

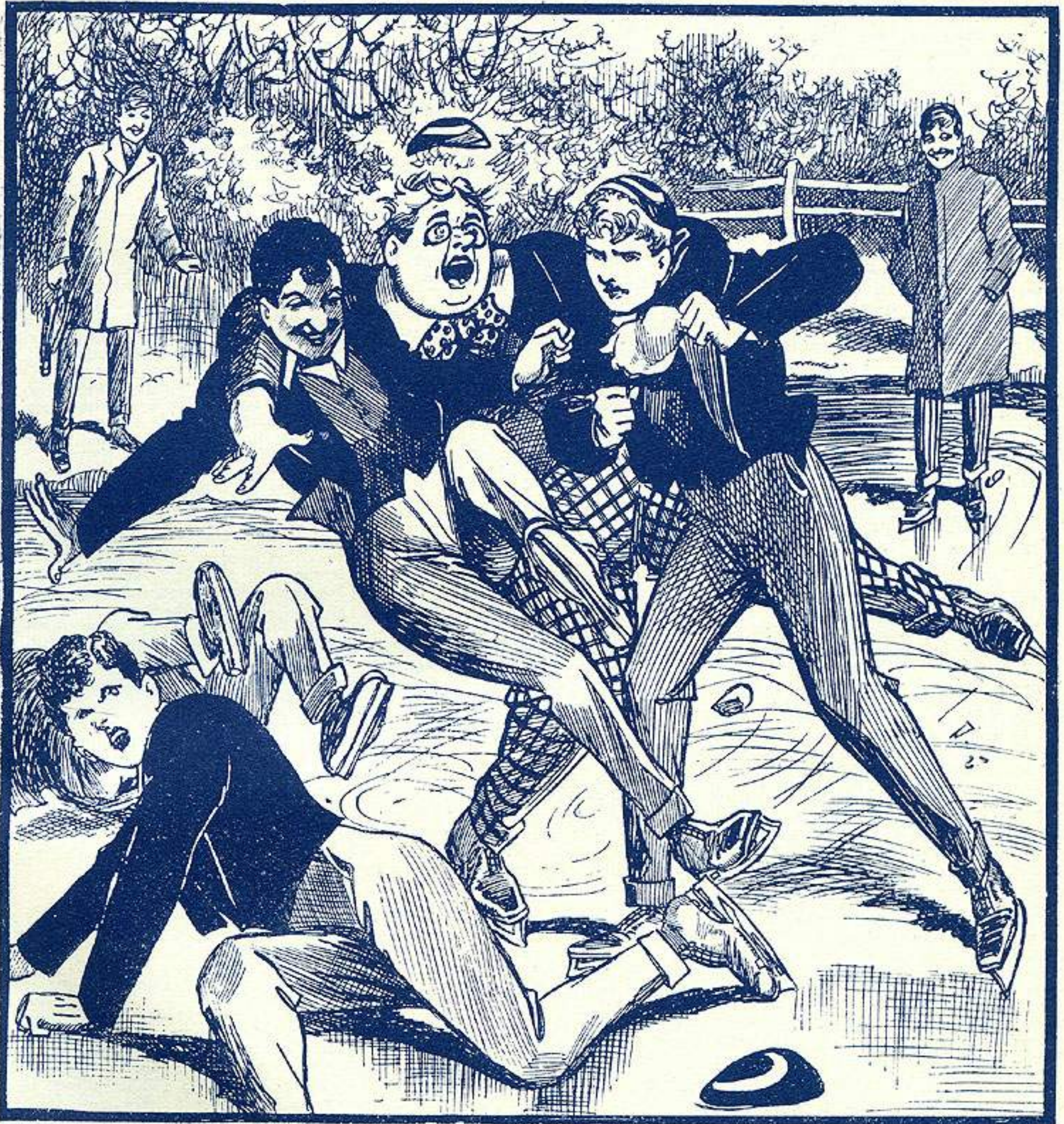


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BRAVO, BUNTER!



A (N) ICE SITUATION!

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Bravo, Bunter!



By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Slippery Customer!

BACK-PEDAL, Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in tones of alarm.

The ice was thick on the river, and there was a buzz of merry voices along the frosty banks. The Sark, that bubbled and sang through the rushes in the summer-time, was frozen hard and fast. A crowd of Greyfriars fellows had come down to skate that bright, frosty afternoon—among them the Famous Five of the Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co. had slid out on the ice, when Bunter of the Remove arrived, skates in hand.

He sat down to put on his skates, and then Bob Cherry called out his warning.

Bunter blinked up over the big glasses on his fat little nose.

"Back-pedal!" repeated Bob solemnly.

"Eh? What's the matter?"

"You're not coming on the ice, surely?"

"Yes, I am, fathead! Why shouldn't I?"

"Danger, old chap."

"Rot!" said Bunter.

"Danger?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"The ice is thick enough, Bob—"

"Not for Bunter," said Bob, shaking his head. "It's warranted to bear anything up to half a ton. But Bunter—"

"You silly ass!" roared the fat junior.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I've warned you," said Bob.

"A fellow of twenty-seven stone—"

"You thumping ass! Do you think I'm twenty-seven stone?"

"Well, say twenty-six and a half."

"Oh, rats!" snapped Bunter.

And he finished putting on his skates.

Bunter certainly was fat, and his weight was very considerable; but undoubtedly twenty-six and a half stone was an exaggeration.

"Come on, Bob!" called out Nugent.

But Bob paused. Billy Bunter was the worst possible skater in existence, and, having had his little joke with the Owl of the Remove, the good-natured Bob was ready to help him if wanted.

"All right! I'm going to lend Bunter a hand, Franky," he answered.

The fat junior rose, and blinked at him, with a slight grin. It was still unsuspected at Greyfriars that Wally Bunter, his cousin's double, had taken Billy Bunter's place in the Greyfriars Remove. To all the Remove, and to Greyfriars generally, he was Billy Bunter; and though his different manners and customs had caused some surprise, nobody dreamed of suspecting that he was not the celebrated W. G. B.

Wally Bunter, as a matter of fact, was a first-rate skater; but in this, as in other matters, Billy Bunter's reputation had fallen upon him, like Elijah's mantle upon Elisha.

"You take his other arm, Inky," said Bob.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh nodded.

"With terrific pleasure, my esteemed Bob!" he answered.

"I'll shove him on from behind if you like," remarked Johnny Bull, rather sarcastically.

"Ready, Bunter?" asked Bob, laughing.

The fat junior blinked at him.

"You think I can't skate?" he asked.

"Eh? I know you can't!" said Bob.

"If you're coming on the ice you'll want help, Billy."

"The wantfulness will be terrific, my worthy and ridiculous Bunter!" said Hurree Singh. "Give me your esteemed arm."

Wally hesitated a moment.

He was inclined to astonish the Removites by a display of first-class skating, which certainly would have astounded them in the supposed Billy Bunter.

But another thought came into Wally's mind, and he grinned and nodded.

"You're awfully good!" he said.

"Catch hold!"

"Here you are!" said Bob cheerily.

He grasped one of Bunter's arms, and Hurree Singh grasped the other, and Johnny Bull, by way of further precaution, took the fat junior by the back of the neck. And Bunter was slid out on the ice.

"Want any help?" asked Harry Wharton, looking round.

"Well, you might take hold of his ears," said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The captain of the Remove lent a hand, though he did not take Bunter by the ears.

"Like me to hang on to your nose, Buntie?" called out Frank Nugent.

"No!" hooted Bunter.

"Well, if you can manage the porpoise, I'll get off," said Nugent. And he skated away up the frozen stream at a great rate.

The other four members of the famous Co. attended to Bunter.

Certainly the fat junior seemed to need plenty of help.

His feet travelled in different directions on the ice, and he threw all his weight, which was justly described by Inky as terrific, on Bob Cherry.

"Here, hold on!" gasped Bob.

"All right! I'm holding on!" said Wally, throwing a fat arm round Bob's neck. "That all right?"

"Ow! You're chok-choking me!" spluttered Bob. "Dragimoff!"

"This way, my esteemed fathead!" exclaimed Hurree Singh, endeavouring to secure his share of Bunter's weight.

He was only too successful.

Wally Bunter suddenly transferred his whole weight to the nabob, throwing his podgy arms round Inky's neck and hanging on as if for his life.

The slim nabob simply crumpled up.

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Help!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the juniors on the ice and the bank.

"Hold up, Bunter!" shouted Wharton, dragging at the fat junior's shoulders.

"Eh? I'm holding on to Inky! Ain't that right?"

"Yaroooh! Help!"

"Ha ha, ha!"

"Oh, you thumping idiot!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "Hold up, Inky! We'll get him off! Give me a hand, Bunter!"

"Here you are!"

The fat junior suddenly rolled away from the gasping nabob, and plumped on Johnny Bull.

Johnny was an exceedingly sturdy and hefty youth, but he was not built to stand up against a frontal attack like that. He went spinning. His skates flourished in the air as he reclined on his back on the ice, roaring.

Bunter's arms were thrown out wildly to catch something. One of them caught Harry Wharton across the chest with a terrific slam, and the captain of the Remove went over backwards as if he had been shot.

"Go it, Bunter!" shrieked Peter Todd from the bank. He was quite enjoying the scene—from a safe distance.

"Pile in, Bunter!" yelled Vernon-Smith. "Give 'em jip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter was going it, there was no mistake about that. He had Bob Cherry and Inky by the necks again, holding on frantically, while his legs travelled round at random. Bob and the nabob strove their hardest to bear up, but the fat junior was dragging them over in spite of their resistance.

The three of them flew round together, amid a wild clashing and crashing of skates, and loud yells of protest.

"Stoppit, you fat idiot!"

"Go easy, my esteemed lunatic—Yaroooh!"

"Help!"

"Dragimoff!"

"Oh, crikey!"

Crash! Bump!

Bob Cherry went over in one direction, and Inky in another. They joined Wharton and Johnny Bull on the ice.

But to the surprise of the yelling on-lookers Bunter remained on his feet, apparently quite at his ease.

He blinked down at the juniors sprawling breathlessly on the ice.

"My hat! Do you call that helping a fellow?" he said.

"Yow-owooop!"

"I'll scalp him!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"My hat! He can skate!" yelled Peter Todd blankly. "Look at him! He's been spoofing us! Look!"

It was an amazing sight. Bunter was skating round the fallen juniors in a circle, with perfect ease and facility. Evidently he was quite at home on skates.

"My hat!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "Look—only look!"

"Bunter—Bunter skating!" ejaculated

Ogilvy. "He can skate! This takes the whole giddy cake!"

Harry Wharton & Co. sat up on the ice, looking quite dazed. Wally Bunter was sailing round them, cutting figures with perfect ease. He was quite as good a skater as anybody there, that was clear. It was equally clear that his former clumsiness had been a little joke on the Co.

"Well, my hat!" stuttered Bob Cherry. "Bunter—you spoofing porpoise! You—you deceiving toad! You—you—"

"I'll scalp him!" gasped Johnny Bull. Bunter waved a fat hand to the breathless Co., and shot off, going up the river in a terrific burst of speed. He vanished round the bend in a few seconds. After his little joke on the Co. he preferred not to remain at close quarters just then.

Harry Wharton staggered to his feet, breathless, but laughing.

"The fat bounder can skate!" he said. "Blessed if I can catch on! He never could skate before."

"I suppose he was spoofing," said Bob, rubbing his nose. "He certainly was spoofing a few minutes ago. The villain jammed his elbow into my eye."

"And on my esteemed nose!" groaned the Nabob of Bhanpur.

"He winded me!" gurgled Johnny Bull.

"Well, wonders will never cease!" said Peter Todd. "Bunter is full of surprises the last few weeks. He'll be playing football next, and getting goals."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites chortled at the idea; but they were destined to discover that Peter's humorous prediction was not so very far from the truth. Their surprise would have vanished if they had known that it was Wally Bunter, and not Billy, that they were dealing with. But they did not know—and they were not likely to know.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

By Sheer Pluck!

"GREYFRIARS cad!" muttered Ponsonby.

Three juniors of Highcliffe School were on the ice a mile from the spot where the Greyfriars fellows were skating. Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson, of the Highcliffe Fourth, were the three; and they slowed down as they spotted Frank Nugent coming up the river at a great rate.

Nugent was a good skater, and he had set out on a long run, enjoying the rush through the frosty air. He was not thinking of the Highcliffians, though the direction he took brought him within a short distance of Highcliffe School.

Ponsonby gave his comrades a quick look.

"We had the worst of a scrap with that gang the other day," he remarked. "This looks like a chance for us."

"Good egg!" grinned Gadsby. "All the more because they're playing Courtenay's team at footer next Saturday, and Courtenay is anxious to keep the peace."

"And the more that rotter wants to keep the peace the more we jolly well won't let him!" chuckled Monson. "Collar that cad! We'll put him through it. There doesn't seem to be any more of the rotters about."

The three Highcliffians skated to interrupt Nugent. Frank perceived them, and slowed down. He could not keep on without a collision, as the Highcliffians were directly in his path.

Nugent could see that Ponsonby & Co. were looking for trouble—but he was out for skating, not scrapping. Moreover, as the Remove match with Highcliffe was coming off on Saturday, he

would have preferred to avoid rags with the Highcliffe fellows just then. But that was exactly what Ponsonby wanted. His constant ragging with the Greyfriars fellows was a thorn in the side of Courtenay, the junior captain of Highcliffe—for which reason the amiable Pon did not mean to let the old feud rest if he could help it.

Frank Nugent swerved to get round the three Highcliffians, and Ponsonby swerved to cut him off. There was a bump as they came into collision, and Pon's arms were thrown round the Removite of Greyfriars.

"Let go, you fool!" gasped Nugent.

"Lend a hand, you fellows!" shouted Ponsonby.

"What-ho!"

Gadsby and Monson came speeding up. Nugent made a great effort to throw off Ponsonby, and they struggled fiercely on the ice.

The Greyfriars junior tore himself away, but he had lost his balance, and he went spinning and clattering away, while Ponsonby rolled over.

"Collar him!" shouted Ponsonby.

"Hallo! Here comes another of the rotters!" muttered Monson.

Gadsby glanced along the river.

"Only Bunter! Never mind him! Go for that cad!"

Clatter, clatter!

Frank Nugent was making desperate efforts to recover his balance, but it was in vain. He was closer to the bank now, where the ice was thin, and at a little distance there was a board marked "DANGER!"

Ponsonby had scrambled up, and he was about to rush towards Nugent, when he observed that long cracks were showing in the ice under Nugent's clattering skates.

He stopped suddenly.

"Look out—keep back!" he panted.

"It's thin ice there—"

"Oh, my hat!"

Crash!

Nugent was over.

The three Highcliffians stood staring at him, dumbfounded, as the falling junior struck the ice.

They were several yards from him—too far to render help if they had attempted to do so.

There was a loud crack from the ice as Nugent struck it, and it smashed through.

Black water bubbled out on the frozen surface, as Nugent, with a sharp cry, disappeared into the gap.

"Good—good heavens!" muttered Gadsby, through palsied lips.

Ponsonby's face was as white as chalk.

Nugent had vanished in the bubbling gap.

The tragedy was so sudden, so terrible, that it seemed to petrify the Highcliffe juniors. They stood staring stupidly at the gap.

A dark head appeared—a hand shot up, and caught the crumbling edge of the ice. Frank Nugent's face, deadly white, appeared over the water.

He was clutching frantically at the ice, but it cracked and crumbled in his grasp.

Ponsonby made a step towards the gap; but a long, threatening crack ran through the ice to his very feet, and he slid hastily back. He had not the courage to venture.

"Help!" came in a faint cry from Nugent.

"Hold on!" came a shout from down the river.

Bunter of the Remove was speeding up; he had seen all, but he was too distant. As he shouted breathlessly the ice gave again in Nugent's frozen hands, and the Greyfriars junior disappeared once more.

"He—he—he'll be drowned!" panted Monson.

"Good gad!"

The three Highcliffians stared at the bubbling gap. There was a whiz as Wally Bunter came up at a terrific burst of speed. The Highcliffians were in his way, and he crashed into them and sent them spinning. The collision helped to stop him. In a second or two he was on the crumbling edge of the gap. Ponsonby scrambled up just in time to see the fat junior plunge in.

"Good gad!" stuttered Ponsonby.

"Bunter's gone in!" said Gadsby dazedly. "He—he's gone in! Oh, crikey!"

"Can't we—we get a ladder, or something, or—a hurdle?" muttered Monson helplessly. "They'll be drowned!"

"Here come some of the Greyfriars fellows!"

Four active figures appeared in the distance, speeding up the river—Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, Bob Cherry, and the nabob. They came on in line at a great speed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Highcliffe cads!" sang out Bob Cherry.

"Roll 'em over!" said Johnny Bull.

"Hold on!" called out Harry Wharton. "No rags now—we're playing Highcliffe on Saturday, you know. Give 'em a rest."

"Stop!" shouted Ponsonby. "Wharton—Cherry—stop, for Heaven's sake! They're gone under!"

"What?"

The skaters spun round, as they were flying by. Ponsonby pointed with a trembling hand to the bubbling gap.

"Nugent's gone in!" he muttered huskily. "Bunter's gone in for him! They'll be both drowned—"

"Nugent!"

Wharton's face was suddenly white. He stared at the gap, hardly understanding for a moment that the black waters had closed over the head of his best and dearest chum.

"Nugent fell in—and—and Bunter went in for him—"

stammered Gadsby. "And you're not helping!"

shouted Johnny Bull, with savage scorn.

The Removites made for the gap. Bob Cherry gave a shout of relief.

"There he is!"

A head rose from the black water, but it was not Nugent's head. The fat face of Bunter, white as chalk now, rose from the water. But the next moment Nugent appeared. He was unconscious, and he was supported by the fat arm of the Owl.

In the excitement of the moment the juniors did not realise the strangeness of the circumstance that it was Bunter who had gone in for Nugent. They were only thinking of the terrible danger.

"Help!"

One fat hand was catching at the ice, while the other fat arm supported Frank Nugent, keeping his head above the water. Harry Wharton was at the gap in a second, but the cracking ice broke under him, and he went in. But his grasp was on Nugent, and he swam strongly.

Johnny Bull, the most practical member of the Co., was scudding to the bank for a hurdle. Bob and Hurree Singh followed him, and the hurdle was dragged away and rushed out on the ice. The three juniors slid it towards the gap cautiously, and Wally Bunter caught hold. Ponsonby & Co. looked on helplessly.

Bob Cherry crawled along the hurdle, and caught Bunter and helped him out.

Wharton was holding on now securely, and in a few seconds Bob relieved him of Nugent, who was quite insensible. Then the captain of the Remove crawled out unaided.

Wally Bunter was waving his arms with great energy to drive off the chill.

"Get Nugent somewhere, you fellows!" he called out. "There's a farmhouse yonder! Get him there!"

Wharton and Bob Cherry had already raised Frank in their arms, and were speeding to the bank with him. Johnny Bull ran to help. Hurree Singh stopped for Bunter.

Now that the danger was over the nabob realised that it was Bunter—Bunter the Owl—who had saved Nugent, and his dark eyes were wide open with astonishment.

"My esteemed Bunter you are wet," he purred softly. "You had betterfully come to the esteemed farmhouse—"

"Oh, I'm all right!" said Wally cheerfully. "I am going home. Skating will restore the circ, you know."

"But—"

"I'm off, Inky! You look after Nugent!"

Wally sped away towards Greyfriars. The nabob looked after him, with wonder in his look, and then followed his chums. He paused for a moment to speak to the shamefaced Highcliffians.

"The funkfulness of your disgusting selves is terrific, my esteemed and white-livered, rotten friends!" he remarked in his expressive but original English.

Then he departed. Ponsonby & Co. did not reply. They disappeared towards Highcliffe, feeling, for once in their lives, ashamed of themselves.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Young Man in a Hurry!

"YOU look wet!"

"Been skating through the ice, Bunter?"

"My hat, he's simply steaming! What have you been up to, Bunter?"

Those questions, and many more, greeted Wally Bunter as he came up with a rush into the crowd of Greyfriars fellows. But Wally did not trouble to reply. He pulled off his skates and ran ashore.

"Bunter!" called out Peter Todd. "I'm wet, Toddy!" was all Wally called back; and he sped away for the school.

"The silly ass has been through the ice, I suppose!" remarked Vernon-Smith. "It wouldn't bear a ton, after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally Bunter sped across the quad and into the School House. He had skated himself into a warm glow, but he wanted to get his wet clothes off as quickly as possible. He was bolting for the staircase, and just stopped in time to avoid crashing into Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch jumped. He had very nearly been cannoned, and being cannoned by a fellow of Bunter's weight was not a light matter.

"Bunter!" rapped out the Remove master.

"Ye-es, sir?"

"What are you rushing about for in that manner?" thundered the Remove master. "You very nearly collided with me, Bunter."

"I—I'm sorry, sir."

"You will take two hundred lines, Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Quelch peered at the fat junior over his glasses. "You are wet, Bunter. Dear me, you are dripping with water!"

"I—I've been—been in the river, sir."

"You utterly careless boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch severely. "Go and change your clothes at once!"

"Oh, there you are!"

It was Bolsover major's voice, and he rushed across to intercept the fat junior. Wally jumped on his machine and pedalled down to the gates, with Bolsover major sprinting close behind.

"Stop him!" shouted Bolsover, as he caught sight of Ogilvy and Russell in the gateway.

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

Wally Bunter dashed up the staircase. On the landing he met Bolsover major, who was unfortunately in the way, and too lordly to get out of it.

Wally crashed into him, and Percy Bolsover sat down on the landing, with a bump and a roar. The fat junior gasped from the shock, but he rushed on, and dived into the Remove dormitory.

And as there was excellent reason to suppose that the Remove bully would follow on his track, he locked the door when he was on the inside. Then he stripped, and proceeded to rub down his fat person with a rough towel with great energy.

He grimed as the handle of the door turned, and then a loud thump came on the panels.

"Bunter!" It was Bolsover major's voice. "Bunter! You fat sweep!"

"Hallo?" answered Wally cheerily.

"Let me in!"

"I like you better outside, old scout."

"I'm going to squash you!" roared Bolsover major.

"I don't think!" chuckled Wally.

"You biffed me over!" yelled Bolsover through the keyhole. "You've nearly winded me! I'm going to spifficate you!"

"My dear man," said Wally, as he rubbed away cheerily, "if you think that's an inducement to me to unlock the door you're making a serious mistake. It's not."

"You—you—you—"

"Run away and play, old nut!"

"Why, I'll—I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Bolsover major. To be told to run away and play by Bunter was too much. The bully of the Remove kicked furiously at the big oaken door.

"Let me in!" he roared.

"Bow-wow!"

"I'll smash you when you come out!"

"Thanks!"

"I'll pulverise you!" shrieked Bolsover.

"Thanks no end!"

Bolsover major gave it up. He bestowed a last thundering kick on the door and departed, with intentions towards Bunter, when he could get at him, that were simply Hunnish.

Wally grinned cheerfully, and went on towelling with vigour. He was not feeling any the worse for his adventure, but he did not mean to run the risk of catching cold. He was soon glowing from head to foot, and then he dressed in dry clothes.

"Oh! My hat! My barnacles!" he murmured.

Billy Bunter's glasses had been left at the bottom of the Sark. They were no loss to Wally, who did not need glasses; but he had to keep up the "barnacles" while he was playing the part of Billy Bunter in the Remove.

"Seven-and-six gone!" he murmured. "Never mind; I suppose Nugent's worth nearly seven-and-six!"

And he chuckled.

He left the dormitory in a cheery mood. Bolsover major was a terrible person to Billy Bunter, but he had no terrors for Wally. Bolsover was not to be seen, however, and Wally went downstairs and out of the School House. A few minutes later he was wheeling out his bike.

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"Bow-wow!" answered Ogilvy.

"Hook it, Bunter!"

Bunter spun out into the road, Bolsover raging behind. He started towards Courtfield, with the bully of the Remove still in pursuit. Wally looked back and chuckled. Bolsover was about to give up the pursuit in disgust when the cyclist slowed down. He laboured at the pedals with a great exhibition of being out of breath.

Bolsover's eyes gleamed, and he put on a spurt.

"Now I've got you, you fat rotter!" he panted.

But Bolsover major hadn't yet quite got the wily Wally. He was almost within reach when Bunter's fatigue vanished as if by magic, and the pedals flew round. The bike darted away from Bolsover major as if it had been suddenly imbued with life.

"Not this time, old horse!" called out Wally.

"Oh, you—you rotter!" gasped Bolsover.

"Try again!"

The bike slowed down once more. But Bolsover major was not to be caught again with the same chaff; and with a black brow he tramped back to Greyfriars, bottling up his wrath.

Wally Bunter grinned, and pedalled on merrily towards Courtfield. A trap dashed out of a lane into the road, with Bob Cherry driving, and Wharton and Nugent in the vehicle behind him, wrapped up in rugs. Nugent's face was still very pale, but Wharton looked quite himself. Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh had gone home by way of the river.

Wally jammed on his brake.

"Hallo!" he called out. "All serene now, Nugent?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry stopped the pony. "So you're all right, Bunter?"

"Right as rain!"

"These fellows say you came in for me, Bunter," said Frank Nugent, looking down at the fat junior from the trap.

"Yes; surprising, wasn't it?" grinned Wally.

"I—I didn't know; I wasn't conscious," said Nugent. "I came up once, but I was nearly done for by that time; I shouldn't have come up again, Bunter. You must have come under the ice for me."

"He did," said Bob.

"Jolly lucky I found you under the ice," said Wally. "I was getting quite chilly, I can tell you. And wet! Did you notice that it was wet under the ice?"

Nugent laughed.

"It was jolly plucky of you, Bunter!" he said.

"Yes; wasn't it?" agreed Wally cheerfully.

"It was great," said Harry Wharton, in a low voice. "I don't profess to understand it, but—but it was great!"

"My dear man, there's lots of things you don't understand. You don't understand that I'm the right man to play against Highcliffe in the match next Saturday, for instance."

Wharton smiled.

"Have you lost your barnacles—I—I mean glasses?" asked Bob.

"They're in the river," answered Wally. "I'm just going to the optician's for a new pair."

"Are you safe riding without your specs?" asked Harry.

"Ha, ha! Oh, yes, quite!"

"Look here. If you leave it a little while I'll go down for you," said the captain of the Remove.

"All serene; I can manage," said Wally, grinning.

He was not likely to accept that offer. If Wharton had gone for his glasses he

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might have made the startling discovery that Wally's lenses were made of plain glass, and were of no assistance to any kind of sight; in a word, that the glasses were only camouflage.

And that might have started a suspicion as to the real state of affairs.

Wally jumped on his bike again, and rode on towards the market town. The trap bowled on to Greyfriars.

"It beats me," said Bob Cherry meditatively. "What's come over Bunter, you chaps? He used to be a funk—now, didn't he?"

"Well, it used to look like it," said Harry.

"Yet the other day he pitched into Angel and Kenney of the Fourth, and walloped the pair of them. And now—"

Bob became very grave. "It was a frightful risk, going under the ice, Harry."

"I know!" said Wharton, with a shiver.

"And Bunter did it!"

"It beats me!" said Nugent. "It's the last thing I should have expected of Bunter! But—but—he did it, and a fellow's bound to be grateful. I shall treat Bunter a bit differently after this."

"Same here," said Bob.

And Harry Wharton nodded assent. The Bunter who had gone under the ice to save Frank Nugent was a very different Bunter from what they had believed him to be; and their feelings towards him were very different indeed.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Hero of the Hour!

"GAMMON!"
"Spoof!"
Such was the opinion of the Greyfriars fellows when the story was told.

The fellows simply could not believe it. Bunter—Bunter, of all fellows—had plunged into the frozen river to fetch Frank Nugent out; and he had succeeded, too. It was too astounding to be easily believed.

But it had to be believed, all the same. It was Bunter who had done it, and there was not much doubt that he had saved Nugent's life. Frank, overcome by the bitter cold of the water, was not likely to have risen to the surface a second time; he had been unconscious when Bunter brought him up. It was more than a nine days' wonder in the Remove.

"Bunter!" said Peter Todd, for the first time in his life proud of his study-mate. "Bunter! It beats me! If it wasn't quite certain—"

"Certain enough," said Harry Wharton. "The Highcliffe fellows stood by like rotten funks, and Bunter went in for Nugent."

"And brought him out!" said Johnny Bull. "At least, he saved him, and we got them out of the water on a hurdle."

"It was no end plucky," said Bob Cherry.

"The pluckfulness was terrific!"

"It was jolly plucky," said Tom Redwing. "I never knew that Bunter was such a swimmer!"

"That's the puzzle of it—he isn't," said Johnny Bull. "He used to swim like a tub, at any rate. He seems to have improved, somehow."

"Even if he had the pluck, who'd have believed that he could do it?" said Hazeldene. "It beats me!"

"It beats everybody, I think."

"But he's a giddy hero!" said Bob Cherry. "We haven't done Bunter justice—that's jolly clear!"

"And—and it was after that that he biffed into me on the stairs, and I chased him," said Bolsover major. "I'm

glad I didn't wallop him now. Why didn't the fathead tell me?"

"That's the oddest part of it," said Bob Cherry, rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "Bunter always used to swank over nothing, and now he's done something really decent he doesn't seem inclined to swank at all."

"It's a giddy mystery."

"I remember telling him," said Peter Todd, "that if he took his cousin Wally for a model, and tried to become as like him as he was like him to look at, he would improve no end. He seems to have done it. What's happened wouldn't have surprised me, in Wally."

"But in Billy—"

"Oh, it beats me hollow, in Billy!" confessed Peter.

"Where is he now?" asked Squiff.

"Gone to Courtfield for some new specs," said Harry Wharton, with a smile. "He lost them in the river."

"You can't get new specs made at a moment's notice," remarked Tom Brown. "The poor old chap will be blinking round like an owl till he gets them. He

"The facts, you fat young owl!" said Bob Cherry warmly.

Sammy winked again.

"Come off!" he answered.

"What?"

"You can't pull my leg, you know," grinned Sammy. "I don't know what your game is, but you can't stuff me up with a yarn like that!"

"Why, you fat duffer—"

"Too steep!" said Bunter minor, shaking his head. "I suppose this is a game, though I'm blessed if I can see why you're spinning such a yarn about my major! But you can't spoof me."

And Sammy Bunter bestowed a third wink on the indignant Removites, and chuckled.

"It's true!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Draw it mild!"

"Why, you cheeky lump of blubber!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I've a jolly good mind—"

"Where's Nugent?" asked Sammy.

"Let's hear what Nugent says."

"He's got a cold, and Mr. Quelch has sent him into sanny," answered Wharton.



Bunter the Hero! (See Chapter 2.)

used to keep a second pair. Who's lent him the tin for the new ones?"

"That's another giddy puzzler," grinned Vernon-Smith. "He doesn't seem to have borrowed the tin of anybody."

"Oh, my hat!"

Sammy Bunter of the Second Form looked into the Common-room, where the juniors were talking. Bunter minor had had wind of the amazing occurrence, and he had come for the particulars.

Of all the astonished fellows at Greyfriars, Sammy Bunter was the most profoundly astonished. That was natural enough; he knew his brother Billy so well.

"I say, what's this yarn about Billy?" he began.

The Removites were willing enough to tell the yarn. In fact, Sammy was treated with unusual respect, as the minor of the great man—Bunter being really a great man, for that afternoon at least.

Sammy winked a fat wink when he had heard all.

"What are you giving me?" was his first question.

"Has Billy got a cold?" asked Sammy.

"No."

"He, he, he! And he never will get a cold jumping into a river after a chap!" said Sammy Bunter confidently.

"No jolly fear! When Billy catches cold it won't be for that reason, you can bet your Sunday hat! He, he, he!"

And Sammy Bunter rolled away, chuckling, and evidently not believing a word of the story. His opinion of his major was too firmly fixed to be changed in such a hurry.

"Well!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "Bunter won't get much kudos in the family circle for what he's done, at any rate!"

"They say that a prophet is never honoured in his own country," said Harry, laughing. "Never mind that fat young bounder! Look here, we'll meet Billy Bunter when he comes in and give him the honours."

"Hear, hear!"

Quite a little army waited at the gates for Bunter to return from Courtfield. Prominent among them was Bolsover.

major—no longer with hostile intentions. Bolsover was as hearty as anyone in his admiration of Bunter's plucky action. Even Skinner forgot to sneer, though he was very much astonished.

There was a shout from the crowd of juniors when a fat figure was seen on a bike out on the road.

"Here he comes!"

"Here's Bunter!"

"Bravo, Bunter!"

Wally Bunter came pedalling up. A new pair of glasses were sticking on his fat little nose—apparently he had obtained them without delay. As the spectacles were of plain glass, and merely used to keep up appearances, there had been no difficulty about that.

Wally blinked over them at the crowd of juniors as he jumped off his bike.

"Hallo! What's this game?" he asked, in surprise.

"Collar him!"

"Here, I say— Oh, my hat!" roared Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For a moment Wally thought it was a rag; but he was quickly undeceived. He was hoisted on the shoulders of Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull, and, sturdy as the two juniors were, and full of enthusiasm, it was no light matter to hoist Bunter.

Hurree Singh and Bob Cherry lent their aid, and Bolsover major helped. Snoop took the bike to run it in. Fellows crowded round, slapping Bunter on the back; and in the midst of a cheering crowd he was borne in at the gates shoulder-high.

"Oh, my only hat!" ejaculated Wally. "Here, don't let me drop! Let me walk, you asses! Careful!"

"Bravo, Bunter!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Bunter!"

With a roar of cheering the Removites bore the fat junior across the quad. And it was not only Removites who cheered. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth Form shouted their loudest, and Tubbs and a crowd of fags of the Third yelled as if for a wager. As the procession came up to the School House Coker of the Fifth strode into it.

The great Coker smacked Wally Bunter on the shoulder with a mighty smack that made the fat junior yell.

"Good man!" roared Coker. "Well done, Bunter!"

"Yaroo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, coming out at the doorway. "Oh! Bunter! Good man, Bunter!"

"Well done, Bunter, bedad!" shouted Gwynne of the Sixth, from his study window.

It was quite a triumph.

Wally's fat face was beaming; he was enjoying it, his enjoyment only marred by a lurking fear that his weight might prove too much for his bearers, and that he might be suddenly let down with a run.

"Right into the House!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

"Mind the step!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Wally. "Mind! Do be careful! Look here, I'm not a feather-weight, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd marched up the steps with Wally, as many as could swarm there. In the doorway a figure in cap and gown appeared. It was Mr. Quelch, the Remove-master; and the procession suddenly halted.

But there was no severity in Mr. Quelch's face now. His expression

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showed that he approved of the hearty demonstration.

"Bunter!" he exclaimed. "My dear boy! I have heard of your brave action!"

"Oh, sir!" stammered Wally.

"I was very surprised—I—I mean, I was very pleased—very delighted to hear of it! I am proud to have so brave a lad in my Form, Bunter!"

Wally crimsoned.

In such circumstances Billy Bunter would have spread himself immensely. He would have swelled until, like the frog in the fable, he would have been in danger of bursting. But Billy Bunter would never have been in such circumstances!

Wally Bunter found not a word to say.

"I gave you lines some time ago," added Mr. Quelch. "I did not then know the facts, Bunter. You will not do those lines."

"T-t-thank you, sir!" stammered Wally.

"I am proud of you, Bunter! Your Form-fellows do well to do you honour!"

And Mr. Quelch shook hands with the fat junior—Wally precariously releasing one hand from Wharton's collar for the purpose; and then there was a tremendous cheer from the Remove. Then Mr. Quelch, smiling, stepped aside, and the procession flowed in, and Wally was not set down till they arrived in the Common-room.

For the first time in history Bunter of the Remove was the hero of the hour; and resembled the gentleman of old who was like to strike the stars with his sublimed head.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Taken at His Word!

"BETTER, old chap?"

Frank Nugent smiled at his chum from the white pillows.

It was the following day, and immediately after morning lessons Harry Wharton had walked over to the sanatorium to see Frank.

"Not so bad, Harry," said Nugent. "Only a bit of a cold. It might have been worse, mightn't it?"

Wharton shivered a little. He could not yet forget the icy chill that had struck him the previous day on the river when he was told that his best chum was under the water. He was not likely to forget it soon.

"Thank goodness, it's no worse, Frank!" he said, in a low voice. "I—I don't know what I should have done if—if—" He broke off. It was not like Wharton to show so much emotion at any time, but his voice was trembling now. "I—I wish I could do something for Bunter, Franky," he went on. "I'd like to show him how grateful I feel."

Nugent smiled again.

Wharton spoke as if Bunter had saved his life instead of Frank's; but, in point of fact, in that case Wharton would have felt less gratitude than he felt now. The possibility that Nugent might have perished under the black waters had been a terrible shock to the captain of the Remove—far more terrible than danger to himself could have been.

"I understand, old chap," said Frank. "I should have been a gone coon but for Bunter. It seems rotten to be so surprised about it, but I can't help it. I should be less surprised if Ponsonby had gone in for me."

Wharton's brow darkened.

"The cad!" he said. "He was the cause of it, and he never stirred a finger. I'm afraid we've been rather unjust to Bunter. I'd like to make it up, somehow, if I could."

"Stand him a terrific feed in the study," said Frank.

"Well, we can do that," said Harry, laughing. "In fact, we killed the fatted calf for him yesterday. It seems a shame, as you say, to be so surprised about it; but he hasn't swanked at all. Not a word! And he's been getting praise enough to turn a level head—and his head never was very level, was it? Bunter's changed a lot."

Wharton remained chatting with his chum till the matron signed to him that time was up. Nugent was likely to be laid up for a few days, though it was not a serious matter. The only serious aspect of it was that he would not be able to play in the Highcliffe match on Saturday; his name was down on the list, and Nugent had been looking forward to that match. But he had so much to be thankful for that he could afford to bear that disappointment with equanimity.

Wharton was in a very thoughtful mood as he walked back across the garden and let himself into the quadrangle. His mind was a little troubled on the score of Bunter.

True, the Owl of the Remove had always been a most intolerable person; and true he had changed considerably of late. But Wharton felt that there must always have been good in any fellow who would risk his life for another, and he wished sincerely that he had gone easier with Billy Bunter in the past. He would have been glad to do anything he could to make it up to Bunter; standing him a study spread seemed ludicrously inadequate.

"Hallo!" As he entered the quad he came on Bunter, rolling along comfortably with his hands in his pockets.

"Hallo, Bunter, old chap!"

Wally nodded, and grinned. Wharton's greeting was friendly, almost affectionate, in fact.

"Seen Nugent?" asked Wally.

"Yes. He's getting on all right," said Harry. "Only a bit of a cold."

"Good!"

"You saved his life, Bunter."

"My dear man," said Wally, almost peevishly, "don't begin all that again! I've heard nothing else since yesterday afternoon. Give a chap a rest!"

"Well, you did, you know."

"I shall begin to wish I hadn't, at this rate!"

Wharton smiled.

"I won't keep on," he said. "But—but there's something I'd like to say, Bunter. Nugent's my best chum, and you've saved his life. Well, if there's ever anything I can do for you, you've only to say the word. Whatever it is, and whenever you like, I'm your man!"

Wally cocked his eye thoughtfully at the captain of the Remove over his new glasses. Then he grinned.

"You mean that?" he said.

"Every word."

"Honest Injun?"

"Honest Injun!" said Harry.

"Right you are!" said Wally cheerily.

"Then play me in the Highcliffe match on Saturday."

Wharton started.

"Wha-a-at?" he ejaculated.

"Play me on Saturday," grinned Wally.

"I know it don't sound very heroic playing a chap in a footer match, but it's the thing I'd like more than any other. If you mean business, there's your chance. Play me on Saturday against Highcliffe and I'll call the account square—what?"

Harry Wharton stood silent.

He had spoken sincerely, in the fulness of his heart, and there were few sacrifices he would have hesitated to make for the fellow who had saved his chum's life.

But he had not expected this. Billy

Bunter's footer was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever to any fellow who had a sense of humour, but it was not what was wanted in the hardest football-match in all the Remove list of fixtures. It was not quite a fair request, for Wharton had spoken from a personal point of view, as it were, and not as captain of the Remove.

But that was Wally's request. He had made it, and he was manifestly sticking to it.

"I'll put up a good game," he said, as Wharton stood dumb. "Rely on me. Put me in the front line, won't you?"

"But—" gasped Wharton.

"I'm as fit as a fiddle," said the fat junior. "I won't forget my shooting-boots on Saturday."

"But—but—"

"Much obliged, old chap," said Wally. "I'll keep Saturday afternoon open for you."

And, with a nod, the fat junior strolled away. Harry Wharton stood staring after him helplessly.

"Oh!" he ejaculated at last. "Oh, dear!"

He ran after the fat junior, and caught him by the shoulder.

"Bunter—"

"Is that the dinner-bell?" asked Bunter. "Good! Let's get in."

"I—I say—"

"You're quite right; no good being late for dinner," assented Wally, hurrying towards the School House.

"I—I wasn't going to speak about dinner," stammered Wharton, hurrying to keep pace with him. "I—"

"It's steak and onions to-day," said Wally Bunter confidentially. "I've seen the cook. She told me."

Wharton did not care whether it was steak and onions or tripe and mangel-wurzels. He was thinking about the Highcliffe match, and the dismaying prospect of playing the Owl of the Remove in his team.

"I—I say, Bunter—" he stammered.

"And half-pay pudding!" said Wally.

Wharton breathed hard.

"About the match on Saturday, Bunter—"

"Looks like being good weather, if it keeps on like this," said Wally affably.

"Let's see, we play on the Highcliffe ground, don't we?"

The "we" made Wharton shudder.

"The—the fact is, Bunter, you can't play, you know—"

"My dear chap, I could play your head off!"

That quite sounded like the old Bunter, and Wharton had to control his impatience before he replied.

"You can't play, Bunter! You know you can't, old man! Ask me anything else you like—"

"I haven't asked you anything," said Wally coolly. "You made me an offer, and I accepted it."

"Yes; but I didn't think—"

"Chap should always think before he speaks," said Wally gravely. "It's a good habit to get into. It prevents a chap being taken at his word when he doesn't mean half what he says."

Wharton flushed.

"I meant every word I said!" he exclaimed.

"Then it's all serene, and my name goes down for the Highcliffe match," said Wally imperturbably. "Come on! We'll be late."

"But—but, Bunter, old chap—"

"Steak and onions," said Wally. "If there's anything I really like it's steak and onions. Don't ask me to be late. I simply couldn't!"

And Wally Bunter settled the matter by scudding into the House; and the captain of the Remove followed him, more slowly, in a state of utter dismay.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Only Way!

"THE brow of my esteemed and ridiculous friend is clouded, like the still waters under the shadow of the deodars!"

Hurree Janset Ram Singh—needless to state—made that remark. And Bob Cherry, who was less poetical, said:

"What are you scowling about, Harry, old nut?"

The nabob's remark was justified. Harry Wharton's brow was deeply clouded.

He had been very thoughtful during the afternoon classes that day—so thoughtful that he had been called to order more than once. He had asked his chums to come up to the study after lessons, and they had come, in some surprise, wondering what was the matter.

"Nugent's all right, isn't he?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, yes!"

"Then what's the matter?"

"Confide the terrific trouble to your esteemed and ludicrous chums, my worthy and ridiculous friend," murmured the nabob.

"I'm in rather a hole," said Harry.

"I don't see how you fellows can help me out. But I'd better tell you."

"Four heads are thicker than one," said Bob Cherry cheerily. "Get it off your chest, old son!"

"I—I—"

Wharton coloured, and hesitated.

"You—you—" assented Bob humorously.

"I suppose I've played the goat," confessed Harry at last. "I—I suppose I might have known Bunter."

"Bunter! My dear man, Bunter's all right!" said Bob, in surprise. "Don't worry about Bunter. Haven't we agreed to be deaf and blind to his dear little weaknesses in consideration of his fishing old Franky out from under the ice? If he's bagged your rations, grin and bear it, and have half mine."

"It isn't that. Bunter seems to have given up bagging fellows' rations," said Harry. "I wish it was no worse than that. But—but what do you think of Bunter in the match on Saturday?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughing matter, Bob."

"It would be if you put him in the team," chuckled Bob. "And I fancy the laugh would be up against us when the match came off."

"I—I suppose I'd better explain," said Harry, his colour deepening. "I—I told Bunter that I'd do anything for him he ever wanted because of what he'd done for Frank."

"No harm in that," said Bob. "I'd do the same. Dash it all, old Franky's worth something! I'd do anything for Bunter, even to the half of my wealth—at present consisting of sevenpence-half-penny."

"Do be serious, old chap! Bunter's asked me to play him in the Remove Eleven against Highcliffe on Saturday."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I meant what I said to him; but, of course, I wasn't thinking about football. But the utter ass thinks he can play footer, you know, and—and he nailed me down on that at once, without even stopping to think."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Of course he can't play! He's a more ridiculous idiot than Coker of the Fifth on the footer-ground."

"He is, and no mistake. He's taken up footer a bit lately, though," said Bob thoughtfully. "I've seen him punt the ball about once or twice, not at all like a born idiot as he used to be."

"That's not quite good enough for the Highcliffe match."

"Ye gods, no!"

"You can't play him," said Johnny Bull decidedly. "It's touch-and-go with that match in any case. Courtenay's lot are a good team—especially Courtenay himself and that Caterpillar chap. It will be touch-and-go. Playing a man short is throwing away the match, and playing Bunter is worse than playing a man short, for he would be always getting in the way."

"I know."

"Well, you can't do it. Bunter had no right to ask that. If you made him an offer, you made it in your private capacity, I suppose, not as football skipper? The footer eleven isn't yours to play with, like a top or a toy engine."

"I know," said Harry. "But—"

"Bunter had no right to ask it, that's true," said Bob Cherry slowly. "There's a distinction, as Johnny says. You can't play a howling, clumsy idiot in the toughest match of the season."

Wharton bit his lip.

"I can't, as footer captain," he said.

"The fellows would be ratty, too."

"I should jolly well think they would!" exclaimed Johnny Bull emphatically. "I should be ratty, for one, if you put that born idiot into the eleven, and made Highcliffe a present of the match!"

"It can't be done!" said Bob.

"He holds me to my word," said Wharton, in a low voice. "It's true that when I spoke to him I wasn't speaking as footer captain. Still, I am footer captain. He—he claims—"

"It's mean!" said Johnny Bull angrily. "He always was mean, if you come to that. He knows he can't play, or ought to know it."

"Suppose—suppose we speak to him?" murmured Bob. "You can't play him, Harry—you can't! It's giving away the match! I suppose he wants Nugent's place in the eleven, as Franky is out of it? The cheeky fat idiot!"

"It's thumping cheek!" said Harry. "But I don't know what to do. He oughtn't to have asked it, I know. But the utter ass thinks he can play. I—I as good as gave him my word."

"It's beastly awkward! Bother him!" growled Bob. "Just like Bunter to nail a fellow down like that!"

"May I make a suggestive remark, my esteemed chums?" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"You may make a suggestion, if that's what you mean, fathead!"

"That is my meanfulness, my dear and growful Bob. The esteemed Bunter is braver than we thought, but he is still the same esteemed Bunter. Suppose we settle with him cashfully?"

"Cashfully!" repeated Bob Cherry.

"We will lend him money on condition he withdraws his claim and releases Wharton from his excellent and fat-headed promise," said the nabob. "The admired Bunter would do anything for a quid. We will offer him two quids—or three. And he will spring jumpfully at the chance, and everything in the garden will be tip-top."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Well, that's not a bad idea," he said.

"They say a leopard can't change his spots, or a merry Ethiopian his skin—so Bunter can't possibly resist hard cash. Who's got any money?"

Harry Wharton's brow cleared a little. Unless Bunter had changed very considerably Hurree Singh's plan promised success.

It was not, perhaps, a method that Wharton would have chosen willingly; but he had no choice in the matter now.

It was impossible to play Bunter in the Highcliffe match, and it was equally impossible to elude what amounted to a

promise. Any avenue of escape from that awkward position was welcome.

"We can find the cash," said Johnny Bull. "If Bunter's cad enough to accept it, that will settle the matter."

"Well, I don't like calling the chap names after what he's done," said Wharton. "But—but—well, we know that Bunter hasn't very nice ideas about money. I think it will work. I've got some tin in the Post Office Bank, and if I can get out of this scrape for a couple of quids I'll jump at the chance."

"Better see whether Bunter will take it before we bother about raising the tin," said Bob.

"Not much doubt about that."

"The certainfulness is terrific!"

"Well, let's go and see him," said Bob—"or, rather, you go and see him, Wharton. Bunter's been so queer the last week or two I don't feel so certain of it as I should have at one time. But try him!"



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Wharton hesitated.

It went strongly against the grain to make what was, after all, an appeal to the baser side of Bunter's nature. But he thought of the Highcliffe match, and Bunter's claim to play in it—a claim he could not elude. He made up his mind, and left the study.

But his brow was troubled as he went along to No. 7. He did not like his self-imposed task; and, in spite of what Bunter had done, his feelings just then towards the fat junior were not very amiable.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Money Does Not Talk!

WALLY BUNTER was at tea with Peter Todd and Dutton in Study No. 7 when the captain of the Remove arrived there.

But there was already a visitor in the study, in the person of Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove.

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His lordship had just come in, with a most benignant expression on his face. Peter Todd was speaking to him as Wharton appeared in the doorway.

"If you've come to tea, Mauly, there's a chair! Hallo, Wharton! The more the merrier! There's a box in that corner!"

"Begad! I haven't come to tea, old bean," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Same here," said Harry, with a smile. "I came to speak to Bunter."

"Begad! So did I!"

"Bunter seems to be getting quite fascinating," said Peter. "As he's so much sought after, you'd better take it in turns; first come first served. You first, Mauly."

"Oh, I don't mind waitin' for Wharton!" said his lordship amiably.

"No; go ahead," said Harry.

"Oh, all right! Bunter, dear old bean—"

"Hallo?" said Wally, looking up from the pilchard he was dissecting. "I'm rather busy, but you can rip on."

"You don't mind my mentionin' the matter before these fellows?"

"Not at all, whatever it is. Fire away!"

"Well, I've brought the fiver."

"Eh?"

"And here it is, old chap."

Lord Mauleverer flicked a five-pound note to the table beside the astonished Wally; and ambled to the door. Wally stared at the banknote, and then after Mauleverer.

"Hold on!" he shouted.

"All serene, dear man!"

"What's this?"

"It's a fiver."

"I can see it's a fiver, fathead. But what are you chucking it about in my study for?"

"I've had a big remittance from old Brooke," explained his lordship. "So there you are."

"Is it your custom to whack out your remittances along the passage?" asked Wally, staring at him over his glasses.

"Begad! No!"

"Then what the thump are you giving me this banknote for?"

"Don't you remember, dear man?"

"You don't owe it to me, I suppose?" exclaimed Wally, wondering for a moment whether, possibly, Lord Mauleverer owed money to his cousin Billy. It was much likelier that the matter was the other way round.

"Nummo! You see—"

"I don't see! If you think I'm a chap that can be given money, Mauleverer—"

"My dear fellow, not at all—not at all!" said his lordship hastily, though he looked surprised, too. "Not a bit! Not the smallest little bit, my dear chap! A loan—merely a loan—until your postal-order comes, you know!"

"My—my postal order?"

"Exactly, old chap! The one you're expectin', you know!"

"I'm not expecting one."

"Eh?"

"When have I said I was expecting a postal-order?" demanded Wally warmly.

"Oh, gad!" murmured his lordship helplessly.

He could only stare at Bunter. For Bunter's postal-order was celebrated at Greyfriars, and had long been a standing joke in the Remove—that well-known postal-order which was always expected and never arrived.

"Take your blessed banknote away with you!" said Wally gruffly. "I don't think this is in good taste, Mauleverer, if you want to know!"

"But—but—"

"Next time you want to make me a loan, wait till I ask for it!"

"But you did ask for it, old fellow!" stammered his lordship. "D-d-don't you remember?"

"I—I asked for it?"

"Yes—about a couple of weeks ago," said Lord Mauleverer. "You were mixed up in some scrape about money, and you tried to stick me—ahem!—I—I mean, you asked me to lend you a fiver."

"D-d-did I?" mumbled Wally, mentally anathematising Billy Bunter and his manners and customs.

"Yes, old fellow. And now old Brooke's shelled out so handsomely I've brought it to you," said Lord Mauleverer amiably. "It's all right, you know—just a loan till—till your postal-order comes."

Wally Bunter rose to his feet, his fat face very red. All eyes were upon him curiously.

"So I asked you to lend me five pounds a fortnight ago, did I?" he said. "I—I don't seem to remember it, but I'll take your word, Mauleverer. You don't seem to have lent it to me then. Now you trot along with it, and I think I know why. You're shelling out because I pulled Nugent out of the river yesterday!"

"Oh, really, my dear chap," murmured Mauleverer feebly, "I—I thought you wanted the tin, you know, as you asked me—"

"Well, I don't want it!" said Wally curtly.

"But—but really, Bunter—"

"You can be civil about it, anyhow, Bunter!" growled Peter Todd. "You've asked Mauly for money often enough in my hearing. You owe him quids and quids at this very moment!"

"Not at all!" said his lordship hurriedly. "Not a bit of it!"

Harry Wharton looked on blankly. For Billy Bunter to refuse a five-pound note was so incredible that the Remove captain could scarcely believe his eyes and his ears. He realised that this did not promise well for his own mission.

Wally picked up the five-pound note and tossed it across to Mauleverer.

"It's all right, Mauly," he said more calmly. "I'm really obliged. I know you meant to be kind. But I don't want your money."

"But you said—"

"Never mind what I said; it's what I say now that matters. Take your fiver, old son, and my thanks along with it; but I don't want it."

"Oh, all right!" said his lordship. "Sorry!"

He tucked the banknote into his pocket, and left the study. A moment later his face reappeared in the doorway.

"Sorry, Bunter!" he said.

"It's all right."

Mauleverer disappeared, and Harry Wharton was about to speak, when once more the face of his lordship loomed into the doorway.

"Awfully sorry, Bunter!" he said.

Then he vanished for good.

Bunter sat down to his pilchards again. He gave Wharton a rather sour blink over his glasses.

"Now you cut ahead!" he remarked.

"I hope you haven't come to offer to lend me money you don't expect to get repaid."

"Ahem!"

"You have, then?" exclaimed Wally in angry surprise.

"Hum!"

"Bunter's on a new stunt," explained Peter Todd. "I don't profess to understand what his game is. I suppose he's set out to surprise us all to death!"

(Grant! from Bunter.)

"I—I— The fact is," said Wharton, hesitating, "I—I'd like you to step along to my study, Bunter—"

"What for?"

"I—I've got something to say—"

"Can't you say it here?"

"Ye-es; but—"

"Oh, don't mind me!" said Wally sarcastically. "I'm only Bunter, you know. I haven't any decent feelings! Pile in!"

"Well, if you don't mind—"

"Not at all!" growled Wally. "Have I asked you to lend me a fiver, by any chance?"

"No. But—but you've asked me—you remember—about the match on Saturday—"

"I accepted your offer, you mean," said Wally grimly.

"Put it like that if you like. I—I wanted to know if you'd accept something else instead?"

"Money, for instance?" jeered Wally.

"Yes," said Harry.

Bunter's manner was irritating. It was true that he had shown up well in the affair on the river; but it was rather too thick for the Owl of the Remove to set up as a fellow with a nice sense of honour in money matters.

Wharton wanted to think as well as possible of Bunter; but he could not help looking on this new attitude as simply a stunt.

"Well, how much?" asked Wally, in a sardonic tone.

Wharton's lip curled involuntarily. But he answered:

"Two quid, if you like!"

"Bother your two quid!"

"Three, then!" said Harry flushing. "I'm not going to haggle with you, Bunter. Call it three, and it's square!"

"Suppose I say five?"

There was a pause. Harry Wharton & Co. were not so well provided with quids as Lord Mauleverer or the Bounder, and five pounds was a large sum to them.

But the captain of the Remove made up his mind. If Bunter was to be bought off at that figure, the money had to be found.

"Five, then!" said Harry at last. "We'll manage it somehow. It's a go, then, Bunter! You'll accept five quid, and—"

"No, I don't!" said Wally scornfully. "I was only pulling your leg, to see how far you would go!"

"Oh!"

"Make it fifty, if you like, and you'll see that I say the same!"

"Well, I can't make it fifty," said Harry. "But—"

"Well, if you did it would make no difference! Do you think I want your measly money?"

"Don't you?" asked Peter Todd blandly.

"No!" roared Wally.

"You can't blame me for thinking you do, Bunter," said Wharton quietly. "This change is a bit sudden, you know. You've no right whatever to get your rag out."

Wally bit his lip.

"I—I know that," he said. "All right, then! I suppose I've no right to fly out at you; there, I'm sorry! But I'm not touching your money. Hang your money! You can keep it in your trousers-pocket!"

"Very well!" said Harry.

The matter was evidently hopeless, and Wharton left the study without another word. Wally grunted, and went on with his tea.

"What's this about the match on Saturday, Bunter?" asked Peter Todd.

"I'm playing for the Remove."

"What?"

"Getting deaf, old sport?"

"You're playing for the Remove?" howled Peter Todd. "In the Highcliffe match—against Courtenay's team?"

"Exactly!"

"You mean to say that Wharton—"

"Wharton can't help himself," said Wally coolly. "He said he'd do anything for me after my fishing his pal out from under the ice. So I've asked for a place in the eleven on Saturday."

Peter looked at him.

"Do you think that's decent?" he asked.

"Quite."

"If Wharton plays you, you'll lose the match for Greyfriars!"

"Poof!"

"What?" exclaimed Peter.

"Poof! Piffle! Pass the marmalade, old man, and don't talk out of the back of your neck!"

"You fat idiot, you know you can't play footer!" shouted Todd. "It's beastly mean to pin Wharton down in that way! If he said anything of the kind, he was taking it for granted that you wouldn't ask for anything he had no right to give!"

"Well, I haven't, have I?"

"Yes, you have. Wharton has no right to play a dud in the toughest match

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Vials of Wrath!

"BUNTER!"

"W. G. Bunter!"

"Impossible!"

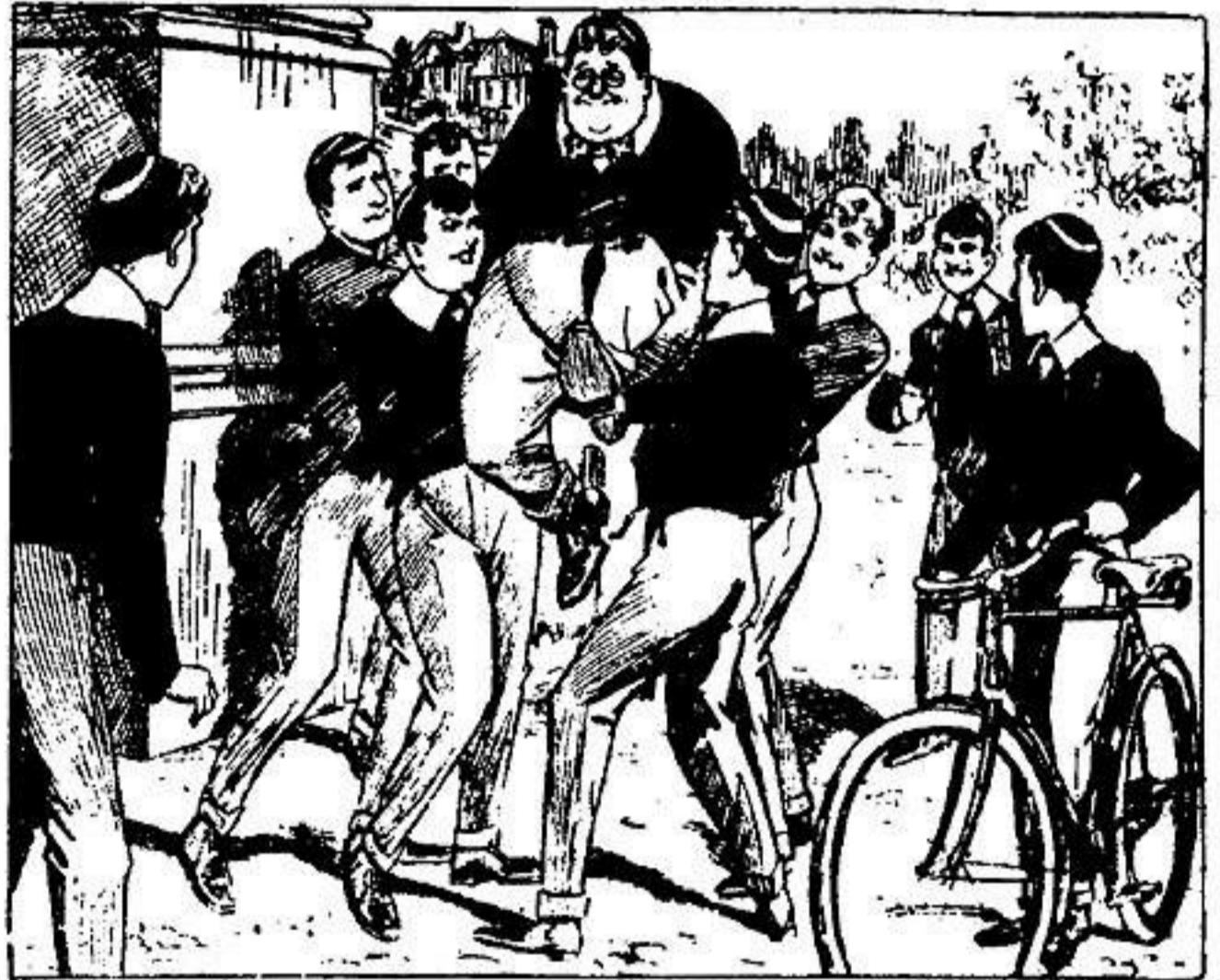
"Wharton's potty!"

"Potty isn't the word for it!" roared Bolsover major. "He's stark, staring, raving, dangerously mad! Bunter! My word!"

There was a buzz of excitement among the Removites clustered before the board upon which the football list for the Highcliffe match was pinned up.

Among the Removites there was keen competition to get their names into that list. Almost any fellow would have given a term's pocket-money to be one of the eleven who went over to Highcliffe in the Greyfriars blue-and-white on the great occasion.

So far as ten members of the team were concerned there was nothing to grumble at, though a good many fellows could have suggested improvements, such as the inclusion of their noble selves. Still, there was no doubt that ten of the



Chairing Bunter! (See Chapter 4.)

of the season!" said Peter angrily. "You know that, and you know you oughtn't to have asked."

"But I'm not a dud, old nut. I'm the best footballer in the Remove, excepting Bob Cherry and Wharton himself," answered Wally cheerily.

"Fathead!"

"Thanks!"

"Idiot!"

"Go it!"

"You can't do this rotten, mean thing, Bunter!"

"I don't see anything mean in winning a match for Greyfriars."

"You'll lose it for us!" shrieked Peter.

"My dear chap, you don't know anything about footer," said Wally.

"Leave it to me. You'll see!"

"Oh, you—you—you toad!" gasped Peter.

"If you don't want all the marmarine, old boy, pass it this way. All right; I'll help myself."

And Wally Bunter went on with his tea happily, regardless of the looks his study-mates gave him.

team were good men and true. But the eleventh—

The eleventh name—the astonishing name—the unnerving name—was that of W. G. Bunter!

Bunter—in the team for Highcliffe!

No wonder there was a buzz of amazement, wrath, and indignation among the fellows who had hoped up to the last moment to find their own names there. The list ran:

Hazeldene; J. Bull, M. Linley; T. Brown, P. Todd, R. Cherry, Hurroo Singh, W. G. Bunter, H. Wharton, S. O. I. Field, H. Vernon-Smith.

W. G. Bunter was in the place vacated by Nugent, who was still in the sanatorium. He hoped to be out in time to witness the match, though not to play in it.

There were plenty of good men Wharton could have played in Nugent's place; in fact, men as good as Nugent. Ogilvy, Russell, Rake, Penfold, Redwing—to name a few. And men who were not so good were undoubtedly miles ahead of Billy Bunter; in fact, Billy Bunter was

the worst player in the Remove or out of it.

Bolsover major had hoped to see his name down, and he would have growled discontentedly if he had found Ogilvy's name or Rake's instead of his own. But to find Bunter's— Mere words could not do justice to Bolsover's rage and indignation. Even Skinner or Snoop or Fisher T. Fish was a better man than William George Bunter.

"Bunter!" repeated Bolsover major. "Bunter, you know! It might as well be Sammy Bunter as Billy Bunter!"

"Or Bessie Bunter!" grinned Skinner.

"It can't be true!" said S. Q. I. Field, otherwise Squiff. "Wharton's made a mistake, or it's a funny joke!"

"If he means it—" began Bolsover major hotly.

"He can't mean it!" said Rake. "We'd better ask him. If he means it, it's time he retired to a lunatic asylum!"

"Or a home for idiots!" said Wibley.

"Where is the thumping ass?" demanded Bolsover major. "Bob Cherry, where's that silly cuckoo?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob, not so cheerily as usual. "What silly cuckoo is wanted? Bunter?"

"No; that idiot Wharton!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" answered Bob gruffly.

"Is it true, Cherry?" called Micky Desmond.

"Is what true?"

"Bunter—for the Highcliffe match?"

"I—I believe so."

"It's true, is it?" howled Bolsover major. "Well, I know the reason. Wharton's putting that fat idiot in because of what he did for Nugent. Is that football? Is it cricket?"

"If that's the reason he's got to be stopped!" growled Rake. "Bunter did a decent thing by a miracle, but that's got nothing to do with footer. No sense in throwing a match away to please Bunter."

"Where's that howling ass Wharton?"

It turned out that Wharton was in the Common-room, and the whole crowd of excited juniors marched there to interview him.

Harry Wharton was not in a happy mood.

It was Friday now, and the Highcliffe match was on the morrow. Twice Wharton had spoken to Bunter on the subject, but each time he had found the fat junior as firm as a rock—or as obstinate as a mule, as Wharton regarded it. He had given it up at last.

Bunter held him to his word.

If he chose to break it, Bunter's name could be scratched. If he didn't so choose, he had to play Bunter, and there was no help for it.

And so on the last day before the match, when the list went up, Bunter's name had appeared officially as a member of the team.

Wharton fully expected a thunderstorm, and he was not left long waiting for it. The army of angry Removites crowded into the Common-room and surrounded him.

Bolsover major had the paper in his hand. He had jerked it off the board. He brandished it under the eyes of the captain of the Remove.

"Look at that!" he roared.

"You had no right to take that paper down, Bolsover," said Wharton quietly.

"You had no right to put Bunter's name on it!" roared Bolsover.

"What does it mean, Wharton?" asked Squiff. "Dry up a minute, Bolsover, and let the chap speak. You can't be in earnest about this, Wharton?"

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"I am," said Harry.

"You're playing Bunter?"

"Yes."

"In the toughest match of the season!" yelled Rake.

Wharton nodded.

"Well, are you mad?" queried Rake.

"I hope not."

"You must be, I think. Do you want to make Highcliffe a present of the match?"

"Give him a chance!" said Squiff mildly. "Look here, Wharton, we're all members of the club, and some of us are in the eleven. We've a right to an explanation, I think."

"That's so," said Harry uncomfortably.

"Well, why have you done this?"

Wharton hesitated.

"Don't we know?" howled Bolsover major. "Because Bunter fished his chum out of the river. He's grateful, you know, and so he's going to throw away a Remove match to please that fat idiot!"

"Is it that, Wharton?"

"Not exactly," said Wharton, clearing his throat. "I know it's rotten; you needn't tell me that. But I'm nailed down."

"How the thump can you be nailed down to play a man you don't want to play?" exclaimed Hazeldene.

Wharton hesitated again. He wanted to justify himself, naturally; but he did not want to expose Bunter to the wrath and scorn of the whole Form. He could not forget what had happened on the ice.

"Well, we're waiting, old fellow," said Squiff. "Take your time, but let's know what it means."

"I can let you know," said Peter Todd, rising from an armchair. "I've had it from Bunter. Wharton promised Bunter to do anything he asked because he had fished Nugent out of the river; and that's what Bunter asked!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Squiff.

Wharton flushed.

"It's a promise," he said awkwardly. "Of course, when I spoke to Bunter I wasn't thinking about footer. I never dreamed that he would be idiot enough to think he could play in the Highcliffe match. But—but that's what he asked, and he holds me to it."

"The fat cad!" exclaimed Squiff wrathfully.

"And do you think you have a right to give away places in the eleven to fellows who can't play footer?" demanded Bolsover major.

"No," said Harry quietly.

"Then leave Bunter out!"

"I can't!"

"You could resign, and get out of it that way," suggested Skinner, with a malicious grin.

"I couldn't!" said Wharton, still very quietly. "If I resigned, instead of playing Bunter, that would only be dodging out of a promise instead of breaking it—and it comes to the same thing. But I know the fellows have a right to object. I should object, in anybody else's place."

"Well, I'm glad you can see that!" snorted Bolsover major.

"And if the members of the club aren't satisfied," pursued Wharton, "there's one way out of it—to turn me out of the captaincy."

"Oh!"

"I'm ready," said Harry. "I've landed myself and the eleven into a scrape by making a reckless promise to a fellow who couldn't be trusted not to take a mean advantage of it. I can't refuse to play Bunter, and I can't resign. But the club can hold a meeting and give me the sack. I sha'n't say a word against it."

"H'm!" said Squiff doubtfully.

"The sack for this occasion only?" asked Hazeldene.

Wharton shook his head.

"For good!" he answered. "That would only be a trick. If the club turn me out of the captaincy, they turn me out for good. I don't complain. Squiff would make a first-rate skipper—"

"Oh, rats!" growled the Australian junior uneasily.

"So would Tom Brown—"

"Bosh!"

"Or Smithy—"

"Thanks," said the Bounder. "But I'm not after your job, Wharton."

"You were once!" sneered Skinner.

"Once isn't now, my dear man," answered the Bounder, unmoved. "Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, Wharton has landed us all this time, but it can't be helped. We can't ask him to break his word, and we're certainly not going to sack the best footer captain the Remove could provide. I should vote against that, for one."

"But—but we can't play Highcliffe with Bunter in the team!" said Tom Brown. "It's asking for a thumping licking."

"We shouldn't have much chance if we played them without Wharton—and Bunter and Wharton go together, in one lot," said Vernon-Smith.

"Pooh! Wharton's not so jolly valuable," said Bolsover major. "I could pick out a better man, if you come to that."

"Named Bolsover!" grinned the Bounder. "I don't think the Remove will accept that offer."

"If the Remove agree with Bolsover, they know what to do," said Harry Wharton. "If not, Bunter plays! I'm sorry I've made such a mess of it; and there's only one remedy that I can see."

"We'll hold a meeting in the Rag!" exclaimed Bolsover major. "I shall propose that Wharton is turned out."

"I'll second that," said Skinner.

"Meeting immediately!" announced Bolsover major. And with his heavy strides he led the way to the Rag.

Skinner followed him, and, after a pause, Snoop and Stott. Nobody else did. Bolsover major did not hold that meeting after all, and it was pretty clear that Harry Wharton was not going to be sacked.

But the alternative—the inclusion of Bunter in the Remove ranks at Highcliffe—had an exasperating effect on the Removites.

Some of them went to look for Bunter; but they found the door of Study No. 7 locked, and the fat junior's voice answered them through the keyhole, cheerfully bidding them to go and eat coke. And there the matter rested for the present.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Day of the Match!

BUNTER of the Remove was not seen in the Common-room that evening.

He could scarcely have ventured there without receiving a record ragging from the incensed Removites.

He was evidently aware of the feeling in the Remove. But he did not seem disturbed on the subject. He kept a cricket-bat on the study table while he was doing his prep. After prep he sat in the study armchair and mugged up Latin—for among the surprising developments in Bunter of late was a taste for work.

Peter Todd talked to him in the study at great length and with great emphasis. Bunter gave him sweet smiles in response.

Tom Dutton told him what he thought of him, and what he thought was not at

all complimentary. But it had no effect whatever on Bunter. He did not even trouble to answer.

When Dutton and Todd left the study, Peter closed the door after him with a terrific slam. Bunter chuckled, and turned the key in the lock. He was apparently deaf to the observations that reached him through the keyhole at intervals during the evening.

In the dormitory that night black looks were cast on the fat junior, which left him wholly unmoved. The Removees agreed that Wharton was an ass—that he might really have known Bunter better. But as for Bunter, words would not express their opinion of him.

The glory he had lately earned had quite departed now. He was never alluded to excepting as a cad, a worm, a toad, or something equally unpleasant. Bolsover major would have walloped him in the dormitory, but Harry Wharton promptly put a stop to ragging. And Wally turned in cheerfully while Percy Bolsover was still making sulphurous remarks.

In the morning he turned out fat and fresh and smiling. There were blacker looks than ever; but Wally had only smiles in response.

He was more than ever like the Billy Bunter of old now, and fellows who had remarked upon an improvement in the Owl of the Remove admitted that they had been mistaken. So far from being improved, he was worse than ever, in the opinion of his Form-fellows.

And the calm self-satisfaction with which he received black looks and opprobrious epithets was more than ever like the old Bunter, and more especially his statement that he was really holding Wharton to his word in order that Greyfriars might not lose the services of a first-class player—himself!

That, as Bob Cherry remarked, put the lid on, and Bob came very near to thumping the fat junior.

Frank Nugent rejoined the Form that morning, still looking a little pale after some days in sunny, but otherwise his old self. Frank gave Bunter a very pleasant look as he came into the Form-room a few minutes after the other fellows. He was not yet aware of the strained state of affairs.

It was after the Remove was dismissed that Frank learned how matters stood, and the news disconcerted and dismayed him. He had come to think well of Bunter, and this was a shock. He glanced at the fat junior at the Remove dinner-table, and found nothing but calm satisfaction in the fat face. After dinner he joined Bunter as the juniors went out—the rest of the Form avoiding the fat Removee as if he had the plague.

"Bunter, old chap—" began Frank as they went into the quadrangle.

"Coming over to Highcliffe with us this afternoon?" asked Wally brightly.

"Ye-es. But—"

"Ripping weather for footer, isn't it?"

The weather's all right."

"I hear that Courtenay's lot are in great form," remarked the fat junior.

"We shall beat them, though."

"Do you feel equal to such a match as that, Bunter?" asked Nugent mildly.

"Quite!"

"Ahem! But isn't it a bit above your weight, old fellow?"

"Not a bit of it!"

Nugent compressed his lips. He was very grateful to Bunter, and felt very kindly towards him; but this egregious self-satisfaction was hard to bear patiently.

"Look here, Bunter," he said at last, "you did a big thing for me the other day—"

"Give us a rest, old nut!"

"Don't spoil it, Bunter, by acting meanly now," said Frank earnestly. "You know it's not fair to pin Wharton down in the way you've done. You're making him play you against his will."

"Only for the sake of the school," explained Bunter. "If I didn't pin him down to his word he wouldn't play me, would he?"

"Of course not!"

"Then the team would lose a jolly good man, you see!"

Nugent repressed a movement of impatience.

"Do be sensible, Bunter!" he exclaimed. "You know you can't play footer for toffee!"

"Wait and see, as the political johnny remarks," grinned Wally.

"You've disappointed me, Bunter," said Nugent.

"Sorry! I—I say, I could tell you something—" Wally checked himself in time. It was on the tip of his tongue to tell Frank the facts—that he was not Billy Bunter, but Wally, and as good a footballer as any fellow in the Remove.

But he stopped in time. The secret had to be kept. His word was given to Billy Bunter, now passing under his name at St. Jim's.

"You couldn't tell me anything to make me believe you're a good footballer," said Frank, little dreaming of what was passing in the fat junior's mind. "You did a ripping thing the other day, and now you're spoiling it by acting meanly and conceitedly. It's too bad."

"But—but I really am a good player, you know!"

"Oh, rot!" said Frank crossly.

"Sometimes a rotten player turns out quite good in the long run," said Wally.

"You must have known it happen. I—I wish now I'd let the fellows see my style the last day or two. But they've all made up their minds that I can't play; and they deserve to wait for a little surprise at Highcliffe."

"You utter ass! We know your style well enough—you play footer like a Chinese mandarin!" growled Nugent.

"You'll see!"

"Then you won't let Wharton off, Bunter?"

"No fear!"

"Then you needn't speak to me again!" said Frank angrily.

"My dear man, you'll come round all right when you've seen me play at Highcliffe."

"Oh, dry up!"

Nugent strode away with a clouded brow, and joined his chums in the quad.

"Been trying your eloquence on that oyster?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ye-es. But it's no good."

"The fat brute!" said Johnny Bull.

"This is simply pie to him—to land us in a scrape like that. You were a thumping ass, Wharton!"

"You've told me that before!" snapped Harry.

"Order!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The slangfulness is not the proper caper, my esteemed Johnny," purred the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur. "What is donefully finished cannot be helped; and the still tongue saved the cracked pitcher from going longest to the well."

Johnny Bull granted, but he said no more. Slanging was not of much use; the trouble could not be mended by hard words. And Wharton was feeling quite uncomfortable enough without reproaches from his chums.

The sight of the fat junior walking cheerfully in the quad, with a satisfied smile on his face, had an exasperating effect on the Co., and they walked away to avoid him. But Bunter rolled after them as they went towards the House.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Well?" snapped Wharton.

"When do we start?"

"The brake comes along at two."

"Right-ho! I'll be ready."

Wharton's lips opened; but he closed them again. He would not make another appeal to the Owl of the Remove.

When the brake arrived Wally Bunter was ready, with the rest of the team—not one of whom gave him a word.

Billy Bunter had always been famous for his thick skin; but the fat junior was now, as Squiff remarked, displaying the hide of a rhinoceros. How a fellow could stand so much contempt and disgust, yet remain satisfied with himself, was a mystery. But he did.

There were a good many fellows in the brake with the team, and a crowd more followed on their bikes or on foot. But the followers did not go with the happy anticipations they had expected.

There was little hope of a team loaded up with such a passenger as Bunter keeping its end up against the Highcliffe Junior Eleven.

Bolsover major, as he squatted in the brake, announced loudly that he was going over to see the Remove receive the licking Wharton was asking for—and his opinion was pretty generally shared.

There was some curiosity, too, to see exactly how badly Bunter would play. That he would play well was a thought that did not cross anybody's mind. That was too wild an impossibility to be considered.

"I say, you chaps—" remarked Wally, as the brake rolled along the road to Highcliffe in the bright winter sunshine.

"Shut up!" said Johnny Bull gruffly.

"What?"

"Shut up!" repeated Johnny, still more gruffly. "You've planted yourself on us, you fat rotter, but we're not bound to listen to your gas! Keep your mouth shut, at least!"

"My dear man, your manners are not improving," said Wally calmly. "I hope you'll have the grace to apologise, if I get any goals this afternoon."

"I'll eat all the goals you get, you fat idiot!"

"Good! I'll remind you of that."

"Oh, ring off!"

Wally sat in silence during the remainder of the drive. He was comforted by the knowledge that when he appeared on the field of play he would surprise the Remove fellows, and make them rub their eyes. But it was not a pleasant drive to Wally; the atmosphere in the brake was thunderous. He was glad when they arrived at Highcliffe School.

Ponsonby & Co. were lounging by the gates, and they stared at the Greyfriars footballers with expressions as supercilious as they could make them.

But the Removees did not heed the nuts of Highcliffe; and the nuts did not venture upon anything more than glances. Frank Courtenay, the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth, came to greet the visitors in his cordial way. Wally Bunter kept a good deal to himself; partly because of the freezing atmosphere round him, and partly because he did not know all the Highcliffe fellows by sight, and was afraid of making a false move.

But he attracted a good many glances when the Highcliffe players learned that he was a member of the eleven. It was difficult for Courtenay to conceal his astonishment when he learned that; and De Courcy involuntarily ejaculated:

"Oh, gad!"

As they came on the ground, however, the Caterpillar joined Bunter with a genial smile.

"So you're playin' for Greyfriars, Bunter?" he remarked.

"Looks like it!" answered Wally. "I congratulate Wharton," said De Courcy gravely.

"He doesn't often bag a player like you, Bunter," remarked Derwent, with an amused grin.

"Oh, some of the team are up to my form!" said Wally.

"Only some of them!" murmured the Caterpillar. "Ye gods!"

"Only some of them," agreed Wally calmly.

"Oh, gad!"

The Caterpillar retreated.

"What's this little game, Franky?" he asked Courtenay a few minutes later.

"What has Wharton brought that fat duffer over here for?"

Courtenay shook his head.

"I can't make it out," he answered.

"They're not short of men—there's a crowd come over with them. But they mean to play Bunter."

"And I was thinkin' that this match was goin' to be strenuous. They are lettin' us down lightly," remarked the Caterpillar.

"I don't catch on. I suppose Wharton knows his own business best—but—"

Courtenay shrugged his shoulders. He gave it up.

A good many Highcliffe fellows gathered round the field—among them Ponsonby & Co. The nuts had learned by this time that Bunter was in the visiting team, and they had come along to be entertained.

"I hear they've got Bunter in Nugent's place," remarked Pon.

"Nugent got wet the other day. I believe!"

The nuts chortled.

"It's goin' to be a sight for gods and men, this merry match," said Pon. "I wouldn't miss it for worlds. There really ought to be a charge for seein' Bunter play football. It's worth a guinea a box, by gad!"

And Pon's chums agreed with him—and so, indeed, did all the rest of the spectators, Greyfriars and Highcliffe alike. And there was a general ripple of merriment when Bunter appeared among the players in the field in the Greyfriars blue-and-white, his plump form filling out his footer rig to the utmost limit. But some noticed that he took his place quite smartly in the line—he was not quite the clumsy Owl of old.

The whistle went.

"Now for the fun!" murmured Ponsonby.

And the fun started—but it was not at all the kind of fun that the crowd expected.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. Well Played!

"ON the ball!"

"Play up, Greyfriars!"

"Roll on, Bunter!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had made up their minds that they carried a helpless passenger, and their only idea in regard to Bunter was to keep him out of the way as much as possible—and to shove him out of the way if he got into it.

That appeared to be the only feasible method of dealing with the superfluous and unwelcome recruit.

Frank Nugent stood with a crowd of Greyfriars fellows looking on, his face very grim. He could not forgive Bunter for bagging that place in the match and thus booking the side for a defeat. But Nugent's expression changed in a few minutes, and was replaced by a look of wonder.

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He rubbed his eyes.

Bunter was not getting in the way of the other forwards. He did not require to be shoved out of the way. He was displaying a remarkable speed and nimbleness, amazing when one considered the weight he had to carry. Even his short sight seemed no longer to incommode him. He could see a chance as fast as any other fellow, and he was quicker than most fellows to take advantage of it.

The Remove were attacking hotly to begin with, and Bunter came on with the forward line. Wharton had the ball, and he passed out to the right wing as he was tackled. He should have sent it to inside-right, but he sent it out to Hurree Singh, ignoring Bunter. But Bunter was not to be ignored. Hurree Singh was ready and watchful, but he never received the leather. A fat figure was on it like an arrow, intercepting it, and dribbling it up the field. There was a gasp from the Remove players as Bunter got away with the ball.

"Bunter!" howled Bolsover major from the ropes. "Bunter's got the ball! I'm dreaming this!"

"Bunter!" yelled Ogilvy. "Bunter! Good man, Bunter! Look at him—walking round them like fire!"

"Go it, Bunter! Oh, my hat!"

"Bunter!" gasped Nugent.

It was astounding—almost unnerving. But Bunter had a wonderful chance, for the Highcliffe players had left him utterly unmarked, and were totally regardless of him.

He was through Highcliffe, on his own, like a knife through cheese, and almost before they knew what was happening he was kicking for goal. The goalie fisted it out, however, and the backs succeeded in clearing; but Harry Wharton & Co. were on the scene, and they brought the ball forward again. Passing like clockwork, they swept up the field, and Bunter was in his place in the line, playing up in a way that made the spectators rub their eyes and fairly blink.

The attack was hot on the home goal. Wharton drove in the leather, and again the goalie fisted it out. A Highcliffe back got it, but a fat Greyfriars forward took it fairly from his toe, wound round him, and kicked. The next instant that fat forward was charged over and laid on his back, but the ball, true as an arrow, shot into the net, and there was a roar.

"Goal!"

"Bunter! Goal!"

"Bravo, Bunter!"

"Well kicked, by gad!" gasped the Caterpillar.

"Bunter!" Bolsover major was clapping his big hands with reports like pistol-shots. "Bunter! Who'd have thought it! Bravo, porpoise! Goal! Goal! Well-kicked, Falstaff! Hurrah!"

"Goal! Goal!"

It was goal right enough, and it was Bunter's goal. Yates, the Highcliffe custodian, tossed out the leather like a fellow in a dream. Harry Wharton clapped Bunter on the shoulder. His face was bright now—amazed, astounded, but very bright.

"Bunter!" gasped Wharton. "You spoofing bounder! You never let on that you could play like this!"

"I told you I was a good player."

"Yes; but—I suppose I'm not dreaming?" said Wharton helplessly.

"How did you do it, Bunter?" asked Johnny Bull, blinking at the fat junior.

"I don't catch on! What does it mean?"

"It means that you've got to eat the goal, according to what you said in the brake," answered Wally.

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll apologise instead," said Johnny Bull. "You really can play footer! Still, that doesn't excuse you for pretending to be a born idiot at footer when you could play all the time."

"Line up!"

From the restart the Highcliffe men had their eyes very keenly on the Greyfriars inside-right. Bunter was no longer unmarked by the enemy, no longer ignored by his own side. Wharton did not need to see more than he had seen. He knew good play when he saw it, and he knew that, amazing as it was, he could depend on Bunter. And Wally Bunter did not fail him.

True, he did not have any more such glorious chances as that first chance. But for the rest of the half he put in good, steady play, and kept his end up nobly.

Highcliffe scored just before the whistle went, and the first half ended goal for goal.

But the Greyfriars players were in great spirits now. Instead of a helpless passenger, their new recruit was a man as good as any in the team—better than most. Nugent, looking on, realised that Bunter was putting up a better game than he could have put up, and his face was very cheerful now. His anger had melted away like snow in the sunshine.

It was the same with the Remove Eleven. In the interval every member of the team found something quite agreeable to say to Bunter, by way of making up for previous unpleasant remarks.

As for accounting for that astounding change in the Owl's form at footer, it was impossible; they gave that up. But there it was, and they admitted that Bunter had been justified, on his form, in claiming a place in the team.

"But you ought to have shown us something like this," said Bob Cherry.

"You could have let us see you play in this style at Greyfriars, you Owl!"

Wally grinned.

"You were all so jolly sure I couldn't play," he answered, "so I kept it as a surprise for you. Not feeling ratty now, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No. But you've given me a lot of worry."

"Sorry, old nut! But I told you—"

"Time!" called out Squiff.

The players lined up for the second half. It was a hard tussle from the whistle, but the advantage was somewhat with Greyfriars. They were a stronger team than Wharton had originally planned, after all. Nugent was the first to admit that. And they outclassed the Highcliffians a little—just a little, but enough, in a game fought steadily out on both sides. Within ten minutes of the finish Harry Wharton put in the ball from a pass by Bunter, who gave him the leather exactly when and where he wanted it.

Again there was a roar of "Goal!"—and it was the last. Courtenay and his men fought hard to the finish, but they could not get through, and the final whistle went with Greyfriars two to one.

"Bunter!" Frank Nugent met the fat junior as the players came off, and clapped him on the shoulder. "Bunter, you ass, why didn't you tell me—"

"I did tell you!"

"Well, so you did," said Nugent, laughing. "But I didn't believe you could play. I'm jolly glad you had my place, as it turns out!"

"Bunter, old top, I congratulate you!"

It was the Caterpillar. "How do you do these things, Bunter? If I'm asleep, will somebody kindly wake me up?"

Wally Bunter rolled on, grinning. That was a happy afternoon for him, after all.

There was a crowd in the old quad to greet the returning footballers when the Greyfriars brake came home. Fellows who had stayed behind were anxious to know how the match had gone, and specially anxious to know how many goals the Removites had been beaten by. How many dozen goals, was the way Skinner put it.

"How many goals?" called out Wibley as the brake loomed up in the dusk.

"Two to one!" called out Bob Cherry cheerily.

"What?" yelled Skinner. "They beat

you by only two to one when you were playing Bunter?"

"Ha, ha! We beat them by two to one!"

"What?"

"You beat them?" howled Kipps."

"Yes, rather!"

"But—but what did Bunter do?" stammered several fellows, in amazement.

"Bunter kicked one of the goals for us."

"Gammon!"

"Draw it mild!"

"Honest Injun!" said Bob. "I don't

pretend to understand it, but there you are—he did!"

"Well, my hat!"

It was not easy to believe, but it had to be believed, and as Wally of the Remove stepped out of the brake the old quad rang to a very unfamiliar shout:

"Bravo, Bunter!"

(Don't miss "FOR ANOTHER'S SINS!"—next Monday's Grand Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

FURTHER REMINISCENCES OF WILLIAM THE GORGEOUS BUNTER.

With Notes by PETER TODD.

In our famerly we have always bene noated for ecksterordinary truthfulness.

My minor Sammy has bene noan to tell a lye. But it was regarded with honor and disgust by awl the rest of us.

Then their was my sister Bessie. She toled lyes at times; but I reasoned with her on the inikwity of the practise, and now she is better in that respekt, thow I am not shore that the improvement will be lasting.

My father is on the Stok Exchaings, or sumthing like that, and, of coarse the hole truth cannot be toled their, or where wood a man bee at awl? But he says that he onley tels lyes for bisness purposes, wich everybody does.

Then their is my mater, who I have berd telling awful lyes to visiters about beeing glad to sea them, and how swete it was of them to drop in lun sutch a frendly maner; and then say things they woodent like wen they had gone. But I suppose that is awl in the day's work in high serciety sutch as we move inn.

With the ekseption of the pater and mater and Sammy and Bessie, our famerly are, theirfore, awl abserlutely truthfull.

Their are five of us. I am the uther wun.

I toled a lie wunsa.

I have never forgotten it. It prays on my mind sumtimes to this bower.

(Bunter's mind—do you notice? Ha, ha!—P. T.)

It was awl Sammy's fawit, however.

Reelly, it was the sort of lye that is sumtimes kalled heroick.

It was awl about a chery-tree.

(Thought that was the other George Washington!—P. T.)

The aforsed chery-tree grew in our garden.

I had an acks. It was given to me as a berthday present by an admiring rellertive.

(It is the G. W. story. Grossa plagiarism!—P. T.)

Sammy took that acks. He went to the chery-tree. This was a long time ago, wen he had no sens of resposerbility, I may ad.

He chopped at the chery-tree like wun o'clock.

Chop, chop, chop!

The chips soo.

"Samuel, desist!" I sed to him.

He put out his tung at me.

It is verry rude to put out your tung.

I chukked him under the chin in a plaiful maner.

He splntered owt a verry wiked word. He sed "Dash!"

I repruved him further, butt to no avale.

See he went on chopping like wun o'clock.

Chop, chop, chop!

By-and-by it maid kwite a diferens to the chery-tree. The tree began to lene over.

See I sed:

"Samuel, if you do not desist, never moar be bruther of mine!"

(Sammy seems to have known, even at that early and irresponsible age, when he was on a good thing, for it appears that he went on chop, chop, chopping.—P. T.)

Chop, chop, chop!

(Sounds like the meals they eat in New Zealand. Chap from there toled me they think nothing of three or four big mutton-chops for

lunch, three or four ditto ditto for tea, and eight or thereabouts for supper. It would make me feel sheepish.—P. T.)

See I sed to Sammy:

"It is a mis-talk to chop so mutch."

Do you see the pun? It is entiarly of my own invenshun, and has never apered in print before.

And Sammy put out his tung.

So I chukked him under the chin agane.

(This won't do at all! Bunter seems to have been cherishing a delusion that he was going to be paid for these reminiscences by the yard, and that the more short lines he could wangle in, and the more times he could tell the same incident over again, the greater would be his guerdon—good word, guerdon—what?—P. T.)

And he sed—

(Cut out! Not because it was too lurid for publication—same awful word—"dash"—but because we really can't have Bunter doing everything all over again and again in this way.—P. T.)

When you chuk a chap under the chin you nacherally maik him bite his tung. You can also do it to a girl; but it does not pay if your pater seas it and the girl hapens to be your sister. I have been calned for that befoar now. I have never tride it with a girl who was not my sister—at leest, not wen her tung was owt. If it is not owt, chukking her under the chin is a sine of afeckshun, and, of coarse, girls like that from me.

(Try it on Miss Clara Trevlyn, Bunter, old gun! And may I be there to see the ensuing slaughter!—P. T.)

Girls shood not put owt there tungs. Nither shood minors to there majors.

See agane it was:

Chop, chop, chop!

(He's learning the tricks of the trade, is Bunter! He has made two lines of that—see? And that means three-halfpence instead of threepence—no, the other way round. I'm getting mixed. But who wouldn't?—P. T.)

Then the chery-tree cain down with a siken-ing crash.

("Thud" is the correct word, Bunty!—P. T.)

And then, just as I had taiken the acks from Sammy's hand, who shood arive upon the sean but my pater?

Sammy boalted. He has not my lionlike curridge.

The pater looked at me verry stearnly.

"Who did this?" he howled.

I mite have sed that Sammy did it; but I thowt that if I did I should get dubbie wax for telling a lye—I mean—what I reely meen is that I remembered that I was older and tuffer than Sammy, and cood endure the paug-consekwent upon a kaining with grater forty-tude.

(Oh, yes, that's what Bunty really means, of course! But who do you think really chopped the chery-tree down? Sammy—or Bessie—or Bunter's mater—or Bunter? Was there ever a chery-tree? Did he dream it? Or—it is a hard, hard thing to think—is he lying now?—P. T.)

See I sed:

"Father, I did it with my little acks!"

Over the ensewing sean I wil draw a vale,

it was just after that I develloped the habit of standing at meles.

In fakt, I stood moast of the time. It seemed somhow eesler, thow hard on the fetes.

But I think that mite truly be sed to be a heroick lye.

It is the onely time in my life that I departed from the strikt truth.

At Greyfriars they make owt that I am an awful lyre—I do not-kno' wye. I think it is envy and jellusy.

(There might be something in the idea if we had all entered for the kettle stakes. But we haven't—we should not dare with Bunter in for the event.—P. T.)

I have never toled a lye at Greyfriars at awl. It has offen paned me eckstreamly to be suspected of it. But I remember the time wen I toled a lie—thow with the best possible intenshuns, and in serkumstances witch made it reelly heroick—and I refrane from biternes.

Mr. Quelch has offen bean down on me for this, but moast ungestly. I am afrade Quelch is a hard man. I have never had any symperthy watever from him.

But let us parse to another subjekt.

I may have menshuned my kusin Wally.

This person is suposed by those who have no judgement to be just like me.

But that is not the kase—not in the verry leste.

Wally is fat.

I am not reelly fat.

I am nearly plump and wel-proporshunot.

Wen Wally puts my cloathes on he does not fit them. They are in dainjer of bursteing.

Wen I put Wally's cloathes on I am praeterkally lost in them.

Anywun out to be abel to tel the differens at a glance.

Wye it is that noboddy can I kannot think.

(And why it is that Bunter cannot think Bunter cannot think; but we know!—P. T.)

Their is a reelly fat fello at St. Jim's. His naim is Trimble—Bagley Trimble.

Now, there's fat if you like!

(But we don't. We loathe that sort of fat—Bunter and Trimble, et hoc genus onme.—P. T.)

I have sean fater fellos than Trimble, but onely in shoes.

(Bunter means shows. But he has been there himself!—P. T.)

I think Trimble ought to be in a shoe. To me his fatnes is posertively disgusteing.

Their is Wynn, too. The St. Jim's felloa seem to think kwite a lot of that chap.

I don't!

He is a pig, in my vallerble oppinion.

They say he can eat moar than I can at a sitting.

But I deft him!

I am willing to put the kwestion to the test at anny time if synwun will suply the grub.

(No mllionaires around, Bunty—except Mauly, of course, and he is a minor, and only gets about a hundred quid a week as pocket-money. He could not spare enough for the proposed competition out of that.—P. T.)

You out to sea my sister Bessie eat!

I am a perfect fool to her.

(Whereas to everybody else Bunty is an extremely imperfect fool—there is so much knavery mixed up with his foolishness.—P. T.)

What I have seen that girl put away wood astonish you.

She maid me reelly it at the seaside wuns by her miraculerous appetite.

I never herd whear she got the munney from, but she had a fiver, and forchunately Samray was not their—he was staing with Aunt Rebecca, who likes the little beest—I am shore I don't kno wye. She never liked me.

Well, Bessie and I wear sent to Briton for the day. We had the munney for our raleway tikets, of coarse. They wood not let us throw at half fairs; in fakt, the chap at the book-ing-offis—a lo fello—tryed to be funny, and sed we both out reelly to be charged dubble, owelng to our eckstrodinary sighs.

(They were sighing at his refusal to entertain the idea of half fares, no doubt.—P. T.)

But their was a man in our kompartment who hadn't got a tiket, and he got in a plunk about it. So I soled him mine. And I got throw all right at Briton. I walked past the baryer with my nose in the air, and sed hawtily, "Seeson." I beleve the chap—it was reelly a girl, thow—did kall me bak, but I was konveently del, and disapeered in the krowd, witch was verry thik.

(I shouldn't wonder if she called Bunter several other things besides bak. In fact, I consider the front elevation, so to speak,

would be more striking to the ordinary eye. There is something massive and monumental about Bunter's waistcoat—a certain je ne sais quoi, dontcherknow—that— But I fear I ramble. And I am not being paid for my notes, so it is hardly worth while to ramble.—P. T.)

Well, we went down to the beech, first haveing a snak in Quene's Rode. But the beech wasn't very intresting, so we kame bak, and went to the plais wear they had the Bath buns—you kno, if youve ever bean to Briton befoar the war. I beleve theyve gone off sine.

(If this was before the war, how did it come about that the fellow who did not succeed in taking Bunter's ticket was a girl? Sometimes I almost suspect that there is a mixture of imagination in these reminiscences.—P. T.)

I had about twelve of the buns—they wear tuppens eech, and Bessie wood not pay for anny moar for me—the meen kat! How munny she put away I shood not like to tel you. Enny way, I lost kount. But it was moar than twelve, bekaws I know I had got to twelve wen she had onely eeten seven, and she sed I had to wate for her to catch up—the ideer of it!

I still felt peckish after that, but it was kwite another hour befoar we had enny moar. Then Bessie sed she was fed up with beeches and prades and bands and akwarums and things, and hadn't we better go and sea about sumthing to eet?

I haled the propersishun with alakwrity. Soe we went bak to the saim plais wear they

sel the Bath buns. But this time we didn't have buns. We had reelly sumthing to eet.

I never was in a plais wear they give you reelly big helpings, but at this plais they are not so mingey as at aum.

We had sardeens and things—what they call horse sumthing, thow I taik joly good kare I don't eet horse—and thik soup, and lemmon soals—two eech—and chicken and ham, with plenty of vegetables, and roste beef, and boyled muton with kaper sors, and aple pie—but they kalled it tart—and marrangs and rasbery tarts, and a few uther od trifels.

At leste, I had thoose things. Bessie had lots moar; she sed she had to have moar than me bekaws it was reelly her oof.

People gathered rownd and staired at us, and our water bust out laffng wenever we gave a fresh order—I am shore I do not kno wye.

Then we had some frute—a few orringes and aple and things, and a pineaple. Bessie was meen agen—she woodent stand a pineaple eech, and she did not give me a fare half.

(The fair Bessie!—P. T.)

The bil was a pretty big wun. Thoose plaices do charge! We didnt give the water annything, bekaws he rudely laffed.

And after it I was kwite ill.

I kno wye.

(I myself have the glimmering of a notion.—P. T.)

It was Bessie's disgusting gredines that maid me ill.

(Of course it was. Bunty cannot lie!—P. T.)

FAME AND BAGGY TRIMBLE!

By MONTY LOWTHER.

MRS. MURPHY'S shop looked very tempting as Baggy Trimble entered and lifted himself on to a high stool.

"Some ginger-beer, please!" said Baggy, producing a shilling—extracted from some confiding person by methods of which I wot not. "And some tarts."

He was unaware that a gentleman, carrying what looked at first sight like one of the ancient, green-covered hurdy-gurdies, had stopped just outside Mrs. Murphy's establishment, and was gazing with growing interest and awe at Baggy as he stuffed away.

Baggy looked up at length, and saw the man staring at him.

He did not like the stare. That may have been due to a guilty conscience. Perhaps Baggy had not come lawfully by the shilling he was spending. One never knows.

"It is just what I have been looking for," muttered the stranger.

Baggy gave a jump. He saw the man block up the doorway with his box on legs, and turn a handle. He seemed to be aiming the queer-looking contraption straight at Baggy.

"Here," cried Baggy, with his mouth full, "wharrer doing? I never asked you to take my photograph, did I?"

"There is no charge, sir," said the operator blandly. "I merely want to take you for a reel."

The man went on turning the handle. No tune resulted, merely a low rumbling. Baggy slid off the stool, and made for the door. He would have knocked the machine down, but the stranger was too nimble and wary for that; and as Baggy, now thoroughly frightened, ducked, and gained the street, the chap caught him by the arm, pretty nearly twisting it off, as Baggy averred afterwards.

"Don't run away," said the man affably. "I only want to make a picture of you for my new film."

Baggy had been taken for many things in his time—among others, a young hippopotamus—but this was the first time he had been taken for a film.

Then the truth dawned upon him. He must have had a sudden brain-wave, or something. He realised that the chap was a cinema artist—one of those merchants who roam about the country seeking what they may devour, picking up slabs of scenery for the films, ready to drop in when the public gets a bit tired of Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford, and all that crowd.

"Lemme go!" cried Baggy, struggling, and kicking at the legs of the machine.

He could not reach the legs of the chap who was gripping him as if he had discovered something precious. They were too far apart. The fellow was tall and as wide as houses.

"But I am only going to film you," said the man, with a laugh.

"I won't be filmed!" burred Baggy.

"Nonsense!" said the chap soothingly.

He still held on, and while he was freezing on to Baggy he coolly folded up his machine.

"The gentleman doesn't mean any harm, Master Trimble," said Mrs. Murphy, coming to the door; "and, please, there's sixpence more to pay for the tarts!"

That finished Baggy. He was in no position to pay the extra sixpence—for the best of reasons. He had not got it!

"Lemme go! Help! Murder! Thieves!" he roared, as he struggled with his captor.

The chap only laughed. Baggy squirmed. If there is enough squirming something is sure to give in time. Baggy is not much given to giving, so to speak. But his jacket did it for him. There was a tearing sound as he wriggled, and then there was Baggy minus his coat, which remained in the possession of the cinema merchant, with one sleeve pretty well torn out by the roots.

Baggy footed it as hard as he could down the street.

"Just the thing!" cried the manipulator of the cinema, as he started in pursuit.

"Help!" shrieked Baggy, looking over his shoulder.

No help! Only his enemy coming to a standstill, turning the old handle briskly, then racing after Baggy once more!

Baggy is not a bit of good on the cinder-path, and he gives up at the first field at hare and hounds, but he can run—when someone wants to film him!

Of course, the film fellow could run faster than a dozen Baggies, if you could stew them down and extract all the running power from the lot.

He didn't seem to mind a bit. He ran; Baggy ran. But the cinema chap only ran and stopped and worked the machinery, while Baggy's fat legs were going like one o'clock all the time.

It ought to be a good film, that!

Baggy passed one or two St. Jim's fellows, but he didn't stop to talk about the weather.

But he had to stop when he came to Skimpole, sitting comfortably on a stile, reading Volume 159 of Professor Balmcrumpet's immortal works.

The be-spectacled Skimmy was dreaming of a whole jolly crowd of scientific things when Baggy, coming along almost head down, bumped into him.

"My dear Trimble, why this impulsive and foolish haste?" inquired Skimpole, sticking to his perch with some difficulty.

"Geroffanlemme come!" panted Baggy, all in one word.

"I decline most emphatically to move from

this spot at your very impolite dictation!" said Skimpole loftily.

"You beast!" gasped Baggy, pointing to where the film-maker was winding away vigorously. "Lemme get by, I tell you! Don't you see what he's doing? He will make pictures of us!"

Baggy tried again to pass Skimpole, but the learned student of science and philosophy grabbed him firmly.

"You are suffering from delusions, you unfortunate person," he said sorrowfully. "I have long since observed this materialising. High living and no thinking has destroyed whatever brain you once had, though your cerebral force was never manifested in any considerable degree."

"I tell you I won't be made a picture of!" howled Baggy.

"This is very sad, my poor Baggy!" said Skimpole. "I see no one." This was true, for the cinema man was working from a point where he was out of Skimpole's line of vision. "What I am desirous of knowing is the why and wherefore of your weird behaviour? Whence this unseemly garb? Where is your jacket? Where are the sartorial symbols of civilisation in your upper regions? You are minus one important article of your conventional attire. It is fortunate, in view of the conventional demands of decency, that you have retained your trousers!"

Baggy made a sort of high dive at Skimpole and the stile. A chuckle sounded from the hedge on the other side, but Skimpole did not hear.

Baggy's manœuvre had unseated him, and the next moment he was busy picking himself out of a bed of nettles which grew luxuriously on the other side of the stile.

No better fared the luckless Baggy! He rose to his feet from the ditch, to see Skimpole sitting among the nettles, like Marius among the ruins of Carthage, examining the damage done to Volume 159, while the enemy gazed down at them and gave a few more turns at the handle.

"It's all right, you fellows," he said. "You have made a splendid picture, the pair of you. Here's your coat, fatty! There was no call to be so frightened. Catch! Here's a bob for helping me out. You can toddle back to the shop and have another gorge—as far as a bob will go!"

And he tramped off down the road. "I expect that film will be a rare treat," said Baggy. "You ought to be grateful to me for getting you into it, Skimmy, you ass, instead of moaning and groaning as if you'd got the toothache!"

That's Baggy all over! He toddled off back to Mrs. Murphy's. He did not ask Skimmy to come. But that, also, is Baggy all over!

SHAKESPEARE'S SCHOOLDAYS.

An Astounding Story of a Remote Period,

By RICHARD NUGENT — SECOND FORM.

I.

"PRITHEE, Bacon, old chap!" Shakespeare nudged his fellow-occupant of Study No. 7593 at Stratford Grammar School.

Bacon yawned.
"Out with it, Shakey!" he grunted.
"I've just finished my new play, old man!" beamed Shakespeare.

"What! Another?" exclaimed Bacon.
"Not so much of your 'another'!" growled Shakespeare. "Listen to this little bit!" And he climbed upon the table.

"Get off my impot!" bellowed Bacon.
With an expression of reposeful contemplation upon his face, Shakespeare began in a shrill falsetto:

"They bore him barefaced on the bier:
Hey nonny, nonny, hey nonny——"
He was interrupted by a terrific banging upon each side of the wall.

"Chuck that, Shakespeare, if you don't want a thick ear!" came in muffled tones from Carlyle, in Study No. 7592.

"If you don't ring off, Shakespeare," bawled the furious voice of Dickens, in Study No. 7594, "I'll come round and slosh you!"

"Brrrr!" growled Shakespeare. "There's no encouragement for me in Stratford! Hallo! Come in, prithee!"

This was in answer to a series of measured knocks at the door.

Nobody entered.
The knocks continued until the panel suddenly gave way and a head was thrust through the panel.

It vanished instantly, and the knocking was resumed at the other panel.

"How now?" roared Shakespeare.
"Bow-wow!" came the reply.
Knock, knock, knock!

"By my troth!" ejaculated William. "Am I going to stand this?"

He was off the table in an instant. Flinging open the door, he was not in the least surprised to find that the cause of the trouble was Smollett of the Sixth.

"Bullying again, Smollett of the Sixth?" said Shakespeare scornfully. "Let young Milton go!"

"You go and eat coke, Shakespeare!" growled Smollett of the Sixth, giving the fag's head another bang against the door. "I told this young beast to fetch me some cigars——"

"And you refused, Milton?" smiled Shakespeare benignantly, giving the fag an approving tap upon his much-be-bumped head.

"Lifted up your head, eh, and said, with flashing eyes: 'No, Smollett of the Sixth! I will be no party to your shady games!' Good kid! Here's a tanner for you!"

Young Milton pocketed the tanner.
"Bosh!" roared Smollett of the Sixth. "I caught the young beast smoking the cigars in the box-room!"

"Anyway, you're going to get it in the neck!" said Shakespeare grimly, pushing back his cuffs.

Whether Smollett of the Sixth thought it was an avalanche that descended upon him was never made known to this truthful pen. Shakespeare and Bacon left him in the passage feeling hurt.

"Come on!" said William to his chum. "Time we gave old Squire Sterne's estate another visit."

They left the school, carrying a huge bag between them.

But they did not stay long on Squire Sterne's estate. When they left—by way of a hole in the hedge—the bag was full of the kindhearted old squire's rabbits and fowls and eggs.

Not that he wanted the chums to depart. He followed them quite a distance, earnestly imploring them to come back.

But agreeable as that would have been, the pair were obliged to harden their hearts, and they hurried on. It was essential that they should reach the school before the gates closed for the night.

On entering, they were greatly surprised to find young Milton sitting in the middle of the passage and bellowing:

"Booo-hooo-oooo!"
"Hallo!" said Shakespeare. "What's the matter, prithee?"

"My 'Paradise'!" wailed young Milton tearfully.

"Eh? What about it?"
"It's lost! Boo-hoo!"
"Paradise lost?" echoed the two chums.

"Where?"

"I had it an hour ago," sobbed Milton—"just before Smollett of the Sixth ragged me I had it! But now it's lost! Boo-oo-oo!"

Shakespeare and Bacon searched Study No. 7593 from top to bottom, but there was not a trace of Milton's "Paradise" to be seen.

Neither did it turn up in Studies No. 7592 nor 7594.

By bed-time the whole school was aware that Milton's "Paradise" was lost. But nobody came forward to throw any light on the matter.

II.

"PRITHEE, Bacon, where the dickens is Act V. of my new play?"

Bacon didn't know. And, to tell the truth, he didn't care. But he helped Shakespeare look for it, all the same.

"Jolly queer!" muttered Shakespeare, scratching his head. "Mizzled as completely as young Milton's 'Paradise'!"

He flopped into a chair, and spent the next half-hour staring thoughtfully at Bacon, whilst the latter wired into his chum's brekker.

It was then the Head of Stratford, Dr. Johnson, carrying a pile of dictionaries under each arm, popped his head into the study.

"Hallo, Shakespeare!"
"Hallo!"

"Just you trot along to my study!" said the Head. "And if you're not jolly well expelled in a couple of twos call me a Dutchman!"

Shakespeare sprang up angrily.
"Look here, that's a lot of rot——"

But it was useless to expostulate. Dr. Johnson was already jogging along the passage.

"Now, what d'ye think of that?" demanded William wrathfully of his chum.

"Think you'd better do as he says," said Bacon nervously. "I'll come with you."

His study-mate was in no hurry to move.
"The question is," said Shakespeare moodily, "whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer such twaddle from that howling duffer, or to take bats and cricket-stumps and things and wipe up his study with him?"

"Best go quietly," suggested Bacon, glancing at his not-to-be-sat-upon chum. "He can make things jolly hot for a chap when he once starts slinging those dictionaries about!"

Shakespeare nodded, and together the pair went to Dr. Johnson's study—No. 1,234,123.

William entered first, and pitched headlong over a heap of dictionaries placed just inside the door.

He scrambled furiously to his feet, and glared round at the face of Smollett of the Sixth leering over another pile of dictionaries.

"You put these here on purpose, you rotter!" he exclaimed hotly. "Take that!"

He hurled a dictionary at Smollett of the Sixth.

The face ducked, only to reappear instantly with a more pronounced leer than before.

"You can drop that as soon as you like, Shakespeare!" cut in the Head warningly. "I have to expel you, but I don't want to shove your head up the chimney as well!"

"Well, I'm not going to have a face like that grimacing at me!" growled Shakespeare. "But what am I to be expelled for?"

The Head looked grieved.
"I'm vuv-vuv-very sus-sus-sorry!" he blubbered. "But it's gotter be done! Boo-hoo!"

Dr. Johnson burst into tears.
"Lend me your hanky, Bacon, will you?" he snivelled.

He fished a rather dirty piece of calico from Bacon's pocket, and, after ejecting the bloater that was wrapped in it, blew his nose with infinitely more vigour than harmony.

"Look here," began Bacon, "that's my hanky——"

"What I want to know is," said Shakespeare, getting angry, "what am I to be expelled for?"

"Why," said the Head sorrowfully—"why did you pinch young Milton's 'Paradise'?"

Dr. Johnson broke down again, and once more blew his nose.

"My hanky——"
"Who pinched Milton's 'Paradise'?" exclaimed Shakespeare.
"You did, you rotter! And now you're expelled from Stratford." Blub-blub!

"Expelled from Stratford!" echoed Smollett of the Sixth triumphantly.

William thrust his jaw over the pile of dictionaries.

"Now, look here, Dr. Johnson," said Shakespeare, beating upon the desk with the edge of a dictionary, "let's come to facts. What the merry dickens do you mean by saying that I boned Milton's 'Paradise'?"

In his agitation the Head tried to balance an inkwell on the corner of a dictionary.

"First of all—— Bust it!"
The inkwell entertained its audience with a double somersault, and the Head swabbed up the ink with the hanky.

"Here! My hanky!"
"For goodness' sake, dry up, Bacon!" said the Head irritably. "You're worse than my aunt!"

"That's all very well——"
"Shut up!" roared Dr. Johnson and Shakespeare, as with one voice.

Bacon grunted, and, shooting a number of dictionaries out of a chair, sat discontentedly down.

"First of all," resumed the Head, "what were you up to last night?"

"I was poaching——"
"Poaching!" yelled Dr. Johnson.

"You confess!" came from behind the pile of dictionaries.

"Poaching eggs, you know," said Shakespeare frankly, "with—er"—he glanced at his chum—"with Bacon."

"Good man!" said the Head approvingly. "Poached eggs and bacon go 'down prime—simply topping!"

Smollett of the Sixth scowled over the pile of dictionaries.

"However, Smollett of the Sixth has evidence of your guilt," went on Dr. Johnson. "He declares that you accosted him and Milton yesterday evening as they were having a friendly confab in the passage, and somehow or other managed to fish Milton's 'Paradise' from his pocket. Then you footed it to the village with Bacon, and bought in poultry and things with what you raised on Milton's 'Paradise.'"

"Then he's a Prussian!" retorted Shakespeare. "We got that game from—— Ahem! The dandelions in the quad appear to be in the best of health this spring; Dr. Johnson!"

"Blow the dandelions!" said the Head suspiciously. "If you think you can come over me with any of that poetical tosh, young Shakespeare——"

Sounds of commotion from the vicinity of the pile of dictionaries interrupted him.

"This confession settles everything!" burst out Smollett of the Sixth, waving a sheet of parchment over the dictionaries. "I'll read it out!"

"Do," said Dr. Johnson. "Get it off your chest."

And Smollett of the Sixth read out:

"In my heart there was a kind of fighting, That would not let me sleep; and rashly then

Up from my cabin,
My sea gown scarfed about me, in the dark

Groped I to find them. So had my desire,
Fingered their packet, and in fine withdrew

To mine own room again, making so bold,
My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission; when I found——"

"By my halidom!" shouted Shakespeare excitedly. "That's from Act V. of my new play!"

"Your whatter?" said the Head sharply.

"A new play I'm writing for the Stratford Dramatic and Apologetic Society," said Shakespeare heatedly. "'Hamlet, the Moor of Athens.'"

"Ho, yes!" sneered Smollett of the Sixth. "We're likely to believe that!"

"I don't think!" observed the Head. "Draw it mild, Shakespeare!"

William glared wildly.
"I tell you—I tell you——"

"Tell it to the Marines!" scoffed Dr. Johnson. "I'm too old a bird to be taken in by that tosh! It's as plain as your dial, Smollett of the Sixth," he went on, taking the confession and glancing at it. "He couldn't have taken the 'Paradise' when

Milton was in the passage, though. He says he couldn't sleep for thinking of the 'Paradise.' He disguised himself in a sea-gown, and groped to find 'them'—evidently expecting to find more than one 'Paradise.' Always was a pig, young Shakespeare! In his confession he stops at what he found—no doubt because he's at the bottom of the page. Now, where's the rest of the confesh, Shakespeare?"

Shakespeare thought furiously for a moment, and then sprinted round that pile of dictionaries, and lugged out Smollett of the Sixth by the ear.

He turned him upside-down, and, holding him by the ankles, began methodically to beat his head upon the floor—after the fashion of a navy laying sets.

Ploek, ploek, ploek!

"Easy does it, Shakespeare!" exclaimed the Head. "These dictionaries are all dancing on their shelves! They'll be off in a minute!"

"Think I'm doing this for fun?" grunted Shakespeare, panting with his exertions. "Ah! There it is at last!"

Something was shaken out of Smollett of the Sixth's pocket, and fell to the floor with a metallic thud.

"Milton's 'Paradise'!" bawled the Head.

At that instant there came a pattering of feet along the passage, and young Milton rushed in with tears in his eyes.

"My 'Paradise'!" he cried. "I heard it drop! Where is it?"

"There you are, kid," said Shakespeare kindly, handing it to the youngster. "Put it in your pocket, and take better care of it in future!"

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Shakespeare—thank you!"

"Don't mench!"

Sobbing with joy, and hugging his regained 'Paradise' to his breast, young Milton hurried away.

"Now to square accounts with you, Smollett of the Sixth!" said Shakespeare grimly. "Bacon, pass the poker!"

The scheming Sixth-Former was laid over a pile of dictionaries, and he received ample demonstrations that William could wield a poker every bit as well as a pen.

Whack, whackety, whack!

"After you, Shakespeare!" bespoke the Head, rolling up the sleeve of his gown, and brandishing a dictionary aloft.

"Odd's bust it!" grunted Shakespeare. "The poker's broken! There's the tongs, though!"

But as he reached for the tongs Smollett of the Sixth bounded out of the study, with Dr. Johnson's dictionary rattling at his head.

"May as well clear out now, Shakey, old chap," murmured Bacon. "This has turned out O.K."

"Right-ho! So-long!" said Shakespeare, nodding to the Head.

"So-long, old chap!" came Dr. Johnson's voice from behind his dictionaries.

And Shakespeare strolled out of the study after Bacon.

After that the study remained wrapped in perfect silence, save for the splutterings of the pen and the curses of the penman.

All was rejoicing now that Milton's 'Paradise' was regained, and to celebrate it Shakespeare, Bacon, and the Head joined young Milton and his pals in an unlimited spread of fried bloaters—those prime, burnt, greasy ones!

THE END.

NOTICES.

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The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

"FOR ANOTHER'S SINS!"

By Frank Richards.

Wally Bunter is in a worse plight than ever in the next story. Just as it seems that he is a few rungs up the ladder he is brought down again with a mighty thump.

Of course, it is really Billy's fault; but Wally cannot explain that.

The worst of it all is that a girl is concerned in this case. Billy had said things about Miss Clara Trevlyn, and Miss Clara, in spite of all that her chums could do to stop her, comes to Greyfriars on vengeance intent. Nice for Wally—what?

OLD BOYS' PAPERS.

Are the boys of the present day interested in these, I wonder, or is it only we whose memories go back to the days of Edwin J. Brett and Charles Fox, of Shoe Lane, who delight in anything connected with the journals that charmed us in our schooldays?

An article in a little amateur paper referred to last week—"Vanity Fair"—has given a jog to my memory. It was really only the first instalment of the article; and the writer goes back so far that most of the papers he mentions belong to a time before even an old stager like myself was born. He starts with 1817, with the "Youth's Instructor and Guardian," which ran for nearly 40 years, it seems. But I really don't think it was the sort of paper we should have liked. The "Boys' and Girls' Penny Magazine" started in 1832. There were various others, all, as Mr. Jay says, of a "semi-religious or non-sensational nature"—rather dull reading, on the whole, I should say. Then there were the Beeton papers—monthly—published by the proprietors of the famous cookery book, and in the 'sixties Routledge's came into the field with stuff that might not be quite so hopelessly unreadable now. I recall one old volume of their "Every Boy's Magazine"—that was the title, I think—with one of Mayne Reid's stories, "Gaspar the Gaucho," a tale of the South American pampas, running through it.

But my contemporary recollections begin much later than that. I have never seen a copy of any of George Emmet's famous papers, published in the early 'seventies; but I can remember the "B.O.P." though I was a small child at a school for young ladies—don't snigger!—when it began. There were only three boys among a couple of dozen or so girls ranging in age from eight to eighteen; and a good deal of the time of one of those boys—six or seven then, and supposed to be delicate—was put in reading the "B.O.P."—Kingston—but I never liked him—and the Rev. T. S. Millington, and Mrs. Eiloart, and later the great Talbot Baines Reed and Gordon Stables and Jules Verne and David Ker.

Then there was the "Boy's World," with Charlton's sea stories and "Ralph Rollington's Schooldays"; and there was the "Boy's Standard," with a story about Caractacus and the Roman gladiators, and school stories, of course—no boys' paper was ever really complete without them; and there were the publications of Edwin J. Brett—"Boys of England," "Young Men of Great Britain," "Boys' Comic Journal"—to which I have referred in previous chats. The first boys' papers for which I ever wrote—I did serials while still at school—were published by one S. Dacre Clarke. But that was later. Before that came "Youth," which Lord Northcliffe, then Alfred Harmsworth, and about eighteen, I believe, edited.

And there was "Young Folks"—I think, of them all, the dearest to me. Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island" and "Black Arrow" and "Kidnapped" first appeared there. William Black and William Sharp and D. Lawson Johnston and Robert Leighton and Charles E. Pearce, and many another author of distinction, wrote for "Young Folks," to which later, when I had persuaded myself that writing boys' stories was too youthful a game for me—but I came back to it years later—I contributed any number of articles.

But I cannot say all that I want to say this week. I must return to the subject later on.

YOUR EDITOR.

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