

THE GREAT FAT-CURE!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

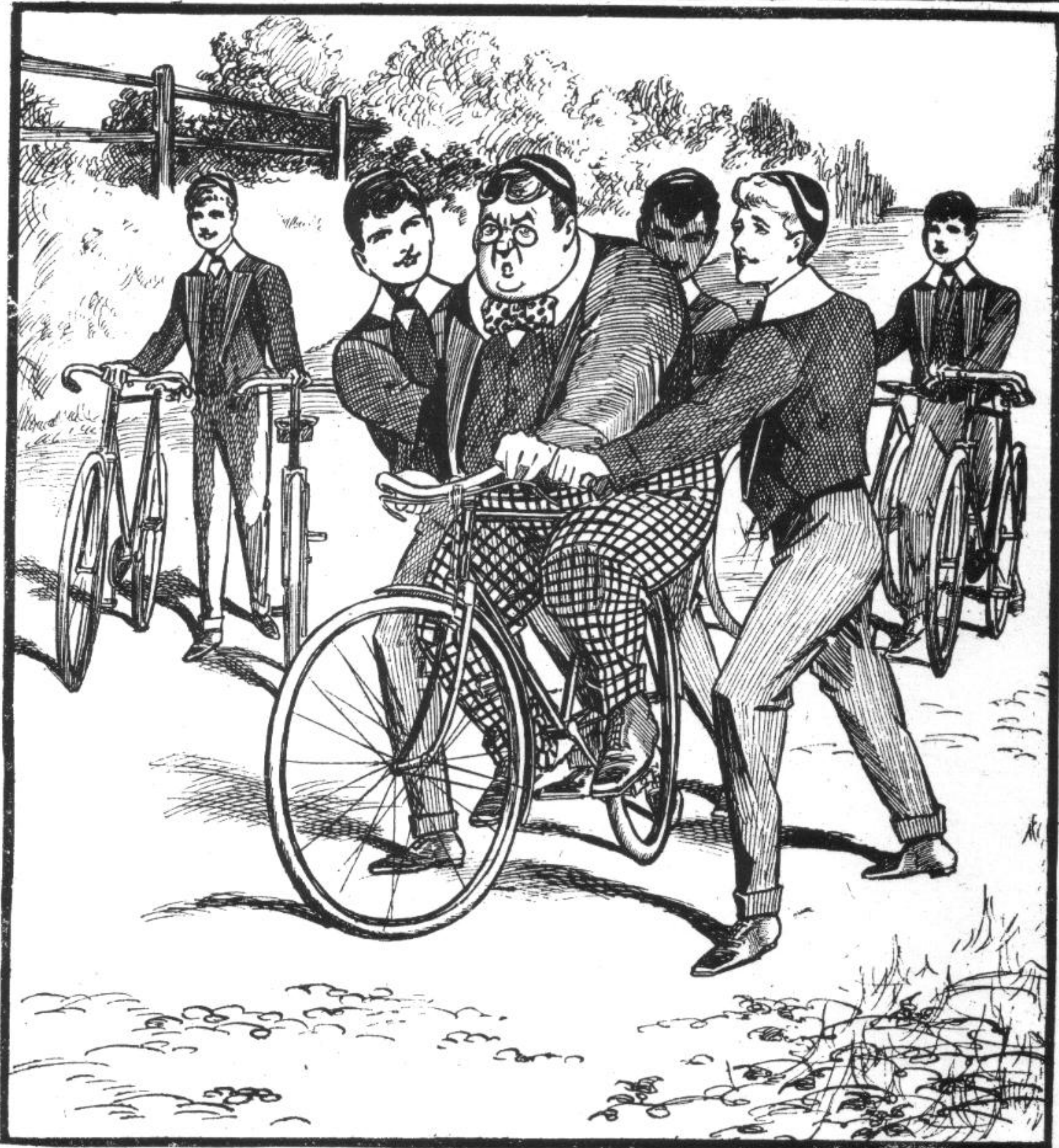


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POOR OLD BUNTER!

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THE GREAT FAT-CURE!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter's Flag Day!

"I SAY, you fellows—"
The familiar voice of the Owl of the Remove floated in through the partially open door of No. 1 Study.

"Buzz off!" roared Bob Cherry. "We're not cashing postal-orders to-day."

The door continued to open, but the familiar face of William George Bunter did not appear for the moment. Instead, a large tray covered with small flags came slowly into the room, the Owl of the Remove, who was carrying the tray, bringing up the rear.

"Flags?" Nugent gasped. "Bunter's having a flag day?"

"Brown Cross Flag Day, boys!" Bunter announced. "Who's going to buy a flag?"

"Ask me another," said Bob Cherry. "I'm not—from you, anyway."

"Whom have you knocked down for that little lot?" asked Johnny Bull, eyeing the tray and the sealed tin for money which Bunter carried in his hand.

"Oh, really, Bull!" Bunter protested virtuously. "I couldn't do such a thing."

"Did the chap faint, then, and did you decide to help him by carrying the flags?" Johnny asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Bunter blinked, with an air of injured innocence.

"Really, you chaps," he said, "you know that I can be trusted, and that I shouldn't be such a rotter as to do such a thing. Who's going to buy a Brown Cross flag?"

"Where did you get those flags, Bunt?" Wharton asked quietly. "I know it's a flag day, and my people were going to send me down a supply to sell in the school. I don't mind having one, if they're genuine."

"Genuine?" Bunter snorted. "Of course they're genuine! My uncle sent them to me. He's a proper collector to-day, and he knows me all right. Besides, the tin for the money is sealed up, so that you fellows can see that it's quite genuine."

Bob gravely took the tin out of Bunter's hand and inspected it. It looked impossible to get out of it money which had once been slipped through the slot.

"Yes," Bob murmured, as he returned it, "your uncle knows you all right, Bunt. He's not taking any risks."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Oh, really, Bob!" the Owl of the Remove protested. "Well, you all know about Brown Cross Flag Day. Who's going to buy a flag?"

The chums exchanged glances. Bunter they knew of old. He had "collected for charity" more than once before.

"What are you getting out of it, Bunt?" Nugent asked, voicing the general question. "We want to know what you're doing this for."

"My my pater's going to send me a postal-order for them," the fat boy explained.

"I thought you said your uncle sent you the flags?" Johnny Bull said.

"Well—er—that is, they sent them between them," Bunter explained. "They know how philanthropic I am, and that I'm awfully sorry for the poor Serbians in Belgium who can't get any grub—"

"The who?" demanded Wharton.

"The people that the flags are being sold for," Bunter said. "I forget who they are, but I know they're very deserving. Come on, you chaps, buy a flag!"

"You're quite sure it's O.K., Bunt?" Wharton asked.

"Absolutely!" Bunter said. "I—I don't mind telling you chaps that—that I want that postal-order rather badly, and—and if you'd care to lend me ten bob on it—"

"Nothing doing!" the chums said in chorus.

"I'll have a flag, though," Wharton said. "Let's put the money in the tin."

Bunter held the tin out, and Wharton slipped a sixpence through the slot and took a flag from the tray. Bob Cherry followed suit, and, seeing that things were apparently genuine, the others did likewise. Bunter beamed as the flags began to disappear from his tray and the pleasant rattle of coins came from inside the box.

"I'm sure the poor Russians in Belgium—" he began.

"Russians?" interrupted Bob Cherry. "I thought you said they were Serbians? You're a fine collector! You don't care what the thing is for as long as you get your postal-order. I hope it gets lost in the post."

"Oh, really, Cherry!" Bunter protested. "I'm awfully interested in the Brown Cross Society, but I've got a rotten memory for names. I think, now you remind me, that it is the Turks."

"Then give me my money back!" said Bob Cherry. "We're fighting those bounders."

"No," Bunter said desperately; "it can't be them. But it's all serene, on my honour."

"And that's pretty poor security," said Johnny Bull candidly. "Still, I can't see very well how you can fake this."

Bunter grinned and waddled towards the door.

"You're a lot of suspicious beasts!" he declared as he caught the knob. "I don't mind if you don't lend me anything on my postal-order."

"Wonder what he means?" Bob said thoughtfully, as the door closed rapidly behind the Owl of the Remove. "I suppose it's all right?"

"Must be," the Removite said thoughtfully. "It looks genuine enough."

Harold Skinner, the cad of the Remove, was standing at his door when the Owl drifted along with his tray of flags, and the fat junior hailed him.

"Buy a flag, Skimmer?" he sang out. "Brown Cross, you know."

"Brown rats!" Skinner retorted.

Bunter blinked indignantly.

"You ought to be patriotic and have one," he said. "You'll see all about it in the papers, and I'm an authorised collector."

"They must be hard up," grinned Skinner. "Almost as hard up as you are."

"Think of the poor Arabs who are dying in Germany for want of food!" Bunter continued pathetically.

"I'd rather not subscribe," Skinner sneered. "I prefer to think of you starving here. I can't afford any cash for your jam-tart scheme."

"But I tell you I'm not getting anything out of it!" Bunter screamed. "Look for yourself. You put the money in the tin, and it is opened by the people in London."

Skinner looked at the tin which Bunter held out. It looked quite genuine. In addition, as it was a half-day off, and as he would be certain to go into the village, Skinner knew that he would be held up sooner or later and forced to buy a flag.

He searched his pocket and found two halfpennies, which he dropped into the box.

"I don't mind having one," he said loftily, and stuck the little emblem from Bunter's tray into his coat.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Truth Will Cut!

FLUSHED with triumph, Bunter sailed into the Rag.

"Flag day, boys!" he sang out. "Who's going to buy a flag?"

"Buzz off, Bunter! We're hard up!" came in a chorus. "Go and offer some of 'em to Mrs. Mimble if you haven't got any tin!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Really, you fellows," Bunter howled, "you're a suspicious lot of beasts! Look here, it's Brown Cross Flag Day to-day, to help the starving German prisoners!"

"Then buzz off!" "Scat!"

A chorus of howls of execration assailed Bunter's ears.

"I don't mean Germans, you deffers!" he howled. "I mean the British! You'll see all about it in the papers! I'm an authorised collector."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "You ain't one of the starving prisoners as well by any chance, are you?"

"Of course not!" the Owl declared indignantly.

"Well, what are you getting out of it?" asked Bulstrode.

"Nothing," the Owl replied "at least, I'm getting a postal-order from my grandfather when I send the tin back. And if you could see your way to lend me half a quid on it till it comes—"

"Nothing doing, my son!" Bulstrode chuckled.

Rake caught hold of the tin which received the money. It had a number stamped on the bottom, and certainly looked a safe receptacle for money.

"I think it's quite genuine this time, you chaps," he said. "I'll have a flag."

"I read in the papers that it was Brown Cross Day to-day," added Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior. "I'll have one, too."

One or two others followed suit; and, seeing that all was apparently clear, the majority of the others did the same.

"Me tinkee me buyee flagge ffrom velly dishonourable Bunter!" Wun Lung said, in his quaint pidgin English.

"Dishonourable!" Bunter snorted indignantly. "You rotten, yellow heathen can keep away! I expect I shall find your penny's a bad one!"

"You expect you'll find it is?" said Tom Brown sharply. "What do you mean?"

"Er—that is," Bunter explained quickly. "I expect my pater will write and say there was a bad penny in there!"

"I thought you said it was your grandfather?" Bulstrode said.

"So—so it is," Bunter said. "They sent me the flags between them."

"You told me that your uncle sent them," Bob Cherry said quietly from the doorway.

"Yes; they're all in it," Bunter said calmly. He remembered a proverb which said something about there being safety in numbers. "We're a very patriotic family. We all sell flags."

"I suppose your pater does it when things are not going well at the pawnshop?" asked Bulstrode sarcastically.

"Of course not!" the Owl of the Remove said indignantly. "My pater's on the Stock Exchange! You're a suspicious lot of cads! But that won't deter me! I'm working in a good cause!"

"Faith, an' it must be a good cause intirely to make Bunter work!" declared Micky Desmond.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyone else want a flag?" demanded Bunter, ignoring the remark.

No one else made a move.

"Would you care to have one, Fish?" Bunter asked. "America always leads the way in philanthropy. Remember the peace ship last Christmas. That was American."

"I guess there's nothin' doin'!" the Yankee junior returned. "I guess you can vamoose the ranch, you mugwump!"

"Yah! You haven't got any money!" Bunter jeered. "I won't lend you any when I've op—when I get my postal-order, I mean!" he added hastily.

Bob Cherry eyed the Owl of the Remove suspiciously.

"What were you going to say, you worm?" he demanded.

"Nothing," said Bunter promptly. "I never even thought of opening the tin and pinching the money. I wouldn't do such a thing!"

"You'd better not either!" Bob warned him, as the fat junior edged towards the door.

"It seems you fellows don't think you can trust me," Bunter said. "Well, I don't want to stop with such rotters, that's all! I expect they'll be only too pleased to get the opportunity of buying flags from a handsome chap like me in the other Forms!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't see anything to cackle about!" Bunter declared. "You ain't fit to deal with honourable people!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter scowled, and set off down the passage. Bob Cherry turned and followed him, a thoughtful frown on his face. But he had not gone very far before he ran into Squiff, the Australian junior.

"Hallo!" Samson Quincey Ifley Field hailed him. "Has Wharton got a birthday or something to-day? The postman brought a big parcel for him this morning."

Bob shook his head.

"Harry's got nothing special on to-day," he said, "and he's not received any parcel. He was expecting one, I believe, though what it was I don't know. I've got it. Are you sure that came this morning, Squiff?"

"Absolutely!" declared Squiff. "But what's the excitement?"

"Come along and see Harry!" said Bob.

They hurried to Study No. 1, but Wharton was not there. Nugent said he thought he had gone down to the foot-pitch.

"Anything wrong?" asked Squiff, as the two set off again to find the Remove captain.

"Yes; I'm afraid there is," Bob said seriously. "It's that fat beast Bunter again! Wharton was expecting a parcel of Brown Cross flags this morning, but, apparently, they never turned up. And now Bunter's hawking a supply round the school."

"My hat!" gasped Squiff. "Think he's pinched 'em?"

"Shouldn't be surprised," returned Bob. "You know, Bunt, don't you? He'd borrow a chap's skin if he could get a jam-tart for it!"

To Bob's annoyance, however, Wharton could not be found just when he was wanted, and it was a good half-hour later that Bob ran across him in the quad.

"Hallo, Bob!" Wharton said. "I've just helped Bunter sell his last flag. I reckon it's a good thing that the cash is in a safe tin. I should— Why, what's the matter?"

"Squiffy's got news for you," Bob said hurriedly. "I reckon we've been buying a rather large-sized pup!"

The Australian junior told Wharton in a few words about the parcel which

had come for him that morning, and his words were not without effect. A sudden fierce look sprang into Harry's eyes.

"This wants seeing into!" he said quickly.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Fough on the Philanthropist!

"GOT it!"

Long experience of opening tins of preserve which did not belong to him enabled Bunter to make short work of the money-box, which contained the contributions to the Brown Cross Fund, when he got it to his study.

For the moment he was alone, and it was of the greatest importance that he should get the money and dispose of the tin as quickly as possible if his scheme for raising the wind was to succeed. Anyone might come into the study at any moment, and then all would be lost.

In point of fact, there were footsteps sounding down the corridor now, and the sharp ears of the Owl of the Remove heard them; but before he could get the tin out of sight they had paused outside the door.

"C—can't come in," Bunter shouted quickly, as he cast desperately round him for a hiding-place for the tin. "C—can't—"

He stopped as the door was suddenly opened, and Harry Wharton, closely followed by Bob Cherry and Squiff, stepped in. The incriminating tin, a large hole



"Is anything the matter, my little ley?" the stranger asked gently. Bunter gazed at the man in astonishment. (See Chapter 4.)

in the top, was still clasped in the fat junior's hands, and Harry's eyes fell accusingly on it.

"W-what do you want?" Bunter asked, with a poor—a very poor—attempt at bluff.

"Why have you opened that tin?" Wharton asked very quietly.

"I—I was afraid someone might pinch it," Bunter hazarded. "I thought it was safer to take the money out and keep it in my pocket."

"My giddy aunt!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"And where did you get that tin from, in the first place?" Wharton asked.

"I've already told you that I got it from my aunt," Bunter said indignantly. "Can't you trust a fellow now?"

"You only told us your pater, uncle, and grandfather before," Bob observed sarcastically.

Wharton did not reply at once. He stepped across the study to the fireplace, where a piece of a burnt label was sticking out from the cinders. He pulled it out, and gave a little whistle of surprise.

"How did this get in the fire, Bunter?" he asked in a low voice.

Bunter looked at the piece of label. Though the greater part of it had been burnt, it was still possible to read "H. Wharton" on it.

"I don't know," the Owl said lamely. "I—"

"But you jolly well soon will know, you fat thief!" Wharton cried angrily. "Pass that stump over, Bob!"

"Here, you're not going to— Yaroooooh!"

"That's to teach you not to tell lies," Wharton snapped. "And that—"

"Yow! Oooo-er! Help! Murder! Yooooop! Yowl!"

"That is to teach you not to pinch parcels belonging to other chaps," the Removite continued, as he laid the stump across the fat figure of the Owl. "This is—"

"Help! You're hurting," yelled Bunter. "Yow-wow-wow, you beast! Yaroooooh!"

"This is to remind you that it's a caddish thing to collect for charity and scoff the proceeds," Wharton continued, unheeding. "And this—"

"Ooo-er! Oh, crikey, yooooow! Stop-pit, you beast! Leggo!"

"This is a reminder that you'd better not do it again!" Wharton finished, as he threw the stump away.

"Yarooooh!" Bunter howled, as he staggered to his feet, to face the interested crowd of juniors who had gathered outside. "You've half killed me!"

"Good thing, too!" said Nugent, from the doorway. "What's he been doing, Harry?"

"Why, the fat beast pinched the flags and tin that came for me this morning," Wharton replied. "He sold them round the school, and was just pinching the cash when I came in here."

A howl of wrath went up from the juniors.

"Bump him!"

"Mob the fat beander!"

"Make him run the gauntlet!"

"And we'll use our flags to hurry him up!"

"The pins, you mean?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry seized the Owl, and bundled him to the doorway. Nearly all the juniors had bought flags, and they meant to let Bunter have them back in return for the mean trick he had played on them—only they intended to let him have them point first.

"I—I was only taking the money to keep it safe, you chaps," Bunter said appealingly. "It's all lies! You want

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to mob Wharton—he's trying to steal it from me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Start him off, Bob."

"I say, you fellows—" Bunter started desperately. "I haven't really taken any of the money—"

There was an ironical laugh from the crowd.

"We'll forgive that little oversight," Johnny Bull said. "We know it ain't your fault."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, you fellows— Yow! Don't be so rough! Ooo-er!"

A strong pair of arms propelled Bunter into the passage, and the next thing he knew was that a couple of pins were sticking into him. The sensation was not pleasant. When a couple more prodded Bunter's fat person he thought still less of the entertainment. He gave a wild whoop of pain, and set off down the corridor, the Removites, with yells of triumph, taking up the chase.

Down the passage Bunter sped, fear, and several further pin-points, lending speed to his short, fat legs, his only thought being to escape from the Nemesis which followed him.

As the news was shouted by the pursuers, fellows everywhere took up the chase, the idea of the pins being something of a novelty, as well as very effective.

"You—you r-rotters!" Bunter gasped as he pelted along at full speed. "After the way I've been working for the Brown Cross Society, and then this is how you treat me!"

"Cheer up, Bunter!" yelled Johnny Bull, who was just on his heels, and could have prodded him a dozen times. "It's a sad heart that never rejoices! Go it!"

Bunter "went it" as rapidly as he could. The pins were very painful, and the Owl of the Remove had already resolved that the next things which he sold would certainly be something softer than pins!

Across the Close the Owl sped, and then through the gates, fleeing towards the village. Only then did the pursuers draw up.

"Drink our healths," Nugent called. "Don't spend it all on grub!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Kind Old Gentleman!

BILLY BUNTER rolled disconsolately along the pavement of Friardale.

He was feeling very annoyed with the world in general. To start with, he was sore—very sore. But what was even worse, he was hungry, and there was no one in the village who would give him "tick." They all knew Bunter, and they all wanted spot cash.

There was no object to be achieved in remaining in Friardale, but there was still less in going back to the school, especially while the fellows were in their present mood. He was so utterly dejected that he quite failed to notice the sudden interest which a stranger who passed him on the pavement took in him.

The man who had paused to survey the retreating figure of the Owl of the Remove was past middle age, tall, and very thin, and wearing side-whiskers and a pointed moustache. His hair was almost yellow, and, consequently, in striking contrast to the black hair on his face; and his eyes, when they looked at one, were small and very crafty. All this, however, Bunter did not notice at the moment.

But, as he came rolling along the pavement again, Bunter was rather surprised

to hear a thin voice hail him as "my little boy," and, looking round, he was more surprised to see the stranger eyeing him narrowly.

"Is anything the matter, my little boy?" the stranger asked gently.

Bunter gazed at the man in considerable astonishment. For the moment he was at a loss what to say; but a sudden inspiration came to him.

"Y-yes, sir," he said. "As a matter of fact, sir, I've been expecting a postal-order for ten shillings from my people, but it must have got lost in the post, sir."

Bunter was studiously polite. "I'm awfully hungry, sir. I—I wonder if you'd mind lending me seven-and-six, sir?"

The stranger looked at Bunter for an instant.

"You have an honest face, my lad," he said. "How much did you say you wanted?"

"Ten shillings, sir," Bunter said promptly.

"And how much did you say the postal-order is for?"

"A pound, sir," Bunter said. "If you'd mind letting me have the fifteen shillings—"

The stranger thrust his hand in his pocket and drew forth a one-pound Treasury note.

"I'll lend you the full amount, my boy," he said. "I think it is a very deserving case."

"Thank you, sir!" said Bunter, his little eyes twinkling behind his round spectacles. "I only said a pound, sir, but they usually make it thirty bob, sir, when they send to me. In fact, sir, it's certain to be thirty bob, sir."

"Then here's the other ten shillings," said the yellow-haired man, producing a red Treasury note. "Next time you see me will do for the postal-order."

For the moment Bunter could hardly murmur the words of thanks which came to his lips, so profound was his astonishment. But the stranger's next words quickly brought him back to himself.

"You look rather hungry, my boy," he said. "Perhaps you would like to come home and have tea with me?"

"T-thank you very much, sir," said the Owl of the Remove.

"Then come this way," invited his new friend. "My name, by the way, is Engensen, and I am a professor. I think we are going to be friends."

Bunter strutted along triumphantly. It never occurred to his thick head to question this sudden generosity on the part of a stranger. The conceited Owl put it all down to his own personality, and thought that it must have been his good looks and charming manners which had fascinated the stranger.

Once outside Friardale, Engensen turned up a lane on the left, and here Bunter found a horse and trap awaiting them. Clambering in, Engensen helped the fat junior up; then, whipping up the horse, set off at a round pace along the lane.

It was half an hour later when they pulled up before a small house at the bottom of a little lane which branched from the main road. Here Engensen descended, and, with some care, assisted Bunter again.

"Go into the house, my lad," he said. "We shall be all alone, and when I have put the horse in the stable I will join you."

"Certainly, sir!" Bunter replied.

The front door of the house opened at Bunter's push, and the junior found himself in a bare passage from which three doors opened. The first room was piled with lumber, and smelt strongly of chemicals. The second one, however, attracted Bunter. It contained little furniture, but that mattered little to

Bunter. Piled on a table in the centre was a feed which, even to the greedy eyes of the fat junior, appeared to be on a very lavish scale.

There was meat on several dishes, vegetables, two plates of large pastries, biscuits of every shape and variety, and scattered amongst the whole were pots of jam, cream, and honey, together with a variety of stewed fruits which made Bunter's mouth water even to look at them.

The Owl of the Remove gave a satisfied grunt. He had fallen on his feet with a vengeance. Then he rolled into the room.

"Better have a taster," he muttered. And, taking a large jam-tart in each hand, he commenced work without waiting for the arrival of his generous host.

The jam-tarts were good, and Bunter, having disposed of them, went on to a couple of cream-buns, which proved equally choice. He decided to make hay while his generous friend was giving that same commodity to the horse. And it was not until he had quite cleared the first plate that Engensen appeared in the doorway.

"M-m-m-m—jush shtarted—m-m-m-m," Bunter remarked, through a mouthful of chocolate eclair.

"That is right," said Engensen. "But before you go any further I've got a little drink of my own concoction which I'd like you to try."

Bunter grinned with anticipation.

"Thank you, sir!" he said.

Engensen reached a bottle from a cupboard in the wall, and, pouring some of its red contents into a glass, filled it with soda. He handed it to Bunter.

"Drink that quickly!" he said.

Bunter took the glass and also a good gulp. The next moment he pulled a wry face and started coughing violently.

"Grooh! Oo-er, you beast! Nearly choked me!" he gasped. "Oo-er, what horrible stuff!"

"Go on, drink it!" said Engensen, with a sudden fierce note in his voice.

"I ain't going to!" declared Bunter. "I believe you're trying to poison me!"

"No; it will do you good," Engensen declared fiercely. "Drink it!"

"I won't!" declared Bunter.

Engensen paused. His face had flushed, and for a moment it looked as though he would try and force the fat junior to do what he bade him. But apparently he mastered his feelings, for his face suddenly cleared.

"It's your loss, then," he said casually.

"Come on, let's get on with the feed!"

Bunter grinned, and looked quite mollified again.

"Now you're talking, sir," he said.

It was an hour later that Bunter prepared to leave his host. He had gorged till even his monstrous capacity seemed to have reached its limit. The trap was waiting again to take him to the village, and as he clambered in he remarked that he had had a decent time.

"You'll come again, won't you?" Engensen said.

"You bet!" remarked Bunter, in a voice which intimated that there was no doubt upon the matter. "To-morrow do?"

"Yes," Engensen said. "If you don't find the trap waiting, come along the road to meet me. It's only five miles."

"Oh, really!" said Bunter. "Do you expect me to walk that?"

"I may be late with the trap," the stranger returned. "But I will try to meet you."

Engensen dropped the Owl of the Remove just outside the village, and, with several protestations that he should have first claim on the postal-order when it came, Bunter bade farewell to his new friend, a fat smile on his face, and two crinkling Treasury notes in his pocket.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Wharton is Worried!

BILLY BUNTER elbowed his way up to Mrs. Mimble's counter in the school tuckshop.

"I'll have that dish of tarts, and half a dozen ginger-beers!" he said loftily.

"Money first, Master Bunter," Mrs. Mimble said firmly.

Bunter smiled expansively.

"Here it is," he said, in the same tones. "A pound note, Mrs. Mimble!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry, who was standing by. "Bunter's in funds again!"

"Wonder where he laid his greasy paws on that?" muttered Wharton, in reply. "I don't think he had it out of the Flag Fund, because, when I came to count up the number of flags sold and what the fellows said they'd given, it tallied fairly well with what was in the tin when I recaptured it!"

Bob Cherry nodded, as Bunter retired to a table with his load, and commenced operations.

"I wonder where he got it, then?" he said.

It would not have been a matter of concern where a fellow's money came from in another boy's case, but Bunter's reputation for dishonesty made it everyone's business to watch him. And Wharton, who had saved the foolish junior from many scrapes, felt genuinely concerned to see the Owl throwing paper money about as he was doing.

He crossed the little tuckshop, and sat down at the table where the Owl of the Remove was gorging.

"I don't want to quiz, Bunter," he said abruptly, "but I should like to know where you got that money from. You haven't been selling flags in Friardale, or anything, have you?"

"Of course not!" Bunter said indignantly. "I'm not going to tell you where I got it from! It's no business of yours if a pal made me an advance on a postal-order that I'm expecting!"

"Same old fairy-tale!" Wharton breathed. "Look here," he added. "you don't catch old birds with chaff now! There's usually something fishy when you come into funds. I expect in the end you'll want us to rescue you from some scrape or other!"

"No fear!" Bunter declared emphatically. "You needn't try and scare me, and get the name of my new pal out of me! He's taken a fancy to me because I'm good-looking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry, who had followed Wharton across the shop.

"There's nothing to cackle at!" Bunter said severely, through a mouthful of cream bun. "It's only natural that a fellow should take a fancy to me. And he's a very good sort, too. I'm going to see him again——"

Bunter's mouth suddenly shut like a trap as he realised that he was saying too much.

"He must be a rummy sort to take a fancy to you!" said Bob, laughing.

Bunter glared.

"I don't want you fellows hanging round me just because I've got some money!" he said loftily.

Wharton laughed.

"We don't require your charity, porpoise," he said. "I was only warning you for your own good. No fellow would be likely to take a fancy to you unless he was off his chump. You be careful what you do, that's all!"

By the time Bunter had swallowed the mouthful of pastry in the way of the acid retort which rose to his lips, Wharton had walked away, and the fellow who confronted Bunter was Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior.

"Hallo!" Bunter said. "What do you want?"

Fisher T. Fish rubbed his thin hands together, and twisted his lean face into something like a smile.

"I guess I'm real glad to see you prospering, old man," he said, with an attempt at joviality.

"What do you want?" Bunter said grudgingly.

"Say, I don't mind a pastry or two, since you're so pressing," said the American junior. "I——"

"I didn't mean that," Bunter snapped. "Still, you can pitch into those. There's plenty more where they came from, and plenty of cash to pay for them! What do you want me for?"

"I saw you with your pal in Friardale yesterday," Fish said, as he started on the feed, "and I guess I'm almighty glad you've got such a real pal. I guess I saw him handin' out the shekels——"

"Hush!" said Bunter, in a low voice. "What were you going to say?"

"I reckon I wanted to congratulate you on havin' sech a real pal, that's all," Fish said cunningly.

"Have another cake," invited Bunter, realising some of his danger.

"I guess I'm much obliged," Fisher T. Fish returned, as he reached over to the dish again. "Waal, he's a real dandy pal, sure!"

Bunter eyed the other through his round spectacles.

"Well, mum's the word about it," he said.

"What about giving me an introduction?" asked Fish, closing one eye.

Bunter's face coloured furiously, and he came near to closing Fish's other eye with his fist.

"Introduction!" he gasped. "No, I won't! He's my discovery, not yours!"

The American junior smiled craftily.

"What if I tell Wharton that you're meeting him again to-night?" he asked.

Bunter's eyes goggled.

"They wouldn't believe you!" he said desperately. "Anyway, how do you know anything about it?"

Fisher T. Fish smiled. Finding out about things came under the comprehensive word "business" to the Yankee junior, and a little discreet eavesdropping had, in the present case, served him in good stead.

"I guess it don't consarn you to know how I know," he drawled. "Is it a bargain?"

"No!" Bunter said desperately.

Fish got up, and started to walk away, believing that at the last moment Bunter would call him back. No sound came from the Owl of the Remove beyond that of his munching jaws. At the door the Yankee junior paused.

"Still think the same?" he called over his shoulder.

"Yes!" said Bunter.

Fish walked out into the open, his brain working busily. He had never intended to tell Harry Wharton & Co., for the very obvious reason that he had everything to lose and nothing to gain by so doing. And the bluff that he had tried to work on Bunter had failed.

He wished that he was still in the tuckshop helping the fat junior to scoff the feed. He was still hungry, and now

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ANSWERS

if you are not getting your right
PENSION

hunger and disappointment sharpened his wits.

For several minutes he strolled round the Close, deep in thought, and suddenly his face brightened and he grinned quietly.

"I guess it's some stunt!" he muttered to himself.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Ethelbert Engensen, Esq.

"LETTER for Master Bunter!"

Trotter the page looked into Study No. 7 with a small envelope just as Billy Bunter was making the scanty toilet which he considered necessary before meeting his newly-found friend, the scientist.

"That's me," said Bunter ungrammatically; and, snatching the letter, he tore it quickly open. "All right!" he added.

As the door closed Bunter gave vent to a snort of indignation.

"That man seems to think I've nothing to do but suit his convenience!" he muttered, as he looked at the note again. "Do not meet me till six o'clock," he read. "Your friend!"

Evidently it was from his friend of the Treasury notes. That was the only person it could be from, Bunter thought. The two facts which would have been very obvious to another fellow at once never filtered through Bunter's muddy brain till some time after.

The first was that the message was in a juvenile and very familiar handwriting, which Bunter should have known if he had his wits about him. The second was that the stranger did not even know Bunter's name, let alone his address, although he might have guessed the latter from his cap. But Fisher T. Fish, when he wrote that note, could not, of course, guess that Bunter had never divulged his name to the stranger during the eventful meeting on the previous day.

From the Yankee junior's point of view, however, the scheme worked well. Bunter put off his departure for the moment, and the brief respite enabled Fish to steal a march on the fat junior.

He set off for the village directly after tea, and he had the satisfaction of seeing that William George Bunter had evidently acted upon the instructions in the note.

"Gee, this is going to be some easy," he muttered to himself as he strode along towards the village. "I guess this is where brains score!"

He knew the man who had been Bunter's benefactor, and whom he had decided to meet, because he had witnessed the whole pantomime the previous evening from the opposite side of the road, and, though he had not actually heard Bunter's words, he had pretty well guessed what passed between the two. And if the Owl of the Remove could make money so easily, he argued, it should be a still simpler thing for a business man like himself to get a few dollars.

When he reached the village he saw that the man he was expecting had not yet arrived. He lounged about, waiting, and looking constantly back to see whether the Owl was yet on the warpath. But, though the minutes passed, the familiar figure of the fat junior did not appear in sight, and Fish suddenly gave a sigh of relief as the spare figure of Engensen appeared, walking briskly, from the opposite direction.

Fish turned his steps, and walked to meet him.

"Good-evening, sir!" he said, raising his cap. "I've come down from the

school to say that Bunter's not coming to see you any more, sir."

"And who on earth is Bunter?" snapped the scientist, glaring at Fisher T. Fish.

"Your—your young friend," said Fish, somewhat taken aback at the tones. "The fat boy, sir. He's a very ungrateful chap, sir, and he says he ain't coming to see you any more. But I guess, if you want a decent chap's society, sir, that I'm what you've been looking for."

The stranger did not answer. He was looking ahead vacantly, apparently deep in thought. Fish did not think that he had heard the last remark.

"I guess I don't like to push myself forward, sir," he said. "But I'm a lonely sort of fellow, sir, without any parents, and—and I guess I haven't much company. I thought, sir, as Bunter's so almighty ungrateful, you might be sure pleased to meet a real, decent fellow, sir, in his place."

Engensen still did not speak. Fisher Tarleton Fish looked rather perplexed. The strange man did not seem in quite such a generous mood to-day.

"I kinder calculate I've taken a fancy to you, sir," the Yankee continued, after a fruitless pause. "I reck'n we could be pals, sir."

Nothing doing, it seemed.

"I guess, too, sir, I'm in a rotten hole, sir," Fish finished desperately. "I've done the straight thing by you, sir, in exposing Bunter's deceit. I wonder if you'd mind doing me a fellow-service? I've been let down over a remittance from my pa—trustees, in Noo York City. I wonder if you'd mind doin' me a good turn by advancin' me five quid, sir, till it comes?"

Engensen seemed suddenly to pull himself together.

"Eh?" he snapped. "So you're out on the cadge as well?"

Fish muttered something inaudible. There was a terrible look in the man's eye—a look as of madness. The Yankee was too frightened for the moment to repeat the harrowing details which he had already concocted about his American remittance.

"You! A measly skeleton like you!" roared Engensen. "What's the use of a skinny scarecrow? Who wants a bag of bones?"

Fish did not answer. He couldn't think of anyone at the moment who required a bag of bones.

"Confounded impertinence!" thundered Engensen. "What's the good of a miserable creature like you?"

"M-miserable creature!" stammered Fish, finding his tongue at last. "Skinny scarecrow! You ain't much to talk about yourself!"

Biff! Smack! Bump!

"Jerusalem crickets!" screamed the American junior, as a tremendous slap on the head sent him to the ground, and he saw more stars and stripes in a second than he had seen on his national flag in a lifetime. "Oh, you howling mugwump! Wassermarrer you?"

"I'll teach you, my boy, to come down here with your impertinence!" roared Engensen. "Tell Bunter when you see him that I shall expect him to-morrow night! I don't believe a word of your story! I expect he's been detained. Hallo! Here he comes!"

Fish turned his head, and saw that during the altercation the perspiring figure of the Owl of the Remove had drawn near. And as he became aware of the fact Fish did a bit of rapid thinking. He had wanted to stay and howl a few choice Americanisms at this eccentric stranger, but the blow which had knocked him over had also knocked the little pluck which he possessed out of

him. He rose stealthily to his feet, and then, suddenly making a dash for it as fast as he could, he sped out of reach of Engensen.

The stranger did not trouble to pursue, and, dodging into a shop doorway, Fish stood so that, by looking at the reflection in the glass, he could see what followed.

From this point of vantage he watched Bunter roll up and greet Engensen. There was no warmth on the part of the Owl of the Remove, but he took an early opportunity to intimate that he was hungry, and that, although he had been promised a postal-order for a larger amount, it had not yet come, but funds were low again.

Engensen took the hint, and passed over another note, after which Bunter became quite affable, and accompanied the scientist back along the road. Fish emerged from his concealment.

"I guess there's somethin' mighty fishy going on!" he muttered. "That mugwump wouldn't love Bunter like that for nothin'. I reck'n it'll be worth followin' this up."

He started stealthily along the road in pursuit of the pair. It was quite evident that there was some secret, and Fish knew that if he could discover it he might use it to extort blackmail from Bunter.

In addition, Fish was suffering strongly from both resentment and curiosity. He did not like the manner in which he had been treated, and he was also deeply curious to know what specially attractive feature the man could see in Bunter's fatness.

Arriving at the lane, however, Fish found, to his chagrin, that the pair were driving away in a trap. He shook his fist impotently.

"I guess that mugwump ain't seen the last of me!" he muttered.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Fish's Miss-Fortune!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob Cherry, bursting into Study No. 1. "Wherefore that moody brow, Harry?"

Wharton looked up and grinned. He had been caught in the midst of a brown study.

"Nothing much," he said; "only I was thinking about Bunter. He worries me."

"The worryfulness of the esteemed Wharton has been terrific!" observed Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh from an arm-chair. "The ludicrous and ridiculously admirable Bunter is not worthfully worried about!"

"Course he isn't!" agreed Bob Cherry.

Wharton shook his head. "You can't drop it like that, Bob," he said. "Bunter has been constantly going out on mysterious journeys, and returning with pots of cash for a week now. It can't be above board. No one but a dangerous lunatic would want Bunter's company for more than one day."

Frank Nugent grinned. "Then what do you think he's doing—a bit of the Raffles' touch?"

Wharton shrugged. "He's only being made someone's tool," he said. "He hasn't enough brain for anything else. But it's a dangerous thing for him."

"I think Harry's right," observed Johnny Bull. "It's up to us to see that he doesn't get into a serious scrape. Hallo!" he added, as there came a rap on the door. "Come in!"

The door opened, to admit the figure

of Fisher T. Fish. The face of the Yankee schoolboy had been badly damaged in a wild scrap, and his clothes were torn and muddy.

"Any tea left, you fellows?" he asked.

"Heaps in the caddy!" said Wharton. "There's tons in the London Docks. Why do you ask?"

Fish scowled.

"I guess you mugwumps needn't be funny!" he growled. "I ain't feelin' like jokes at present!"

"But you look like one!" said Johnny Bull. "What have you been up to?"

Fish paused, and drew a deep breath.

"I've been trackin' Bunter, I guess," he said. "I guess it's worth a tea."

"Find out anything?" queried Wharton interestedly.

"Lots," remarked Fish drily.

"Sit down, then, and let's have the yarn," said Bob. "There's still some tea in the pot, and there's plenty of grub in the cupboard."

Fish nodded, and helped himself to tea. The chums waited till he had finished. It was dark now, and Wharton switched on the light.

"I guess I'm telling you chaps this because I know you're interested in Bunter," observed Fish. "I've had a rough time—some!—an' it's all through follerin' him home with his new pal."

"Who's his new pal?" asked Wharton interestedly.

Fish described Engensen with some colour.

"I guess he has Bunter up there at his house feedin' every night. I found that out, and I sorter decided to follow 'em to-night. This blighter Engensen caught me outside the kitchen window watchin' him mixin' up some red powder in a plate of food, and the howlin' jackass nearly killed me before I could do a bunk."

Wharton whistled thoughtfully.

"Would Bunter eat that food, do you think?" he asked.

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Fish. "He hadn't been there long then. It must have been his grub."

"I say," said Bob Cherry, "this is serious."

"It looks very Fishy," murmured Nugent.

Fisher Tarleton Fish scowled.

"The fishyfulness of the whole business," observed Hurreo Singh, "is—"

"Terrific!"

There was another pause.

"I suppose it's no good saying anything to Bunter," Wharton observed at length. "He'd never believe it. But I reckon this chap Engensen must be mad, all the same. I vote we take a trip to this place to-morrow and explore."

"Good idea!" said Johnny Bull.

"It looks as though he's experimenting with Bunter," pursued Wharton. "He hasn't done him any harm yet, apparently, but things don't look any too bright."

"Think we'd better tell Quelchy?" asked Frank Nugent.

Wharton shook his head.

"No; we've really got nothing to go on yet," he said. "This Yank may be romancing, for all we know."

"You silly mugwump!" howled Fish. "Do I look as though I was romancin'?"

Johnny Bull laughed.

"But you're such a bright lad," he said. "Never know what you will do to raise the wind."

"I guess you can go to Jericho, then!" hooted Fish. "It don't matter to me. Only I'd like to see that howlin' jackass jumped on."

Wharton did not speak for a moment.

"You know where this place is, I suppose?" he asked Fish.

"Of course I do," he said. "I guess I went on my bike. It ain't a very long run—about five miles."

"Then we'll toddle over there on our bikes to-morrow," said Wharton. "And we'll call on the worthy gentleman."

There was a sudden grunt outside the door, and the next moment the subject of their conversation—Bunter himself—rolled into the room.

"I say, you fellows—" he began, when Wharton interrupted him.

"Who's your new pal, Bunter?" he asked.

"What do you know about him?" demanded Bunter suspiciously.

"I mean," said Wharton, "the one you go and grub with, and the one who lends you your cash."

Bunter directed a fierce look at Fish.

"Mr. Ingersoll, you mean," he said.

"Oh, he's a friend of my pater's."

"Phew!" muttered Fish. "I guess—"

"I don't care what you guess, Fishy," said the Owl of the Remove. "I can choose what friends I like. You've been telling these chaps a lot of lies."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Madman's Confidence!

"HALLO, my little boy. Here we are again!"

Bunter looked up as he suddenly confronted Engensen.

"Yes," said Bunter. "How do you do?"

He didn't speak with much enthusiasm. He didn't care, as a matter of fact, how Engensen did. But he asked the question because he was hard up, and it would cause his friend to ask how he himself was. Upon which Bunter would say that his postal-order had not come.

Such was the simple system that the Owl of the Remove had developed.

But to-day his friend did not ask how he was. Bunter was rather nonplussed.

"M-my postal-order hasn't come yet," he said at length. "I find things are getting rather tight."

Engensen smiled genially.



Bunter took the plate, and, to the surprise of the fellows standing, he did not offer to pay. (See Chapter 13.)

"Just a minute, Bunt," said Wharton seriously. "Do you know that your friend's trying an experiment on you?"

"No, I don't," said Bunter calmly. "because he's not. He says I remind him of his own dead, beautiful son. I don't wonder."

"Don't you believe it—" began Wharton.

"I know you're jealous," said the Owl spitefully. "You can go and eat coke!"

The next instant the door had slammed behind him.

"Cheer up!" he said. "It'll come before long."

"B-but could you lend me another quid till it comes?" asked Bunter. "I'm awfully hard up, sir. I'm having a dog's time of it."

"As a matter of fact, I'm hard up, too," Engensen said. "I'm afraid that it can't be done to-day."

"But I'll pay it all back out of my postal-order," said Bunter indignantly.

"Oh, that's all right," said the other.

lightly. "It's been rather a long time coming now. The chances are that you'll find it waiting for you when you get back."

Bunter relapsed into moody silence. It was on the tip of his tongue to say that he knew it wouldn't be there; but he checked himself in time.

They had reached the trap by now, and Bunter climbed moodily in. Even to his obtuse brain it seemed rather evident that his ready-money supply, unlike the widow's cruse of old, was beginning to dry up. He had still the feed, however, to look forward to.

The drive to the house passed in silence. Engensen might have told Bunter, for purposes of diplomacy, that he reminded him of his own dead, beautiful son, but he always used to think, at the same time, that if he ever had had a "beautiful son" like Bunter he would have been best dead.

He was friendly with Bunter for a purpose, and to-day he had decided that it was time that he revealed something of that purpose to his tool.

The greedy eyes of the Owl of the Remove danced with pleasure when he witnessed the feed which had been prepared for to-day's banquet, and, without wasting much time on formalities, he sat down to begin. Engensen took a place opposite him.

"It's a nice dinner, isn't it?" he queried.

"Yes," munched Bunter. "Very decent, sir."

"But I've got a fine treat for you in a minute. Bunter, I've got a question to ask you. Have you always been fat like that?"

"Yes," returned the Owl of the Remove proudly. "It's a family gift."

"But wouldn't you like to become slim and graceful?"

"No!"

"Wouldn't you like to become like other boys?"

"No!"

Bunter, busy on a tender piece of chicken, did not see the object of the apparently aimless questioning.

Engensen glared across the table.

"You're not listening to what I'm saying," he said abruptly. "I'm going to make you a sporting offer. I'll make you thin, if you like."

Bunter suddenly paused in his feeding.

"You'll make me thin?" he said, aghast.

Engensen nodded.

"Think how you'll be able to get about like other boys," he said alluringly. "See how handsome you'll become! See how fine it will be!"

"I ain't going to get thin!" said Bunter defiantly.

Engensen glared again.

"You don't know what you're talking about," he said. "A fat, ungainly lout like you is not fit to be about."

"Eh?" said Bunter horrified. He could hardly believe his own ears.

Engensen got more excited at his opposition.

"I don't care what you want," he said. "It's for your own good that you ought to get thin. And whether you like it or not, I'm going to make you thin!"

Bunter's eyes goggled.

"Y-y-y-you're g-g-g-going—" he remarked unintelligibly.

"Yes," remarked Engensen. "It's best to understand each other. I'd better explain things fully. I'm a chemist, and I have made obesity a life study. Some people have said I'm mad, but I'm not. It's only that I specialise in one thing. Now, I've resolved to cure you of your fat. I sha'n't hurt you."

Bunter's remarks were still more un-

intelligible. He was more frightened than he had ever been before in his life. Inwardly he found himself agreeing very strongly with the people who said that Engensen was mad. But that did not help matters.

"I—I don't w-w-want to be th-thin," he stammered.

"Very well, then, I shall start treatment on you to-night," the madman returned. "You won't be allowed to go home any more till I have cured your fat. And as I have decided to keep you here, there will be no further need for these inducements."

The madman caught the edge of the tablecloth as he spoke, and, with one powerful movement, dashed its appetising spread on the floor. Bunter jumped from his chair, and stood, panting and terrified, against the wall.

"A little bread-and-butter, with good wholesome water containing xylpœdine," remarked Engensen slowly, "is what you'll have. Sit down there, while I fetch your new diet."

Bunter sat down. The power of movement seemed to go out of him under the madman's searching glare. But the moment the man's back was turned Bunter's fear reasserted itself. He rose stealthily and tiptoed towards the door.

The coast was clear. Bunter slipped stealthily along. There was nothing very heroic in Bunter's move. It was the only plan which suggested itself to his mind.

He reached the back door in safety. Engensen had gone into the front part of the house. Bunter's hand caught the knob of the door and turned it. It opened at the touch, but just as he was slipping through it he saw Engensen appear down the other end of the passage, returning with the supply of food.

Each became aware of the other at the same moment, and Engensen, with a furious roar, dropped everything that he was carrying except the knife, and dashed in pursuit.

Bunter tore through the little garden. There was a fence all round, and the Owl made for the single small gate in it.

"Help, help!" he yelled in abject terror.

He could hear the quick breathing of his pursuer and the strangled oaths which tumbled over each other out of his lips. He was very near the gate, and he reached it by a desperate sprint.

Then Bunter had some reason to agree that, after all, a little fat reducing might have done him good. The gate was only a small one, and though it allowed Bunter to get half-way through, he could go no farther.

He turned desperate, goggling eyes back along the path. He saw no hope of escape. The madman was very near him, his eyes bloodshot, and his face distorted with passion.

Bunter felt himself go cold all over. For a brief, terrible second he gazed at the glinting knife. And Wharton's timely advice suddenly came back to him.

"I—I wish he was here now!" Bunter muttered.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

To the Rescue!

"RESCUE, you chaps!"

The voice which Bunter had hoped to hear was suddenly raised, and the junior saw six fellows dart from where they had been hiding in an angle of the house and dash at the madman. The sight of help so near infused a little fresh spirit into Bunter. He left the gate, and, running in a circle, managed to dodge the madman. The next moment Harry Wharton & Co. had closed with Engensen.

They had arrived in the very nick of

time. For they had only had time to hide their cycles and creep round to the side of the house when Bunter's shout for help had come to them, and they saw him rush across the garden with the madman behind him.

Engensen fought furiously, but once the knife had been wrenched from him he was powerless in the grasp of the Removites.

It was obvious to anyone, however, that he was mentally unsound. As Bob Cherry knelt on his chest while he lay on the grass, the man swore and cursed furiously. Wharton shook his head slowly as he looked at him.

"We shall have to give the fellow in charge," he said. "He's gone clean off his chump! Fancy Bunter being in the hands of a fellow like that for a week! I said the chap must be potty to pal up with Bunter!"

Bob Cherry nodded.

"Let's yank him up," he said.

He took his knee off the man's chest, and together they hauled the fellow to his feet. He seemed suddenly to have grown quite normal again. The flush had left his face, and his eyes, as he gazed at Wharton, were cold and hard.

"I don't know what fool's game you are playing," he said acidly. "If you think you're schoolboy brigands, or something like that, you'd better leave me alone before you find yourselves in trouble!"

Wharton's breath was taken away for the moment.

"Do you deny that you were chasing that fellow just now with a knife?" he asked.

Engensen did not reply for a moment.

"Yes," he said at length.

"Oh, my aunt!" muttered Bob.

"What a whopper!"

"We were merely playing," Engensen continued coolly. "Bunter is a friend of mine."

Wharton exchanged glances with his chums.

"We'd better get Bunter's opinion about that," he said. "Where is Bunter?"

The danger over, however, the Owl of the Remove was nowhere to be seen. He had not made it his first task to come and thank the Removites for saving his life.

As soon as he had seen that Engensen was in safe hands he had slipped into the house again to gather up any still edible remnants of the feast, which had been scattered on the floor when the madman jerked the cloth from the table.

As he entered the room, however, the Owl spotted a small, brown, leather-bound book lying on the floor. His first idea was that it might contain banknotes, and with eager fingers Bunter picked it up.

To his disappointment, it proved to be nothing more than a diary; but as the Owl glanced through it he caught sight of a few words which interested him, and the next moment he had forgotten all about the food which lay scattered on the floor as he stood reading, with bulging eyes, what was written in the book.

It told in a few words the story of Engensen's dealings with Bunter, and described him as an "unintelligent, over-fed little pig," from their first meeting up to that night.

From the moment Engensen clapped eyes upon him in Friar Dale, it appeared that he had selected him as a subject on which to try a new anti-fat medicine he had invented.

The succeeding pages told of the doses which had been administered to the unwitting Bunter, and their probable effects. By the time that Bunter got to the last

page he was in a state bordering upon collapse.

That he should have fallen into such a trap was very annoying, but the knowledge of the amount of stuff which Bunter had apparently taken with his food filled that youth with dread.

Bunter wondered dimly why something extraordinarily horrible had not already happened to him.

On the last page, however, he read the explanation of this. It was contained on a leaf by itself, and consisted of only a few words. As Bunter read them, a smile slowly overspread his face.

"Bunter, where are you?"

The Owl pricked up his ears as he heard his name shouted from somewhere outside. Footsteps were coming his way. He paused for a moment, undecided what to do. Then he opened the diary, and, tearing out the last written page, screwed it up and stuffed it quickly in his pocket.

The next moment Harry Wharton appeared in the doorway.

"I've been looking for you," he said severely. "Your friend tells me that you were only having a game to-night. Is that right?"

"Game!" groaned Bunter, with a roll of his eyes. "Oh, crikey! Game! He tried to murder me! I knocked him down three times before he got hold of that knife, and tried to cut my throat from ear to ear! And I believe he's poisoned me as well! Grooh! I do feel bad!"

Wharton looked at the Owl in alarm.

"Poisoned you?" he asked. "What do you mean?"

Bunter extended the diary.

"Read that!" he groaned.

Wharton scanned the writing.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Poisoned!

BILLY BUNTER emitted a hollow groan.

Wharton, startled by what he was reading, failed to notice it.

Bunter emitted another and louder groan. This had the desired effect, for Wharton looked up with an anxious expression.

"Not feeling bad, are you?" he asked kindly.

"Oh, crikey!" Bunter replied. "I feel horribly ill! I think I'm going to die!" He dropped limply into a chair. "I feel I'm going all to pieces! I'm wasting away! Oh, dear!"

"Just a minute, Bunt!" said Wharton, going out into the passage again.

As the quick footsteps sounded along the passage, Bunter seemed to recover himself in a remarkable manner. He got to his feet, and crossed the room. From the debris on the floor he selected a large and tasty cake, and, taking a huge bite out of it, returned with it to his seat. He had nearly consumed the cake before Wharton, accompanied by Bob Cherry, returned.

"Hallo!" said Wharton cheerily. "You're not so bad that you can't eat?"

"No," said Bunter, in a hollow voice. "It seems to relieve me. I think I'm wasting away, and if I don't eat I shall die!"

Bob Cherry eyed the Owl steadily. After reading the diary, he could not doubt that Bunter had been in serious danger at the hands of the madman, but, at the same time, his illness seemed to have developed very rapidly.

"A walk will do you good," he suggested. "You're probably faint from fright!"

"I can't walk," said Bunter miserably.

"How do you know?" said Bob. "You haven't tried yet."

"I—I feel my legs giving way," Bunter said pathetically.

"Gammon!" said Bob tersely. "Come on and see what you can do!"

"I think you're very hard-hearted, Bob!" growled Bunter. "I hope you get poisoned as well!"

"Thanks!" laughed the Removite. "Anything else you'd like?"

"You needn't make fun!" growled Bunter. "Grooh! I do feel awful!"

"Well, try to walk," said Harry Wharton.

Bunter got up. It was no use piling on the agony too thickly all at once. He advanced with faltering steps along the passage to the open air, where the others, with Engensen as a prisoner, waited.

Bunter scowled at his former ally, but he said nothing. He did not wish to raise the topic of his being poisoned in front of the "scientist," lest something might come out which he was most anxious should not be revealed.

"How do you feel now?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, better!" said Bunter quickly.

"Good!" said Bob. "Then we can start away. Mr. Engensen, you'll have to come as far as the nearest police-station and be charged. Bunter says it wasn't a game!"

Engensen eyed the fat junior balefully. "So you want to deny that we were having a bit of sport?"

"Sport!" screamed Bunter. "Why, you duffer, you nearly killed me with that knife!"

"And haven't I been a good friend to you?" said Engensen.

"No, you ain't!" said Bunter. "You nearly poisoned me!"

"And serve you right, too!" said the other bitterly.

"We don't want to waste time," said Wharton quickly. "Come on!"

"You young fools shall pay for this!" cried Engensen, with a splendid show of indignation. "You shall pay for seizing a man in his own house in this manner!"

"Yah!" said Bunter defiantly, safe behind the crowd. "You ain't fit to be at large! We're going to run you in!"

They had reached the road by now, and, getting their cycles out from the hedges, the juniors set off with their prisoner. Bunter was prevailed upon to wheel a couple of cycles, so that the others might have their hands free for Engensen.

There was no station nearer than Friar-dale where the madman could be given in charge, and long before they got as far their prisoner had another of his fits of fury. His captors had their work cut out to master him.

Most obligingly, too, he had another outbreak just as they reached the police-station, so no long explanations were needed, as his condition was very evident. But scarcely was he off their hands before the party found themselves with fresh troubles.

Bunter felt bad again.

"I—I don't think I can go much farther, Wharton," he said. "I've got that sinking feeling again. I'd better have something to eat. If you fellows will lend me five bob, I'll get my people to return it after I'm dead. I'm sure you'd like to think that you did everything possible for me!"

Wharton grinned in spite of himself.

"Here you are, then!" he said.

"Thanks!" said the Owl. "I sha'n't be long, you chaps!"

"Think you can get back alone?"

"Nunno!" said Bunter.

"All right, then!" said Bob. "We'll wait for you!"

Bunter proceeded to stuff himself at Uncle Clegg's, and, considering how bad he had felt, he took his "cure" manfully. The pastries vanished at lightning

rate, and within ten minutes Bunter was out again.

"Not much the matter with you," said Johnny Bull tersely.

"Oh, really, Bull!" protested Bunter. "I feel awful!"

"It doesn't affect your eating powers much," observed Nugent.

"The greedfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous Bunter is still terrific," added Hurree Singh.

"You fellows don't know how I feel!" said Bunter, with a groan. "I—I don't think I can walk back, really!"

"You haven't tried yet," said Squiff. "You always get that feeling after eating too much!"

"I tell you I'm poisoned!" said the Owl. "I know you beasts would like to see me drop down dead in the streets! I don't care! I'll overstrain myself or something, and then my blood will be on your heads!"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!" snapped Bob Cherry.

"Come on!" said Wharton. "Let's get back! I'm sure a walk will do Bunter good!"

Bunter emitted a hollow groan, and started to walk slowly and painfully.

It was a miserable procession that passed through Friar-dale, and everyone came out to have a look at the Owl of the Remove, quite convinced that something terrible had happened to Bunter.

Long before Greyfriars was reached, however, Bunter began to get rapidly worse. He stopped in the road, and declared that he could not walk at all.

"It's no good, you fellows!" the Owl said. "I'm sure I'm going to die! Carry me back to the old school to do it!"

The Famous Five looked at Bunter. He did not seem to have any of the usual symptoms of a dying person. In fact, he looked quite normal, and, as they knew, his appetite was still of the best.

"Stick it, Bunter!" said Wharton encouragingly. "It's not far now."

"It's no good!" said Bunter faintly. "I'm done up!"

The Removites exchanged looks. They scarcely knew what to do. They had only Bunter's word that he was bad; and, after all, Bunter was not exactly a George Washington.

He might easily be shamming; yet, in the face of the diary, there was also a reasonable chance that he really was poisoned. And appearances are proverbially deceptive.

"Climb on my bike," said Bob Cherry. "We'll push you."

Bunter, with some difficulty, did so, and the Removites commenced to wheel him along the road.

Fifty yards had not been covered, however, before Bunter's voice rose once more.

"I'm feeling awfully hungry again, you chaps," he said, "and the old feeling is coming back."

Bob Cherry groaned.

"Well, we can't give you anything, Bunt," he said, rather shortly. "We've got no jam-tarts hidden in our pockets!"

"Unsympathetic beast!" growled Bunter.

The miserable procession moved on to the gates of the school. If anything, Bunter grew worse. A series of hollow groans came continuously from the fat youth on the bicycle.

"Sha'n't be long now," Wharton said testily.

For the Owl was rather getting on his nerves. He knew that the biggest part of the agony was imagination, and the ingratitude of the Owl was getting a little too much for him.

The party passed through the gates, and Bunter gave a specially deep groan.

Mr. Quelch, who was walking towards the gate, heard it, and looked curiously at the procession.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed. "Is—is anything wrong with Bunter?"

"I'm poisoned!" groaned the Owl. "Grooooh!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Dr. Locke Is Alarmed!

"**P**OISONED!" gasped the Form-master.

"I'm afraid something serious has happened to Bunter, sir," said Wharton. "He has been keeping company with a madman!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—" protested the Owl.

"That is enough, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, with a frown. "I will hear you in a minute. Come this way, all of you!"

The Form-master led the way to his study, and then, in a few words, Wharton told the whole story as he knew it. Mr. Quelch took the diary from him when he had finished, and read it quickly. There were grim lines on his face as he looked up.

"I see!" he said shortly. "And when were you taken ill, Bunter?"

"I—I've not felt well for some days, sir," the Owl said, "but it came on worse this afternoon."

Mr. Quelch nodded slowly, and Bunter, to add to the impression, groaned heavily.

"Do you feel very bad?" the Form-master asked.

"Horrible!" said Bunter. "I believe I'm going to die!"

Mr. Quelch looked distressed.

"Bunter, you had better accompany me to Dr. Locke immediately!" Mr. Quelch said. "This—this is very serious!"

"Yes, sir," said Bunter. "Grooooh!"

"And you had better come as well, Wharton," added the Form-master.

"Grooh!" said Bunter again.

"Bunter, I wish you would stop making that noise!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "It is quite unnecessary!"

"I feel awful, sir!" protested the Owl.

Mr. Quelch did not reply. He led the way straight to Dr. Locke's study, where he tapped sharply on the door.

"Come in!" said a voice.

Mr. Quelch entered, and shut the door behind him. A faint groan from the sufferer followed him.

Dr. Locke was not alone. He had a visitor—a smart-looking young man, in the uniform of a naval officer—and Mr. Quelch noted at once the thin ring of red between the two gold ones on his arm, which denoted that he was a surgeon.

"I hope I'm not intruding, sir?" said the Remove Form-master. "But rather a serious thing has happened."

"That is all right, Quelch," said the Head. "This is a nephew of mine straight from H.M.S. Something, 'somewhere in the North Sea.' Surgeon Neville Locke—Mr. Quelch!"

"How do you do?" said the Form-master cordially, as he gripped hands.

"First rate!" replied the naval surgeon. "I'm— But what on earth is that row outside the door?"

The trio paused to listen. Bunter was obliging with a solo of groans in his best style. They seemed to tumble over each other in their eagerness to penetrate the study.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the Head. "It sounds like some poor animal in pain!"

"It's Bunter, sir," explained the Form-master. "He seems to have made

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friends with a mad scientist in the village, and he has been the subject of some experiments for fat-reducing!"

Dr. Locke gave vent to a gasp of amazement.

"The madman was captured by Wharton and some other juniors," the Form-master continued. "He is now in custody, and I have a record here of what he has done," he added, extending the diary which Bunter had picked up. "It is a very amazing document. Perhaps you would like to look through it before you see Bunter?"

"Certainly!" said the Head, in some alarm. "Yes, yes, of course!"

"Grooh!" came from outside the door. "Oooo-er! Grooooh!"

"The boy seems to be in some pain," observed Surgeon Locke.

"Yes; I fear he is," said the Form-master. "But I'm afraid that he is rather prone to exaggerate his troubles."

Dr. Locke read the amazing story of Engensen's experiment, with pursed lips.

"Neville, this is something in your line," he said.

And at his invitation the naval officer joined him.

"Yes," the latter remarked at length; "it is a curious affair. It will be rather serious for the school, too, won't it?"

Dr. Locke nodded gravely.

"Yes," he said; "if anything happens to this boy it will be distinctly a bad thing for Greyfriars. Quelch, you had better call Bunter in at once. I will see Wharton afterwards to thank him for his timely action in capturing this—this dangerous lunatic!"

Mr. Quelch stepped across and opened the door.

"Come in, Bunter!" he said.

"Mr. Quelch has told me of your experience, Bunter," said the Head. "How do you feel now?"

"Horrible, sir!" said Bunter. "I think I'm going to die!"

Surgeon Locke looked the fat boy over. His appearance was not that of a person who had been poisoned. His eyes were normal, and his colour, for one so fat, was good.

"Excuse me, uncle," he said suddenly; "but I should like to ask this boy a few questions."

"Yes, yes!" agreed the Head. "Certainly! By all means!"

Before the days of the war Neville Locke had been a promising young Harley Street doctor, specialising in troubles of the stomach.

"When did you first feel ill, Bunter?" he asked.

"I—I haven't felt well for some days, sir," said Bunter. "I felt very bad this afternoon."

"After you read the diary—eh?"

Bunter blinked indignantly.

"I don't think—" he began.

"I want a straight answer, please!" said Surgeon Locke quickly.

"Y-yes, sir!" said Bunter, rather taken back.

"And have you had any food since then?" asked the naval man.

"Oh, yes, sir!" said the Owl of the Remove. "In fact, sir, food seems to give me relief. I always feel better after it."

The corners of the surgeon's mouth twitched.

It would be unfair to say that he was used to dealing with malingerers; but, like every fold, the Navy has its black sheep, and Surgeon Locke was reputed for having a very short way with them. If he had had Bunter on board a ship, he would have cured the fat youth within five minutes. But he realised that a different procedure had to be followed here.

He asked a few more questions of the

Owl, all of them worded so carefully that the Owl flatly contradicted himself three times, got absolutely lost for words once, and simply gaped and said "Crikey!" another time. The slow brain of the fat junior was no match for that of the smart young naval man.

"That will do!" he said at length. "Bunter, you had better go outside again!"

Bunter, with several more deep groans, went out. A faint howl came from him a moment later as Harry Wharton seized him by the ear and hauled him away from the keyhole.

"I hardly know what to advise, uncle," said the surgeon. "My treatment of such a case would be different from yours. You see, I am handicapped by not knowing what this wretched man has been giving Bunter in the way of medicine."

Dr. Locke nodded.

"So far as I can see, there are no signs of poisoning whatever," he continued. "Bunter might be suffering from a very obscure ailment which did not show itself, but the chances, in my opinion, are a hundred to one that he is shamming."

"If he is not, however—and we had better act on that assumption—the only treatment will be to supply him with plenty of food. His tissues may have been wasted by the stuff he has taken, and, consequently, they need building up again."

The Head nodded again.

"Personally, if I had Bunter in my charge," added Neville, "I should put him on a nice, low diet, with plenty of nasty medicine, and he would be cured within a very short space of time if the case was not genuine."

"I could never do that," Dr. Locke said. "It would be very—very inhuman. Bunter appears to be in great pain, and, as his headmaster, I cannot ignore his obvious distress."

"Quite so!" agreed Neville. "I foresaw that difficulty."

"But there is also another reason why I could not be harsh with Bunter, even if I wanted to," continued the Head. "Bunter would write to his parents, and endeavour to cause a scandal. Quite regardless of the fact that Greyfriars was in no way responsible for the foolish boy's trouble, people would cast a slur on the good old name."

"Yes; that is what you would naturally want to avoid," said Neville.

"Well, my only course," said Dr. Locke, "is to allow Bunter to be fed up until he feels better. If he gets worse, he will, of course, require further medical treatment. But if I allow him the run of the school tuckshop for a few weeks, it should root out any effects of this madman's drugs, and Bunter will not seek to do anything to injure the school's good name."

"That is a good idea, sir," said Mr. Quelch.

"Well, Quelch," replied the Head, "I will ask you to convey my decision to Bunter."

Dr. Locke had put it delicately, but Mr. Quelch understood. He shook hands with Neville Locke again, and then left the study, to inform the fat junior of the good fortune which was the sequel to his adventure with the madman.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Fat of the Land!

"**A** PLATE of tarts, Mrs. Mimble!" said Bunter.

"Yes, Master Bunter," said the good lady of the tuckshop.

Bunter took the plate, and, to the surprise of the fellows standing there, he

did not offer to pay for them. What was more curious, Mrs. Mimble just noted the amount on a scrap of paper, and then went on serving the next customer.

Bunter despatched the tarts in record time, and came again. Once more Mrs. Mimble handed over a plate without question.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" muttered Bob Cherry, who happened to be standing by. "Wonders will never cease!"

Several fellows were watching Bunter, but that fat youth continued stolidly munching.

When Bunter came for a third plate, however, Bob Cherry's eyes opened, and he looked across the counter at Mrs. Mimble.

"Bunter on the free list?" he asked jestingly.

"Yes," said Mrs. Mimble quietly. "Who on earth is paying?" gasped Bob.

"A friend," said Mrs. Mimble. "What's his name?" queried Skinner. "I don't think that concerns you, Master Skinner!" snapped Mrs. Mimble. Skinner retired, baffled.

Bunter continued to eat stolidly, and two or three of the fellows who were fasting for lack of money approached him.

"Hallo, Bunter!" said Snoop affectionately. "Let's have an invitation to the feed."

"Can't," said Bunter. "Can't!" gasped Stott, who was waiting to be invited as well. "What do you mean? What's the giddy dodge? You might just as well put us up to it."

Bunter did not reply. "Be a sport!" urged Snoop. Munch! Crunch!

"I guess I've often done you a good turn, Bunt," said Fisher T. Fish, joining the group.

Bunter attacked a large cream horn. He was not interested in the crowd around him.

"Just cut along and get a plate of tarts for us, old chap!" urged Stott winningly. "And ask for a couple of cream buns for me, old sport," added Treluce.

"And a jam-roll for me," added Trevor.

Bunter started on a jam-tart. "I guess you know how to be a real brick to your pals," said Fisher T. Fish, flashing a killing look at the other hangers-on.

"And you won't forget your old friends," said Stott and Snoop.

Bunter looked up. "Go away!" he said, in a tired voice. "Don't be a beast!" protested Treluce. "Why—why, man, you can get as much as you want! It wouldn't hurt you to get a plate for us."

"Go away!" repeated Bunter loftily.

"I guess—" began Fish. "There's no need for you to guess anything," Bunter said, not troubling to stop munching. "You ain't going to get any!"

"But—but you can get as much as you want!" said Treluce again. That seemed the great argument to him. He was determined to drive it into Bunter. "You can get as much as you want!"

"And I'm going to get as much as I want!" said Bunter meaningly.

There was a pause. Bunter made no move.

Fish brought things to a head. "Then I guess you're a rotten jay!" he said.

Bunter grunted. "I reckon that you're a rotten, fat, greedy hog!" Fish snorted. "I guess I hope you choke right now!"

Bunter looked up pityingly. "Clear away, you fellows!" he said. "I'm an invalid. I want more air when I'm having my food!"

"Invalid!"
"Oh, my sainted aunt!"
"Look at the sick man!"
"Bunter ain't well! Look at the poor fellow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bunter's statement awoke the interest of the whole tuckshop. The idea of Bunter being an invalid, when it was evident that he was in his very best form, to judge by the way he scoffed the pastries, was too funny for words.

"Come and have a look at the cripple!" shouted Stott vindictively.

"Every picture tells a story!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bunter went on eating.

"What's the matter, Bunt?" asked a voice. "Something awful!" said Bunter deeply.

"Corns?" suggested another voice. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter scowled, but said nothing. "You seem to be losing your appetite, porpoise," said Skinner, grinning. "Shall I fetch a doctor?"

Still no reply. A jam-tart started rapidly disappearing, cornerwise, down Bunter's throat.

As a matter of fact, one of Mr. Quelch's instructions to Bunter had been that he should not say a word of what had happened to him to any of the other juniors or the tuckshop allowance would cease.

Bob Cherry, however, who had also been sworn to silence, saw through the secret of Bunter's sudden plenty. He slipped off quietly to tell his chums.

He met Wharton in the Close. "I say, Harry," he said, "have you seen the latest?"

"No," said the captain of the Remove. "What's in the wind now?"

"Bunter," said Bob. "He's in the tuckshop scoffing plate after plate of grub. All he has to do is to ask for it, and he gets it from Mrs. Mimble. I reckon the Head must be paying out of his own pocket."

Wharton looked thoughtful. "What do you think of Bunter's illness?" he asked suddenly.

"Spoof!" said Bob shortly. "I hardly know what to think," said Wharton.

"I don't reckon there's any doubt about it," said Bob. "It doesn't seem to affect him in any way—we've only got his word that he's ill. Anyone can groan like he does. Grooooooh! How's that?"

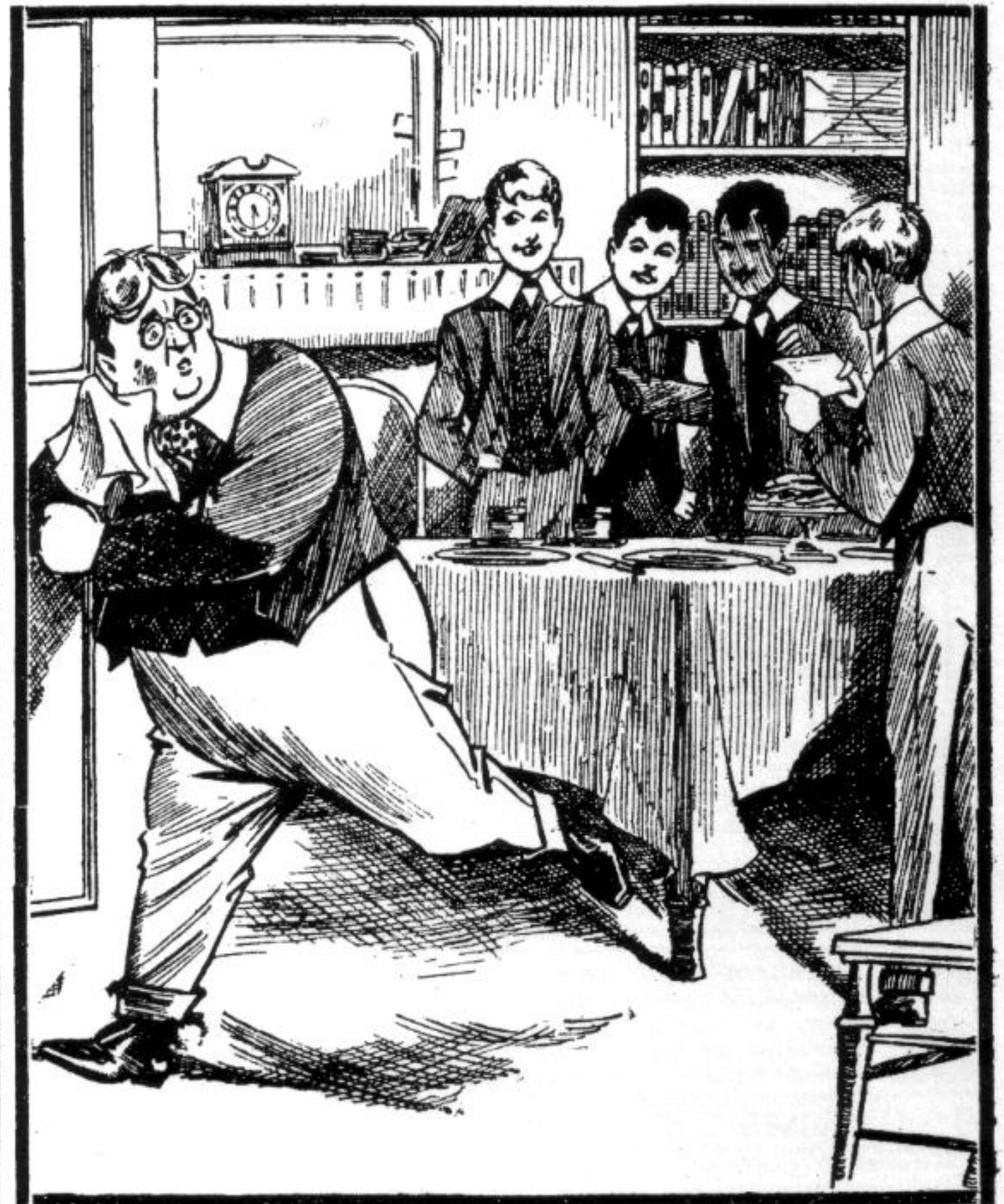
Harry Wharton laughed. "Yes," he said. "I don't believe there's any more the matter with him than there is with us. But we can't prove it, can we?"

"I wish we could," said Bob Cherry savagely. "There's no earthly reason why that fat spoofer should sit there and grub at the Head's expense!"

"None at all!" agreed Wharton. He stood with a moody brow for several seconds, then finally seemed to make up his mind.

"Come across to the tuckshop," he said. "We'll see how he's going now."

They arrived just as Bunter was commencing on a fresh plate of food. His pace was slackening, and the majority of



Bunter made a hurried exit from the study. (See Chapter 13.)
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his "friends," who had vainly sought admittance to the feast, had left him. Treluce was still endeavouring to drive home the point that Bunter could get as much as he wanted.

"Hallo, Bunter!" said Wharton, crossing over. "How are you feeling?"

Bunter looked up haggardly. "Rotten!" he said. "I think it's coming on worse. I sha'n't be well for some time."

"Not while this game lasts," said Bob Cherry.

"Really, Cherry!" Bunter protested. "I think you're an unfeeling beast!"

He chose a cream bun, and as he had wasted several seconds in addressing Bob, crammed the whole of the pastry in at once to make up for it.

"Don't you think it's playing a rather low-down game on the Head?" asked Wharton.

Bunter apparently did not hear him.

"It's a pretty caddish thing you're doing!" added Bob.

The Owl of the Remove looked up.

"I wish you fellows would move off," he said.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Secret Out!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

It was during the evening following Bunter's entry into the land of plenty that he looked into No. 1 Study.

"I say, you fellows," he said, as he came into the study. "I'm feeling—"

"Rather ashamed of yourself?" said Bob quickly.

"The ashamedfulness of the esteemed Bunter should be terrific!" added Hurree Singh.

"I wish you fellows wouldn't interrupt!" growled Bunter. "I was going to say that I'm feeling rather bad again, and I'm very hungry. So I've come in to have tea with you chaps."

"Have you?" said Johnny Bull sweetly.

"Yes," beamed Bunter. "I know it's rather an honour for you chaps to think that you're prolonging my life a little longer, but I've come in—"

"For the purpose of going out again," finished Johnny.

"Oh, really, Bull," said Bunter. "I—"

"Scat!" said Nugent.

"Really—"

"Clear off!" roared Bob Cherry.

"But I say—"

"If you don't buzz off," said Harry Wharton, picking up an old cricket-stump out of the corner, "I shall help you!"

"I—I said," repeated Bunter disbelievingly, "that I'd come in to have tea with you."

"Then scoot!" said Nugent. "We don't want you."

"The unwelcomeness of the ludicrous Bunter is terrific!"

Bunter stood in the doorway.

"I'm hungry," he said pathetically.

"We don't care!" said Bob.

"I think I'm going to die!" added Bunter, groaning.

"Well, don't do it here!" said Nugent mercilessly. "Go out into the passage!"

"I—I think you fellows are very heartless," wailed Bunter. "I—I haven't had any tea yet."

"Go down to Mrs. Mumble," said Wharton. "You can get plenty there."

"I—I can't!" groaned Bunter.

"Why?"

"She's sold out," said the Owl.

"You mean you've eaten it all," said Johnny Bull. "Well, then, you've had as much as is good for you. We haven't got any."

"I—"

"Buzz off!" said Wharton, fondling the stump.

"Rotten beasts!" shouted Bunter, as he retreated. "You wait till I'm well again!" he shouted through the key-hole. "I'll lick you all for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter rolled disconsolately down the passage. He entered No. 7. Peter and Alonzo Todd and Tom Dutton had finished their tea.

"Any tea left?" asked the Owl of the Remove.

"No," said Peter Todd. "Go down to Mrs. Mumble. You said you were going to, so we didn't keep any for you."

"Beasts!" growled Bunter.

"Can't help your troubles," said Peter cheerily. "It's your own fault."

Why don't you go down to the tuckshop, anyway?"

"She's sold out," said Bunter shortly. Peter didn't say anything.

"Well, what about some tea?" Bunter asked presently.

"Nothing doing here," said Peter firmly. "You're late, for one thing, and for another we've nothing left."

"Rotter!"

Bunter rolled out, searching for hospitality somewhere else. But there seemed to be nothing doing anywhere.

Stott and Snoop found a welcome opportunity for venting some of their spite upon the Owl for his refusal to respond to their entreaties of the previous morning.

Treluce repeated, once more, that Bunter could get as much as he wanted in the tuckshop, and added, after a brain-wave, that he would get a jolly sight more than he wanted in that study.

Bunter inwardly agreed that this was correct when a rather heavy boot helped him into the passage once more.

There was a goodly spread in No. 13 when Bunter looked in. The Owl's eyes glistened with pleasure when he saw it.

Only Fisher T. Fish and Squiff were there; Johnny Bull being in No. 1.

"I say, you fellows," Bunter said. "I've just popped in to tea."

"Really?" said Squiff.

"It's very good of you," Bunter said.

"Good?" said Squiff. "What do you mean?"

"To invite me to tea, of course," said Bunter.

"I never said anything about that," said Squiff coolly. "But while you are here—"

"Yes?" said Bunter eagerly.

"You might just pop out again!"

"Oh, really, Squiff," said Bunter. "I—"

"I guess you can vamoose the ranch right now," interposed Fish, taking a hand in the conversation. "Go down to Mrs. Mumble!"

"I ain't going to," said Bunter defiantly.

"Why?" asked Squiff.

"She's sold out," Bunter replied sulkily.

Fisher T. Fish grinned. "I guess you're sold, too," he said. "And I guess you're going out as well."

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"I say, Fishy," said Bunter, eyeing the feed. "be a sport, old chap! You may be hungry one day, and then you'll come to me."

"I guess I sha'n't get much more when I do come than you're going to get out of me," replied the Yankee junior. He had bitter memories of the previous morning.

"Squiff, old man," Bunter said, realising that there would not be much forthcoming from the American; "Squiff, old man, I'm feeling bad again. I believe that I'm going to be ill!"

Fish, not in the secret of Bunter's supposed ailment, grinned with anticipation.

"That's through eating too much," he said. "I calc'late it will serve you right to be real right-down bad. I guess I hope you're plumb ill!"

"Beast!" retorted Bunter.

"I'm afraid you'll have to be ill, Bunter," said Squiff. "But you can't be ill here! Scat!"

"I say, Squiff—"

"Clear out!"

"Vamoosé!"

Bunter edged towards the door as Squiff started to rise.

"My death will be at your door, Squiff," said Bunter, with much pathos.

"It won't," said the Australian junior, with a grin. "I shall move you on before you expire!"

"Oh, really—"

"Buzz off!"

Bunter slammed the door just as a large boot thudded against it. He rolled down the passage drearily.

The only place left was No. 1 Study. They usually had compassion on the Owl in the end. Bunter looked in at the door again.

"I'm nearly dead, you fellows," he said, with a groan.

"Thanks for letting us know," said Johnny Bull, with a grin. "I'll come out and watch the final stages."

"But you might save my life if you could give me some tea," the Owl explained.

"Here's something to go on with, then," said Bob Cherry suddenly.

He caught up a jam-tart which had been left, and hurled it at the Owl. The aim was good, and the jammy surface flattened on Bunter's face.

"Oo-er!" ejaculated the Owl.

He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket, and dabbed the jam off. As he did so, a screwed-up paper fell from his pocket. But the Owl had not time to notice that. He saw something else coming his way, and he made a discreet and hurried exit from the study.

"He's dropped something!" said Bob, catching sight of the paper.

Bob stepped across to pick it up, intending to return it to the fat youth; but, as he noticed the colour and make of the paper, he stopped short, and slowly straightened the sheet out.

"As I thought!" he muttered a moment later.

"What's up?" asked Harry interestedly.

"You chaps remember that there was a missing page in the madman's diary, don't you?" Bob asked quickly. "It looked as though it had been torn out by someone in a hurry."

"Yes," said Nugent. "I've often wondered what it was."

"Well, I've got it here," said Bob. "Listen!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Cherry's Certain Cure!

"SING it out!"

"Let's have it!" said the Removites eagerly.

"Well, listen here," said Bob.

"It's in the madman's own writing.

"I find through a chemist's error that I have been administering an absolutely harmless mixture to the fat boy (Bunter). I intend to tell him my plans to-day, and then give him a real strong dose of the Xylpoædine."

"My aunt!"

"So—so Bunter's never been poisoned at all!" murmured Wharton.

"Of course he hasn't!" said Bob. "He's been shamming from beginning to end. Anyone with half an eye could see that!"

Wharton nodded.

"But it's a good thing that we've got the proof at last," he said. "We'll soon write 'finis' to the free tarts at the Head's expense."

"And the groans," said Johnny Bull, laughing.

There was a short pause.

"I've got it!" said Bob Cherry suddenly. "We'll give Bunty something to groan about!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How are you going to do it?" asked Nugent.

Bob explained quickly, and there was another burst of laughter.

"Mind," Bob said. "It's got to be a great feed. Can we manage it to-night?"

"Afraid not," said Wharton. "Mrs. Mible's sold out. We'd better give Bunty another day of grace, but we'll go and order all Mrs. Mible's tarts in advance, so that there won't be much doing when Bunty rolls down there to-morrow."

Preparations for Cherry's great cure of Bunter's ailment were rapidly pushed forward. Squiff, who had been the sixth of the party engaged in the skirmish with the madman, was called into the study and let into the wheeze. He laughed heartily when the plan was explained to him.

Next day the Removites were busy carting eatables up to Study No. 1. They passed Bunter several times, and each time he saw them he gave a groan.

The groan was to impress them with the notion that he was feeling bad. He certainly had good reason, after his recent gorging, to feel hungry, for, to his amazement, Mrs. Mible was practically sold out as soon as the tuckshop opened.

"It's a plot!" Bunter shouted defiantly. "You ain't got no right to refuse me as much as I want! I shall go to the Head!"

"Then you can go to the Head, you impudent little boy!" Mrs. Mible retorted.

On second thoughts Bunter did not go to the Head, but he eyed the preparations for the feed in Study No. 1 greedily.

Just before afternoon school, however, Bunter saw Bob Cherry approaching him. There was a friendly smile on his face.

"Hallo, Bunter!" he said. "Feeling all right?"

"No, I ain't!" said the Owl peevishly. "I'm feeling rotten! I'm starving! That dreadful poison is eating my system away!"

"Could you do a good feed to-night?" asked Bob.

The Owl's face brightened.

"Rather!" he said.

"You can wire in as hard as you like," said Bob. "It's a feed we're getting up to celebrate the capture of your friend Engensen."

"I'll be there," said Bunter. "I expect it'll do me good."

"It will," said Bob cryptically. "It'll do you a lot of good, my son. In fact, it will cure you."

"I wouldn't go so far as to say that,"

replied the unsuspecting Owl. "But I'll come."

"Good!" grinned Bob.

There were a number of smiles exchanged between the famous Co. during the afternoon.

Bunter had swallowed the bait splendidly. He came up to Study No. 1 smiling and genial.

Early though he was, he found the six chums waiting for him. There was only one vacant chair. The short-sighted Owl advanced and sat down in it, and then he saw, for the first time, that on his plate was piled a large number of pieces of bread, while a huge bowl of water stood beside it.

"W-what's this?" he demanded incredulously.

"Your share of the feed," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Mum-mum-my share?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes," said Wharton.

"I s-say, you fellows," said Bunter, with a feeble grin. "I d-don't mind a joke, you know, but I'm hungry. Let's get on with the grub!"

"Get on with it, then," urged Johnny Bull. "There's plenty there to build up your fading tissues. Good, wholesome bread and plenty of wholesome water. The finest cure for poisoning and anti-fat treatment."

"But—but—"

"Get on with it," Nugent said. "We're waiting for you to finish so that we can start."

"The speediness of the ludicrous Bunter should be terrific!" observed Hurree Singh, his dusky face breaking into a broad grin.

"I—I think I'm feeling better, you chaps," gasped Bunter, seeing the determination on the faces of the Removites.

"Do you good all the same," said Wharton. "Eat it!"

"I ain't going to!" said Bunter.

Wharton put his hand in his pocket, and brought out the torn page of the diary.

"This is what you left in here yesterday," he explained. "You know what it is!"

Bunter looked up, and his little eyes goggled as he saw what the Remove captain held in his hand.

"Wh-where did you get that?" the Owl stuttered.

"You dropped it yourself," said Wharton. "Now, we're going to offer you one of two alternatives. Either you eat that bread and water and then go and tell Quelchy that you're cured, or else we take that page to the Head! You can please yourself."

Bunter was quite nonplussed.

"I—I only did it for a lark," he said at length. "You chaps can share my tarts with me if you promise not to say anything about that."

"Nothing doing, Bunty, my boy!" grinned Bob Cherry. "You've got to choose between the royal feast we've invited you to, and an interview with the Head!"

"I—I'll eat the bread and water," said Bunter at length. The very thought of the interview which must result were the document to get into the Head's hands was too terrible to be entertained.

"That's the way, my lad," said Bob encouragingly, as Bunter fell on to the bread and water.

Bunter did not eat his feast with any relish. He paused between every two mouthfuls to say what he thought of the Removites. Once he got so excited that he swallowed a large piece of crust too quickly, and nearly choked. After that, Harry Wharton brought the cricket-stump into play to prevent such accidents happening again.

For a solid half-hour Bunter dealt with the frugal spread. When he got tired of the taste of bread he tried the water, and when he tired of water he tried the bread again. It was a dazzling choice that he had, and he made the most of it.

But the Removites permitted of no dallying. They were anxious to get on with their own feast, and they intended Bunter's cure to be lasting.

When Bunter got to the last slice of the stale bread he felt considerably fuller than he had done for many a day. The sight, even, of the pastries made him feel ill.

"Finished, Buntty?" asked Wharton kindly.

"Grooh!"

"Had enough?"

"Ugh! You beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then you can sit in the corner over there, Buntty," said Bob Cherry. "I'm awfully glad to think I've been able to cure your illness. Now we're going to have our own feast to celebrate your recovery."

"Beasts!" said Bunter again.

He seemed to find it rather uncomfortable to move, but the gentle hands of

the Removites placed him in the corner; and then, drawing up their chairs, the juniors started on their feed.

Bunter sat and watched them with glaring eyes. He was so full that he could not have eaten anything if it had been offered to him, but the position was galling almost beyond endurance to the Owl.

"Have a few tarts?" Bob asked pleasantly, after a while.

"Ugh! No! Grooh! Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was an hour later that Bunter, ably supported by Wharton and Bob Cherry, knocked at Mr. Quelch's door.

"Come in!" said the voice of the Form-master.

The trio entered.

"Well?" demanded Mr. Quelch, somewhat impatiently, as no one spoke.

"What do you want?"

Bunter's resolution failed him at the last minute, but Wharton saved the situation.

"Bunter's just discovered that he's quite all right again, sir," he said. "He's so overjoyed that he can hardly speak."

"Is that so, Bunter?"

"Nun-no—I mean yes, sir!"

"Good!" said the Form-master. "I will tell the Head. He will be very pleased to think that you are out of danger."

The party marched out of the study again. Bunter was in a very bad humour. He had not even been shaken by the hand and congratulated.

The only souvenir, in fact, that he had at the moment, was a very uncomfortable internal feeling.

"I sha'n't forget this, you beasts!" he gritted between his teeth.

"Neither shall we!" laughed Bob and Harry together.

And quite certainly the Famous Five were not in the least likely to forget Bunter's Fat Cure!

THE END.

(Don't miss "THE HERLOCK SHOLMES OF GREYFRIARS!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

"THE HERLOCK SHOLMES OF GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

Horace Coker is the Herlock Sholmes, and the wildest imaginings of Peter Todd, in his humorous contributions to the "Greyfriars Herald," are scarcely equal to the doings of the majestic Coker when he takes up the detective role. Neither Green nor Potter makes a quite-satisfactory Jobson; both seem to have the strangest distrust of the deductive powers of their chief. Coker cannot understand it all, of course. He reasons out for himself the theory that the burglar who had visited Greyfriars must be a certain man at Friardale, and he goes to visit the suspected person, feeling sure that a fellow of his wonderful tact and great penetration can get from him incriminating admissions. The Famous Five take a hand, and the result is not exactly pleasant to

"THE HERLOCK SHOLMES OF GREYFRIARS!"

AMATEUR MAGAZINES.

I promised to return to this subject if any readers would let me have their balance-sheets of expenditure and income in connection with such journals, as some comment upon these might be an aid to others who are contemplating running magazines.

No one has forwarded me particulars with reference to a printed magazine, and I am still firmly of opinion that no such paper can be run under present conditions without loss.

One reader claims to have made a small profit on a printed sheet. He does not

give details, and he adds that his father is a printer and does the work for him very cheaply, which would have rendered his balance-sheet of little use as a guide even had he given it.

But R. W. Randall, of 108, Whinbush Road, Hitchin, who has no objection to his name and address being given, has sent me on the balance-sheet for a full year of a little stencilled paper which he has now run at a profit since September, 1915—a highly creditable achievement. He must have put in a lot of really hard work on it, and in one sense the balance-sheet may be said to be defective, as nothing is allowed in it for his time and labour, which would certainly have to be reckoned in if the paper were anything but a labour of love.

During the eighteen months the little paper—"The Choir Journal"—has sold copies of its monthly issues to the value of £3 4s. 3d., an average of 66 copies per month. This is the only item on the credit side. Evidently our friend Randall has had no advertisement revenue; but most of those who think of starting such papers dream of getting this—a delusive dream.

On the other side are items of 14s. odd for paper, 18s. odd for stencil-sheets, and 7s. 6d. for sundries, such as ink, paper-fasteners, and the like. There is a credit balance of 24s., of which 13s. figures as a donation to Messrs. C. Arthur Pearson's Fresh Air Fund. But, of course, this donation must be reckoned in with the profit balance.

A FRIENDLY OFFER.

Randall, who appears to be a fellow of the right sort, tells me, in response to a request, that he would not a bit mind answering letters from other readers who are interested in the subject and would like some advice as to how they can go about producing a paper on the lines of his.

Mind you, these lines are in no sense ambitious. Most of those who write me on the subject seem to have a notion that for a few shillings they can have printed a paper somewhat of the type of the "Magnet," "Gem," or "Greyfriars Herald." This is absurd. A single issue of any one of these papers costs a sum

which would make them open their mouths in astonishment. But, they say, they only want a hundred or two copies, not hundreds of thousands. The cost of composing—typesetting—one of the most expensive items of all, is as great for one copy as for ever so many. They forget this, or don't know it.

If you write to our friend Randall, please enclose a stamped and addressed envelope, keep your letter short and to the point, and don't expect him to send you a reply going into the most minute details. Be satisfied if you get answers to the direct queries you ask.

NOTICES.

Re Leagues, Etc.

Lawrence Hibbert, 72, Main St., Frodsham, wants more members—also agents—for his "Gem" and "Magnet" League.

Members wanted for the Junior Stamp Exchange. Send stamped addressed envelope for particulars to Bertram Dowle, 53, Alderson Rd., Great Yarmouth.

Douglas Leggatt, 38, Highbury Hill, N., is starting a "Gem" and "Magnet" League.

Stamp-collectors should join this Stamp Exchange. Stamped and addressed envelope for particulars.—W. G. Phillips, 114, Llantarnam Rd., Cwmbran, Mon.

Tom L. Mullins, 6, Main St., Kinsale, will forward Irish readers particulars of Correspondence Club on application. Either sex. Magazine.

Miss Cooper, 12, Culmore Rd., Balham, S.W., wants more members for her "Gem" and "Magnet" League. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Members wanted, both sexes, for the League of Magnetites, Torquay.—Apply, Secretary, 82, Ellacombe Church Rd., Torquay. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Members wanted for the Patriotic League for sending reading matter to soldiers and sailors.—Lewis Corley, 8, Sharp St., Grimesthorpe, Sheffield.

Your Editor

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 8.—BILLY BUNTER.



William George Bunter.

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER, to give him his full name. And it is rather a mistake to omit the George, for it only needs one letter dropped to have a considerable bearing upon what may be styled Bunter's principal industry.

It is not too much to claim that Billy Bunter's name has penetrated wherever the English language is spoken. Those who doubt this only need to see the letters which pour into our office. They come from the trenches, they come from Morocco, from Singapore, from Jamaica, from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the States, the Argentine, China, Japan, and many another far land. And scarcely one of them addressed to the MAGNET but pays a tribute to Bunter!

He must be ranked with Sherlock Holmes, Captain Kettle, Sexton Blake, Don Q, and other characters who have captured the popular imagination. Among the younger generation he is better known than Sam Weller or Robinson Crusoe. A doctor, just home from a long Arctic voyage, writes: "When I am away like this, I always tell my people that every number of the MAGNET must be saved for me. I can't afford to miss even one story of Billy Bunter!" A reader of the mature age of seven weighs in with: "Ain't Billy Bunter fat?" One pictures his admiring awe before such a colossus of stoutness, such a shifter of tuck! The mother of two Anzac soldiers tells us that the last thing they asked for was that "their Billy Bunter" should not be forgotten when the budget of papers was sent along. "Let's have more about old Bunter tying up his bootlace and expecting that postal-order that never comes," writes a cheerful sapper from the Front.

None of us admires him. Or, if any does, he shows a very perverted taste. There is nothing to admire in him. But he amuses us—and that counts for a great deal.

It would not be easy to pick out Bunter's redeeming qualities. On the other hand, it would be quite easy to make a long list of his faults.

He is greedy, vain, dishonest, cowardly, snobbish, foolish. Perhaps it is because he is so foolish that one finds it less difficult to forgive him.

The Remove generally say that he is more fool than knave. So he may be; but he is knave enough to trade on their long-suffering!

Yet they are probably right. There are many people like Bunter, though, when those people get before a judge and jury, they find themselves treated with less leniency than Bunter gets at Greyfriars. Some liars talk themselves into believing their own lies, as he does. George the Fourth was one of those. He told the story of the part he played in the Battle of Waterloo—at which he was not present at all—until he believed that he had been there. And thousands of grasping natures have persuaded themselves that what they wanted was rightfully theirs—if only they could get their hands on it. And the unlucky ones have gone to prison, and the lucky ones have become millionaires!

It is hopeless to attempt to tell the full story of W. G. B.'s career at Greyfriars, even in the baldest of outline. He appears in the stories from the very first—as less of a scamp and more of an absolute ass then, for it cannot be said that his virtues—if any—have grown. But always he was insufferably greedy, a good deal of a sneak, and an abominable nuisance. He shared Study No. 1 at one time. Later he posed as the head of No. 14. But for a long time past he has been an inmate of No. 7, and has had the benefit of being looked after by Peter Todd—with a cricket-stump!

Anyone but Todd would have given him up long ago. No, that is not quite correct. There are two others who have

far more patience with him than he deserves—Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent. And Harry especially has stood his friend many a time, and saved him from disaster. Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Inky cannot stand so much of him as these two. They don't try. Bob's methods are, indeed, inclined to the drastic where Bunter is concerned.

Bunter has nourished ambitions in his time. The chief and least worthy of them is that of wanting to be thought possessed of "very high connections." His fabrications as to the Bunter De Bunters, who came over with the Conqueror, have been of positively Prussian calibre.

He has aspired to be ranked among the blades, has made himself ill with tobacco, and rolled over to Highcliffe to be rooked by the merry nuts. He has tried mesmerism—ay, even upon Mr. Quelch! He really believed that he had mesmerised Mrs. Mumble, of the tuckshop; and it is doubtful whether he was ever convinced of the truth—which was that the poor old dame thought he had gone mad, and let him take away tuck because she dared not refuse him. He blundered, so to speak, into ventriloquism—his one real accomplishment. He fancies himself an excellent footballer and a capable cricketer; whereas to call him a duffer at either game is to flatter him!

He is quite convinced that he possesses a strong fascination for the fair sex, and fancies that the Cliff House girls all adore him, whereas even gentle Marjorie Hazeldene has been known to admit that she cannot bear him. "Bunter the Masher" and "Bunter the Blade" make a pair of pictures of unspeakable self-conceit.

His somnambulism is not his fault, save in so far as it may be due to his greediness. Sleepwalking, Bunter is the same old Bunter. He raids pantries, and takes that which, in the words of the old rhyme, "isn't his." But when caught he does not "go to prison"!

Above all things else, even above his entirely fictitious pedigree and his entirely imaginary charms of manner and person, he puts—grub! Grub is his passion. For it he will scheme, lie, intrigue, borrow—even steal, or at least convey to his own personal use the money or the property of others. For it he might—if he could—even tell the truth!

Yet he has had his better moments. Love has stirred the heart in Billy Bunter's fat bosom, and for Cora Quelch's fair sake he has shown real pluck, has even tried to be decent. Cora is fat as well as fair; she seems like the destined mate of Billy Bunter—but not, let us hope, unless his efforts at reform prove less fleeting.

It is hard to guess whether he has a really friendly feeling for anyone among the fellows who have stood by him so often and so well. For Peter Todd? Perhaps. For Harry Wharton? There is little to show it. For Mark Linley? Certainly not; he thinks he can afford to despise Mark, whose boots he is not worthy to black. He despises Alonzo, who is infinitely his superior in everything that really matters. He can always be got round by flattery and a loan; the fellows who refuse him either he classes together as "Beasts"!

He will come to a bad end, one fears. But not for a long while yet, one hopes. It is easier to despise Billy Bunter than to do without him!

EXTRACTS FROM

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD.

THE CLUE OF THE CHANTING CHEESE.

An Adventure of Herlock Sholmes. By PETER TODD.

I.

CLANG, clang, clang!
The latest up-to-date telephonic arrangement in our room informed me that someone desired a communication with either myself or Sholmes.

"Jotson, my dear fellow," said Sholmes, languidly pushing his shapely feet further up the chimney, "that is our patent telephone-bell ringing."

"Sholmes," I exclaimed, "how—"

"Merely deduction, my dear Jotson," he said modestly. "The telephone is on the table near my elbow, the bell of the telephone, I perceive, is vibrating, and the sound comes from that direction, therefore—he shrugged his powerful shoulders—"the conclusion is obvious."

Clang, clang, clang, clang!

"It was a wonderful idea of mine, Jotson!" murmured Sholmes dreamily. "Who would have thought of having a church-bell attached to a telephone instead of the commonplace little toy ones which everyone uses? The police would laugh at the idea." He smiled scornfully, and threw a handful of margarine at me to show his contempt for the police force in general.

Clang, clang, clang!

"Ah, the bell is ringing yet, my dear Jotson!" remarked Sholmes, glancing up at the huge church-bell proudly. "Any of my enemies listening outside would never dream that someone was ringing me up on the telephone. Even if they looked in they would probably not notice a church-bell, whereas a telephone—"

Clang, clang, clang!

"The person at the other end seems to be in a hurry, my dear Jotson. Do not look surprised. I deduced that from the number of clangs there are per half-second. In that invaluable penny ready-reckoner you see in the wastepaper-basket—"

Clang, clangty, clang!

"I wonder why they are ringing so hard?" murmured Sholmes, placing his right thumb against his nose and extending his fingers—his usual attitude when thinking deeply.

"Perhaps they want someone to answer the telephone," I ventured.

"An excellent suggestion, Jotson!" exclaimed my friend, jabbing a fork into my ribs approvingly.

He took up the receiver, which was made to represent a grandfather's clock, so as not to attract attention—another of Sholmes' ingenious ideas—and called down.

"Hallo! Did you ring?"

"Is that that idiotic imbecile of a Sholmes speaking?" raved a voice.

"It is," replied Sholmes, raising his hat.

"Don't go out, pothead! I'll be round in a brace of shakes. Infernal mystery to be cleared up. Coming round in my aeroplane. Pip, pip!"

Clang, clang, clang!

The amiable gentleman had rung off.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 472.

"I am expecting a visitor—from somewhere in the vicinity of Colney Hatch, I believe," yawned Sholmes, by way of explanation.

A few minutes later there came a crash as the door downstairs was flung open, closely followed by a loud bump and a feminine shriek.

"Our visitor is using violence, and quite possibly strong language," remarked Sholmes.

I could not help giving vent to a gasp of astonishment at this marvellous piece of reasoning on my friend's part.

Before Sholmes had time to utter another chapter, the sound of heavy, hob-nailed boots could be distinctly heard ascending the stairs. Even to my untrained ears the sound was evident, but perhaps my study of Sholmes' methods accounted for this.

Sholmes lazily took a pair of handcuffs from behind his ear.

"They may be needed," he said.

A moment later a gentleman burst into the room.

"Take a seat, my dear sir!" said Sholmes, waving his hand towards the coal-scuttle.

Our visitor did not seem to hear. He appeared to be in a rather uneasy frame of mind.

"You are the chap who answered the 'phone, eh?" he inquired.

"I ham! Name, please!" said Sholmes, jotting down on his shirt-cuff the man's size, age, appearance, and bank balance.

"U. R. H. Ump," answered the visitor, lighting a Wild West Woodbine with an imitation five-pound note.

"I am a what?" exclaimed Sholmes, picking up the fender, and wiggling his ears in a warlike manner.

"Uglyface Rottenfizz Hare-brayne Ump," repeated the gentleman, stirring the fire with the hobnailed end of his expensive canary-wood walking-stick, and at the same time carefully wiping his boots on the tablecloth, which could boast of never having been washed since Sholmes rescued it from a dustheap. "I am the Marquis of Mudville."

"Pleased to meet you, m' lord," warbled Sholmes, rubbing his hands together, and purring with satisfaction.

"There is still a chance of keeping the instalments going, my dear Jotson—what!"

"Look here, Sholmes!" began the marquis. "And don't shade your eyes, either. The famous Mudville Emerald has been stolen! It is worth two-and-sixpence-halfpenny if it is worth a penny, which is doubtful. We can't afford such a loss, although we are exceedingly rich—five millions a year or less. My grandmother is dreadfully cut up. She fears that if the thief gets away, the stone will soon be cut up, too! That's a pun!" And he glared round threateningly, raising the teapot aloft, prepared to shy it if we did not appreciate his witty effort.

"Ho, ho, ho!" I bellowed.

"He, he, he!" smiled Sholmes musically. I will take my fee in

advance, if you don't mind, Lord Frump."

"Ump, my name is!" scowled the marquis, handing him a cheque for one shilling.

The fee was not exorbitant, however, as the marquis had nothing but an overdraft at the bank.

"I shall expect you to recover that emerald or leave me the equivalent in your will," snorted the Marquis of Mudville. "You had better make your will before you come to my house to investigate. Ha, ha! You see, I want to be married before the century is out, and I'm rather short of cash."

"I understand," said Sholmes, who was in the same position.

"You know the way to Mudville, I suppose?" growled the marquis. "It's on the outskirts of Mudville. Don't fail to turn up between now and the end of the war. So-long!"

"Hoh reservoir!" returned Sholmes in perfect French, and our client had gone. Sholmes' fountain-pen had gone also.

"Rather an appetising case," commented Sholmes, starting upon his tea, which Mrs. Spudson had just brought in.

He had barely eaten three pounds of ham, a tin of sardines, a couple of loaves, a jar of jam, a bottle of pickles, and a dozen jam tarts when a lady was shown into the room.

Sholmes calculated she could boast of being a centenarian, but her modesty intervened.

"Mr. Sholmes," she sobbed, "I am seventeen."

Sholmes neatly swallowed his clay pipe.

"Oh, crikey!" I gasped.

"A sad case!" my friend murmured. He told me afterwards that the good lady had probably lost the flight of time for the last ninety years.

"My name is Emmeline Ayrloome," she said, breaking into a flood of tears which soon covered the floor.

We were compelled to rest our feet on the table, and Sholmes had the pleasure of seeing his new washtub sailing out of the door.

The tears subsided at last, and the lady resumed.

"Mr. Sholmes," she said, in a loud voice, "I have been shamefully treated! I have been the maid-of-all-work at the Marquis of Mudville's for sixty—ahem!—a year at least, and now I am discharged! Boo-hoo!"

"Hush, Emmeline!" said Sholmes softly.

He had a tender heart had Sholmes, especially where women were concerned.

Miss Ayrloome dried her tears on the tablecloth.

"I will tell you all about the terrible affair," she exclaimed. "My mistress—the grandmother of the terrible marquis—had just received an emerald by parcel-post from Mr. Folstone Fakem, the great

diamond dealer of Paste Court. 'Twas he who made the Depaste Diamonds."

"I have heard of him," put in Sholmes. "He was invited to stay at a certain abode in Dartmoor for a couple of years by Yearshard, the magistrate, after having been bowled out by Inspector Pinkeye."

"Yes, that is he," agreed the young lady. "Well, my mistress placed the stone upon the table whilst she swept the floor and washed the crockery—she did not leave the room once, and was sure no one entered—and when she went to the table the stone was gone! She flew out of the room in terror and dismay, and while she was out, I, knowing nothing of the theft, entered the room to tidy it up a little. I had just commenced when in rushed my lady, her grandson, and the butler. They could not find the stone, and the rascally marquis said she must have dropped it and I must have picked it up."

"So I"—she emphasised her statement by breaking a plate over Sholmes' head—"I am accused of the theft, and I have been dismissed!"

Sholmes woke up. "Pray calm yourself, my dear lady!" he said soothingly, tossing the broken crockery down the back of my neck. "I will go to Mudville immediately, and I am sure my friend Jotson will accompany me."

"Most assuredly!" I replied promptly. A visit to the house of a marquis appealed to my aristocratic instincts.

"I had decided upon going out, whether or no," yawned Sholmes, when our lady client had gone. "I am expecting the gentleman for the instalments any minute now, and, unless my deductions are at fault, that is he knocking at the door. Let us depart by the back way, my dear Jotson."

II.

"HERE we are, my dear Jotson! This gallant craft will take us across to Mudville, so, as you are paying the fare, we may as well step in."

How Sholmes discovered that I was paying the fare across I am at a loss to imagine. But, as Sholmes had predicted, I did pay, for he had left all his spare change in our room.

"I don't trust that fellow," murmured Sholmes, eyeing the ferryman suspiciously. "Lend me the money. I will pay him."

I handed my friend half-a-crown, and the ferryman gave Sholmes the change. Sholmes counted it carefully and slipped it into his pocket.

"Now, get across as quickly as you can!" my friend ordered.

We were about half-way across when the boat sprang a leak.

The ferryman, by way of encouragement, informed us that the ship would be at the bottom of the ocean in five minutes.

Sholmes, who was a good hand at cheering people up, remarked that the engine might burst any minute.

And Sholmes, as usual, was right.

I first became aware of the catastrophe when we were about twenty feet in the air, and my head cannoned violently against the learned cranium of Sholmes. Then I felt my ears caught in a vicelike grip, and Sholmes muttered, as he gritted his back teeth:

"Jotson, never mind the weather! If we die, we die together!"

The next moment we were swimming for our lives in fully four feet of unfiltered water.

After swimming for about a dozen miles by the side of Sholmes, I was

almost exhausted. But Sholmes, who had won his third-class swimming certificate at school, adopted the famous overheel stroke, and held me up, and after another score miles or so we reached the shore.

Later we discovered we had been swimming in circles; but as we had no time to waste in language, we entered a neighbouring farmhouse and obtained a change of attire.

The well-knit figure of Sholmes was seen to advantage in the kilts of a Highlander, and he spoke highly of my appearance in the garb of a cowboy.

"We'll visit our friend the marquis now," said Sholmes precisely. "Put on your top-hat, my dear Jotson, and keep this backfire blunderbuss—the wonderful work of the great German inventor, Karl Krackt—within easy reach of your trusty hand."

We reached Owte House, and were greeted profusely by the marquis. Sholmes, however, did not appear to trust him. There also seemed some reason to fear that the marquis did not trust Sholmes.

"This, I presume, is your fat-headed friend and dotty disciple, Shotson?" he said genially, scowling at me the while.

I bowed low. Fortunately the sound of rending cloth from the rear passed unnoticed.

"Have a cigar, Sholmes?" said the marquis, holding out the box to Sholmes.

"Certainly!" replied Sholmes, condescendingly taking a handful.

"A famous and noteworthy brand, these," said the marquis, grinning devilishly. "My butler tried one this morning, and is now seriously ill in bed. They are the wonderful Dan-de-Lion leaf brand. Ever heard of them?"

Sholmes nodded, but I noticed that for

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some reason he did not place a couple in his mouth, as was his custom.

The marquis offered me one, but I informed him that liquid refreshment was more in my line. However, I ignored the glass of muddy water he brought me. The bottle I drew from my inside pocket contained something more to my taste.

"I will show you your bed-room now," remarked the marquis. "Stay a moment, though! I will ring up the undertaker. We may need him to-morrow."

And he chuckled again.

I observed that Sholmes gave the marquis a suspicious look, although I must confess that at the time I saw no cause for it.

We passed along a corridor, and suddenly from a passage on the right there came a humming sound, accompanied by the unmistakable odour of antique cheese.

"Don't go down there!" exclaimed the marquis suddenly, catching Sholmes by the hair and me by the collar. "It is only some cheese we have placed in the cellar to asphyxiate the mice!"

He showed us to our bed-room, which contained only one narrow bed.

It was still only afternoon, but the marquis said he liked plenty of sleep, and five o'clock was his bedtime.

"I'm off to bed!" he announced. "I don't suppose you will retire yet. Good-night, or, to be more appropriate, good-bye!"

And, with a brutal guffaw, he left the room.

"I have my suspicions of that man," remarked Sholmes. "The cigars he gave me are the most notorious brand on the market, and the fact that he rang for an undertaker does not suggest real hospitality. I will make a thorough search of this room."

He produced from his pocket a pair of powerful spectacles which he had discovered in the foot of his stocking after hanging it up on Christmas Eve.

He donned them and peered under the bed.

"As I thought, Jotson!" he murmured, drawing from beneath the bed an infernal machine timed to go off at eleven o'clock in the morning. The marquis evidently knew Sholmes' habits. At that hour he would be sound asleep.

The villain had laid his schemes well. Even if we failed to smoke the poisonous cigars, we should go up in unpleasant fragments at 11 a.m. precisely. That was why he summoned an undertaker, so Sholmes deduced.

Sholmes tossed the villainous contrivance out of the window, and looked at me with a smile.

"Let us go downstairs, my dear Jotson," he said. "I have already formed a deduction."

"Sholmes!" I exclaimed. "In this short time, with absolutely nothing to go upon—"

Sholmes held up his hand warningly.

"Sh, my dear Jotson!" he murmured. "The marquis may hear you, and we don't want him to suspect anything. But I may say, Jotson, in strict confidence, that I suspect him of trying to take our lives. Do not express your admiration in words, Jotson. To a trained, deductive mind, my dear Jotson, that is the obvious conclusion to be derived from the facts."

We descended the stairs, and a sound like the sawing of wood caused me to believe that the scheming marquis was asleep.

"We will now make inquiries in the city," proposed Sholmes, and ten minutes later found us in the heart of Mudville.

III.

"My questioning will begin at this shop," remarked Sholmes. "I notice they sell cheese, although I cannot see it."

I was aware of that fact, too, although the sense which led him to this conclusion was not as highly trained in me as in the great Sholmes.

That genius entered the establishment.

"One halfpennyworth of Spanish telephones," he ordered briskly.

The old lady handed him the goods and the bill, and as she was rather shortsighted he paid her with a bad halfpenny.

"Has the Marquis of Mudville made any purchases here lately?" asked Sholmes, in mysterious tones.

"Oh, the mad marquis! He gets madder the longer he lives. A few days ago he came for a pennyworth of cheese, and bought the oldest I had in the shop. He said he wanted it as a memento of the days before the Flood. Goodness knows how he keeps it in captivity—I don't. I had to hold it down with a huge anchor-chain and cover it with a thick glass dish."

"Excellent!" murmured Sholmes, rubbing his hands together. "Good-afternoon, my good woman!"

We left the shop, and Sholmes made a bee-line for the establishment of Mr. Popshop, the pawnbroker of Mudville.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Popshop!" greeted Sholmes. "I see you deal in secondhand respirators. Have you sold one to the marquis recently?"

"Yes, the mad marquis bought one, and, as usual, he did not pay for it."

"Let me have one, please."

Sholmes took the respirator, and started to leave the shop.

"Here, I want three shillings for that!" roared the pawnbroker.

"Oh, quite so!" agreed Sholmes, taking the hint and handing the man three halfpennies.

Sholmes hurriedly retired, heedless of any thanks or words of praise the pawnbroker might wish to utter.

"Jotson," said Sholmes, when we were safely within the walls of Owto House, "the marquis is rapidly nearing the end of his tether. To-night will be his downfall."

That night Sholmes, unlike myself, stayed awake.

He did not need much sleep, and if he had, he would not have been able to get it, for I am slightly addicted to snoring.

I slept soundly all night, and during that time the mystery was solved.

When I got down the next morning I was astounded to find Sholmes seated in a chair, and in another chair the marquis, handcuffed.

"No need to ask the usual question, Jotson," he said, on observing me. "I will explain. The odour from the cheese aroused my suspicions in the first place. A piece of cheese which possessed a perfume like that one does is a safe hiding-place for an emerald. To approach it a hero's heart—or a deaf nose—is needed. The question was: How could the thief himself get at the cheese? I deduced a respirator.

"The marquis and his butler were in league together. The emerald is insured in twenty different companies against theft, and the marquis is heavily in debt; therefore"—he shrugged his shoulders—"he succumbed to the temptation. He deliberately tried to kill the butler by giving him one of these cigars, in order to keep his ill-gotten gains to himself."

"You are the devil himself, Sholmes!" snarled the marquis.

Sholmes did not blush. He had long been proof against compliments.

"He wanted me out of the way as well, for while I lived he felt himself insecure. That is why he asked me to look into the case. But he did not know that thereby he was sealing his doom! He scuttled the ferryboat, but did not reckon on my marvellous swimming prowess.

"I have called in a vet to the butler, and he is rapidly recovering. He confessed that he was hiding under the table and stole his mistress' emerald, and the marquis here embedded it in the cheese. Miss Ayrloome, as I surmised all along, is innocent.

"The marquis went to bed early last night so that he could remove the emerald from the cheese and disappear. He intended, doubtless, to return when the commotion caused by three deaths—yours, mine, and the butler's—had died down, and to deceive the bungling police with some plausible excuse. Ha! Here is Pinkeye! Take your man, inspector!"

"You excel yourself, my dear Sholmes!" I exclaimed. "But why did the marquis not dispose—"

"Enough!" interrupted Sholmes imperatively. "Pass the cocaine-barrel!"

THE END.

DALE'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

By RICHARD PENFOLD.

CHAPTER 1.

A Welcome Birthday Gift.

"MANY happy returns of the day!"

"Fourteen, eh? By George, Dale, you'll soon be drawing your old-age pension!"

"Good luck, Dale! May your shadow never grow whiskers!"

It was in the dormitory of the Fourth Form at Monkhouse that this good-natured chaff was heard. The occasion was Sidney Dale's fourteenth birthday. How it had got about that this was one of the anniversaries of his uneventful life, Dale himself did not know, but it had. Every fellow in the Form seemed to know about it, and to be anxious to show him his goodwill.

Dale was a quiet, rather reserved fellow, but quite popular. He was a good tackling half-back, a fair bat, a good half-miler, and something of a "swotter," having ambitions for the future as a barrister.

His frank, genial face lighted up as he looked into the grinning countenances around him.

"Thank you, my sons!" he cried. "One of these days, when you're old fogies like myself, I'll wish you the same. Sorry I haven't any wine to offer you, but there's plenty of water in the jug if you care to drink my health."

A laugh went up.

"What about the presents?" asked a sallow, dark-haired junior.

The speaker was Willox, a surly, bad-tempered fellow, who believed everybody had a grudge against him, and seemed to have a grudge against everybody.

"A fat lot you'd give away!" retorted Webb, Dale's study-mate.

"And what do you know about it, anyway?" snapped Paget, another of Dale's friends.

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THE GREYFRIARS HERALD.

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Dale scanned the faces of the juniors around him.

"What's this about presents?" he asked. "Look here, you fellows, I hope you haven't been spending money for me. I'm sure——"

"Wait and see!" interrupted Paget, with twinkling eyes.

"Shouldn't be surprised if our study isn't chock-full of hampers and boxes, enclosing spanking gifts," said Brooks. "Come along before call-over and see if anything's turned up!"

"You all seem jolly anxious about the presents," said Dale, smelling a rat. "Perhaps I shall have to make a few presents—of thick ears—before I've done!"

About a dozen fellows, with Willox bringing up the rear, trooped downstairs to Study 9.

Paget opened the door, and the rest stood in double file for Dale to pass through into the room.

"My word! Is this some jape, kids?" asked Dale suspiciously.

On the table by the window was quite a heap of packages. Most of them were done up in brown paper. Some were very large, others small.

"Go on; open them!" cried Willox, as they all crowded round the doorway. "Don't keep us in suspense!"

"I can't see what it's got to do with any of you!" declared Dale. "This is a private affair."

But none of the juniors moved. All had grinning, expectant faces. Dale was a bit puzzled. He took up the first of the parcels. With difficulty he unfastened the knotted string. A pair of very old and absolutely useless footer-boots tumbled out of the paper wrapping!

There was a message on a scrap of exercise paper, but Dale did not bother to pick it up and read it. Instead, he picked up the boots, turned to the crowd at the door, and took aim.

There was an instant scamper for cover. Dale came out into the corridor.

"I guessed you fellows were up to your turks," he said good-temperedly. "But you don't catch me any more at that game!"

"Oh, do open some more!" they pleaded.

"There's bound to be something decent amongst them," suggested Willox. "They can't all be rotten fakes."

"You seem to be shoving your nose in a lot to-day," Paget rebuked him. "Buzz off! We've had enough of you!"

Dale was persuaded to re-enter the study, and to examine the parcels. It was rather a weak joke now that the secret was out, but he entered into the laughing that went up as each article was uncovered.

Many useless articles, such as a worn-out kettle, a moth-eaten waistcoat, an empty preserve tin, were disclosed. Some of the smaller "gifts," such as the birthday-cards, designed and painted at Monkhouse on exercise paper, had been sent through the post.

The study carpet soon looked like the floor of the school dustbin. But at last, when nearly all the parcels had been opened, something of real value was discovered.

It was a small, round package, about six inches long.

"Feels like a stick of blacklead wrapped up," grinned Dale. "You fellows must have been badly in want of a job when you started on this!"

He stripped off the paper, and then

stared with parted lips. In his fingers was a gold-mounted fountain pen!

"A Swan, by Jove!" cried Dale, his eyes brightening. "Just what I've wanted for months! Come by post, too! I'd have been sorry if I'd missed this."

One of the juniors bent down to pick up the scrap of paper that had fallen from the packet's interior.

"To dear Sidney, with love," he read, amidst a chortle.

"My sister must have sent it," said Dale, turning red. "She knew I wanted one. Doesn't look like her writing, though."

He thrust the slip of paper in his pocket.

"By George!" Dale went on, trying his present on a piece of paper. "It's got ink in it all ready, and it simply flies along!"

"I've seen a pen like that somewhere," declared Webb. "I remember! The Head's got one!"

"What of that?" retorted Paget. "The Head's not the only one in the world to use a gold-mounted Swan. There are thousands of 'em about."

"Oh, I'm not saying that it's his pen!" said Webb tartly.

"Of course you're not," interposed Dale, smiling; "because it's mine. Now you fellows who have so kindly presented me with this rubbish had better take it out with you again!"

And before they had finished clearing up the mess the bell was ringing for call-over.

CHAPTER 2.

Dr. Griffith's Discovery.

A FEW days later there was the usual term exam in Big Hall. As was customary, the only master present was the Head, Dr. Griffith, a tall, thin, austere man, who now and again left the table on the dais to march between the rows of desks at which the Fourth-Formers sat, diligently scribbling, or biting the ends of their penholders in the effort to obtain inspiration.

Sidney Dale, in his place, sat hard at work. He was keen on gaining high marks, and, to his delight, had found that the questions suited him down to the ground.

And the new fountain-pen flew over the paper like a magic wand. It gave him lots of confidence. Certainly it was an excellent one, and just as certainly he had an advantage over the other fellows, who had to be everlastingly dipping their old-fashioned nibs in the ink-wells.

The gold Swan was a bit of a mystery, though. He had written home to thank Laura for it. His sister had replied that she had not sent it. Dale had tried in vain to discover the donor. Still, it had been addressed to him, and he had no qualms about keeping it, more especially as he valued it so highly.

He was just finishing the answer to the last question when he suddenly became conscious of the Head's tall form standing beside him.

"Boy," cried Dr. Griffith sharply, and so hushed was the hall that his voice sounded across it with clarion notes, "where did you get that pen?"

Dale looked up. The Head's aspect was more than usually stern. His eyes, peering at Dale over the gold pince-nez, were fierce and questioning.

"It was sent me as a present on my birthday, sir," answered the junior readily.

"Let me look at it!" commanded the Head.

Dale handed it to him, and the Head took it across to the window, where he

examined it for several moments. The eyes of all the Fourth-Formers were fixed on him.

"Dale," said the Head gravely, "do you know that this is my pen?"

"I didn't know," answered the junior, with a heart suddenly turned to lead. "I didn't even know you had lost one, sir."

"I lost it over a week ago," said Dr. Griffith. "I was expecting someone, some servant, some boy who put honesty higher than covetousness, and find it and bring it to me. Why did you not do so when you found it, Dale?"

Dale felt his cheeks growing hot. He resented the Head's attitude. It was like an accusation of theft before all the Form.

"Because I didn't find it, sir!" he retorted hotly. "It was sent me through the post a few days ago as a birthday-present!"

"What proof have you of that?" snapped the Head.

At this Paget and Webb and several others got up from their places.

"I was there when Dale opened the packet it came in, sir," said Paget stoutly.

"That's right, sir!" chimed in Webb. "I was there, too."

Others made similar statements.

"Well, since that is the case," said the doctor, relenting, "I am ready to admit a mistake must have been made. Nevertheless, this is indubitably my pen. It bears the number of the one I purchased. If it really was sent to Dale, the person who sent it had no right to bestow what is beyond dispute my property. This matter must be inquired into thoroughly. Can any boy throw light upon it?"

There was tense silence for a few moments. A shuffling of feet turned all eyes to the side desks. Willox, looking very uncomfortable, was standing erect.

"Please, sir," he stammered, "Dale might have sent it to himself!"

There was a quick indrawing of breath. Dale sprang to his feet.

"It's a lie!" he cried fiercely. "I'm not a cad! I wouldn't do such a thing!"

Dr. Griffith stood midway between the boys, and looked from one to the other. He had not been Head of Monkhouse for so many years without becoming a pretty shrewd judge of character.

"Oh, since you two boys seem to be the only ones who know anything at all about the matter," he exclaimed, "I'll ask you to come along to my study as soon as the examination is over! I'm sorry, Dale, that you must finish your work with an ordinary school pen."

As soon as the papers were gathered up, and the Head left Big Hall, and the juniors were free to leave their seats, wrath descended upon Willox.

"You utter outsider!" cried Paget. "I've a jolly good mind to punch your ugly, fat head!"

"What do you know about it, anyway?" demanded Webb, glaring into Willox's face, and tugging at the lapel of his coat.

"Let him be," suggested Dale, calm and cool now. "The Head will find out soon enough!"

Willox looked sheepish and surly, and said nothing. He followed Dale to the Head's study.

"I found this slip of paper in my pocket, sir," said Dale, on approaching the Head's desk. "It was sent me with the pen. The wrapper I didn't keep, as I did not think it was of value."

The Head examined the paper carefully, and then turned over a heap of the exam papers.

"Willox," he said quietly, looking up into the surly face, "you'd better make a clean breast of it! Do you deny that

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(Continued from page 19.)

this is your writing, in spite of its attempted disguise?"

Willox muttered a denial. But he could not keep it up, and when pressed with questions, first began to stivel, then confessed.

He had found the pen in the corridor outside the Head's study. He had meant to keep it for himself, but was afraid. When he had heard Paget & Co. arranging the mock birthday-presents for Dale, whom he detested, he had been tempted to send the pen to him through the post, feeling sure that it would mean trouble for Dale sooner or later.

"Dale, my boy, I am very sorry for what happened to-day," said the Head kindly. "I fear I was unjust to you. I owe you a sincere apology, and I make it now."

Dale smiled, light-hearted once more. "Oh, that's all right, sir!" he said. "I'm glad the affair's cleared up. And please don't be too hard on Willox, sir. He didn't realise what he was doing."

"Leave that to me," said Dr. Griffith, shaking hands with Dale. "And, I say, my boy, I shan't feel sure that you really forgive me unless you agree to accept a little gift I shall offer you."

That gift, received a few days later, turned out to be a gold-mounted pen

exactly like that owned by the Head. Willox was not expelled, but he left Monkhouse soon after, regretted by none.

THE END.

THE BALLAD OF BUNTER.

By SQUIFF.

The shades of night were falling fast
When through the quad at Greyfriars
passed

A youth who bore, with aspect bland,
A postal-order in his hand,
"Twas Bunter!

A postal-order had arrived!
On postal-orders Bunter thrived.
His haste was great; he could not
stop;

He buzzed to Mrs. Mimble's shop,
"Fat Bunter!

His brow was set; his eyes gleamed ex-
pectation through his gleaming specs.
Without a glance around him cast,
He gave his orders thick and fast,
Did Bunter!

"Tomatoes, please, and tongue and
ham,

And marmalade and eggs and jam,
A currant-cake, a seed-cake, too,
I think a dozen eggs will do!"
Said Bunter!

"A dozen tarts - mind, tuppenny ones!
I think I'll have a dozen buns,
And half a dozen ginger-pop!"
The orders came without a stop
From Bunter!

"Try not the tarts," Bob Cherry said,
"Although they look so nice and red!
You're full up now, right to the chin!"
But Billy went on piling in,
Like Bunter!

"Beware the tasty sweet meringue!"
Such was the warning Nugent sang.
"Don't overdo it, Bunter dear!"
But Bunter didn't seem to hear
Poor Bunter!

A little later, in the dorm,
We saw the glutton of the Form;
His eye was dull, his breath was slow,
He rocked in anguish to and fro—
Poor Bunter!

His face was pale; he mumbled low:
"It must have been the tarts, you
know,
Or p'r'aps that final pot of jam,
Or else the tongue, or else the ham!"
Groaned Bunter!

He could not speak; he could but
groan.
Said Bull, in sympathetic tone:
"What's needed now, I'm sure of that
Is nice, rich, greasy bacon-fat
For Bunter!"

What happened next, I'm loth to say,
We sadly turned our heads away.
Poor Bunter's voice was heard no
more,
We left him curled up on the floor.
Poor Bunter!

BRIEF NOTICES

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S. Perry, 3, West View, Wolstanton, Staffs., or H. Beresford, 9, George St., Newcastle, Staffs., will send particulars of Correspondence Club Exchange on receipt of stamped, addressed envelope. Open to anyone in British Empire between 12 20.

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More readers wanted by Surrey "Gem" and "Magnet" League (Sheffield branch), within 3-mile radius of Sheffield. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.—L. Corley, 3, Sharp St., Sheffield.

Wilfred J. Sirrell, 110, City Rd., Cardiff, proposes to start an amateur magazine, and would be glad to hear from any reader with a hectograph or hand-press.

F. Richards, 58, Belmont Terr., Aberbeeg, Mon., wishes to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, open to boys anywhere, and hopes to run a magazine in connection with it. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

W. H. Simpson, 3, Oakwell Terr., Grove Hill, Middlesborough, wants more members for his "Magnet" Correspondence Club, open to the United Kingdom. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

J. P. Hess, 7, Oxford Rd., Kilburn, N.W., wants more members for his Home and Colonial Club. Printed magazine. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

R. Kemp, 25, Morton Rd., Colchester, wants more members for a "Gem" and "Magnet" Club. Open to anyone in the United Kingdom.

R. Euser, 29, Westwood Rd., Southampton, is forming a "Gem" and "Magnet" League for readers anywhere in the United Kingdom, and will be glad to hear from anyone interested.

D. Cramphorn, 242, Uphall Rd., Ilford, would be glad to correspond with readers interested in cinematography.

Miss Phyllis Stokoe, Kia-Ora, Kenilworth St., Waverley, N.S.W., Australia, would be glad to correspond with girl readers of 18 or so.

E. Mellor, c/o Mr. C. T. W. Mount, P.O. Box 492, Cape Town, South Africa, would be glad to correspond with an English boy reader.

John Chiles, P.O. Box 295, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, would like to correspond with a boy reader of about 15.

Miss Olga Ivanovna Sergius, 21, St. James' Rd., Brixton, S.W., would be glad to receive any Russian books or papers for the use of Russian soldiers in British hospitals.

BACK NUMBERS WANTED.

By J. R. Burnsick, 15, Thirlmere Avenue, Aufield, Liverpool "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library back numbers.

By C. A. Levett, 19, Old Humphrey Avenue, All Saints' St., Hastings—"Magnet" stories dealing with Vernon-Smith before his reform.

By H. Warwick, 30, Barratt Avenue, Wood Green, N. Clean back numbers of "Magnet" and "Gem"; offers 1/2d. each.

By A. May, 2, Lock's Lane, Mitcham—"Bunter the Boxer" and "Bunter's P.O."; 2d. each offered. Also "The School on Strike" and "The Greyfriars Cyclists"; 1d. each offered.

By W. C. Bennett, 58, Baynton Rd., Stoke Newington, N.—"Boys' Friend" No. 730.

By W. Fraser, 9, Acre St., Nairn—"The Boy Without a Name," "The Boot-Boy of St. Bart's," "A Schoolboy's Honour," and "Bunter the Boxer."

By R. Penny, 159, Ombresley Rd., Worcester—"The Mystery of the Painted Room," "Wun Lung's Secret," and "Fishy's Fag Agency."

By C. W. Hickton, 4, Greenall Rd., Northwich, Cheshire—Back numbers of "Magnet" before 1913, especially those containing stories of Bunter and the Bounder.

By A. Sharp, 47, Somerville Road, New Cross, S.E.—"The Stolen Cup." Is willing to pay 6d. for a clean copy.

By Joseph Hogan, care of Mr. Neil, 25, Woodside Quadrant, Glasgow, W.—"School and Sport," "The Boy Without a Name," "Through Thick and Thin," "The School under Canvas," "The Bully's Chance," "Figgins' Fig-Pudding," and "Figgins' Folly."

By A. Innes, 197, Dalry Road, Edinburgh—"When Friends Fall Out," "The Terrible Two," and "The Mailed Fist at Greyfriars."

