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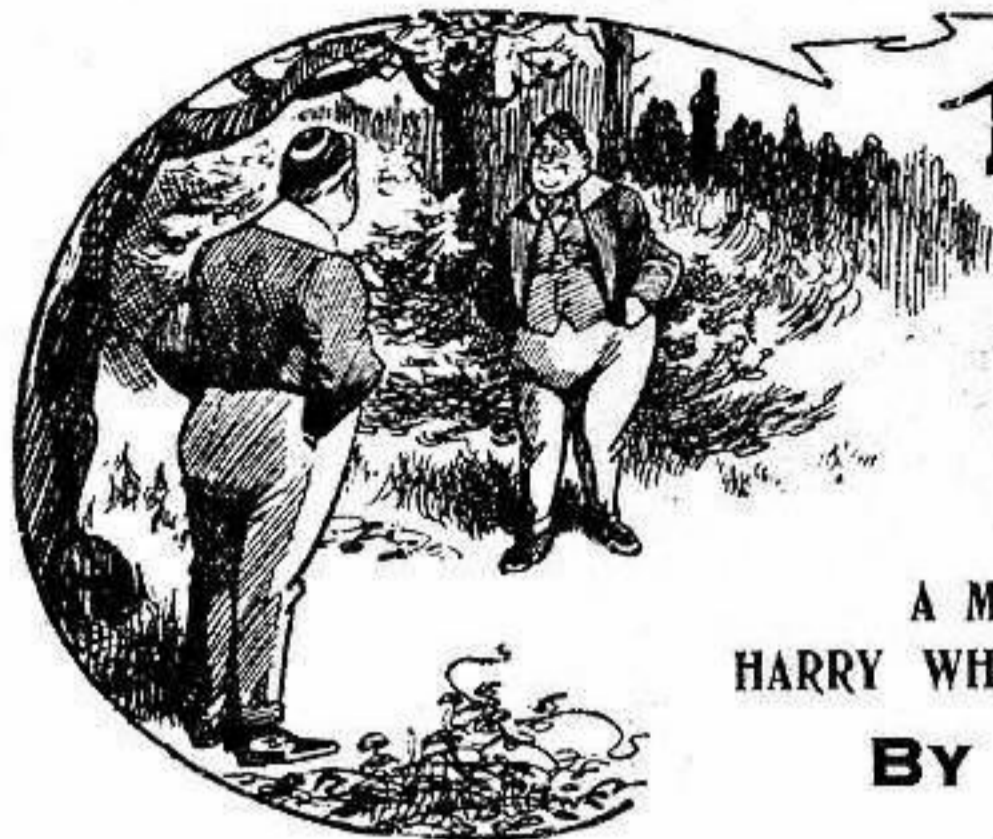


THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE!



BILLY BUNTER—THE HOPE OF HIS SIDE!

(A Screamingly Funny Scene in the Long, Complete School Tale contained in this Number.) 26-4-19



The Return of the Native!

A Magnificent Long, Complete Story of
HARRY WHARTON & CO. AT GREYFRIARS SCHOOL.

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter's Appointment!

BUNTER?" Bunter of the Remove was making for the gates when Harry Wharton called out rather sharply.

Bunter did not seem to hear.

He rolled on towards the gates, quickening his pace a little.

"Bunter!" shouted Wharton.

Still the fat junior did not turn his head. It seemed that Bunter of the Remove was suddenly afflicted with deafness.

"Bunter!" roared the captain of the Remove.

And then, as the fat junior did not heed, Wharton rushed in pursuit. He overtook Bunter in the gateway, and caught him by a fat shoulder.

Bunter had to stop then.

He spun round on Wharton's sudden grip, and stood blinking at the captain of the Remove over his big glasses with a red face and a guilty expression.

"Didn't you hear me?" demanded Wharton.

"I'm—ahem—"

"Where are you off to?"

"I—I—I'm going out!" stammered the fat junior.

"You're jolly well not!" exclaimed Wharton warmly. "You're coming along to cricket practice!"

"You—you see—"

"Blessed if I ever heard of such cheek!" exclaimed Wharton. "Haven't I put your name down for the Remove Eleven for the first match of the season?"

"It's jolly good of you! But—"

"And here you are mooching off and dodging practice, and pretending not to hear me when I yell after you!" exclaimed Wharton indignantly. "What do you mean by it, you fat bounder?"

Bunter's fat face became redder.

He evidently found it difficult to explain.

"Don't you want to play against Redclyffe to-morrow?" demanded Harry.

"Oh yes! Yes, rather!"

"And do you think you're such a topping cricketer that you don't need any practice?"

"Nunno."

"Then come along!" said Wharton gruffly.

"I—I've got to go," stammered Bunter. "The—the fact is, I—I've got to meet a chap—"

"Bother the chap!"

"It's my cousin!" blurted out the fat junior.

"Oh!" Wharton looked a little more amiable. "Your cousin Wally, do you mean—your cousin at St. Jim's?"

The fat junior grinned.

"My cousin at St. Jim's," he assented.

"He—he's come over to see me. I got his letter this morning, saying he would come to-day."

"Well, he'll come here, I suppose? Are you meeting him at the station?"

"Nunno."

"We'll be jolly glad to see him," said Harry. "We all like the chap. You've grown a good deal more like him, Bunty, since the time he was here on a visit."

"Oh!"

"I don't mean to look at. You were as like as two peas to look at any time," said Harry. "I mean in your ways. For instance, if anybody had told me last term that I should be playing Billy Bunter in the Remove Eleven I should have thought he was off his dot."

"W-w-would you?"

"Oh, yes, rather! But you've turned out a good man, both at footer and cricket," said Wharton. "It seems like a giddy miracle; but it is so, and there's no denying it."

Bunter of the Remove grinned again.

He was wondering whether the Greyfriars fellows would ever guess that he was Wally Bunter, and not Billy Bunter at all, and that the two fat cousins had taken advantage of their remarkable resemblance to change schools.

It was such an unheard-of scheme that it was not surprising that no one "tumbled" to it, though the change in the supposed Billy was always causing surprise in the Greyfriars Remove.

"Well, if Wally's coming here we'll be glad to see him," continued Wharton.

"Is he staying the night?"

"I—I hope not—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I think not."

"If you've got to go and meet him, bring him along as soon as you can," said Wharton. "You simply must put in some practice to-day, Bunter. How long will you be?"

"I—I don't know."

"What rot! Think a minute!"

"The—the fact is—" stammered the unhappy impostor.

"Well, what is the fact? What are you stammering about?"

"The—the fact—the fact is—"

"Well?"

"The—the fact is—"

"Is that a game?" asked Wharton.

"Are you wound up, or are you understudying a parrot?"

"The—the fact is, my cousin isn't

coming to Greyfriars," stammered Wally. "I hope he's going straight back to St. Jim's—I mean, I think he is—that is to say, I—I'm just meeting him in the village for a—a—a jaw, that's all."

"I don't see why he can't come on to the school," said Wharton, in surprise.

"He knows he's always welcome."

"Ye-es; bitt—but there's reasons—"

"Oh, all right! It's his bizney, I suppose. Get back in time for some practice at the nets if you can."

"I—I will."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came the stentorian tones of Bob Cherry. "Are you coming, Wharton? We're waiting for you!"

"I'm coming."

Harry Wharton joined his chums, and Wally Bunter, in great relief at escaping further questioning, rolled out of the gates. The role he was playing at Greyfriars weighed upon him a little sometimes.

"Bunter going out?" asked Johnny Bull, as the Famous Five walked down to Little Side.

"Yes; it seems that his cousin is coming over from St. Jim's."

"Good! We'll be glad to see him!" said Frank Nugent heartily.

"The gladfulness will be terrific!"

"He's not coming here. Billy's meeting him in the village. Blessed if I quite understand Bunter," said Harry.

"He doesn't seem to waste much affection on his relations. He's always dodging his minor in the Second Form. And the other day he was no end worried because his sister Bessie was coming here to see him. Now he seems quite bothered because his cousin's coming to see him from St. Jim's, and he won't bring him here. And his cousin Wally is a really splendid chap!"

"One of the best!" said Bob Cherry.

"I think he has a good influence on our merry Bunter, too. Billy's no end improved since the time Wally stayed here on a visit."

"No doubt about that!" agreed Wharton. "Well, here we are!"

And the Bunters were dismissed from the minds of the Famous Five of the Remove, as they devoted their attention to the great game of cricket.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Rather Sudden!

WALLY BUNTER'S fat brow was contracted in a deep frown as he rolled away down the lane towards Friardale.

The fat junior was worried.

He had been so keen to come to Greyfriars, among the fellows he had learned to like, that he had fallen in cheerfully with Billy Bunter's hare-brained scheme of changing places. It had been easy enough, though difficulties had cropped up at times.

So far, only Snoop of the Remove had found out the secret, and he was friendly with Wally Bunter, and was keeping dark what he had discovered—and, indeed, had helped Wally to avoid a meeting with Billy's sister Bessie, which would have been perilous for the spoofer.

No one else had a suspicion—not even Sammy Bunter of the Second Form, partly owing to Wally's sedulous care in avoiding his attractive society.

But, glad as Wally was to be at Greyfriars, there were worries attached to the role he was playing. Billy Bunter was a very unreliable personage. The agreement had been that they should change places for the whole term; but of late Billy Bunter had written rather frequently letters full of complaints about St. Jim's. Apparently he had not found his new school so delightful a place as he had anticipated.

And now this sudden visit looked as if Billy was tired of the change, and wanted to change back. Which was not gratifying to Wally, who had succeeded at last in living down Billy's unenviable reputation, and was getting on famously in the Remove.

Wally turned off the road before entering the village, and walked into the woods, where the trees were glimmering with the green of spring. He stopped under a big oak, and looked about him. "Late, of course!" he grunted.

Billy Bunter could always be depended upon to be late.

Wally paced to and fro under the oak, with his hands in his pockets, and the frown deepening on his face. He was thinking of the cricket-ground at Greyfriars, where he was wanted, and where he wanted to be.

It was just like William George Bunter to keep him hanging about like this, he reflected wrathfully.

He had been under the big oak about half an hour when a fat figure came through the trees.

The new-comer was so exactly like Wally Bunter to look at that at the first glance it would have been difficult to tell one from the other.

At the second glance, however, it would have been noted that Wally Bunter looked much fresher and more fit than his cousin. Fat as he was, he was fit as a fiddle, which Billy Bunter certainly was not.

There was a smear of jam about the new arrival's mouth, and a shiny look on his podgy face, and Wally Bunter could guess the cause of his delay in keeping the appointment.

"Hallo, Wally!" said Billy Bunter as he came up. "You're here!"

"I've been waiting for you half an hour!" growled Wally.

"Good! I was afraid you might keep me waiting," said Billy Bunter. "It's all right, then."

"Did you lose your train?"

"No. I shouldn't be here now if I had."

"I suppose you stopped to guzzle at Uncle Clegg's as you came by?" grunted Wally.

"I certainly stopped there for a snack," said Bunter, with dignity. "I was hungry after my journey. I don't like your tone, Wally!"

"Lump it, then!" grunted Wally.

"Look here—"

"Oh, not so much chin-wag!" said Wally. "What are you here for? That's what I want to know!"

"If you're not going to be civil—"

"Cut that out! I want to know what you're here for! I've got to get back to Greyfriars as quickly as I can!"

Billy Bunter grinned.

"You're not going back to Greyfriars!" he answered.

"What?"

Wally stared at his cousin.

"I've hooked it!" explained Billy.

"You've cleared off from St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

"Why, you—you—you silly ass!" gasped Wally. "What have you done that for?"

"I didn't find St. Jim's as I expected," said Bunter. "The fellows are not really up to my style. D'Arcy and Tom Merry and Figgins—all that lot. I've found them a lot of rotters."

"They've found you a rotter, you mean!"

"Look here, Wally!" roared Bunter. "Once and for all, I don't want any cheek from a poor relation!"

"Oh, dry up!"

Billy Bunter blinked in great wrath at his cousin through his big spectacles.

"You cheeky sweep!" he exclaimed.

"Is this your gratitude?"

"Gratitude for what?" snapped Wally.

"For all that I've done for you!" said Billy Bunter warmly. "Didn't I let you take my place at Greyfriars—"

"Because you'd got into trouble with a bookmaker, and wanted to shift it on to my shoulders!" said Wally hotly. "I found that out afterwards, when the man began pestering me for money. And nearly every chap in the Remove makes out that I owe him money—"

Bunter chuckled.

"Have you paid them?" he asked.

"I had to. They supposed I was you, but I couldn't act like you!" growled Wally. "I've had to square up no end of accounts you'd run up, and it's made a pretty hole in my pocket-money!"

"Good! That will see me clear!" said Bunter, with satisfaction.

"Eh?"

"Of course, I shall settle with you later," said Bunter loftily. "I hope you don't imagine for one moment that I shall remain in debt to a poor relation?"

"I jolly well do!" snorted Wally.

"You know you won't pay me a cent!"

"If you take that tone, Wally, I decline to discuss the matter further. In my circle I'm accustomed to good breeding. An office chap like you wouldn't understand that, of course!"

"You—you fat Hun—"

Billy Bunter waved a fat hand at his incensed cousin.

"That's enough!" he said. "I'm going!"

"Where are you going?"

"To Greyfriars."

"And what am I going to do?" shrieked Wally.

"Anything you like!"

And with that William George Bunter walked away, with his fat little nose high in the air.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Pilly Bunter Means Business!

"MY hat!" Wally Bunter stared blankly after the Owl of the Remove for a moment or two. He was taken quite aback.

He had had his doubts about Billy, and it had been borne in on his mind that the peculiar arrangement would have to come to an end. But he had not expected this suddenness. Even Billy Bunter might have shown a little more consideration than this.

He stood rooted to the ground as William George walked loftily away. But only for a few moments. Then he

rushed in pursuit of the Owl of the Remove, and grasped him by the shoulders.

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat down in the grass with a loud roar.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Now, you fat rotter!" panted Wally.

"Yooop!"

"Gerrup!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"I've a jolly good mind to give you the biggest hiding you ever had in your life!" roared Wally. "What do you mean by going back on me like this? We arranged till the end of the term for—"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You can't go to Greyfriars to-day!"

"Yah! I'm going! Botcher you! You're a low cad, Wally! Yow-ow! I despise you! Owl! Wow!"

Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet, glaring at Wally with a glare that bado fair to crack his spectacles. He shook his fat fist under his cousin's nose.

"Do you know what I've a jolly good mind to do?" he demanded. "I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking, only—"

"Go ahead!"

"Only you ain't worth a fellow soiling his hands on!" snorted Bunter.

"Jolly lucky for you!" said Wally.

"Now then, don't try to roll off yet, you barrel, or I'll stop you again. We've got to have this out. Why have you bolted from St. Jim's?"

"Fed up with the place."

"Oh, I know—I know! You've borrowed all the money D'Arcy will lend you, and he's put the stopper on; you've made everybody fed up with you; and now you want to land me into it same as you did at Greyfriars!" exclaimed Wally, greatly incensed. "If I go to St. Jim's now, I shall find that I've got a reputation as juicy as the one you left for me at Greyfriars. Why can't you learn to play the game, you fat spoofer? I was an ass ever to listen to your rot!"

"I did it entirely for your sake, of course!" said Bunter.

"Rats!"

"I don't expect gratitude," continued Billy Bunter, "I'm always doing these kind actions, and never getting any gratitude. But there's such a thing as common decency, Wally. You might thank a chap."

"Oh, you—you—"

"You were going to St. Jim's—you, a bounder, who's worked for his living!" said Bunter warmly. "You'd have been a rank outsider, of course—and I gave you an easy start by letting you get into Greyfriars in my name. You passed there as a gentleman—"

"I passed there as you!"

"That's what I mean. And I actually allowed myself to be supposed a fellow who had worked, and who was sent to a public school by the kindness of his employer. That was a come-down—for me! Me—a fellow who had soiled his hands with work!" said Billy Bunter disdainfully.

"You seem to have soiled them with a good many other things, and your neck, too!"

"Once for all, I don't want any of your low cheek, Wally!" roared Billy Bunter. "Keep your low manners for your low circle. I'm fed up with St. Jim's, and I'm going back to Greyfriars. There may have been some mention of keeping it up for the whole term. I won't say there wasn't. But you ought to be thankful for what you've had. You can go to St. Jim's. You've been there before, and you know your way about. Besides, there's another reason. Old Penman—"

"My old governor?" said Wally.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 585.

"Yes, your dashed old governor, as you call him—"

"I don't call him my dashed old governor; I speak of him respectfully, and you'd better do so if you don't want your nose pulled! Mr. Penman is the kindest of men."

"Oh, bother him, anyway! He telephoned to-day."

"Is he coming down to the school?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" said Wally.

"He came before, and we dodged him," said Bunter. "But this time he'll see you there, and you'll stay there. It's quite simple. He said on the telephone that it was very important, and there had been a change in his plans. He had news for me—I mean for you—which he thought would please me—you, you know. I don't know what he was driving at. I don't care, either. I got tired of his talk, and rang off."

"You cheeky idiot!"

"Well, I couldn't be bothered—it was nearly tea-time, too. Besides, I dare say he thought they cut him off at the exchange. Anyway, I don't see that it matters."

"When is he going to St. Jim's?"

"To-morrow afternoon."

"Oh, crikey! I'm booked to play in the Redclyffe match at Greyfriars to-morrow afternoon."

"They've put you in the Remove Eleven?" exclaimed Bunter, in astonishment.

"Yes."

"That's all right, then! I'll play," said Billy Bunter. "It will come to the same thing."

"You howling ass, you can't play cricket!"

"Look here, Wally—"

"Look here, Billy—"

"Time I got on to Greyfriars. Good-bye!"

Wally caught the Owl of the Remove by the arm.

"Billy! You can't play this rotten trick on me. Go back to St. Jim's, and keep it up as we agreed, to the end of the term."

"Can't be done! Besides, there's Penman to-morrow."

"We could work that, as we did when he came before—"

"I'm fed up with the place," said Bunter peevishly. "I'm going back to Greyfriars. I've done enough for you, Wally. If you can't be grateful, you might at least show some sense of obligation. Anyhow, it's settled."

Wally set his lips.

"You won't go back to St. Jim's?"

"No, I won't!"

"Do you call this playing the game?"

"I'm not going to argue with you, Wally. Besides, there's no time. I've got to get in to tea. I only had a snack at Uncle Clegg's—a few sausage-rolls, and a ham pie, and some tarts. I'm hungry."

"Did you get leave to come here from St. Jim's?"

"Oh, no; I just bunked after lessons!"

"But—but if I go, I shall get in late—bed-time, I think—I shall get into a thumping row."

"Blessed if I thought about that. You can spin them some yarn—railway strike, or something."

"You mean I can tell them thumping lies, as you would in my place?" growled Wally. "Well, lies don't come so easy to me."

"I've said I don't want any of your low cheek, Wally. This discussion had better cease," said Billy Bunter. "I want my tea. Oh, there's one other thing!"

"What's that?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 535.

"I'm rather short of money. Can you lend me a quid?"

Wally Bunter did not answer that question. It seemed rather too much for him. Instead of speaking, he took Billy Bunter by the collar.

"Hallo! Wharrar you at?" howled Bunter.

Wally did not explain; he left Billy to guess; and really, it was easy to guess what Wally was at. He spun the fat junior round, and applied his boot to the Owl's plump person with great energy.

Biff, biff, biff!

"Yaroooh! Help! Fire! Murder!" roared Bunter. "Yaroooh! Leggo! Oh, my hat!"

Biff!

Then Wally released the Owl of Greyfriars, and without another word walked away.

His career at Greyfriars had been suddenly cut short, and he had to face a fresh set of troubles and difficulties the cheery Billy had prepared for him; but he had found some little solace in that final scene.

There was no solace in it for Billy Bunter. He sat in the grass and roared.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Return of the Native!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Too late for practice!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Slacker!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Why didn't you bring Wally to see us?" demanded Nugent.

Billy Bunter grinned.

The Owl of the Remove had arrived at his old school, and rolled in at the gates as the dusk was beginning to gather. Harry Wharton & Co. were chatting near the doorway of the School House when the fat junior joined them.

Billy Bunter looked a little uncertain at first. He could not help wondering whether the chums of the Remove would observe any difference between the Bunter who had gone out and the Bunter who had come in.

"We'd all have been glad to see Wally," went on Bob Cherry, little guessing how much he had seen of Wally the past few weeks. "You ought to have brought him along, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Perhaps there wasn't time," remarked Harry Wharton. "Wally Bunter must be pretty late in getting back to St. Jim's, anyway."

"That's it," said the fat junior. "He had to start back at once—the next train, you know. I'm going to pack up his things for him and send them on."

"Eh?"

"His things!" repeated Wharton. "What on earth things did he bring to Friardale with him?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He lacked Wally's ready wit, and he was so taken aback by his own blunder that he could only stammer. He blinked at the Famous Five, who stared at him in utter astonishment.

"I—I—I mean—" stammered Bunter.

"Well, what do you mean?"

"Lemme see. I—I mean that—that he's been buying some things in the village, and—and I'm going to see them sent off!" gasped Bunter. He did not mean to explain that he had been referring to the things Wally had left about Study No. 7 in the Remove.

"So he's come donkeys' miles to a little village to do shopping?" asked Frank Nugent, mystified.

"That's it!" gasped Bunter. "Just right! You've got it exactly, Nugent."

"Well, my hat!"

"The hatfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Although the esteemed Bunter has latefully cultivated the straight and narrow path of truthfulness, in the manner of the excellent and absurd George Washington, it really seems to me that he is now wandering from the facts."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Where's your cap?" asked Bob Cherry suddenly.

"My—my cap?"

"Yes, your cap."

"On my head, of course!"

"That isn't a Greyfriars cap."

"Oh my hat!" ejaculated Bunter.

"Not your hat—your cap!" grinned Bob. "Have you lost it?"

"Ye-e-es, exactly! You see, I meant to change with my cousin, but he cut up rusty, and I forgot—"

"What?"

"I—I mean—"

"What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed the astounded Bob. "Your cousin wears a St. Jim's cap, doesn't he?"

"Eh? No—oh, yes—of—of course! I—I mean—I—I didn't want to come here in a St. Jim's cap, so I put this on, and then I forgot—that is to say, I—I didn't put this on—"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean—I—my cap blew off!" gasped Bunter. "There was a fearful wind in the lane."

"There's been hardly a breath of wind since you went out."

"That—that's what I meant to say. I—I meant that a—a motor-car dashed past me, and the wind from it blew my cap off, and—and it fell into the river; so I bought this cap. See?"

The famous Five simply blinked at Bunter.

That the Owl of the Remove was departing from the straight line of veracity they could, of course, see easily. Why he should be lying it was not so easy to see.

But one thing was borne in upon their minds. Bunter was more like his old self now than he had been for weeks.

If the fat junior had lost his cap, and had bought a cheap cap in the village, there was nothing to lie about so far as the chums of the Remove could see.

Yet Bunter was plainly lying.

"Are you sure it wasn't a herd of wild elephants that passed you?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Didn't one of them hook your cap off with his trunk?"

"No!" roared Bunter.

"What are you telling whoppers for, anyway?"

"I decline to answer such a question as that, Cherry. I say, you fellows, is Toddy in the study?"

"I believe so," said Wharton.

"I hope he hasn't had tea yet," said Bunter anxiously. "I'm simply famished after my journey."

"What journey?"

Bunter jumped. He was putting his foot into it again.

"D-d-did I say journey?" he stammered.

"You did, you fat duffer!"

"I—I meant—that is, I haven't had a journey. Don't you fellows get the idea into your heads that I've just come from St. Jim's. I haven't."

"Wha-a-at?"

"When I say journey," proceeded Bunter cautiously, "I mean the walk home from Friardale. That's what I really meant."

"Is he off his rocker?" asked Bob Cherry, addressing space.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"He must be wandering in his mind,

"I should think," said Harry Wharton, in wonder. "Blessed if he doesn't talk as if he'd been drinking! What's happened to you since you went out, Bunt?"

"N-n-nothing!"

"You're different, somehow," said the captain of the Remove, looking at the fat junior more closely. "Blessed if I quite understand; but there's some change in you. You seem all of a sudden to have become just like you were a few weeks ago, before your cousin came on a visit here."

"He, he, he!"

"Same old cackle, too!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in surprise. "I haven't heard you give that alarm-clock cackle for weeks. Now you've suddenly turned it on again, along with the whoppers."

"I—I say, you fellows, I think I'll go and see Toddy!" exclaimed Bunter hastily. "I suppose I shall find him just the same—what?"

"He's not likely to have changed much in two hours," answered Wharton.

Bunter jumped again.

"Nunno! Of—of course not! I—I'll go up!"

And the Owl of the Remove rolled into the School House, and hurried up to the Remove passage. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another very oddly.

"Blessed if I quite catch on to this!" said Wharton slowly. "What's the matter with him?"

"He doesn't seem the same chap," said Bob. "It's extraordinary. I can't put my finger on any special thing, but it's there. He seems to be a different chap since he went out a couple of hours ago. It's just as if he suddenly turned into the old Bunter again."

"That's it—and it's a pity."

"The improvement was terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Now it is gone from our gaze like the beautiful dreamfulness."

And the Famous Five strolled into the School House in a very puzzled mood. It really seemed as if Bunter would never leave off surprising them in one way or another.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Welcome Home!

PETER TODD glanced up from the grate as Billy Bunter entered No. 7—his old study in the Remove passage. Peter nodded affably.

Since Wally Bunter had been at Greyfriars in his cousin's name, Peter had grown quite to like his fat study-mate. He felt that he had never quite done Bunter justice, and though he was puzzled he had grown very friendly.

"Hallo, old scout!" he said genially. "You're in time. You oughtn't to have cut cricket, though."

"Couldn't be helped," said Bunter. "You see, I had to get off in such a hurry. They'd have stopped me if they'd known I was coming here—"

"What?"

"I—I mean—I—I mean, what is there for tea, Toddy?"

"Who'd have stopped you?"

"Nobody. What I meant to say was nobody would have stopped me. I say, Toddy. I'm awfully hungry! What is there for tea?"

"Well, there's lots of toast," said Peter, with a very curious look at the fat junior. "There's bloater-paste, too. Haven't you brought in anything?"

"Nunno!"

"Oh, all right! We'll make this do," said Toddy. "Dutton's gone to tea with Smithy and Redwing, as it happens."

"How's old Smithy? Same old Bunder, I suppose?"

Peter stared.

"I suppose so," he answered. "I don't

see why he should have changed since you saw him in the Form-room."

"Oh—ah—yes! Quite so!" stammered Bunter. "By the way, Toddy, I owed you fifteen bob when I left—"

"When you left?"

"I—I mean, when I didn't leave—"

"Eh?"

"That is, when—when—some time ago—in fact, I owed you fifteen bob, didn't I?"

"You did," said Peter Todd, "and anybody could have knocked me down with a feather when you settled up."

"I settled up?"

"Have you forgotten you did?"

"Yes—no—of course I settled up! I always settle up, don't I?" said Billy Bunter. "What I was going to say is, that now I've settled up I hope you won't be mean about making a chap a small loan occasionally when he's hard up."

"I'll lend you some tin if you're hard up," answered Peter, "at once. Since you've turned honest, I don't mind."

titled relations, whoppers, and all! What's come over you, Bunter? Have you got tired of turning over a new leaf?"

"Oh, rats!" said Bunter peevishly. "The point is, will you lend me ten shillings, and have it back out of my postal-order?"

Peter Todd shook his head.

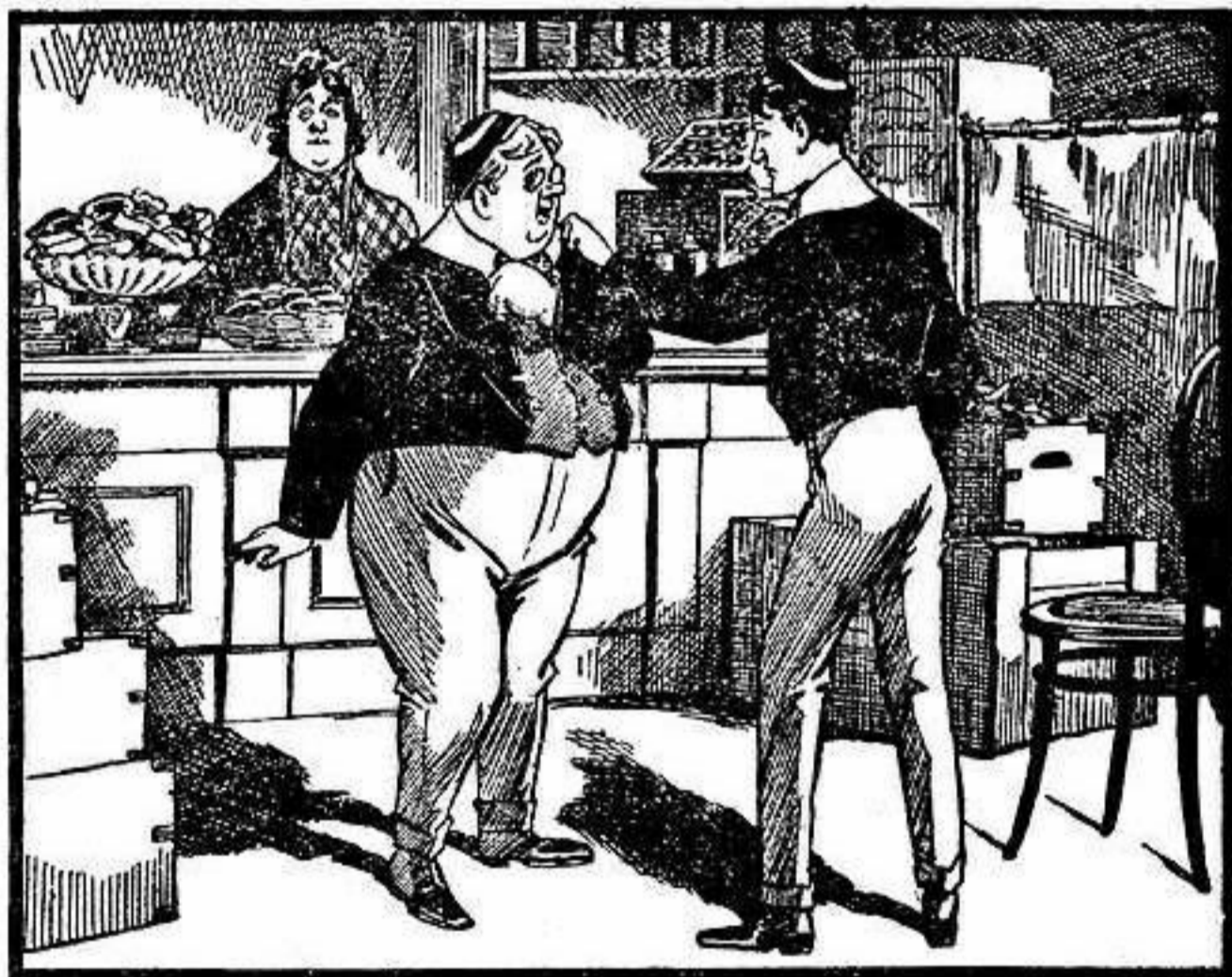
"No," he said deliberately. "I won't, Bunter! If you've started the postal-order and the titled relations again, I've got strong doubts whether I should ever see my ten bob any more. If you're short of tin, you'd better send a wire to your wealthy connections. They may dub up—perhaps!"

"Look here, you silly ass—" roared Bunter.

Peter Todd dished up the toast, and opened the bloater-paste. Billy Bunter surveyed the frugal tea-table with a snort of disgust.

"So that's all there is for tea!" he snapped.

"That's all, old nut! You can add to



"It's simply a question of waiting till this evening, Mrs. Mimble, till my postal-order comes!" Billy Bunter was saying, when Harry Wharton entered and clapped him on the shoulder. "Ow!" howled Bunter. "You beast, Bolsover—" (See Chapter 10.)

"The fact is, I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"What?" howled Peter.

"A postal-order, from a titled relation of mine—"

Billy Bunter stopped. The expression on Peter's face was so extraordinary. It was quite a long time since anything had been heard at Greyfriars of Billy Bunter's celebrated postal-order, which was always expected and which never arrived. His titled relations, too, had been unmentioned for a similar length of time. Now they had revived together—quite suddenly.

"You—you—you're expecting a postal-order?" stuttered Peter Todd.

"Yes. Haven't I said so?"

"From a—a—a titled relation?"

"Yes."

"Well, my only hat!"

"Blessed if I see anything to be surprised at in that, Peter Todd. Don't I often get postal-orders from my wealthy connections?"

"My only hat!" repeated Toddy.

"He's started that again—postal orders,

it anything you like, though!" said Peter liberally.

"I happen to be short of money."

"Gammon!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"You had plenty of tin to-day, and you said you were going to stand something for tea. You're getting like your old self again, Billy!"

"I want something better than this for tea! I can tell you, I'm not accustomed to this sort of grub. At St. Jim's we—"

Bunter paused in time.

"Well, what about St. Jim's?"

"N-n-nothing!"

Billy Bunter sat down to tea. Such as it was, he was forced to be content with it—though he did not look contented. He helped himself to all the bloater-paste, Peter watching that performance with a sort of mesmerised stare. He made no remark on it, however. This reversion to type, so to speak, on the part of his fat study-mate took Peter Todd by surprise. It required getting used to.

Bunter travelled through the toast at a great speed, too. When the table was bare, he rose with a dissatisfied grunt.

"Call that a tea!" he said.

"You seem to have taken a fancy to most of it!" said Peter tartly.

"I'm jolly nearly famished, after a thumping long journey—E—I mean, after walking to Friardale. I could get a snack in the tuckshop, only I happen to be short of tin. Now, look here, Toddy! This really isn't the welcome home I expected—"

"The what?"

"I—I mean, I really think you might lend me ten bob, old chap. My postal-order will be here to-morrow morning—or the afternoon, at latest—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Dash it all! I'm half sorry I came back!" growled Bunter.

"Eh? Were you thinking of putting up in Friardale for the night?"

"Eh? No! Oh, no! I mean—Look here, Peter! If you'll lend me ten bob, I'll let you come home with me next holidays to Bunter Court."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You'll meet a lot of titled people here, and it will give you an insight into high life," said Bunter, blinking at him. "That's rather a catch for a skinny solicitor's son like you, Peter!"

"Great Scott!" said Peter dazedly.

Bunter's charming old manners were coming back with a vengeance. It really seemed to Peter Todd as if he had had a different fellow entirely in the study for the past few weeks.

"I've been friendly with you," went on Bunter. "Nothing of the snob about me, I hope. You're not much class, Peter, as you know; but I've always taken you up, and been genial. The least you can do is to make me a small loan when I'm short of cash. Now, I put it to you."

"Is this a new and mysterious kind of joke?" asked Peter Todd.

"Eh? I'm not joking!"

Peter Todd rose to his feet.

"I used to keep a stump in the study for you, Bunter," he said. "Since you turned over a new leaf I haven't used it."

"Look here—"

"I wondered how long your giddy reform would last," pursued Peter. "It's lasted longer than I should have expected. But you seem to have got fed up on being decent. You're your own self again, Bunter—more than ever, I think. As you're the old Bunter once more, I shall have to use the old methods. You see that?"

"I—I say—"

stammered Bunter, as Peter Todd picked up a cricket-stump from the corner of the study.

"Where will you have it?" asked Toddy.

"I—I say, you beast—"

"Say where!"

Instead of saying where he would have it, Billy Bunter made a jump for the doorway.

Peter Todd made a jump for Bunter at the same time, and he reached Bunter before Bunter reached the door.

Whack, whack!

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the stump smote him rearward. "Yow-ow! Beast! Oh, crikey! You rotter! Ow!"

Whack!

The stump landed again as Billy Bunter bolted through the doorway. Then he escaped into the passage.

"Come back and have some more!" roared Peter Todd, brandishing the stump.

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter was travelling—not towards Study No. 7. Peter Todd grinned, and slammed the door.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 585.

A minute later a wrathful voice was howling through the keyhole:

"Beast!"

Then Bunter's receding footsteps died away rapidly.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Not So Popular!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Trot in, my fat tulip!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were at tea in Study No. 1 when a fat face looked in at the doorway.

Billy Bunter blinked in rather cautiously.

When he looked into a study at tea-time he was not unaccustomed to hearing emphatic objurgations, or even to receiving flying missiles in the shape of a cushion or a book.

But the cordial looks of the Famous Five showed that there were neither objurgations nor missiles to be looked for now, and Bunter was surprised. He grinned, however, as he remembered that the juniors supposed him to be the Bunter they had known during the last few weeks.

"I say, you fellows—"

he began.

"Come in!" said Harry Wharton.

"Had your tea?"

Bunter sniffed.

"What Toddy calls a tea," he answered. "I believe Toddy's growing meaner than ever!"

"Oh, don't talk out of your hat!" said Wharton, rather sharply. "Toddy's all right!"

"Fancy offering toast and bloater-paste to a fellow he's not seen for—"

for—Bunter stammered—"for two hours!" he concluded, rather lamely.

"Well, two hours isn't a long time!" said Harry, laughing. "But if you haven't had tea, old kid, pile in! Lots!"

"The lotfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bunter!"

"Well, as you're so pressing, I will," said Bunter. "The fact is, I shouldn't object to digging in this study again. You know, I used to share this study with you and Nugent, Wharton. I'll tell you what—I'll come back, if you like!"

"Ahem! We won't rob Toddy of your company, old scout!"

"The fact is," said Bunter, with his mouth full of ham, "I can't stand Toddy. I'm not a snob, I hope, but I really feel that I ought to draw the line at chumming with a skinny solicitor's son. Hardly up to my social standing, you know!"

A sudden silence fell upon the Famous Five. They looked at Bunter, but they did not speak.

The difference they had already noticed in him seemed to be growing more pronounced. Bunter of the Remove had astonished them by improving in a very remarkable way. He seemed bent now on astonishing them by a reverse process.

"I say, you fellows, this ham is good!"

said Bunter. "You don't mind if I finish it, do you? Are those hard-boiled eggs, Nugent? Pass them this way, will you? I hope you fellows have finished?"

Without waiting to be informed whether the fellows had finished, Billy Bunter rolled all the eggs upon his plate. He polished them off in great style. Then he began on the cake.

"Help yourself, old scout!" said Wharton hospitably.

"Well, I will, if you don't mind!" said Bunter. And he transferred the cake to his plate. "This will save time. No good fooling around with slicing. I say, you fellows, this is rather a good cake. I wonder you didn't try it!"

Bunter had not given them much

chance of trying it, but the Famous Five made no remark.

Sidney James Snoop glanced into the study while Bunter was busy with the cake. He gave Bunter a very cordial smile.

"I was going to ask you to tea, Bunter," he remarked. "Too late, it seems!"

"Not at all!" answered Bunter, rising to his feet with his mouth full of cake. "I'll come, with pleasure!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry involuntarily.

"Just wait a minute, Snoopey," said Bunter. "I think I'll have a go at the biscuits; they look rather nice."

"Do!" gasped Wharton.

Bunter did. The biscuits disappeared in record time. Evidently Bunter did not believe in wasting anything.

"Now I'll get along, you fellows," he remarked, blinking at the five. "Sorry I can't stay longer. I'll give you a look in another time, you know. You can rely on me for the Redclyffe match to-morrow, Wharton."

"I've got your name down," said Harry.

"That's right! I'll beat Redclyffe for you, old chap."

"Well, we're going to help a little."

"Yes, of course; I shall expect the team to back me up," said Bunter, with a nod. "I make only one condition—that I open the innings. You see, you want to open the innings with your best batsman—it encourages the others."

"I am going to open the innings myself, with Smiathy!" answered Harry Wharton curtly.

Bunter blinked at him.

"That won't do!" he said.

"Won't it?"

"Not at all," said the fat junior decidedly. "I shall insist—I feel that I must insist upon opening the innings. You've got one great drawback as cricket captain, Wharton!"

"Have I?" said Harry, breathing hard.

"Yes. You don't mind my mentioning, do you? Candid friend, you know—"

"Oh, don't mind me!" said the captain of the Remove sarcastically.

"Right—I won't! Your drawback is conceit," said Bunter. "You're a bit swelled-headed about what you can do on the pitch, you know."

"What-a-at?"

"As a matter of absolute fact, you're not a patch on me when it comes to cricket, you know."

"My hat!"

"My play," said Bunter, "is what a chap can really call play. It brings the runs, you know. What's wanted is runs. Well, I'm the man for runs. Of course, as cricket captain, you can swank around opening the innings, if you like. But my opinion is that you ought to stand back and leave a better man to do it. For the sake of the team, you know. I'm coming, Snoopey!"

And Billy Bunter rolled out of the study after Snoop, leaving Harry Wharton absolutely speechless. Deep silence reigned in Study No. 1 as the Owl of the Remove departed. He had taken away the breath of the Famous Five.

Sidney James Snoop had a rather peculiar expression on his face as he led the way to his study.

He had been quite chummy with Wally Bunter, whose little secret he knew; it was his observation of Wally's sterling good qualities that had first surprised him, and then made him suspect the truth. Except in outward appearance, Wally was quite unlike his cousin Billy; but the fat junior who had been talking "out of his hat" in Study No. 1 seemed

to Snoop more like Billy than Wally. And he was puzzled.

Bunter gave him a fat wink as they entered No. 11. Skinner and Stott were downstairs, and they had the study to themselves.

"That's the way to talk to him!" remarked Bunter.

"Is it?" stammered Snoop.

"Yes, rather! Wharton wants taking down a peg or two at times. There's a little too much of His Majestic Magnificence about him, you know!"

"Oh!"

"Now, what is his play compared with mine?" said Bunter.

"Your play is good," said Snoop. "But, dash it all, it's not up to Wharton's, old fellow!"

"Fat lot you know about cricket," answered Bunter. "I could play Wharton's head off!"

"Hardly, I think," said Snoop, with a smile.

"Look here, I came here to tea, not to hear you display your ignorance of cricket!" said Bunter loftily. "What do you know about the game—you, a chap who mooches around making bets on gee-gees, and never touches a bat if he could help it?"

Snoop flushed.

"I've given all that up, Bunter," he said, in a low voice.

"Gammon!"

"Why, you know I have!" exclaimed Snoop sharply.

Bunter closed one eye.

"My dear man, keep that for those who aren't quite so fly as I am," he replied. "I know what it's worth."

"I don't understand you," said Snoop, after a pause. "It was you who helped me to get out of the rotten way I was in, Bunter. I thought you believed in me."

"He, he, he!"

"If you don't—" began Snoop, with a deep breath.

Bunter waved a fat hand.

"I'm fly!" he remarked. "My dear chap, you'd have to get up very early in the morning to pull the wool over my eyes! He, he, he!"

"You don't believe me, then?"

"He, he! No fear!"

Sidney James Snoop compressed his lips.

"You've done me some good turns, Bunter," he began, after a pause.

"Of course! I'm always doing fellows good turns," said Bunter, with a nod. "That's my sort. I don't think anybody could fairly deny that I'm the most generous fellow at Greyfriars."

"My hat!"

"Only, I'm wide," said Bunter, with a wink. "Very wide! You can't take me in, you know. No good spinning me yarns. He, he, he!"

"Let's have tea," said Snoop abruptly.

"Certainly; I'm quite ready."

There was a nice tea in Study No. 11, and Bunter did it full justice. Snoop's face was not very bright as he entertained his visitor. He was puzzled, and he was curiously troubled. Bunter was there, looking the same as ever—but it seemed to Snoop that he had lost his friend.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Remuneration Required!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. glanced rather curiously at Bunter when the Owl of the Remove came into the Common-room that evening.

Bunter had puzzled them a good deal of late; and now he puzzled them more than ever.

The remarkable improvement that had taken place in the fat junior was sur-

prising enough; but that he should have slipped back into his old self in a single day was still more surprising.

Billy Bunter was aware that he was the object of more than usual interest, and he found it rather entertaining.

He was rather pleased to be back at Greyfriars.

Cousin Wally had more than kept his place warm for him. He had lived down Bunter's reputation for him, and made him almost popular. Fellows were civil to Bunter, in fact, quite friendly; his remarks were listened to without derisive grins—which was a pleasant change from former days. How long it would take the Owl of the Remove to spoil the good effect Wally had produced was another matter.

Bunter, as he stretched his fat toes to the fire, wondered how cousin Wally was getting on at St. Jim's now. Grundy of the Shell had promised Bunter a licking that evening; and the Owl wondered cheerfully whether the unfortunate Wally was getting it. If he got it, he deserved it for his cheek, Billy Bunter reflected. Wally had not been so respectful as a poor relation ought to be to so great a person as William George Bunter.

Billy Bunter kept his ears open that evening. He was very curious about what had happened at Greyfriars during his absence.

He was considerably surprised to learn how cousin Wally had won golden opinions from all sorts of people. Why fellows should think so much of his poor relation, when they had thought so little of William George himself, was a puzzle to the fat junior. But evidently they did.

Billy Bunter learned, for the first time, how Wally had rescued Frank Nugent from the frozen river, and how he had played a great part in a football match at Highcliffe. The affair of fishing Nugent out of the river had naturally made some impression on the juniors, and it was not forgotten—least of all by Nugent himself. Some allusion to it caused Bunter to prick up his fat ears, and he listened with avidity. He found that he was supposed to be not only a great footballer and a good cricketer, but a hero into the bargain.

The bare idea made him swell with importance.

The fat Owl had no scruple whatever about bagging another fellow's credit; and perhaps, as Wally had been using his name, he felt that he was entitled to bask in all the glory reaped under that name.

Later in the evening, when Wharton and Nugent went to their study to bake chestnuts, Billy Bunter followed them. He had not ventured to ask open questions as to the affair of the river, for fear of giving himself away; but he had a more or less clear idea of what had happened, and it was his idea to turn it to account.

"I say, you fellows—" he began, as he blinked into the study.

"Come in, fatty," said Nugent.

"Thanks, I will."

"Any more valuable opinions to hand out on the subject of cricket?" asked the captain of the Remove sarcastically.

"I could tell you a thumping lot you don't know, if you come to that!" answered Bunter. "But you'll see what real cricket's like when I play Redclyffe tomorrow."

"I hope so. If I hadn't seen you at practice I should have some jolly strong doubts, from the way you talk," said Harry. "Well, what are you giggling at? Have I said anything funny in that?"

"Oh, no—nunno! Of—of course, you've seen me at practice lots of times," grinned Bunter. "Naturally. But I didn't come here to talk about cricket."

"There's the chestnuts. Help yourself."

"Well, I will, as you're so pressing!" said Bunter. "But I didn't come here for chestnuts. The fact is, my postal-order hasn't come."

"The one you were expecting last term?"

"Oh, roally, Wharton—"

"Or the one you were expecting when we were both fags in the 'Third?'" chuckled Frank Nugent.

Billy Bunter gave Nugent a lofty blink.

"I'm surprised at you, Nugent!" he said.

"Go hon!"

"Considering all I've done for you, I think you might be a bit more civil. I don't expect gratitude, but—"

Frank Nugent stared at him.

"What do you mean, tubby?" he asked.

"I dare say you've forgotten how I plunged into the river and brought you out at the risk of my life."

"Eh?"

"I don't want to brag," said Bunter. "That's not my nature. But it was heroic. I can't say less than that. It isn't every fellow who'd have done it, I can tell you."

"Well, my hat!" stuttered Nugent.

Harry Wharton fixed his eyes on the Owl of the Remove. He was more astonished than words could express.

On the occasion when Wally Bunter had rescued Nugent the Removites had expected the fat junior to "spread" himself, but he hadn't done it. That wasn't Wally's way. In fact, the praise he had received had seemed rather to irritate him than otherwise, and he had shown a keen desire to hear the last of the affair. And now—after a lapse of weeks—here was Bunter bragging or what he had done in the most unpleasant way! It was the old Billy Bunter, with a vengeance.

Bunter did not seem to understand the strained silence in the study. He helped himself to chestnuts, and rattled on, with his mouth full.

"Where would you be now, Nugent, but for my bravery?"

"At the bottom of the river, very likely," said Frank Nugent quietly.

Billy Bunter nodded.

"That's it! Mind, I'm not bragging of what I did. Anything of that kind comes naturally to a fellow who's as brave as a lion. But there it is. I did it, and you ought to be grateful."

"I hope I am," said Frank, still more quietly.

"Well, I hope so," assented Bunter. "You certainly ought to be. What are you scowling at me for, Wharton?"

"I did not mean to scowl," said Harry mildly. "I think I ought to speak seriously to you, Bunter. For some weeks now you've surprised us all by being a really decent chap. We've got used to it, and most of the fellows have come to like you, and respect you, too. Some queer change seems to have come over you to-day, and you've suddenly become as mean and unpleasant as you ever were in the old days. I can't understand it."

"What rot!"

"If it's a joke of yours, you'd better chuck it. It's not funny, and it's not pleasant," said Wharton. "But if it's only that you're fed up with being decent, I suggest to you to keep it up till you like it. You did a splendid thing when you went into the water for Nugent, and you didn't spoil it by bragging. Now you've started all of a sudden. What's come over you?"

"I'm not surprised that you're jealous of me, Wharton—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 585.

"What?" roared Wharton.
 "You don't like me getting the lime-light. I understand perfectly. But it's mean, and you should keep that kind of meanness in check!"

"Why, you—you—"
 "I'm speaking to you candidly, as a friend, you know," said Bunter, blinking at him. "But to come back to business. My postal-order hasn't come, and I'm rather short of money. I was going to ask Nugent to lend me a pound."

"I haven't a pound," said Frank.
 "Well, make it ten bob," said Bunter carelessly.

Frank Nugent looked at him oddly as he felt in his pockets. If Bunter was asking for his pocket-money, because he had pulled him out of the river, Bunter could have it—and a deep scorn along with it, which was not likely to trouble him much, however.

Nugent found nine-and-six in various coins in his pockets, and handed that sum over to Billy Bunter without a word.

Bunter's eyes glistened behind his big glasses as he received it. Wally's stay at Greyfriars was turning out an unexpectedly paying proposition for William George.

"Thanks!" he said carelessly. "Will you have this back out of my postal-order in the morning?"

"It doesn't matter."
 "Well, let it stand over till next week, then, shall we?" said Bunter.

"Oh, yes!"
 "Right-ho!"

And the chestnuts being all gone, Billy Bunter rolled out of the study the richer by nine shillings and sixpence.

Wharton and Nugent looked at one another.

"Well!" said Frank, with a deep breath.

"Well!" said Harry.
 And they said no more. There was nothing they could say that was equal to the occasion.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Wally's Warning!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's powerful voice was heard in the Remove passage.

"Wharton! Where are you, Wharton?"
 "Here!"

"You're wanted!"
 Bob Cherry looked into Study No. 1.

"Quelchy wants you," he said. "I believe it's a telephone call. Quelchy looked a bit of a gorgon!"

"A telephone call!" repeated Wharton. "I can't be wanted on the telephone. My uncle wouldn't ring me up this time of the evening, anyway. Besides, he's not home yet from Cologne."

"May have turned up unexpectedly," said Bob. "Quelchy's telephone was buzzing. Anyway, he wants you in a hurry. Cut, my son!"

Harry-Wharton hurried downstairs in a state of surprise. He found Mr. Quelch at his study door, with a severe expression on his face.

"Wharton, were you expecting a telephone-call on my instrument?" he asked.

Wharton was glad to be able to reply in the negative. The Remove-master's expression did not indicate that he was keen to lend his telephone to fellows in his Form.

"No, sir!"
 "Well, you have been asked for, from Wayland."

"Wayland!" repeated Wharton in astonishment. "That's the town near St. Jim's. It's a trunk call from there."

"Yes, and for that reason I have told the person that I will call you. It is a

St. Jim's boy who desires to speak to you."

"Oh! Thank you sir!"
 "This is a very extraordinary proceeding, Wharton, and although you may take this call, you must tell the person that such a thing must not occur again."
 "Oh, certainly, sir!"
 Mr. Quelch stepped out of the study, and Wharton went to the telephone. He was quite as surprised as the Form-master. It was incredible that Tom Merry or D'Arcy should have rung him up on the Form-master's telephone without asking permission, but he could not imagine who else it could be. He sat down to the instrument and took up the receiver.
 "Hallo!"
 "Hallo! Is that Wharton?"
 "Yes. Who's speaking?"
 "Wally Bunter!"
 "My only hat!" ejaculated Wharton.
 "Surprised you—what?"
 "Well, rather!"
 Wharton was more than surprised. He believed that he had not seen Wally Bunter since the latter had visited Billy at Greyfriars. This sudden and unexpected communication astonished him.
 "I'm sorry," went on the fat voice on the telephone. "I'm afraid Mr. Quelch was rather waxy. But I told him it was important. I hope he won't rag you."
 "That's all right; only it mustn't happen again."
 "I understand."
 "But what—"
 "It's really important, Wharton. I

couldn't let you go on without a warning. I can't tell you the whole story, because it's a promise. I can't let it out. But I can't let you go ahead without giving you a tip. It's about your cricket match to-morrow."

"We're playing Redclyffe to-morrow," said Harry, utterly mystified.

"Yes, that's it."
 "I didn't know you were so well posted about our fixtures."

There was a chuckle on the telephone, which mystified the captain of the Remove still more. Wally Bunter's voice went on again.

"You're playing my cousin in your team?"
 "Yes."

"Well, don't!"
 "Eh?"

"That's the tip I want to give you. Don't play Billy Bunter against Redclyffe, or he will let you down."

"My hat!"
 "He can't play cricket, you know."

"Oh!" said Harry, thinking he understood at last. "Billy met you in Friardale to-day, and I suppose he told you about the Redclyffe match, and that he was down to play? No wonder you're surprised. But Billy has improved wonderfully since you were here that time, Wally."

"Ha, ha!"
 "Eh? Are you laughing? What do you mean?"

"N-n-nothing! But Billy hasn't improved—he's a bigger duffer than ever."

"Not at all," answered Harry. "I know it must surprise you, Wally, considering what a duffer he always was at games; but it's the fact. He helped us win a footer match soon after your visit here. Now he's turning out wonderfully well at cricket."

"He's not. You see—ahem!—I can't very well explain, but he's as big a duffer at cricket as he ever was."

"My dear chap," said Wharton, a little impatiently, "you haven't seen him for nearly a term, and you don't know. I've seen him every day."

"You haven't—I—I mean—"
 "But I have," said Harry. "He's in my Form, you know. I know a chap's form at cricket, and Billy is as good as I've got in the Eleven. He bowls very nearly as well as Inky, and bats as well as Squiff. He's a good man in the field, too—quite good all round. You'll be surprised when you see him again. I know it's odd, but it's a fact."

"It isn't! You see—"
 "Well?"

"I—I can't tell you the facts, because I promised Billy that the whole thing should be kept dark. But you simply mustn't play him!"

"I must, you know. His name's in the list on the board."

"He will let you down in the match."
 "Bosh!" said Harry, a little nettled.

Wally Bunter's remarks seemed a rather strong reflection upon his capacity as cricket captain. Wharton knew a good man when he saw one. And he was quite satisfied with what he had seen of Bunter at cricket practice. That it was another Bunter he was not aware, and Wally could not tell him.

"Wharton, old man, I wish you'd take my tip," went on Wally's voice earnestly. "I could prove what I say, only I'm bound by a promise. I suppose Billy hasn't told you anything?"

"What had he to tell me?"
 "H'm! Does he intend to play in the match to-morrow?"

"Yes."
 "I mean, has he said so since he saw me in Friardale this afternoon?"

"Yes."
 "The fat rotter!"

"Look here, Wally, I don't see what

Read
**"BUNTER—
 AND BUNTER!"**
 A Wonderful Complete
 Story of the arrival of
 Wally Bunter at St. Jim's,
 By MARTIN CLIFFORD,
 In
"THE GEM."
 Out This Wednesday.

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"Oh!" said Harry, thinking he understood at last. "Billy met you in Friardale to-day, and I suppose he told you about the Redclyffe match, and that he was down to play? No wonder you're surprised. But Billy has improved wonderfully since you were here that time, Wally."

"Ha, ha!"

"Eh? Are you laughing? What do you mean?"

"N-n-nothing! But Billy hasn't improved—he's a bigger duffer than ever."

"Not at all," answered Harry. "I know it must surprise you, Wally, considering what a duffer he always was at games; but it's the fact. He helped us win a footer match soon after your visit here. Now he's turning out wonderfully well at cricket."

"He's not. You see—ahem!—I can't very well explain, but he's as big a duffer at cricket as he ever was."

"My dear chap," said Wharton, a little impatiently, "you haven't seen him for nearly a term, and you don't know. I've seen him every day."

"You haven't—I—I mean—"

"But I have," said Harry. "He's in my Form, you know. I know a chap's form at cricket, and Billy is as good as I've got in the Eleven. He bowls very nearly as well as Inky, and bats as well as Squiff. He's a good man in the field, too—quite good all round. You'll be surprised when you see him again. I know it's odd, but it's a fact."

"It isn't! You see—"

"Well?"

"I—I can't tell you the facts, because I promised Billy that the whole thing should be kept dark. But you simply mustn't play him!"

"I must, you know. His name's in the list on the board."

"He will let you down in the match."
 "Bosh!" said Harry, a little nettled.

Wally Bunter's remarks seemed a rather strong reflection upon his capacity as cricket captain. Wharton knew a good man when he saw one. And he was quite satisfied with what he had seen of Bunter at cricket practice. That it was another Bunter he was not aware, and Wally could not tell him.

"Wharton, old man, I wish you'd take my tip," went on Wally's voice earnestly. "I could prove what I say, only I'm bound by a promise. I suppose Billy hasn't told you anything?"

"What had he to tell me?"

"H'm! Does he intend to play in the match to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"I mean, has he said so since he saw me in Friardale this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"The fat rotter!"

"Look here, Wally, I don't see what

you're driving at. I suppose you mean this good-naturedly, but you're quite off-side. Billy Bunter has turned out a good man at games, and we're making use of him."

"It may cost you the match if you do. I wish I could spin you the whole yarn, but it's a promise, as I said. But for your own sake, Wharton, don't play Billy Bunter in the Redclyffe match to-morrow. You'll be sorry if you do."

"It's all right," said Harry. "I wish you could come over and see the match."

"I wish I could come over; but Mr. Penman is coming down to-morrow. If I could come over I'd keep the fat rascal from spoofing you, somehow."

"What the—"

"Don't play him—take my tip, and don't! You—"

There was sudden silence.

Wharton listened, and spoke again. But he was out off.

He put the receiver back on the hooks, and rose from the stool.

In great amazement he quitted Mr. Quelch's study. His chums met him at the corner of the passage, naturally curious to know what it was all about. They fairly blinked when Wharton explained.

"Is the fellow potty?" said Johnny Bull. "He must have gone out of bounds to go to Wayland, and get a trunk call from there. And all to tell you not to play his cousin in a cricket match to-morrow."

"Blessed if I understand it," said Harry, in perplexity. "I suppose Billy told him about it to-day; and from what he remembers of Billy. I suppose it seemed to him that I must be cracked to put the Owl into a good match. But—but really, it's not very complimentary to me. He oughtn't to conclude that I don't know a fellow's form at cricket."

"He means well," said Nugent.

"I've no doubt he does; but"—Wharton reddened a little—"he seems to take me for a silly ass, and it's a check! All that trouble and bother to tell me not to play a man I've selected on his merits. I must say, it's check!"

"It won't make any difference?"

"Of course not," said Harry. "Fancy the idea of shifting a man out of the Eleven because a fellow who hasn't seen him for months rings me up and tells me he's no good—when I know he is. I really think Wally Bunter must be going off his rocker!"

Wally's well-meant warning had been futile, as he probably feared it would be. He had done his best; but Billy Bunter was booked to play for the Remove on the morrow. When he had done so, there was no doubt that Wharton would wish that he had paid heed to Wally's warning.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Nice Boy!

BILLY BUNTER turned up in the Remove Form-room the following morning, as usual—or, rather, as had been usual for Wally for the past few weeks. He was looking quite jaunty and smiling. Fortune was favouring the Owl of the Remove. He was booked to play in the first match of the season that afternoon; not one of the important fixtures, certainly, but a good match, and that was a distinction. Not for one moment did Bunter think of giving up the place that had been awarded to Wally. In the depths of his ineffable conceit he firmly believed himself to be a better cricketer than Wally Bunter, or, indeed, than any fellow in the Remove. Hitherto he had been kept in the background by jealousy of his great powers. Now he was going to have a

chance to show all Greyfriars what he could do.

That was how Billy Bunter looked at it. That was his point of view, and he was quite satisfied with it.

He had other sources of satisfaction. At St. Jim's he had looked upon D'Arcy of the Fourth as a sort of horn of plenty; but the cornucopia had dried up at last. Frank Nugent was destined to take its place. Having saved Nugent's life—or, at least, being supposed to have saved it—Bunter felt that he was entitled to look upon Nugent as a gold-mine, which was to pay continual dividends, as it were. There was, so Bunter argued, such a thing as gratitude, and Nugent could hardly refuse a small loan now and then to the fellow who had saved his life.

The unfortunate Nugent's pocket-money was ear-marked in advance for whole terms, in Bunter's fat mind. Unless the victim discovered that he was being imposed upon, how could he refuse Bunter's requests, or demands? Doubtless he would be driven to resistance in the long run; but Bunter never

in dealing with the old, original Bunter.

Bunter was worried, too.

Quelch seemed to expect him to know a lot of things he did not know, and to expect him to remember all kinds of things he never did remember, and had no intention of trying to remember.

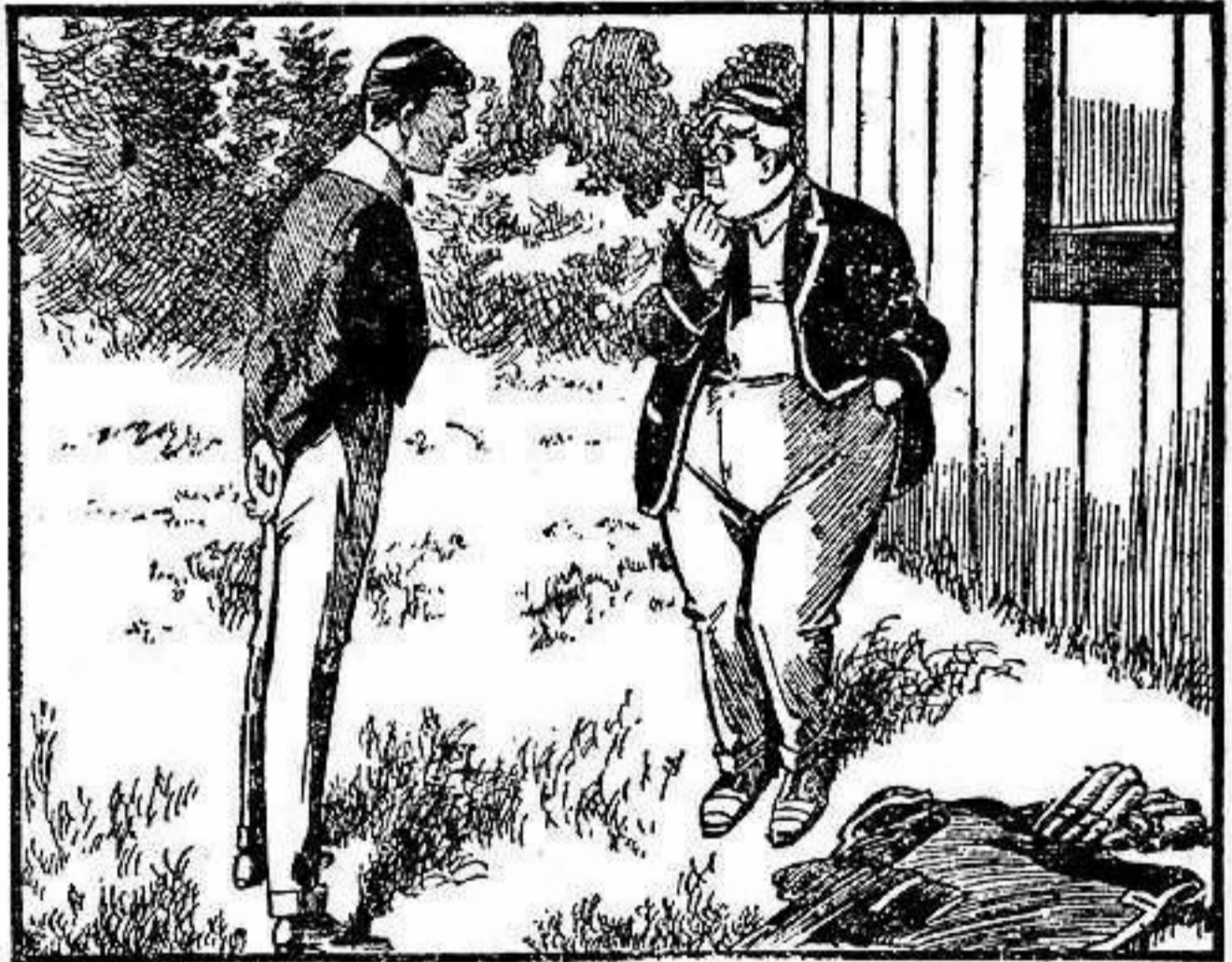
Bunter did not believe in work, in class or out. So long as he scraped through without a licking he was content.

As dunce of the class he had been treated with a certain leniency; but since Wally had shown what he could do, more was naturally expected of him.

When Lord Mauleverer blundered in his construe, Bunter was told to take the book and show him how to do better; and the exhibition Bunter gave of his knowledge made the Removites open their eyes.

Lord Mauleverer did not benefit much by Bunter's assistance.

Towards the end of morning lessons Mr. Quelch called to Bunter. His brow



"You're Billy Bunter!" said Snoop. "You changed back with your cousin yesterday. That's clear enough now!" Bunter jumped. (See Chapter 11.)

thought of the long run. The present was enough for him. And he meant to be very careful not to let Nugent, or anyone else, discover the real facts.

Wally had promised, and Wally's promise was sacred. Billy had also promised, for that matter, and his promise was not exactly sacred; but it was to his interest to keep it.

Altogether, Billy Bunter felt that he had reason to be satisfied with himself and things in general, and he was glad that he had bolted from St. Jim's, and turned up at his old school.

But the fat smile faded from his face during the morning.

He found Mr. Quelch even more of a Tartar than he remembered him of old.

Wally had been a credit to the Remove; he had worked industriously in the Form-room and the study, and he had fifth place in the class, only Wharton, Mark Linley, Vernon-Smith, and Tom Redwing being above him. The Remove-master had learned to expect attention, industry, and keenness from Bunter. And that morning he was perplexed, puzzled, and, finally, very angry

were knitted, and his eyes looked like gimlets.

"Bunter," he said, in a voice that made the fat junior quake, "for a considerable time past you have been one of my best pupils."

"Yes, sir," stammered Bunter. "I—I hope so, sir."

"I have considered you a clever boy, Bunter."

"Ye-es, sir. I—I'm considered rather clever at home. My sister Bessie thinks me an awfully clever chap."

"This morning, Bunter, you have displayed nothing but stupidity."

"Oh, sir!"

"As you have proved of late that you are not so stupid as I once supposed. I cannot believe that it is genuine stupidity you have displayed this morning."

"Oh!"

"And I warn you, Bunter, not to try my patience any further. I can make allowances for stupidity, but not for deliberate idleness and carelessness. Take warning, Bunter!"

"Oh, sir! Yes, sir! Certainly, sir!" stammered Bunter.

And the Owl of the Remove sat in dismay after Mr. Quelch's warning. If he had to live up to cousin Wally's scholarly reputation his return to Greyfriars was not likely to be all happiness.

He escaped the cane that morning; but it was very probable that he would not escape it the next day. Perhaps fortunately, Bunter took very short views; and the possible happenings of the next day did not worry him, once he was out of the Form-room.

Bob Cherry tapped him on the shoulder in the passage.

"What's the game, Fatty?" he asked.

"Game?" repeated Bunter.

"Yes. What were you playing the goat for in the Form-room? Quelch is rather a tough customer to joke with."

"I wasn't joking with the old donkey!" growled Bunter.

"Do you mean to say that you're as big an idiot as you made out in class?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You got Quelch's rag out, Bunter," said Sidney James Snoop, looking very curiously at the Owl. "He knew you were spoofing."

"I wasn't spoofing!" howled Bunter.

"You could construe better than that if you liked."

"Oh, I could do a lot of things if I liked!" said Bunter loftily. "I don't choose to waste my valuable time grinding Latin. What's the good of it? I'm going to be a stockbroker when I grow up, and a stockbroker doesn't have any Latin customers."

"His customers ain't Latin!" remarked Vernon-Smith. "They're sometimes let in! And you'll be equal to that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is, I think this classical stuff is all rot!" said Billy Bunter. "I didn't come to Greyfriars to work like a nigger in a plantation. Besides, I'm going to give a lot of time to games this season, and I simply sha'n't be able to mug up classics. Rot, anyway! Talk about Virgil! I could write a better shipwreck scene than the one Quelch is always harping on. As for Cæsar, it's rot—sheer rot! I jolly well wish the Gauls had done him in before he wrote his dashed piffle about them!"

And, having aired those valuable opinions, Billy Bunter rolled away, quite satisfied with himself. He caught Frank Nugent as the latter was going out into the quad.

"I say, Franky—"

Nugent quickened his pace, but slackened down again.

"Well?" he said.

"My postal-order hasn't come."

"You don't say so!" answered Frank sarcastically.

"But I do, old chap! And, you see, it leaves me rather in a hole. Can you lend me half-a-crown?"

Nugent did not speak.

"Dumb?" asked Bunter.

"You cleared me out yesterday, Bunter," said Frank Nugent at last. "I'm stony till the end of the week."

"I could do with two bob."

"I haven't two bob."

"Can't you borrow it off Wharton?"

"Eh?"

"Wharton would lend it to you, old chap!"

"If you want Wharton's money, you'd better ask him for it!" said Frank Nugent curtly.

"I don't think he'd make me a loan; anyway, I don't choose to ask him," said Bunter loftily. "I'm not the fellow to ask favours of anybody, I hope! If you

don't choose to lend me money after I've saved your life—"

"I—I'll speak to Wharton."

"Go ahead, old fellow!" said Bunter encouragingly.

Frank Nugent joined his chum in the quad, and came back in a couple of minutes. He placed two shillings in Bunter's fat hand without speaking.

"Couldn't make it half-a-crown?" growled Bunter.

Nugent walked away without replying.

Billy Bunter looked at the two shillings in his fat hand, and looked after Nugent, and then at the two shillings again. Then he ejaculated:

"Beast!"

And, having thus expressed his sense of obligation, Billy Bunter rolled away to the tuckshop, where the two shillings speedily disappeared into Mrs. Nimble's till.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Redclyffe Match!

"WHERE'S Bunter?"

Harry Wharton was asking that question some time after dinner. The Remove fellows were beginning to gather on Little Side, and Billy Bunter was wanted.

"Anybody seen Bunter?"

"Look in the tuckshop!" grinned Hazeldene.

Wharton laughed, and went into Mrs. Mimble's little shop. It was not very long since dinner, but Bunter apparently had an aching void, which led him to the good lady's establishment. He was arguing with Mrs. Mimble over the counter.

"It's simply a question of waiting till this evening, Mrs. Mimble, till my postal-order comes!" the fat junior was explaining, when Wharton entered and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Ow!" howled Bunter, spinning round.

"You beast, Bolsover—"

"You fat duffer!" answered Wharton.

"Oh, it's you, Harry, old chap!"

"Anything wrong with your blinkers?" demanded Wharton in surprise. "I thought you'd got over your short sight."

"What rot!"

"You seemed to, for the last few weeks."

"The fact is, I—I was joking!" stammered Bunter. "I knew it was you all the time! He, he, he! One of my little jokes!"

"I don't see the joke."

"You wouldn't; you haven't much brains, you know, Wharton! I say, can you lend me a couple of bob?"

"No!" said Wharton curtly.

"I must have a snack before we play Redclyffe!" said Bunter. "Otherwise I shall have to ask you to scratch my name!"

"All right!" said Wharton cheerfully.

"Smithy's been bothering me no end to give his pal Redwing a chance, and he's a good man. You mean it?"

"Eh? Nunno!" said Bunter hurriedly. "Not at all! Only a—a—a joke."

"You seem to be full of jokes this afternoon, Bunter!"

"But the fact is, old chap, I simply must have a snack," said Bunter, blinking at the captain of the Remove.

"Quelch wouldn't let me have more than three helpings at dinner. Anybody would think it was still war-time, the way that old beak watches a chap eat. And I've had nothing since but a jam-tart and a slice of cake and a few apples. I'm going to play a tremendous game this afternoon; and I must have a few tarts to keep my strength up."

"Tarts won't do you any good just before a match."

"The very thing, my dear chap. You

have some, too," said Bunter generously.

"I'll stand them. Lend me two bob—say three—"

"I can stand myself tarts if I want them. No good lending you the money to stand them."

"I should square out of my postal-order, of course. That's understood," said Bunter, with dignity. "I think it's rather ungrateful of you to refuse me a small loan."

"Ungrateful!" repeated Wharton.

"Certainly. Considering that I have risked my life to save your pal from being run over by a motor-car—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, to save him from being drowned in a runaway river—that is to say, in a river—you might squeeze out half-a-crown."

"You're squeezing enough out of Nugent on the strength of that," said Wharton drily. "Come on Bunter; you're wanted on Little Side."

"I can't come till I've had a snack."

"Stay here, then," said Wharton gruffly. "I'll give your place to Tom Redwing. Blessed if I don't think I'd better, anyway!"

"Hold on! I'm coming!"

Bunter hurried out of the tuckshop after the captain of the Remove. He did not mean to lose his place in the Remove Eleven that afternoon if he could help it.

Wharton was growing very restive.

Somehow—he hardly knew how—his faith in Bunter as a cricketer was declining. He was resolved not to attach any importance to Wally Bunter's mysterious warning of the previous evening; but perhaps it lingered in his mind, all the same. Bunter seemed to have fallen back all of a sudden into his old manners and customs, which coincided strangely with Wally's warning.

Yet it seemed absurd to suppose that the fat junior could possibly have lost the skill he had seemed to acquire on the cricket-field. However like he was now to his old self, he could hardly have lapsed into his former obtuse clumsiness at games.

Still, Wharton was less satisfied than before with his selection of Bunter as a member of the Eleven, and he would not have been sorry if the fat junior had resigned his place in the team. That, however, was not at all likely to happen.

Billy Bunter rolled off to change for the match, and he reappeared on Little Side looking as if he were just about to burst out of his flannels. He came on the field with an important strut, his bat tucked under one fat arm.

"I say, you fellows, when are Redclyffe coming?" he inquired.

"Any minute," answered Wharton.

"Like their check to keep me waiting!"

"You!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Yes, me!" answered the Owl of the Remove loftily.

"Are you captain and team all rolled into one, by any chance?" inquired Bob. "Or are you a fat, conceited duffer?"

"I'm sorry to see this jealousy in you as well as Wharton, Cherry. That's a great drawback in cricket," remarked Bunter sagely. "It leads to such a lot of jealousy."

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

"Dear old Bunter!" said Peter Todd affectionately. "We thought he had changed; as if a leopard could change his spots, and a giddy Ethiopian his skin! It's the dear old Bunter we always knew."

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Here come Redclyffe," said Vernon-Smith.

Fano of Redclyffe and his merry men had arrived. Some of them glanced

rather curiously at Bunter, finding that ample youth in the Remove Eleven. Bunter ran Harry Wharton down after he had tossed for innings with the Redclyffe skipper.

"We bat first?" asked Bunter.

"Yes."

"It's a single innings match?" pursued the Owl of the Remove.

"You know it is—or you ought to know."

"Then a lot depends on the opening. Now, I'm going to speak to you quite plainly, Wharton—"

"You needn't trouble."

"I feel it's my duty to state my opinion," said Bunter firmly, "as a prominent member of the team—"

"Cut it short!"

"I think I ought to open the innings. You can take the bowler's end, if you like; I don't mind. But—I wish you wouldn't walk away while I'm talking to you, Wharton!" roared Bunter.

But Wharton did walk away.

The captain of the Remove opened the innings, with Vernon-Smith at the other end. Billy Bunter expressed his feelings with a loud snort.

"Conceited ass!" he remarked to the fellow standing near him, who happened to be Frank Nugent.

"Oh, shut up!" was Frank's answer.

Bunter turned to Bolsover major for sympathy. Bolsover was looking on, giving laborious explanations of the game to the French junior, Dupont, which was rather good-natured of Bolsover.

"Just like Wharton to shove in like this, isn't it?" said Bunter. "You won't catch him putting his best man on to begin—no fear!"

Bolsover major stared at him.

"You silly chump!" he answered.

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Dry up!"

And Billy Bunter sniffed, and dried up at last.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter in All His Glory!

"MAN in!"
"Bunter!"
"Where's that fat bounder?"
The Remove were five down for fifty when Bunter's name was called. But the Owl of the Remove was not to be seen.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows. "You go in next, Frank," he said. "And some of you cut off to the tuck-shop and roll that fat rotter here. Yank him along by the ears if necessary."

Nugent went to the wickets, and a few minutes later Billy Bunter reappeared on the field, escorted by Bob Cherry and Squiff, who had a grip on his fat arms. There was a smear of jam on the Owl's fat face, which looked as if he had raised a loan somewhere on the cricket-field.

"Why can't you stay where you're wanted, you duffer?" exclaimed Wharton.

"I might have guessed you'd soon be out," assented Bunter. "How many runs did you make—two, or three?"

"You're to go in next."

"Oh, I'm ready! The others won't be wanted."

"Oh, won't they?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"I shall knock up all the runs we need. I suppose we're going to give Redclyffe a look-in before dark. I advise Wharton to declare at a hundred."

"We haven't got the hundred yet, ass!"

"That's all right, when I get to work."

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" remarked Squiff.

"I don't think much of their bowling," said Bunter, blinking at the field. "Their fielding's rather poor, too. Look at that! Nugent's got a two. I should have caught him out if I'd been at short-slip."

"Short-slip never had an earthly, you duffer."

"I should have done it."

"Fathead!" was Squiff's reply to that.

Sidney James Snoop was among the onlookers near the pavilion, and he was listening to Bunter's remarks with a very odd expression on his face. What had come over Wally Bunter was a mystery to Snoop, and a strange and curious suspicion was beginning to take root in his mind. He, and only he, had known that Wally had taken Billy Bunter's place at Greyfriars, and he had come to know Wally better than the other fellows. And the startling thought came into his mind, as he listened to Bunter, that the cousins had, without his knowledge, changed back.

That really seemed the only way of accounting for Bunter's present manners and customs; but it was such a startling thought that Snoop dismissed it from his mind at first.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There goes Franky!"

Nugent was out for four runs.

"Man in, Bunter!"

"Oh, I'm ready! Where's my bat?"

"There it is, under your silly nose, Owl!"

"If Fane knows anything, he'll tell 'em to field deep," said Bunter, as he started. "They'll need to. You fellows can look out for some hard hitting. I'm going to surprise you!"

And Bunter rolled out to the wicket.

All eyes were upon him as he stood up to receive the rest of the over from Fane of Redclyffe.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows as he watched. Bunter had adopted an exaggerated straddle, which was not much like Wally's style. More than ever the fat junior seemed his old, clumsy, inept self.

Fane grinned along the pitch. He did not think it would take him long to get this batsman out.

He was right.

The ball came along, and Billy Bunter swiped at it—a mighty swipe. If the willow had met the leather the ball would probably have travelled somewhere. But it didn't! It missed by about a yard. The ball knocked out the middle stump, and the bat, meeting with no resistance, swept round, and Billy Bunter swept round after it. The fat junior spun a nearly complete circle, tangled his fat little legs, and sat down.

"Yow! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter all round the field. Harry Wharton did not laugh. His face was a study.

"Bravo, Bunter! Do that again!" howled Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Zat is somezing I have not seen before!" exclaimed Dupont. "Zat is some more cricket I have yet to learn. What you call him, Bolsover?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How's that?" Fane was shrieking.

"Out!" gasped the umpire, almost overcome.

"Yaroooh!"

"You're out, Bunter!"

"Yow-ow! Where's my specs? Oh, my hat! I fell over something!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter scrambled up, set his glasses straight on his fat little nose, and blinked round at a howling field.

"I say, you fellows, I'm not out—"

"Out!"

"But I say—"

"Come off, you fat idiot!" roared Bob Cherry. "Prod him with your bat, Marky, and get a move on him!"

Mark Linley was coming out to the wicket. Billy Bunter, with a snort of indignation, rolled back to the pavilion.

"What price ducks' eggs?" howled Sammy Bunter, of the Second from the crowd.

"Cheap to-day!" grinned Squiff.

"The cheapfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton clapped Bunter on the shoulder.

"What do you mean by it?" he demanded.

"What do you mean?" snorted

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Bunter. "I'm not out! The umpire's a silly ass! You're another!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I fell over something——"

"Your own silly hoofs, you ass!" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Sidney James Snoop. "That's not Wally! I knew it!"

"Wally?" repeated Bob Cherry, looking at him. "What do you mean, Snoop? Who supposed it was Wally?"

"I did! I—I mean——" stammered Snoop.

"Bravo, Murky! Well hit!"

Mark Linley was doing well at the wickets. The attention of the juniors was turned to the game again, and Bunter was left to puff and pant unheeded.

Greyfriars were all down at last for seventy-five—the hundred promised by W. G. Bunter had not materialised. The duck's egg scored by the Owl of the Remove was rather serious for his side. Wharton had looked for at least twenty from him. He was puzzled and exasperated. Any batsman might have had bad luck—but Bunter's was not bad luck—it was sheer incompetence. It was plain to everyone on the field—excepting Bunter—that he could not play cricket, and it was hard to understand.

Snoop understood, however.

He had no further doubts. The two Bunters had changed back during that meeting at Friardale the previous day. That explained everything. Sidney James was sure of it at last.

He debated in his mind whether to explain to Wharton before the Redclyffe innings began. He had undertaken to keep Wally's secret; but now that Wally Bunter had gone from Greyfriars—as he evidently was—Snoop did not see any reason why the secret should be kept. It was too late to keep Bunter from losing a wicket for his side; but the obtuse Owl might be prevented from doing any further damage.

He decided to speak to Bunter first. He cornered the Owl of the Remove near the pavilion.

"I've found you out, you fat spoofer!" he said in a low voice.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh, what?" he exclaimed peevishly.

"You're not Wally!" said Snoop.

Bunter stared. As he was not aware that Snoop knew Wally's secret, the remark naturally astonished him.

"Potty?" he asked. "Who said I was Wally?"

"You're Billy Bunter!" said Snoop. "You changed back with your cousin yesterday. That's clear enough now!"

Bunter jumped.

"D-d-did you know?" he stammered. "Did that silly ass Wally tell you? Oh, my hat!"

"You ought to have resigned the place in the team!" exclaimed Snoop. "It was given to Wally, not to you!"

"Oh really, Snoop——"

"If I'd known earlier I'd have told Wharton, in time to save that wicket," said Sidney James. "Wally oughtn't to have left Wharton in the lurch like this, with a silly idiot to play for him!"

"Look here——"

"He ought to have given Wharton the tip, somehow——"

"He couldn't!" grinned Bunter. "We promised each other to keep it dark, you see. How did you find it out? I don't believe Wally told you!"

"I found it out, and he had to own up! But I was going to keep it dark. Now he's gone it doesn't matter. I shall speak to Wharton."

"I—I say, don't do anything of the kind!" exclaimed Bunter in alarm. "Why, he will very likely rush me out of the team. And I'm going to bowl

for the Remove, you know, and take no end of wickets!"

"You silly chump!"

"If I'm dropped out it means losing the match for Greyfriars!" said Billy Bunter impressively. "Mind that!"

"Ass!" answered Snoop.

He turned away. Bunter's statement that he was to bowl for the Remove finally decided him. Wally had proved a first-class bowler, and, in spite of Bunter's exhibition at the wicket, he was certain to be given a chance with the ball. And that meant runs for Redclyffe—even one, over, from Bunter, might be worth a dozen runs to them. Snoop felt that it was his duty to stop that.

It was not so easy to explain to Wharton, however. He was talking with Fane, before the visitors' innings started, and Snoop could not broach the matter in the presence of the Redclyffe fellows. It was not till the Remove players were going into the field that Sidney James had a chance to speak.

He caught Wharton by the arm and stopped him, and Harry looked at him with impatient inquiry.

"What do you want, Snoop? Let go!"

"You're playing Bunter——"

"Do let me go!"

"Don't let him bowl!"

"What do you mean? He can't bat to-day, somehow, but he's a good bowler," said Harry. "Let go my arm, Snoop! I've got to go."

"He's not Wally—I mean—it's Billy Bunter!" stammered Snoop. "It was Wally you picked for the team—and now——"

Wharton stared at him.

"I don't understand you, Snoop," he said tartly. "Let go, I tell you!"

"But I tell you——"

Wharton jerked his arm away, and went into the field. He had not made head or tail of what Snoop was trying to say, and he really wondered for a moment whether Sidney James was quite right in his senses. Only for a moment, however; the next he had forgotten Snoop's existence.

Snoop shrugged his shoulders as he fell back into the crowd. He had done his best, but it had come to nothing. Billy Bunter was destined to exhibit to an astonished world his wonderful powers as a bowler.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh took the first over, and Squiff relieved him. Billy Bunter blinked with indignant inquiry at his skipper. While the field crossed after an over, he found an opportunity of speaking to Wharton.

"Has Snoop been spinning you a yarn?" he demanded.

"Eh, what? He said something—some rot. What about it?"

"It's all rot!" said Bunter. "Don't you believe him! Wally's been at St. Jim's all the time, you know!"

"Eh?"

"As for me," said Bunter impressively. "I haven't been a mile from Greyfriars."

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"Snoop was simply talking out of his hat. Now, what I want to know is, why don't you put me on to bowl?"

"Next, after Inky's been on again," said Harry.

"Oh, all right!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's next over cost Redclyffe a wicket. Fane was at the batting end when Bunter was put on to bowl.

The first ball made the Greyfriars fellows stare, and the Redcliffians smile. It was such a ball as a clumsy fag in the Second Form might have sent down

to another fag. Fane grinned as he knocked it away for two.

The next ball gave him four, and the next another four. The Redcliffians grinned at one another.

Harry Wharton called to Bunter as he returned the ball to him.

"Play up, Bunter!"

"Oh, don't you worry!" answered the Owl of the Remove. "I know how to bowl, Wharton. Precious little you could teach me!"

"You're giving them runs," said Harry, compressing his lips.

"Rot! Your fielding's jolly bad!"

"Bunter, you—you——"

"I'm giving you easy catches, if you knew how to take them. You're all so jolly clumsy!"

"Oh!"

"The fact is, Wharton," said Bunter, blinking at his captain severely, "I expect better backing than this if my bowling's to be of any use. I might as well have a field of tin soldiers. Put some life into it!"

And Bunter went to his work, leaving his skipper speechless.

Fane carelessly knocked the next ball away to the boundary. A couple of twos finished the over.

"My hat!" murmured Harry Wharton in utter dismay.

He was not surprised to see the general grin on the Redclyffian visage. Bowling like this was enough to make anybody grin.

Bunter, much to his wrath and indignation, was not given the ball any more, so far as bowling went. But the Redclyffe batsmen showed a remarkable unanimity in knocking the leather into Bunter's territory whenever they could, so he had great chances in the field. Unfortunately, he did not improve any of those chances. With that involuntary support from the Greyfriars field the Redclyffe innings looked very prosperous.

But fortune favoured the Remove in spite of Bunter. The hat-trick by Hurree Jamset Ram Singh put a different complexion on matters, and it was repeated by Tom Brown, of New Zealand.

And so it came about that Redclyffe were all down at last for a run under the number they wanted to tie, and the Greyfriars Remove remained winners by a narrow margin.

"Just done it!" said Billy Bunter, as he rolled off the field. "You've stuck it out till nearly dark, and just done it! If I'd had the bowling——"

"It wouldn't have lasted so long, certainly," grinned Bob Cherry. "They'd have licked us pretty early!"

Snort!

"I want to have a word with you presently, Bunter," said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Oh, rats!" answered Bunter. "The fact is, Wharton, you can't play cricket, and you don't even know enough to play a good man when you've got one. That's your chief drawback—conceit and fatheadedness! So now you know!"

And Bunter rolled off.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

"YOU fat villain!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"You spoofing Hun!"

"Eh?"

"Bump him!"

"Squash him!"

Billy Bunter jumped up in alarm. He was in Study No. 7, enjoying his tea. He had come in before the other fellows, and made a handsome collection of tuck from several studies. Now he was enjoying his plunder; but his

enjoyment was interrupted by the sudden entrance of five wrathful juniors.

Bunter blinked at the Famous Five in alarm, and backed round the study table.

"I—I say, wharrer marrer?" he stammered. "If you're going to make a fuss about these saveloys, Bob Cherry, well—"

"You fat rotter!"

"Besides, I never took them from your study, they came by post; a present from one of my titled relations. As for this cake, Nugent—"

"You spoofing rascal!" roared Nugent.

"If you're going to grudge a cake to the fellow who risked his life to pull you out of the river, Nugent—"

"You didn't!" howled Nugent.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"It was your cousin Wally!" exclaimed Wharton. "You spoofer, we've had it all from Snoop!"

Bunter's jaw dropped.

"Sn-o-o-ooop?" he stammered.

"Yes, Snoop!" growled Johnny Bull.

"It seems that Snoop's known it for a long time. You changed places with your cousin Wally because he wanted to come to Greyfriars, and you wanted to go to St. Jim's—"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"We were asses not to guess, knowing the two fat bounders to be so much alike," said Harry Wharton. "Still, who'd ever have thought of such a game of spoof?"

"Blessed if I should," said Bob.

"That's why Wally telephoned from

St. Jim's last night, and warned me not to play that fat idiot," continued Wharton. "I understand now. I wish I'd taken his tip!"

"I—I say, you fellows—" stuttered Bunter.

"Well, what have you got to say?" demanded the captain of the Remove. "You shoved yourself into the Eleven, knowing it was your bounder of a cousin I'd given the place to—"

"N-n-not at all, I—I haven't been to St. Jim's—"

"What?"

"I've been here all the time, you know!"

"Why, you owned up to Snoop!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Not at all—Snoop's dreaming. Besides, he's untruthful. I've often been shocked at Snoop for his untruthfulness. If there's anything I really despise in a fellow, it's untruthfulness!"

"Oh, fan me, somebody!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"I haven't been anywhere near St. Jim's," continued Bunter cheerfully.

"Not at all. I didn't bolt yesterday because old Lathom had given me a lot of lines, and Grundy of the Shell was going to lick me over a measly cake he'd lost from his study. Rotten measly cake, too—not at all like the cakes I get from home. Just like Grundy!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"As for changing places with Wally, I don't even know what you mean. Besides, it was Wally's idea from the very beginning."

"It's no good talking to him," said

Harry Wharton. "We shall have to keep this dark, you fellows, now we know. The Head would be no end waxy if he knew. But that spoofing rotter—"

"I really don't see why you're calling me names, Wharton. I rely upon you to keep it dark, of course. The Head would be wild, and he might pitch into me. Besides, it isn't true!"

"You jolly nearly lost us the Red-clyffe match!" roared Bob Cherry.

"You mean you nearly lost it by your rotten play, I suppose. I don't want to brag, but I must say that I was about the only good cricketer on the field," said Bunter warmly. "I'm not a fellow to blow my own trumpet, I hope, but I must say that!"

"Collar him!" gasped Bob.

"Here, I say—hands off—I say, Nugent, you beast, after I saved your life— Yaroooh! Help! Murder! Fire!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Yooop! Help! Fire!" roared Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, it was only a joke, you know! Simply a joke! He, he, he! Yoooop!"

Bump!

The Famous Five left Billy Bunter sitting on his study carpet. The way of the transgressor had proved hard once more!

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



Goggs Grammarian

By Richard Randolph

SYNOPSIS.

Johnny Goggs—in company with Blount, Trickett, and Waters—come to Rylcombe Grammar School from Franklingham, which has been burnt down.

Goggs is a ventriloquist, a ju-jitsu expert, and an all-round sportsman, though he behaves like a simpleton.

Gordon Gay & Co. are discussing a plan of campaign with Goggs, in Gay's study, and Carker listens at the keyhole. He leaves a sixpenny-piece on the floor, as an excuse if he is discovered. Goggs comes out of the study and coolly appropriates the coin.

(Now read on.)

Phelim O'Haggarty.

THEY passed on their opposite ways, Carker scowling, Goggs smiling.

"Now, I wonder," said Goggs, to himself, "whether our dear friend Carker was indulging his curiosity at that door? I have gathered that he has pleasant little habits of that kind, and I have heard of such tricks as this to avert suspicion. We must keep an eye or two upon Carker!"

He went on to his own study, and returned to the rest in a minute or so with something hidden under his jacket.

"Will you all be so very kind as to offer me a view of your backs?" he asked.

"Eh?" said Lane and Harry Wootton together.

"He means that he wants you all to turn

away from him for a minute," explained Bugs.

"Then why in the world doesn't he say so?" growled Wootton minor.

"I was under the impression that my speech was perfectly clear, and impossible to be misunderstood by anyone of even infantile intelligence," Goggs said, rather sadly. "In the near future I hope to fit myself for my company by a prolonged course of reading in the nursery play-book direction. At present I see that I must submit to being interpreted by my dear friend Bagshaw."

"You'll submit to something a heap worse than that if you don't stop that rot!" growled Frank Monk.

"I think not, my dear—er—Nuts; I really think not! Will you please all turn round, close your eyes, and—er—hold your tongues? To make it perfectly clear what I mean, I may add that you are not necessarily expected to use your fingers for that purpose, though their use is not barred if it will be of any real assistance to you."

They turned round. Goggs whipped from under his jacket a red wig and a pair of glasses of the pince-nez type. Off came his big spectacles. The glasses were thrust into place. The red wig covered his smooth hair. The very expression of his face changed wonderfully.

"Shure, an' yez may now turra round!" he said.

They turned, and gasped in surprise. For to their eyes it was no longer Johnny Goggs who stood there, but someone quite

unlike him. Possibly it was the manner of speech he had adopted that led them all—with the exception of Mont Blanc, whose views on the nationalities of the United Kingdom were as hazy as those of most people from the Continent are—to see in him a typical Irish boy.

"Allow me to luthrojuice to yez Phelim O'Hoggarty, from Ballynakillemall, a gentleman quite unknown to anny spalpeen at St. Jim's," said Goggs, in the richest of brogues.

"My hat!"

"Hanged if he isn't a fair knock-out!"

"That's the style! That does it!"

"You're licked, Gordon! You never did anything up to that mark!"

"It's jolly good," admitted Gay frankly. "But can he keep it up?"

"Bedad an' begorra an' hejabers, an' pwhy for would I not?" inquired Goggs.

"You're overdoing the thing," said Gay critically.

"I am adapting my impersonation of the part to the undeveloped minds with which I have to deal at present," replied Goggs, in his natural voice and his usual manner.

"Oh, come along!" said Carboy. "There isn't a giddy chap at St. Jim's keen enough to spot Goggles under that disguise! And yet it's nothing but a wig and a different pair of glasses! My hat!"

"I do not think it will serve any useful purpose for me to wear that, my dear Carhuncle," said Goggs gravely.

"Wear what, chump?"

"Your hat. It would not differ sufficiently from my own to help in the disguise. And it might be overdoing the part to wear the typical hat of the stage Hibernian—I really forget whether they call it a caubeen or a shillelagh."

"Ass! I didn't mean—"

Goggs shook his head sadly.

"I fear we shall never understand one another, Boil. There are centuries of progress and culture between your status and mine. By a great effort I may now and then get down to the level of your intelligence; but it is too much to hope that you should ever rise to the level of mine!"

"Well, I'm jiggered! Oh, look here, you fellows, does the silly, swanking ass mean all that?" demanded Carboy of Goggs' old chums.

"I suppose so," answered Bags.

"It's true enough, isn't it?" added Tricks.

"You really are a frightfully stupid, backward sort of chap compared to our Goggs-bird, Carboy," chimed in Wagtail, shaking his head.

"Look here, I'm not going—"

"You are, Carboy, and you're going now!" broke in Gay. "If we waste any more time the dinner-bell will have gone before we're back. Quick march! Come along, Goggles, you blessed superman!"

"What? In these—er—trousers?" asked Goggs.

"What have your bags— Oh, I see! No, take the giddy wig off till we're clear of the school. We don't want anyone here to spot Phelim."

Plots and Counterplots.

GOGGS drew Bags aside as the party passed into the corridor.

"Mind staying behind?" he asked.

The directness of his speech made it plain to Bags at once that this was no idle question.

"Not a bit, if you want me to," he answered.

"Might keep Wagtail, too. Carker wants watching."

"Carker?" said Bags, in surprise.

He hardly knew the junior named. If Snipe had been mentioned he would not have been surprised.

"Yes, I am not certain, but I suspect him of having found out more than suits our book. If you see him with Larking & Co., you may be sure I'm right."

"You're probably right anyway, old top—you generally are. Cut off! I'll collar Wagtail!"

It was not exactly with a good grace that Waters consented to stay behind; but he did consent.

The nine passed out of gates. A hundred yards or so down the road, with no one in sight, Goggs became Phelim O'Hoggarty, from Ballynakillell, simply by substituting pince-nez for spectacles and donning the red wig.

"There's a risk in it," said Gay. "But none of our fellows seem to be about; and we can't have the Saints spotting Goggles."

They went on towards the barn. But they were still some little distance from it when three St. Jim's juniors came into sight.

"Cardew, Clive, and Levison," said Frank Monk. "Just as well you're ready for them, Goggles!"

"Rather!" agreed Gay. "Two of them are among the keenest chaps of the whole crowd at spotting anything. You may take Clive in, though he isn't a duffer; but Cardew and Levison need some spoofing."

"Sure, an' they shall be afther havin' all they nade," said Goggs.

"That's the style, Goggles!" said Jack Wootton.

"O'Hoggarty, av yez please, Masther Wooden," replied Goggs solemnly.

"Hallo!" said Clive, as the three drew up to the nine. "Were you coming along to our show? The trouble's supposed to be over now, you know, though I must say you fellows did your little best to start it again at once."

"Yaas," drawled Cardew. "You succeeded in rousin' the ire of the dear Tommy to the highest pitch. He's really quite a good-tempered chap, is Tommy; but he came back breathin' fire an' slaughter against some of you."

"It was rather thick, you know," said Levison. "Poor old Tommy toddling along with nothing but peace and good will in his

tender heart, and then some of you ruffians springing on him from behind and lowering his proud crest in the dust before he had time to say 'knife.' Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beastly thick, I call it!" remarked Clive, evidently in earnest.

"Positively sinful," observed Cardew, obviously not at all in earnest.

"He'll get over it," said Gordon Gay. "It was a—well, you might say it was a kind of mistake."

"We couldn't help it," added Jack Wootton.

"Sounds alarmin'," said Cardew, shrugging his shoulders. "Especially as at the moment you have odds of three to one. I do hope you are not often taken that way."

"Oh, we're not going to pile in on you, if that's what you're getting at!" said Gay.

"That is precisely what I am gettin' at, old gun! I admit candidly that I seldom have any but selfish thoughts. I may experience slight movements of sympathy towards Tommy for his misfortunes, y'know; but really to hurt my feelin's you would have to do likewise to me. An', as I'm not very vigorous to-day, I trust that I may be spared that shock to my delicate constitution."

"Hanged if I shouldn't like to jump on him!" grunted Harry Wootton in the car of Carboy.

"So should I! That fellow always riles me. He's as long-winded as Goggles, and he is so beastly cool and cheeky."

"I perceive new faces," remarked Cardew. "An' I remember now that our dear Tommy an' the other warriors mentioned new boys as among their opponents of yesterday. Are these two of the doughty champions?"

He looked full at Goggs and Tricks as he spoke.

"Trickett was in it—O'Hoggarty wasn't," answered Gay.

"Shure, an' I don't foight," said Goggs.

"Ah! Sinn Fein, I presume?" returned Cardew.

"Faith, an' ye do presume!"

"Introduce us, Gay!" said Levison.

The ceremony of introduction was briefly put through. Cardew showed a disposition to linger which did not at all suit the Grammarians. He appeared to be interested in Phelim O'Hoggarty, the supposed Irish junior who announced himself a non-combatant.

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"It wasn't us you were coming along to see, I take it, Cardew?" said Frank Monk pointedly.

"No, dear boy; though the sight of your cheerful an' ingenuous faces is always a pleasure to me, I assure you. As a matter of fact, I am about to look up my dear old pal Lacy. The separation from Algernon, playmate of my early days, has tried me severely; an' at the first available opportunity I naturally fly to his friendly embrace."

"Rats!" snapped Jack Wootton.

Everyone there knew that Cardew was saying the thing which was not, and some of them suspected him of designs quite unconnected with Lacy.

It was true that he and Algernon Lacy had been schoolfellows at Wodehouse in the past. But there was no love lost between them. Cardew held Lacy in contempt and dislike, and Lacy hated Cardew.

All this mattered little to Gordon Gay & Co. Lacy was no chum of theirs, and Cardew was not among the St. Jim's fellows whom most of them liked best; though between Gordon Gay and him there was a bond.

"Ah, but you don't know the depth of my feelin's, Wootton!" said Cardew. "I pine—I yearn—to look again upon the classic countenance of Algy! Come on, dear boys; let us fly to Algy! We are not really wanted here!"

That was true. Yet the Grammarians looked doubtfully after the St. Jim's chums as they passed on their way towards the Grammar School.

"I don't half like it!" admitted Gay.

"Those three are up to something," said Monk. "Cardew's deep as the Atlantic, and Levison's as wily as a Red Indian, and Clive's hefty enough, though he's not as dodgy as they are."

"Tom Merry wouldn't come along again to-day," Wootton major said, stroking the back of his head thoughtfully. "And neither would Blake and that crowd. But these are just the chaps they'd send to spy out the land."

"And we've something hanging on it," remarked his brother. "You challenged them, you know, Gordon!"

"I know. Well, I don't really see what they could do, and, as Goggs is with us, they can't find out a lot."

"They might happen on something by chance, though," said Lane.

"Ze dear Goggs—he might be mention by somevon," Mont Blanc added.

"Well, we've got to risk that. Kim on, you cripples!"

There was less risk than they fancied. The three were not really going to the Grammar School at all. But a risk—just that which had been guarded against—had already been run; and it had not left Cardew unsuspecting.

"Levison, dear boy," said Cardew, "what do you make of that freak O'Hagan?"

"O'Hoggarty," Clive corrected him.

"I was just thinking about the bounder," answered Ernest Levison. "I don't know what to make of him. There was something about his face that I seemed to know, and yet—no, he isn't quite like anyone else I ever saw. And his voice was strange to me, anyway."

"H'm! I'll freely admit that I can't place O'Hea—"

"O'Hoggarty," said Clive again.

"What a pedantically correct individual you are, Sidney dear! What does it matter? O'Hea, O'Hagan, or O'Hoggarty—it's all one. I don't a bit believe any of the names belongs to him!"

"Hanged if I can make out what you're drivin' at, Cardew!" said Clive, looking completely puzzled.

"My dear infant, you're not expected to! Don't get thinkin'—it will only make its poor, dear ickle head ache. What do you think, Levison, old bean?"

"Levison's allowed to think, then?" snorted Clive.

"Levison can't be kept out of it," answered Cardew gravely.

"Well, if Gay hadn't been there I should have thought it was Gay in disguise," said Levison slowly.

"Ass! He'd have been there all the same if he had been in disguise!" Clive put in.

But they took no notice of Clive.

"Good, Sherlock—good!" chirruped Cardew. "But it couldn't have been Gay, an' I can't think of any of the rest capable of doin' it is style like that."

"Must be one of the new fellows," said Levison. "There are three or four of them, I've heard!"

"But why should a new chap disguise himself?" asked Cardew.

"Was he disguised?" inquired Clive.

"I don't know, dashed if I do! The only thing I'm certain of is that there's somethin' fishy about it somewhere, by gad! But where it is, an' what it is—well, that's beyond me at present."

The three passed the Grammar School and held on their way to the house farther up the road to which they were bound. It was on their return journey that they saw Bags and Wagtail hurry out of the Grammar School gates with their bikes.

The two just glanced at the trio of St. Jim's juniors—not uninterested in them, it seemed, but in too big a hurry to do more than glance.

"Two more of the new chums!" observed Clive.

"He's comin' on, Levison," said Cardew. "That was a deduction. They wore Grammar School caps; Sidney has not seen them before—ergo, they are new fellows. No flaw in it, either. Good, dear boy, good—dashed good, by gad!"

"Oh, shut up, ass!" growled Clive.

"Larking, Carpenter, and Snipe ahead!" remarked Levison. "It's a rummy bizney; but it really looks to me as though the two new chaps were chasing those three."

"Queer taste!" yawned Cardew. "From the little I have been privileged to see of Larkin, Carpenter, an' Snipe, I would prefer to chase myself in the other direction. Snipe's a positively putrid cad! Larkin's not an agreeable person. An' even Carpenter's very so-so!"

"I don't fancy they are chasing them with any notion of falling on their necks and kissing them!" said Levison, with one of his sardonic grins.

"If you ask me," Clive said, "all this has something to do with Gay and that crowd, and that red-headed Irish bounder."

"Thinkin' again, Sidney—thinkin' again!" protested Cardew. "What a dashed crop of headaches you are raisin' for yourself!"

"I'll bet Clive's right, though!" said Levison.

And, of course, Clive was right.

A Mix-up!

BAGS and Wagtail had done their best to carry out Goggs' instructions.

They had kept a watch on Carker as long as it was possible. But Carker had tumbled to the fact that he was being watched, and had managed to slip away.

It was by the merest chance that they came upon him again—in close conference with Larking & Co.

The conference broke up directly they approached. Larking, Carpenter, and Snipe lounged off in one direction, hands in pockets. Carker went in another.

He had told them what was in the wind, and he had no intention of sharing any enterprise they might undertake in consequence of his information. That was not Carker's way. Whenever he could contrive it he got his grudges paid by deputy.

It was rather a risky enterprise that Larking and Carpenter meditated. They were very sore over their defeat of the night before, and both were ready to take risks.

Snipe, though also sore, was by no means so ready. Danger did not appeal to Snipe; he hated getting hurt. And he saw that none of them was likely to come through an attempt at interference with Gordon Gay & Co. without damage.

But he had to go. Larking and Carpenter gave him no choice in the matter.

They only waited until they thought Blount and Waters were out of the way, and then they fetched out their bikes and made for the gates.

But Wagtail, posted at a window, saw; and it was not a long start that the three got.

Bags and Wagtail rode hard.

"Can we catch them up before they get to the barn, Bags?" panted Wagtail.

"May catch them—may get there in time to warn the fellows of their coming. My word! Hear Snipe blowing?"

Snipe was puffing hard, and would have fallen behind but for the determination of his companions to keep him with them. But Wagtail was also blowing a bit, and it became more and more evident that he and Bags would not arrive together in time to give an effective warning.

"I'm going on!" said Bags.

(Continued on page 16.)

The Editor's Chat.

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YOUR EDITOR'S EASTER GREETING.

By the time this issue of the MAGNET Library is in my readers' hands Easter will be upon us.

In many respects Easter is a festival grander than Christmas. It brings with it the first flush of spring; and one's thoughts turn instinctively to holidays and cycling-tours and picnics.

No Bank Holiday is ever dull if spent in the right way. Certainly no Bank Holiday can be dull when the MAGNET Library figures on the list of attractions.

This week's story will, I feel confident, bring mirth and delight into the hearts of thousands; for wherever those magic words "By Frank Richards" appear, they bring in their train a heritage of happy laughter.

The first peace-time Easter has dawned; and, although all is not well with the world, and there are critical times ahead, we are living under much happier conditions than was the case last Easter.

I hope that my thousands of Magnetite chums will give themselves up to the enjoyment of a real good time—a time of sheer happiness and content.

Let every bell ring out!

There is peace and joy in our fair land to-day. Other troubles may come; but the nightmare of war is over, and we may look to the future with radiant faces, resolved to meet all its changes and chances in the same spirit which has animated the British nation during four years of crisis and upheaval.

For Next Monday:

"FOES OF THE REMOVE!"

By Frank Richards.

Napoleon Dupont, the French junior of the Remove, is the central figure in next week's grand long complete story of school-life.

Bolsover major, who, in spite of his bullying ways, has hitherto been on the best of terms with the French boy, breaks out at last, and the vials of his wrath descend upon the head of Dupont.

After a glove-fight in the gym between the two study-mates, Bolsover major considers the incident closed; but he is too premature! Napoleon Dupont broods on the treatment he has received, and, in order to defend his honour, he takes a step which is altogether without precedent in the history of Greyfriars. So grave a view do the authorities take of Dupont's action that his expulsion from the school seems more than probable; but the French junior takes Time by the forelock, and, without waiting for the sentence, disappears from the school, thus causing a temporary lull in the campaign between the

"FOES OF THE REMOVE!"

This story combines drama and humour with a fine study of character, and must surely rank with Frank Richards' best.

THE MAN WHO STAYED AT HOME!

No Easter Holiday for Frank Richards!

Shortly before going to press with this number I wrote to Mr. Frank Richards, urging him to take a much-needed holiday at Eastertide.

Few men have worked so untiringly, under adverse conditions, during the past few years, as the author of the famous MAGNET stories.

Some readers there are who imagine that Mr. Frank Richards is a machine, from which stories emerge with the regularity of clock-work. So far from this, Mr. Richards is a man, with all a man's worries and responsibilities; and many of his stories during the war were written under circumstances of great difficulty and danger. He once wrote a story telling how the Zeppelins came to Greyfriars. Not many people who read that story would

imagine that during its composition the "Zepps" were raining down bombs in the vicinity of the author's house; yet such was the case.

And so, realising that Mr. Frank Richards stood greatly in need of a holiday, I wrote and urged him to take one. And this is his reply:

"My dear Ed,—It was very considerate of you to suggest sea-breezes, and all that sort of thing, for the undersigned; but I cannot throw down the pen at present for obvious reasons.

"I am sending you a MAGNET story herewith, and this puts me ahead with my work, so far as the MAGNET is concerned; but I am busy on a big scheme in connection with the 'Penny Popular'—a scheme which I want to tackle while it is red-hot, so to speak.

"My Easter 'holidays' will therefore be spent in my 'den,' and I will postpone the rest and change you kindly suggest until after the completion of my task.

"With kindest regards,

"Yours ever,
"FRANK RICHARDS."

It is useless to argue with such a determined person as Mr. Frank Richards. For the benefit of those who admire and look forward to his fine stories of school-life, I am allowing him to go ahead with his big scheme without let or hindrance.

When the summer is well advanced, and I ask Mr. Richards to take his long-deferred holiday, he will probably turn round and tell me that he is writing a long "Boys' Friend Library" story dealing with the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., and that he will postpone his holiday until the following Christmas.

Such is the tireless spirit of the man who to-day stands second to none as a writer of stories for boys and girls. Mr. Richards is foolish, perhaps; but his is a splendid folly. I regard him as a brick; and I can already hear the unanimous chorus of my thousands of loyal reader-chums:

"Hear, hear!"

NOTICES.

Cricket.—Matches Wanted.

ST. JAMES' CARDIFF—17—12 miles—home and away.—H. W. Tutchet, 16, Henty Street, Roath Park, Cardiff.

WANDLESIDE C.C.—16-17—5 miles.—A. O. Burroughs, 2, Stanley Terrace, Beddington Corner, Mitcham Junction, Surrey.

Back Numbers Wanted.

Emmett Francis Cross, 77, Waller Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada—all stories dealing with Talbot; also Christmas Numbers of the Companion Papers for 1912-13-14.

A. B. Lowrey, Glenwood, Watford Road, Croyley Green, Herts—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Heroes of Highcliffe," "The Toff"; "Penny Populars," 50-53; "Schoolboy Out-cast," "Bunter the Blade," "The Schoolboy Earl," 1s. 6d. offered. Write first.

F. E. W. Sproat, 14, Rock Park, Rock Ferry, Cheshire—"Gem," "Stolen Holiday"; MAGNETS, "House on the Heath," "Schoolboys Never Shall Be Slaves," "Shunned by the Form," "Fall of the Fifth," 4d. each offered. Write first.

D. White, 82, Lowfield Street, Dartford, Kent—"Penny Popular," No. 1; good condition. 6d. offered. Write first.

Charles Rees, 15, Highfield Road, Rock Ferry, Birkenhead—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Bunter the Blade," "Rival Ventriloquists," 1d. each offered. Write first.

Miss M. Ridley, 94, Wessex Flats, Wedmore Street, Upper Holloway, N. 19—any numbers "Gem" and MAGNET; also "Penny Popular" before 1916. 2d. each offered. Christmas Numbers, 3d.

Miss G. M. Higgins, 37, Salisbury Street, Blandford, Dorset—MAGNET containing "A Very Gallant Gentleman."

H. A. H. (YOUR EDITOR.)

And he shot ahead. As he drew near to the three in front Larking looked round.

"Here's that bounder Blount coming!" he said. "Spread across the road, and don't let him pass!"

Carpenter and Snipe obeyed, though it was not without a tremor on Snipe's part. Larking was in the middle. Snipe would have preferred that place. But he had what might be considered the place of honour—that on the right, where the rider behind them was likeliest to attempt passing.

Bags tried another dodge. He put on speed as he drew near, and cut in between Larking and Snipe. Their purpose in spreading out had been so evident that he did not waste any words upon them at the outset.

But Larking thwarted him. He twisted the front wheel of his machine round to the right, and closed in on Snipe. Bags had to use his back-pedal brake in a hurry to avoid a collision.

"Are you going to let me pass, confound you?" snapped Bags.

"Do you want to pass?" inquired Larking mockingly.

Bags hung back for a moment, then tried to dash in on the other side of Larking.

But Carpenter and Larking combined to spoil him there, and he only just saved himself from a fall.

All this had somewhat slowed progress. Wagtail had caught up. But the arrival of Wagtail only complicated matters.

Bags made his third attempt on the right, where Snipe was. Riding in bumping fashion over the rough, grassy edge of the road, he very nearly got past, for Snipe's courage failed him when it came to risking a fall it stopping him.

But if Snipe could not summon up resolution to act, Larking had enough and to spare.

Bags felt his front wheel bump down into a drainage channel. At that moment Larking closed in on Snipe, and, leaning sideways, gave him his shoulder.

"Yowwyp! You silly idiot" hooted Snipe as he reeled over towards Bags.

Bags did his best to push clear. But he had almost lost his balance before Snipe touched him, and when Snipe fell all over him he had no chance whatever.

He clattered down, with one leg pinned under his bike. Snipe, with a wild howl of rage, tumbled upon him; and next moment Wagtail, riding too hard to stop himself in time, sprawled on top of Snipe!

"Yooooop! Gerrup!" howled Bags.

"Uwwwwwww!" wailed Snipe.

"You silly coots!" roared Wagtail.

"Come on, Carp!" said Larking.

And the two hurried on.

"By gad, though, that was pretty fairly thick, Lark!" said Carpenter doubtfully.

He looked back over his shoulder. The three were struggling up, and bestowing kind words upon one another as they rose. It was plain that their machines had all taken damage, and it seemed unlikely that

any of the riders had failed to take some damage also.

"Nobody actually done in, is there?" inquired Larking, not looking round.

"No; but—"

"Oh, don't be squeamish! Something had to be done. And, after all, what did I do? Merely fell against Snipey, who is a pal of mine. I didn't touch Blount or Waters. It might have been the most complete accident."

"But it wasn't!"

"Will you swear to that, Carp? I don't see how you could. Why, I jolly nearly tumbled myself!"

"Well, it's done now," replied Carpenter half sulkily. "And here we are at the barn. What's your programme?"

"You'll see that in a minutes or two. Are you game to follow my lead?"

"Yes!" Carpenter said recklessly.

But he did not like the look on his chum's face. Larking, with all his faults, was no coward. And at this moment he seemed ready for and desperate deed.

Carpenter reflected that they would be heavily outnumbered, however; and Larking would hardly have the opportunity to do anything really serious.

But it was just the realisation of the fact that the odds were so heavily against him that made Larking feel so desperate. What he meant to do had nothing tragic about it. Indeed, done in a different spirit, it would have been a mere joke, and would have been taken as such. As things were, however, Gordon Gay & Co. were hardly likely to see it in that way. And they were quite certain to take vengeance for it.

In the cover of the hedge Larking and Carpenter waited.

From inside the barn sounded voices. Goggs was making up Gordon Gay as Granny.

Down the road Bags and Wagtail and Snipe sorted themselves out, and Cardew and Clive and Levison drew near to them.

"You pimply-faced maniac!" fumed Bags, his usually serene temper very badly ruffled.

"It wasn't my fault, you cheeky idiot!" howled Snipe. "Didn't you see Larking push me over?"

"Why didn't you give way and let me pass, then?" yelled Bags.

"Yes, why didn't you do that?" snorted Wagtail. "That's what we want to know." Bags turned in wrath upon his chum.

"You—you ought never to be trusted on a bike again!" he roared. "A perambulator's nearer your giddy mark! What did you go piling yourself up on top of me and this rotter for?"

"I couldn't draw aside," burred Snipe. "Larking was in the way; you could see that! I was trying when—"

"A perambulator, eh?" shouted Wagtail, red as a peony and almost foaming at the mouth. "Put your fists up, Blount! I'm not jolly well going to stand that sort of thing, even from you!"

Snipe grinned maliciously. Nothing could have suited his book better than a fight between those two.

But Bags did not put up his fists. He knew himself Wagtail's master in the art of self-defence, and perhaps that "even you" helped to keep him from extremities. Wagtail was, in the opinion of his chums, a bit of an ass in many ways; he was swanky without much excuse for it, though not so swanky as he had been before the advent of Goggs. But he did put up with a good deal from all three of them; and Bags knew that it must be galling to him now and then to feel that his was always the fourth place in the brotherhood of four.

"Hallo!" drawled the cool voice of Ralph Reckness Cardew. "Trouble in the merry family—what?"

Blount and Waters and Snipe all swung round. They had been too busily occupied in slinging compliments at one another to note the approach of the three juniors from the rival school.

"Mind your own business!" snorted Wagtail.

"Oh, don't get ratty!" said Clive. "Look here, can we help?"

"If you contemplate makin' a start in a career as a bicycle repairer, old top," drawled Cardew, "don't fancy that I'm goin' into partnership with you."

"They do want a little attention," said Levison, grinning in a manner that was very different from Clive's, for the South African junior's had sympathy in it.

"Well, that's not your funeral!" snapped Bags.

"Better leave them to it, dear boys," said Cardew. "When people have the camelious hump it's no use bein' kind an' polite to them, y'know. May I venture to inquire how the smash happened?"

"You can inquire what you jolly well like, but I'm not going to answer you!" replied Wagtail hotly.

"Hallo! What, more trouble? Another bit of a mix-up?" said Cardew, looking along the road.

It certainly looked like that, and it certainly sounded like that.

Out of the field in which the barn stood poured a wild and whirling crowd. Somewhere in its centre were Larking and Carpenter, catching it hot. On its circumference appeared what looked like an elderly lady in a distinctly disreputable state.

Her hat was at the back of her head. Her hair hung down at the back of her neck, not in mane or pigtail, but dressed for the usual position on top of her head. Her skirt was slit right up. Her blouse hung in tatters.

If she really had been an elderly lady it would have been indeed a shocking spectacle.

But, though the make-up might disguise his face, there was no possible mistake about the voice of Gordon Gay, raised high in anger, and proceeding from the mouth of the seeming female.

(Another grand long instalment of this magnificent school serial will appear in next Monday's issue. Order early.)

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