

GREATLY ENLARGED NUMBER!

The BOYS' HERALD

2^d

No. 88.

ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY.

July 2, 1921



Don't Go to
London
Lad!"

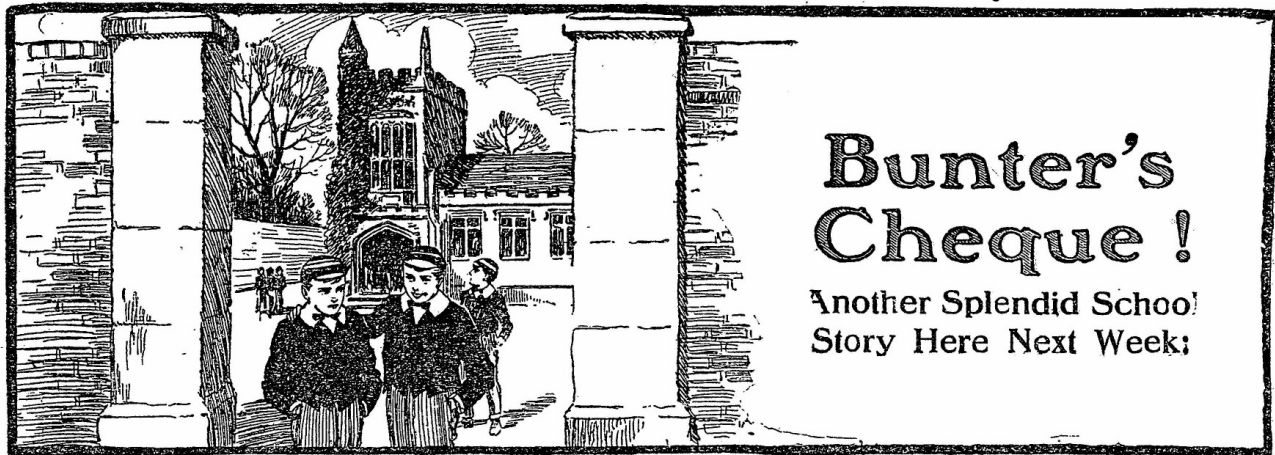
Great New Serial Starts Inside

Contents of this Ripping Number.

Splendid Long, Complete Story of "STRINGER" and the heroes of the Norchester Cricket Club. Our Engrossing New Serial, "DON'T GO TO LONDON, LAD!"

Fine Naval Story, "THE LAD FROM THE LOWER DECK."
Long, Complete School Story. Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes Given Away!

Another Splendid Complete Story of the Chums of Greyfriars School!



Bunter's Cheque!

Another Splendid School Story Here Next Week!

Billy Bunter Astonishes the Natives!

"I'm expecting——"
"Rats!"

"I'm expecting——" repeated Billy Bunter firmly.

Bob Cherry held up his hand.

"Don't say postal-order!" he said. "We're fed-up on your postal-order, Bunter. If you say postal-order you get bumped."

"Hear, hear!"

"And the bumpfulness will be terrific, my esteemed and prevaricating Bunter," added Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But I say, you fellows, I'm really expecting——"

"I've told you what to expect," said Bob. "Just say the word postal-order, and you get it."

"In the neck!" remarked Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five, of the Remove, more in sorrow than in anger.

"I wasn't going to!" he answered with dignity.

"What?"

"You're not expecting a postal-order?" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"No."

"Ye gods!" said Bob Cherry dazedly. "You're not expecting a postal-order, and you don't want to raise a loan on it in advance?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Nugent.

Harry Wharton and Co. surveyed Billy Bunter with interest. It was the first time on record that the Owl of the Remove hadn't been expecting a postal-order.

"I'm expecting a cheque!" explained Bunter.

"Oh! It's a cheque this time!" said Bob Cherry, with deep sarcasm.

"Yes, it's a cheque this time," answered Bunter calmly.

"I've written to my pater for a cheque."

"Which, of course, he will send by return of post?" asked Bob, still deeply sarcastic.

"Exactly."

"If you won't be happy till you get it," remarked Johnny Bull, "you're booked for an unhappy life, Bunter."

"I'm expecting a cheque by any post now," said Bunter.

"I've asked the pater to make it a fairish large one, so that I can settle up some little accounts I owe in the Remove. I believe I owe you fellows some money——"

"I believe you do!" chuckled Bob.

"I dare say it comes to a pound or two altogether——"

"I dare say it does—and the rest."

"My idea is, to get a decent cheque from the pater, and square up all round," said Bunter. "I've put it to him nicely, and I've no doubt—no doubt whatever—that the cheque will turn up all right. It's pretty certain to come by this afternoon's post."

"About a thousand pounds, I suppose?" asked Bob Cherry, evidently still in a sarcastic vein.

Bunter shook his head.

"Not at all. Only about fifty."

"Only about fifty!" said Bob faintly. "I call that rather stingy of your pater. Only about fifty pounds!"

"That's all," said Bunter. "But it will enable me to square up all my little accounts, and leave me something in hand. But there's just one little difficulty——"

"I can guess what that is," remarked Wharton.

"Well, what?"

"The cheque won't come."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing of the kind!" roared Bunter. "The cheque will come all right. I'm not worrying about that. I've mentioned to you fellows that my father's rich——"

"You've mentioned a lot of things," assented Bob Cherry.

"You beat Ananias and George Washington hollow."

"There's one little difficulty," said Bunter unheeding. "The pater's so jolly careful in money matters. He may cross the cheque for safety—he always crosses his cheques. Then there may be some delay about cashing it. That's all."

"Really all?" asked Bob.

"Yes. Now I want you fellows to lend me ten bob to tide me over——"

"Until the cheque comes?" grinned Bob Cherry. "I don't think! We'll see the cheque first, if you don't mind."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't mind," answered Bunter. "What I'm worrying about is that the cheque may be crossed. If it is, I shall have to ask Mr. Quelch to pass it through his bank, and naturally he won't hand over the money till it's cleared. That means delay. Of course, it may be an open cheque. In that case I sha'n't trouble you fellows. But if it's crossed——"

"You howling ass!" said Bob Cherry, in measured tones: "do you think you can pull our leg to that extent? Your cheque will come along with the postal-order you've been expecting ever since you were a fag in the Second Form——"

"And not sooner!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"If you doubt my word, Cherry——"

"If!" ejaculated Bob.

"Seeing—is believing!" said Bunter, with dignity. "I should think you might trust me, knowing me so well——"

"We know you too well, you see!" chuckled Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"It's a new stunt," said Bob. "The postal-order's worn out, and Bunter's made it a cheque instead. Let's bump him."

"Good egg!"

Billy Bunter jumped back.

"I say, you fellows; don't play the goat, you know. I'm not asking you to lend me ten bob till the cheque comes——"

"It won't come!" roared Bob.

"If it's crossed, I shall take it to Quelch to cash for me," said Bunter. "And then——"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"If you get a cheque for fifty pounds, old top, we'll lend you ten bob till it's cashed," he said. "If you don't, we'll give you a jolly good ragging for trying to spoof us with a new yarn. That's a compact."

"Agreed!" said Bunter.

"Off his dot!" said Bob, in astonishment. "You're going to get the ragging, Bunter."

Billy Bunter turned up his fat little nose.

"You'll see!" he answered calmly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the postman."

Mr. Boggs, the village postman, was sighted in the distance. He was plodding up the road from Friardale towards the gates of Greyfriars, with his sack on his shoulder. There was a chuckle from the group of juniors in the gateway.

"Here he is!" said Harry Wharton. "Now for the giddy cheque! Don't let that fat porpoise roll away."

"I've got an eye on him," said Johnny Bull. "If you move off, Bunter, you get my boot."

"Oh, really, Bull——"

Harry Wharton and Co. stepped out of the gateway to greet the village postman. Mr. Boggs stopped and breathed hard and touched his cap. The Famous-Five kept William George Bunter in their midst. They expected him to attempt to dodge now that his remarkable statement was to be put to the test.

But to their surprise, Bunter showed no desire to dodge. He seemed quite eager to meet the postman.

"Anything for me, Boggs?" he called out.

"Yes, Master Bunter."

"Registered letter?"

"Yes, Master Bunter."

The obliging Mr. Boggs fumbled for the letter, while Billy Bunter gave his unbelieving companions a triumphant blink.

"I say, you fellows, what did I tell you?" he chirruped.

"Seeing is believing!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Let's see the whacking cheque."

"Sign, please, Master Bunter."

Billy Bunter took his registered letter, signed for it, and the postman plodded on with his sack. The Famous Five gathered round Bunter in great curiosity as he jabbed a fat thumb into the sealed envelope. It was but seldom that the Owl of the Remove received registered letters, though he was in a constant state of expecting them.

A registered letter had to be supposed to contain something of value. Was it the celebrated postal-order at last—the postal-order that had become famous at Greyfriars?

"Let's see it!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We're dying to see it—hurry up."

"We are on the tender hooks, my esteemed Bunter," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; probably meaning tenterhooks.

Bunter jerked the envelope open.

There was a letter inside; and Bunter unfolded it calmly. An engraved slip of paper was revealed.

"My hat!"

Bunter held it up to view.

Harry Wharton and Co. looked at it. They stared at it. They blinked at it. For it was a cheque—evidently a cheque!

June 22.

LONDON AND SOUTHERN COUNTIES BANK, LTD.

PAY W. G. Bunter

Fifty Pounds (£50)

W. S. Bunter.

Money to Burn!

"FIFTY pounds!"

"My only hat!"

"Phew!"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"My only esteemed aunt!"

Billy Bunter grinned complacently. He twirled the cheque in his fat fingers with a careless air, as if cheques for fifty pounds a time were a mere nothing to him. Harry Wharton and Co. looked at the cheque, and looked at Billy Bunter, and looked at one another. Their astonishment almost deprived them of the power of speech.

It was a cheque for fifty pounds, payable to W. G. Bunter, signed by his father, William Samuel Bunter—there was no doubt about that. It was a real cheque on a real bank, and it was for fifty pounds. Certainly it was crossed—two lines were drawn from top to bottom of the cheque, which made it necessary to pass it through a bank to be cleared. There was, as Bunter had foreboded, some delay to be looked for in gathering the cash. But it was a cheque for fifty pounds!

"He's crossed it!" said Bunter regretfully. "I was afraid he would. The pater's so jolly careful in money matters. Otherwise I could walk down to Courtfield this afternoon and present it at the bank. Still, it means only a few days."

Bob Cherry rubbed his eyes.

"Do I sleep, do I dream, or is visions about?" he ejaculated. "It looks like a cheque."

"It is a cheque, you ass!" hooted Bunter.

"The chequefulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Singh. "The surprisefulness is also great. Bunter has told the truth."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Is it possible that Bunter has told the truth before, and we never knew?" murmured Bob. "Is there really such a place as Bunter Court—and such a person as Bunter's butler? After this, nothing would surprise me."

"I'll take this to Quelchy at once," said Bunter. He held out a fat hand. "Lend me ten bob, you fellows, to tide me over till this is cashed."

"Caught!" said Wharton, laughing. "It's up to us. You'll have to square when the cheque's cashed, Bunter."

"Rely on me, old fellow," Bunter loftily accepted the ten-shilling note extended by the captain of the Remove. "You fellows can make a list, if you like, of the little sums I owe you."

Billy Bunter rolled in at the gates, with the cheque in his fat paw. He left the Famous Five in a dazed state.

They simply could not "get on" to it.

Bunter's yarns of his wealthy home, his wealthy people, and his titled relations, were a standing joke in the Remove. His father had been seen at Greyfriars; a fat little important City gentleman, who certainly did not look as if he could afford to send his hopeful son tips of fifty pounds a

time; and still less as if he would do it, even if he could afford it. Yet here was the cheque!

"Hallo, what's the giddy excitement?" Skinner came out of the gates with Snoop, and paused to look at the astonished five. "Anything happened?"

"Lots!" answered Bob Cherry. "Bunter—"

"Got his postal-order?" grinned Snoop.

"Better than that! He's got a cheque for fifty pounds."

"Gammon!" said Snoop and Skinner simultaneously.

"Honest injun."

"Made it himself, then?" asked Skinner sceptically.

"It's from his father."

"You've actually seen it?" asked Harold Skinner.

"With our own dazzled eyes."

"My hat!" Skinner drew a quick breath. "My hat! I remember once Bunter had fivers, after his pater brought off some swindle or other on the Stock Exchange. Has the old sport struck it lucky again, I wonder? But fifty pounds phew!"

"Fifty pounds!" said Sidney James Snoop, in an awed voice. "And—and only to-day I refused to lend Bunter my bike—"

"It's never too late to mend," suggested Bob Cherry satirically. "Rush after him and lend it to him quick. There'll be a dozen fellows ready to lend him bikes when they've seen his cheque."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner and Snoop exchanged a glance, and turned back into the gates. They had been starting in a little walk that half-holiday; but they were not bothering about a walk now. If William George Bunter had fifty pounds, he also had two devoted pals ready to haunt him like shadows—to lend him bikes, and even bobs, and to listen with admiring attention to any remarks he was pleased to make. Skinner and Snoop would have been pally with a Prussian Hun if the Hun had had fifty pounds.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Bunter's going to be popular!" he remarked.

"The popularity will be terrific."

Bob Cherry was right.

As the Famous Five strolled back into gates, they sighted the Owl of the Remove. Skinner and Snoop had joined him in the quadrangle, and were walking one on either side of him—hovering round him, as it were, in the most friendly fashion. They were the first to hover; but there were destined to be some more hoverers—many more. Fifty pound cheques were not seen everyday in the Greyfriars Remove—indeed, Bunter was the first fellow at Greyfriars who had ever possessed such an article, excepting perhaps Lord Maul-everer. The Famous Five chuckled, and went down to the cricket—quite indifferent on the subject of the cheque, though still astonished. But there were plenty of fellows who were not indifferent.

Skinner and Snoop obtained a view of the cheque—and even the sceptical Skinner had to acknowledge that it was the genuine article. And from the moment that his eyes rested on it, Skinner's manner to William George Bunter was like honey, only sweeter.

"I'd hike off to the bank at once, before it closes!" Skinner advised. "I'll come with you, if you like, Bunter."

"So will I," said Snoop.

"You see, the cheque's crossed," said Bunter. "The pater's so jolly careful. I can't cash it at the bank."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"Take it to Quelchy. He will put it through his bank and hand me the money, of course."

"Of course," said Skinner. "He may think it rather odd your pater sending you so much, though—the Head mayn't like it—"

"I'll tell him I'm going to get a new bike and a camera and things," said Bunter.

"Good! I say, this is ripping of your pater, Billy, old fellow."

Bunter blinked at Skinner.

It was not an hour since Skinner had called him a fat toad. Now he was Billy, old fellow! Such was the magic power of a printed slip of paper!

"You were mentioning that you wanted a bike this afternoon, old scout," remarked Snoop.

Bunter elevated his fat little nose.

"You refused to lend me your bike," he said.

"I—I didn't exactly refuse—"

"You said you'd see me hanged first."

"Well, that wasn't refusing, was it?" said Snoop jocularly. "Only my little joke, Billy! Of course, I'd be glad for you to use my bike whenever you please."

"Same here," said Skinner heartily. "I wouldn't lend my bike to every chap, but Billy is different—"

"Quite different—among pals, you know—"

"Well, perhaps I may borrow it," said Bunter. "Drake—I say, Drake—" Drake and Rodney were coming out of the schoolhouse, and they stopped as Bunter hailed them. "Drake, old chap."

"Hullo, tubby!" answered Drake.
 "Don't call Bunter silly names, Drake," said Skinner warmly. "There's such a thing as politeness."
 Jack Drake stared at him.
 "Eh, what's the matter with calling him tubby? You were calling him a greasy barrel this morning!"
 "I—I—" stammered Skinner.
 "You shouldn't made such jokes, Skinner," said Snoop reprovingly. "Of course, Billy knows it's only your fun, but still—"
 "I admit it," said Skinner blandly. "Billy knows I wouldn't say anything to offend him."
 Drake and Rodney stared.
 "Is this a game?" asked Jack Drake.
 "Or has Bunter come into a fortune?" queried Rodney.
 "You've generally got a lot of cash about you, Drake," said Bunter; "can you cash a cheque for me?"
 Drake chuckled.
 "I dare say I could," he answered. "I'd like to see the cheque first."
 "Here it is."
 "Wha-a-at!"
 Jack Drake blinked at the cheque.
 "Fifty pounds! My only hat! Where did you get it?"
 "My pater sent it, to get some things I want," answered Bunter carelessly. "I suppose you can't cash it for me."
 "Hardly—my pater doesn't send me quids in fifties," said Drake, laughing. "Better take it to the Head—if it's genuine."
 "Can't you see it's genuine, you ass?" hooted Bunter.
 "Well, it looks all right," admitted Drake. "But I thought your people hadn't much tin—"
 "I've often told you they were rolling in money."
 "Yes; that's why I thought they weren't."
 "Oh, really, Drake—"

Several Remove fellows were gathering round, and they all wanted to look at the cheque. Bunter showed it round willingly enough. He seemed to be enjoying the limelight he was receiving. The cheque passed from hand to hand amid exclamations of surprise and congratulation. Even Bolsover major condescended to congratulate Bunter. Fisher T. Fish examined the cheque with meticulous attention, and seemed loth to part with it again. When it was returned to Bunter, Fishy's eye followed it hungrily.

"Jerusalem crickets!" said Fisher T. Fish, "I guess that's the real goods, and you're the lucky guy from Luckville, Bunter. I'll tell you what; if you'd like to put some money into a little scheme I've thought of—"

Bunter did not heed.
 "I'm going to Mr. Quelch now," he said. "He's going to cash it for me. I shall have to wait till it's through the bank. Still, I've some friends who'll lend me a pound or two to go on with."

"My dear chap—" said Skinner.

"My dear fellow—" said Snoop.

"I guess I'm your antelope—"

"Don't forget me, Bunter—"

Quite a process marched with William George Bunter to the Remove master's study. Perhaps some of the fellows had a lingering doubt as to the genuineness of the cheque, and wanted to see whether Bunter really would take it to his Form-master. But there was no hesitation about Bunter. He marched up to Mr. Quelch's door, and knocked.

"Come in!"
 Bunter entered the study, and the door closed on a crowd of eager and interested juniors. They heard a murmur of voices within, but the words were not to be distinguished. Then came Mr. Quelch's clear, metallic voice:

"Certainly, Bunter!"
 A minute or two later, the door reopened and Billy Bunter came out. His friends—a dozen in number now—gathered round him in faithful array. They walked out of the school-house with him in faithful attendance. Billy Bunter's steps led him—as if by instinct—towards the school shop. And thither his numerous friends escorted him; and during the next half-hour, William George Bunter, seated on a high stool at the counter, sticky and shiny and happy, had the time of his life!

The Rise and Fall of William George Bunter!

"SAY, you fellows—"
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo, my giddy millionaire!"
 "Lend me ten bob, will you?"
 "I don't think."
 It was two days later; and William George Bunter, the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove, was at the zenith of his popularity. Never had a fellow become popular so suddenly and so completely. It was as sudden and complete as the change which, according to the advertisements, follows the taking of a patent medicine.

Before the arrival of the cheque, Bunter had been the person of the least possible consequence in the Lower Fourth. He had been a fat boulder and a tubby toad and a cringing porpoise, and all sorts of things like that. Nobody who knew him would have trusted him with a German mark.

After the cheque, the difference was astonishing. The effect was as amazing as that of Dr. Somebody's pink pills, or Somebody Else's memory system.

No longer a fat toad or a podgy porpoise, W. G. Bunter was an old fellow, an old chap; an old scout.

Friends sprang up around him like mushrooms.

Skinner and Snoop and Stott were sworn brothers to him. Fisher T. Fish worshipped the ground he walked on, and the bank the cheque was drawn on. Bolsover major was markedly civil; lots of fellows had a kind word for Bunter. Angel of the Fourth invited him into his study for a quiet game of nap, and was quite content to accept Bunter's I O U's for his very considerable losses. For evidently it was only a matter of days before W. G. Bunter would be rolling in currency notes. The story of the cheque spread—and even Loder and Carne, of the Sixth, had cheery nods for Bunter—whose existence they would never have dreamed of deigning to notice a few days before. Fitzgerald of the Fifth even went for a walk with him. Bunter dropped into a way of alluding carelessly to "my friends in the Sixth," or "my pals in the Fifth Form."

The glory of the fifty-pound cheque was like a halo round Bunter's podgy brow.

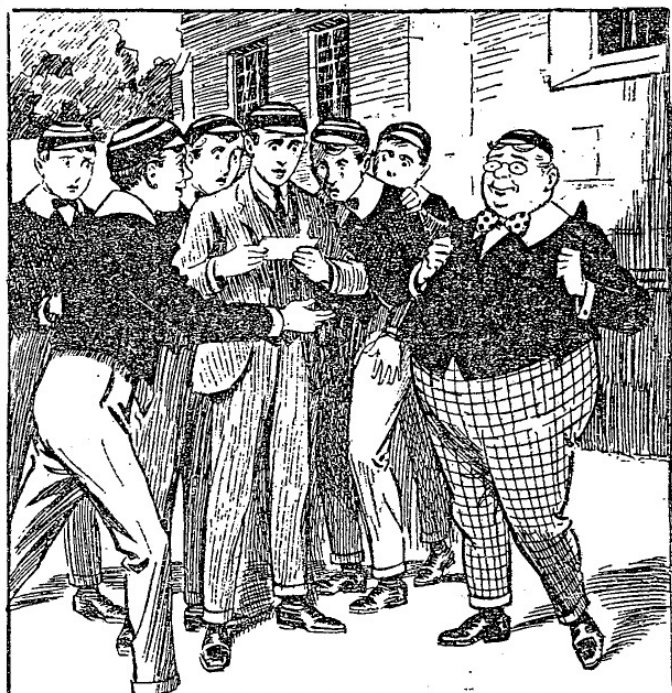
On his great expectations, he borrowed right and left.

Once upon a time, he had borrowed on the expected arrival of a postal-order. But that postal-order was, as Bob Cherry had remarked, worn out. It had done yeoman service, but as a money-raising stunt, it had seen its best days, and was now a chicken that would not fight. But the cheque was a real thing. Many eyes had seen it; a dozen fellows had gone with Bunter to Mr. Quelch's study with it; it was only a matter of days before it would have been cleared by the bank, and the actual cash would be in Bunter's fat hands. Fellows even began to believe that there was such a place as Bunter Court.

To lend Bunter a bob or two now was, as Skinner remarked in the privacy of his study, a paying game. It was a sport to catch a whale. Bunter was airily planning motor excursions, runs up to London to the theatres, feeds at big hotels in Folkestone; and fellows who stood by him now were to come in for a share of these good things—crumbs that were to fall from the rich man's table.

For two days William George Bunter was a pig in clover, and he throve on it. Even Fisher T. Fish "squeezed out" a loan for Bunter—though parting with money gave Fishy a pain like the toothache. He squeezed most of his new friends dry in the course of two days. Then he had recourse again to the Famous Five. He requested the loan of "ten bob" in a careless and casual manner, as of a fellow to whom ten-bob notes were trifles. But they were not trifles to Harry Wharton and Co., and five heads were shaken in response to Bunter's request.

"I'll tell you what!" said Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove. "I'm rather short of money—till my



Harry Wharton & Co., looked at the engraved slip of paper. They stared at it, they blinked at it, for it was a cheque—evidently a cheque!

cheque's cashed. Lend me ten bob, and I'll hand you a pound for it—when my cheque's cashed."

"I'll lend you a thick ear, you fat rotter!" growled Bob Cherry.

"I suppose you're rather jealous of my wealth, Bob Cherry—"

Bob raised his boot, and Bunter rolled away without finishing his remark. He looked into Drake's study.

"Drake, old chap, lend me a pound till my cheque's cashed—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I'm making up a party for the Frivolity next week," said Bunter. "We're going up in a big car, and there's going to be a feed at the Carlton, and—"

"Fathead!"

"I jolly well sha'n't take you!" roared Bunter. "Yah! Go and eat coke."

And he rolled along the Remove in search of a lender. Skinner and Snoop were drawn blank; they had no more to lend; they had already expended their sprats which were to catch whales. As a last resource, Bunter looked into Fisher T. Fish's study.

"I guess I'd be glad to oblige, old sport," said Fisher T. Fish. "But money is tight. Haven't you heard from Quelch yet?"

"I haven't asked him," said Bunter loftily. "I'm not in a hurry for the money. I simply want ten bob or so for the present but I dare say Angel of the Fourth will lend it to me, I'm going to take him on a theatre crawl when my cheque's cashed."

Fishy hesitated.

"I—I guess you're asking this infant, too!" he insinuated.

"I'm asking the fellows who can trust me with a little loan," said Bunter distantly.

"I—I guess—"

"I'll give you my I O U, if you like," said Bunter. "Money's nothing to me. I'll give you an I O U for a pound, if you like."

Fisher T. Fish fairly quivered with greed.

"Pay as soon as the cheque's cashed?" he asked.

"Same day."

"I guess I've got ten bob," said Fisher T. Fish. "Of course, I'd always be glad to oblige a friend like you. Bunter; but business is business. Just give me that I O U you were speaking of—"

"Certainly."

Bunter fumbled in his pocket for a fragment of paper, and drew out a rumpled old letter. On the blank side he scribbled the I O U, handed it to Fisher T. Fish, and received the ten-shilling note. One moment more, and William George Bunter was hurrying down the Remove passage, en route for the tuck-shop in the corner of the quad. Money never remained in William George's pocket till it burned a hole there.

Fisher T. Fish folded up the I O U very carefully, to put it away in safety. Fishy grinned over it with satisfaction. In a day or two he was going to bag a hundred per cent. on his loan; which was good enough even for a sharp youth who had been "raised" in "Noo York."

As he folded the paper he noticed that there was writing on one side of it. He grinned again. The short-sighted Owl of the Remove had evidently handed him a letter with the I O U on the back, instead of having written it on a loose sheet of paper as he supposed. Fishy unfolded the paper again, and glanced at the letter. Fishy was no more scrupulous than Bunter himself on points like that.

"Gee-whiz!"

Fisher T. Fish jumped.

If Fishy's sharp eyes had suddenly rested on the Gorgon, the sight could not have startled him more than the sight of Bunter's letter.

He read it—he read it again—he stared at it—he blinked at it—and he gasped for breath.

"Done!" spluttered Fisher T. Fish. "Gee-whiz! Great snakes! The—the pesky spofer—done! Diddled! My ten bob—oh, hokey!" He glared wildly round the study, caught up a cricket bat belonging to Johnny Bull, and tore out of the doorway—after Billy Bunter! He came along the Remove passage as if he were on the cinder-path, wild-eyed.

Crash!

"You howling ass!" roared Bob Cherry, as Fisher T. Fish cannoned him on the stairs. "You—you—"

"Where's Bunter?" gasped Fishy.

"Bother Bunter! You—"

"I want his blood!" yelled Fisher T. Fish. "I'm going to brain him. Where is he?"

Without stopping for an answer to his question, Fisher T. Fish raced down the stairs, leaving Bob Cherry staring after him blankly.

"What's the matter with Fishy?" called out Drake.

"Blessed if I know—off his rocker, I should think,"

gasped Bob. "He's after Bunter with a cricket bat—he's going to brain him—"

"Fishy—"

"What the thump—"

Heedless of the excitement he was causing, Fisher T. Fish rushed out into the quad, wild-eyed and gasping. He glared round for Bunter. Half-a-dozen fellows rushed on the excited junior.

"What's the matter with you?" roared Harry Wharton, seizing Fishy by the collar and shaking him.

"I guess I'm going to brain Bunter—my ten bob—and the other bob—and the half-crown—" spluttered Fisher T. Fish incoherently.

"What's he done?" demanded Skinner. "You let Bunter alone, Fishy! Bunter's got friends to stand by him, I can tell you."

"Yes, rather," said Snoop warmly.

"The fat clam!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish.

"You shut up!" said Bolsover major; "what do you mean by calling Bunter names, you skinny scarecrow?"

"Look at this!" Fisher T. Fish waved the letter wildly in the air. "Spoof—that cheque—oh, Jerusalem crickets! And he's had my last ten bob."

"Quite potty," said Bob Cherry, in wonder. "That's an I O U in Bunter's scrawl. What's wrong?"

"The other side—"

"It's a letter—"

"Bunter's pater's fist," said Skinner. "I know it—why—what—oh, my hat—great pip!"

A dozen eyes saw the letter as Fisher T. Fish held it up. It was a really surprising letter—especially to Bunter's new friends. It was short, if not sweet:

"Dear William,—It is impossible for me to send you anything beyond your allowance; but I quite approve of your desire to keep up equal appearances with your schoolfellows. I have no objection to sending you a cheque which you may show about the school. You will be very careful to return it to me by the next post.

"Your affectionate father,

"S. BUNTER."

Evidently that was the letter that had accompanied the celebrated cheque. Skinner blinked at it, with quite a sickly look. Skinner had expended seven shillings, and sixpence in "sprats" to catch whales that, only too clearly, never would be caught!

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Drake. "But—but—but he took the cheque to Mr. Quelch to be cashed—"

"We—we went with him—" stammered Snoop.

Fisher T. Fish raved.

"He was pulling our pesky leg—he just went into Quelch's study and spun him some yarn—asked him to lend him a dictionary, perhaps—I guess I see it all now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Tain't a laughing matter," yelled Fisher T. Fish.

"He's had fifteen bob out of me—"

"Seven and six out of me!" panted Skinner.

"He owes me twelve shillings!" spluttered Bolsover major.

"Where is he? Where is the spoofing toad?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, don't you feel friendly to Bunter now?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where is he?" raved Fisher T. Fish. "I'm going to brain him—I'm going to scalp him—I guess I want his blood—"

"Where is he?" howled Skinner.

"I saw him making for the tuck-shop ten minutes ago," remarked Rodney, with a chuckle.

Fisher T. Fish gave a whoop.

"Then my ten bob's gone—it wouldn't last him ten minutes! I'll have his scalp—I'll have his gore—"

Brandishing the bat, Fisher T. Fish headed a rush for the tuck-shop—followed fast by Bunter's new friends—who did not look friendly now. It was just then that Bunter, very sticky and shiny, emerged from the tuck-shop, with exactly ten shillings' worth of tuck reposing in his well stored interior. He gave the crowd of wrathful juniors a startled blink—and without waiting to ask questions, bolted for his life.

"After him!" roared Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Go it, Bunter!"

And with a speed that was amazing, considering the weight he had to carry, William George Bunter fled, with a howling crowd on his track.

What was left of William George Bunter, after his friends had done with him, lay in the armchair in No. 7 Study, that evening, and groaned. Brief—very brief—had been the popularity in which William George had basked. He had gone up like the rocket—and had come down like the stick—and as he groaned in the armchair, he wondered dismally whether life was really worth living. Just then it felt as if it wasn't.

THE END.

Another grand story next week.