£300 IN CASH PRIZES! See our New, Simple, and Interesting CRICKET COMPETITION, inside!

No. 806. Vol. XXIV. Week ending July 21st, 1923.

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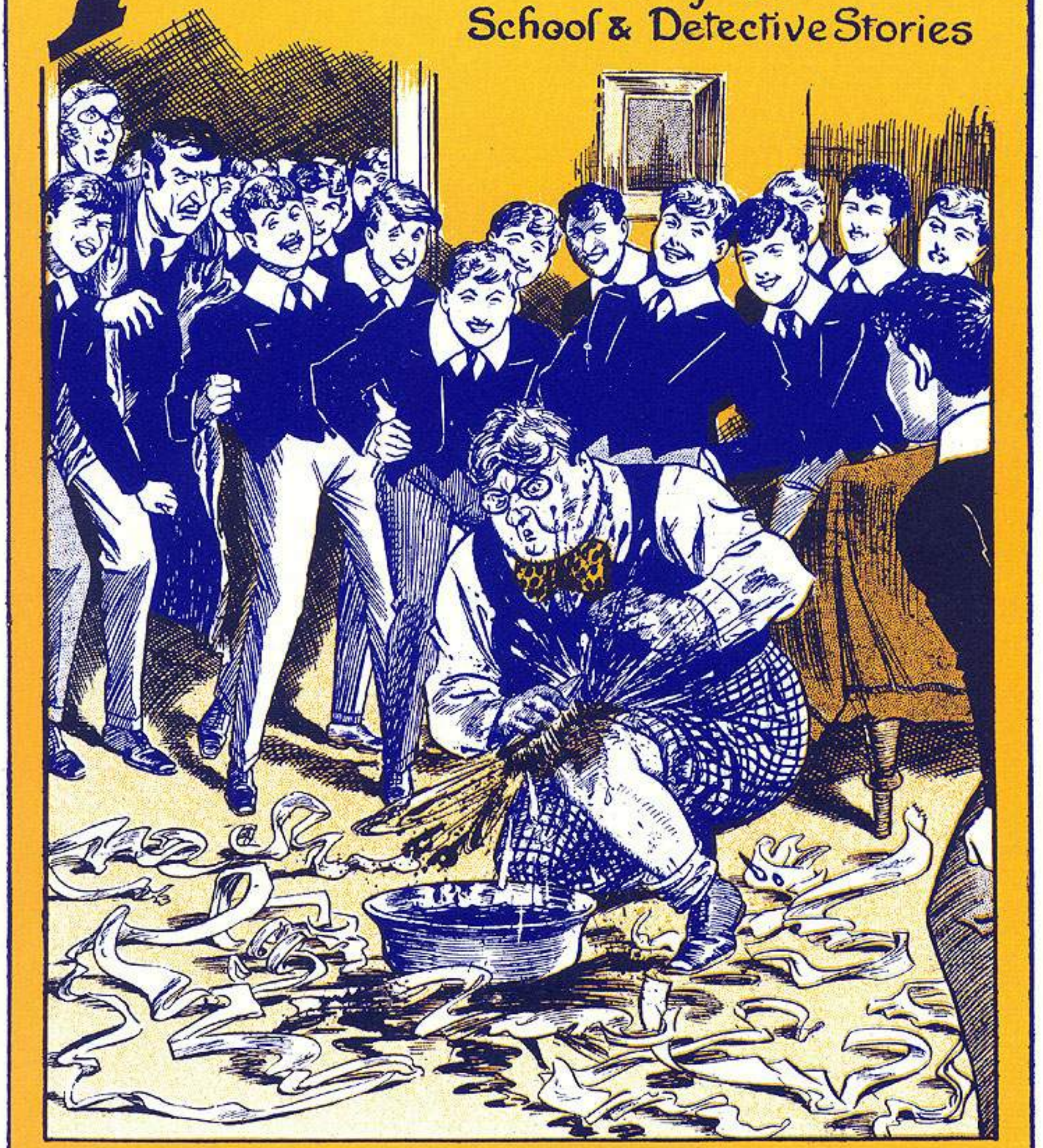
of School & Detective Stories



CURING AN "INJURED" KNEE!

(A diverting incident from this week's mirthful story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, inside.)

SOMETHING EXTRA NOTABLE!

WELL, it has come, chums! At the foot of this page you will find full particulars of the new magnificent Cricket Competition, which puts in the shade everything ever put forth in this line. I know what you will be saying—"Why not have given an early announcement concerning this treat?" There were reasons, good reasons. In the first place, I was keen on having a really out and out sensation for this cricket season. That's good enough. Nothing is lost—everything gained, and many a smart cricket enthusiast with a nimble brain will be considerably richer in pocket, thanks to the new MAGNET feature. Just get hold of the details, then send in your coupons.

THREE HUNDRED POUNDS!

That's the prize list! Forecasting this time, not broadcasting! The brilliant competition has been set going right worthily. MAGNET readers all over the country can get going. There is money to be won! Profits for the prophets! The rest I leave to you. Coupons, please!

"GALLOPING DICK!"

There is one thing to be said about another cheery little item of intelligence I have to impart this week. You will say it is right on the wicket. That's natural enough, and comes easy to the MAGNET. The old paper feels the pulse of public opinion, as it were. It knows what's what and what's wanted. And I know this much, namely, that the new and thrilling series of highwayman yarns which I have in preparation will hit the taste of every one of my countless readers. The series opens in a fortnight's time.

We all remember the magnificent stories of David Goodwin. He is always great; his realism is intense. When he tackles a subject he gets right into the thick of it. He is a master of detail. Well, this new series of a knight of the road and the daring deeds he did in the dim past will create a big sensation, or I am much mistaken.

It is only a top-sawyer at the writing game who can make you feel things. As you read these grand yarns you will have the thunder of the hoofs of the outlaw in your ears. It gives you the romance of the thing, and you will see it all, for you have plenty of imagination, as I happen to know—the sleeping village alongside the main turnpike north and south, with the silence of the night broken by the clattering of horsemen. The highwayman is out, and is making for the little countrysides in the backlands with his haul, while the Bow Street men are in hot pursuit. It was an amazingly different sort of England in those days. Life was not specially safe, but the chevaliers of the road, though their hands were against many, had their friends—those who would stand between them and arrest. For the highwayman was true as steel to comrades, and he often helped the victim of oppression.

You must read this new series of stories. Don't forget the date! Two weeks from now! The new feature is one more up to the MAGNET.

"MAULEVERER MEANS BUSINESS!"

Next week's Greyfriars yarn shows Mauly to the life. He is a splendid chap despite his affectations, always ready to help a chum in trouble. You will admire his tenacity in the new story. Without pausing to count the difficulties, he engages himself to find a large sum of money. How does he manage the business? There is plenty that is mirth-

(*Continued on page 28.*)

GREAT COMPETITION FOR CRICKET LOVERS!

FIRST PRIZE £100; SECOND PRIZE £50; THIRD PRIZE £30; and 120 Prizes of £1 each.

Can you forecast how the Counties are going to finish up?

WE offer the above splendid prizes to the reader who is clever enough to send us a list showing exactly in what order the seventeen first-class County Cricket Clubs will stand at the end of the season.

For your guidance we publish the order in which each of the clubs stood last year, which was as follows:

1. Yorkshire.
2. Nottinghamshire.
3. Surrey.
4. Kent.
5. Lancashire.
6. Hampshire.
7. Middlesex.
8. Essex.
9. Sussex.
10. Somerset.
11. Derbyshire.
12. Warwickshire.
13. Gloucestershire.
14. Leicestershire.
15. Northamptonshire.
16. Glamorgan.
17. Worcestershire.

What you have to do is to fill in on the coupon on this page your forecast of the order in which the counties will finish up. To the reader who does this correctly we shall award a prize of £100, and the other prizes in the order of the correctness of the forecasts.

In the case of ties, any or all of the prizes will be added together and divided, but the full amount of £300 will be awarded.

All forecasts must be submitted on coupons taken from this journal or from one of the other publications taking part in the contest.

You may send as many coupon-forecasts as you like.

They must all be addressed to "Cricket Competition," Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, and must reach that address not later than Thursday, August 16th.

You may send in your forecasts at once if you like, but none will be considered after August 16th.

The decision of the Editor in all matters concerning this competition must be accepted as final and binding, and entries will only be admitted on that understanding.

Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with "Football Favourite," "Sports Budget," "Young Britain," "Champion," "Boys' Realm," "Boys' Friend," "Popular," "Pluck," "Union Jack," "Rocket," "Nelson Lee Library," "Boys' Cinema," and "Gem," and readers of these journals are invited to compete.

I forecast that the Counties will finish the season in this order:	
No. 1	
No. 2	
No. 3	
No. 4	
No. 5	
No. 6	
No. 7	
No. 8	
No. 9	
No. 10	
No. 11	
No. 12	
No. 13	
No. 14	
No. 15	
No. 16	
No. 17	

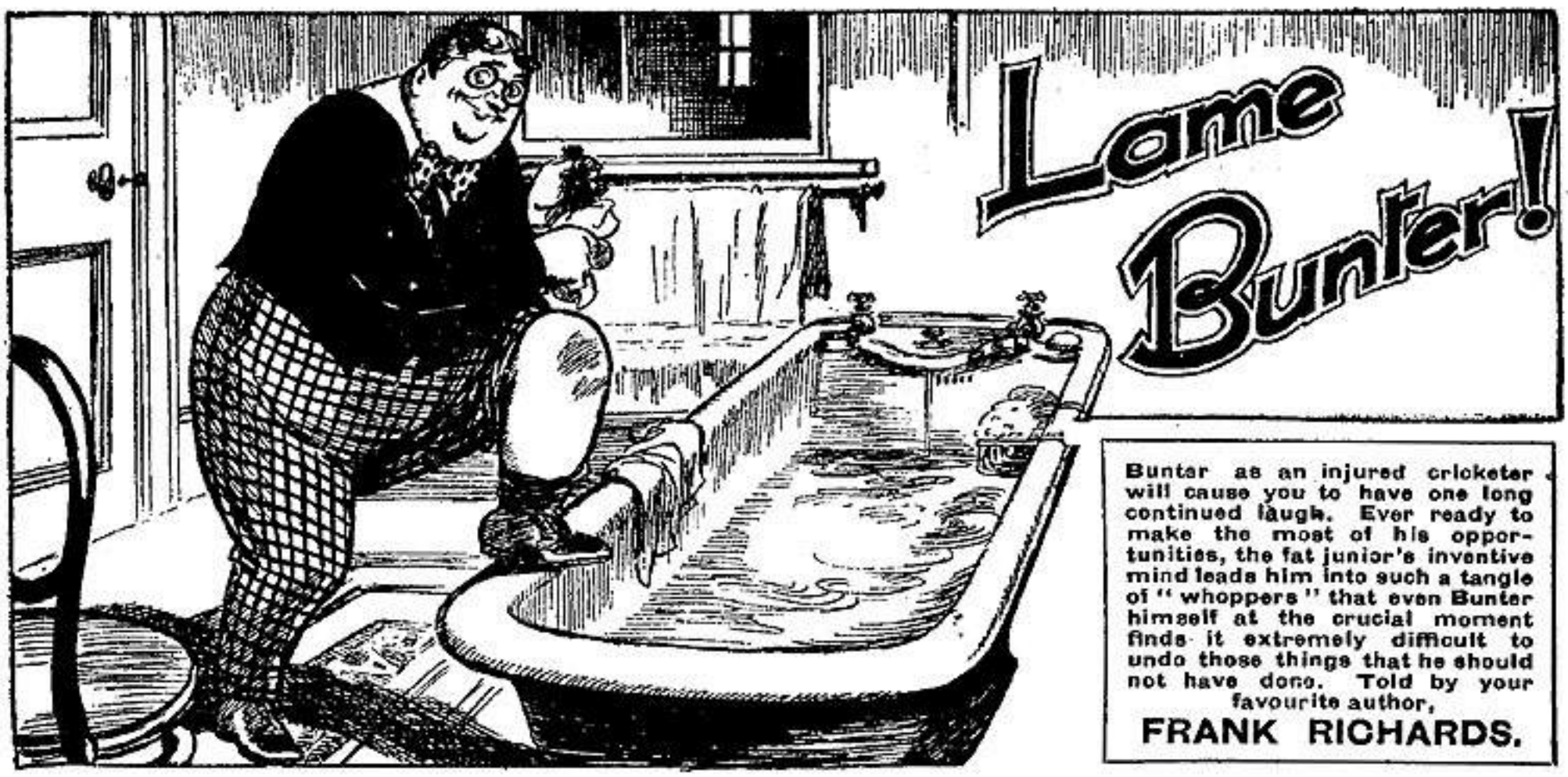
I enter Cricket Competition in accordance with the Rules as announced, and agree to abide by the published decision.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

M. Closing date, August 16th, 1923.



Bunter as an injured cricketer will cause you to have one long continued laugh. Ever ready to make the most of his opportunities, the fat junior's inventive mind leads him into such a tangle of "whoppers" that even Bunter himself at the crucial moment finds it extremely difficult to undo those things that he should not have done. Told by your favourite author,

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Cricket for Bunter!

"SHARP!"

"Oh, really, Wingate——"

"Get a move on!"

"I say——"

"Sharp!" roared Wingate.

Billy Bunter gave a deep groan.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and nearly everybody was out of doors in the sunny afternoon. Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove, were at cricket practice on Little Side.

But the call of cricket fell on deaf ears so far as William George Bunter was concerned.

Fresh air and exercise did not appeal to him. He had settled down to enjoy his half-holiday in his own way.

In Study No. 7 in the Remove, with the window closed, Billy Bunter sprawled in the armchair, with his feet resting on another chair. There was a bag of juicy jam-tarts at his elbow, and a packet of toffee on his fat knees. Bunter was eating.

This was happiness; as near perfect happiness as a mortal could expect to get.

Nobody on the cricket field was specially anxious to see Bunter arrive there. Bunter wasn't at all anxious to arrive there. So—but for Wingate of the Sixth—all parties might have been pleased.

It was just rotten luck for Bunter that Wingate of the Sixth should have a sudden access of dutiful determination that restful afternoon.

It was Wingate's duty, as Head of the Games, to see that slackers, of any Form, did not cut cricket. On certain occasions they were bound to turn up for practice, whether they liked it or not. Generally, Wingate was very easy-going; his rule could not be said to be hard. But there were times when the slackers took too wide a licence, and then Wingate would wake up, as it were, and come down heavy on them.

It was just Bunter's luck that Wingate should "wake up" on this afternoon, when the Owl of the Remove had just settled down to enjoy himself.

Wingate, full of duty and determination, had looked over the Remove crowd at the nets, marked the absentees, and set out to look for them. From Study No. 11 he had routed out Skinner, and Snoop, and Stott. From No. 12 Lord Mauleverer had emerged, breathless, with the prefect's boot to help him out. From No. 14 came Fisher T. Fish, yelling, and "guessing" at the top of his transatlantic voice that he wouldn't stand it. And then Wingate looked into No. 7, and found Bunter, and proceeded to deal with that fat and lazy youth.

Bunter groaned deeply. There was no gainsaying Wingate. It was useless to tell the Greyfriars captain that he was ill, and taking jam-tarts and toffee for his malady. Wingate was a suspicious beast, and wouldn't take a fellow's word.

Billy Bunter rolled dismally out of the armchair. He had devoured only one chunk of toffee, so far, and one tart. He had to leave the rest. And suppose Coker, of the Fifth, missed the tarts, before Bunter had had time to return and devour them? Suppose Bob Cherry missed the toffee? Both of them were beasts, who would think nothing of reclaiming their property by brutal force, and kicking Bunter into the bargain!

"I—I say, Wingate, I've got a pain!" murmured Bunter.

"You'll have another if you're not outside this study in two ticks!" answered Wingate heartlessly.

What was the good of arguing with a fellow like that?

Bunter disdained to argue. He rolled dismally to the door.

In the passage, Wingate shook a warning finger at him.

"How long will it take you to change?" he asked.

"About—about an hour!" stuttered Bunter.

"Not less?"

"Well, I—I might do it in half an hour!"

"I think you might!" assented Wingate. "I think you might do it in less, Bunter. I'm going down to the Remove pitch now. If you're not there three minutes after me, I shall come back for you."

"I—I say—I've lost my flannels——"

"You've got three minutes to find them, and get into them. I shall bring an ashplant with me!"

Wingate strode away. He had other slackers to rouse out.

Billy Bunter shook a fat fist after him—waiting till he was out of sight, however. That was only prudent.

"Beast!" he groaned.

He looked back into the study. The jam-tarts drew him almost irresistibly.

But he dared not.

If Wingate started in with the ashplant, it would be too painful. Bunter had only three minutes; he knew that Wingate was a man of his word.

How he did it Bunter never knew; but he was rolling down to the junior cricket ground by the time that brief interval had expired; and he was in flannels, looking as though he might burst out of them at any point.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Here comes the porpoise!"

Wingate was there, and he gave the Owl of the Remove a grim look.

"Just in time, Bunter!"

"I say, Wingate——"

"Get a move on. Wharton, see that Bunter does something!"

"Right-ho, Wingate," said the captain of the Remove. "This way, Bunter!"

There was a chortle among the junior cricketers. Only on rare occasions, and by compulsion, did Bunter line up for games. True, he was always willing to play a distinguished part in school matches—but for that opportunities were lacking. For such a dull business as practice, Bunter had no desire.

"Buck up, old fat rabbit!" said Johnny Bull. "It will do you good, you know."

"Oh, dear!"

"Try some bowling, and see if you can get within a mile of the sticks!" suggested Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"For goodness' sake don't give him a ball," said Peter Todd. "He will brain somebody."

"The brainfulness will be terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Beast!"

"Pull up your socks, Bunty," said Harry Wharton good-humouredly. "You've often told us how you could knock up centuries for the Form, if you had a chance."

"So I could!" growled Bunter.

"Well, take the bat, and knock up a century now," said Wharton encouragingly. "Inky will give you some easy bowling!"

"With terrific pleasurefulness!" said Hurree Singh.

Bunter snorted.

"I could knock Inky's bowling all over the field, if I liked!" he said disdainfully.

"Well, go ahead and do it, old bean!"

Billy Bunter blinked round through his big glasses. He wasn't thinking of cricket, but of the jam-tarts in his study. Like the Dying Gladiator of old, he heard but he heeded not; his eyes were with his heart, and that was far away.

But there was no help for it; Wingate was still in the offing, and there was no escape for Bunter. But necessity is the parent of invention; and Bunter's fat brain was working. He took the bat and went to the wicket, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh prepared to give him an easy ball. There was a general grin as Bunter took up his position, with a fat straddle.

The ball came down. It was right for the wicket; but it did not reach the wicket. There was something in the way.

It was not Bunter's bat. Bunter's bat was seldom or never known to get in the way of a cricket ball.

It was Bunter's fat leg.

There was a wild yell from the batsman:

"Yaroooh!"

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

"Yoop! Help! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The bat crashed on the wicket, and they fell together. Billy Bunter was jazzing on one leg, clasping the other, and yelling:

"Wow-wow-wow! I'm killed! I'm lame! Yooop! Help!"

Bump!

The Owl of the Remove sat down, with a concussion that almost shook the cricket pitch, and sat and roared.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Disabled!

"HA, ha, ha!"

Bunter could not help feeling that it was heartless, horribly unfeeling. Here was he, an injured cricketer, suffering terribly; and all the other fellows did was to howl with laughter. It could not be called sympathetic.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get up, you fat idiot!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Yoooop!"

"Pick him up, somebody!"

"Anybody got a steam derrick in his pocket?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter!" shouted Wharton.

"Beast! Ow!"

"You're not hurt, you fat duffer!" exclaimed Squiff.

"Wow! I'm lame!"

Billy Bunter essayed to rise. He collapsed again quite artistically, and lay groaning on the pitch.

The grinning cricketers gathered round him. This wasn't exactly cricket practice; but it came in as a comic interlude.

Billy Bunter blinked up at them pathetically.

"I can't move!" he groaned. "Carry me in, will you? Get a stretcher or something."

"What's the good of a stretcher to you?" said Bob. "Who could lift it? You want a lorry."

"Beast!"

"Take hold of his ears, and let's see if we can pull him along," suggested Johnny Bull.

"Yarooooh!"

Wingate of the Sixth came striding up. He was not laughing; he was annoyed. His valuable time was being wasted.

"Get up, Bunter!" he snapped.

"I—I can't!"

"You're not hurt!"

"I'm fearfully injured."

Bunter backed up that statement with a deep, almost hair-raising groan.

"The ball really hit him, Wingate," said Harry Wharton. "He had his silly leg right in the way."

"It's broken my knee," said Bunter faintly. "I didn't know it was coming down so hard, or I wouldn't——"

He paused in time.

"You fat rascal!" growled Wingate. "You got a knock on purpose to sneak off!"

"Oh, really, Wingate——"

"Let's see the damage, anyhow."

"I can't move!"

"Give him your boot, Todd, till he moves."

"Certainly."

"Yaroooh! Keep off! I—I can move!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter found that he could move by the time Peter Todd had drawn his foot back to help him. He sat up, and bared the injured knee.

Undoubtedly Bunter had had a hard knock. He had intended to get a light one, and plead a fictitious injury. But the best-laid schemes do not always work out according to programme. Bunter had had a much harder knock than he had anticipated; and there was a dark bruise on his fat knee.

It was not a serious bruise—any other fellow would have made nothing of it. But there it was—it was a bruise, and that could not be gainsaid.

Bunter could have wept with the pathos of it as he blinked at it. He was an injured cricketer—seriously injured in standing up manfully to the bowling; and he was getting no sympathy at all.

Wingate gave a snort of contempt.

"You can crawl off, you slacking bounder!" he said. "I've a jolly good mind to give you six, for getting leg before."

"I'm fearfully hurt——"

"Oh, get out!"

"I can't get up!"

"Help him with a bat, somebody!"

"Keep off, you beasts! I can get up, I think."

Bunter got up quite quickly. He blinked round for sympathy; but there was no sympathy going. All the juniors were laughing, and Wingate of the Sixth was frowning.

"Help me back to the house, Toddy!" murmured Bunter. "Let me lean on your arm, old chap."

"I don't think!" grinned Peter.

"Help me, Bob! You're not such a beast as Toddy!"

"I'll help!" said Bob. "Here you are."

He prodded Bunter with his bat.

"Yoooop!"

Billy Bunter jumped away, without further help. But out of reach of Bob Cherry's bat, he developed lameness. He went off the cricket field limping.

He looked back from a safe distance, hoping to see that the Removites were properly impressed by these signs of injury and suffering. He was disappointed. The juniors had turned to cricket again, and apparently they had already forgotten the existence of W. G. Bunter.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter.

He limped off towards the School House. That limp was an asset, as it were; it showed that he was injured, and that it was no prefect's duty to round him up again that afternoon.

The limp grew more pronounced as he approached the School House. It was a custom of Bunter's, when he departed from the truth—as he so often did—to let his "whoppers" grow. Having started with a slight limp, he finished with a very pronounced limp indeed. The more he limped, the more he felt himself a very injured person.

"Hallo, what's the matter with the fat frog?" It was Coker of the Fifth, in the quad. "Gone bandy-legged, Bunter?"

Bunter blinked at Coker, more in sorrow than in anger. Bandy-legged! A fellow who had just been seriously injured, playing cricket! It was just like Coker of the Fifth.

"I've been hurt," said Bunter, with dignity. "Playing cricket!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Coker.

"The ball crashed on my leg—practically smashed my knee," said Bunter. "I may be lame for life. I'm not complaining. A fellow must take the risks of the game."

And Bunter limped on, leaving Coker of the Fifth dumbfounded.

In the doorway of the School House Bunter encountered Mr. Quelch, his Form-master. Mr. Quelch's penetrating

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RESULT OF "Magnet" Limerick Competition (No. 9).

In this competition the first prize of £1 1s. for the best line sent in has been awarded to:

ERNEST VINCENT, 56, Nichols Street, Leicester, whose line was:

"After my name K.C.B. should appear."

Four consolation prizes of 2s. 6d. each for the next best have been awarded to the following:

F. H. RICHARDSON, 32, Boswall Drive, Edinburgh.
WM. HEWITT, 53, Durants Road, Ponders End, N.
B. TAYLOR, 4, Hartley Road, Leytonstone, E. 11.
CHARLES J. BUGG, 5, St. Margaret's Road, South Tottenham, N. 15.

eyes almost bored into Bunter; and for a moment he decided not to limp. But he realised that Mr. Quelch must have seen him limping towards the house; it was too late now.

"What is the matter with you, Bunter?" asked the Remove master, in his sharp, metallic tones.

"M-m-matter, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"Have you hurt yourself?"

"I've been playing cricket, sir," said Bunter bravely. "I'm injured. I don't mind, sir! It's all in the game."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch, rather nonplussed. "You had better go at once to the housekeeper, Bunter."

"Yes, sir."

Bunter was not keen on going to the housekeeper. But he had to go, and he went. Mrs. Kebble did not tell him what she thought of him and his injury. But Bunter could read her thoughts in her face, short-sighted as he was; and mentally he called Mrs. Kebble a cat.

"Anyhow, I'm out of the blessed cricket!" he murmured, as he made his way to the Remove passage. And his fat face was wreathed in smiles as he thought of Coker's tarts and Bob Cherry's toffee.

Study No. 7 was not vacant when he reached it. Somebody was there—and Bunter, blinking in, beheld a fat face, very like his own, adorned with a pair of large spectacles. It was his minor, Sammy Bunter of the Second.

Bunter minor was busy—had been very busy. Apparently he had looked in to see his major that afternoon. He had not found his major, but he had found the tarts and the toffee. The toffee had vanished. The last tart was vanishing.

Sammy Bunter turned a happy and jammy face towards his major.

Bunter blinked at him speechlessly for a moment.

"You—you——" he gasped.

"I say, Billy——"

"You—you——"

"You didn't mind——" began Sammy, alarmed by his major's expression.

Apparently Bunter did mind.

He made a wild rush at Sammy Bunter, and grasped him, and whirled him round to the doorway. Then he kicked.

"Whooop!" roared Sammy.

Bunter minor fairly flew into the passage. He did not stay there. He fled for the stairs. Bunter sank into the armchair, a twinge in his knee reminding him that he had kicked Sammy with the lame leg. But to judge by the effects on Sammy, the lameness could not have been very serious.

The ball came down, and Bunter stopped it—with his knee! "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Leg before!" "Yoop! Help! Wow!" yelled Billy Bunter, jazzing on one leg and clasping the other.
(See Chapter 1.)

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter the Invalid!

"WHAT!"

Peter Todd stared and blinked.

Peter had come in to tea, after the cricket, having in the interval forgotten that there was such a person as William George Bunter under the sun.

Now he was reminded of Bunter.

William George was in the study. That was not surprising, as Peter's study was also Bunter's study. It was Bunter's attitude that was surprising.

He sat in the armchair, and his leg rested on another chair. His trouser-leg was turned back over the knee. The knee was bandaged. Bandages were fairly piled on it. It looked extraordinarily enlarged in its multifarious bandages. It looked, indeed, more like a huge knob than a knee.

There was an expression of patient suffering on Bunter's face as he blinked at Peter.

"Don't come too near!" he breathed.

"What! Why not?"

"You might touch me!"

"Touch you?" babbled Peter.

"A jolt would give me fearful pain. I'm suffering great agony now, but I'm bearing it, Toddy."

Peter looked at him. Peter was quite a voluble youth, as a rule; but now he seemed at a loss for words.

"I'm not going to make a fuss about it," said Bunter, with simple heroism. "Fellows have been injured at games before. I know that."

"Games?" stuttered Peter.

"It's up to a fellow not to make a fuss. After all, a chap's bound to take his risks at cricket."

"Cricket?"

"Oh, really, Peter! I wish you wouldn't keep on repeating what I say like a dashed parrot!" said Bunter irritably.

Peter Todd gasped.

"So you've been injured at games—knocked out playing cricket!" he contrived to ejaculate.

"You know I have, Peter!" said the Owl of the Remove reproachfully. "You were present, and saw me standing up to the bowling."

"Standing up to the bowling?" repeated Peter dazedly.

In spite of Bunter's injunction, he seemed to be unable to do anything but repeat Bunter parrot-like.

"It was hot stuff," said Bunter.

"Hot stuff?"

"But I faced it."

"You—you faced it?"

"There's risk in every game," said Bunter. "A fellow can't show the white feather. Dash it all, a chap's bound to have pluck! Suppose he gets injured—seriously injured! Well, he's got to stand it—that's all!"

That really was heroic of Bunter. He blinked at Peter Todd, apparently expecting an outbreak of admiring ejaculations.

If Bunter expected that, however, Bunter was disappointed. Whatsoever Toddy's face expressed, it was not admiration. Neither were his remarks punctuated by notes of admiration.

"You fat spoofer!" he roared.

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"You're not hurt."

"Look here——"

"Standing up to the bowling!" hooted Peter. "Call that bowling? Inky sent you down a ball that a blind owl could have played with its eyes shut!"

"Yah!"

"Hot stuff!" snorted Peter Todd. "Facing it! You fat fraud!"

"If that's your sympathy for a fellow who's been knocked out playing cricket, Peter Todd——"

"What have you done your silly knee up like that for?" bawled Peter Todd.

"Because it's injured, you beast! Suppose it turned to—to—to gangrene?"

"Oh, pip!"

"Suppose mortifaction set in?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Mortification."

"Do you mean mortification, you fat dummy?"

"No, I don't; I mean mortifaction," said Bunter. "You're ignorant, Peter Todd."

Tom Dutton, the third member of Study No. 7, came in. He stared at Bunter and his bandaged knee, as well

he might. Tom had been a witness of Billy Bunter's exploits on the cricket-ground.

"What's that for, Bunter?" he asked.

"My knee's broken, or jolly near," explained Bunter.

Tom Dutton had the misfortune to be deaf, or, more properly speaking, his study-mates had the misfortune, and Tom had the deafness.

"Eh, what?" he asked.

"Knee broken!" hooted Bunter.

"Spoken? Yes, I spoke. I asked you what you've got yourself tied up like an old gouty subject for."

"Injury to the knee!" shrieked Bunter.

"See? Yes, I see! But what's it for?"

"I'm lame!" howled Bunter.

"What game?"

"Oh dear!"

"Silly game, I call it, if it's a game," said Dutton, staring blankly at Bunter. "Must be jolly uncomfy sitting there like a trussed turkey!"

"You silly chump!"

"Yes, I saw it—not much of a bump," said Dutton. "Mean to say you've tied your leg up like that because of a little bump? Well, you must be an ass!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I don't see the joke at all! Dry up, for goodness' sake! What are you laughing at, Peter Todd?"

Peter Todd did not undertake to explain what he was laughing at. He was too tired after cricket.

Study No. 7 proceeded to get tea. Bunter, being an invalid, could not help. But he looked very hungrily at the tea-table when it was ready.

"I say, Peter, I'm hungry," he said.

"You generally are!" assented Peter.

"I sha'n't be able to stand my whack to-day——"

"You generally aren't."

"I've been disappointed about a postal-order——"

"I believe I've heard something like that before," said Peter Todd in a reflective sort of way.

"I say, Peter, I want my tea, you know. I'll stand my whack to-morrow. You're going to stand me some tea, old chap."

"Pile in, fatty!"

"I can't reach it from here," hinted Bunter.

"No, I suppose you can't. Come up to the table."

"I'm lame!"

"Dear me!" said Peter Todd.

"The slightest movement causes me fearful agony!"

"Better sit still, then," advised Peter.

"I'm going to. Pass me the grub, will you?"

"Not at all!"

"Look here, you beast! How am I to eat if you won't pass me the grub and I can't come to the table?" howled Bunter.

"Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron!" said Toddy.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Isn't that the answer?"

"The—the answer?"

"Weren't you asking me a conundrum?"

"Beast! No, I wasn't! How am I to get my tea if you won't wait on me while I'm knocked up?" shrieked Bunter.

"One stacks the caps and the other caps the stacks!" said Peter, apparently determined to persist in the theory that Bunter was asking him conundrums.

"Beast!"

"I say, these sardines are quite good!" remarked Peter Todd. "Better buck up, Bunter, or they'll all be gone!"

"Wheel this chair up to the table for me, will you, Peter?"

"Can't you manage by yourself?"

"No."

"Where there's a wheel there's a way!" said Peter encouragingly.

"Beast! Hand me over the grub!"

"My dear chap, I'm not a steam-crane! I couldn't lift you! How can I hand you over the grub?"

"You know what I mean!" howled Bunter. "Hand the grub over to me, you beast!"

"Oh, that's what you mean, is it? Well, what I mean is to get on with these sardines before you scoff the lion's share!" And Peter got on.

Billy Bunter looked at his study-mate as if he could bite him. Bunter had envisaged himself as an invalid in the study, with a gentle and sympathetic Peter waiting on him at teatime, giving him all the nicest morsels. Evidently he had over-rated Peter's sympathetic gentleness. Instead of waiting on him Peter was waiting on himself, and the nicest morsels were going inside Peter.

Bunter stood it for a few minutes.

His pose was, as he flattered himself, an effective one. As a lame hero, knocked out by gallantly standing up to deadly bowling, Bunter fancied himself very much. But missing his tea for the sake of that pose was too much of a good thing.

The lame hero contrived to get out of the armchair. With deep groans, he approached the study table.

"Feel better?" asked Peter genially.

"No! Worse!"

"Lost your appetite?"

"No!" said Bunter hastily.

"That's bad!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter started tea, putting on speed to make up for lost time. It was not till the table had been cleared that he had leisure to groan again. Then he put in a few groans.

"Is it the fearful anguish makes you kick up that row?" Peter Todd asked, glancing round him as if in search of something.

"Yes! What are you looking for?"

"My fives-bat! I'm going to give you some more fearful anguish if you don't stop groaning!"

Bunter stopped groaning.

When Peter and Dutton started prep Bunter was in the armchair again, with his bandaged leg resting on another chair, though he did not venture to groan. Peter gave him a look.

"Prep, fatty!" he said.

"I'm too ill for it, Peter!"

"That won't wash with Quelchy in the morning, you fat duffer!"

"You'll be sorry, Peter, if mortifaction sets in and you lose me!" said Bunter, with a last attempt to touch Peter's heart.

Peter chuckled heartlessly.

"I don't think there's such a thing as mortifaction, old bean!" he said. "But I hope there is if it will lead to losing you!"

"Beast!"

Bunter gave Peter up after that. When prep was finished Bunter was reading; in spite of his terrible anguish, he contrived to read. He blinked up as Todd and Dutton were leaving the study.

"I sha'n't be coming down to Common-room, Peter," he said faintly.

"Good!"

"Tell the fellows I'm too injured to move."

"Tell your own whoppers, old bean! I'm not a substitute Ananias!" said Peter.

"If the fellows inquire after me——"

"That's all right!" said Peter comfortingly. "They won't!"

"Beast!"

And Bunter was left alone in his glory.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Lame Duck!

PETER TODD was right. Nobody seemed to miss William George Bunter in the Common-room that evening. Nobody asked Peter where he was or seemed to remember him at all. Bunter had seen, in his mind's eye, a constant stream of fellows coming along to Study No. 7 to inquire how he was, perhaps to bring him something grateful and comforting in the way of tuck. But that agreeable vision remained a vision of the mind's eye only. With his bodily eyes Bunter saw nothing of the kind.

It was not till bedtime that the unimportant existence of William George Bunter was recalled, and then it was recalled by Gwynne of the Sixth, whose turn of duty it was to see lights out in the Remove dormitory. Gwynne missed

one member of the Form, and rapped out a question as to where he was:

"Where's Bunter?"

"My hat! I suppose he's still in the study!" ejaculated Peter Todd.

"Not swotting?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Ha, ha! I fancy not!"

"By gad! I'll warm him!" grunted Gwynne of the Sixth, and he started for the Remove passage.

Gwynne's eyes almost bulged from his head at the sight of Bunter, with his bandaged knee, in the study. Bunter had not really spent a happy evening. He was utterly neglected in his sufferings, and more than once he had wondered whether it would not be wiser to "chuck" up his sufferings and stop being lame. But he had a natural repugnance to chucking up a "wheeze" until he was quite sure that there was nothing in it, so he carried on.

At least, Bunter reflected, Toddy would be bound to come back at bedtime and give him a helping arm up to the dormitory. Unfortunately, Toddy did not. It was a prefect who glared in at the doorway, and Bunter felt an inward tremor.

"What's this game?" grunted Gwynne.

"I'm lame."

"Phwat?"

"Knee smashed at cricket to-day," faltered Bunter.

"Gammon!"

"There's a fearful bruise!" said Bunter. "Mrs. Kebble's given me some embrocation for it."

"Did Mrs. Kebble tie you up like this?"

"N-n-no."

"Did she tell you to do it?"

"N-n-not exactly."

"I understand!" said Gwynne, with a nod.

"I—I'm glad you understand, Gwynne!" mumbled Bunter. "You see, I can't get to the dorm without help."

"Sure, I'm going to help you!" said Gwynne kindly.

Bunter's eyes glimmered behind his glasses. He wondered what the fellows would think when he limped into the Remove dormitory, leaning on the distinguished arm of so great a personage as a prefect of the Sixth Form.

"Thank you, Gwynne!" said the Owl of the Remove in a faint voice.

"Not at all!" said Gwynne genially. "If you want help—sure, you're going to have it!"

He took the armchair by the back and tilted it up. There was a terrific roar as Billy Bunter rolled out on the hearthrug.

"Yaroooh!"

"Can you walk to the dorm now?" inquired Gwynne.

"Yow-ow! No!"

"Can you run?"

"No! Ow!"

"Poor kid!" said Gwynne commiseratingly. "It's hard on you! Can't either walk or run! Looks to me as if you're in for it, then, because, bedad, I'm going to kick you all the time you stay in this study!"

Gwynne started.

Whether Bunter could walk or run or not, certainly he could jump. He jumped like a kangaroo.

One jump carried him out of range of Gwynne's boot; another landed him in the passage. Then, as Gwynne followed him out, his running powers developed quite suddenly.

He ran for his life.

He ran so well that he was in the Remove dormitory two or three minutes ahead of Gwynne. A general chuckle greeted his arrival there.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "What's the matter with your knee, Bunter?"

"Ow, wow! I'm lame!" gasped Bunter, sinking on his bed. "You unsympathetic beasts——"

"You were putting on a lot of speed for a lame duck!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Better turn in before Gwynne comes back!" suggested Vernon-Smith. "He doesn't like to be kept waiting."

That advice was too good not to be taken. Billy Bunter turned in with great speed.

Gwynne was grinning when he came in to turn lights out. After the prefect was gone, a deep groan proceeded from Bunter's bed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What on earth's that?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

Groan!

"Is that you, Bunter?"

"Yes. I'm suffering fearful agony!"

"Can't you suffer it quietly?"

Groan!

"If I hear that row again," said Bolsover major, in concentrated tones, "I'll get out of bed to you, Bunter! I'll jolly well give you something to groan for!"

"I—I say, you fellows," said Bunter, suppressing his groans. "I say, I'm really in awful pain, you know! That cricket-ball fractured the—the spinal column of my knee!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you fellows can take my word!" howled Bunter. "The spinal column of my knee is practically in fragments! I say, I ought to have these bandages changed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you going to change them for me, Toddy?"

"I don't think!" grinned Toddy.

"Are you, Wharton?"

"I seem to fancy not!" chuckled the captain of the Remove.

"I may have a mortifacted leg in the morning."

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

The mortifacted leg was too much for the Removites. They howled. Billy Bunter gave a scornful snort, and laid his head on the pillow to sleep. In spite of his fearful injuries and his uncommon suffering, he was soon in slumber, and his deep and resonant snore echoed through the dormitory as usual.

Clang, clang, clang!

Billy Bunter came out of a blissful dream of doughnuts and meringues as the rising-bell clanged out in the sunny summer morning.

He rubbed his eyes, and blinked round the dormitory. For the moment he had forgotten that he was a disabled cricketer suffering from severe injuries. But the bundle of bandages tied round his fat knee reminded him, and he started the morning with a deep groan.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You want me to help you out, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry, picking up a pillow.

"Don't come too near," said Bunter, as Peter Todd blinked in amazement at him. "You might touch me." "Touch you?" babbled Peter. "Yes, I'm suffering great pain, but I'm bearing it, Toddy."
(See Chapter 3.)

"I say, Bob, old chap, don't be a beast," said Bunter faintly. "Tell Mr. Quelch I'm too ill to come down this morning."

"You feel that you can't turn out?"

"Yes, old chap."

"Not even if I swipe you with this pillow?"

"Yarooooh!"

Bunter found that he could turn out. He was last down of the Remove that morning, which was not uncommon. But the aspect he presented when he came down was very uncommon indeed. One leg of his trousers bulged over bandages on his knee, and he was limping painfully.

His limp made the Removites chuckle. But when he was seen by Mr. Quelch, at breakfast, the Form master noted it, and eyed him.

"You are limping, Bunter."

"Yes, sir."

"Is your injury still painful?"

"It—it's awful, sir," said Bunter pathetically.

"I have spoken to Mrs. Kebble, Bunter, and she states that there was only a slight bruise on your knee, which would probably disappear by to-day."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, sir, Mrs. Kebble is rather an ignorant woman, sir."

"Bunter, do you mean to tell me, seriously, that your knee obliges you to limp?"

"Oh, yes, sir! It was so agonising last evening, sir, that I wasn't able to do any prep."

"Phew!" murmured the Removites, wondering how Mr. Quelch would take that artless statement.

Mr. Quelch frowned grimly.

"If you are really hurt, Bunter——"

"Horribly, sir!"

"It is very extraordinary that the injury should leave so little trace——"

"There's lots of traces, sir," said Bunter eagerly.

"Mrs. Kebble states——"

"It—it's got worse since then, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Horribly black and blue, sir! Horribly!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch, staring at the fat junior. "In that case, the matter certainly is serious."

"I—I'm glad you think so, sir," said Bunter. "The pain is horrible! I—I don't know how I shall be able to do any lessons, sir! Of course, I—I should hate to miss lessons. But with this fearful pain, and horrible black bruises all over my knee——"

"Very well, Bunter! Before morning lessons I will examine your injury myself, and ascertain whether it is necessary for you to see a doctor. You may sit down."

Bunter sat down—or, rather, collapsed into his chair. The look on his fat face made the Remove fellows almost shriek; they were only barely restrained by the august presence of their Form master. Mr. Quelch was going to look at that injured knee—at those awful black and blue bruises that existed only in Bunter's active imagination! It was a weakness in Bunter's system of spoofing that he never paused to calculate the probable result of a "whopper." It really looked as if William George Bunter was "landed" now; and he wondered desperately whether it would be feasible to have a sudden and remarkable recovery before morning lessons. With that problem on his mind, Bunter, for the first time in his life, almost lost his appetite.

But not quite.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Only Way!

AFTER breakfast Billy Bunter wandered out of the School House with a corrugated brow.

He had food for thought.

Thinking was not much in Billy Bunter's line, and it worried him. When there was trouble on hand Bunter's first resource was to shift it upon somebody else if possible; if that wasn't possible, his second resource was to let it "slide."

Neither resource was of any use to him now.

His fat knee, which was supposed to be black and blue from the impact of the cricket-ball, was to be inspected by his Form master before first lesson. And so far from that fat knee being black and blue, the slight bruise that really had existed had almost gone.

What was he going to do?

He had missed prep the evening before on the strength of the injury. His trousers bulged with bandages on its account at this very moment.

And one glance from Mr. Quelch would be enough. There would be the missed prep to pay for, and the "whoppers" told at the breakfast-table, and Bunter's fat palms tingled in anticipation.

Moreover, with his spoof shown up and his "injury" abolished, he would not be able to dodge cricket practice next time, as he had confidently hoped.

It was a hard case, and Bunter's podgy brow was as corrugated as the roof of an Army hut as he thought it out, in dismal mood.

Obviously, there was only one thing for it.

Owning up to the facts was not the thing. A resource like that never even occurred to Bunter, though his fat brain was working at great pressure. Between Bunter and facts there was a great gulf fixed.

He had stated that his knee was black and blue. Before Mr. Quelch examined it it had to become black and blue. That would bear out Bunter's statement, and prove to his Form master what a truthful fellow he was. He hoped, indeed, that when Mr. Quelch saw this evidence with his own eyes, he would be properly ashamed of having doubted Bunter's word.

Nevertheless, this brilliant scheme for getting out of the difficulty had its drawbacks. For the fat leg could only become in the proper state of black-and-blueness by the violent impact of some hard instrument, such as a cricket-bat or a boot.

Bunter had not the slightest desire to feel the violent impact of a hard instrument on his fat leg. In fact, he hated the idea.

But after due thought, and feeling that time was getting on, Bunter came to the conclusion that it was the only way. He decided first to bang his knee against the school wall as the simplest method, and he approached the wall for that purpose. But his inward repugnance was too strong for Bunter. Something within him, stronger than his determination to manufacture convincing evidence, held him back, and his fat knee tapped the wall gently instead of banging it.

He realised dismally that this would not do.

He looked for his minor, Sammy of the Second. Sammy would kick him on the knee, if he asked him. Indeed, he was aware that Sammy would kick him anywhere with pleasure, given the opportunity.

Bunter minor was found in the quadrangle, and he eyed Bunter major very warily. Sammy had not forgotten the encounter in Study No. 7 the previous day.

But Billy Bunter soon reassured him.

"It's all right, Sammy."

"Is it?" said Sammy, backing warily.

"Never mind about the tarts. You were a greedy little beast; and it wasn't honest, either, to take my tarts while I was out playing cricket," said Bunter severely.

Sammy winked.

"Do you call that cricket?" he asked, with interest.

"Look here——"

"I've heard Coker of the Fifth inquiring after some tarts," said Sammy. "Know anything about them?"

Bunter decided that there was no need to go into that. Besides, there wasn't time.

"I want you to do something for me, Sammy," he said, sinking his voice, after a careful blink round.

"You can give it a name," said Bunter minor, not in a very promising tone.

"Will you kick me?"

"Eh?"

"Kick me."

"K-k-kick you?" stuttered Sammy.

"Yes. Hard!"

"Pulling my leg?" asked the astonished Sammy.

"No, no!" said Bunter irritably. "I've got a reason, and—and I want you to kick me as hard as you can—well, nearly as hard as you can."

"Pleasure!" said Sammy. "Turn round!"

"It's got to be on my knee. The same knee that was injured yesterday when I got leg-before, you know," whispered Bunter.

A glimmer of intelligence came into Sammy's little round eyes behind Sammy's big, round spectacles.

"Oh! Making out you're hurt?" he asked. "What's the game? That won't get you off classes, will it?"

"Never mind that," said Bunter impatiently. "You jaw too much, Sammy. Look here, will you give me a kick on the knee, hard enough to make a jolly good bruise?"

"I don't mind," grinned Sammy. Really, Sammy Bunter looked as if he quite liked the prospect. Perhaps he remembered the kicking he had received in Study No. 7, and felt that one good turn deserved another. Perhaps it was mere brotherly affection, and a kindly desire to oblige. Anyhow, there was no doubt that Sammy was keen.

"Shove out the giddy joint," he said. "As hard as I can—what?"

"Well, fairly hard," said Bunter, hesitating. "I've got to have a jolly good bruise."

"I'll manage it!" said Sammy reassuringly.

"Not—not too jolly hard."

"Leave it to me," said Sammy. "Which is the jolly old injured wing?"

"Blessed if I know! Oh, the bandaged one, of course," said Bunter. "Don't be an ass, Sammy!"

"Better take the bandages off, to get the full effect," advised Sammy, who was beginning to take quite an intense interest in the proceedings now.

"N-n-no. I—I think I'll leave them on," said Bunter. "You might kick too hard, you know."

"Couldn't be too hard, if you want a really good bruise."

"I'll chance that," said Bunter, very decidedly. "Now, I—I think I'll shut my eyes while you take a run and kick. See?"

"Better," agreed Sammy. "You'd funk, I expect."

"You cheeky little beast——"

"Ready?" asked Sammy briskly. "Stand there! Close your peepers, and stand firm. I promise you I'll fetch you a oner!"

He retired a few paces, to take a run. Billy Bunter stood with closed eyes, palpitating.

But again the something within him rose in rebellion. Perhaps Sammy's enthusiastic undertaking to give him a "oner" helped to sap away Billy Bunter's resolution. His eyes opened and blinked at Sammy as the fat fag came on in full career, and landed out with his boot with terrific vim.

Bunter jumped aside—just in time.

Sammy Bunter's foot swept past him, and, meeting with no resistance, flew into the air, and Sammy sat down in the quad with a crash.

"Oooooch!" he gasped.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

His plan had not been carried out. But there was something comic in Sammy sitting down like that, with a bump that almost shook the solid globe underneath him.

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Yooop!" spluttered Sammy. "You beast, you did that on purpose! Ow, ow, ow!"

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter walked away. It was borne in upon his fat mind that he wouldn't be able, somehow, to act upon this scheme, brilliant as it was. His repugnance to a "oner" on his fat leg was too powerful. So he walked away, to think the problem over afresh, leaving Sammy sitting on the ground, gasping for breath, and spluttering out remarks that were utterly unbrotherly.

"I'm glad you understand, Gwynne," mumbled Bunter. "I can't get to the dorm without help." "Sure, I'm going to help you," replied the prefect, kindly. And he took the armchair by the back and tilted it up. *(See Chapter 4.)*

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Brain-wave!

"I—I SAY, Mrs. Kebble!"

Billy Bunter blinked dismally into the housekeeper's room.

His first scheme had failed—not from any lack of keenness on his minor's part. Bunter had cudgelled his brains for nothing, realising that the only scheme that would suit him would be one that did not include getting hurt. To that he realised he had an objection that was too strong to be overcome.

With a faint hope he rolled to the housekeeper's room. Mrs. Kebble was, in Bunter's opinion, a "cat." But even a cat had feelings. By pitching a particularly pathetic yarn Bunter faintly hoped that Mrs. Kebble might be induced to bandage his knee with official bandages, upon which he would be able to tell Mr. Quelch that Mrs. Kebble had instructed him to keep the injured leg's bandages intact.

It was a faint hope, but it was all Bunter had left. So he spoke in his most ingratiating voice as he limped into the housekeeper's room.

Mrs. Kebble was not there.

The door was half-open, and Mrs. Kebble had evidently been there lately, for there was a pile of linen on the table, a quill pen, and a bottle of marking-ink. Mrs. Kebble had been marking linen when she had been called away by some of her multifarious duties below stairs.

Bunter grunted with disappointment.

If Mrs. Kebble failed him, all was lost. The Remove master would see the fat knee bare of injury, and a severe licking for deception would follow. Bunter realised how unfortunate it was that, while his Form master was a beast, the housekeeper was a cat, and even the cat was away!

He did not know where Mrs. Kebble was, and there was no time to go hunting for her. He wondered whether he should spare a minute in spilling the indelible marking-ink over the clean linen. It would not help him in his present emergency; but it would be a solace in itself.

He picked up the bottle, and gave an angry grunt as, removing the cork, he stained his fat fingers. He rubbed the fingers on his trousers, but the ink really was indelible, and it did not come off.

"Blow it!" growled Bunter.

Tell-tale marks on his fingers were so many clues to his visit to the housekeeper's room. And it would be no end of trouble to scrub them off, and then they wouldn't quite go. Obviously, it would be more prudent not to spill the ink over the clean linen.

And then, like a brain-wave, the great idea came to Bunter.

His eyes glittered behind his spectacles.

He quickly re-corked the bottle of marking-ink, dropped it into his pocket,

and hurried out of the room, in his haste forgetting even to limp.

A minute later he was in a bath-room, with the door locked. He was safe from observation there, and there was soap and hot water for use after he had carried out his amazing wheeze.

Ink that stained his fat fingers the colour of a dark bruise would stain his fat knee ditto.

It was a wheeze worthy of Billy Bunter, who lived, moved, and had his fat being in spoof.

Hurriedly he turned back the leg of his trousers, and whipped off the bandages.

Then, wetting a handkerchief with the purple marking-ink, he carefully rubbed it over his knee and the parts adjoining.

The deep stain sank into the skin.

In a few minutes Bunter's knee looked as if it were fairly blossoming with bruises. The whole surface thereof had a black and blue bruised appearance.

"Oh, good!" ejaculated Bunter.

He had to wait for it to dry. In the meantime he screwed up the inky handkerchief round the bottle, and hid them under the bath. It was rather rotten that he had had to use his own handkerchief; but there had been no time to get hold of another fellow's. Every great scheme has its drawbacks. But this, after all, was a mere trifle.

Bunter turned on the hot water, and scrubbed his fat paws, to get rid of traces of the ink. Even with hot water, soap, and a scrubbing-brush it clung. Evidently it was ink of very good quality. But Bunter simply had to get rid of these tell-tale stains, and he rubbed and scrubbed, and scrubbed and rubbed, till he was in a perspiration.

He was still busy when his name was called.

"Bunter! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where are you, Bunter?"

It was Bob Cherry's voice.

Evidently Bob had been sent in search of the Owl of the Remove. The fat junior made no reply. Bob was not likely to look for him among the bath-rooms. Bunter seldom or never visited bath-rooms; nobody who knew Bunter would have sought him there.

He grinned as he heard Bob's powerful voice booming up and down the passages.

"Bunter! Mr. Quelch wants you, Bunter!"

"Let him want!" murmured Bunter, sotto voce.

"Bunter! Fatty! Froggy! Tubby!" bawled Bob Cherry.

But there was no answer, and the voice faded away, as the unsuccessful searcher went farther.

Bunter's fat paws were clean at last—cleaner than they had been the whole term, in fact. Then he looked at his injured knee. The ink had dried, and there was quite a convincing appearance of bruising. Certainly, a very close inspection would have revealed the cheat; but it was not likely that the Remove master would make a close inspection. The mere sight of the black-and-blue knee would surely be enough for him.

Having ascertained that the marking-ink was quite dry, Bunter replaced his bandages. It was necessary to be careful, of course, that the ink did not stain the bandages. Bruises couldn't have done that, however severe.

With the bandages bulging under the trouser-leg, Bunter's knee had a very gouty look, as he rolled out of the bath-room at last, grinning.

Stairs and passages were deserted.

Bunter realised that first lesson was in progress by this time, and his heart beat a little faster.

If his spoof was not a success, this was one more sin to answer for. But he felt that he was in for it now, and he rolled away to the Remove-room, manfully resolved to do his best. Mr. Quelch, being a beast, would not take a fellow's word: but the evidence of his own eyes would surely be enough even for a suspicious beast. Bunter hoped so, anyway.

As he approached the Form-room, Bunter ceased to grin, and assumed an expression of martyred anguish. With deep suffering in his fat face, he limped slowly and painfully into the Remove room.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Working the Oracle!

"BUNTER!"

Mr. Quelch's voice was like the rumble of thunder. And the glitter in his eyes was a good deal like the electric flash which accompanies thunder.

All eyes in the Form-room fixed on Bunter. He was a quarter of an hour late for class, which in itself was unpardonable. And he was limping!

The Removites fairly stared at Bunter. Everybody in the Form-room knew that he was not injured. That he should have the colossal cheek to attempt this spoof on so dangerous a customer as Henry Quelch, M.A., simply took the juniors' breath away.

"The awful ass!" breathed Peter Todd. "Quelchy will skin him for this."

"The skinfulness will be terrific," murmured the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Bunter's for it!" grinned Bolsover major.

"Silence! Bunter!" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!" said Bunter, in a faint and expiring voice.

"You are late for class."

"Am I, sir? I'm suffering so much, sir——"

"I have spoken again to Mrs. Kebble, Bunter, specially, and she states that your injury, such as it was, was utterly negligible."

Bunter wondered whether Mrs. Kebble had been interviewing the Remove master at the time he bagged the marking-ink. If so, Mr. Quelch had been helping him out, quite unintentionally.

"I told you, Bunter, that I would examine your supposed injury myself, and sent Cherry to find you and send you to my study."

"D-d-did you, sir?"

"Cherry was unable to find you. Where have you been?"

"I—I was lying down, sir," said Bunter faintly. "The awful pain in my knee, sir——"

"Very well!" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice. "You are compelling me to waste lesson-time, Bunter. If your injury really exists, I shall excuse you. If not, your punishment will be very severe. You will now show the knee you declare to be injured."

"Yes, sir."

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Why doesn't the fat owl own up before it is too late?"

That was a puzzle to all the Remove. So far as they could see, one glance at Bunter's knee would reveal the truth.

But Bunter did not seem alarmed. He fetched the chair from the corner of the Form-room, and sat down, in full view, between the juniors' desks and the Form master's high desk.

There he rolled back the trouser-leg, and revealed the bandages. There was a chuckle along the forms, as the bandages came into view. Mr. Quelch stilled it with a glare.

"This is not a laughing matter," he exclaimed. "If Bunter is injured, the matter is serious."

"If!" murmured Peter Todd.

"If he is not injured, the matter is still more serious," said Mr. Quelch. "In that case he is guilty of deception. That is a much more serious matter than an injury received at cricket."

The juniors tried to be grave. Doubtless Mr. Quelch was right. But it was quite certain that Bunter, at least, did not agree with him. Any injury to his fat person was the most serious of matters to William George Bunter; while he could have borne quite a lot of deception with fortitude.

"Remove those bandages, Bunter?"

"It—it hurts me to touch it, sir!"

"Remove the bandages!" repeated Mr. Quelch, in a voice of thunder.

"Oh! Very well, sir!"

Bunter unrolled the bandages. Bunter had had no lint at his disposal, and the bandages were home-made and variously made. One of Peter Todd's best handkerchiefs, and a shirt of Dutton's cut into strips, formed the greater part. Bunter never was very careful of other fellows' property; and an injured cricketer, of course, couldn't be too particular.

The bandages came off, and the fat knee was revealed to Mr. Quelch's eyes and the eyes of all the Form.

There was a gasp.

Mr. Quelch blinked.

The knee, and the leg above and below the knee, showed up blackish and bluish.

"Great pip!" murmured Peter Todd blankly. "I—I never thought he was damaged like that!"

"Out of condition!" said Wharton. "I suppose a tap would damage a fat bounder in Bunter's state."

Mr. Quelch's expression had altered.

"Bless my soul!" he said.

Bunter gave a groan.

He felt that it was time to groan.

"M-m-may I—I tie it up again, sir?" he faltered. "It—it hurts! The—the bandages seem to relieve the pain a little, sir!"

Mr. Quelch blinked at the black-and-blue knee.

"I am afraid, Bunter, that you are very much out of condition," he said. "Your knee has become much worse since Mrs. Kebble saw it. But certainly it looks very bad, and I shall telephone for the doctor to come up as quickly as possible and see it!"

Bunter groaned again—a genuine groan this time, at the prospect of a keen-eyed medical man seeing his knee. The marking-ink was not likely to deceive Dr. Pillbury.

"Certainly you may replace the bandages, Bunter," said the Form master, in a much more kindly manner now. "You are excused from lessons this morning, and you may go to your study and rest until the doctor arrives. You had better not exert yourself in any way until Dr. Pillbury has seen you!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Wharton, will you kindly go to my study, and ring up Dr. Pillbury at Friardale in my name, and request him to come up to the school at his very earliest convenience!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"We will now resume lessons!" added Mr. Quelch, to the disappointment of the Remove. Those young gentlemen would have preferred to devote the

whole morning to Billy Bunter and his "gammy" leg—it came very much easier than Latin prose.

"You might help me to my study, Wharton," said Bunter, in an expiring voice, as the captain of the Remove came out of his place.

"Pray do so, Wharton, and then telephone!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!"

Billy Bunter leaned heavily on Wharton's arm as they left the Form-room. Wharton helped him cheerily enough; he was convinced now—for the present, at least—of the reality of the injury. And though Bunter had bagged that injury from sheer slacking, Wharton felt that this was not the time to think of that.

Leaning on the captain of the Remove, and limping painfully, William George Bunter disappeared from the sight of his Form-fellows—who were left to Latin prose and Mr. Quelch.

Wharton convoyed Bunter to his study, and landed him in the armchair there.

"D-do-don't go for a minute, old chap!" said Bunter.

Wharton turned back from the door.

"Anything I can do?" he asked.

"Ye-e-es!"

"Buck up, then!" hinted Wharton, as the Owl of the Remove paused. "I've got to turn up in the Form-room, you know!"

"You're going to telephone to that beast?"

"Eh! What beast?" ejaculated Wharton.

"That sawbones beast!"

"Oh! Dr. Pillbury. Yes!"

"I—I say—— Suppose——"

"Well?" said Harry patiently.

"Suppose you forgot to telephone?"

Wharton stared at him.

"How on earth could I forget?" he demanded. "Quelchy's sent me specially to telephone!"

"You could spin Quelchy a yarn, I suppose," said Bunter peevishly.

"You fat rotter——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Don't you want to see the doctor?" demanded Harry Wharton. "Your knee looked pretty bad to me! Inflamed, I should say, or something!"

Bunter grinned.

"You—you see, I don't want to be made an invalid of," he said. "I'm hurt—fearfully hurt! The pain's terrible, of course! But dash it all, a fellow who plays cricket must stand all that. I don't want to go about having doctors and medicines and so on because I've got a knock at cricket. Would you?"

"I shouldn't like it," said Harry. "But I'm not a lump of fat and pastry, to get knocked out by a little jolt like that. You must be in a pretty rotten condition, Bunter, and you certainly ought to see a doctor."

"Well, I don't want to!" grunted Bunter.

"Can't be helped!" Wharton turned to the door again.

"Look here, you beast, are you going to telephone for that beast, when I don't want to see him?" snapped Bunter.

"I must, you ass! Quelchy would, if I didn't!"

"You can tell him you have, I suppose!"

Harry Wharton made no reply to that. As Bunter was—presumably—injured, the Remove captain did not want to take him by the scruff of the neck and shake him. And that would have been the only adequate reply to Bunter's cheery suggestion.

He left the study, leaving Bunter scowling, and went down to the Remove master's study, where he duly rang up Dr. Pillbury's house in Friardale. The doctor was out, so he gave Mr. Quelch's message to Mrs. Pillbury, and then returned to the Form-room.

Lessons in the Remove room that morning proceeded without Bunter.

That, from Bunter's point of view, as he sprawled and reflected in his study, was so much to the good. But it would turn out so much to the bad if the facts came out; he realised that. He hardly dared to think of what Mr. Quelch would say—and do!—when Dr. Pillbury informed him that Bunter's fat knee was affected by marking-ink—and nothing else! Bunter turned quite faint at that thought.

But once more, under the pressure of dire necessity, William George's powerful brain rose equal to the occasion. Ten minutes after Wharton had rejoined the class, Bunter peered cautiously out of Study No. 7, and still more cautiously made his way downstairs. The coast was clear—at that hour all the fellows were at classes.

But Bunter's fat heart thumped as he scuttled into Mr. Quelch's study, took the receiver off the hooks, and rang up Dr. Pillbury's number.

Mrs. Pillbury's voice came over the wires; the doctor had not yet returned from his morning round.

"Yes?"

"Speaking from Greyfriars, ma'am! You've had a message from here this morning——"

"Yes; Dr. Pillbury will call as soon as he returns. I expect him in about half an hour!"

Bunter shivered. It was a narrow shave!

"It's a mistake, ma'am—Mr. Quelch will not want the doctor after all!" he said. "He—he asked me to give you his apologies for the mistake!"

"Oh! Very well!"

Bunter rang off.

He crept back to his study feeling elated. The obnoxious medical gentleman would not come; the second message cancelled the first. The evil hour was put off, at least. That was something; in fact, it was a great deal to Billy Bunter, who never looked very far ahead.

He settled down in the armchair in Study No. 7, to pass a happy and thoroughly lazy morning—untroubled by the vision of a keen-eyed medical gentleman inspecting his inky knee.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bandy!

GROAN!

That cheery sound greeted Peter Todd as he came up to Study No. 7 after the Remove were released from morning classes.

Bunter had not been groaning all the morning. That would have been an unnecessary labour—a waste of effort. He started in with a groan as soon as he heard footsteps in the Remove passage.

Peter looked in.

The Owl of the Remove was reclining in the armchair, his bandaged leg resting on another. He groaned again as Toddy came in.

"Kick me fairly hard," said Bunter, hesitatingly. "I want a jolly good bruise." "I'll manage it," grinned Sammy. He landed out with his boot, but at the critical moment Bunter major jumped aside. Sammy sat down with a bump. (*See Chapter* 5.)

—and earn their everlasting thanks!

"Feeling bad?" asked Peter.

"Awful!" said Bunter pathetically.

Peter Todd eyed him. He was convinced, and yet, in spite of his conviction, doubt seemed to linger. There was so much spoof about William George Bunter that it really was not easy to believe that he was telling the truth.

Bunter, indeed, with the help of his fervid imagination, almost believed by this time that he was lame, and that his lameness was caused by deeds of derring-do on the cricket-field. But Toddy, though he had seen the black-and-blue knee, simply couldn't help having a lingering doubt. He knew William George so well.

"Knee isn't any better?" asked Toddy.

"Worse!"

"Well, the doctor can't be long, now," said Peter. "Eh, what are you grinning at?"

Bunter became grave again.

"I—I don't think the doctor can do much good, Peter," he said. "I—I think I really want a Harley Street specialist."

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Peter!"

"I—I suppose it's genuine?" said Peter Todd dubiously, eyeing Bunter. "If you're really hurt, fatty, I'm sorry. But you ought to keep yourself more fit. A rap like that wouldn't have hurt any fellow but you."

Groan!

"Look here, Bunter!"

Groan!

"Anything I can do?" grunted Peter. He was feeling a little remorseful.

"I'm hungry," said Bunter.

"Dinner won't be long."

"I could do with a snack now," said Bunter. "Now I'm laid up, Peter, with a fearful injury, you might look after me a bit."

"Oh, the injury isn't fearful," said Peter cheerily. "And you'll make yourself worse by guzzling just before dinner."

"A few tarts——"

"A few rats!" said Peter.

"Even some toffee!" urged Bunter.

"It hasn't affected your appetite, I see," said Peter. "Perhaps I'd better have a look at that knee, Bunter. I may be able to buck it up."

"I—I can't unbandage it, Peter. The pain is too fearful when I touch it," groaned Bunter. "I say, old fellow, you might cut down to the tuckshop and get me a bag of tarts. I'll pay, of course."

"Where's the cash?"

"I'm expecting a postal-order——"

"You can expect the bag of tarts at the same time, then," said Peter Todd. And he left the study.

"Beast!" howled Bunter.

Peter Todd went downstairs thoughtfully. The Famous Five met him in the lower passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! How's Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Blessed if I know," answered Toddy frankly. "I suppose it must be genuine, but——"

"Even Bunter might tell the truth, by accident," said Frank Nugent, laughing. "Besides, we saw the knee. It looked pretty bad to me."

"The badfulness looked terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!"

Billy Bunter appeared on the staircase. He came down holding on to the banisters, limping. There was a pathetic suffering in his fat face.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hadn't you better rest till the doctor comes, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Blow the doctor! What's the good of doctors?" asked Bunter scoffingly. "They don't know anything!"

"They know a malingerer when they see one!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull!"

"You won't do a bad leg any good hopping about on it, Bunter," said Nugent.

"If there was a decent chap here he'd lend me his arm to lean on," said Bunter witheringly.

Peter Todd gave an impatient grunt. He did not fancy himself walking about with Bunter leaning on his arm. No doubt it would have made a pathetic picture; but Peter was a practical youth, and he hated pathos. Nevertheless, it was difficult to resist the appeal.

"I'll help you, if you like," grunted Peter.

"Thanks, old chap!"

Bunter took Peter's arm and leaned on it. He put plenty of weight on Peter's arm.

"I—I think a walk in the quad would do me good," said Bunter faintly.

Peter walked him into the quad.

Bunter headed, as if by instinct, towards the school shop in the corner behind the elms. Peter Todd coolly headed him off.

"I say, Peter——"

"You don't want to guzzle now and spoil your dinner," said Toddy.

"Beast!"

"Hallo, Bunter! Still bandy?" inquired Coker of the Fifth, staring at the two juniors in the quad.

"I'm lame," said Bunter. "I've been lamed by a cricket-ball."

"Gammon!" said Coker.

"Beast!"

Bunter jerked at Toddy again, and headed him for the tuckshop. Peter Todd jerked in his turn, and headed away from it. Billy Bunter gave him a blink of rage.

"I'm going to the tuckshop, Peter Todd, you beast!"

"Worst thing possible for you, old fat bean," answered Peter. "I'm pretty sure that the doctor will put you on a low diet."

Bunter dropped Peter's arm. The pathetic picture, evidently, had to be parted with, if Bunter was to get to the tuckshop before dinner. Possibly Toddy was not sorry to part with him. Limping painfully, Billy Bunter made his way alone to the tuckshop. There were a dozen fellows there, and they greeted him with a chortle.

"Here comes bandy Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old dot-and-carry-one!"

"I say, you fellows, you might be a bit sympathetic," groaned Bunter. "I'm suffering terrible pain, you know."

"We don't know," grinned Skinner. "I don't believe it for one."

"Oh, really, Skinner!"

"You've got out of morning classes," said Snoop with a chuckle. "But what are you going to do when the doctor comes? He'll bowl you out!"

Bunter snorted, and limped up to Mrs. Mimble's counter. Mrs. Mimble eyed him curiously.

"Ginger-beer and a couple of jam-tarts, please," said Bunter.

Mrs. Mimble still eyed him. It was a custom of that good dame never to supply Bunter till he laid the money on the counter. It saved the trouble of complaining to his Form master afterwards that he hadn't paid. There were many signs of suffering about Bunter, but no signs of cash, so Mrs. Mimble sat tight, as it were.

"I suppose you can trust me for a bob or so, when I'm ill, Mrs. Mimble?" said Bunter with deep reproach.

Mrs. Mimble shook her head.

"I've been crippled by a cricket-ball, playing cricket, Mrs. Mimble," said the Owl of the Remove.

"What stories you do tell, Master Bunter," said Mrs. Mimble. "As if I didn't know that you never play cricket."

Bunter turned to the grinning juniors.

"Who's going to lend me a bob?" he asked.

"Echo answers who!" said Ogilvy.

"I'll tell you what," said Skinner. "Show us the fearful injury, and I'll stand you a bob if it's genuine."

"I—I can't touch it without frightful pain."

"Without giving it away, you mean," suggested Skinner humorously. "I'm blessed if I know how you spoofed Quelchy; but you can't spoof me."

"You saw it in the Form-room!" howled Bunter.

"Not near enough to see what game you'd been up to," grinned Skinner. "Let's see it at close range."

"Yes, let's!" said Ogilvy.

"Beast!"

Wingate of the Sixth looked into the tuckshop.

"Is Bunter here? Bunter, you're to go to your study at once, and sit down. You're not to walk about with your leg in that state."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Mr. Quelch's orders!" snapped Wingate. "Get off with you!"

"I—I say, Wingate——"

"Get off!"

Billy Bunter limped away dismally. He blinked pathetically at Wingate, as if in expectation of being offered a helping arm. Wingate did not offer him a helping arm; but he looked greatly inclined to offer him a helping boot. Bunter did not want help of that sort, so he limped back to the School House without assistance.

In the doorway Sammy of the Second met him with a fat grin.

"I hear you're still keeping it up," he remarked.

"I'm lame, Sammy."

"You look a bit bandy," said Sammy, blinking at him. "Did you get somebody else to jam a boot on your knee, after all?"

"Shut up, you little beast!"

Billy Bunter limped on, leaving Sammy chortling. Lord Mauleverer was going upstairs, and Bunter caught hold of him.

"Help me along, Mauly!" he moaned.

"Oh, gad!" said his lordship in dismay.

"I'm lame——"

"Well, hang on," said Lord Mauleverer. "I don't believe you're really lame, you know, you're such a jolly old fabricator; but I'll chance it. Hang on—not too heavy."

Lord Mauleverer good-naturedly piloted Bunter up to the Remove passage. Bunter put on all the weight he could, and his lazy lordship was panting by the time he reached the landing.

"There you are!" he gasped. "I believe you're spoofin', but there you are. Let go!"

Bunter gave him a savage blink. Instead of letting go, he flung his arms round Mauly's neck.

"I—I'm falling!" he gasped. "My leg's giving way! Hold me!"

(*Continued on page* 17.)

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

HARRY WHARTON | FRANK NUGENT | BOB CHERRY | MARK LINLEY | HURREE SINGH | PETER TODD

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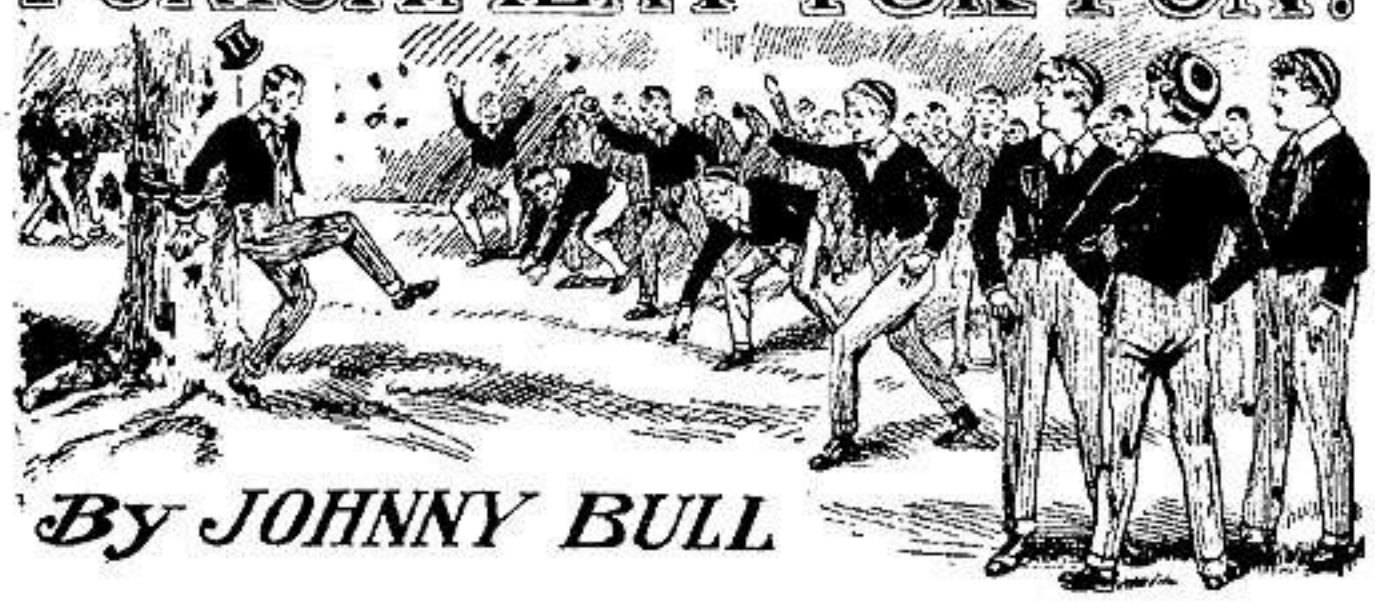
PUNISHMENT FOR PON!



By JOHNNY BULL

WHEN Cecil Ponsonby, the snob of Highcliffe, came strolling in at the gates of Greyfriars, he was walking into a hornets' nest, though he didn't know it at the time.

Bob Cherry sighted Pon from his study window. And Bob's brow grew dark with anger.

"Here's that cad Ponsonby!" he exclaimed, turning to Mark Linley, his study-mate. "He's been saying beastly things about my pater, sneering at him because he joined the Army as a private, and worked his way up from the ranks. And he's said some horrid things about you, Marky, because you happened to work in a factory before you came to Greyfriars."

"Yes, I know," said Mark Linley, his eyes gleaming. "Ponsonby's a hateful snob! Unless a fellow happens to be a blue-blooded aristocrat, Pon throws mud at him."

"It's high time a little mud was thrown at Pon," said Bob Cherry grimly. "Real mud, I mean. I'm fed up with his taunts and sneers. He doesn't know that the nasty remarks he made about us were overheard by Bunter, and that they came back to us. I suppose he's come over to see his pal Skinner. I'm not a vindictive fellow, but I really think it's time we taught Pon a lesson."

Mark Linley agreed. And so did Dick Penfold, who came into the study at that moment. Besides slandering Major Cherry, Ponsonby had cruelly taunted Penfold—behind his back, of course—with being the son of a cobbler.

"Wish we had a pillory here or a ducking-stool," said Penfold. "Some of those old customs want reviving."

"But we can tie Pon to a tree, and make him stay there until he eats his words," said Bob Cherry.

This plan having been agreed upon, Mark Linley brought out a coil of rope from the cupboard, and the trio hurried down into the Close. As they bore down upon Cecil Ponsonby, the Highcliffe "knut" eyed them uneasily.

"What are you goin' to do with that rope?" he asked.

"You'll soon see!" said Bob Cherry curtly. "Collar him!"

Ponsonby, seeing breakers ahead, attempted to dash out of gates. But he was swiftly overhauled and captured, and dragged to one of the elm-trees in the Close.

"What's the little game?" he panted, as Mark Linley got busy with the rope.

"You've been saying beastly, snobbish things about us," said Bob Cherry. "And we're going to tie you to this tree until you humbly apologise."

Ponsonby struggled desperately as he was pinioned to the tree. But his struggles were of no avail. He was made a prisoner.

"I'll pay you out for this!" he muttered thickly. "And as for apologising—why, I wouldn't dream of it!"

But Ponsonby had to change his tune before very long. A crowd of fags came out into the Close, and they started to pelt the unhappy prisoner with missiles of every description. Lumps of mud and other unsavoury articles came whizzing through the air, and Ponsonby yelled and yelped as they smote upon his person.

When the bombardment had been in progress nearly five minutes Ponsonby resembled a muddied oaf. His once-immaculate clothes were mud-stained, and so were his features.

"Ow-ow-ow! Give over, you young villains!" spluttered Pon.

"Say you're sorry, then!" commanded Bob Cherry.

"Yow! I—I beg your pardon!" gasped Ponsonby.

Whereupon the snob of Highcliffe was released, and he slunk away with a sullen scowl on his mud-begrimed face. He had come to Greyfriars to see Skinner, but he decided that the interview with Skinner would have to stand over until he had had a much-needed bath.

KING OF THE SNOBS!

By Cecil Ponsonby.

(Leader of the Highcliffe "Nuts.")

My name is Cecil Ponsonby,
A dashin', darin' blade;
That's why I'm so unpopular,
I'm very much afraid.
I simply love to strut an' swank
With all the noble "nobs";
For I am Cecil Ponsonby,
The snobbiest of the snobs!

I'm what they call a sporty boy,
A clever, charmin' chap;
Don't fancy cricket overmuch,
But like a game of nap.
I spend my money recklessly,
My tanners an' my bobs;
For I am Cecil Ponsonby,
The snobbiest of the snobs!

I own the wide, revolvin' earth,
An' everythin' that's in it;
If you should scoff at my remark
I'll black your eye this minute!
I'll make you shiver in your shoes,
An' simply shake with sobs;
For I am Cecil Ponsonby,
The snobbiest of the snobs!

I stroll along the leafy lanes
With Monson, Vav, an' Drury;
An' when we spot a Greyfriars kid
We fly into a fury.
Our fists go whirlin' through the air,
The victim ducks an' bobs,
When biffed by Cecil Ponsonby,
The snobbiest of the snobs!

Then bow the knee, ye fags, to me,
An' grovel low before me!
For if you don't, or can't, or won't,
The outlook will be stormy!
I love to lick the smaller fry,
I revel in such jobs;
Beware of Cecil Ponsonby,
The snobbiest of the snobs!

A special "Farming" Supplement—next on the list!

I am monarch of all I survey,
  My right there is none to resist;
A fellow who stands in my way
  Will soon feel the force of my fist!
The fags who defy me, by Jove,
  I'll lam with a stump or a poker;
For I'm a superior cove—
  The only illustrious Coker!

I'm the burliest, brainiest chap
  That ever appeared in a paper;
Although I am keen on a scrap,
  I'm seldom a jester or japer.
Such a dignified person am I,
  I'd never become a gay joker;
I'll get in the Sixth by-and-by—
  More power to the elbow of Coker!

I ought to be head of the school;
  No shadow of doubt about that;
Old Wingate is rather a fool
  To be in command, and that's flat!
I'm a sober and steady young man,
  I'm neither a gambler nor smoker;
So look round and find (if you can!)
  A worthier fellow than Coker!

Such fellows as Potter and Greene
  I have to put up with, worse luck!
For Potter's a foolish old bean,
  And Greene hasn't got half my pluck.
I also possess an Aunt Judy,
  She's splendid—unless I provoke her;
She then becomes sullen and broody,
  And doles out no "fivers" to Coker!

I am monarch of all I survey
  (I fancy I said this before);
But I have to repeat it each day,
  And subdue the young fags more and more.
If Wharton and Cherry appear,
  And call me a comical joker,
They'll each get a lovely thick ear—
  A personal present from Coker!

SNOBS IN THE STONE AGE!

(An effort from the pen of Bolsover minor—spelling corrected only—which must not be taken too seriously.)

MAGLIUS HIGHBROW sat pruning his goatskin in the shadow of his cave, well satisfied with Ancient Brit in general and Maglius Highbrow in particular.

The village of Upstart was famed for its snobs, whose lofty and supercilious airs and graces had long since been the subject of heated discussion in the neighbouring villages. If any unfortunate person had the audacity to walk on the same path as Maglius Highbrow that same person soon felt the weight of a stone axe upon his cranium. Thus it was that ye cottage hospital of Menhere was packed to overflowing with patients suffering from brained fever.

Maglius Highbrow, being chief of the village of Upstart, was always accompanied by a bodyguard of giants, whose task it was to reduce to a fitting state of servility, civility, and humility all such persons upon whom the noble Maglius frowned. And as the said Maglius had a habit of frowning every minute of the day, owing to his efforts to keep in place a whalebone monocle, the stone clubs of the bodyguard were in constant and painful contact with all who chanced their way.

Maglius Highbrow was by no means a man of war when it came to personal encounters—far from it. But as a chronicler of his own exploits Maglius Highbrow wanted a lot of beating and was a man to pass in fear and trembling. As, however, he never went abroad unattended, the proof of his glorified statements could never be put to the test.

But the day dawned when the bodyguard of stalwarts went on strike. Instead of five pieces of stone per diem, they demanded ten. That, of course, was out of the question. Although Maglius was a profiteer and had made a "pile," the thought of those extra five pieces per man per day—perhaps—was too much for him. He accordingly made a secret visit to his bankers at Stonehenge and paid into his account five billion pieces. It was his intention to plead bankruptcy with his mutinous servants.

But the best laid plans of mice and men, and incidentally snobs, gang agley, and Maglius' meanness proved his ultimate undoing.

Returning from Stonehenge at dead of night, Maglius stole stealthily through the village of Menhere, which was a short cut to the village of Upstart—just fifty miles distant.

"Ha, ha!" he chuckled. "I have my faithful bodyguard on the hip"—which was quite true; his solitary article of apparel was a goatskin!—"we shall see whether the goats skin me!"

"Who goes there?"

The command caused Maglius to jump in his sandals, and the stone club he was carrying, weighing over half a ton (Here, steady on, old son!—Ed.), dropped from his nerveless fingers and slightly sprained his big toe.

"Yowp!" yelled Maglius, hopping about like a cave bear on one foot and nursing the other. "Yowp!"

"Stand forward, Yowp," commanded the voice, "and give the countersign!"

Maglius, still hopping on one foot, came into the view of the sentry of Menhere.

"Pass, Yowp!" said the sentry, lowering his club, having recognised the sign. "All is well!"

But as Maglius still continued to hop about on one foot the sentry grew suspicious, and, chancing to look at the twisted countenance of the fellow, recognised at a glance the snub nose of his hated enemy, Maglius Highbrow.

Throwing all caution to the winds and his club to all points of the compass, the sentry, who was also a snob—for he was a sandal repairer by trade—rushed at his enemy.

In two seconds the aristocratic face of Maglius resembled a lump of putty. The noise he made drew all the inhabitants of Menhere to the spot, and loud was their cheering when they saw the snob of Upstart getting it in the neck from the snob—who wasn't a snob, and yet who was—of Menhere.

"The men here of Menhere," bawled the Menhere snob, "I give into your hands the hated snob of Upstart. Do unto him as you will."

And they did.

Maglius Highbrow was compelled to run the gauntlet between two ranks of warriors, whose heavy clubs found a billet every time they whizzed through the air. All the snobbishness was soon knocked out of Maglius, to say nothing of a few ribs and teeth.

When the snob of Upstart finally departed from Menhere he was black and blue all over. Gone was his snub snob's nose, and in its place reigned an organ which was for ever to remind him of his fall, for instead of indicating a liking for things lofty, it now showed an unmistakable tendency to hide itself in Maglius' left ear.

And the men of Menhere rejoiced exceeding glad.

Feeling elated with themselves, the men of Menhere held a council of war, and one and all declared their intention of putting a stop to the snobbishness of the inhabitants of Upstart. Accordingly, they girded their loins and marched in a body to the rival village.

The snobs of Upstart awoke to find their hated enemies in their midst.

In less than ten minutes they were on the retreat, and they dashed in the direction of Stonehenge. Once there, they tried to call a truce, but the men of Menhere weren't having any.

"Put them in the stocks!" yelled the snob who had made such an impression upon Maglius Highbrow.

The notion was carried unanimously—and so were the snobs of Upstart. They were bound against the stone pillars of Stonehenge, and the victorious men of Menhere pelted them with stones and anything else that came to hand.

In a very few minutes they were a beaten crowd, fully repentant. When they finally departed for their own village their going could be likened unto a troop of dogs with their tails between their legs.

Look out for our grand Highwayman series!

THE SNOB OF ST. SAM'S!

By .. DICKY NUGENT.

A stirring school story that will make you "sit up." You won't be able to take the snobbishness of AUBREY DE VERE "lying down."

A HANSOM Rolls-Rice car drew up at the gates of St. Sam's. It stood purring in the roadway, although noboddy had stroked it.

Out of the car stepped an ellegant youth, drest in a bran-new suit of spotless Etons. He also wore a horty, soopercilious look, as if he owned the earth.

Our hero—or, rather, our villain—was Aubrey Lushington Montmorensy de Vere. He settled his silk topper upon his eye, and screwed his monocle into his head, and started strutting across the quad.

A crowd of Fourth-Formers had seen Aubrey arrive, and they came running towards him.

"Hallo, new kid!"

"What's your name?"

"Where have you sprung from?"

These and other queschuns were fired at the ellegant Aubrey like bullets from a masheen-gun.

Aubrey tilted his nose high in the air, and looked right over the heads of his queschuners.

"I will not dane to have anythin' to do with you, begad!" he drawled. "You are beneeth my social standing, and we have nothing in common. I am the son of a barrow-net."

At this there was a shout of wrath from the juniors.

"The checky bounder!" snorted Billy Dibbs. "He'll get his head punched if he starts giving himself heirs and graces! The son of a barrow-net, indeed! What does that matter? I myself am the son of a Cabinet Minnister—I mean, a cabinet-maker—but I'm not always swanking about it."

"Strikes me very forcibly," said Teddy Scott, "that the new kid is a snob of the first water!"

Aubrey de Vere glared through his monocle at the Fourth-Formers.

"You are low-down, common persons!" he said. "You are not worthy to black my boots, or sew on my weskit-buttons. I have nothing but scorn and content for you! But I don't suppose I shall see very much of you at St. Sam's. I antissipate going into the Sixth."

"My hat!"

"I am a very sooperior person—much too sooperior to rub sholders with the common heard!"

Billy Dibbs sprang forward.

"Bump the snobbish beest!" he wrapped out.

Aubrey de Vere would have had all the breth bumped out of his body, but at that moment the juniors caught sight of the stooping figger of the Head, who was engaged in a game of marbels with Mr. Layman, the master of the Fourth.

"We'll deal with this preshus snob another time!" muttered Teddy Scott.

Aubrey de Vere, with his nose still stuck in the air, strutted into the school building. Two menservants—valleys in the employ of his father—followed him with his luggage.

Aubrey went first of all to his Housemaster, to be put through his paces. And he receeved a rood shock. Instead of getting into the Sixth, as he had antissipated, he was dumped into the Fourth with Billy Dibbs & Co.

The snobbish new boy had a further shock when he found that he couldn't have a study to himself. He was obliged to share the apartment of Billy Dibbs and Teddy Scott. So he had to mingle with the common heard, weather he liked it or not.

Aubrey de Vere held himself aloof from his Form-fellows. He did not kondessend to pass the time of day with them or to talk with them on any toppick. He treeted them as if they didn't eggsist.

Next morning, in the Form-room, there was a drammatick scene.

Mr. Layman was taking the Fourth in Algy Bra—never a faverito subject. Aubrey de Vere paid no attention to the lesson. He sat by himself at the end of the back row, pollishing his finger-nails with a mannicuring implement.

"De Vere," thundered Mr. Layman, in a voice which tinkled right through the Form-room, "I will trubble you to pay attention to the lesson!"

"Ratts!"

Mr. Layman jumped about a foot in the air.

"W-w-what d-d-did y-y-you s-s-say?" he gasped.

"Ratts!" repeeted Aubrey.

And a buzz of eggsitement ran round the class at top speed.

"Boy," spluttered Mr. Layman angrily, "come out hear, and I will flogg you for this impertinense!"

Aubrey de Vere surveyed the Formmaster grimly.

"If you dare touch me," he said, "I shall tell the fellows the trooth about your parentage!"

At this terribul threat Mr. Layman shuddered and turned pail. At the risk of the dreadful secret leeking out, however, he determined to flog the insolent new boy. Cane in hand, he strode towards Aubrey de Vere.

Swish!

"Yaroooooo!" yelled Aubrey. "You've done it now, you beest! I shall expose you in publick! I say, you fellows, this man's father was a dustman! He used to come round to my ancestral halls shouting: 'Any old rags or bones!' What do you think of that?"

Mr. Layman hung his head in shame.

"Alas! It is only too true!" he muttered.

But the St. Sam's fellows were not snobs. They didn't care tuppence weather Mr. Layman's father was a dustman or a wealthy magnet on the Stock Exchange.

Angry shouts arose.

"Wallop the cad, sir!"

"Lay it on hard!"

"We don't think any the less of you bekawse your father was a dustman!"

Mr. Layman beamed upon the class.

"It is very kind of you to say that, my boys," he said. "I will now give this snobbish youth the thrashing he deserves!"

Aubrey de Vere went through the mill with a vengeance! The cane lashed about his sholders, and his screems of angwish pennetrated to the Head's study.

Prezzantly the Head himself swept into the Form-room with russling gown.

"What's all the merry rumpus?" he demanded.

Mr. Layman eggsplained, and the Head looked grim.

"That's right, old bean! Lay it on good and proper!" he said. "I'll have a go at him myself when you've finished!"

Aubrey de Vere levelled an accusing fourfinger at the Head.

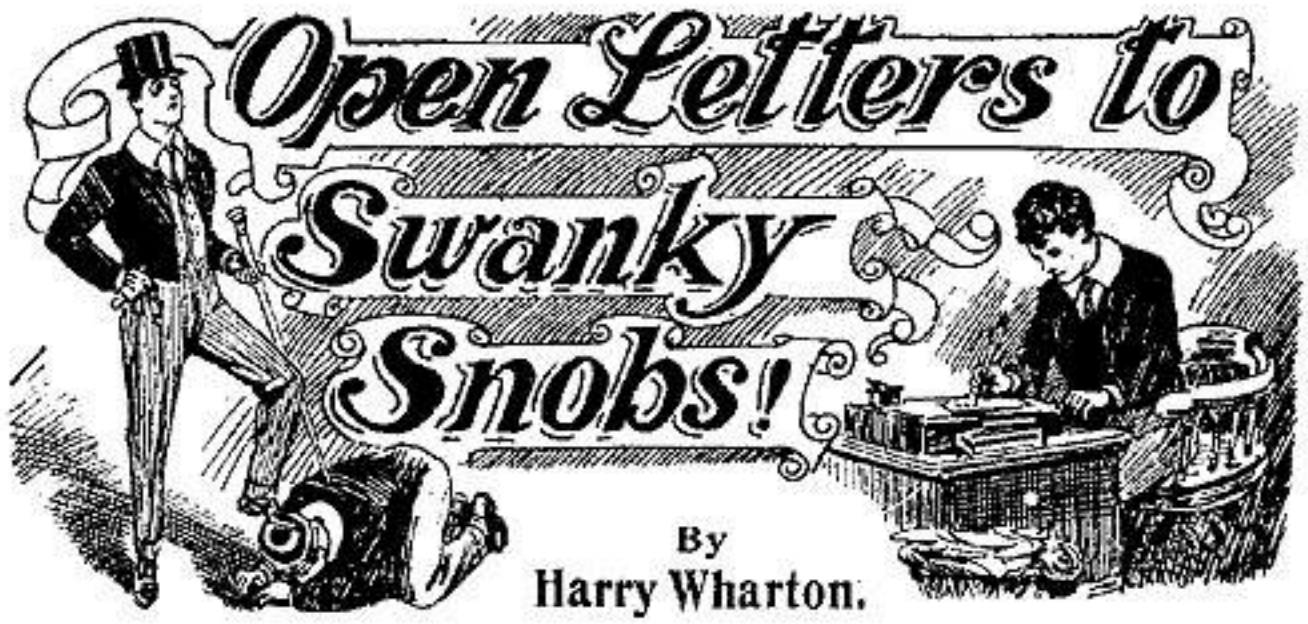
"Yah! I'll let everybody know that you were a pork-butcher before you became headmaster of St. Sam's!" he shouted.

This wild outburst failed to ruffle the Head's dignity.

"My turn, Layman, I think," he said, in quiet, well-moddulated toans. "Gimme that blessed cane, and I'll wallop the little snob till he's black and blew!"

The Head's threat was duly carried out—and so was the Snob of St. Sam's—on a stretcher!

THE END.



By Harry Wharton.

TO CECIL PONSONBY, Highcliffe School.

Dear Pon.—You have been heard to make sneering remarks concerning some of the fellows in the Greyfriars Remove. You say that they are not of gentle birth, like yourself, but are ignorant commoners. You point out that Dick Penfold is the son of a cobbler, that Mark Linley is a "low-bred factory cad," and that Bob Cherry's father served in the ranks before he became a commissioned officer.

No decent fellow thinks any the less of Penfold because his father mends boots. As to Mark Linley, he may have worked in a factory (there is no disgrace in that), but he is much more of a gentleman than you, my estimable Pon. And if Bob Cherry's father worked his way up from the ranks, all honour to him.

Allow me to inform you that you are a contemptible snob, and we have a short way with snobs. The three fellows you have slandered are going over to Highcliffe this evening to demand an apology with their fists. Whether you apologise or not for your cowardly taunts I hope you will be given the licking you so richly deserve.

I will waste no more words on such a despicable outsider as yourself.

Yours scornfully,
HARRY WHARTON.

To HORACE COKER, Fifth Form.

Most Pompous Personage,—You remind us very strongly of the character in Shakespeare who said, "I am Sir Oracle, and when I open my lips let no dog bark."

Although you are not lacking in certain good qualities, you appear to have a very lofty opinion of yourself. You treat the Remove fellows as if they were far beneath your notice, and you glare at them with a "get-off-the-earth" expression on your far from beautiful countenance.

You not only remind us of Sir Oracle, but also of the snobbish old lady who said to her maid, "Janet, just see if any common person happens to be using the ocean. I wish to bathe."

Try and recollect, most mighty one, that there are other individuals on the earth besides Horace Coker, and don't go dashing around on your motor-cycle, treating pedestrians as if they were crawling worms. You are by no means a bad fellow at heart, but you suffer badly from the complaint of snobbishness, a complaint which we shall have to cure if you don't cure it yourself.

Yours,
HARRY WHARTON.

To CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE, Upper Fourth.

Dear Temple,—If a prize was presented to the biggest snob at Greyfriars I fancy you would be well in the running. You are suffering from Cokeritis, which is a chronic form of snobbishness. You strut about like a smug profiteer who has bought Greyfriars School, and your head is so badly swollen that you need an extra large size in hats.

We detest a swanky snob just as cordially as we detest the humble, crawling Uriah Heep type of fellow. There is a happy medium, and you will be well advised to climb down from your high horse. When the Remove whacked the Upper Fourth by an innings at cricket we hoped it would knock some of the conceit out of you, but apparently it has failed to do so.

Pride goeth before a fall, my high-and-mighty friend. So mind your eye!

Yours grimly,
HARRY WHARTON.

CONCERNING SNOBS!

By Bob Cherry.

HAVE you heard the latest conundrum which is going the rounds at Greyfriars?

"Why is Cecil Reginald Temple like a scarecrow?"—"Because he's always 'stuck up'!"

* * * *

There is another riddle about Temple which made me smile.

"What does Temple wear in the warm weather?"—"He simply puts on airs."

* * *

I regret to have to include Harry Wharton's cousin in my list of snobs. He is a pilot in the Air Force. Consequently, he is always "looking down" on other people.

* * *

Dick Penfold's father must come in the category of snobs. But he is a harmless, necessary "snob." You see, he repairs boots.

* * *

Coker of the Fifth is a very "lofty" person—at least, he was the other day when he climbed to the top of the school flagstaff for a wager!

* * *

Ponsonby of Highcliffe, who is a very complete snob, declares that the Greyfriars fellows are not fit to lick his boots. But we are quite fit enough to "lick" Ponsonby!

* * *

Loder of the Sixth, when crossing the plank over the River Sark the other day, lost his footing and found nothing to stand on. He couldn't even stand on his dignity. And he hit the water with a mighty splash. He disappeared from view, and had to be fished out of the bed of the river. We knew that Loder was a wrong 'un, but we didn't think he would sink so low as that!

EDITORIAL!

By HARRY WHARTON.

"I AM a most superior person! Kindly get off the earth, and allow me to pass!"

The average snob, though he may not use these actual words, conveys them by his expression. He struts across the stage of life with his aristocratic nose tilted in the air, and he regards his fellow-creatures with scorn and contempt.

Personally, I can't stand a snob. Very few fellows can, for that matter. The stuck-up, conceited person is almost as bad as a sneak—almost, but not quite, for sneaking is a most contemptible thing.

There aren't many snobs at Greyfriars, thank goodness. The names of Cecil Reginald Temple and Horace Coker leap to my mind; but they are harmless snobs. They are very superior persons, and they try to lord it over "the cheeky Remove fags," as they call us; but they have many good points, so we must make allowances for them.

The most complete snob of my acquaintance is Cecil Ponsonby, of Highcliffe. The elegant Pon has not often figured in the pages of the GREYFRIARS HERALD, but the limelight is switched upon him this week, and he is shown up in his true colours.

In addition to being a snob, Ponsonby is an unutterable cad, and we welcome this chance of putting him in the pillory, as it were.

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when Pon sees this number, and I have no doubt he will utter fierce vows of vengeance. But we have nothing to fear from Ponsonby and his tribe of non-sportsmen.

The members of my staff have devoted their energies this week to giving snobs a jolly good dressing-down. We think that all snobs ought to be exterminated, and if a few more outspoken numbers like this were published, I venture to say that the snob would never survive!

A plague upon all snobs, and all superior, stuck-up persons, who consider that they possess the earth and all that therein is!

"A Deed of Daring!" by Mark Linley—next Monday!

LAME BUNTER!

(Continued from page 12.)

"Oh, gad! I can't hold a ton weight! Ow!" roared Lord Mauleverer, as Bunter barged him violently into the passage wall. "Yooop!"

Crash!

Bunter released his lordship then, and rolled into his study, grinning. Lord Mauleverer stood rubbing his head, which had cracked violently on the wall.

"Ow! The horrid fat bounder did that on purpose!" groaned Mauleverer. "I'll jolly well punch him! Ow!"

He scudded along to Study No. 7. Bunter gave a deep groan as he looked in. Lord Mauleverer, disarmed by that sound of woe, relented, and went on up the passage. And Bunter, ceasing to groan as soon as he was gone, grinned.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Pig in Clover!

"LAME BUNTER" limped in to dinner prompt to time. His lameness did not, fortunately, make him late for a meal.

Mr. Quelch, at the head of the Remove table, gave him a sharp look.

"Your knee is still bad, Bunter?"

"Awful, sir."

"It is very odd that the doctor has not yet called," said Mr. Quelch. "You are sure, Wharton, that you heard Mrs. Pillbury's answer correctly?"

"Yes, sir," answered Wharton. "Mrs. Pillbury said that the doctor was out on his round, and would come here directly he returned."

"Very good."

Mr. Quelch was puzzled; and Billy Bunter, naturally, did not feel disposed to enlighten him. The Remove fellows watched Bunter with some interest at dinner. Most of them believed that he really was lamed, though they attributed that misfortune to his being so rottenly out of condition. But even those who believed could not help, like Peter Todd, feeling some sort of lingering doubt.

Even those who believed in the injury, however, weren't disposed to allow Bunter to put on "side" as an injured cricketer. That really was too rich.

He was no cricketer, and he had received the damage, such as it was, in deliberately getting "leg before" in order to sneak out of cricket practice. Injured heroes of the game, naturally, received plenty of sympathy and plenty of kudos—in inverse proportion, however, to the fuss they made about it. Bunter wasn't an injured hero of the game, and the fuss he made was tremendous. Fellows had said less about a broken collar-bone than Bunter was saying about his precious knee.

So even where fellows felt sorry that Bunter was hurt, they felt irritated at his "side." They would not have allowed that he was a disabled cricketer at any price.

His injury had not affected his appetite. He did well at dinner—remarkably well, as he always did.

When the Removites left the table, Bunter walked like the others—until he remembered that he was lame, and recommenced limping. Skinner and some other fellows noticed that, and grinned.

Skinner, being a good deal of a spoofer himself, ought really to have sympathised. But he didn't! No one is so heavily down on deception as a deceiver.

"Has it come on again, Bunter?" grinned Skinner, when they were outside the dining-hall.

"Again! This fearful pain is on all the time," said Bunter. "Can't you see me limping?"

"I saw you get half-way to the door without limping!" chuckled Skinner. "Don't you know that liars should have good memories?"

"I'm trying to bear it," said Bunter. "I'm not the sort of fellow to make a fuss about an injury. I—I was trying to walk without limping, but the fearful pain——"

"Fearful piffle!" said Skinner.

"You wouldn't sympathise, of course," said Bunter disdainfully. "You're a rotten slacker, and you never show up for cricket unless a prefect runs you down to the ground by the neck."

"Do you?" howled Skinner.

"Looks as if I did, when I'm crippled from playing cricket," said Bunter loftily.

Snort from Johnny Bull.

"Cut it out, Bunter, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Johnny. "Do you think anybody will swallow that bunkum?"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"You got leg before so as to sneak off the ground!" growled Johnny Bull. "You meant to get a little tap—and if you got a hard one, it was an accident."

Bunter blinked at him.

"I forgive you, Bull!" he said.

A soft answer is said to turn away wrath. But Bunter's forgiveness seemed to have a most exasperating effect on Johnny Bull.

"Forgive me!" roared Johnny. "You fat slug——"

"I understand your rotten motives," said Bunter scornfully. "You never play up in games at the risk of getting serious injuries. I do! But you shouldn't shout out your jealousy like this. It's bad form."

And Bunter limped away victoriously, leaving Johnny Bull quite speechless.

Bunter did not show up in the Remove room for classes that afternoon. He was ordered to remain in his study and rest till the doctor came to see him.

That afternoon there was "maths" for the Remove, and Billy Bunter rejoiced at his exemption. His bandy leg was turning up trumps, after all.

While the Removites rejoiced—or otherwise—in mathematics, Billy Bunter was not, however, quite idle. After all the fellows were safe in the Form-rooms Bunter limped out of Study No. 7. Finding the coast quite clear, he ceased to limp, and became quite active.

Apparently Bunter had decided on a round of visits in the Remove studies, while the owners were absent. It was a rare opportunity, and Bunter was not the fellow to miss opportunities like this.

He dropped in at Study No. 1 first, and explored the study cupboard. There was a cake there, and Bunter, standing in front of the cupboard, finished the cake to the last crumb.

He proceeded to Study No. 2, which belonged to Hazeldene and Tom Brown. Those juniors had some supplies for tea, and they furnished Bunter with a snack.

The next study was drawn blank, but in Study No. 4, which belonged to Vernon-Smith and Redwing, Bunter was fortunate. The Bounder had apparently laid in supplies for a spread. He had also locked the cupboard door. But a locked cupboard door did not worry Bunter. There was a cold chisel in Tom Redwing's tool-box, and Bunter had opened cupboard doors before. He was soon busy on Smithy's spread.

Certainly it was rather a serious matter to raid a fellow like the Bounder in this way. In ordinary circumstances the Owl of the Remove would hardly have ventured upon it. But he felt that even Smithy, beast as he was, couldn't kick a lame fellow.

What was the good of being lame, or even pretending to be lame, if nothing was made out of it? So Bunter, relying on his lameness as an armour of proof, as it were, finished up Vernon-Smith's ample supply to the last item.

By that time even Bunter was feeling as if he had had almost enough. But not quite. He proceeded from study to study, gathering in loot as he proceeded. But now, instead of devouring it on the spot, he stacked it into a bag, to convey it to his lair and devour it at his leisure.

Having made a complete round of the Remove studies, Billy Bunter rolled back to Study No. 7 well laden.

He rested in the armchair after his labours, and took a short nap. When he awoke he was hungry again, and he started in on the bag of supplies.

The supplies faded away under Bunter's hefty attack.

But there was so much that even the Owl of the Remove slacked down at last and toyed with his provender.

He knew that there would be wrath in the Remove after lessons, though he relied upon his lameness as a safeguard. The fellows could scarcely kick or bump him, he considered, in the painful and pathetic circumstances. Bolsover major, perhaps, being a beastly bully, might. And Bunter, for that reason, had spared Bolsover major's supplies, though with an effort. But, kicked or unkicked, certainly the wrathful Removites would have seized anything that was left when they discovered the raid. To leave anything was, therefore, a sheer waste. So Bunter, though now feeling a rather uncomfortable tightness in his waistcoat, slowly and steadily finished up the looted tuck.

Seldom had Bunter enjoyed so plentiful a spread, seldom, or never, had it cost him an effort to finish a feed. It cost him an effort this time, but he manfully made the effort, and finished.

Then he sank back in the armchair, fatigued and very full, and sank into a blissful slumber.

Billy Bunter did not always enjoy life at Greyfriars. But he felt that things were looking up now. His present spoof seemed more profitable than many previous spoofs, and he was resolved to remain, as long as he possibly could. Lame Bunter. And, with a fat grin of satisfaction on his face, he closed his eyes and slumbered.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

No Rag!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Who's been in my study?"

"What the thump——"

"Who the dickens——"?

"My cake——"

"My tarts——"

"My cold chicken——"

It was quite a roar of excited voices in the Remove passage, and it awakened Bunter from sleep and a happy dream, in which pork-pies figured prominently.

He sat up and rubbed his eyes and

blinked. Peter Todd looked in at the doorway grimly.

"Oh you're here!" he said.

"Yes, old chap. I've been asleep. Haven't opened my eyes all the afternoon," said Bunter.

"I hope you opened them long enough to make your will," said Peter.

"My—my will?" stammered Bunter.

"Yes. The fellows are going to slaughter you."

"I—I say, Peter——"

"Where's Bunter?" roared Bob Cherry, in the passage. "It's Bunter, of course. He's cleared out my cupboard!"

"He's burgled mine!" yelled Vernon-Smith. "Burgled it, and bagged my spread!"

"I'll scalp him!"

"I'll burst him!"

"I'll squash him!"

Trampling footsteps gathered round Study No. 7 doorway. Furious faces looked in. Bunter gasped and blinked at them. At that critical moment a horrid doubt smote him as to whether his lameness would prove a sufficient protection against an enraged Form.

"Have him out!" roared Tom Brown.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Lynch him!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish.

The juniors crowded into the study.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Don't forget he's injured, you know."

"Injured be blowed!" howled Skinner. "It's all spoof! Besides, do you think he's going to take my pot of jam for nothing?"

"He's got my sardines!" howled Snoop.

"My bloater paste!" yelled Russell.

"I—I say, you fellows, I haven't!" roared Bunter, in alarm. "Give a fellow a chance to speak. I haven't been out of this study. I hope you can take my word."

"Why, you're sticky and jammy and crumby all over this blessed minute!" exclaimed Kipps.

"Reeking with it!" said Wibley.

"I—I assure you fellows, honest Injun, that——"

"You're Injun isn't honest, Bunty. He's a well-known bad character," said Peter Todd. "You're for it, you greedy Hun."

"Collar him!"

"Scrag him!"

Harry Wharton stood before Bunter, however, and pushed away the enraged juniors who were eager to lay hands on him. Bunter made himself as small as possible behind the captain of the Remove in dire terror.

"Chuck it!" said Harry. "You can't handle a fellow who's laid up with a bad leg."

"He's counted on that, of course," said Hazeldene.

"Very likely; but there it is, all the same."

"He hasn't raided your study, perhaps!" hooted Skinner.

"Yes, he has; and cleared it right out!" retorted Wharton. "All the same, you can't handle the fat blighter now."

"It's all spoof, I tell you!"

"If it is the doctor will show him up when he comes, and you can deal with him afterwards."

"I'm going to smash him now!" roared Skinner.

"You're not, old pippin," said Bob Cherry, shoving the excited Skinner back. "Never mind your silly old pot of jam."

"I—I—I'll——" gasped Skinner.

"I guess I'm going to make potato scrapings of him!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish. "You hear me, yaup? He's got my marmalade."

"There was only a scrape left in the jar, you beast!" gasped Bunter. "And I never went to your study at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Easy does it," said Harry Wharton soothingly. "Let him off till after the doctor's been. He ought to be boiled in oil, but——"

"You're an ass, Wharton!" said Vernon-Smith. But he left the study, and most of the other fellows followed his example. The captain of the Remove had his way.

But Skinner and Snoop and several of the other fellows lingered in the passage, with the fixed determination of "going" for Bunter as soon as the Form captain's protection was withdrawn.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I'm really much obliged to you for standing by me," gasped Bunter. "Of course, you know I'm innocent."

"We know you're not!" growled Johnny Bull. "I'm going to smash you after the doctor's been and shown you up."

"Beast!"

Johnny stalked away. Billy Bunter caught hold of Wharton's sleeve as the captain of the Remove turned to go.

"Harry, old chap——"

"Cut that out!" snapped Wharton.

"I say, you're going to ask me to tea, ain't you?"

"My only hat! Can you shift any tea, after what you've shifted already?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Oh, that was nothing—I mean, I haven't had anything! Besides, it was hours ago. I'm hungry now, and Toddy's a mean beast! I know he don't mean to stand me any tea; I can see it in his eye."

"Right on the wicket!" agreed Peter Todd. "Not to mention the fact that you've cleared out the study, and there's nothing left for tea."

"I say, Harry——"

"Oh, let go!"

"Those beasts will go for me when you're gone!" gasped Bunter. "You know they will! I—I can't lick half a dozen fellows when I'm lame, can I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Any other time I'd dust up the passage with the lot of them!" said Bunter valiantly. "You, too, Toddy! But I can't risk it now—my injury might turn to mortification——"

"Oh, come along, you rat rotter!" growled Wharton. "I suppose I'd better let you stick to me till the fellows cool down."

"If you put it like that, Wharton ——" began Bunter, with dignity.

"Well, I do."

"All right, old chap; I can take a joke! He, he, he! I'm coming."

And Bunter rolled down the Remove passage between Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, to Study No. 1, and Skinner & Co., eyeing his convoy, decided to postpone vengeance. In Study No. 1 it was necessary for Nugent to cut away to the tuckshop for fresh supplies for tea. And amazing to relate, when tea was ready, Bunter was ready, too. By what marvellous inward process of expansion he found room for more was a deep mystery; but he did, and the fat grin on his face showed that he was enjoying life once more.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Too Late!

"BUNTY!"

"Don't bother!"

"You're wanted."

"Rot!"

"Doctor's come!"

"Wha-a-a-a-at?" spluttered Bunter.

In Study No. 1, after tea, William George Bunter had appropriated the armchair, and stretched his fat person in it. Wharton and Nugent were giving him delicate hints that it was time to travel, and Bunter was disregarding the hints. He wasn't at all sure that the Remove fellows had had time to cool down yet.

Then Toddy looked in, with his startling statement. Billy Bunter sat up as it he had been electrified.

"Doctor!" he gasped. "D-d-d-did you say d-d-d-doctor?"

"Doctor!" repeated Toddy. "Medical johnny—sawbones—undertaker's assistant—any old thing you like! He's in Quelchy's study, and you're to roll along."

The slacker of the Remove bestirs himself next week—

"Oh dear!"

Bunter's dismay was so great that the juniors stared at him. Lingering suspicions that "Lame Bunter" was spoofing revived with greater force. The announcement that a Gorgon had come to see him could hardly have dismayed him more.

"Get a move on, old bandy bird," said Peter. "Want any help down the stairs? I'll roll you, if you like."

"I—I can't go!"

"Must, fathead!"

"Why on earth don't you want to see the doctor, Bunter?" demanded Nugent. "Isn't your leg bad?"

"Yes—no—oh, don't worry!" snapped Bunter. "I believe you're pulling my leg, Toddy, you beast! The doctor hasn't come at all."

"He was bound to come sooner or later to-day," said Wharton. "You know I telephoned for him——"

"I know you're an ass!" grunted Bunter. "They know that was a mistake."

"Eh! How was it a mistake?"

"I mean, I said—that is, I didn't say—meantersay—hum—hem——" said Bunter incoherently.

"Great pip! Have you been playing any trick to keep the doctor away?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Bunter hastily. "If you think I telephoned after you did, and said it was a mistake, you're jolly well mistaken, Wharton. I never thought of such a thing."

"My only hat!" said Wharton, understanding now why Dr. Pillbury had not called as expected.

"Somebody may have, you know," said Bunter cautiously. "Not me! Why, I couldn't have got down to Quelchy's study, with my bad leg, could I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he's come now," grinned Peter Todd. "Quelchy must have phoned himself, after lessons, as the sawbones didn't turn up. You're for it, Bunter."

"Tell him I'm ill!" gasped Bunter. "Say I'm dying, or—or dead! Say I've got an infectious disease——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Come along, fathead!"

"I can't! Say my leg's so bad I can't limp——"

"Then he'll come up here," said Toddy.

"I—I say, Toddy, couldn't you barge into him on the staircase——"

"What?"

"And—and land him, you know. If—if you should break his leg, or anything, I shouldn't mind!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Peter. "I can see myself barging into a medical man on the staircase and breaking his jolly old legs—I don't think! Now, I've told you, Bunter! Get a move on!"

"Tell him I won't come!" howled Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"Tell him I—I—I hope he'll come up, if he doesn't mind," stuttered Bunter. "Keep him as long as you can, Toddy, there's a good chap."

"I'll tell him," said Peter. And he retired, very much puzzled, but quite convinced by this time that Bunter's injured leg was all "bunkum."

Bunter hurriedly shut the door after him, and gave Wharton and Nugent an almost agonised blink. They stared at him.

"There's not a moment to waste!" gasped Bunter. "I'm for it if that beast sees my leg! Fancy the brute coming, you know, after I specially phoned and said he wasn't wanted. Pushing rotter, you know."

"Quelchy must have phoned——"

"Just like the beast! I—I say, Harry, old man, back me up. Do you—do you think Dr. Pillbury would know any difference between a—a—a gammy knee, and—and—and—and——"

"And what?"

"And—and marking-ink rubbed into the skin!" gasped Bunter, getting it out at last. Bunter's fate hung on minutes now, and it was no time for further spoof.

"Marking-ink!" yelled Wharton.

"Rubbed into the skin!" gasped Nugent. "Great Scott!"

"You spoofing, fat villain——"

"You deceiving toad——"

"I say, you fellows, is this a time for slanging a chap, with a beastly sawbones after him?" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "You might help a fellow who's in a scrape."

"What can we do?" ejaculated Wharton. "Do you want me to give you a really bad knee? I've got a cricket-bat here——"

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I—I say, that beast Pillbury is a sharp beast—I know he'll spot it!"

"Jolly certain to," said Wharton. "I should have spotted a stunt like that if I'd seen it close at hand. The doctor will know at once."

Bunter groaned.

"Better own up!" suggested Nugent.

"You silly ass—and get a licking! Call yourselves sportsmen, and not stand by a chap crippled playing cricket——"

"You silly owl!" roared Wharton. "You've just owned up that you weren't hurt in the cricket, and it's only marking-ink."

"I—I mean—don't be a beast, old chap! If—if I can get it washed off before the doctor sees it, I—I can make out it's suddenly recovered, you know. Gimme some hot water in a basin."

"You won't have time——"

"Help me, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a howl from the passage. It appeared that there were a good many fellows listening to Bunter's excited voice, raised in alarm.

"Wharton, old fellow——"

If there was one thing that was absolutely certain, it was that Lame Bunter thoroughly deserved to be bowled out, and duly punished. But it went against the grain to refuse help to a fellow in a scrape, whatsoever his deserts might be. Wharton caught the kettle from the fire, and Nugent jerked a basin from the cupboard.

Bunter bared his fat knee, to wash away the black-and-blue bruises that had imposed on Mr. Quelch that morning. A sudden recovery was evidently Bunter's only chance; but it was doubtful whether the Owl of the Remove would be granted time for so sudden a recovery. At every moment he feared to hear the doctor's footsteps on the stairs.

"Soap!" gasped Bunter.

"No soap here——"

"Get some, you ass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You might help me to my study, Wharton," said Bunter in an expiring voice. "Pray do, Wharton," commanded Mr. Quelch. Limping painfully, the fat junior leaned heavily on Wharton's arm and disappeared from the Form-room. (*See Chapter 7.*)

—and comes out strong as a friend in need!

"And a scrubbing-brush!" shrieked Bunter, as Nugent dashed from the study, convulsed with laughter.

Nugent had to drive a way through a crowd of yelling juniors. Nearly all the Remove seemed to have gathered round the doorway of Study No. 1, and they stared in at Bunter with great merriment. He was already laying his fat knee in the hot water, by way of a beginning, and the water was assuming a purple colour.

Bunter blinked round at them in great indignation.

"You beasts, cackling at a chap who's going to get a licking!" he gasped. "Chap who's been crippled at cricket."

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

"Where's that slow beast Nugent?"

"Here he is!" gasped Frank, hurrying back into the study with a cake of soap in one hand and a scrubbing-brush in the other.

"Go it, Bunter!" yelled Skinner, highly delighted now. "You'll never get it off in time. I can hear sawbones moving!"

"I—I say, you fellows, barge him if he comes up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rub away, Bunter!" gasped Wharton, weeping tears of mirth. "Oh, my hat! You'll be the death of me!"

"This ain't a laughing matter, you beast."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All the juniors seemed to think that it was a laughing matter. They yelled and almost wept as Billy Bunter rubbed and scrubbed, and scrubbed and rubbed at his fat knee with frantic haste.

But that unhappy marking-ink, warranted indelible by its makers, seemed bent on living up to the guarantee. Lots of it came off—enough to turn the flowing bowl into a pool of purple. But lots of it remained. Bunter had rubbed it in not wisely but too well. The bandages lay on the floor, Bunter's turned-up trouser-leg was soaked and dripping, purple water was splashed right and left, Bunter's fat hands were purple, and there were purple spots on his fat, perspiring face. Perspiration streaming down turned the purple spots into purple streaks, and still the hapless Owl of the Remove rubbed and scrubbed frantically, working against time.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!"

Dr. Pillbury came up the Remove staircase with Mr. Quelch. He gave the howling crowd of juniors a curious look.

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Quelch. "What does this outbreak of unseemly merriment mean? This is the study, Dr. Pillbury! As I was saying, the unfortunate boy's knee, when I saw it, seemed to be a mass of dark bruises—not raised bruises, you understand; but the skin seemed covered with black and blue—— Bless my soul!"

Mr Quelch stared into the study.

Bunter suspended his rubbing and scrubbing. With the bare fat knee in the basin, a cake of empurpled soap in his left hand, an empurpled scrubbing-brush in his right, Bunter stood as if turned to stone.

Dr. Pillbury blinked at him.

"Upon my word!" he ejaculated.

"Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Oh dear!"

"What are you doing?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!"

"Is that your damaged knee, Bunter?"

"Ow! Oh! Yes, sir!"

If Mr. Quelch had not been a very keen-eyed gentleman he could not have failed to see the truth now. But as a matter of fact, he was a very keen-eyed gentleman indeed.

"Bless my soul!" he said quite faintly.

"Master Bunter's black and blue bruises seem to be of—ahem—a very unusual nature!" remarked Dr. Pillbury. "They wash off apparently. Remarkable!"

"Bunter, you have deceived me!"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I hope, sir, that—that you know me well enough to know that I—I'm incapable of deceit, sir."

"Let me see the knee," said the medical gentleman.

He looked at it and smiled.

"There is nothing whatever the matter with the knee," he said, "only it has recently been rubbed with some dark purple ink, which doubtless gave it an appearance of subcutaneous discoloration, resembling bruises."

"I—I am aware of that now, Dr. Pillbury!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Your time has been wasted, sir, owing to an astounding deception on the part of this unscrupulous boy, who has escaped lessons for a whole day by this—this—this rascally imposition."

Dr. Pillbury retired from the study, suppressing a smile. Bunter would have been glad to see Mr. Quelch follow him. But Mr. Quelch seemed interested in Bunter, and he remained.

"Bunter! You—you young rascal, put away that nonsense at once!"

"M-m-mayn't I bathe my—my injury, sir?" asked Bunter feebly.

"What?"

"My injury, sir! I'm practically crippled——"

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Quelch made a stride at Bunter and took him by the collar. Bunter gave a wild roar.

"Come with me, you utterly unscrupulous boy!"

"Yaroooh!"

Mr. Quelch led the Owl of the Remove from the study. Behind them the Remove buzzed and chortled as they went downstairs.

"Bunter's for it now!" said Peter Todd.

"Serve him jolly well right!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The rightfulness is terrific."

Some of the Removites, interested in the closing scene of the tragedy, followed Bunter and the Remove master. Mr. Quelch's study door was shut; but his voice could be heard, incessant, for five consecutive minutes. Billy Bunter was receiving what the juniors called a Royal jaw. And that was not all.

When Mr. Quelch's voice ceased to be audible Bunter's became audible in turn—extremely audible.

"Yoooop! Yaroooh! Oh dear! Oh crumbs! Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

"Quelchy's going it!" remarked Bob Cherry.

Undoubtedly Mr. Quelch was going it. To judge by Bunter's terrific roars the Remove master was putting in some really hefty and athletic work with the cane.

The study door opened at last, and Bunter emerged. He was limp, though not limping. He gave a woeful blink at the Removites.

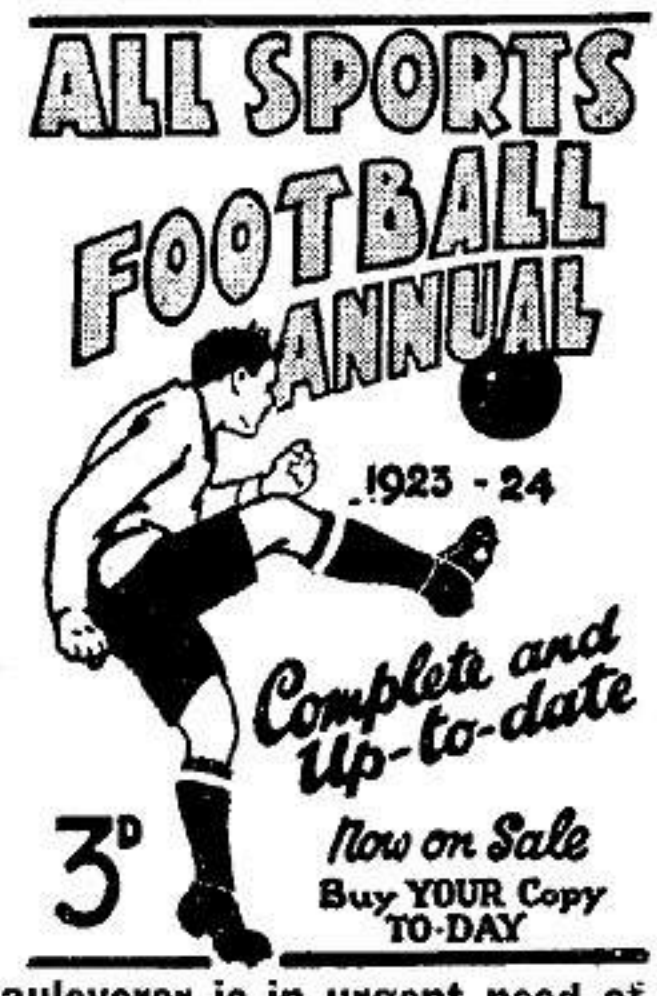
"Ow, ow, ow, ow! Wow!" he said, clasping his fat hands in anguish. "Licked, you know, after getting crippled at cricket, too. Jevver hear of such an awful beast? Ow, ow, ow! Enough to make a fellow chuck up cricket for good! Ow, ow!"

Bunter crawled away, cured of his limp; but suffering severely in his fat palms. And an unsympathetic chortle followed Billy Bunter—no longer lame Bunter.

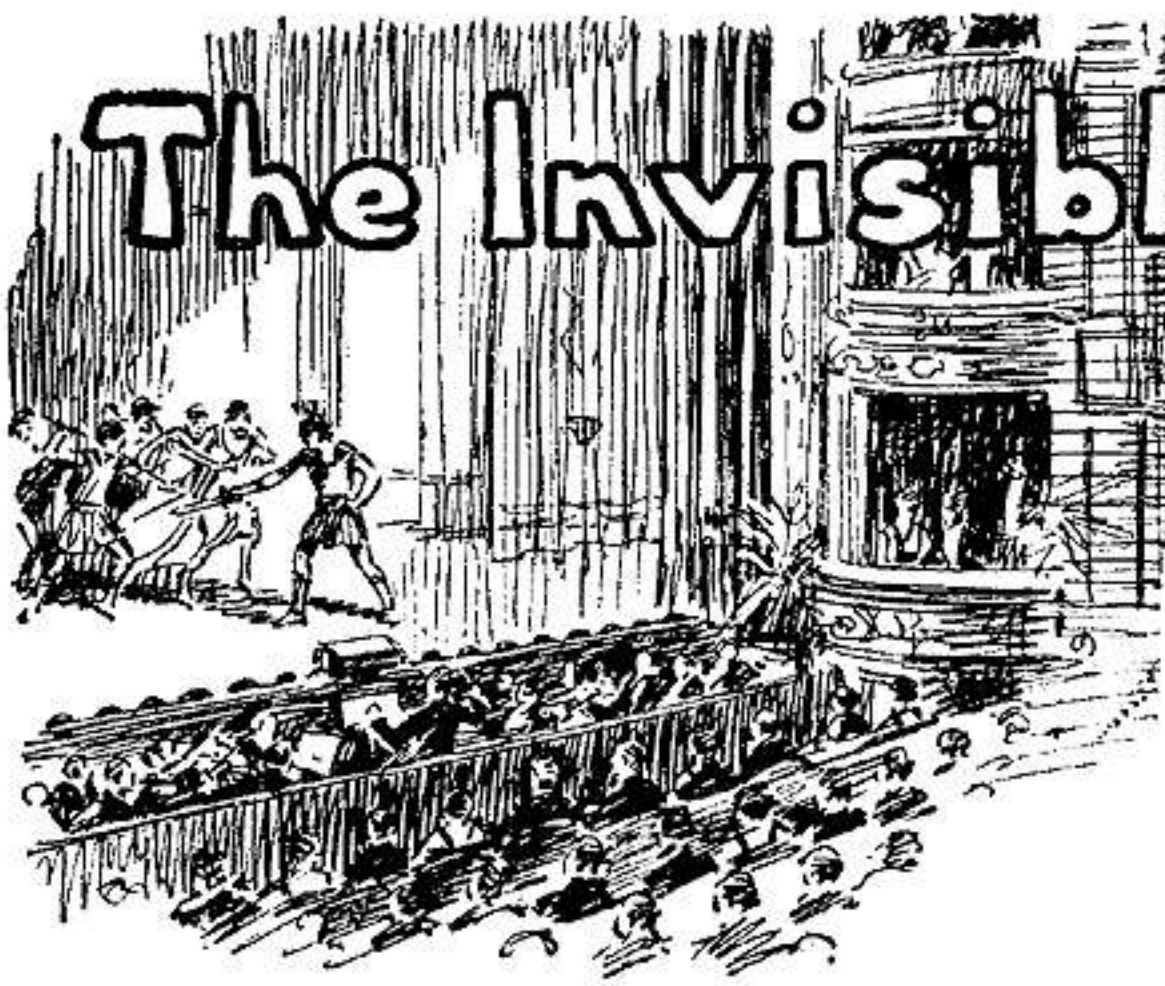
THE END.

(Next Monday's ripping complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, shows Lord Mauleverer—the slacker of the Remove—as the principal character on stage. His generous nature will make a great appeal to you all. To help a "lame dog over a stile," Mauly is in urgent need of £500. Will he get it? MEANS BUSINESS!" Next Monday!) Find the answer in "MAULEVERER

Lord Mauleverer is in urgent need of £500—



The Invisible Knife!



At the zenith of his triumph a popular opera singer is stabbed by an unseen hand. Ferrers Locke—the world-famous detective—is called in to solve the mystery, which turns out to be one of the toughest propositions he has ever met with in the course of his adventurous career. Recounted by **OWEN CONQUEST.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
The Brawl in Act 2.

"MISSA LOCKE, me catchee taxi-cab. Allee same waitee outside now."

Thus Sing-Sing, the Chinese servant of the world's most famous private detective, announced that he had accomplished the errand on which he had been sent.

Ferrers Locke, standing before the mirror in his dressing-room, gave a final touch to the bow tie at his throat.

"Right-ho, Sing-Sing!" he responded cheerily. "Shan't be a minute."

The Chinese withdrew his yellow countenance, and quietly closed the door. Locke stepped away from the dressing-table, a lithe, handsome figure in evening dress. He picked up his opera hat from a chair, gave a final glance at his toilet, and left the room.

Stopping on the landing, he rapped at another door, and entered the room of his assistant, Jack Drake.

"Ha, Drake, my boy! Just ready, I see! The taxi's waiting."

Jack Drake, also immaculate in evening dress, picked up his opera hat and followed his chief from the room.

"You've got the tickets, sir?" he asked.

Locke gave a laugh, and tapped his pocket.

"You bet! I've got the tickets, a case of excellent cigars, money enough to pay for the taxi and buy a programme, and a pair of decent opera-glasses. There's nothing else we want, is there?"

"I could do with a packet of bulls'-eyes, sir," said the youngster wistfully. "Funny, but as a kid I never went to a show without wanting to suck bulls'-eyes; and I haven't got over the taste."

"Well, you're jolly well not going to suck bulls'-eyes in the Grand Metropolitan Opera House to-night, my lad!" said Locke, with mock severity. "We sha'n't be the only people in the orchestra stalls, you know!"

Sing-Sing opened the front door to them, and bowed with Oriental politeness as they went out.

"You needn't stop up for us," said Locke; "I have a key. Good-night, Sing-Sing."

Entering the taxi, the detective and his assistant were driven rapidly from Baker Street to Savoy Square, in which the Grand Metropolitan Opera House was situated. They alighted at the corner of the square, and walked the remaining hundred yards to the theatre.

The scene near the Opera House was an animated one. A stream of fashionably-dressed men and women were pouring into the great foyer of the theatre. One beautiful motor-car after another set down its occupants on the pavement outside. A side street was thronged with people who had been unable to get into the pit and gallery.

To-night was indeed a gala night at the Grand Metropolitan. For the first time a new opera by the illustrious English composer, Paul Dubec, was to be presented. It was entitled, "The Conquest," and a great Italian prima donna, Signoretta Letti, had been engaged to sing the principal role.

But perhaps the public were more anxious to hear the tenor on this occasion. Next to the interest in the opera itself, the chief attraction was undoubtedly Owen Dalwyn, the Welsh impressario.

Dalwyn, though born in Wales, had spent many years in Italy. And it was in Milan that he had received most of his training. Already he had sung many roles in the United States. In New York, where exists the most critical opera public outside of Italy, Dalwyn had been compared favourably with the immortal Caruso. The American musical critics had lavished praise upon him. For days the topic in the English papers had been, "Would Dalwyn make good over here?" That problem would be solved to-night.

Entering the Opera House, Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake were ushered to their seats by a trim attendant. Their stalls were in the centre of row A, and immediately in front of the orchestra. These they had obtained only through the kind offices of Carl Hazzard, the manager of the Grand Metropolitan, and a personal friend of the detective.

On either side and behind them were the elite of London, the women wonderfully arrayed in jewels and silks. The pit and gallery were a sea of faces eagerly watching the arrivals in the boxes and stalls and trying to identify notabilities. The Royal box, as yet unoccupied, was tastefully decorated with lovely blooms.

The orchestra entered with their instruments, and remained standing. There was a stir in the Royal box. The conductor raised his baton. Then the whole house rose as one man to its feet as the National Anthem crashed out.

As seats were resumed, Ferrers Locke nudged Drake in the ribs.

"See that lady—the second to your left, my boy?"

"Yes."

"She's Miss Gwen Dalwyn, the sister of the impressario."

A few moments later, as the first notes of the opera were played by the orchestra, the boy stole another sidelong glance at the lady in question. She was becomingly dressed in dove-grey, with a tiara of pearls in her raven hair. Her slim fingers trembled slightly as she held her programme.

The lights lowered in the auditorium. The curtain rang up. The first act of "The Conquest" had begun.

The period of the new opera was at the time of the Roman Conquest; the scene in Act One was laid on the Greek coast.

Hardly a sound rose from all that vast audience as the opera proceeded. A few enthusiasts greeted the entry of Signoretta Letti with applause. But these were speedily hushed into silence again by the vast majority of music devotees.

The great Italian prima donna was in fine voice. And Owen Dalwyn, in the role of Claudius, rose to the occasion, and sang as he had never sung before. The purity of his tone held all spell-bound, and he struck the high notes with a surety that had never been surpassed even by the great Caruso himself.

And, as the curtain fell on Act One, and the last music of the instruments died away, a deathly silence held the vast audience. Then, like the crashing of a mighty tidal wave against a rocky headland, a thunder of applause burst forth.

Time and again the curtain rose and fell. And still the audience was not satisfied. Letti was cheered to the echo. Then from a thousand throats rose the name of the tenor:

"Dalwyn! Dalwyn!"

Again the curtain ran up. Again the Welsh impressario appeared with the prima donna. But this time the roar of applause was for the man, Owen Dalwyn

—for whom and what purpose, see next Monday's fine story!

had made good. London had taken him to her heart!

Jack Drake, flushed and happy, stole a glance along the stalls to where sat the sister of the man who stood bowing on the stage. Two spots of colour lighted the cheeks of the woman, and tears glistened in her eyes. But they were tears of joy.

Ferrers Locke, moving from his seat to smoke a cigar in the foyer, could not refrain from halting by her.

"Miss Dalwyn," he whispered, "I'm glad. My heartiest congratulations to you both!"

The woman looked up in astonishment.

"Mr. Locke!" she exclaimed. "I did not recognise you at first. Of course, I met you at Lord D'Acre's country house last month. I—I thank you, on behalf of my brother, too, for your congrats. Oh, it is splendid—splendid! If only Owen can repeat this triumph when he sings in Milan next month, our cup of happiness will be filled to overflowing."

"He'll make good anywhere," said Locke stoutly. "That voice of his is pure gold."

And, with a genial nod, he passed out for his smoke.

The second act promised to be even better received than the first. The scene was the interior of the home of Claudius, the captain of the Roman guard. It was picturesque, and great draperies of black and gold in the background added a richness to the scene.

The music of this act was even more entrancing than the first. In addition, the theme of it was more exciting. A fine Soldiers' Chorus was followed by a pulse-stirring brawl in the house, which was broken into by a mob of citizens. The fracas developed. Claudius entered, and was set upon by the armed citizens. Drawing his short sword, he defended himself valiantly against the knives of the rabble. Then above the rushing notes of the orchestra arose an agonised human cry. Claudius slipped down among the mob that surrounded him on the stage and rolled over on the boards. Carried away by excitement, a few members of the audience broke into applause. It was grand music and grand acting!

But even as the applause broke out a flame flickered close to the fallen man on the stage. Next instant, to the horror of all beholders, the whole of the black-and-gold draperies were ablaze!

The applause stopped immediately, and several fear-stricken cries rent the great theatre:

"Fire! Fire!"

The mob went tearing from the stage shouting at the top of their voices. People sprang to their feet in all parts of the opera-house. Only Claudius, otherwise Owen Dalwyn, the impressario, remained still.

Locke leaped to his feet at the first alarm, as did Jack Drake. The detective's voice rang clear to every part of the building:

"Keep calm!"

That was the order he sent forth in such an impressive manner that even those most panic-stricken restrained their mad desire to rush from the building.

Drake, meantime, thumped the flabbergasted orchestra conductor on the back.

"What have you stopped playing for?" he demanded. "Play, man—play! Any old thing. Give 'em 'Susannah's Squeaking Shoes!'"

The orchestra conductor pulled himself together, and nobly rose to the occasion. And so the jazz strains of "Susannah's Squeaking Shoes" rang throughout the building, which but a few moments before had resounded with the highbrow music of grand opera.

As for Ferrers Locke, directly he had stemmed the impending panic, he turned his gaze again to the stage. To his consternation, he caught a glimpse of the "Roman citizens" fleeing from the stage, while Owen Dalwyn remained prone on the boards.

It took but a fraction of a second for Locke to make up his mind how to act.

He vaulted lightly on to the brass rail of the orchestra enclosure, remained poised there for a moment, then made a flying leap over the conductor's shoulder on to the stage. As sure-footed as a cat, he alighted on the prompter's box, on either side of which extended the array of footlights.

Then again he hurled himself forward. The asbestos fire curtain came down with a run, just missing his head.

But now the detective was on the stage with the asbestos curtain between himself and the audience. Darting to the side of Dalwyn, he raised the tenor in his arms. The yellow tongues of flame, bursting from the almost destroyed draperies, licked his hands and clothes. A stream of water from a small hose, operated by some zealous stage-hand, struck against the side of his head and sent him reeling.

"Hi, go easy, my friend!" roared Locke. "I'm not on fire!"

Avoiding further contact with fire and water, he staggered with his burden into the wings. Here Carl Hazzard, the immaculately dressed manager, who had just come round from the front of the theatre, met him.

"My dear Locke," cried the manager, "what is it? What has happened to poor Dalwyn?"

Ferrers Locke, who had only had time to gather the man in his arms and dash from the stage, had not more than glanced at his burden. But the dead weight of the man told him that the tenor was unconscious, if indeed life remained in him at all.

Instead of attempting a reply to the manager's anxious query, he demanded roughly:

"Lead the way to Dalwyn's dressing-room!"

Some of the actors and stage-hands were getting the blaze under control—of that he was aware. The draperies had burned themselves out, and had fallen a mass of smouldering ashes about the stage.

And the manager, with one quick glance round, noted that the danger to the building was past. With a sigh of relief he led the way to the dressing-room of the impressario.

Very tenderly Ferrers Locke laid the singer down on a well-sprung settee. Then, raising Dalwyn's head in his arms, he quickly ran his eyes over the man. Suddenly his eyes narrowed to pin-points, and his face assumed a set expression. For at the back of Dalwyn's neck an ominous stain of crimson showed!

"Good heavens!" muttered Locke. "The man has been stabbed!"

"Stabbed!"

Every vestige of colour left the fat, fleshy face of the theatre-manager as he bent over the singer.

Locke indicated the stain on Dalwyn's neck and at the back of the shoulder of the Roman captain's uniform that he wore. Then he looked up with a start as the door of the dressing-room was flung open to reveal the form of a woman in dove-grey evening-dress. It was Miss Gwen Dalwyn, sister of the opera-singer.

For a moment the woman, white-faced, stood swaying at the door. Then with a cry she reached her brother's side.

"Owen! Owen!" she cried. "Speak—speak to me!" Then, drawing away slightly with her eyes wide and staring, she muttered, in trembling accents:

"Oh, the villains—the villains! They—they have killed him!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
A Baffling Mystery!

FERRERS LOCKE stooped down and gently raised the grief-stricken woman from her knees.

As he did so, Jack Drake, who had come round in search of his chief, entered the dressing-room.

"Ah, in the nick of time, my boy!" said Locke, in a tone of relief. "Please look after Miss Dalwyn!"

The boy led the lady to a seat at the dressing-table.

"Is the woman right, Locke?" muttered Carl Hazzard, in a distressed voice. "Is poor Dalwyn indeed dead?"

Locke looked up and shook his head.

"Thank Heavens, he still breathes!" he said. "Go before the curtain, Hazzard, and request that if there is a doctor in the audience, he will come round to the stage door at once. Meet him there yourself, and bring him to this room."

The manager hurried away. The fire had been got under control, but the stage presented a pitiful spectacle. Instead of the beautiful scenic effects of the second act of the opera, the place was littered with ashes, charred pieces of wood and canvas, and everything was wet with water. The agitated composer of the opera, the prima donna, many ladies and gentlemen of the cast, and a number of stage-hands were excitedly discussing the amazing events of the evening.

Going before the drop curtain, which had been lowered, he made his request for a doctor.

Withdrawing from the stage, he was in time to meet the first doctor who presented himself at the stage door, and at once conducted the surgeon to Dalwyn's dressing-room.

Ferrers Locke had cut away Dalwyn's clothes and temporarily dressed the unfortunate man's wounds with a field-dressing such as he always carried with him. He whispered a few words to the medical man. Then, as the doctor bent over the patient, he buttonholed the theatre manager.

"Look here, Hazzard," said Ferrers Locke, in a serious tone. "There is more in this business than meets the eye!"

The manager started.

"You mean that—that it wasn't an accident!"

"I do. In my opinion the wound which Dalwyn received, and the fire that broke out on the stage, were the results of foul play."

Hazzard opened his mouth as though to speak again, but Locke hastily cut in.

"Listen to me, Hazzard," he said. "I want you to give orders immediately that no one is to leave the stage door of this theatre."

"But—but many have left already! A number of the actors and stage-hands rushed out at the first alarm, so the attendant at the door told me."

"You will find that most of those

Talking of money, there's £300 to be picked up! See Page 2.

have returned now that the fire has been extinguished. Anyway, do as I tell you!

"That done, telephone for an ambulance and to Inspector Pycroft at Scotland Yard, and ask him to come here with all speed."

Greatly upset at the real drama which had been enacted in his theatre that evening, Carl Hazzard hurried out of the room to do as he had been bidden.

Slowly, the doctor rose from the side of the patient.

"Well, what's the verdict, doctor?" asked Ferrers Locke.

The medical man put his glasses into his pocket and chose his words carefully.

"He has received a nasty wound," he said. "Luckily, the knife, or whatever it was that struck him, missed the jugular vein by the fraction of an inch."

Miss Dalwyn rose unsteadily from the chair and advanced towards him.

"Then—then my brother will live?"

"That is my opinion," said the medical man cautiously. "Doubtless an X-ray examination of the wound will be made at the hospital. Until that is done, nothing really positive can be said."

Ferrers Locke picked up the stained portions of the stage uniform which he had cut from Dalwyn's shoulder, and carefully placed them in a wardrobe.

"Kindly see that no one touches these, doctor," he said. "I shall not be gone many minutes!"

Nodding to Drake, the detective left the tenor's dressing-room and mingled with the throng in the wings.

"First, my boy!" he whispered, to his assistant. "We will take a look at the stage where this drama occurred. Let's see—it was up-stage centre?"

Walking up the stage Locke gently flicked some of the ashes of the destroyed draperies away with his handkerchief.

"See, Drake," he muttered, "the boards here are stained with a patch of deep crimson. This is the spot where Dalwyn fell!"

Going down on his knees, he looked carefully at the boarding of the stage for fully a minute without speaking again. Next he took his opera-glasses, and, placing them close to the boards, used one of the lenses as a magnifying-glass.

As he rose, a cheery voice greeted him.

"Ah, Mr. Locke, on the job already?"

It was Inspector Pycroft, of Scotland Yard, who, by travelling the short distance from the Embankment in a fast motor-car, had beaten the ambulance which had also been summoned by telephone.

Locke shook hands with his old friend, the C.I.D. man, and briefly told Pycroft the broad facts of the case.

"The case is clear," said Pycroft. "This tenor fellow, Dalwyn, must have been stabbed by one of the singers or actors, or whatever you call 'em, who took part in that brawl scene in act two. I'll have the whole lot of 'em cross-questioned. Someone must have seen the thing done!"

"Don't you be too sure, my worthy friend," remarked Locke. "I was sitting in the front row of the stalls, and I had no idea that a knife had been driven into Dalwyn's neck until I got the singer to his dressing-room."

The lip of the Scotland Yard man curled slightly beneath his moustache.

"You've found the weapon with which the deed was done, of course?"

"No," replied Locke.

"Well, I'm hanged!" muttered Pycroft.

"But I have something to show you," said Locke calmly.

He moved off towards the dressing-room of the tenor, but halted as a stretcher was brought along with Dalwyn lying on it. The ambulance had arrived. Behind the stretcher walked Miss Gwen Dalwyn.

The sleuth touched the lady on the arm.

"Miss Dalwyn," he said, "I wish to be of as much assistance to you as possible. When you have seen your brother to the hospital, will you kindly return here?"

The lady nodded, and gave Locke a look of gratitude before leaving the theatre.

"Now, Pycroft," said Ferrers Locke to the inspector, "I will show you exhibit one!"

No one was in the tenor's dressing-room as he pushed open the door. The doctor had accompanied the party with the injured man. Pycroft, Drake, and Carl Hazzard followed the sleuth into the apartment, wondering greatly what it was that Locke had to exhibit to them.

Going to the wardrobe, Ferrers Locke opened the door and took out the portion of crimson-stained uniform which he had cut from the tenor's shoulder.

"Have you a magnifying-glass with you, Pycroft?" he asked.

The inspector produced one.

"Good!" said Locke. "I see that you believe in the Boy Scouts' motto: 'Be Prepared.' Now carefully examine this coat. Notice particularly the tiny black marks near the collar!"

Placing his glass over the stained cloth, Pycroft gazed at the marks long and earnestly.

"Evidently the costume was dirty before it was worn," he remarked at length.

"Do you think that likely, Hazzard?" asked Locke.

"I do not," returned the manager of the opera house decidedly. "Dalwyn's costume, like all those used in 'The Conquest,' was absolutely new for the performance this evening."

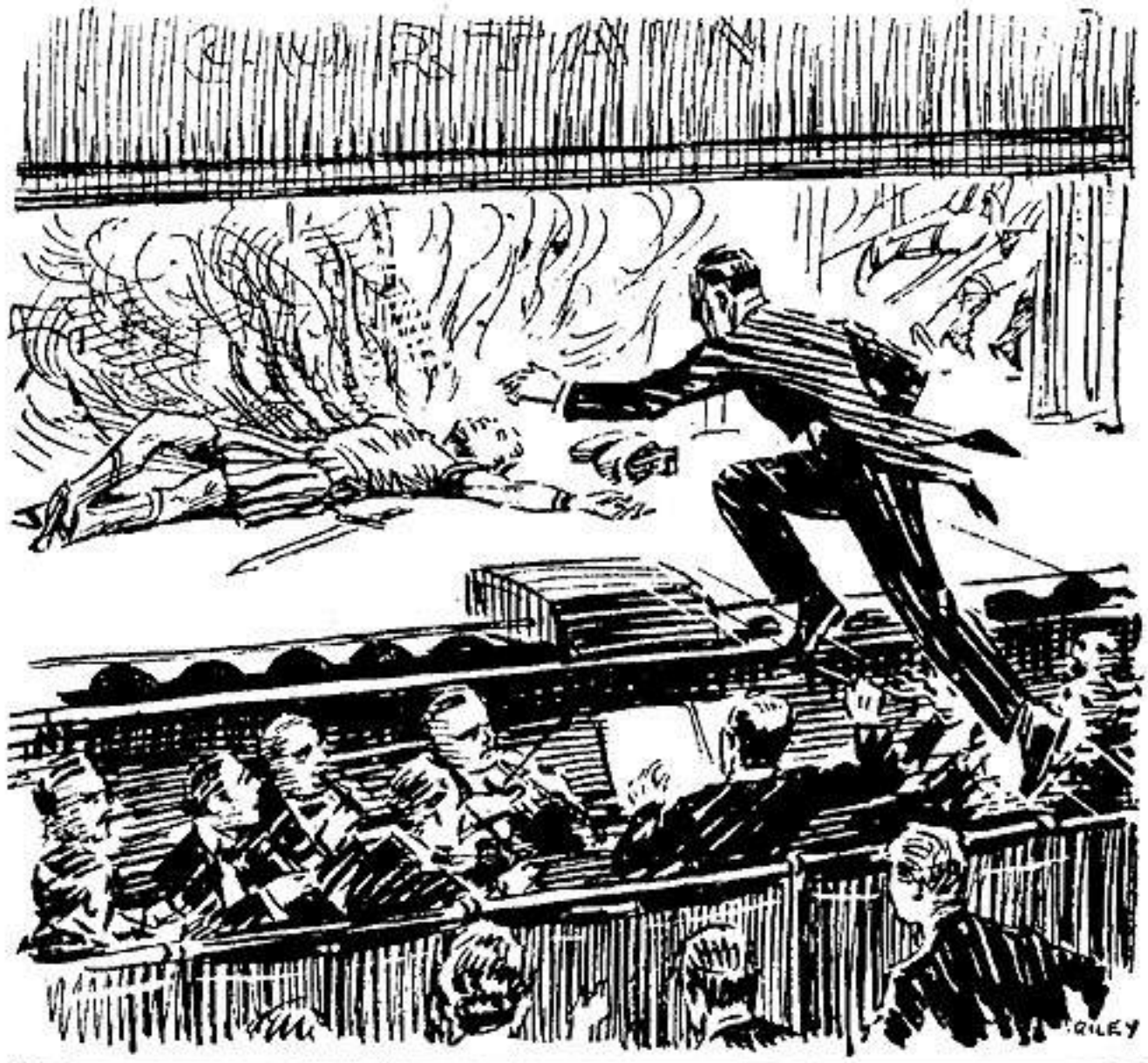
"Well, it doesn't matter, anyway," said Pycroft. "It doesn't get us much farther with the case."

"I'm not so sure," said Ferrers Locke. "Those small black marks you see on the crimson stain are not from grease-paint or anything of that nature. Unless I am greatly mistaken, they are stains of ordinary petroleum-jelly, or vaseline, in which has been mixed common or garden soot. There is nothing in this dressing-room to indicate that Dalwyn got the stains on his costume before he went on the stage. Therefore it is reasonable to suppose that the knife that wounded him was coated with the stuff."

"But, my dear Mr. Locke," expostulated the theatre manager, "none of the knives used in Act II. this evening were thus coated with petroleum-jelly. They were only stage properties."

"We will examine them," said Locke, "though I do not expect to find the weapon which was used for the deed among them. Come—let us go on the stage again."

By this time the audience had left the opera-house. Many of the singers who had taken part in the new production had changed to street attire. Now they



Ferrers Locke vaulted lightly on to the brass rail of the orchestra enclosure, and from there took a flying leap over the conductor's shoulder on to the stage. Reaching the fallen player, he raised him in his arms, the yellow tongues of flame from the burning draperies licking his hands and clothes. *(See Chapter 1.)*

"The Eleventh Event!"—next Monday's detective thriller!

and the stage-hands were impatiently waiting for the official investigations to be completed so that they could go home.

Leading his companions back on to the stage, Ferrers Locke pointed to some tiny dark stains near the small patch of crimson.

"Here we have the same phenomenon," he remarked—"black, greasy marks. They correspond with the marks on the costume worn by Owen Dalwyn."

Inspector Pycroft bent his burly form over the marks and examined them through his glass. Rising, he stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"H'm! I see—I see!" he murmured. "My theory of this affair is that one of those chaps engaged in the same scene as Dalwyn had a grudge against him. This chap, whom I will call Mr. X, knew jolly well that he would be nobbled for a cert if he used the property knife issued to him for the deed he had in view. So he had another knife concealed on his person."

"I can hardly credit it!" said Carl Hazzard. "Why on earth should a man who had a grudge against Dalwyn elect to do such a thing in public, with a couple of thousand pairs of eyes looking on?"

"That's just it!" said the C.I.D. man. "Although all those folk were watching the scene, no one appears to have seen the actual stabbing. As a matter of fact, it was the safest method Mr. X could have selected. There was the brawl on the stage. The music was playing, voices were raised in song, knives were flashing, and in the general hurly-burly the assassin got in his blow, which might have proved fatal to this singer chap."

"Very good! Very good, Pycroft—as far as it goes!" said Ferrers Locke. "And perhaps you can explain the manner in which the draperies caught fire immediately afterwards? For one might suspect that the fire was started to create confusion and cover up the traces of a crime."

"Huh! H'm! Yes!" said Pycroft, growing a trifle redder about the neck. "But, hang it all, I've hardly started my investigations yet! I'll find out the reason when I've had a further quiz round, never you fear! Kindly summon all the men who appeared on the stage with Dalwyn in the brawl scene of Act II."

While the manager was doing this Ferrers Locke put a few questions to one of the scene-shifters. According to the man, several of the knives which had been used in Act II. had been dropped on the stage when the singers had made their hurried departure. They had been collected up by the stage-hands and placed on a bench in the wings.

"The property man's got the whole lot of 'em there, sir," said the scene-shifter. "Those what were brought orf by the hactors, too."

Followed by Pycroft and Jack Drake, the sleuth crossed to the property-man.

"Have you the full complement of knives used in Act II.?" he asked.

The property-man nodded and jerked a thumb in the direction of a bench behind him.

"They're all here, sir," he replied. "And none of them is stained with blood, either."

"Thank you," said Ferrers Locke, after glancing over the array of stage weapons. "That is all I wanted to know."

Meantime, Carl Hazzard, manager of the opera-house, had collected the singers who had taken part in the brawl scene. There were two dozen in all. The majority of them had by now changed into civilian attire.

Both Locke and Pycroft plied them with questions. But one and all denied all knowledge of the drama which had been acted so close to them on the boards. The first they had heard of it, they averred, was after Dalwyn had been carried from the stage.

But Pycroft was by no means satisfied. He ordered a couple of constables who were present to search the dressing-rooms and the other parts of the theatre behind the footlights. He personally ran his hands over each of the men assembled on the stage. Not a trace of another knife such as could have caused the injury Dalwyn had received was to be found, however.

The inspector chewed his moustache and looked like a man who had bumped up against a problem beyond his capacity.

"Remarkable!" he muttered. "Very remarkable!"

At that moment Miss Gwen Dalwyn was escorted into the theatre from the stage-door entrance. She wore a beautiful blue wrap over her dove-grey evening-gown. The colour had returned to her cheeks, and her whole bearing was calm and dignified.

"Your brother is a trifle better, Miss Dalwyn?" murmured Ferrers Locke, stepping forward to greet her.

"Yes, thanks, Mr. Locke! The doctors at the hospital say that he will be greatly improved after a night's rest. Who are those men lined up over there?"

"They are the singers who enacted the role of citizens in the scene in which your brother received his injury."

The woman's lips compressed slightly.

"Then it was one of them who struck my brother down?"

"I cannot say, Miss Dalwyn—yet."

"But it must have been!"

Taking a couple of steps on to the stage, she came face to face with the men who were lined up. Immediately an exclamation left her lips. Then, raising her hand, she pointed a trembling finger at a medium-sized man at the end of the front row. Her voice rose in a hysterical cry:

"He's here—here before me! Robert Griffiths—the man who stabbed my brother!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Hunted Across Europe!

AS to who was the most astonished at the sudden denunciation by the woman, it would be difficult to say. Ferrers Locke, accustomed as he was to surprises in his adventurous career, was taken aback. The man himself who had been pointed out as the culprit appeared flabbergasted. The blood faded from his cheeks. And though he opened his mouth as though to speak, he closed it again without uttering a sound.

"Come, come, Miss Dalwyn," said Ferrers Locke. "That is a serious accusation you have made. What proof have you to substantiate it?"

"This. That Robert Griffiths has always been the enemy of my brother. This man lived in the same town in Wales where my brother and I were brought up. An uncle of Griffiths left my Owen a small legacy, and Griffiths made himself most objectionable about the matter."

"But this was years ago?" murmured Locke.

"Yes," said the woman. "But there has been great bitterness on Griffiths' part since. Both he and Owen were acquiring a musical education. The legacy came in handy to my brother for the purpose, and Griffiths took no pains to conceal the envy he felt. I wasn't aware that Robert Griffiths was a member of the caste of the new opera. But here he is, and he was on the stage at the time my brother was stabbed."

"Huh!" grunted Pycroft. "No proof that he stabbed him though!" Turning to Robert Griffiths, the accused man, he said. "You knew Mr. Dalwyn?"

Griffiths moistened his lips.

"I did," he replied. "But I swear I did not stab him, nor do I know who did!"

"I should like to see the brawl scene in Act II reconstructed," said Inspector Pycroft. "By the way, Mr. Hazzard, how did Mr. Griffiths here come to get a job in the same company with Dalwyn?"

"It was Mr. Dalwyn who recommended him for a small part," said the opera house manager.

"Yes," interposed Griffiths. "If you want to know, I may as well tell you I was down on my luck, and Dalwyn gave me a leg up."

One of the other members of the company lined up gave a cough.

"Ahem!" he said apologetically. "I think, in consideration of what has been said, I ought to tell you, inspector, what I heard before going on the stage to-night. Passing Dalwyn's dressing-room I heard voices raised in anger. One of them was Dalwyn's, the other—Robert Griffiths'!"

All eyes turned on the man at the end of the front row. Plainly Griffiths was very uncomfortable. His face was suffused with red, and his hands clenched and unclenched nervously.

"Hang it, I ought to have told you!" he growled. "I—I wanted to obtain a loan from Dalwyn. I've been extremely hard up of late. He refused, and—and——"

"You threatened him?" finished Ferrers Locke quietly.

Robert Griffiths started and hung his head.

"Yes," he said. "But I meant nothing. It—it was an idle threat."

But the square jaw of Inspector Pycroft was stuck out at an aggressive angle, as he looked over the men who had sung in Act II.

"Can any of you remember how close Griffiths was to Dalwyn on the stage?" he demanded.

No less than three of the men gave it as their opinion that Robert Griffiths was close against Dalwyn on the stage. They remembered, owing to a distinctive dress which Griffiths had worn in the scene.

It was enough for the Scotland Yard man. His eye flickered in the direction of a policeman who had been standing in the background, and his hand fell on the shoulder of the Welsh singer.

"Robert Griffiths," he said, "it is my duty to place you under arrest on the charge of attempted murder and causing grievous bodily harm to the person of Owen Dalwyn. And I warn you that

anything you say may be taken down and used in evidence against you."

For a couple of moments the Welshman stared at the C.I.D. man, while the colour mounted higher on his cheeks. Then with a growl like an angry bear he threw the inspector's hand off his shoulder, and gave Pycroft a sharp jab with his fist in the region of the belt.

"Ooch!" gulped Pycroft.

"Now keep your hands off me, you fat bluebottle!" said Griffiths in a towering rage. "If you so much as——"

But before he had time even to finish his sentence, Pycroft had sprung forward and snapped a pair of "darbies" on his wrists.

"Take him away!" ordered Pycroft, as the constable gripped Griffiths by the arm. "I'll come along a bit later."

When Griffiths, loudly protesting his innocence, and calling the police "dunderheads" and a few other choice names, had been led away, Pycroft rubbed his hands together as though well satisfied.

"Thank you, Miss Dalwyn," he said. "But for you it may have been a hard job to have laid hands on the culprit. There's no doubt that Griffiths, after threatening your brother, decided to kill him. What has become of the knife with which he did the deed, and how the fire occurred, are matters which I have no doubt I shall speedily solve."

Then Locke broke in.

"All the other singers who took part in the opera are still present," he said. "Will you kindly make sure, Hazzard, that all the stage hands, electricians, and so forth are here too?"

Pycroft revealed his impatience as Carl Hazzard proceeded to find out what Locke wanted to know. It turned out that one stage hand, called Andrew Stube, who had recently been engaged, had not been seen since shortly after the fire. The man had helped to collect up the weapons which had been left on the stage, and it was opined that he must have gone home. Ferrers Locke made a note of the man's address in his pocket-book.

"Waste of time," grunted Pycroft. "Though I might go and interview the man myself to-morrow if we don't find that knife. Not likely, though, that the chap would have picked a blood-stained knife from the stage without noticing it. Take my word for it, Griffiths brought the knife off himself, and has put it down some crack or crevice. We shall find it!"

"Somehow, I don't think you will," said Ferrers Locke, shaking his head. "To my mind, it's a pity that you arrested poor Griffiths. But it's none of my business. I shall, however, with your permission, Hazzard, take a further look round the theatre."

"Do so by all means, my dear Locke," said the manager heartily.

Pycroft shrugged his shoulders, and grunting an excuse, went off to help the two constables in their search for the missing knife.

"Crumbs!" said Jack Drake to his famous master. "This is a queer go altogether! You don't think the man Griffiths did the job?"

"Frankly, I don't," said Ferrers Locke. "Another theory has been forming gradually in my mind. I intend to put it to the test. Follow me!"

Leaving the manager, who had other business to attend to, he led Drake to the ladder leading up into the "flies." They climbed this, and cautiously made their way high up above the stage. A narrow balcony extended the whole depth of the stage on both sides. To the wooden rails of these were tied a number of ropes attached to the various rolls of scenery suspended above and across the stage.

Walking along one of these narrow wooden balconies, Ferrers Locke gazed down at the stage, a thoughtful expression on his keen face. Then suddenly his eyes lighted on two or three black marks on the guardian rail.

"By Jove, I believe I'm right!" he said. "Dalwyn was assaulted with the knife from up here!"

"From up here?" exclaimed Jack Drake, in amazement.

Locke pointed to the black smears on the rail.

"There is the evidence," he said. "Those marks are of soot mixed in petroleum jelly. Similar stains showed on Dalwyn's costume and on the stage."

"You think that the knife was coated with petroleum jelly in which soot or lamp-black had been mixed?"

"That's so, my boy. Let us try to reconstruct the crime in theory. A stage hand has a grudge against Dalwyn or one of the other singers. He possesses some skill in knife-throwing. So he lays his plans well in advance. Knowing that long black draperies act as a background to the scene on the stage, and that the scene is played in a fairly dim light, he blackens the knife with soot mixed in petroleum jelly."

"Rather messy, sir," commented Jack Drake. "Black paint would have been better."

"So it would. But in all probability the man had kept the knife coated in petroleum jelly to prevent rust. Therefore, it was an easy matter for him to mix lamp-black or soot with it to darken the knife."

He paused, and then resumed:

"Now we come to the crime itself. Standing up here, the would-be assassin waited his opportunity. He hurled the knife downwards to the stage. The knife, being black, was invisible against the black draperies in the background, and went unnoticed by the audience. Then, directly he had thrown the knife, the man dropped a small fire-bomb behind the draperies, and out of sight of the audience. This ignited directly it struck the stage, and next instant all the draperies were ablaze."

"But surely the folk in the wings would have seen anything dropped behind the draperies, sir?"

"No. There were side pieces of scenery set in such a way that it was impossible to see on the stage."

"By gum," muttered Drake, "if your theory is correct, it was a jolly well-conceived affair. But if the knife was thrown from here, it must have struck Dalwyn on the neck and then fallen to the stage. In that case surely someone would have found it?"

"Unless," said Ferrers Locke, "the miscreant who stood up here to perform the deed hastened down the ladders and assisted in clearing up the stage himself. Needless to say, his first thought would be for the knife, and he would pick it up and conceal it."

"Well, it ought to be fairly easy to find out which of the hands were up here during the second act," said Jack Drake. "Most likely it was that chap Andrew Stube, who pushed off home in such a mighty hurry."

"There is a pointer in that direction," agreed Ferrers Locke. "But let us descend to the stage and make a few more inquiries."

By questioning some of the other stage hands, Locke found that Stube, who had been engaged only recently at the theatre, had been in the flies during part of the performance. The man was described as of foreign descent, of bulky proportions, and possessed of a short moustache and beard.

Miss Dalwyn came face to face with the men who were lined up in a row. Then an exclamation left her lips. She pointed a trembling finger at the man at the end of the front row. "He's here," she cried, hoarsely. "Robert Griffiths—the man who stabbed my brother!" *(See Chapter 2.)*

When Locke went to bid the opera-house manager good-night, the latter earnestly expressed the hope that he would continue the investigations. Moreover, Hazzard offered to pay all expenses.

Leaving the opera house, Locke and Drake took a taxi and bowled home to Baker Street. But although the hour was close on midnight, they had no thought of sleep. Keeping the taxi waiting, they hastily changed into some old clothes and cabbed it as far as Shaftesbury Avenue. There they paid off the taxi and walked to Stube's address in Soho.

The place proved to be a small Italian lodging-house. They awakened the proprietor from his sleep, and, naturally, the man was far from pleased to have visitors at that unearthly hour. However, a pound note pressed into his greasy palm by the detective made him rather more amicable.

The landlord, in answer to Locke's queries, stated that he knew but little of Andrew Stube, for the man had only stayed with him for three days. Locke pressed another pound into the Italian's willing palm, and the man agreed to let the sleuth look over the room occupied by the stage hand.

It took but a glance for Locke to see that Stube had no intention of returning that night. All his clothing had been removed, and only a few articles of no monetary value remained.

"My aunt, look at this, sir!" suddenly exclaimed Drake, who had been peering into a small cupboard.

The find proved to be a nearly empty tin of petroleum jelly.

But Ferrers Locke was on his knees by the empty fire grate. He thrust his hand in and began feeling about the chimney.

"Here we have it!" he cried triumphantly, as he brought his hand down again. "It was on a soot-covered ledge at the back of the chimney just above the grate."

And he produced a broad-bladed knife, dirty with soot and vaseline, and with ominous rust-coloured stains along its edge.

"Our finds here have proved my theory to be correct as to the method by which the deed was committed," said Locke. "Our next job is to find Stube and discover the motive for the deed."

Taking the knife and empty tin with them, he and his young assistant left the house in Soho. But the mysterious Stube had made his get-away. Unable to pick up his track that night, they returned to Baker Street to snatch a few hours' sleep.

After breakfast Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake separated, and paid a visit to various railway-stations, steamship companies, and tourist agencies. In the office of one of the last named, Jack Drake had the good fortune to learn that a man answering exactly to Stube's description had booked through to Milan, in Italy. He reported the discovery to his chief when he returned to Baker Street for luncheon.

"Excellent!" said Ferrers Locke. "I have telephoned to Inspector Pycroft to join us at lunch. We will then show him the knife, and learn what happened at the police-court proceedings against Griffiths this morning. The newspapers were full of the opera-house sensation. It would not surprise me to learn, however, that Robert Griffiths was discharged from custody."

This surmise proved to be correct. Inspector Pycroft arrived at Baker Street looking thoroughly miserable. Despite his best efforts to make a case of the meagre material at his disposal, he had heard the magistrate discharge Griffiths on the grounds of "insufficient evidence."

"Well, cheer up, my dear Pycroft!" said Ferrers Locke gaily. "Sing-Sing has made some very excellent rabbit-pie. And—er—how would you like a jaunt over to Italy?"

"To Italy!" echoed Pycroft. "What the dickens——"

"I'll explain," said Locke calmly. "A man calling himself Andrew Stube secured a job as a scene shifter at the Grand Metropolitan. That is the man who stabbed Owen Dalwyn. If you wish to retrieve the blunder you made in arresting Robert Griffiths, you will take a few days from the Yard to accompany Drake and me to Milan. There I hope to be able to point out to you the wanted man. After that it will remain for you to take extradition proceedings and get the fellow back to England to stand his trial."

A gleam of hope shone in the eyes of the red-faced police inspector.

"By Jove, I'll come, Mr. Locke!" said he. "I was a fool not to have taken your advice in the first place."

* * * * * *

It was five days later. Very much against his will, Inspector Pycroft, of Scotland Yard, occupied a dress-circle seat between Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake in the Milan Opera House.

"La Boheme!" snorted Pycroft for about the umpteenth time. "I don't hold with grand opera; it's too highbrow!"

"Sh-sh, my dear Pycroft!" murmured Locke. "Perhaps never again will you hear the role of Rudolph sung as it is being sung to-night. Carlosa, the great Italian tenor, is wonderful, is he not?"

"He's got a fine, loud voice," admitted Pycroft grudgingly. "But he's no picture to look at. I can't stand those burly, clean-shaven, oily-looking fellows. Besides, I haven't understood a word of the first act. I'd sooner see a decent picture of old Charlie Chaplin any day of the week than sit and listen to a lot of Macaronis screeching in Italian."

From this it will be judged that Inspector Pycroft, of Scotland Yard, was not in the best of humours. He had been dragged to the opera against his will. And, although they had been a whole day in Milan, Locke had made no move to point out to him the man wanted for the Dalwyn stabbing affray. Instead, during the day the private sleuth had gone off on his own, leaving Pycroft and Drake to amuse themselves as best they could.

To Pycroft's further annoyance that night, directly after the opera Ferrers Locke insisted on them all going to the stage door, "to watch the stars come out."

"Really, Mr. Locke," said Pycroft, "if you'll excuse my remarking so, you're potty on these opera singers."

Nevertheless, Pycroft stood alongside of Locke and Drake and admired the daintily-clad prima donna and others as they emerged from the stage door and entered their motor-cars. Then a burly figure came out, and all recognised the great Italian impressario.

"Signor Carlosa, eh?" muttered Pycroft.

"Yes," said Ferrers Locke. "Signor Carlosa, my dear Pycroft—the man you are looking for!"

He nodded in the direction of two smart Italian policemen who had been hovering in the vicinity. To the amazement of the C.I.D. man they immediately walked up to the singer and said a few words that caused Carlosa to start back as though shot.

Then, uttering a cry of rage, the tenor sprang for his car.

"Quick, Pycroft!" yelled Locke. "Get your darbies on him!"

There was something so imperative in the sleuth's tone that Pycroft was constrained to obey.

"Good!" commented Locke. "Bundle him into the car!"

Pycroft did so. Locke and Drake and the two Italian policemen also piled in, and the motor drove rapidly to the Milan police headquarters. Here Carlosa was formally charged with the attempted murder of Owen Dalwyn in London, and placed in a cell pending the result of the extradition proceedings.

Back at their hotel, Ferrers Locke briefly cleared up whatever mystery remained.

"The stabbing affair in the Grand Metropolitan was the act of a madly jealous man," he said. "Carlosa had been staying in London after a visit to the United States. In America he had heard Owen Dalwyn sing, and saw in the Welsh tenor a dangerous rival to his own prestige. He gave out in London that he was going to return to Italy. Instead, he disguised himself, and, with forged references, secured a job at the Grand Metropolitan as Andrew Stube, a scene shifter. He deliberately laid his plans for throwing a knife down from the flies of the theatre at Dalwyn and causing confusion immediately afterwards by dropping an incendiary bomb on the other side of the black draperies which were hung at the back of the stage."

"H'm!" grunted Pycroft. "And he made a thundering good aim with that knife, too!"

"He did. As a matter of fact, I remembered reading somewhere that in his very early days in Italy Carlosa had earned his living by throwing knives in a circus. He brought his old-time skill to his aid in his plot against Dalwyn. Directly after the trouble at the Grand Metropolitan, Stube, alias Carlosa, returned to his lodgings with the stained knife, which he retrieved from the stage in the confusion. The knife he secreted in the chimney of his room, where I found it. To-day I located the cutlery firm in Milan who sold this identical knife to Carlosa just before his visit to the States. Then I arranged with the Italian police to have the singer arrested to-night."

There was a pause. Then Pycroft held out his hand.

"By Jove, you're wonderful, Mr. Locke!" he said. "You have done the police a great service in bringing the rascal to book."

"Glad to have been of assistance," returned Locke heartily. "And it's a pleasure to know, too, that Owen Dalwyn will shortly come to Milan and score the great triumph that Carlosa feared so much. When he appears in England again, I advise you to go and hear him, Pycroft."

"No, thanks," said Pycroft, as he knocked out the ashes of his pipe, preparatory to going to bed. "I still don't hold with that highbrow stuff they call grand opera!"

THE END.

(Don't miss next Monday's sensational 'tec yarn, entitled "The Eleventh Event!" By Owen Conquest.)

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SCOUTS AND SCOUTING!

By SCOUTMASTER.

WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

"Oh, yes, I've seen lots of 'em!" said the slacker, "Parading about with shorts and sticks! But what's the use of it all? What is it all about?"

That's a remark I overheard a short while ago from a young fellow who had just watched a troop of Boy Scouts pass down the road. I smiled a little at this, for I knew that, in spite of the certain note of disdain in the boy's tone, that he had only to taste the great joys of scouting to make him an enthusiastic supporter of the growing movement.

He didn't know. He'd heard about Scouts, but that was all. He had not troubled to gain access to the inner working of this fine movement. And that is the same with many others. They know of its existence, and that is about as far as their knowledge extends. But we of the inner circle, so to speak, know what it is all about.

It is to teach boys to be men, clean-minded and hard. The sort of chap with the clean-cut features and deep chest, who is out to gain the top rung of the ladder or perish in the attempt.

We learn more than that, too—lots more; and that is where we score again. Scouting is the greatest movement in the world, and one still in its infancy. But it is still a mystery, and will always be. That is the beauty of it all. It's full of mystery and full of something new every day. In the manner of the proverbial brook, it goes on for ever, and as it proceeds it widens.

What is that magnetic influence radiating its irresistible forces over the Great Game? It is the "Spirit of Adventure." There is a deep secret force hidden in adventure, the thing which boys thrive on. Clean, wholesome adventure, with experiences gained. Every boy loves adventure—he would not be a boy if he didn't. You do yourself. Don't you experience that wonderful feeling and thrill when off to camp—that you are off on some great adventure like the men of olden times?

Off to camp—among the woods and wild life, in the open spaces, there to cook your own grub, explore the country, and camp as a good camper does.

Your club-room roof is the blue smiling sky, and there are no walls to be cooped up in. What a club-room, and what a mistress in Nature! Thorough in her teaching, she gets the best out of everybody.

"KIM."

An excellent example of a good scout is in Rudyard Kipling's "Kim." Kimball O'Hara, to give him his full name, was a member of the Secret Service in India. You've all read the book of his wonderful adventures, no doubt, and know how Kim became acquainted with a certain member of the Government Intelligence Department, which was the start of his amazing career? His knowledge of the native tongue and customs, his pluck and intelligence, stood him in good stead.

He was a boy who used his eyes and common sense. In other words, he was a true Boy Scout. Just those two natural facilities exercised in the proper manner ultimately put him into the most envied position a boy could be in.

When I say he used his eyes, I not only mean in the ordinary sense of the phrase, of just glancing at a certain thing, but what he saw he remembered afterwards in every detail. He observed, took note, and filed it away, as it were, for future reference. And every scout should emulate Kim—observe, remember, and deduct. That's true scouting.

ON THE HIKE.

"Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag, and tramp, tramp, tramp!"

That is how the old song should go, really. Not exactly pack up your troubles; pack up your camping equipment, and then take the first road for the Great Outdoors.

Get on the hike—on the move—anywhere. It does not matter so long as you do. This is not the time to stick to the club-room; your club-room is in the open on the highway. Any week-end that comes your way, gather together the patrol, sling the jolly old haversack over your shoulder, and, with a light heart and thick ash staff, go and find where the open spaces are.

"BE PREPARED!"

The wonderful motto which has made scouting what it is, the greatest movement in the world, consists of just two words. But words which have volumes of meaning in them. Just think of it! "Be Prepared"—the Boy Scout's motto which carries him forward along the straight road of life to success. Do you know what it means?

It is this: Hold yourself in readiness to help others, guard yourself well, and always be on the alert. Take for example the following:

I was walking along one day last summer when I saw two fellows ahead of me going in the same direction. Suddenly one slipped and fell, spraining his ankle badly. The other turned in dismay, looked at his friend lying on the ground groaning, and then scratched his head, nonplussed. What was he to do? I was about to run forward when another figure came round the corner at the double, and was upon the scene in a twinkling of an eyelid. By the time I had come up this newcomer was kneeling beside the prostrate boy.

Out of his pocket came a small first-aid case, and he was administering aid to the injured foot in a very short time.

This boy was a scout. He was "Prepared." He knew exactly what to do, and did it in a very businesslike manner. That is merely an ordinary example where knowledge of first-aid, taught to every Scout, came in useful, and also a case of "Being Prepared." There are many others, too numerous to mention. But things of that sort are being done every day all over the world.

So you see how fine it is to be able to help others, and yourself. It is something to be proud of, to know that you can be of use in an emergency. In a case of fire, or in accidents of the kind mentioned, directing strangers, knowing how to do this, that, and the other, and always prepared for the occasion.

It is this kind, unselfish, ready-to-oblige nature which carries Scouts to the top of the ladder. People realise that that sort of chap is worth his salt a fellow who "obliges without regarding whom he obliges" and trustworthy to hold a responsible position.

Every branch of profession comes in the Boy Scout training—mechanics, book-keeping, drawing, printing, secretarial work, farming, etc. So that when the time comes to find an occupation, the Scout is ready to face the world with a good start.

He has prepared himself, and is ready to fight in the true scouting spirit.

THE EDITOR'S CHAT!

(*Continued from page 2.*)

provoking here, also something that is serious, and through it all looms the generosity of good old Mauly, who never counts the cost.

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"THE ELEVENTH EVENT!"

This shows Ferrers Locke faced by a difficulty which looks insuperable. There is something a bit more than shady taking place in a big international sports fixture, and British sport would have had a knock-down blow, only—well, Ferrers Locke happened to tumble in and take a hand. Watch out for this!

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A FARMING NUMBER!

It is a pleasure to announce this supplement. Some people scoff at farming and say it is on the down grade. There is no need to believe this—in fact, it is all moonshine. Just read the "Greyfriars Herald" in next week's MAGNET. Everybody who is foggy about farming should secure a copy. There is far too much indifference on the subject. That's why some fellows get the wrong pig by the ear. Enough said!