

VISCOUNT BUNTER!

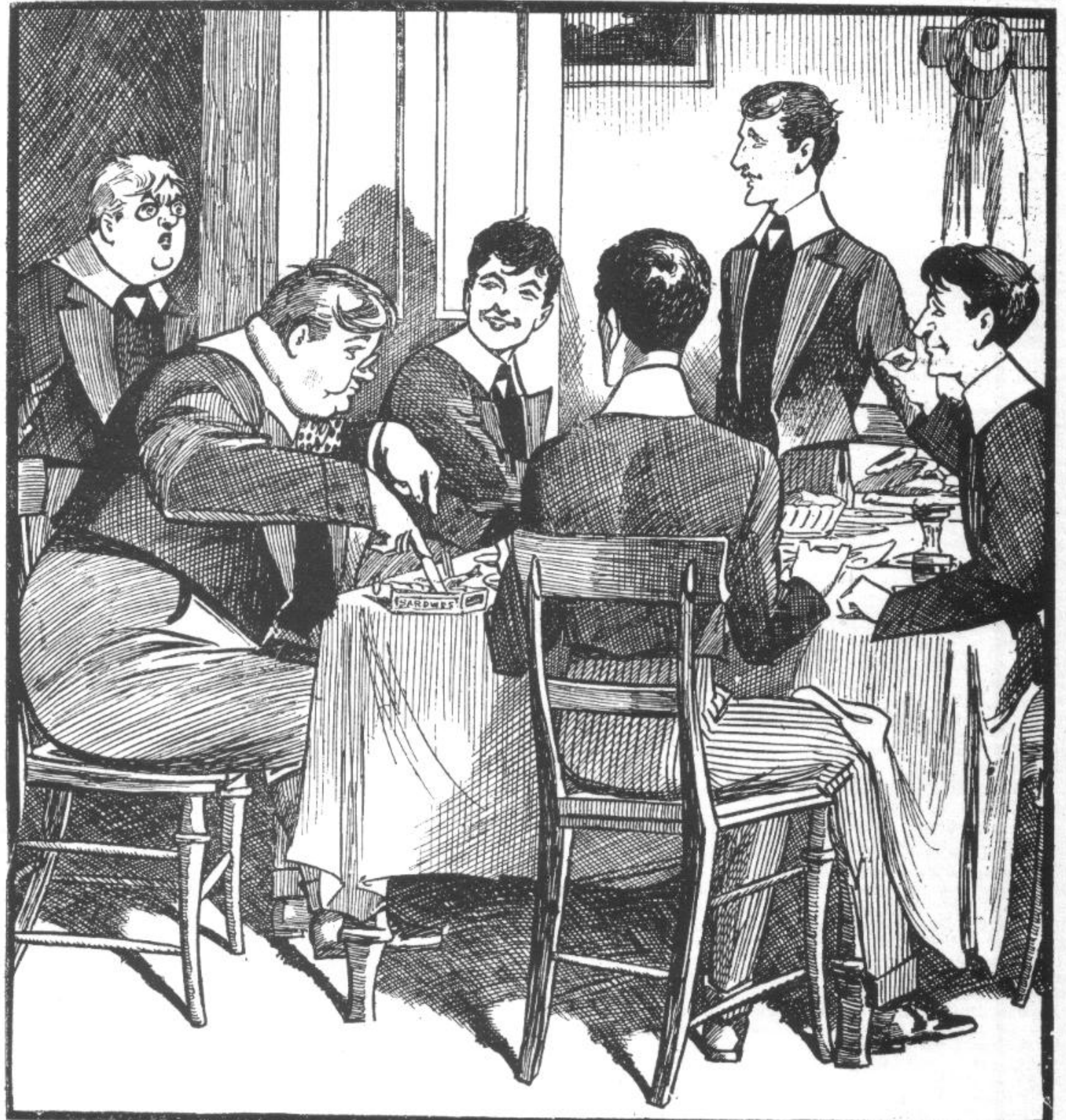
A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



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THE VISCOUNT AND HIS FRIENDS!

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VISCOUNT BUNTER!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Mystery of Billy Bunter!

WHAT'S the matter with Bunter?"

Harry Wharton & Co.—the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove—were adorning the steps of the School House with their persons, when Bob Cherry spotted Bunter in the quadrangle.

Billy Bunter was not, as a rule, an object of great interest.

Certainly he was an interesting study in some ways. The amount he could put away at a meal, the number of meals he could consume in a day, his deadly skill as a borrower, and his shocking reputation as a settler-up, made him remarkable in his way. But these gifts did not make him popular, neither did they cause his society to be yearned after.

Just now, however, Billy Bunter was attracting considerable attention. The Famous Five looked at him in wonder.

Bunter was coming across the quad. He generally rolled or waddled. Now he was strutting.

His little, fat nose was turned up loftily. His manner was consequential, not to say swanking. His glance was lofty and supercilious.

Something had evidently happened to Bunter.

"My hat!" said Johnny Bull, in amazement. "Bunter's putting on some side! What's the matter with him?"

"The sidefulness is terrible," grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Perhaps Bunter's esteemed postal order has come at last!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Other fellows were watching Bunter strut across the quad. The extraordinary self-importance of the fat junior's manner was very striking.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Bunter came up to the steps and blinked at the chums of the Remove through his big glasses. "What is it this time, Bunt? Have they made you Head of Greyfriars, or lord lieutenant of the county, or has your postal-order come?"

Billy Bunter's next proceeding was remarkable. It made the five juniors stare.

He fixed his eyes—and his spectacles—upon Bob Cherry's feet. From Bob's feet, Bunter's glance travelled slowly up Bob's person to his face. Then it descended to his feet again. Then it travelled up to Bob's astonished face again. And then Bunter sniffed.

This weird process was what Bunter would have described as looking a fellow up and down. It was meant to convey the most ineffable scorn. It ought to have produced a withering effect upon the victim. In Bob Cherry's case it didn't. Bob was not withered. He looked at Bunter with some anxiety.

"Are you off your rocker?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"If you're not, what are you blinking at me like that for?" demanded Bob.

Bunter snorted with contempt.

"What on earth's the matter with you, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"What are you playing the giddy guy for?"

Another contemptuous snort. "Blessed if I don't think he's potty!" said Frank Nugent, in wonder.

"Bunter, my fat tulip—" began Bob.

Bunter waved a fat hand at him.

"None of your familiarity!" he said.

"Wha-a-at!"

"I don't like it," said Bunter. "In fact, I'll thank you to keep your distance."

"Ki-ki-keep my distance?" stuttered Bob.

"Yes. The same applies to the rest of you. Once for all, I want you to understand quite clearly that I object to your rotten familiarity!"

"Great Cæsar!"

The Famous Five simply blinked. Billy Bunter gave them a supercilious stare—a look as much like that of Cecil Ponsonby of Highcliffe as he could make it—and rolled into the House.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, in amazement.

"Something's happened," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Perhaps Bunter's pater is making money on the Stock Exchange again. He did once, and Bunter used to get fivers from him. If he's got a liver, that might account for it."

"More likely gone potty!" growled Johnny Bull. "Look at him now!"

The juniors glanced after Bunter.

He was strutting down the passage with so absurd an air of consequence that the Removites could not help grinning.

He passed Mark Linley in the passage.

Linley gave him a pleasant nod. Bunter gave Linley a lofty blink, turned his fat little nose up a trifle higher, snorted, and strutted on.

Mark Linley stared. Bunter had cut him!

"My hat!" ejaculated Mark.

He joined the Famous Five on the steps.

"Anything wrong with Bunter?" he asked.

"Come into a fortune. I should think," grinned Bob Cherry. "That's the effect it would have on Bunter, if he did. Nice boy!"

"I suppose he meant to give me the cut direct," said Mark, in amused wonder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was never taken seriously in the Remove. And his new and wonderful superciliousness was taken even less seriously than any of his other proceedings.

Something had evidently happened to puff up the Owl of the Remove, and he was swelling with importance, like the frog in the fable.

Peter Todd came along from the Common-room, and slapped Bunter on the shoulder.

"Just in time, my tulip!" he exclaimed.

"Keep your paws off, please, Todd!"

"Eh?"

"I don't like it!"

"You don't like it?" ejaculated Peter, staring at him.

"Certainly not. You can use your

familiarity towards your social equals," said Bunter.

"Mum-mum-my social equals?" gasped Peter.

"Yes. I decline to stand it!"

Peter's eyes almost bulged out of his head.

"I suppose this is some new kind of joke," he said at last. "Stop being funny, Bunter, and come up to the study. I've got a rabbit for tea!"

"Blow your rabbit!"

"I want you to cook it, fathead!"

"I decline to do anything of the sort!"

"You—you—you decline?"

"Certainly! You can hardly expect a fellow of my type to perform menial tasks!"

Peter almost collapsed. At any other time Bunter's eyes would have glistened at the news that there was a rabbit for tea in Study No. 7. Next to eating, cooking was Bunter's chief delight. Sleeping came third in his estimate of the joys of existence.

Now the news that there was a rabbit for tea left him unmoved. He declined the menial task of cooking it! Peter was almost dazed.

"Bunt, old man," he said, quite concerned. "Anything the matter?"

"My name is Bunter!"

"Eh?"

"I prefer not to be called Bunt!"

"What?"

"I regard it as disrespectful—in fact, impertinent!"

"My only aunt!" muttered Peter, quite overcome.

Bunter gave him a look—a look that Ponsonby of Highcliffe might have envied, so full of scorn and insolence was it—and rolled on. Peter blinked after him for some moments, and then joined the grinning juniors in the doorway.

"You chaps noticed that Bunter's gone potty?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"I suppose it can't be an awfully deep joke?" said the perplexed Peter. "He must be off his rocker. Still, potty or not, he's got to cook that rabbit!"

"Never mind the rabbit," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Come to tea in our study. We've got a ripping spread and a distinguished visitor. We're waiting for him now."

"Who's the chap?"

"D'Arcy, from St. Jim's."

"Good! I'll come!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as an elegant figure came in at the gates.

And the Famous Five forgot all about William George Bunter and his wonderful new attitude of superiority, and hurried out to greet their distinguished visitor.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter's Old Pal!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS DARCY of St. Jim's received a warm greeting from the chums of the Remove. Harry Wharton & Co. had been very pleased to hear that he was in the neighbourhood, and intended

to honour them with a call. There had been preparations in No. 1 Study on a somewhat unusual scale in honour of the visitor.

"Jolly glad to see you, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, as he shook hands with the Famous Five and Peter Todd. "I thought I would dwop in, you know, as I was ovah heah. You got my note all wight, Wharton?"

"Right as rain," said Harry. "It was a ripping idea! What are you doing in this part of the world on your own?"

"My majah, you know," explained D'Arcy. "You have met my bwothah, I think—old Conway, of the Loamshire Regiment. They've sent him to Wapshot Camp to look aftah some wecwuits. He's a gweat hand at twainin' wecwuits. Organism' ability, and that sort of thing, wathah wuns in our family, you know!"

Bob Cherry turned a chuckle into a cough at the right moment.

"So I got leave to wun ovah and see old Conway at the camp," said Arthur Augustus. "I was weally thinkin' of givin' him some tips about the bizney, you know; but he was wathah busay, and hadn't much time to listen to me. And as Wapshot is only a few miles fwom Gweyfwahs, I thought I couldn't do bettah than dwop in and see you!"

"Jolly good wheeze!" said Frank Nugent. "Come to the study!"

Arthur Augustus was marched into the School House in the midst of the juniors. Arthur Augustus had some little ways that were all his own, but he was very popular with the Greyfriars chums. With all his elegant manners and customs, and his remarkable accent, they knew he was one of the best, and at their last meeting, on the occasion of a footer match, he had kicked a goal for St. Jim's under great difficulties. And the Famous Five were just the fellows to appreciate a good footballer at his true value.

No. 1 Study in the Remove presented a very cheery aspect. It was a cold afternoon, and a cheery fire blazed and sparkled in the grate. A spotless tablecloth had been borrowed from Mrs. Kobble for the occasion. The array of crockery on the table was really imposing, and the fact that it represented six or seven different patterns only gave it a pleasing variety.

The walk from Wapshot and the keen, frosty air had given Arthur Augustus a good appetite, and he was fully prepared to do justice to the spread that had been prepared. And it was a topping spread. Such a distinguished visit was not an occasion for war-time economy.

Arthur Augustus' noble face beamed good-temperedly over the board. He chatted away cheerfully with his kind hosts. And the juniors kept quite grave faces while Gussy explained how unlucky it was that Captain Lord Conway hadn't had time to listen to his valuable tips on military matters.

There was a tap at the door while Gussy was speaking, and a fat face looked in, and Bunter's big glasses glimmered into the study.

Six glares were turned on the Owl of the Remove. The chums of Greyfriars were not proud of Bunter, and they did not yearn to show him off to visitors. But Billy Bunter was impervious to glares. He rolled in.

"Gussy, old chap!" he exclaimed affectionately. "How do you do? Fancy meetin' you here!"

"Bai Jove! Is that Buntah?"

"Your old pal Bunter," said the Owl of the Remove, stretching out a fat paw.

Arthur Augustus blinked at him, and took the paw. Arthur Augustus would have shaken hands with a rhinoceros rather than have hurt the animal's feelings.

"Glad to see you again, deah boy!" said D'Arcy politely.

"Quite an unexpected pleasure!" purred Bunter.

"The unexpectedness is terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The pleasurefulness is not so great!"

Bunter did not hear.

"I spotted you in the quad, Gussy," he said cheerfully. "I thought I'd drop in, as you were here."

"You are vevy good."

Bob Cherry had risen to get the teapot from the fender. He withdrew a little behind D'Arcy's chair, so that the swell of St. Jim's could not see him, and made furious gestures at Bunter. He pointed to the door with one hand, and shook the other hand clenched.

This was a strong hint that the Owl's company was not desired. Even Bob, though not accustomed to stand upon ceremony, did not care to sling the Owl out in the presence of the St. Jim's fellow.

But the strongest hints were no use to Bunter. He blinked at Bob over D'Arcy's unconscious head.

"Anything the matter, Cherry?" he asked calmly. "What are you waying your hands like that for? Not St. Vitus' dance, is it?"

Arthur Augustus glanced round, and Bob, with a crimson face, made a dive for the teapot. Bunter had quite disconcerted him.

"Anything the matter, Wharton?"

"Eh? No!"

"I thought you were looking rather queer."

"D-d-did you?" stammered Wharton.

"Yow-ow-ow!" suddenly roared Bunter.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Have you got a pain, Buntah?"

"Yow-ow! Some beast's trodden on my foot!" roared Bunter. "Can't you keep your big hoofs to yourself, Bull, you ass?"

"D-d-did I tread on you?" stammered Johnny Bull, crimsoning.

"Yes, you did, you fathead!"

"Ahem! Sorry," said Johnny Bull, with a basilisk look.

He was sorry, in a way—sorry that he couldn't take Bunter by the neck and pitch him into the passage.

"Well, don't be so jolly clumsy!" said Bunter. "I wish you wouldn't shove your elbow into my ribs like that, Toddy!"

"I—I—did I?"

"Yes, you did. Can't you be careful? Your elbow's jolly bony, you know! Got a chair for a chap?" asked Bunter, blinking round.

There was complete silence. Billy Bunter grunted and dragged a box to the table. There was no room for Bunter, but he wedged in beside D'Arcy, and the St. Jim's junior politely moved his chair to make room for him.

"You can fill my cup, Bob," said Bunter calmly. "Is that ham, Wharton? Pass it this way. Can I pass you anything, Gussy?"

"Thank you, no, Buntah!"

Billy Bunter commenced operations on the feed. So far as that was concerned, the Famous Five did not mind. It was Bunter's charming society and his odious familiarity with their guest that they objected to.

In spite of Arthur Augustus' Chesterfieldian manners, he winced when Bunter called him Gussy. Harry Wharton & Co. addressed him as D'Arcy, but that was not familiar enough for Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was on pally terms with Lord Eastwood's son, whether the unfortunate Gussy liked it or not, and he meant that there should be no mistake about the fact.

"Four lumps of sugar, Bob!" said Bunter cheerily. "Don't practise war economy on your pals!"

Bob, with a sulphurous look, shoved the sugar-basin towards Bunter.

"Where's the tongs?" asked Bunter.

Sugar-tongs were wanting. Such things would happen in junior studies. Whether there were tongs or not, Bunter never troubled to use them. A fat finger and thumb served his purpose always. For some reason best known to himself, Billy Bunter had grown remarkably particular on a sudden.

There was no reply to Bunter's question, and the fat junior helped himself to sugar with a spoon. It was surprising that he did not use his fat fingers.

The cheery conversation had been interrupted by Bunter's addition to the party.

Bunter's fixed idea was that he was a brilliant conversationalist, and he always annexed the lion's share of the conversation when he had a chance. He had a chance now, as D'Arcy's politeness was unlimited, and the chums of the Remove were dubious about slinging Bunter out just then.

"What are you doing over here, Gussy?" he asked.

"I came to visit my bwothah at Wapshot," said Arthur Augustus.

"Home on leave—eh?" said Bunter. "I'm rather expecting some of my relations home on leave. General Bunter may be back any day!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And I've had a letter from Colonel Bunter about it, too," said Bunter. "You may have heard of him—Colonel Bunter of the Loamshire Regiment!"

"Bai Jove! That is my majah's wegiment!" said Arthur Augustus. "Which battalion is he in, Buntah?"

"Ahem! I—I meant the West Riding Regiment," said Bunter hastily. "I've got lots of relations at the Front. Ogilvy brags about having six brothers out there, but I've got more than that—in fact, dozens!"

"Dozens of bwothahs?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "The Buntahs must be a vevy numewous family—a most wemarkable family!"

"Nunno—dozens of relations, I meant. It was Colonel Bunter who led the attack on Liege."

"On Liege?"

"Yes, rather," said Bunter. "Pass the cake, Bob!"

"Gweat Scott! Is Colonel Bunter in the German Army?" asked the astonished Arthur Augustus.

"Eh? No, of course not!"

"But Liege was attacked by the Germans, Buntah!"

"W-w-was it? I—I didn't mean Liege: I—I meant Cologne."

"But Cologne has not been attacked yet, so fah as I've evah heard," said Arthur Augustus, puzzled. "The Bwedish twoops have not yet weached the Whine."

"Of course, I—I meant Brussels," said Bunter. "You can fill my cup again, Bob, as you're standing up."

Arthur Augustus gave Bunter a rather keen look, and allowed the attack on Brussels to pass without comment. Unsuspicious as he was, Arthur Augustus could not help discerning that Bunter was a fibber of no ordinary magnitude.

"You haven't filled my cup, Bob!"

Bob Cherry picked up the teapot. He leaned over Bunter's shoulder to fill his cup. Perhaps it was an accident—but the tea, instead of going into Bunter's cup, went in a hot stream on Bunter's fat knees.

"Yaroooogh!"

There was a terrific roar from Bunter

as he jumped up. His seat flew backwards, and the back of his fat hand caught Arthur Augustus on the chin, and there was a yelp from D'Arcy.

Bunter roared.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yah! Yooooop!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Great Secret!

"OH, cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus rubbed his noble chin.

Billy Bunter wriggled and roared.

"You clumsy ass! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Is it hot, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry innocently.

"Hot, you fathead! I'm scalded! Yow-ow-ow!"

"I twust you are not hurt, Buntah?"

"Of course I'm hurt, you ass!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You'd better go and change your trucks, Bunter," said Johnny Bull.

"I'll come with you, Bunter," remarked Todd.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bunter.

"I'm not so jolly wet as all that. Bob's a silly, clumsy ass, that's all!"

"Shall I pour out some more tea for you, Bunter?" asked Bob, in a suffocating voice.

"Yow! No! I don't want any more tea."

"You really ought to change your bags, Bunter," said Wharton.

"Oh, rats!"

Billy Bunter dragged the box to the table again and sat down. The study was not to get rid of him so easily as all that.

"I've barked my hand," growled Bunter, sucking it. "I've knocked my hand on something—"

"It was my chin, Buntah," said Arthur Augustus mildly.

"Well, it might have been worse: might have knocked it on the chair," said Bunter. "Never mind!"

Arthur Augustus looked rather taken aback for a moment. Evidently the damage to his noble chin did not count for much in Bunter's estimation.

"I think I'll sample the lemonade," said Bunter. "Don't let that dangerous ass Cherry handle the teapot again! Lemme see, I was saying something to you, Gussy."

"Were you, Buntah?"

"We shall have to begin thinking about cricket pretty soon," remarked Harry Wharton.

"I wish you wouldn't interrupt me, Wharton! You're like a sheep's head," said Bunter. "All jaw, you know. He, he, he!"

"Why, you—ahem—ahem!"

"You can expect me over at St. Jim's shortly, Gussy," went on Bunter. "I promised to give you a look-in a long time ago, but I haven't really had time: so many engagements, you know."

"Yaas?"

"And you can depend on me for the next vac. Lord Mauleverer has asked me to go to his place, but I told him my old pal came first. I've agreed to let him have a week later."

"Oh!"

"The fact is, I shall probably astonish you the next time I see you," said Bunter. "I've had some news that will astonish some fellows. I expect a lot of jealousy here. But there's really a sort of fellow-feeling between us two, Gussy."

"Is there weally?" said D'Arcy, in surprise.

"Certainly! It's a sort of connection, the fact that our people came over together with the Conqueror."

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"Did they, bai Jove?"

"Yes. Sir Fulke de Bunter was at the Battle of Flodden, you know, where William defeated Alfred the Great."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry; and the other juniors chuckled. Even Arthur Augustus grinned at the idea of William the Conqueror and Alfred the Great meeting at the Battle of Flodden.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter crossly. "These chaps don't know much about history, Gussy. Of course, they haven't the same interest in it that I have, as they don't belong to a noble family. They will look a bit green when our family title is revived. I dare say you know a lot about these things. You've heard of Lord Bunter?"

"Nevah, deah boy."

"The title became extinct," said Bunter. "But it may be revived, if claimed by the right branch of the family. My pater's claiming it."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob.

The great mystery was out now.

This was the reason of the extraordinary and amazing swank Billy Bunter had been displaying that afternoon.

Evidently he had received a letter from his pater, announcing the glorious news.

"Lord Bunter!" murmured Wharton.

"Grand Duke of the Tuckshop!" chuckled Nugent. "Or Viscount Postal-Order!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar in the study. The juniors could not help it. The idea of Billy Bunter as a member of the nobility was a little too much for them. And the idea of Bunter senior, the fat, florid City man, with a seat in the House of Peers, was only a little less excruciating. They yelled.

Billy Bunter blinked at them angrily through his spectacles. He could not see that the revival of the title of the Bunter family was a laughing matter. The discovery that he was in reality of noble race did not come as a surprise to Bunter. Far from it! He had always felt a sense of superiority—a sense of very decided superiority over other fellows. This discovery accounted for it.

He gave D'Arcy a somewhat bitter smile.

"You see," he said, "that's the kind of jealousy I've got to expect from these commoners."

"Commoners!" gasped Peter Todd.

"Oh, my hat!"

"You'll understand me, Gussy, as your pater's a lord, too."

"Too!" shrieked Nugent. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! This is vewy intew-estin'," said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon Bunter very curiously. "Has your patah been gwanted the title, Buntah?"

"Not yet," said Bunter. "He's going to take the matter to the House of Lords, though, when he's got a bit more evidence to go upon. But it's quite clear. One of those johnnies who hunt up pedigrees and things found it out: you know, there's a lot of johnnies do that for a living. Well, this man, Hooker, found it out, and came to my pater and told him. The evidence is clear enough. They've got to dig into a lot of old records to get proof positive, that's all, then the claim is going before the House of Lords. The title was borne by John de Bunter, in the reign of Henry the Fourth, and we are the lineal descendants of John de Bunter. My pater's Lord Bunter really."

"Bai Jove!"

"I tal' the second title, when—when the claim's established—I'm Viscount Bunter," said the Owl of the Remove,

with dignity. "My young brother's the Honourable Samuel Bunter, really."

"Never noticed anything honourable about him," remarked Johnny Bull.

"It's his title, fathead! You don't know anything about these things," said Bunter scornfully. "You don't belong to an old family."

"There were Bulls in England before the Conqueror came," grinned Nugent.

"And Cherries," chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I congwatulate you, Buntah," said Arthur Augustus. "I twust your patah will succeed in makin' out his claim, if—if it is well founded."

"No doubt about that," said Bunter. "The Bunters are mentioned all through English history. There was a Bunter with old Alfred when he burnt the cakes!"

"After the Conqueror came?" yelled Bob.

"Yes—I—I mean no—before, of course! The Bunters distinguished themselves in the Wars of the Roses, too, with—with Marlborough—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not Wellington?" asked Harry Wharton.

"You can cackle as much as you like. You'll look pretty green when I'm entered on the school books as Viscount Bunter. When I go up to Oxford I shall wear a tassel," said Bunter. "All noblemen do. It marks them out from the common herd."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I shall have to be gettin' off," said Arthur Augustus. "I have to catch the six twain at Courtfield."

The juniors rose.

"I'll come with you, Gussy," said Bunter affectionately. "The fact is, it's rather a relief to be with a fellow-nobleman, after these common rotters!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You can glare at me, Bull," said Bunter, "but I mean it! I don't believe in any of your rotten Radicalism! I believe in keeping up the privileges of the privileged classes. I don't believe in letting common people into anything. If I had my way, I'd abolish the House of Commons! The House of Lords ought to govern the country, of course—the D'Arcys and Bunters—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" yelled Bunter. "Ha, ha! We can, and we will! Ha, ha, ha!"

"The cacklefulness is terrific, my esteemed, idiotic Bunter!"

"I don't intend to have much more to say to you fellows," said Bunter, glaring at them wrathfully, "especially you, Toddy! I don't mind keeping on speaking terms with you, Inky. You're a nigger, but you're a prince, after all. But a nobleman must keep up his station. I want you other fellows to understand, once for all, that you're required to keep your distance!"

"Please do not honour me with your esteemed friendship, my ludicrous and respected Bunter!" implored Hurreo Janset Ram Singh. "I would rather give up my esteemed rank and be a common or garden person!"

"You fellows needn't come to the station!" said Bunter. "I'm going to the station with my pal Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus gazed at Bunter as if the fat junior's far from beautiful features mesmerised him. He was not used to Bunter—and Bunter wanted some getting used to.

"You'll excuse us, D'Arcy, won't you?" said Wharton.

And he made a sign to his chums, and several pairs of hands were laid upon the fat person of the new nobleman.

"Here, leggo!" roared Bunter.

"None of your common tricks with me, you low bounders! Yarough!"

Viscount Bunter went whirling through the doorway. The Removites had been very patient; but patience had its limits, and the Owl of the Remove had reached the limit. There was a loud bump in the passage, and a louder roar.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "Is that extraordinary person quite wight in the head, deah boys?"

"Not quite," chuckled Bob—"not at all, in fact! Come on! Wipe your boots on the noble viscount as you pass, you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove marched out with Arthur Augustus. The latter politely avoided the sprawling Owl, but the rest trod upon him with great care, amid a succession of wild yells from the viscount. The little party started merrily for Courtfield, but Arthur Augustus went unaccompanied by his fellow-nobleman. He seemed quite satisfied with the company of mere commoners, however. Viscount Bunter remained in the Remove passage, trying to get his second noble wind.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

What Peter Todd Might Do!

PETER TODD found Billy Bunter in Study No. 7 when he came back from the walk to Courtfield.

Peter looked at his study-mate very curiously.

Billy Bunter was the biggest duffer in the Remove, certainly; but his latest sample of rot was extraordinary, even for Bunter.

The Remove fellows had heard a great deal about Bunter's titled relations. They never seemed to come to Greyfriars, certainly. Nobody but Billy Bunter had ever beheld them. Like Bunter's equally well-known postal-order, they never arrived.

But for Billy Bunter himself to set up in life, so to speak, as a nobleman was really a corker, as Peter called it.

Peter's shrewd idea was that some impecunious gentleman, in need of money, had invented that story to spoof the elder Bunter. He had heard of such things before. The fat and self-satisfied City gentleman had probably been very pleased and flattered when the "expert investigator" had informed him that he was the direct heir of the ancient line of De Bunter. He had not been slow to believe that there was an extinct earldom in the Bunter family, and doubtless he had parted with fees to enable the "expert" to continue his valuable investigations. Mr. Bunter would not be the first conceited and snobbish old donkey who had been spoofed in such a manner, and probably he would not be the last. But that there was anything in the claim, Peter would have required a great deal of evidence to convince him.

But Billy Bunter evidently had no doubts. Like his pater, he had swallowed the yarn as greedily as a gudgeon.

The fat junior had always been conceited and given to swank, though what on earth Billy Bunter had to be conceited about was a deep mystery to the rest of the Remove.

But his conceit of old was as nothing to his conceit now. It was "as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine." The Owl of the Remove was puffed up by the supposed discovery till he was hardly recognisable.

His father was an earl—of the same rank as D'Arcy's father! He—William George—was a viscount, the rank of D'Arcy's elder brother. Even his minor, Sammy, was an honourable. It was more than enough to take Bunter's breath

away. There had been only one lord at Greyfriars hitherto—Lord Mauleverer of the Remove, who did not swank at all. Now there would be two—and Bunter certainly would be sure to swank enough for two.

No wonder Bunter had insisted upon sharing D'Arcy's company that after-noon. In Gussy's company, he felt himself on his natural level. He was imbued with a lofty contempt for commoners, a deep scorn for the vulgar herd, such scorn being, in Bunter's valuable opinion, a natural trait in a nobleman's character.

Bunter was very busy in the study when Peter came in. He was standing before the looking-glass, apparently making faces at himself in the glass. In

top again. It was "looking a fellow up and down" once more, though Peter did not know it.

"I think I've mentioned to you, Peter Todd, that I want none of your disgustin' familiarity!" said Bunter cuttingly.

"My—my what?"

"Disgustin' familiarity!"

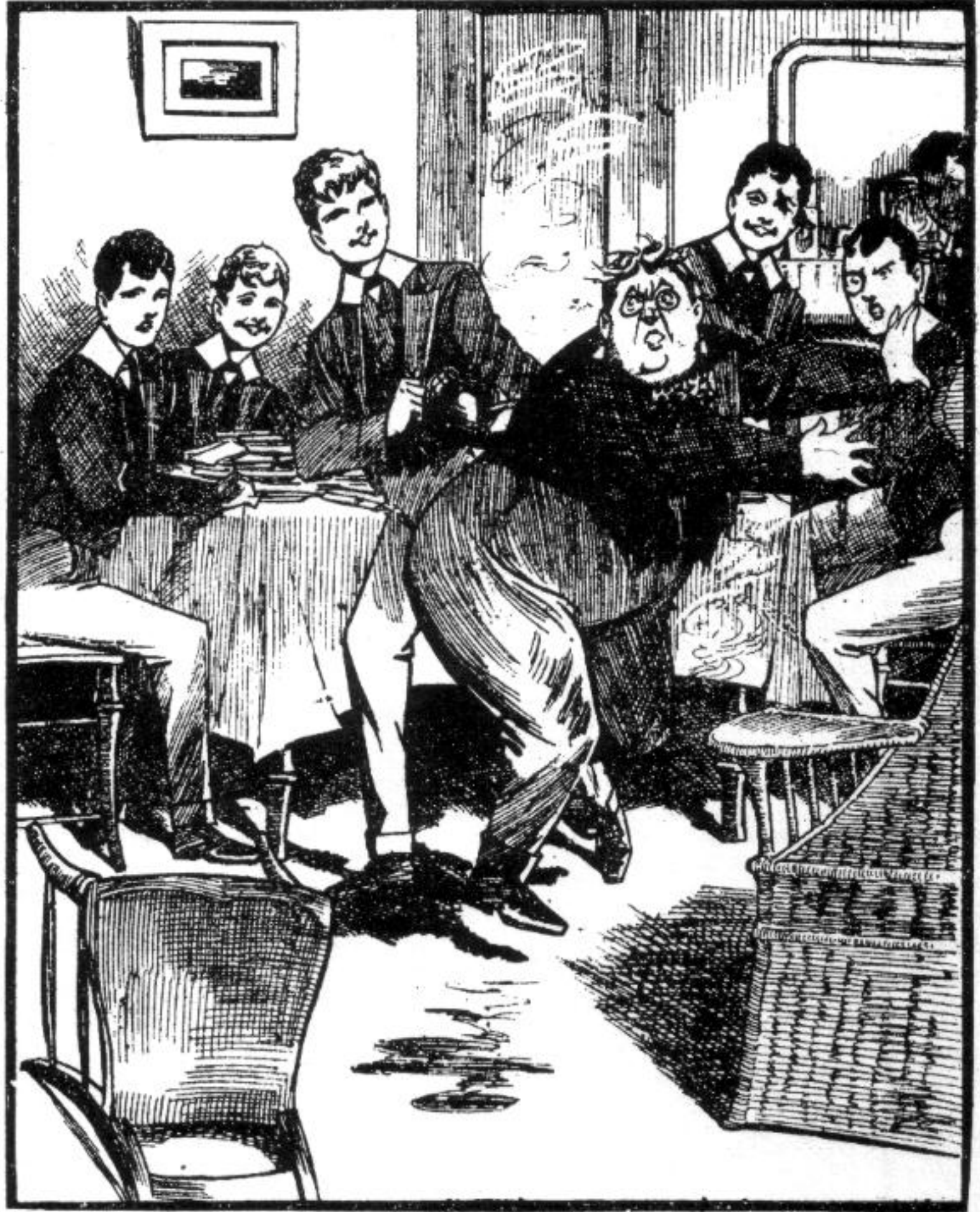
"Disgusting," said Peter—"not disgustin'!"

"Aristocrats never pronounce the 'g,'" said Bunter calmly. "Of course, you wouldn't know that!"

Peter gasped.

"As we're in the same study, I suppose I shall have to go on knowin' you!" said Bunter. "But I insist upon your keepin' your distance!"

"My word!" murmured Peter.



The tea went in a hot steam on Bunter's fat knees.

(See Chapter 3.)

reality, he was trying hard to catch the scornful curl of the lip that distinguished Cecil Ponsonby of Highcliffe. It did not seem to come, somehow. Bunter varied his efforts by an attempt at the calm repose of D'Arcy's countenance, but that would not come either. The fat, puffy cheeks and the fat little pig nose did not seem to lend themselves to an expression of aristocratic calm. Then Bunter strove to reproduce the half-cynical smile of De Courcy—the Caterpillar of Highcliffe—and his expression was so weird that Peter Todd uttered an exclamation of alarm.

"Bunter, you fat duffer, are you ill?"

Billy Bunter spun round from the glass. He folded his arms, and surveyed Peter from top to toe, and from toe to

"It's a bit rotten that I can't have a study to myself, as Mauly did before Delarey came," said Bunter. "Perhaps you'd like to change out, Toddy, an' take Dutton an' Alonzo with you? It would really be more comfy for me."

"Who would you sponge on at tea-time, then?" asked Toddy.

"I think it's very probably that the Bunter estates go with the title," said Bunter. "In that case, I shall be as rich as Mauly. You can hardly expect me, under the circumstances, to be friendly with a solicitor's son."

Peter seemed to find breathing hard.

"Meanwhile, I shall allow you to make me a loan every now and then," said Bunter magnanimously. "I don't intend exactly to cut you."

"Kik-kik-cut me!" breathed Peter.
"Some of the fellows, though, I shall simply have to cut—that scholarship bounder, Linley, for example! I can't go on speakin' to him!"

"Speakin'!" murmured Peter.
"And fellows like Bull; the Bulls are commonplace! I don't know about Wharton. He belongs to a decent family, I think. Of course, a nobleman is bound to be a bit particular."

Peter Todd picked up a cricket-stump—the stump he kept specially for Bunter; but he laid it down again, much to the nobleman's relief.

"I won't lick you, Bunter," said Todd, with a deep breath. "You're asking for it, but I won't. You'll get enough lickings in the Remove without any from me if you keep on like this!"

"I shall hope the Remove will show a proper respect for a chap of my rank!"

"Oh, my hat! Do you remember, Bunter, I kicked you out of the study a few weeks ago for some of your rot?"

"If you touch me with your plebeian hands, Todd—"

"My—my what?"

"Plebeian hands!" said Bunter scornfully.

"Mum-mum-my plebeian hands!" said Peter Todd faintly. "You take the biscuit, Bunt!"

"Don't call me Bunt!"

"Eh?"

"I'm only Bunt to my social equals."

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Peter. "I let

you come back into this study, Bunt. I'll let you stay. It's an honour to share a study with a nobleman—such a real nobleman, with such noble manners. But draw it mild! If I have too much of your funny business I shall land out—like that!"

"Yaroo!" yelled Bunter.

"Or I might kick you—like that!"

"Yooop!"

"I might even take you by the neck—like that!"

"Gurrrrgg!"

"And sling you out of the study—like that!"

Bump!

"And kick you along the passage—like that—and that—and that!"

"Yaroo! Yow-ow-ow! Help! Yah!"

Bunter fled wildly, and Peter Todd dribbled him along to the stairs. Frank Nugent looked out of No. 1.

"What's the row?"

"Yow-ow-ow-woop!"

"Only showing Bunter what I might do if he's too funny," gasped Peter.

"Do you understand now, Bunter, or shall I show you some more?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter apparently understood sufficiently, for he bolted downstairs at top speed, without waiting for any further demonstration. And Peter Todd returned to his study, grinning. It was much more comfortable without the vicount.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Viscount Bunter!

THERE were merry faces in the junior Common-room that evening.

Billy Bunter was the single topic.

Bunter's claim to be admitted to the select ranks of the nobility came, as Vernon-Smith remarked, as a welcome relief from war-worry.

Nobody, unfortunately, believed in the genuineness of the claim. Either old Mr. Bunter was indulging in swank, or he was being spoofed by some unscrupulous imposter. That was the general opinion.

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That communication from Bunter senior found only one believer in the Remove, and that was Bunter junior.

Bunter seemed surprised by the general hilarity with which the news had been received. He had fully expected the fellows to bow down and worship, as it were. The Remove didn't. They cackled. Even Fisher T. Fish, who like a true republican would have walked a mile to see a lord, only cackled, and guessed that Bunter's nobility was "some" spoof.

If Bunter turned out really to be a peer of the realm, the Remove considered that he would not be a credit to the House of Lords. They wondered, indeed, how the other lords would stand him when he got there. Mauleverer was the only lord Bunter had met so far, and Mauly could not stand him at any price. But there was not supposed to be much chance of William George Bunter taking his seat in that august assembly as Lord Bunter de Bunter.

Bunter's line of action since he had received the great news made the juniors chortle. His fixed belief was that swank was one of the natural gifts of the real aristocracy. Lord Mauleverer, certainly, had never been suspected of swank. Nobody would have guessed that Mauleverer was an earl, except, perhaps, from his urbane politeness to people who happened to be below him in station. But that was not Bunter's idea of a lord—not by any means!

The Common-room was very anxious for Bunter to come in that evening. As a rule, his presence was not yearned after. But just now he was an object of great interest. And when the fat junior came in, all eyes were turned upon him. Bunter did not mind that—indeed, it seemed to him exactly as it should be. But he could not see why all the fellows were grinning. That was not a part of the programme at all, from Bunter's point of view.

"Hail!" said Bolsover major.

"All hail!" said Skinner.

"The hailfulness is terrific, most noble and distinguished lord!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Where's your belt, Bunter?" asked Squiff.

"Eh! I don't wear a belt," said Bunter puzzled.

The Australian junior looked perplexed.

"Of course, we haven't any earls in New South Wales," he said. "But I've read of belted earls. Ain't you a belted earl? I thought that was the only genuine variety, all others spurious imitations."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Field, you silly ass!" began Bunter wrathfully.

Sampson Quincy Iffley Field walked round Bunter, scanning him on all sides. Bunter viewed that proceeding with growing annoyance.

"What are you up to, you fathead?" he exclaimed.

"Only looking at you," said Squiff innocently. "I'm interested in earls—especially such jelly fat ones."

"I'm not an earl, you ass. My pater's an earl. I'm a viscount."

"Viscount Bunter, of that ilk!" chortled Ogilvy.

"And I don't want any of your common jokes," said Bunter angrily. "I don't believe in this dashed Socialism. Noblemen ought to be treated with respect."

"Oh, by gad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"What a butter Bunter will make when he grows up!" chuckled Russell. "That lofty pride and scorn for common mortals—it's wasted here. Bunter ought

to be adorning the hall of a mansion in Belgrave Square."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tell us all about it, Bunt," urged Bob Cherry. "Sorry—I mean my lord! Tell us all about it, my lord."

"I don't mind tellin' you," said Bunter loftily. "It's come out that my pater is the real heir of the ancient line of Bunter de Bunter. Our ancestral line goes back to the Conquest."

"Jolly useful, an ancestral line in the family," remarked Skinner. "I suppose the ancestral washing was hung out on the ancestral line, Bunter?"

"You silly ass, I don't mean that kind of a line. I mean a pedigree."

"Oh, you've got a pedigree, like a prize dog?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I refuse to discuss the matter with you, Skinner. You're low!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Harold Skinner.

"Most of you fellows are low," continued Bunter, surveying the juniors with a glance of ineffable scorn. "I'll thank you to keep your distance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites shrieked. Bunter's head—never very strong—had evidently been quite turned by his good fortune. He was so puffed up with vanity now that what little wisdom he had ever possessed had quite deserted him. It was impossible to be angry with him. The juniors could only yell.

"Now you know what the Kaiser's like when he's at home," gurgled Peter Todd. "This is a second edition of his gorgeous greatness."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't want any of your familiar jokes, Peter Todd! Perhaps," said Bunter loftily, "perhaps I may get your father a job on my estate. I dare say I shall want a lot of lawyers to look after my estates."

"And when you come into them, will you settle up the seven-and-six you owe me from last term?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mind you're careful when you order your coronet," said Tom Brown. "You'll want a good size in coronets, if your head goes on swelling at this rate."

"You'll let us come and hear your maiden speech in the House, Bunter?" chuckled Hazeldene.

"Nothin' of the kind," said Bunter. "The fact is, I don't mind speakin' to you here, but outside Greyfriars I shall have to draw a line."

"An ancestral line?" asked Hazel.

"You silly ass!"

"Won't you own us in public, my lord?" asked Bob Cherry tearfully. "Mustn't we even look from afar upon your refulgent greatness?"

Billy Bunter snorted and turned away. He rolled over to where Lord Mauleverer was sitting, and gave his lordship a very affable nod. Now that they were of equal rank, Bunter expected Mauly to be chummy. They were birds of a feather, in a way, as the only two lords at Greyfriars. To Bunter's surprise and annoyance, Lord Mauleverer left his seat and retired to the sofa as Bunter sat down. Bunter rose again, and followed him to the sofa.

"I'm goin' to have a little chat with you, Mauly," he said agreeably.

"Oh, begad!" groaned Mauleverer.

"I'm goin' to pal with you, old chap," said Bunter, beaming. "You're my equal."

"Am I, begad?"

"Yaas, wathah," said Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer fell helplessly back on the sofa. To hear Bunter imitating Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble accent in that manner almost floored him.

"Wha-a-at?" he stammered.

"Yaas, wathah."

Billy Bunter was getting on. He had started by dropping his final "g's," in the natty manner. Success emboldened him, and now he had gone the whole hog, so to speak, and reproduced Gussy's striking accent in its entirety. There was a yell that was almost hysterical in the Common-room. That accent seemed natural enough in D'Arcy of St. Jim's. It was one of his ways, and was second nature with him. In Bunter it was excruciating. It did not suit his fat voice at all.

"Oh, begad!" groaned Mauleverer. "Don't, Bunter! You're killin' me!"

"Bai Jove!" said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish you rotters would stop that cacklin'," said Bunter. "You ought to know bettah than to go on interruptin' your bettahs in that way."

But the juniors only shrieked. Bunter's new accent put the lid on, as Bob Cherry remarked. It was the finishing touch—all Bunter wanted to make himself complete.

"Bai Jove!" yelled Bob. "Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come away, Mauly," said Bunter haughtily. "This isn't a place for fellows like us. Come up to my study, deah boy."

"Goin' up to your study?" asked Mauleverer.

"Yaas."

"Then I'll stay here, thanks."

"Oh, then I'll stay, too!" said Bunter, settling down again.

"You're goin' to stay?"

"Yaas."

"Then I'll go."

And Lord Mauleverer went, leaving Viscount Bunter blinking on the sofa, and the rest of the Common-room yelling.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

One Pound Sterling!

THE next day Bunter's new role was still the chief topic in the Remove. Even the Rookwood footer match was a small thing by comparison. Bunter was the cynosure of all eyes. His newly-acquired stunt was worth watching. It was a little difficult to strut with so much weight to carry; but Bunter strutted. His little fat nose was incessantly turned up, and he had cultivated a glance that was quite as supercilious as Ponsonby's. It was not difficult, with practice, to look as snobbish and ill-natured as Ponsonby of Highcliffe. But the D'Arcy manner, which Bunter was also cultivating, came a little harder.

It was learned that Bunter was expecting his pater to see him on Saturday, and the juniors were looking forward to seeing the new earl. How the fat and purple-complexioned City gentleman would look as an earl was an interesting question. Bunter was asked if his pater would come in his coronet—an impertinent question which he declined to answer. But from the fact that the viscount was seeking to borrow bobs in the Remove that day, it seemed that the family estates of Bunter de Bunter had not arrived with the title.

The position was, indeed, a little awkward for the viscount. There was the bluest of blue blood in his fat veins; he had an ancestral line stretching back to the days of Norman William and the other undesirable aliens who had come over with him. Yet he was in need, dire need, of the humble bob. Fellows ought to have been proud to lend bobs to a peer of the realm; but they weren't. The peer could not be relied upon to return them.

Bunter thought of that awkward matter rather seriously. He suggested to Lord Mauleverer that it was up to him, as a nobleman, to whack out some of his ample pocket-money to another nobleman who was temporarily short. Lord Mauleverer did not seem to see it. Indeed, strange to relate, the noble Mauly found it harder than ever to stand Bunter now that he was a nobleman. How they would get on together later on in the House of Lords was a problem. Mauly was getting into a habit of breaking into a run whenever he saw Bunter; and he had the advantage there, as Bunter had too much weight to carry to be able to run a race.

After lessons that day the Owl of the Remove waylaid Harry Wharton & Co. on their way to the footer ground. His manner was not so lofty now.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Buzz off, my lord!" said Bob Cherry.

"The fact is, I don't want to cut you chaps," said Bunter. "You—you mustn't mind what I said yesterday. Perhaps I was hasty."

"Not at all," said Wharton. "Give us the cut direct, old chap; we'll take it as a personal favour from the nobility."

"I say, you fellows, don't walk away while I'm talkin' to you!" Bunter toddled after the Famous Five as they strode on. "The fact is, Cherry, I'm not goin' to drop you. I—I don't mind your pater being a poor old major."

Bunter had come down out of the clouds a little. Until he came into the family estates he had realised that noble hauteur had better be kept within limits. It could be reserved for fellows like Skinner and Snoop, who would never lend him anything in any case.

"Same with you, Bull," said Bunter. "You can't help bein' a commonplace chap, an' I'm goin' to be friendly."

"You'd better begin being friendly with me!" said Johnny Bull, in a tone that implied, however, that Bunter had better not.

"The—the fact is, till the matter's settled in the House of Lords, I may be rather short of money," explained Bunter. "It's bound to take some time—lords don't hurry themselves, you know. It might be weeks."

"Or years!" grinned Nugent.

"Or centuries!" chuckled Bob. "Might never come off at all, in fact."

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, you fellows, I'm expectin' a postal-order—"

"Still expecting a postal-order?" exclaimed Bob, in astonishment. "Make it a cheque now you're a viscount, old chap. It sounds more wealthy, and you're just as likely to get it."

"It will be for a pound," said Bunter, unheeding. "I suppose you chaps could lend me something off it? Of course, you can depend on my handin' you the postal-order immediately it comes. On the word of a nobleman!" added Bunter, with dignity.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you cacklin' asses—"

Bob Cherry halted.

"You're sure the postal-order's coming, Bunter?" he asked, with great seriousness.

"Absolutely!"

"And it will be for a pound?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha! I mean, if you're sure, there's no reason why I shouldn't give you a pound now."

"No reason at all," said Bunter eagerly. "I give you my word as a nobleman to hand you the postal-order. And—and I'll go on speakin' to you, Cherry—I will, really."

"You're too good," said Bob. "I don't know what I've done to deserve this kindness from the nobility and gentry. Still, if you'd like me to hand you a

pound—or two pounds for that matter—I'm your man!"

"Hand 'em over!" gasped Bunter, scarcely believing in his good luck. This was almost better than a patent of nobility. Two pounds meant a huge supply of tuck; and he could eat that. And he couldn't eat his nobility.

"Sure you want 'em?"

"Yes, yes!" Bunter was so eager that he forgot to say "Yaas." "Hand 'em over, Bob!"

"Right-ho!" said Bob. "Here you are!"

Thump!

"Yow-ow!" roared Bunter, staggering back. "You silly ass, wharret you at?"

"Pounding you," said Bob innocently. "Didn't you ask me to give you a pound?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come and have the other," said Bob.

"I promised you two pounds."

"Yow-ow-ow! You dangerous idiot!" shrieked Bunter, dodging away. "You—you—Yaroo! Keep him off! Yow-ow! Yah!"

Billy Bunter fled. He did not want the other pound. The Famous Five went on to the football-field, chuckling, and the fat viscount did not follow.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as a sound of yelling in the quad caught his ears. "Who's in trouble?"

"Bunter minor," grinned Nugent.

The juniors looked at the scene. Sammy Bunter of the Second Form was grasped in the hands of Dicky Nugent, Gatty, Myers, and another fag. They were bumping him against a tree, and Bunter minor was roaring.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Are you trying to burst him?" asked Bob Cherry.

"What's up, Dicky?" asked Frank Nugent.

Nugent minor looked round.

"We're bumping him," he said.

"I can see that, fathead. What for?"

"He says he's an honourable now," said Dicky Nugent wrathfully. "If he's honourable, he shouldn't pinch the cake out of a chap's desk, should he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Sammy.

"Leggo!"

"He's been putting on side in the Form-room!" howled Gatty. "Told us we were common persons—us, you know. We'll give him honourable!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sammy Bunter broke loose and fled across the quad, with the fags whooping in pursuit.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Sammy's been playing the ox, like his merry major, in the Second Form. The fags don't seem to like it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five walked on, chuckling. The newly-discovered nobility of the Bunter family had evidently got into Sammy's head, as well as Billy's. Whether it was genuine or not, so far it had produced more kicks than halfpence.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Needy Nobleman!

PETER TODD and Tom Dutton were at tea in Study No. 7, when Bunter's fat face glimmered in at the door. Peter glanced at him, and went on with his tea. The Owl insinuated himself into the study rather nervously. He never quite knew how to take Peter Todd, and only that afternoon he had expressed lofty contempt for Peter's humble ancestry. But, to Bunter's relief, Peter did not look round for the stump.

Tom Dutton gave Bunter a look. The deaf junior had been the last to hear of

the wonderful good fortune that had befallen the Bunters. But he had heard of it at last. He made no remark, however.

"Got somethin' decent for tea?" asked Bunter.

"Nothing suitable for a viscount," said Peter Todd. "Only the humble sardine, and the common or garden bloater-paste, and the merry war bread."

"Pretty rotten for a nobleman to have to eat war bread!" grumbled Bunter. "They ought to draw the line somewhere. War bread could be reserved for common people."

"Well, this little lot is going to be," said Peter affably. "Likewise the sardines and the bloater-paste."

"I've come in to tea, Todd!"

"You don't feel that your dignity would suffer by having tea in the same study with commoners?"

"Nunno!"

"Then your lordship can pile in, as soon as your Highness provides something to pile into."

Bunter drew a chair to the table, and sat down rather dubiously. He reached out a fat hand to the dish of sardines, and gave a loud yelp as Peter rapped it with the handle of a knife.

"Yoo-hoop!"

"Let that alone!" growled Peter.

"Look here, I'm goin' to have tea!" roared Bunter.

"Go ahead. Not my tea, though!"

"I—I say, Peter, don't be a stingy beast!"

"My dear chap, I hope I know my place better than to offer to stand treat to a haughty nobleman," said Peter calmly. "I should expect to be crushed to the floor by the lofty scorn of Vere de Vere Bunter de Bunter. Nothing doing!"

"I'm hungry."

"Do noblemen get hungry, like common persons?"

"Yes, you fathead!"

"Then you'd better hike along to the buffet of the House of Lords," advised Peter. "You'll meet your social equals there, and perhaps they will stand you something for tea."

"Look here, Peter, I want my tea!" howled Bunter. "I—I'm goin' to stand my whack when my postal-order comes, or when I come into the family estates."

"Leave your tea till then."

"But I'm hungry, you fathead! Look here, you can have the sardines, you measly bounder, and I'll have bread-and-butter!"

"War bread isn't good enough for a nobleman."

"But there isn't any other!" yelled Bunter.

"No; that's unfortunate!"

"You—you—you rotter! You want to do me out of my tea because you're jealous of my rank!" howled Bunter.

"Not at all. I'm simply going to stop you doing me out of my tea," said Peter.

"Keep your fat paws away, or you'll get another rap. This grub isn't good enough for a nobleman, and I'm not going to have a hand in derogating from the dignity of the nobility."

Billy Bunter gave Peter a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. At that moment he would rather have been a well-filled common mortal than a hungry viscount. He turned to Dutton as a last resource.

"I say, Dutton, you're going to let me have tea?"

"There isn't any mutton here, Bunter, and if there were, you shouldn't have any," said Dutton.

"Oh, you deaf ass!"

"Eh?"

"I'm hungry!" shrieked Bunter.

"Oh, I don't know about that!" said Tom judiciously. "I don't say you ought

to be hung. Bunter. You ought to be jolly well elouted!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

The Owl of the Remove gave his study-mates a Hunnish glare, and rolled out of the study. There was no tea for the viscount in No. 7, unless he stood it himself. And the viscount's financial circumstances did not enable him to do that.

Billy Bunter grunted discontentedly, resolving never to ask Peter Todd to Bunter Hall—when he came into his estates. He rolled along to No. 4, and found Vernon-Smith and Skinner at tea there. The Bounder pointed to the door.

"I say, you fellows—" began Bunter.

"Oh, get out!" said Vernon-Smith.

"The fact is, I've got a proposition to make to you, Smithy," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I've been thinking it over, and I think it's a good idea, which you ought to jump at. You're rich. Your pater is only a City man, but he's got tons of money. Well, my idea is this. You lend me some tin—"

"Bow-wow."

"And I'll stand by you in society," said Bunter.

"Wha-a-at!"

"That's fair play—give and take, you know," said Bunter, while Smithy stared at him in astonishment. "There's lots of it done now. The war profiteers, for example. They make lots of money, and they pay titled people to introduce them into society. So do Yankee millionaires. Well, I shouldn't be ashamed of you in society!"

"You wouldn't?" gasped the Bounder.

"Not at all! Of course you're a bit loud—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"And I wouldn't go so far as to say that your manners are specially good, or anythin' like that. But worse fellows than you have been introduced into tip-top society by hard-up titled people. Not that I'm hard up—it's merely a temporary embarrassment. But I mean it. You act like a pal towards me, and I'll see you through—introduce you at my home, let you see my high connections, and take you up generally."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner. "That's a good offer, Smithy. Jump at it!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Smithy.

"You see, that's the only way you vulgar new-rich people can get on in good society," said Bunter encouragingly. "Taken up by a viscount, you'll be all right. Why, pork-butcher millionaires from Chicago have paid thousands of dollars to be introduced in the West End. I don't say I could take up your pater."

"N-n-not my pater!" stuttered Smithy.

"Well, no. A chap must draw a line somewhere. But you've toned down wonderfully since you've been at Greyfriars, and I think I could introduce you among my high connections. Of course, I should expect you to act like a pal, and not be mean in money matters."

Vernon-Smith rose to his feet. He did not look as if he intended to accept Bunter's generous offer. Perhaps the viscount lacked tact a little in the way he had made it.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Bunter. "Is it a go? Here, I say, keep that cushion away, you mad idiot! Wharrer you at?"

The Bounder did not explain what he was at. He let his actions speak for themselves. The cushion rose and fell with mighty swipes, and Viscount Bunter roared like a bull, and dodged out of the study.

Vernon-Smith kicked the door shut after him. He had lost the great chance

of being introduced to Bunter's high connections. "Yow-ow-ow!" groaned Bunter, astonished and enraged by Smithy's reception of his offer. "Ow! The beast! Yow-ow-ow! The rotters! They're all jealous of me because I'm a—yow!—viscount. I wonder whether it would be any good with Fishy?"

Billy Bunter brightened up at the thought. Fisher T. Fish was a native of the great United States, and therefore regarded titled persons with an awe and admiration that approached veneration. Surely Fisher T. Fish could not be blind to the advantages of getting on pally terms with a member of the titled classes? He would be able to write home to New York about his friend, Viscount Bunter, and make all his acquaintances there green with envy. True, it was not easy to extract cash from Fisher T. Fish. Orpheus, who with his lute drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek, would have essayed in vain to draw a single shilling from Fisher T. Fish. But if Fishy would lend anything to anybody, it would be to a viscount, and Bunter resolved to try.

Fisher T. Fish was alone in the end study, Johnny Bull and Squiff being at tea in No. 1 with the Co. He grinned as Bunter came in.

"Hallo, my lord juke!" said Fishy.

"I've got somethin' to say to you, Fishy," said Bunter genially. "You know the way you suck up to Mauly, because he's a lord—"

"Hey?"

"Mauly never takes any notice of you," continued Bunter cheerfully. "He can't stand you at any price. But I don't believe in a nobleman bein' so standoffish as all that."

"You fat clam—"

"I have no objection to takin' you up, Fishy—no objection whatever. After all, you can't help bein' a Yankee."

"You silly jay!" roared Fish.

"Ahem! Now, my idea is that I should let you be friendly with me, and treat you, in fact, as an equal," explained Bunter. "Later on I undertake to introduce you into decent society. Mind, some Yankees pay hundreds of pounds for that. All I shall require will be a small loan now and then—"

"You—you—you clam!" gasped Fisher T. Fish, eyeing Bunter as if he would eat him. "Do you think I believe in your silly spoof? Why, a sharper tried the same game on my popper once—made out that the popper was descended from a titled family in this old island, and tried to screw dollars out of him! My popper was too 'cute for the jay. Yours isn't! Why, you fat idiot—"

"Look here, Fishy—"

"It's a regular business with some swindlers," said Fishy. "They find out some conceited old johnny who's got a screw loose, and butter him up, and screw tin out of him. That's the game. Your popper's being done, you fat clam!"

"I decline to discuss the matter with a low rotter!" said Bunter savagely. "You'll oblige me by not speakin' to me again, Fish! I bar Yankees!"

And Bunter turned on his heel to walk majestically out of the study, with his little fat nose elevated. His impressive

Write to the Editor of

ANSWERS

If you are not getting your right PENSION

exit was somewhat spoiled, however, by Fisher T. Fish running after him and planting a kick upon his stout person. Bunter pitched forward into the passage on his noble nose.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Fish. "Now come and have some more, you jay! I'll viscount you!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter scrambled up, shook an aristocratic fist at the grinning Fish, and rolled away, leaving the Yankee junior chuckling. A few minutes later he blinked in at Study No. 1, where the Famous Five and Squiff and Mark Linley were at tea. He had no time to speak. A loaf landed on his waistcoat, and he disappeared into the passage again.

Viscount Bunter had his tea in Hall that evening.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Earl Looks In!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! There's his nibs!"

Bob Cherry uttered that exclamation on Saturday afternoon as Mr. Bunter entered the gates of Greyfriars. The Famous Five were bound for the footer-ground for a match with the Upper Fourth. They paused a minute or two to glance at the fat City gentleman.

Mr. Bunter had come by train, and had evidently walked from the station. Once upon a time Mr. Bunter had done remarkably well on the Stock Exchange, some fluctuation of prices, owing to the war, having enriched him at the expense of his fellow-citizens. At that time Mr. Bunter had visited Greyfriars in a tremendous motor-car, and had handed out fivers as tips to his hopeful sons. But another fluctuation in the uncertain realms of finance had done the speculator quite brown. In that strange region of the City where you sell shares you do not possess, and buy shares that you cannot pay for, and make fortunes thereby, there are many ups and downs, and Mr. Bunter was getting some of the downs of late. The tremendous car had vanished, so had the fivers.

But Mr. Bunter was very much elated by the striking discovery that he was a member of the nobility. In his time he had parted with quite considerable sums to get a titled person on a list of directors; he knew the value of a title on a prospectus. Now he was going to be a titled person himself, and he would be equally valuable in that peculiar line. The name and style of Earl de Bunter would be enough to make any prospectus go. Besides the kudos, there would be a distinct financial gain in getting into the select ranks of the nobility. Probably that consideration made Mr. Bunter all the more willing to lend his ear to the flattering tale the astute Mr. Hooker poured into it.

Certainly he had listened to the voice of the charmer. Undoubtedly he had parted with the necessary fees to enable Mr. Hooker to pursue his valuable investigations concerning the ancestral line of the Bunter de Bunters.

Now he was expecting to receive conclusive evidence from the expert, which would make his claim to the peerage quite clear, and enable him to take his proper place in the Upper House.

And so, though he came without the big car, he looked a very consequential person as he came across the quadrangle at Greyfriars. The news had had much the same effect upon him as upon his son, though in a minor degree.

"Here he is!" said Skinner. "Walk up, you fellows! Come and see the merry earl! No charge!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you chaps!" said Harry Wharton. "Don't rag Bunter's pater. Keep that for Bunter!"

"Who's ragging him?" said Skinner. "I suppose it's up to us, as common persons, to treat the nobility with respect. I'm going to bow to the ground!"

"Same here!" chuckled Bolsover major. "Why shouldn't we pull the old donkey's leg?"

"All together!" said Skinner. "Give him a reception! He won't know you're pulling his leg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Quite a little crowd of juniors gathered round to follow Skinner's example. Pulling the fat leg of the consequential City gentleman was a little harmless and necessary amusement, in their opinion.

They became quite grave as Mr. Bunter approached. Billy Bunter and Sammy had joined the stout gentleman in the quad, and they were walking on either side of him—or, rather, strutting.

The sight of the fat gentleman and the two fat juniors made the Removites find it difficult to keep grave. Mr. Bunter himself seemed to consider the ground scarcely good enough for him to plant his aristocratic feet upon. Billy and Sammy had their fat little noses elevated to a remarkable extent.

"The blessed asses!" murmured Johnny Bull. "The old boy seems nearly as big an ass as Billy himself!"

The three Bunters arrived at the steps of the School House.

Skinner & Co., with solemn faces, raised their caps, and bowed down before them.

They bowed till their foreheads almost touched the ground.

Mr. Bunter smiled genially.

Perhaps he regarded that as a proper and fitting reception for a nobleman.

"Hail!" said Skinner.

"All hail!" said Bolsover major.

"Three cheers for Lord Bunter!" shouted Hazeldene.

"Hooray!"

"Hip, hip—hooray!"

Between bowing lines of juniors, Mr. Bunter walked on, himself bowing right and left like a royal personage.

He passed into the House, evidently in a state of the greatest satisfaction.

He had taken those low bows and the loud cheers as his due. No doubt the Greyfriars fellows were pleased and flattered by the visit.

The Famous Five hurried away to the footer-ground chuckling. Skinner & Co. were doubled up with merriment now that the Bunters had disappeared.

"We'll give him a send-off when he comes out!" chortled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fact that Mr. Bunter did not perceive that the young rascals were pulling his leg added to Skinner & Co.'s merriment. Mr. Bunter was far from seeing it.

"You have told your schoolfellows the news, Billy?" he remarked, as his sons took him into the visitors' room.

"Oh, yes!" said Billy, rather uneasily.

He did not take that demonstration of the juniors quite so seriously as his pater did. He knew the Remove a little better.

"Very nice-mannered boys!" said Mr. Bunter.

"My yes!"

"I am glad to see this spirit in the school—a very proper spirit!" said the City gentleman. "It shows that Greyfriars is not, like some schools, a hotbed of modern Radicalism. A genuine respect for the old nobility should be inculcated in the mind of youth."

Billy Bunter grunted, and Sammy, remembering how much respect had been

shown by the Second Form to the old nobility, in his person, grinned.

"It's all right, pater?" asked Billy, a little anxiously. "There isn't any spoof about it?"

His father regarded him with frigid majesty.

"What do you mean by that extraordinary remark, William?"

"Well, some of the chaps say it's spoof," said Bunter. "They say there are swindlers who tell you a yarn like this for money. I know it was tried on Fish's father. All the school howled over it, and it turned out to be a swindle!"

"Do you want me to box your ears, William?"

"Eh? Nunno!"

"Then do not make such ridiculous suggestions!" said Mr. Bunter severely.

"Oh, all right! But—"

"Mr. Hooker is charging me very moderate fees for his investigations. There is not the slightest doubt that the claim is well founded."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter, rubbing his fat hands. "I say, pater, will there be any family estates along with the title?"

"That is the fresh news I have for you, my son," said Mr. Bunter, more graciously. "I have received some very interesting information from Mr. Hooker. So far as the title is concerned, he had practically secured all the necessary proofs to go before the House of Lords. But in the course of his inquiries he has learned that the old estate, now in the possession of a distant branch of the family, bearing another name, should legally go with the title."

"Oh, ripping!" said Sammy.

"Mr. Hooker has not yet been able to furnish full particulars, as he is under the necessity of examining many old records and parish registers," continued Mr. Bunter. "A further fee is necessary before this can be done."

"You'll pay him, of course, dad?"

"Certainly! It is worth the money. An estate of the value of twenty thousand pounds a year is at stake."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"So, my boys, you see that our prospects are good," said Mr. Bunter. "Some of my friends in the City have expressed doubts bordering on decision—dictated, of course, by base envy. I attach not the slightest importance to these jealous sneers. I intend, however, to consult my solicitors in the matter before advancing Mr. Hooker any further sums, as the amount he now requires is somewhat large. In fact, I may require my solicitors' assistance in the matter of raising the money required for pursuing the claim. Under the circumstances, I shall not be sending you boys your allowances for the rest of this term."

"Oh!" said Bunter major and minor together, in great dismay.

"That is a very slight matter compared with what is at stake."

Billy and Sammy did not look as if they regarded it as a slight matter.

"As soon as the Bunter estate is secured, however, you may look forward to prosperous times," said Mr. Bunter kindly. "I have already laid my plans for your future. You will go into the Guards, William."

"My hat!" said William.

"And you will go into the Diplomatic Service, Samuel."

"Good egg!" said Samuel.

Mr. Bunter looked at his watch.

"I must call upon the Head while I am here," he said. "I have to mention to him that your fees will be paid a little later than usual this term. You may wait for me and walk to the station with me."

And Mr. Bunter left the visitors' room to see the Head.

Billy and Sammy blinked at one another.

"No more dashed pocket-money this term!" grunted Sammy.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Billy.

The title and estates had lost some of their charm. But Bunter major and minor were looking very lofty as they came out into the quadrangle. After all, they were a viscount and an honourable, even if they were a little short of that necessary article—cash. They found Skinner & Co. waiting for them.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Very Funny!

HAROLD SKINNER was quite celebrated in the Lower School for his gift of humour. His peculiar gift was having full play now.

Skinner had been making some little preparations.

As soon as the Bunters came out they were surrounded by Skinner and Bolsover, Hazeldene, Snoop, Stott, and several other fellows, all grinning cheerfully.

"I say, you fellows, no larks, you know!" began Billy Bunter, in alarm.

"Not at all," said Skinner. "Not the least bit in the world. Honour to whom honour is due—that's the game."

"Buck up with those coronets!" said Bolsover major.

"Coronets?" ejaculated Sammy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Bunter wrathfully. "Yow! Leggo, Bulstrode, you beast!"

Skinner produced two crowns cut out of gilt paper. Bolsover and Bulstrode and Snoop held the two Bunters, while Skinner placed the home-made coronets on their caps, and pinned them there securely.

There were howls of laughter as Bunter and Sammy were crowned. Their aspect, with coronets of gilt paper adorning their heads, was very striking.

"You rotters!" roared Bunter. "Leggo! Take that rubbish off!"

"My dear chap, that's a viscount's coronet!" grinned Skinner. "Honour to whom honour is due, you know."

"Yah, you rotter—"

"Leggo!" howled Sammy.

"No fear!" chuckled Bolsover major. "You're coming for a little walky-walky. It does us proud to prom with a viscount and an honourable."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leggo! I'll yell for Quelch! Yah! Yarrah!"

Amid roars of laughter the two Bunters were marched away, each with both arms securely held. Billy and Sammy could not remove their coronets, and they were promenaded round the quadrangle amid howls of merriment.

The procession reached the football ground, where a crowd of fellows had gathered to watch the Form match. The whistle had gone for half-time, and the footballers were resting, when the Bunter procession came in sight.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Here come the merry dukes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, by gad, what a corkin' idea!" exclaimed Temple of the Fourth. "All hail! Bow down, you common persons!"

Billy Bunter's face was crimson with rage under his coronet.

"You rotters!" he yelled. "Leggo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows— Wharton, you rotter—make 'em leggo—"

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"Here comes the old Johnny!" shouted Kippe.

"This way!" said Skinner.

"Yow-ow! Leggo!"

"I say, draw it mild!" exclaimed Wharton. "Don't work that off on old Bunter—"

"Rats! Bring 'em along!"

The whistle went for the resumption of play, and the footballers had to return to the game. Skinner & Co. marched the viscount and the honourable off in triumph towards the School House.

Mr. Bunter had just come out, and he was looking round for Billy and Sammy.

He gave a jump as he sighted them.

"Upon my word!" he ejaculated.

The fat City gentleman stood staring in amazement as the procession came up, with the two crimson-faced Bunters in the midst of it, coroneted with gilt paper.

"Wha-at does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Bunter.

"Respect to the nobility, sir," said Skinner. "We like to see Bunter in his coronet. We think it suits him."

"You rotter!" yelled Bunter.

Mr. Bunter's plump face became purple. Even he could see at last that the Remove fellows were treating the Bunter earldom from a humorous point of view. He took a tight grip on his umbrella.

At that moment there was a sound of a window sharply opened, and Mr. Quelch leaned out of his study.

"Skinner!" he rapped out.

"Oh! Yes, sir?" stammered Skinner.

"How dare you!"

"I I— No harm, sir!" said Skinner. "We—we're only showing our respect for the old nobility, sir."

"Silence! Release Bunter at once, and come to my study!"

The dismayed jokers released the Bunters, and Billy and Sammy dragged off the coronets.

Mr. Bunter glared at the practical jokers, signed to Billy and Sammy to follow him, and stalked away to the gates.

"All of you come into my study!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Oh, you see, Skinner!" murmured Snoop.

Not quite so hilarious now, Skinner & Co. made their way to the Remove-master's study. They found Mr. Quelch selecting a cane.

"What is the meaning of this absurd joke upon a gentleman visiting the school?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch severely.

"It wasn't a joke, sir," said Skinner calmly. "Quite serious, sir!"

"What?"

"You see, sir, it's come out that Mr. Bunter is an earl—"

"How dare you say such ridiculous things, Skinner?"

"But it's true, sir—at least, Bunter says so. Bunter is a viscount, and viscounts are supposed to wear coronets, so we—we—"

"Is it possible that Bunter has been making such ridiculous boasts?" said Mr. Quelch, frowning. "However, that is no excuse for rudeness to his father, Skinner!"

"We weren't rude, sir; only showing a proper respect to the old nobility—"

"Hold out your hand, Skinner!"

There was a sound of swishing in the study for some minutes. Skinner & Co. were rubbing their hands ruefully when they left.

"Old Quelch hasn't any sense of humour!" groaned Skinner, as he went down the passage, squeezing his hands.

"He can't deny that it was funny. That's the worst of these dashed Form-masters—they haven't any sense of humour!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" said Snoop.

"Serve you jolly well right!" cackled Billy Bunter. "Perhaps you'll learn not

to make your vulgar jokes about your betters— Yarrah!"

Billy Bunter sat down suddenly, and Skinner & Co. found some solace in walking over him. It was only too clear that even the caning in Mr. Quelch's study had not taught the unruly Removites to treat the nobility with proper respect.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Sammy's Scheme!

"**R**OTTEN!" growled Bunter.

The viscount was in a bad temper.

As his pater was so soon to become an earl, Bunter had expected the visit to materialise in a handsome tip—instead of which he had only learned that his pocket-money was stopped for the rest of the term. It was a disappointment. Of course, matters would be all right when the family estates came along—with the title. But they had not come along yet; and, meanwhile, Billy Bunter was in a very painful position for a member of the nobility.

It was true that he was getting on famously with his new manners and customs as a nobleman. With careful practice, every day he approached nearer and nearer to Ponsonby's sneer and to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's remarkable accent.

The Removites chuckled explosively when they heard Bunter say "Yaas, wathah!" or "Bai Jove!" but the viscount despised base envy. They only yelled when Bunter "looked a fellow up and down" with a supercilious sneer. It really seemed impossible to hurt their feelings. Indeed, after Bunter had looked Squiff up and down scornfully, Squiff said it was as good as anything on the cinema, and asked Bunter to do it again.

Meanwhile, funds, which were generally short with Bunter, were shorter than ever.

Pocket-money had stopped, and the needy nobleman was unable to sponge upon his study-mates, as had been his old custom. It was in vain that Bunter explained that he didn't mind being treated by a commoner. Peter Todd replied that he knew his place better than to do any such thing—and he didn't do any such thing, either!

No. 1 Study was as inexorable as No. 7. The Famous Five agreed that mere commoners like themselves couldn't ask a viscount to tea. It was too much honour for them. The viscount came to tea without being asked, and was assisted out of the study.

Billy Bunter had supposed that his wonderful change of fortune gave him the right to make himself exceedingly unpleasant to every one he chose, and to put on side without limit. Nobody objected to his putting on side if he wanted to, for that matter; but he was expected to do it in his own quarters.

So Bunter decided that it was rotten, and indeed it was. The prospect of tea in Hall for the rest of the term was appalling. The school fare was good, but it was plain, and nothing like what Bunter wanted.

He liked to pay visits to the tuckshop between meals, too; but it was futile to visit the tuckshop without cash. Mrs. Mumble would not have trusted him if he had been a duke instead of a viscount, not to the value of sixpence.

Bunter had renewed his kind offer to Smithy to see him through when he grew up and wanted to go into society. The Bounder, in return, had renewed the application of the cushion. Bunter let the matter drop then.

It was a hard time for Bunter, and he

waited in hope of hearing that the family estates had come along at last.

But day followed day without a letter from home. Bunter haunted the doorway to wait for the postman. He longed for the good news, partly because he was in dire need of cash, and partly because he was very anxious to crush the mocking Removites.

Most of the fellows, indeed, did not care twopence whether he was a viscount or not, but Skinner & Co. certainly would have changed their tune if they had believed that there was anything in the yarn. A real viscount, with a real family estate, would have received the kindest and most civil attentions from Skinner and Snoop and Fisher T. Fish, and fellows of their kind.

Billy Bunter was thinking it over in his study, and growling over the unkindness of Fate, when his minor came in. Bunter blinked at him.

"No news yet, Billy?" asked Bunter minor.

"No!" grunted the Owl of the Remove.

"I—I say, suppose it's all bunkum?" said Sammy dubiously. "Most of the chaps seem to think so—in fact, all of them!"

"Bai Jove! You are a duffah, Sammy!"

"What!"

"You are a duffah, you young boundah!" said Bunter deliberately. "Of course it's all wight—as stwaight as a stwing!"

Sammy almost fell down.

"Wha-a-at did you say?" he stuttered.

"As stwaight as a stwing."

"Have you hurt your mouth?" asked Sammy, in wonder.

"Eh? No!"

"What are you jabbering like that for, then?" demanded Sammy. "I've never noticed you had a lisp before!"

"It's not a lisp, you young idiot! That's my accent!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Sammy. "I say, Billy, you are a silly ass to do that! You'll make the chaps cackle no end!"

"None of your cheek, you young duffah!" said Bunter loftily. "I'll thank you to treat me with respect!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Sammy.

"What are you caeklin' at, you cheekay young boundah?"

"He, he, he!" went on Sammy explosively. "Don't do it, Billy! You give me a pain in my waistcoat!"

"Weally, Sammy——"

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Bunter, dropping his accent. "What have you come here for? I suppose you haven't had a remittance?"

"I jolly well shouldn't tell you if I had!" said Sammy promptly. "But I haven't. Look here, I'm stony!"

"Same here!" grunted his major.

"Not much good being in the nobility without any money," said Sammy sulkily. "Nugent minor punched my nose to-day, too, because he said I sneered at him!"

"Those low rotters don't know how to treat their betters! It's all this dashed modern Radicalism!" said Bunter contemptuously.

"I've got an idea, Billy," said the fat fag, lowering his voice. "There's a lot of the chaps would suck up fast enough to us if they believed it!"

"I know that. They'll believe it later," said Bunter. "Then I shall decline to speak to them!"

"Yes, that's all very well later, but just at present our money's stopped, and we're hard up. Suppose we make them believe it?"

"How?" asked Bunter.

"Well, if the pater called you up on the telephone, and told you it was all

right, and settled, and all in order," said Sammy cautiously, "they'd believe it then. Suppose he said he was sending us a fiver each by next post?"

"But he won't."

"Fathead! You can easily get somebody to ring you up and say so! Quelchy's telephone, you know——"

"My hat!" said Bunter.

His eyes glistened behind his big spectacles. He knew how quickly Skinner & Co. would come round if they once believed. He knew, in fact, how he would have acted himself in such a case.

"But—but they wouldn't believe I'd been on the phone," he said. "You see, they wouldn't hear it!"

"Oh, you're an ass!" said Sammy.

Bunter ambled down to Little Side to watch them, with a fat grin on his face. Skinner & Co. were lounging by the ropes, and they greeted the Owl of the Remove with a cackle.

"Title come along yet?" asked Snoop.

Bunter sniffed contemptuously.

"As a matter of fact, I've had some news," he said.

"Got the family estates?"

"Yes."

"What!" yelled Skinner.

"I'm expecting to hear from my pater to-day," said Bunter calmly. "I understand that the matter is practically settled now. You can cackle. You'll cackle on the other side of your mouth soon, Skinner! The pater's going to send me



He folded his arms, and surveyed Peter from top to toe.
(See Chapter 4.)

"Get Skinner to answer the 'phone for you—have a pain or something!"

"You ain't such a fat little fool as you look, Sammy," said Bunter admiringly. "Blessed if I should have thought of that! You could go down to Friardale and use the post-office telephone. You could alter your voice a bit, and it always sounds different on the 'phone, anyway!"

"Mind, halves," said Sammy warningly.

"Halves!" agreed Bunter.

The two young rascals remained for some time discussing the details of the little plot, and then Sammy took his cap and left the school. Billy Bunter rolled out into the quad. It was a half-holiday, and Harry Wharton & Co. were at footer practice.

a fiver to begin with when the matter's quite certain!"

"I'll believe in that fiver when I see it!" grinned Skinner.

"You'll see it to-day or to-morrow," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter grunted, and blinked on at the football. The practice ended, and the juniors came off. It was just then that Tubb of the Third came hurrying down from the House.

"Bunter major here?" he called out.

"Hallo!" said Bunter.

"Quelchy wants you!" grunted the fag. "Your father's rung you up on Quelchy's telephone. Like his cheek, I think!"

"My pater?" exclaimed Bunter.

"Quelch told me to tell you."
 "You don't know what it's about?"
 "How should I know? Don't care either," said Tubb, and he strolled away, whistling.

Billy Bunter turned a triumphant blink on Skinner & Co.

"Now you'll see what you will see!" he remarked.

Skinner looked at him very curiously. For the first time a doubt smote Skinner. Was there anything in the yarn after all? Stranger things had happened. If there was anything in it, Harold Skinner had been doing his best to get on bad terms with a rich fellow, which was quite out of keeping with Skinner's usual methods.

"You can come with me if you like," said Bunter loftily. "You'll jolly well see now!"

"I'll come!" said Skinner. "I expect your pater's rung you up to tell you he's found Hooker out, and given him in charge."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll jolly well see!" said Bunter confidently.

The two juniors went into the School House to Mr. Quelch's study. The Remove-master was there.

"Your father wishes to speak to you on the telephone, Bunter," he said. "He informs me that he has some very important news for you, and wishes to communicate with you without delay. I have asked him to hold on while I sent for you. You may use the telephone."

"Thank you, sir!" said Bunter.

Mr. Quelch quitted the study, from a motive of delicacy. He did not wish to overhear a private family conversation.

Billy Bunter gave the surprised Skinner a triumphant blink, and took up the receiver.

"Yes."
 "Ow, ow, ow!" said Bunter suddenly. He doubled up over the receiver, pressing his disengaged hand to his ample waistcoat.

"What's the matter with you, fatty?" asked Skinner.

"Ow! I've got a pain!" groaned Bunter. "Yow-ow! I—I say, take this, will you, Skinner? Speak to my pater for me!"

"Take a bird!" said Skinner promptly.

Skinner had been stretching his ears to hear what was said on the telephone, but he could catch only a buzz. He was intensely curious to know what Mr. Bunter had to say to his son. He could not help thinking that it must be something really important to cause the elder Bunter to make a trunk-call—and it must be a trunk-call, as Mr. Bunter was doubtless in London. Skinner put his ear to the receiver with great promptness.

Billy Bunter twisted his fat features and pressed his hands to his waistcoat. It was not uncommon for the fat junior to suffer from internal pains after a reckless gorge, and Skinner had seen him like that before. And Bunter did it very well.

"Hallo! Billy! Is that you, William?"

"Bunter's asked me to take the 'phone for him, sir," said Skinner into the transmitter, and Skinner spoke very respectfully. "He's got a sudden pain in the tummy."

"Oh! Is he still there?"

"Just beside me, Mr. Bunter."

"Very well. Kindly tell him my message."

"Certainly, sir!"

"The matter concerning the estate is now settled. The other party have decided not to risk a lawsuit, and after the necessary preliminaries have been gone through, the estate will be handed over. Tell my son."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Skinner. "I—I mean, yes, sir. I say, Bunter, it's all serene, and your pater's got the giddy estate!"

"Good!" said Bunter. "Ow, ow!"

"Anything else, sir?" asked Skinner

into the 'phone. There was now the deepest respect in his voice.

"Yes. Tell William that I am sending him a five-pound note by the next post, and tell him to inform my younger son, Samuel, that he will receive the same."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

"That is all. Thank you very much, Mr. Quelch! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, sir!"

Skinner put up the receiver.

"What did he say?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"He's sending you and Sammy a fiver each by next post," said Skinner. "He thought he was talking to Quelch."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "Thanks for 'phoning, Skinner! I'm weally vewy much obliged to you, deah boy!" added Bunter on second thoughts.

Bunter's new accent would have made Skinner yell on any other occasion; but he did not yell now. That telephone-message from Mr. Bunter had changed matters very considerably in Skinner's estimation.

"Not at all, Bunt, old chap!" said Skinner affably.

"Please don't call me Bunt, Skinnah! I don't like it!"

"Ahem! I mean, Bunter," said Skinner amicably. "Of course, I shouldn't think of being over-familiar with you, Bunter."

"I should think not!" said Bunter, swelling with importance. "I don't allow familiarity from commouers, I can tell you!"

"I shouldn't," said Skinner. "And I'm sure, Bunter, that you won't be ratty about a few silly jokes. I apologise!"

"I accept your apology," said Bunter loftily.

And he rolled out of the study, followed by Skinner, who was quite friendly and respectful now. Skinner's friends were waiting for them at the end of the passage. They were grinning in anticipation. They did not doubt that Mr. Bunter's important news was that the expert had been found out to be a spoofer. They simply jumped as they saw Skinner coming down the passage arm-in-arm with Bunter. Skinner had taken the fat junior's arm, and Bunter graciously allowed him to do so.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Becomes Popular!

"HALLO!"
 "Hallo! Is that you, Billy?"

Bunter grinned over the receiver. He did not recognise the voice, though he knew to whom it must belong.

"Yes. Is that you, pater?"

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"Hallo! What's the game?" asked Snoop.

"Game!" said Skinner. "There's no game! I suppose a chap can take his pal's arm?"

"His pal!" ejaculated Stott.

"Bunter's my pal—always has been. Bunter isn't the chap to remember a foolish practical joke against a fellow he's always friendly with," said Skinner calmly. "Bunter's too much of a true nobleman for that."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop & Co., supposing that this was one of Skinner's little jokes.

Skinner stared at them frigidly.

"I don't see what there is to cackle at!" he said cuttingly. "Come away, Bunter! You don't want to mix with this low crowd!"

"I guess you're off your rocker!" said Fisher T. Fish, in amazement. "What game are you playing now, you jay?"

"Skinner knows that it's all true," said Bunter loftily. "You rotters can go and eat coke!"

"You fat jay——"

"You'll kindly be civil to Viscount Bunter, Fish!" said Skinner. "If you cheek him I'll jolly well pull your nose!"

"Eh?"

"You—you—you don't mean to say that—that there's anything in it, after all?" yelled Snoop.

"I thought there was all along," said Skinner calmly. "In fact, I believed it from the first. It didn't surprise me in the least to learn that Bunter was a member of the nobility. From his looks, anybody would naturally think so."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Had your tea, Bunter?" asked Skinner.

"No."

"Come up to my study, old chap," said Skinner affectionately.

Snoop and Stott and Fish simply blinked at one another. They could not make it out.

"He must be spoofing the fat idiot," said Snoop at last.

"Let's see whether he stands him tea," said Fisher T. Fish sagaciously. "If Skinner stands him tea, that will prove he believes the yarn."

"Yes; that's so. It—it must be true after all!" said Stott, in wonder. "Fancy Bunter a giddy viscount—and rich, too!"

"I guess Bunter isn't such a bad chap," said Fish. "I've always rather liked old Bunter, now—now I come to think of it."

"Same here!" chuckled Snoop. "One thing's jolly certain. If that fat fool's going to have plenty of tin, Skinner isn't going to keep him all to himself!"

"No fear!" said Stott emphatically.

And the three juniors hurried up to the Remove passage after Skinner and his prize. They found Bunter lolling in a lofty attitude in Smithy's armchair, while Skinner was laying the table, with the best the study cupboard afforded. There could be no further doubt. If Skinner stood Bunter anything, it was because he believed the yarn; Skinner's feed was a sprat to catch a whale. And if a keen and cunning fellow like Skinner believed it, it must be upon good evidence; it was, in fact, true. Snoop and Stott and Fish came into the study with determined looks. Bunter the impecunious borrower, and Bunter the wealthy viscount, were two entirely different personages. Skinner wasn't going to keep that prize all to himself. Snoop and Stott and Fish were quite prepared to remember—now they thought of it—that they had always harboured feelings of respect and affection for Bunter.

"Having tea here, Billy?" asked Snoop.

Bunter nodded.

"Yes. What do you fellows want?"

"Ahem! The fact is——"

"There's the door," said Skinner.

"Look here, Skinner, we want Bunter!" said Snoop indignantly. "Bunter's always been my pal, and you're not going to come between us. Come along to my study, Bunter! I've had a remittance, and I'm standing a good spread."

"Yes, do come, old chap!" said Stott.

Vernon-Smith came into the study.

"Hallo! Tea ready?" he said.

"Good! What's this crowd doing here? Get out, Bunter!"

"Bunter's staying to tea," said Skinner. "I suppose I can have a friend to tea if I like, Smithy?"

The Bounder stared.

"Hallo! Is Bunter your friend now?"

"Certainly! We've always been pals."

"Well, you can have your pal to yourself!" growled the Bounder. "I'll go along to Toddy's to tea."

"You can go and eat coke if you like!"

"Has Bunter come into a fortune?" asked the Bounder sarcastically.

"As a matter of fact, he has, though that doesn't make any difference, of course," said Skinner. "Bunter knows who his true friends are."

"You mean to say that the yarn's turned out to be true?" gasped Vernon-Smith.

"Yes, it has," said Bunter. "And you can keep your distance, Smithy. I decline to know a person of your station."

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

And he quitted the study, to spread the news.

Skinner, Snoop, Stott, and Fish exchanged glances that were somewhat hostile. But they all realised that it would not do to quarrel over the prize. They agreed tacitly to share Bunter, as it were. And Snoop & Co. fetched in supplies from the tuckshop, and the worthy party all sat down to tea together. Viscount Bunter was a personage whom Skinner & Co., at least, delighted to honour.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter In All His Glory!

SAMMY BUNTER blinked wrathfully into No. 4 about an hour later. The tea-party had not quite finished. Sammy rolled in with a snort. Billy, lapped in luxury now, had ungratefully forgotten all about his minor, to whom he owed that sudden access of good fortune. Sammy was not pleased. He had come back hungry from Friardale, with the intention of taking a full share of what might be going. And he had had to inquire up and down and round about for his major, before he ran him down in Skinner's study.

"So you're here!" growled Sammy surlily.

"Yes. Come in," said Billy, remembering his brother's existence now that he was visible to the eye. "Come in and have tea; Skinner won't mind."

"Delighted!" said Skinner.

"Always a pleasure to see Sammy," remarked Snoop affably. "Here's a chair for you, kid."

Sammy's frown vanished, and he grinned. Evidently the scheme had worked. Skinner & Co. were reputed to be the meanest fellows in the Form; but No. 4, now, was a land flowing with milk and honey.

A viscount with a whack in a big landed estate was the kind of fellow Skinner & Co. wanted to know. And Sammy, though only an honourable,

was worthy of respectful attention. Skinner & Co. would have toadied to Lord Mauleverer if they could; but they couldn't—his lordship wasn't taking any. But Bunter was open to any offer in that line. By judicious buttering up a very good thing could be made out of Bunter—as soon as he had his money. It was worth while feeding him; the surest way of getting into his favour.

Skinner & Co. intended to appropriate Bunter, and keep off all rivals. Little disagreeable ways could be tolerated in a rich viscount. Skinner & Co. would have tolerated the Kaiser himself if that unpleasant old gentleman had made it worth their while. It was only judicious now to forget that they had ridiculed Bunter's claims. Now that Mr. Bunter announced that the matter was completely settled, and that a handsome tip for his sons was following by next post, even the suspicious Skinner could not doubt. His views would have been somewhat changed if he could have known that it was not Mr. Bunter, but the hopeful Sammy, who had been talking on the telephone. But Skinner did not know that.

Skinner & Co. were being very generous with supplies. Billy Bunter had been eating for some time, but he was still busy. Sammy added his efforts to those of his major, and helped to clear the festive board quite effectually. Both the Bunters looked very shiny when they had finished.

Meanwhile, the door opened every now and then for a curious Remove fellow to look in.

The news had spread, and it had astounded the juniors. Billy Bunter was quite willing to explain about that stunning message on the telephone. Some of the fellows still cherished doubts, but Skinner's faith in the story was taken as good evidence by most. Some of them congratulated Bunter, who received their congratulations with great loftiness.

Sammy Bunter, when he had finished, rolled away, taking a cake under his arm; an incident his hosts affected not to notice. He gave Billy a significant look as he went, which said—as plainly as looks could say—"Halves." He knew that his major intended to make hay while the sun shone, and he was not to be left out of the spoil.

When Bunter left the study—breathing somewhat heavily—Skinner walked arm-in-arm with him, and his friends gathered round him. Bunter looked into No. 7 Study with a lofty blink.

"You can keep your mouldy old sardines, Peter Todd!" he said.

"Thanks; I'm going to!" said Peter.

"As for the seven-and-six I owe you, Todd——"

"Oh, never mind that!" said Peter. "I'll wait for that till the family estate comes along. I suppose it's coming by next post along with your postal-order—what?"

"Wats!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Wats!" said Bunter firmly.

Peter yelled.

"I don't want any of your cheeky cacklin!" said Bunter. "I wefuse to take any notice of your confounded cheek, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I insist upon payin' you immediately. I wefuse to be undah any obligation to a person I despise." And Billy Bunter, along with D'Arcy's accent, bestowed one of Ponsonby's supercilious sneers upon Peter Todd.

Peter seemed to be suffering from convulsions.

"As my wemittance doesn't awwise till to-morrow mornin', my fwien'ds

will lend me the small sum necessary to settle with you, Todd."

"Oh, don't!" gasped Peter. "You're giving me a pain, my lord!"

"You'll oblige me, Skinnah——"
Skinner hesitated a moment. Seven-and-six was a considerable sum.

"Of course, it's only till my fivah comes," said Bunter loftily. "If you do not want to oblige me, Skinnah, I cannot continue to wegard you as a fwiend."

"Ha, ha—I—I mean, all right, old chap!" gasped Skinner. D'Arcy's accent, in Bunter's fat mouth, was almost too much for him.

Skinner handed out three half-crowns. He intended to have a good deal more than that out of Bunter's fiver next day.

"Oh, good!" said Peter Todd. "It will come in handy."

"I twust, Petah, that you nevah had any doubt about my settlin' up this twiflin' amount?"

"I jolly well did!" said Peter.
"In that case, I wegard you as a wottah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"And I shall keep you waitin' for the money till my fivah awwives."

And Bunter slipped Skinner's half-crowns into his own pocket, and rolled out of the study. His dear pals followed him—Skinner looking rather green. The astute Owl had done him for seven-and-six, and Skinner would rather have had his money safe in his own pocket. But he did not venture to mention that to the haughty viscount.

Harry Wharton & Co., coming in to tea, met the party in the Remove passage. They grinned at the sight of Bunter surrounded by his admirers.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "You chaps seem to be awfully pally—all of a sudden, too."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Bunter.
"Wha-a-at?"
"My own friends are stickin' to me——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.
"I wegard your silly cacklin' with contempt! Pway do not address me," said Bunter contemptuously. "I wequiah you fellahs to undahstand, cleahly, that I wefuse to have anythin' to do with you! Come on, Skinnah, deah boy!"

And Bunter, bestowing a Ponsonby sneer upon the Famous Five, rolled on, with his fat little nose in the air.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Sold!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. smiled as they came into the Common-room that evening.

Billy Bunter was there, rolling in an armchair by the fire, chatting loftily to his friends. Skinner & Co. listened with great respect. Snoop had fetched a cushion for Bunter's head. Fisher T. Fish had brought him a hassock for his feet.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob cheerily, giving Bunter a playful slap on the shoulder. "Still going strong, Fatty?"

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter. "Keep your low paws off me, Bob Cherry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"There's a letter for you in the rack, Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

"Why didn't you bring it in?" he said. "Go and fetch it!"

"Eh?"
"Go and fetch it!"

Wharton looked at him. It was the first time the Owl of the Remove had ventured to give the Form captain a preemptory order.

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"Well, my hat!" said Wharton. "You're improving, Bunter."

"Don't talk to me!" said Bunter. "I've told you already that I wefuse to have anythin' to do with you."

"I'll fetch the letter, old chap," said Skinner.

"Yaas, do," said Bunter.
Skinner went for the letter. Bunter turned his spectacles on the Famous Five with ineffable scorn.

He had been in clover since the telephone call, and had forgotten his anxiety for a letter from home. But now it had come, and Bunter had little doubt that it contained good news. His pater had promised to write as soon as the matter was absolutely certain, and there was nothing else to write about.

Skinner brought in the letter, and Bunter blinked at the superscription. It was in his father's hand.

"I dare say the fiver's in that," remarked Snoop.

Bunter coughed.
"Ahem! I don't know about that," he said. "Open it for me, one of you fellows."

Skinner slit the envelope with a pen-knife, and Bunter drew out the letter.

He was the centre of attraction as he unfolded it. There was no banknote in it, and Skinner felt disappointed. He regarded his seven-and-six as well invested, but he was anxious to see it again, all the same.

Billy Bunter glanced carelessly at the letter—with elaborate carelessness. But as he read, his glance became fixed.

His fat face paled, and his spectacles seemed glued to the letter.

Skinner & Co. exchanged uneasy glances. This did not look like good news. Fisher T. Fish felt a horrible inward pang. He had lent Bunter a shilling.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter at last.

"Anything wrong, Fatty?" asked Bob Cherry, kindly enough. Absurd as Bunter had made himself, the expression on his face at that moment might have touched the heart of a Hun.

"Oh, crumbs!"
"What's wrong?" asked Skinner, all the affability fading from his sharp face.

"Oh, the rotten spoofer! The beast! He ought to be locked up! Oh, dear! The pater must have been an awful ass! Oh, crumbs! What a rotten sell!"

Bunter groaned out those disconnected words dismally.

He did not need to say much more. Skinner snatched at the letter, and, without waiting to ask permission, looked at it. Then he uttered a yell.

"Sold!"
"Oh, dear!"

"Sold!" yelled Skinner. "Listen to this——"

"Let Bunter's letter alone, you cad!" growled Wharton.

"Rot! Listen to this!" Skinner dodged the captain of the Remove, and read out sentences from the letter in jerks. "Consulted my solicitors about—— Keep off, Wharton! They find that Hooker is a common swindler. He has deceived me, for the purpose of obtaining money—no foundation whatever for his story—warrant issued for his apprehension on the charge of obtaining money under false pretences—disappeared—say as little about the matter as possible——"

Wharton jerked the letter away and tossed it to Bunter.

But Skinner had read enough. There was a roar of laughter in the Common-room.

Mr. Bunter's letter cleared the matter up with a vengeance. Peter Todd remarked that if Mr. Bunter had consulted him, he could have enlightened him as

to Mr. Hooker's probable character without bothering the solicitors.

"But—but what about that telephone call to-day?" said Bob Cherry, in amazement. "This letter must have been posted before that."

"Spoofer!" yelled Skinner, the truth dawning upon his mind at last. "Old Bunter couldn't have written one thing and telephoned another. Bunter got somebody to telephone."

"Oh, my hat!"
"Where's my seven-and-six, you fat swindler?"

"Where's my bob?" yelled Fisher T. Fish.

"And my tanner!" roared Snoop.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I—I say, you fellows, keep those rotters off!" yelled Bunter, as his dear friends closed round him in fury. "I—I say, Wharton——"

"Are you taking up my acquaintance again?" asked Wharton, laughing.

"Ow-yow! Yes, I say, Toddy—Toddy, old chap——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I guess I want my bob!" yelled Fisher T. Fish, dragging Bunter out of the armchair. "Where's my bob, you fat clam?"

"Yaroo!"

"Hand over my seven-and-six!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was well for Bunter that he was not left to the mercy of his dear pals, who were equally exasperated at having been spoofed and at the loss of their cash. Harry Wharton & Co., and Peter Todd, and Mark Linley chipped in at once, and the Owl of the Remove was rescued. Skinner & Co. were collared without ceremony, and strewn on the floor of the Common-room.

"Let Bunter alone, you rotters!" said Wharton. "It's bad enough for the fat-head to lose his title and estate."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The esteemed title has gone from Bunter's gaze like a beautiful dream," chuckled Hurree Singh. "He is no longer an esteemed vile count. The commiseration is terrific."

"I want my bob!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish.

Fisher T. Fish did not get his bob. He got Bob Cherry's boot, and he departed from the Common-room in a great hurry, roaring.

"I lent that fat beast seven-and-six!" gasped Skinner.

"I'll settle that when my postal-order comes," said Bunter. "Go and eat coke! I say, you fellows, isn't this an awful sell? And—and I don't get any more pocket-money this term. Oh, dear! Ow!"

"You can wait for your seven-and-six till Bunter's postal-order comes, Skinner," chortled Bob Cherry. "But if you want something to go on with, I'll give you a thick ear!"

"Yaroo!"
Skinner fled.

Billy Bunter looked extremely forlorn the next day. His whilom friends regarded him with Hunnish looks when they came across him; but Bunter did not much mind that. What he minded was the awakening from his golden dream.

He was no longer a viscount—even in his own estimation. He gave up D'Arcy's accent and Ponsonby's sneer, and resumed the pronunciation of his final g's. His one comfort was that now he was no longer a lofty nobleman, Peter Todd allowed him to come to tea in No. 7 Study.

THE END.

(Don't miss "THE PREFECT'S PLOT!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 9.—H. VERNON-SMITH.



EASILY among the best stories which have ever appeared in this paper have been those which told of the long contest between Harry Wharton and Herbert Vernon-Smith for supremacy in the Remove.

When the Bounder—as the Remove at once named Vernon-Smith—came to Greyfriars, he was so hopeless an outsider that even the worst elements in the Form despised him. An utter Ishmael—his hand against every man and every man's hand against him—he could not then menace Wharton. The menace came later, when, largely through the efforts of Harry and his chums, the Bounder had been forced to conform to at least the appearance of decency, when his physical fitness had increased, and he had shown himself a good all-round man at games, in spite of his seeming weediness.

The only child of a purse-proud, self-sufficient, wrong-headed man, Vernon-Smith was entered at the school mainly because his father held the Head, as he believed, in the hollow of his hand. Dr. Locke had borrowed money which he was unable to repay, and his creditor was Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith. The boy knew of this, and because of it counted himself free to do exactly as he liked without the risk of expulsion or even of a flogging.

He had taken too much to drink before he got to Greyfriars, and thought it a sufficient explanation to tell the Head that he had met a few friends, had some champagne, and got "a bit bosky." He really did not see much in it to make a fuss about. He had done that sort of thing at home, and his father had not minded—had considered that in dissipation of this sort his son was only qualifying to become the complete "man of the world" that he desired to see him.

At once he rebelled against the authority of Mr. Quelch, and the Head's inaction in face of such flagrant mutiny so angered the master of the Remove that he handed in his resignation. Then Dr. Locke told his old friend and colleague the sad truth. What could Mr.

Quelch do but take back his resignation and accept the heavy responsibility of keeping the boy within bounds, in spite of the keen-edged weapon that Vernon-Smith held in his father's ability to ruin the Head?

Dr. Locke's hands were tied. Mr. Quelch was heavily handicapped by what he knew. But the Form was free to deal with the Bounder, and the Form dealt with him.

The Form, led by Harry Wharton, dealt with him sternly but fairly. That was the thing which at first puzzled him utterly—the fairness. It was a new thing to him. He was not at once stirred to emulate it; but his brain was too keen for him to overlook it. These fellows, who were so ready to jump on him when they held him in the wrong, were just as ready to back him up against aggression when they held him in the right. It surprised him, but it taught him a lesson.

Soon he deserted the Ishmael role. It was not worth while. If he were to have any chance against Wharton and Wharton's following, he must have a following of his own. So he dropped some of the worst of his follies, and fell more into line.

Honours won in the cricket and footer fields helped to give him a firm footing. He backed up Bulstrode against Wharton, all the time looking forward to the day when he himself should be able to head a faction against the fellow he hated most. The prefects came to think better of him. It seemed absurd to Wingate and to others that a fellow who was good enough to play for a strong team like Lantham, and to help that team to beat Greyfriars First Eleven, should be kept out of the Remove Eleven by what looked like jealousy on the part of the Form skipper.

It was not jealousy, though personal antagonism there was, as was inevitable. Wharton knew so much more about the Bounder than Wingate could know—knew of his Cross Keys escapades, knew of his evil influence over weaker spirits, knew that he had no loyalty to Greyfriars,

that he was ready to intrigue with Ponsoby and the Highcliffe nuts against his own school!

There came the time when Vernon-Smith put up for the Form captaincy and all but wrested it from Wharton's grasp. If craft could have availed him he would have won it; but pluck and honesty triumphed over craft in the long run.

The Head got out of Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith's clutches at last. Bob Cherry's pluck had much to do with his escape; but there were signs of better feeling on the part of the Bounder and his father alike in the affair. Herbert Vernon-Smith would not have owned the influence of the fellow he detested; but he was feeling it. Through all their bitter rivalry Wharton was always generous, always chivalrous, always ready to see the best in his enemy, even while he knew far better than most did how black was the worst.

It was not only Wharton whom the Bounder hated. All Harry's chums—Frank Nugent, Bob Cherry, Inky, Johnny Bull, Mark Linley—were counted by Vernon-Smith as mortal enemies. And in his biggest campaign he got in shrewd blows at them all. Linley was tricked from out of the school; Wharton, Nugent, and Bull went—one and all expelled; Bob Cherry was also expelled, but refused to go; Inky, whose turn would have come had Bob submitted, shared in his rebellion, and the Bounder was beaten in the end.

Now, he owed it largely to the fellows he had plotted against that he escaped expulsion. It was with no very good grace that he submitted to lie under a debt to them. But the leaven of better things was working in him by this time. When at last his reformation came it appeared sudden; but it was not really so. For a long time before it he had no longer been the undisciplined, selfish cub who came "bosky" to school. That cub knew no more of the white light of honour than the veriest savage. The plotter of later days sinned against the light which he had learned to know, and at times hated himself for his sinning, and at other times showed by some unexpected feat of courage, by some amazing deed of self-sacrifice, that he had at least in part learned his lesson.

To Harry Wharton more than to any other, did he owe it that the lesson was learned; and when at last the change came in him he recognised the debt. Nowadays his best friends are the fellows whom he used to reckon his worst enemies; and beyond all doubt Wharton is the dearest of them all to him. He is not effusive about it. No one who does not know would easily guess that he cares much for anyone. About "Smithy"—if they call him "the Bounder" nowadays it is but through habit, and the nickname has lost all its harshness—there is much of the old cynical seeming; but there is a far warmer heart than many suspect under the apparent coldness.

He is dead straight now. With such resolution as he possesses, backsliding is for him almost unthinkable. But he makes no parade of his straightness; and in acquiring that quality he has not lost his old craft. The word may not seem a pleasant one; but it is the most expressive one. The Bounder is quite the "widest" fellow in the Greyfriars Remove.

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EXTRACTS FROM
THE GREYFRIARS HERALD.

THE TUCK TRUST!

By WILLIAM WIBLEY.

THAT day everybody was thinking about the St. Jim's match, and nobody at all was thinking about Fisher T. Fish. Fisher T. Fish is no one in particular. Of course, he wasn't in the eleven—he can't play footer for terfee. But Fisher T. Fish was doing some thinking that day, though he wasn't thinking about footer—as we found out afterwards.

Some of the fellows had noticed that he was a good deal in the school shop that morning. Bob Cherry saw him in Mrs. Mimble's little parlour, when he went in for a ginger-pop, and Fishy was talking away nineteen to the dozen to the old lady. Bob heard her say:

"Well, it's very kind of you, Master Fish, and I really should like to get away this afternoon to see my nephew, but—"

"You leave it to me, ma'am," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I can work the raffle."

"I don't understand Latin, Master Fish," said Mrs. Mimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry from the shop. "That isn't Latin, Mrs. Mimble, that's American!"

"Deary me!" said Mrs. Mimble. And she came to serve Bob with his ginger-beer.

"What are you up to, Fishy?" asked Bob. "Trying to get a reduction on the price of tuck?"

"I guess you can go and chop chips!" said Fish.

But Bob didn't care what Fishy was up to. Bob is in the Remove Eleven, and he was thinking about footer. He left Fishy confabbing with Mrs. Mimble, and forgot all about him.

The St. Jim's match is always a big affair at Greyfriars. Tom Merry & Co. came over with a good many friends from St. Jim's. Lots of us had relations down, and Hazeldene had fetched over his sister, Marjorie, from Cliff House, with a lot of the Cliff House girls. There was a tremendous crowd to see the match, and as it was fine, spring weather, and unusually warm for the time of year, Harry Wharton had arranged for an alfresco feed after the match—a sort of picnic in the quad under the trees. There were certainly too many guests to get into a study, and it would have been a crowd even in the Rag. On an occasion like that, Mrs. Mimble always did a roaring business in the school shop, and took no end of cash.

It was a good match. Tom Merry and D'Arcy put the ball through in the first half, and a fat chap they had in goal never gave our forwards a chance. But in the second half the Remove woke up, and Wharton and Vernon-Smith got a goal each, and Tom Brown kicked the winning goal from right-half—a fine shot. St. Jim's took their licking like sportsmen, of course, they really couldn't have expected to beat the Greyfriars Remove.

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on their own ground, though they had started jolly well.

After the match the trouble began with Fishy.

A regular army poured into the school shop to refresh themselves and jaw about the match, and get supplies for the feed to the visitors.

To our surprise, Mrs. Mimble wasn't to be seen, but Fish of the Remove was behind the counter, in his shirt-sleeves, with an apron on.

"What the merry dickens are you doing there, Fishy?" asked Nugent.

"I guess I'm in charge of this hyper establishment," said Fishy.

"Where's Mrs. Mimble?"

"Gone out for the afternoon," explained Fish. "Her nephew has come home wounded from the Front, and she was very anxious to visit him in hospital, so I offered to see to the shop for her this afternoon."

"Well, that was jolly decent of you," said Wharton, in surprise. He was naturally surprised, of course, for it is very unusual for Fisher T. Fish to do anything decent.

Fish nodded.

"I guess I'm always open to lend a hand to a deserving woman like Mrs. Mimble," he said.

"Well, you'll have all your work cut out this afternoon," said Bob Cherry. "There's going to be a rush of custom."

"I guess I shall be all there."

"Ginger pop for me," said Ogilvy.

"Yep! Twopence, please."

"I mean a penny bottle."

"Penny bottles are off," said Fisher T. Fish. "I've got twopenny and four-penny. Which is yours?"

That was the first hint we had that Fisher T. Fish was at his old tricks again. We might have guessed it really, knowing Fishy as we did.

"Look here, what's the little game?" asked Wharton.

"Owing to the state of the market, there's been a slight increase in prices," explained Fish.

"This is the first I've heard of it."

"Yep! You've got to hear of everything for the first time," assented Fish. "You'll get used to it, I calculate."

"Look here, has Mrs. Mimble raised her prices?"

"I guess Mrs. Mimble hasn't anything to do with this stunt. P'raps I'd better explain how matters stand," said Fishy, leaning his skinny elbows on the counter, and looking at us.

"Perhaps you had," growled Squiff, "and the sooner the quicker, you spoofing Yankee!"

"Hard words break no bones" said Fish calmly. "You can call me a Yankee till you're black in the face, but you'll have to pay my prices. This hyper is a Tuck Trust."

"A what?" yelled Johnny Bull.

"A Tuck Trust," said Fishy coolly. "I've taken over Mrs. Mimble's stock

for this afternoon, and I'm trading on my own."

"On your own?"

"Sure! I guess I've deposited five quid with Mrs. Mimble as a security. If I sell more than five quids' worth of stuff, I pay her for it—shop prices. See? I'm keeping strict account of what I sell, and Mrs. Mimble's got a list of her stock, and I shall settle up with her this evening. But, owing to the state of the market, and—and other causes, I'm obliged to put a little on the price of goods."

"My hat!"

"And did Mrs. Mimble know you were going to put a little on the price of goods?" asked Wharton.

Fishy shrugged his shoulders.

"I didn't discuss that with Mrs. Mimble," he said. "Mrs. Mimble is a good soul; but she ain't a slick business woman. I dare say Mrs. Mimble thought I was going to sell at the usual prices. What Mrs. Mimble may have thought don't cut any ice with me. I guess I'm selling at my own prices, and my prices are double. And you can take it or leave it!"

Every chap in the shop glared at Fisher T. Fish across the counter.

Fish didn't mind.

He waited for orders. He knew that the fellows must have the stuff, on an occasion like the St. Jim's match. They couldn't keep their guests waiting for tea while they fetched tuck from Friar Dale or Courtfield.

Fishy held the whip hand.

Poor old Mrs. Mimble had been glad to get off that afternoon; but she couldn't very well have closed the shop, so she had naturally jumped at Fishy's offer to keep shop for her.

She didn't know Fishy as well as we did, and had no suspicion that he would try to work a swindle on us.

But that was Fishy's plan. He had to account to Mrs. Mimble for everything he sold at shop prices. He was sure to sell five quids' worth on such an important occasion. He was going to charge double prices, and keep five quid for himself. That was Fishy's little game!

The fellows hardly knew what to say at first. They simply had to have the tuck. Fisher T. Fish grinned at them across the counter.

"I guess you can give your orders," he remarked. "This is business, you know."

"You don't call it stealing?" asked Nugent.

"Nope!"

"That's the English for it."

"I reckon you make me tired!" said Fisher T. Fish. "There ain't a single galoot, I guess, in this sleepy old island, who understands business. You don't know how to work a trust in this hyper country. I reckon if you had a few smart American business men over hyper, there'd have been a Bread Trust before this, and you'd be paying two bob a time

for your loaves. This hyer is a Tuck Trust. I've cornered the school supply of tuck, and I guess I'm charging what I like for it. If you don't like to pay my price, go for a walk and buy somewhere else!"

"We can't do that," said Wharton.

"And we won't!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I want a cake," said Bolsover major.

"A shilling cake."

"Two shillings, please."

"You Yankee thief!"

"I guess you don't touch a two-shilling cake in this hyer establishment, Bolsover, till you pony up the spondulicks."

Just then Coker of the Fifth came in. Coker wanted some things for tea. He came up to the counter, and slammed down a ten-bob note.

"Hallo, you in charge, Fish?" he asked.

"I guess this hyer is my establishment, some," said Fish. "I reckon I've taken it over for the afternoon."

"Oh!" said Coker. "Well, if you're in charge, buck up and serve me! Pot of jam, cake, tin of biscuits, pound of ham, and a tongue!"

"I guess all that won't come out of ten bob, Coker."

"Eh? Why won't it?"

"Prices have gone up?"

"Gone up? How much?"

"Hundred per cent.," said Fishy calmly.

Coker of the Fifth stared at him, and then gazed round.

"What does that silly Yankee idiot mean?" he asked.

"He means to swindle us!" growled Johnny Bull. "He's got Mrs. Mimble to put him in charge, and he's doubled the prices!"

"Has he?" said Coker.

"Correct!" said Fish. "Now, you want a good cake, Coker, I suppose—one of my special line?"

"I want a half-crown cake," said Coker.

"Correct! That's five shillings now."

"That's half-a-crown now!" said Coker.

"Five bob, I calculate."

"Something amiss with your calculator, ther!" said Coker. "I'm having that cake at the usual price!"

"Sorry! It can't be done."

"Look here—"

"If you're not going to make purchases, Coker, kindly make room for the next gentleman! What can I do for you, Ogilvy?"

"Ginger-pop!" said Ogilvy.

"Tuppenny or fourpenny?"

"Penny!" yelled Ogilvy.

"Penny pops are off in this hyer establishment!"

"Are you going to serve me, Fish?" thundered Coker.

"Yep, if you pay my price."

"At the old price?" roared Coker.

"Nope!"

"You mean that?" said Coker.

"Yep!"

"Very well; I'll serve myself!"

Coker whipped round behind the counter in a twinkling.

Fisher T. Fish simply glared at him.

He hadn't expected that. That is a peculiar thing about Fishy. He never can see anything outside his precious calculations. He had worked it out that he was going to do a stunning stroke of business that afternoon with his Tuck Trust, and it hadn't occurred to his mighty brain that perhaps the fellows would take the law into their own hands. That wasn't business, according to Fishy. Whether it was business or not, it was what he was going to get.

Coker began to sort out his goods himself, and the whole crowd roared at the expression on Fishy's face.

"Will you vamoose, Coker?" yelled Fishy. "Will you light out, you scallywag? Will you absquatulate, you mug-wump? Let my goods alone!"

Coker didn't trouble to reply; he began making the things up into a bundle. Fisher T. Fish made a grab at the bundle. Still Coker didn't speak; he just let out his left at Fishy, and the Yankee went down behind the counter as if a mule had kicked him.

Coker put a foot on his chest to keep him there, out of the way, while he was doing up the bundle. Fish squirmed under Coker's boot—it was a good size, and pretty heavy—but he couldn't squirm away. Coker kept him pinned down, and tied up his parcel.

"Just ten bob!" said Coker, when he had finished. "I'll put the ten-bob note in the till, Fish!"

"You scallywag!" shrieked Fish. "You'll put a pound in the till! You're not going to rob me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker wiped his boots on Fishy, and came round from behind the counter with his parcel. Fish jumped up like a jack-in-the-box.

"Gimme my goods, you slab-sided jay!" he bellowed.

Coker walked out of the shop.

"I've been robbed!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "You cackling jays, I've been burgled! I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"We're waiting for you to serve us, Fishy," said Wharton.

"I guess I'm ready—at the new prices."

"Old prices, my son!"

"Nepe!"

"Then we'll serve ourselves, same as Coker!"

"I guess—"

"Come on, you fellows!" said Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fellows swarmed round the counter.

Fisher T. Fish, quite desperate, began to hit out, and, of course, he was rolled over on the floor in a second. Any number of feet trampled over him, and his yells were simply terrific, as Inky put it. Bob Cherry emptied a tin of treacle over him, and Johnny Bull added a pot of jam, paying for it himself. Squiff poured ginger-pop over him, and Bolsover major added pickles. Fishy was in an awful state by that time, especially as he was being trodden on every minute. He yelled and gasped and shrieked, but the fellows only roared, and went on serving themselves.

Harry Wharton & Co. dropped the money in the till—old prices—for all the goods they took, but some of the chaps weren't so particular. Skinner said that, as Fishy had deposited five quids with Mrs. Mimble, the loss would fall on him, so there was nothing to be particular about. Billy Bunter was scoffing everything within reach at top speed, and certainly Bunter wasn't likely to pay a penny. But that was Fishy's look-out. Skinner and Snoop and Stott crammed their pockets, and marched off, grinning.

Bolsover major said he was going to allow himself a discount for cash—he told Fishy that was business—and he paid about half. A lot of the fellows began to allow themselves a discount for cash; and when cash ran out, they told Fishy to keep careful account of what they took, as they were giving themselves credit.

Fishy wasn't quite in a state to keep careful account of anything. He was squirming on the floor; for, as fast as he got up, somebody knocked him down again, and he was kept pretty busy rubbing pickles and treacle out of his eyes and off his face.

More and more fellows crowded in, and, when they heard what was on, there was a regular raid.

Purchases got bigger, and cash grew beautifully less.

Harry Wharton & Co. departed with their goods, and Temple & Co. of the Fourth marched off with big bundles, and a crowd of fags took their places. Tubb & Co. of the Third and young Nugent, minor of the Second had never had such a chance in their lives.

They simply rose to it.

Fishy was gasping and shrieking on the floor all the time. Fellows dabbed jam and pickles and butter on him, Skinner pointing out that Fishy himself would have to pay for all he received in that way, so they could afford to be liberal.

All the time Billy Bunter was tucking away as if he were trying to break a record. He had unfastened three of his waistcoat buttons, and was breathing like a grampus. But he wouldn't give in. Sammy Bunter, his minor, was going great guns, too. They must have accounted for pounds' worth of Fishy's stock.

The shop was pretty well cleared by the time the customers were satisfied and the last of them cleared off. Billy Bunter fairly rolled as he went out, and he was looking green and yellow.

Then Fishy was able to get up at last.

He was smothered from head to foot in treacle and jam and pickles and other things, and looked a horrid sight. He didn't dare to show himself in the quad, where the alfresco feed was going on. He sneaked out of a back way, and squirmed round to the School House to get cleaned; but he was spotted, and there was a yell. Some of the St. Jim's chaps saw him, and they stared. D'Arcy of St. Jim's stuck an eyeglass in his eye and fairly blinked at him.

"Bai Jove! What's that vewy cuwious object?" he asked.

"Oh, that's Fishy!" said Bob Cherry. "Don't mind him. He's a Yankee, you know, and he does these queer things."

"Bai Jove, he must be a vewy wemarkable person!"

"He is!" agreed Bob.

While everybody else was having a good time, Fisher T. Fish was busy in the dormitory, trying to get clean. The guests were gone by the time he came down, and Fishy looked weak and woeful.

When Mrs. Mimble came back there was a settling-up with Fishy. Mrs. Mimble found her shop in a rather ruffled state, but she was pleased to see what a whopping amount of stock had been disposed of. But she found that the takings in the till were four pounds nineteen shillings short of the value of stock sold, so Fishy had only one bob back out of his five pounds.

Fishy explained to her, almost with tears in his eyes, that there had been a rag, and that the loss ought properly to fall on her; even then he wouldn't make any profit. But Mrs. Mimble didn't see it. She was soon told what Fishy had been up to, and she gave him a lecture instead, and told him that if he wasn't satisfied, all he had to do was to complain to the Head about the rag, and the Head would see justice done.

But that was just what Fishy was afraid of; he didn't want justice. He knew what the Head would have thought about the Tuck Trust, and doubling the prices. Fishy would have got the licking of his life, and he knew it. So he didn't think of complaining to the Head.

He came away from the tuckshop with a single, solitary bob in his pocket, and an expression on his face that might have

touched the heart of a Chicago speculator. He looked quite bowed down when he came in, and his look made the fellows simply howl.

"How's the Tuck Trust getting on?" Bob Cherry asked.

But Fishy only groaned and limped away to his study. All that evening he could be heard groaning at intervals. The next day and the following days Fishy was going round looking up the fellows who hadn't paid, and trying to screw the money out of them. He is still trying!

THE END.

THE VANISHED ALIENS!

An Adventure of Herlock Sholmes, Detective.

By PETER TODD.

I.

AMONG the ever-glorious deeds of Sholmes' triumphs, the case which was perhaps of the most vital importance to the British nation was the case of the Vanished Aliens.

The War Office staff were even troubled in their sleep to such an extent that it is said they dreamed we were at war with the Orkney Islands instead of Germany, and our troops were accordingly sent to Inverness under the impression that that town was the capital of the Orkneys!

To such a pass had the state of affairs arrived when the case was placed in Sholmes' hands—at three-thirty precisely on the thirty-fifth of March, nineteen hundred and nineteen.

We were seated in our own rooms in Shaker Street. I was busily making notes on the *Affair of the Lost Sardine*, and Sholmes was contentedly swigging cocaine by the gallon. He was still wearing his famous well-patched dressing-gown. The door was thrown open suddenly, and an inky boy, very red in the face, with ruffled hair flying in all possible directions, and panting energetically, made us aware that he had entered the room.

Sholmes removed from my shoulder a large and shapely boot, through which five elegant toes were peeping. He took another of the same kind from the fireplace. He turned his head, and gave the boy a piercing look.

"Boy, you have been hurrying!" he said, with his usual miraculous deduction.

The boy started perceptibly.

"Sir, how could you know that?" he gasped.

Sholmes scowled, and filled a bucket with cocaine.

"Deduction!" he grunted, drinking it off at one gulp.

The boy looked surprised, but hurriedly explained his interview with us.

"Mr. Sholmes," he said, "I am the office-boy at the War Office!"

He looked doubtfully at me, probably wondering whether I was a rhinoceros or a chimpanzee.

"You may speak freely before my friend Jotson," said Sholmes airily.

"He may be considered in the same light as a gallopst."

The boy, readily believing him, went on:

"There have been heard lately many strange and unaccountable sounds from beneath the office. They are rumbling

and gurgling noises, most irritating to the nerves. The staff cannot sleep for them! I remember one of our brightest clerks staying awake for an hour at a stretch, unable to continue his daily sleep. I fear he has insomnia. We despatched one of our most trusty men up here to you in a taxi; but he must have fallen asleep inside, and may now be somewhere in the north of Scotland. Of course, the taximeter will have ticked off a considerable amount by now; but we can easily remedy that by having a tax put on tomatoes or treacle."

"I will look into this case," said Sholmes. "Have you brought my fee? Thanks! Have a swig of cocaine, and get out!"

When the boy had departed, Sholmes walked up and down the room, talking.

"Jotson," he said, speaking between draughts of cocaine, "this is rather a perplexing mystery. I noticed in the 'Daily Dummkopf' during my stay in Germany the day before the war broke out, that the Germans expected the War Office to be attacked somewhere about this date. We must work quickly, Jotson!"

There was a thoughtful silence for some moments.

Then Sholmes began:

"My dear Jot—"

"My dear Sho—"

"Enough! Let us go!"

Once outside, Sholmes started talking again.

"I had read in the paper all about the affair before the boy arrived," he remarked. "He must have taken a few rests on his way to our rooms. The War Office staff, as he said, have been greatly disturbed by these strange sounds. They seem to emanate from beneath the office. The police, understudying my methods, searched the place from which the sounds were not likely to come. The roof has been thoroughly overhauled, and one keen police-inspector even looked up the chimney, but nothing was discovered.

"The sounds seem to come from the cellar, therefore it is hardly likely that anything will be discovered there. Still, that remains as a remote possibility.

"It was stated in the papers that two men were heard speaking in German just outside the establishment of another German at the corner of War Office Street.

"Perhaps you are not aware, my dear Jotson, that when two men of foreign appearance are conversing privately with each other in German they are very likely to be of German nationality."

"Is that so, Sholmes?" I exclaimed involuntarily.

"Decidedly so!" said Sholmes, bringing his hand heavily down, by way of emphasis, upon my new top-hat. "I made that discovery during my visit to Germany, in the Irrenhaus at which I stayed. What hour have you, Jot?"

Sholmes of late had developed the habit of calling me Jot.

I drew my watch from my pocket. "Jot," remarked Sholmes, with a smile, "I will tell you the exact time without looking at your watch!"

"Sholmes, are you serious?"

"Of course!" he answered.

I accepted his word without question, though one would not have thought so after looking at his face.

"Well, my dear Jot, it is exactly four o'clock!"

I started, as if stung by a caterpillar.

"Sholmes, without looking at your watch—"

He smiled sadly.

"All that I have to remember my watch by," he murmured, "is a ticket

signed by a man whom I prefer to designate as an avuncular relative."

I nodded sympathetically. My cigarette-case was in the same hands.

"But how—" I began.

"Oh, the deduction is simple," he said indifferently. A moment ago the bell in the tower yonder pealed forth four times. Did you not hear it, Jot?"

"Yes, now I come to think of it, dear Sholmes, I did."

"But, of course, you did not connect it with anything. For many years—in fact, ever since I was parted from my watch—I have noted that when the bell strikes four times it is four o'clock. When it strikes once, it is one o'clock. When it strikes twelve times it is twelve o'clock, and so forth. A little thinking—"

"Marvellous!" I ejaculated. "Your powers of observation, my dear Sholmes, are tremendous, not to say terrific!"

"What is more," Sholmes continued, "I perceive that the small hand of the clock is pointing to four, and the large to twelve. That also tells me it is four o'clock!"

For not the first time in my chequered career I was amazed.

We walked on, Sholmes resting his elbow on my head, and I making notes in abbreviated shorthand as fast as I could.

Sholmes placed a pipe in either corner of his mouth, and a cigarette between his lips, and commenced to talk again.

"Jotson," he said, stopping a moment to wipe the mud off his boots with my handkerchief, "my spies tell me there have been several disappearances of Germans lately!"

Sholmes had spies everywhere, and confided to me that the majority of them were domiciled at Bedlam.

"There is Herr Zozzidge, the pork-butcher, whose disappearance is as mysterious as the contents of the pork-pies he used to sell. Von Tusch, another wealthy German, has completely disappeared, but I have a very good idea of his whereabouts. There is a secret coal-grate just outside the War Office, Jot, though perhaps you did not know of it?"

"I must confess I did not," I admitted.

"The traitors in our midst must have informed the Germans of it. His footprints were traced up to there, but no further. He left his boots on the War Office doorstep, but they were thrown into a dustbin by a policeman. Now, what does this point to?"

"That the boots were worn-out," I ventured.

"It proves," said Sholmes triumphantly, "that the German went down the coal-hole! I have given Scotland Yard this explanation, but Inspector Snooze pooh-poohed the idea, and Chief Constable Snoak had just time to say 'Piffle!' before he fell asleep."

"The police were ever bunglers!" I murmured.

"Herr Popstein, the pawnbroker, who reminds me so clearly of my watch, will shortly disappear, I firmly believe."

And Sholmes' foresight proved correct, for, as we afterwards discovered, Herr Popstein disappeared that day.

"See, that is the place outside of which those two men were heard speaking in German!" indicated Sholmes, pointing with a long and bony forefinger to a huge Empire Sausage manufacturing works controlled by a German gentleman named Herr Blitzen. "We must watch that tonight! The food manufactured there, which is now called Empire Sausage, is

(Continued on page 20.)

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That is all—very simple, very quick—but notice the result—the vast improvement. The scalp is freed from every vestige of Dandruff, Scurf, Dust, and Dirt; the hair is silkily soft and fragrant.

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Name

Address

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD.

(Continued from page 18.)

really German sausage cleverly disguised. The police, of course, know nothing of this valuable clue.

"Herr Blitzen, when going on a journey, invariably travels by means of a Zeppelin. As you know, I have made a great study of the British nation, Jot, and this mode of travelling is not at all natural for a Briton. Now, think carefully, Jot. Have you ever seen an Englishman go from one place to another in a Zeppelin?"

I thought long and hard, my somewhat rusted brains making such a creaking, jarring noise in this unusual exercise as would have disturbed less metallic nerves than those of Herlock Sholmes.

"No, of course not!" I cried at last.

"That minute detail is enough to arouse my suspicions," said Sholmes.

Even then, I must confess that I thought Sholmes was on the wrong track. The police were sure that Herr Blitzen was a most respectable and patriotic Briton, for thousands of people had seen him publicly drop eighteen-pence in the War-box.

And there was nothing to suggest his being a spy, save for the fact that occasionally plans of fortifications and naval constructions were seen protruding from his pockets.

Besides, he was naturalised! What greater proof of patriotism could possibly be required?

Sholmes, however, had formed a deduction, and as that deduction led him to suspect Herr Blitzen, guilty or not guilty, the German must pay the penalty of any crime he may or may not have committed.

Sholmes looked at his nose with one eye and at the setting sun with the other—a sure proof that he was hungry—and addressed me:

"Let us seek a harbourage, Jot, where we can obtain a morsel of something digestible!"

II.

It was common knowledge that Sholmes was acquainted with every street, every house, every person, and, last, but not least, every public-house in London.

We decided to find shelter in some obscure building, for Sholmes was in danger all the while he was out. He was Germany's greatest stumbling-block. In fact, the Germans had dropped bombs on both Colney Hatch and Hanwell, in the mistaken assumption that he must be in one of these residences; but luckily he was not, being still at large.

We adjourned to a restaurant, where Sholmes partook of a light repast, consisting merely of a quart of shrimps, a battalion of oysters, an army corps of kippers and bloaters, topped with two or three filleted lobsters. Sholmes firmly believed in moderation in eating.

From the restaurant window, which had no panes, we had a very good view of the War Office.

"Jot," said Sholmes, thoughtfully chewing the head of a bloater, "there are spies everywhere nowadays. Only the other day a person of decidedly foreign appearance was discovered on Maniac Moor, flashing a powerful electric lamp of German design. He repeated, 'Mein Gott!' nineteen times before he arrived at the police-station.

"There he explained in the German language that he had been looking for

buttercups with the aid of the flash-lamp. He was then, of course, immediately released.

"Personally, I believe that man to be a spy in the pay of Germany, and his explanation was merely a clever excuse!"

"Sholmes!" I murmured, in expostulation.

"It is common knowledge," went on Sholmes, heedlessly starting on another bloater-head, "that the German Spy Association is willing to pay anyone up to the exorbitant sum of ten shillings per annum to spy upon the War Office for them. They have approached me on the subject!"

"And you refused?" I asked.

"Certainly!" heatedly replied Sholmes, who was patriotic to his finger-tips. "It was not good enough for me! I demanded twelve-and-sixpence per annum; but they would not pay it, so, as a true patriot, I utterly refused to have anything to do with them!"

"Bravo, Sholmes!" I exclaimed. "You share my patriotism! I wish they would ask for my services, though!"

Sholmes smiled, and fell asleep, with his head hanging out of the window. I also fell asleep, and rolled under the table, where I dreamed I was making notes on the Case of the Kidnapped Kipper—one of Sholmes' greatest triumphs.

Dusk fell, and still we snored on in a sweet harmony, which had the effect of setting all the dogs in the neighbourhood barking their objections.

Suddenly I was awakened by a dig in the ribs, and had the satisfaction of feeling Sholmes' boot collide feebly with my left eye.

"Jotson, take up your notebook and write!" I heard Sholmes command. "Mine hour hath come!"

I rose to my feet, fearing that the full moon had had its usual effect on Sholmes.

At that moment the old—exceedingly old—clock in the distance struck fifteen times.

"Ten minutes to twelve!" announced Sholmes. "In ten minutes' time it will be midnight!"

Before I had time to applaud this clever piece of deduction, he held up a warning hand.

"Look out of the window, Jot, and tell me what you see!"

I placed my notebook behind my ear and looked keenly out of the window.

"See," I exclaimed when I was "there are two men outside Herr Blitzen's work! I hear them speaking mutually to each other in German!"

Sholmes nodded.

"That is what awoke me, Jot," he said. "I knew there must be something wrong, and, as you know, I always look very closely into things that are wrong. You may have noticed me regarding you keenly at times, Jot?"

I said that I had noticed him, and remarked, further, that on several occasions I had observed him looking into a mirror with his usual piercing gaze, sadly shaking his head the while.

"As it is a high jump from this window to the ground, you had better leap first, Jot," he said. "When you reach the ground, lie prostrate, so that I may alight upon you. That may help to break my fall a little."

"An excellent suggestion!" I approved, willingly carrying out his instructions.

"Regardez! The men have received a heavy box from Herr Blitzen!" exclaimed Sholmes, after his leap. "They are making for the War Office, I perceive! We must shadow them!"

Sholmes followed the two men at a respectable distance, and I crawled after

Sholmes with a pain in every part of my body.

Still, as Sholmes afterwards agreed, anything was better than for him to be hurt, for then mystery upon mystery would be left in the hands of the police, and, of course, remain unsolved until Sholmes recovered.

The two suspects stopped abruptly outside the War Office, and in less time than it takes to recite "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" they had disappeared, taking the box with them.

"Now they are trapped!" said Sholmes exultantly.

He drew a mouth-organ from his pocket, and upon it commenced to play what he afterwards told me was a new variant of "The Death of Nelson."

Instantly two thousand Metropolitan Police, headed by Inspector Pinkeye, marched up to discover the cause of the disturbance.

"Follow me, men!" cried Sholmes, donning a policeman's helmet, and keeping in step.

Sholmes located the secret coal-grate, and hopped down the hole out of sight. Inspector Pinkeye did the same, and, one by one, the men followed.

I peered down the hole and had a birds-eye view of all that happened.

"Where does this lead to?" demanded Sholmes, pointing to a rusty iron-door in the wall of the coal-cellar.

No one knew.

Guzzling, gurgling, grunting, and rumbling sounds came from within, and Sholmes ordered the men to break open the door.

That was soon done, and a startling scene met the astonished gaze of Inspector Pinkeye and his men.

Sholmes, however, merely smiled. He had anticipated this.

The room was packed with Germans, some of them eating German sausage and drinking lager, and others snoring loudly on the floor.

Herr Popstein was there, and so were many other rascally Germans with whom Sholmes was acquainted.

They were thrown into the utmost confusion when the police entered.

"At them, men!" came Sholmes' voice from the rear.

"Mein Gott!" gasped a big, blond German, laying about him with a piece of sauerkraut.

"Mein sauerkraut!" granted another.

The aliens were soon all captured, and Inspector Pinkeye severely told them to go to the nearest police-station.

The box which the two aliens had been carrying was found to contain innumerable rolls of German sausage, the crown of the age.

When we arrived at our rooms Sholmes explained the mystery.

"When I learned that rumbling sounds had been heard from beneath the War Office," he said, "I easily deduced that they were caused by German snores. The chief characteristic of a German is his snore, which is almost as loud as your own, Jot."

"Never!" I ejaculated.

"The guzzling sounds were made by the aliens eating and drinking. They wanted food, of course, and the two spies obtained it nightly from Herr Blitzen, who is now under arrest. The Germans' scheme was to band together and attack the War Office in their sleep. The War would then soon be at an end—probably in our favour. I, however, frustrated their villainous scheme, and the police have told them not to do it again!"

Thus once more had Sholmes' wonderful detective powers come to the rescue of his country, and Germany's latest scheme had ended in smoke!

THE END.

