it up, and the rolled-gold glimmered in the September sunshine. "Here you are, Bunter."

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

He understood now why Toddy had asked him whether somebody was after him, as he was keeping a watch behind; and why Ogilvy had wanted to know whether he wanted to get in ahead of time!

Wun Lung, grinning all over his little yellow face, sidled away to the platform exit.

But he did not sidle fast enough! Wharton grasped it—and grasped the little Chinese!

"You blithering little ass!" he roared.

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "Wun, of course!"

"Allee light!" yelled Wun Lung. "Only little joke—velly funnee little joke—"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry. "Wun's a funny little ass, and he can't help it—but it's up to us, as his pals, to help him help it! Bump him! We'll bump him every time—and give him a sample now, to begin with."

"Hear, hear!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

Four times the Chinese smote the platform, and each time he yelled.

The Famous Five walked on and left him yelling.

THE END.

(There will be another spanking fine yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. and the amazing boy "Skip" in next Saturday's MAGNET. Note the title, chums: "COKER TAKES CONTROL!" An early order will save disappointment.)

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25-9-37

A BEAK on the BOARDS!

By DICKY NUGENT

A Screamingly Funny Story of Jack Jolly & Co., of St. Sam's.

"Coming to the second house of the Muggleton Empire, sir!" grinned Mr. Lickham, looking into the headmaster's study at St. Sam's. "They say it's a topping show this week!"

Doctor Birchmell herled aside a pile of bills on his desk. He heaved a sigh and flung himself back and threw the Fourth Form-master a reproving look.

"Lickham! Lickham! How many times am I to tell you that I never patronise common mewsick-halls!" he cried wearily. "The headmaster of a grate skool like St. Sam's has to keep up appearances—and keep down eggspenses," he added, with a wry look at the bills.

"I'll stand treat, sir," said Mr. Lickham cheerfully. "I happen to be in funds just now. I won a prize in the football pool this week, you know!"

The Head's hands went up in a gesture of sheer horror.

"Bless my sole! A St. Sam's master sending in football coupons? Why, it's shameful, Lickham—disgraceful! Er—I suppose you can't oblige me with the loan of a five-pound note till—"

"Sorry, sir! I only won ten shillings, as it happens!" grinned Mr. Lickham. "But why not come along to the Empire, sir? Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag, and smile, smile, smile!"

"Would that I could, Lickham! But I'm afraid it's impossible without a fiver falling into my hands like manner from heaven! Unless I find that amount by the morning, my tailor is going to issue a summons! At the present moment, Lickham, stark ruination stares me in the face!"

Mr. Lickham stared the Head in the face with a look of deep sympathy.

"That's ruff luck, sir, and no mistake!" he murmured. "Still, sir, if you'll come along to the Empire, as like as not you'll run into some kind friend that you can tap—"

A tap on the door interrupted Mr. Lickham's remarks at that moment.

"Trot in, fathead!" commanded Doctor Birchmell, in his refined way. And the door opened to admit Toadey minor.

At the site of the sneak of the Fourth, who wore a dressing gown over his pyjamas, the two masters frowned severely.

"Toadey! What are you doing of, walking about when you should be in bed!" demanded the Head. "You know very well that you're not allowed out of your dorm after lights out—"

"Please, sir, that's just why I've called," wined Toadey minor. "Some chaps have gone out breaking bounds from our dorm and it worried me so much to know they were defying the laws of the skool that I slipped out to tell you about it!"

Mr. Lickham wissled. The Head glared.

"Breaking bounds from the dormitory, eh?" growled Doctor

Birchemall. "This is an offence punishable by the sack—or eggspulsion, as the vulgar mite put it!"

Who are these miscreants, Toadey? And what do they think they're doing of?"

"Please, sir, it's Jolly and Merry and Bright and Fearless!" wined the sneak of the Fourth. "They're breaking bounds to go to the second performance at the Muggleton Empire!"

"Grate pip! The yung raskals have the disportment to leave their beds to witness a low, common mewsick-hall show—"

"Please, sir, it's even worse than that," said Toadey minor, with a snigger. "They've gone to do a turn on the stage!"

"WHA-A-AT?"

"Fakt, sir!" sniggered the sneak of the Fourth. "There's a competition being held to-nite. They're offering a cash prize for the best amateur turn. And Jolly and his pals have gone to do a tap-dancing and acrobattick turn."

"Ye gods!"

Doctor Birchmell rose from his desk. His face was white with rage. At the same time he looked as black as thunder.

"What are you going to do, sir?" asked Mr. Lickham.

"I'm going to the Muggleton Empire, of course!" snapped the Head. "Return to bed at once, Toadey. Are you coming with me, Lickham?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

And five minits later, the two beaks were tramping down to the Head's garage on the first stage of their jerney to Muggleton.

"The Head!" hist Frank Fearless.

Jolly and Merry and Bright wissled.

The heroes of the Fourth were waiting in a dressing-room at the Muggleton Empire, discussing their chances of bagging the fiver offered for the best amateur variety turn of the evening.

Fearless had just opened the window and glanced down into the alleyway leading to the stage door. But the two figgers he spotted in the alley made him close it in a flash.

"It's Doctor Birchmell right enuff, you chaps!" he gasped. "He's got Lickham with him. They're both coming towards the stage door!"

"Oh, grate pip!"

Jack Jolly & Co. looked at each other in sheer dismay. If the Head found them at the Muggleton Empire at this time of the nite,

it would be simply garstly! Ten to one in doennuts they would all get the sack!

The chums of the Fourth looked properly down in the mouth for a moment. Jolly and Bright and Fearless turned pail. Merry, who was more nervous, looked as if he mite kick the bucket.

But our heroes were not the kind to throw up their hands without making an effort to land on their feet. In a cuple of jiffies, Jack Jolly was leading the way to the door of the dressing-room.

"There's only one thing to do," he said, as he broke into a run. "We must warn the doorkeeper not to let them in."

"But suppose they go round to the front and pay to come in?" objected Merry.

"They won't do that," said Jolly, who knew nothing of Mr. Lickham's luck in the football pool. "For one thing, they're too mean; and for another, they've never got any munny!"

"Ha, ha! That's too!"

They had reached the stage doorkeeper's partitioned-off offis by this time, and the sound of the Head's hob-nailed boots drawing nearer sent Jolly diving into the doorkeeper's cubby-hole.

"Quick!" he cried, giving the stage doorkeeper a dig in the ribs. "There's a cuple of suspicious carrickters trying to get in by the stage door. Keep 'em out!"

"That's wot I'm 'ere for!" growled the doorkeeper. "I'll give 'em suspicious carrickters! You watch me!"

Jack Jolly scuttled back into the shaddows and joined his pals. A moment later a bearded figger appeared in the doorway.

Four grinning yungsters had bounded on to the stage, d'ying handapings and summeralts. They formed up into a row and started a fast and ferocious eggshhibition of high-speed dancing.

It was tip-top tap dancing and the audience fairly rose to it.

Doctor Birchmell rose to it, too, but unlike the audience, he did not rise to applawd.

"BOYS!"

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For a moment the audience gasped. Then they came to the conclusion it was all part of the

show, and a roar of larfter went up.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! He's supposed to be their skool-master!"

"What a jolly good joak! Ha, ha, ha!"

While the audience roared, the manager in the wings was making frantick signals to the Co. to carry on with their show. Jack Jolly pulled himself together with a mitey effort.

"Come on, you fellows!" he said. "We've got to see it through!"

"Stop!" roared the Head, as the Fourth Formers resewmed their dance.

"Sorry and all that, sir, but we've got to do our turn!" yelled back Jack Jolly. And the crowd larfed louder than ever, thinking it was another funny gag.

The St. Sam's juniors finished their dance amid loud applawse and then took up their positions for the yewman pyramid—the next item in the act.

Doctor Birchmell wasted no more time in arguement. He dived under the curtain dividing the orchestra from the orditorium and jumped up at the stage. The conductor made a grab at him, but all he got for his pains, as the Head climbed over the footlights, was a buff on the chest from the Head's foot. A deffening howl of larfter went up as the conductor toppled back into the midst of the mewsicians.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But that was a meer curtain-raiser compared with the fun that followed. It was when Doctor Birchmell got bizzy trying to stop the performance that the fun really became fast and ferocious.

First he tried to pull down Fearless, who had climbed on to Jolly's shoulders to start the pyramid. But instead of the Head pulling down Fearless, it was Fearless who pulled up the Head. The crowd simply shrieked as Doctor Birchmell went flying over Fearless' head, and Doctor Birchmell himself shrieked when he lost his balance at the top and hit the stage with his anattermy.

BANG! CRASH! WALLOP!

"Yaroooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Red with rage, Doctor Birchmell picked himself up and made a rush at the yewman pyramid. Jolly stepped aside just in time, however, and the Head, going into a skid, shot across the stage on his heels and finished up on the back of his neck. It happened like that again and again. Jack Jolly & Co. were determined to finish their show, and the Head was equally determined to stop them. And the complications that resulted were trooly commical!

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Mr. Lickham went through the doorway with a rush. He came out soon after with a bigger rush—caused by the stage doorkeeper's hevvy boot planted on the seat on his trowsis!

"I'm afraid he duzzent see in the mood to listen to eggsplications, sir!" gasped Mr. Lickham, as he rewwlly rubbed himself in the rear. "There's only one way of getting in, by the look of it, and that's to pay for seats, like I intended to do at first."

So that was what they did. They secured front row seats in the stalls and sat down to watch the show till the heroes of the Fourth appeared. When that moment arrived, Doctor Birchmell was grimly determined to act!

It was a jolly good variety show, and Mr. Lickham, who felt like getting some fun for his munny while he was about it, enjoyed it immensely. He applawded the jugglers and conjurers raptcherously and larfed till the tears rolled down his cheeks over a redressed comedian.

But the Head was only concerned about the Fourth Formers, and he made up his mind not to be answered. He jeered at the jugglers and catcalled at the conjurers and criticised the comedian.

Then the amateur variety competition began and the Head sat forward in his seat, biting his nails with impatience for Jack Jolly & Co. to appear.

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