CUT-OUT PHOTOS COMING LATER! SEE . . . BELOW.

No. 910. Vol. XXVIII. Week Ending July 18th, 1925.

The Magnet 2d. Library

EVERY MONDAY.

Complete School Stories

AN APOLOGY!

Your Editor regrets that, owing to unforeseen mechanical difficulties having arisen, the FREE CUT-OUT ACTION PHOTOS OF FAMOUS CRICKETERS will **NOT** be presented with the MAGNET this week, but will be postponed until MONDAY, AUGUST 10th, paper dated AUGUST 15th, when 4 SUPERB CUT-OUT STAND-UP PHOTOS will be given away FREE.

THE BUNTERS ENJOY THE AIR AT BUNTER COURT — IN IMAGINATION!

(See the grand complete story of Greyfriars inside.)

10/- a week for a year

FAMOUS CRICKETERS COMPETITION

5/- a week for a year

AND 40 SPECIAL PRIZES etc.

SEE THE LIST OF PRIZES ON PAGE 17.

THE good old MAGNET has had many interesting and popular competitions in the past, but this new contest, the first part of which we are giving you this week, bids fair to outshine all its predecessors. Everybody is invited to join in—and there is no entrance fee.

Here we give you the first set of puzzle-pictures, each of which represents the name of a famous cricketer. So that the contest shall be equal for everyone, you will find on Page 24 a list of names, and every "cricketer" represented by a puzzle-picture will be found in this list.

Also, to make the contest even more simple, we have filled in the solution to the first picture in this set. It is TATE.

THE WAY TO WIN.

As you make out the answer to each of the other five pictures given this week, write it, IN INK, in the space underneath, and then keep the set until next week, when we shall give you the Second Set of six puzzles to solve.

The contest will continue for six weeks, and with the final set we shall give you a coupon and full directions for the sending in of your entries.

The Closing Date will be Thursday, August 27th, 1925.

You must adhere strictly to these Rules.

The First Prize will be awarded to the reader who sends a correct, or most nearly correct, solution of the six sets of puzzle-pictures. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit.

You may send as many attempts as you like, but every attempt must be a complete solution of the whole series of puzzles. It must be quite distinct and separate from any other attempt, and all solutions must be written IN INK.

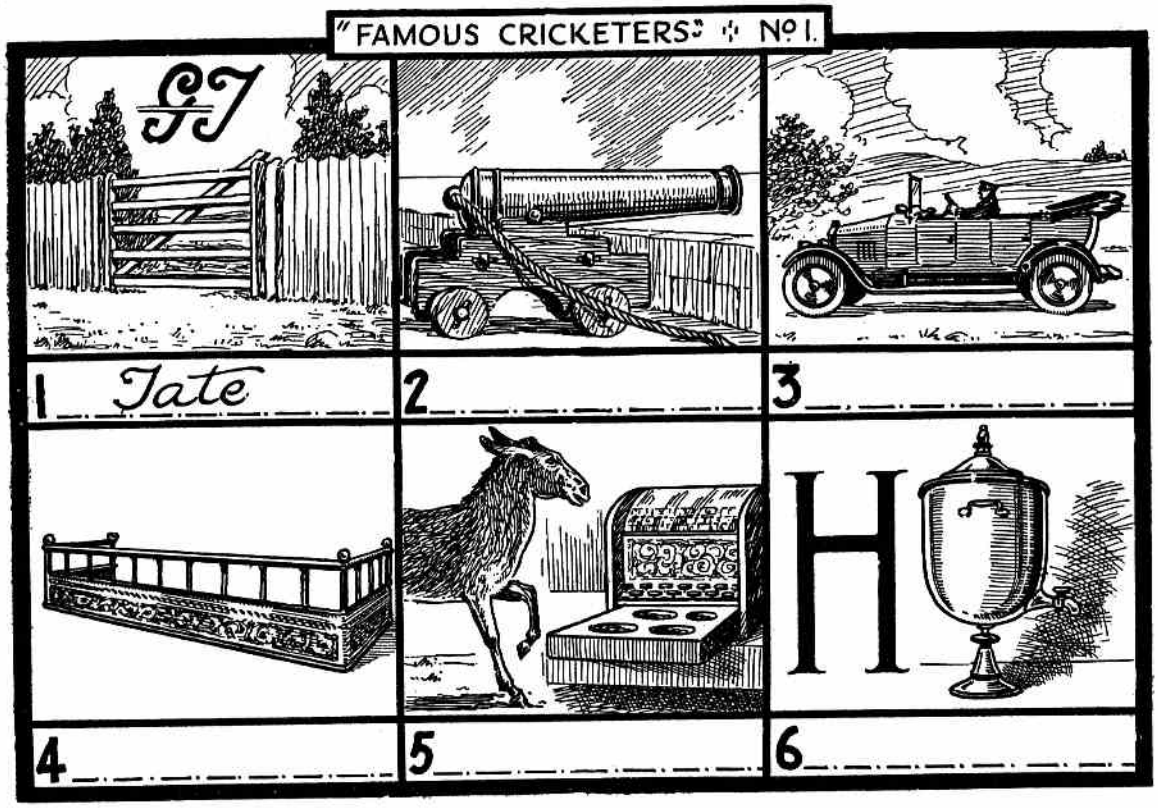
The Editor reserves full right to divide the prizes or their value. No competitor will receive more than one prize. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor be taken as final and binding.

Entries mutilated or bearing alterations or alternative names will be disqualified. No correspondence will be allowed. No responsibility can be taken for delay or loss in the post or otherwise.

Employees of the proprietors of the MAGNET may not compete.

START NOW.

LIST OF NAMES ON PAGE 24.



THE FOUNDATION STONE! Bunter Court exists only in the imagination of Billy Bunter. His schoolfellows are tired of hearing about the host of footmen, the Rolls-Royce cars, the horses, the gorgeous picture gallery, the gardens, lake, etc. But Bunter is determined to convince his doubting Form-fellows that Bunter Court does exist! From "fancy" comes the first stone of the "ancestral" home, the beginning of a great "reality!"

Billy Bunter's Brain-Wave!

A Magnificent, New, Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, with Billy Bunter well in the limelight.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Court—and Bunter Caught!

"BUNTER Court——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you, Bunter Court——"

Billy Bunter was interrupted by a fresh roar of laughter.

The juniors in the Rag at Greyfriars School seemed to be in a hilarious mood.

Only Billy Bunter was serious.

The Owl of the Remove blinked wrathfully at his hilarious Form-fellows through his big spectacles.

"If you fellows don't believe me——" he hooted.

"Believe you!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Oh my hat!"

"The believefulness is not terrific, my esteemed Bunter," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I tell you——"

"Can it, old man," said Johnny Bull. "You've done your funny turn. Now can it!"

"You cheeky ass! I tell you——"

"Run away and play!" advised Frank Nugent.

"Is this what you call a civil way of receiving an invitation for the holidays?" hooted Bunter indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. chortled again.

Perhaps it was not exactly civil or grateful to receive a kind invitation to Bunter Court for the summer holidays with an outburst of merriment. But, really, the Remove fellows could not help it.

Much was heard in the Greyfriars Remove of Bunter Court, the magnificent and palatial home of the Bunter tribe.

But no one at Greyfriars had ever seen that gorgeous establishment, or knew its precise locality—not even William George Bunter himself, in the opinion of the Remove.

Often and often had Billy Bunter described the spacious mansion, the huge garage, the army of expensive cars, the troops of liveried servants, the stately butler, the vast park, the great lake in the grounds, the acres and acres of woodland and meadow. It was an oft-told tale; but never, never had it found any believers.

In the opinion of the Remove fellows, Billy Bunter resembled the poet described by Shakespeare, whose fervid imagination gave to airy nothing a local habitation and a name.

Harry Wharton & Co. were discussing the summer holidays, break-up at Greyfriars being near at hand. Where the Famous Five were going was not yet settled, only that they were all going together. But really, they couldn't very well arrange to go home with Bunter, to Bunter Court. It really was not practicable to set out for such an unsubstantial destination.

Bunter glowed with indignation.

Bunter was blessed with a powerful imagination; and sometimes it seemed that he really did believe in his own amazing yarns—while he was telling them, at least, which seemed to indicate that his credulity was equal to his imagination.

At all events, whether or not he believed in his weird tales himself, he expected other fellows to believe in them, and was greatly annoyed at his valuable word being doubted.

Bunter Court might have been a magnificent establishment just round the corner, from the way Bunter spoke of it, instead of a figment of Bunter's fertile fancy.

"I say, you fellows, you might be civil, at least!" said Bunter, indignantly. "If you asked me to Wharton Lodge, Harry, old chap, I should be civil."

"I dare say you would," grinned the captain of the Remove. "I'd ask you, old fat man, only I'm afraid the answer would be in the affirmative."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll come, old man!"

"You jolly well won't!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Roll away, old barrel," said Bob Cherry. "We're discussing important business, you know, and you're interrupting us."

"The fact is I'm sticking to my old pals this vac," said Bunter, blinking at the Famous Five. "For that reason I've turned down that chap, D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, who's written me a most pressing letter."

"I don't think!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I've got the letter in my pocket now, and I'll show it to you if you can't take my word, Bull."

Johnny Bull held out his hand.

"Show up!" he said.

"I jolly well will!" said Bunter.

And the fat junior groped in his pockets.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him. Bunter was searching his pockets with great assiduity, and for a moment the chums of the Remove really fancied that there might be a letter from D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, in existence there. But the fat junior's plump hands came out empty.

"I remember, now, I left it in my study," he explained.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat bounder! Blessed if you really didn't almost take me in for a minute," growled Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Now, about the hols," went on Harry Wharton, resuming the discussion that Bunter had interrupted.

"That's what I'm speaking about—the hols," said Bunter, interrupting again. "I've turned down De Courcy, of Highcliffe, too, for the sake of you fellows. The old Caterpillar fairly begged me to come home with him this vac, but I said it couldn't be done. I explained that I was taking a party home to Bunter Court, you see."

"Bow-wow!"

"Do come, you chaps," urged Bunter. "I really want you to come. We'll do you down all right—huntin' and shootin' and fishin', three or four cars to choose from, bathing in the lake, boating—all sorts of things. I've been home with you fellows, and I want you to come home with me this time. Is it a go?"

"You silly owl!" said Harry Wharton. "Suppose we said yes?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh?" ejaculated Bunter.

"It's a long, long way to Tipperary," said Bob, "but it's a longer, longer way to Bunter Court."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I mean it!" howled Bunter. "The fact is, I want the company of you fellows, you know—being such pals. I'll come home with you, or you can come home with me. Can't say fairer than that. Will you agree to come to Bunter Court? I'll ask the pater to send the big Rolls-Royce to take the lot of us."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Is it a go?" asked Bunter.

"Can it!" said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Franky——"

Bob Cherry closed one eye at his comrades, unseen by the short-sighted Owl of the Remove.

"Let's!" he said.

"Eh?"

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Good!" he said. "On second thoughts, let's!"

"The letfulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Singh. "My esteemed Bunter, I have terrific pleasure in accepting your kind invitation."

"I'm on!" said Johnny Bull, taking up the joke. "I'll come! Count me in, Bunter!"

"Me, too!" said Nugent heartily.

Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five.

Having urged those cheery youths to come home with him for the holidays, his fat face ought to have expressed great satisfaction at this general acceptance of his invitation.

But he did not seem wholly at ease somehow.

"It's settled," said Bob. "We're coming! The car will be here for us the day the school breaks up, Bunter, what?"

"Oh—yes."

"Leave it at that, then."

Bunter coughed.

"I'm jolly glad!" he said. "Very glad indeed! There's just one thing——"

"Oh! There's just one thing, is there?" grinned Bob. "What's that?"

"The pater—you know my pater's in the City—the pater's engaged in a big international financial operation," said Bunter. "It's barely possible that he may be called away from Bunter Court—may have to go to the Continent to see some other big men in finance. In that case, we should have to modify the arrangement a little."

"Oh, should we?" grinned Bob.

"Yes. It's not likely to happen, but it might—and in that case, of course, we'd put it off till next vac, and I'd come home with one of you fellows instead. That would be practically the same thing, wouldn't it?"

"Not quite!" chuckled Bob. "Only practically, and practically is a chicken that won't fight. We're coming to Bunter Court."

"Hear, hear!"

"If your pater's away we shall miss him, of course, but we'll try to bear it. We shall try to console ourselves with the stately butler——"

"And the liveried footmen," said Nugent.

"And the three Rolls-Royce cars—or is it four?" asked Johnny Bull.

"And the magnificent picture gallery," remarked Harry Wharton.

"And boating on the lake and hunting in the woods," said Bob.

"The huntfulness and the fishfulness and the shootfulness will console us for the regretted absence of Mr. Bunter," said Hurree Singh gravely.

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" gasped Bunter.

"It's a go, old fellow!"

"Quite settled!"

"Quite!"

Bunter drew a deep breath.

He was dismayed, and it was quite easy for the entertained juniors to read his dismay in his fat face. But the Owl of the Remove pulled himself together. After all, it was some days yet to the vacation, and in a few days much might happen. Bunter Court might even be burned to the ground in time to save the fat Owl from owning up to the swank!

"Right-ho, you fellows!" he said briskly. "It's settled, then! You're coming to Bunter Court! I'll send the pater a telegram at once to tell him."

"Oh, do!"

"Lend me a bob——"

"Eh?"

"I've been disappointed about a postal-order," explained Bunter. "I happen to be short of a bob for the telegram. But I really must let the pater know you're coming. He will want to make a few preparations for really distinguished guests."

"Oh, my hat!"

Bunter held out a fat hand.

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Better telephone!" he said gravely. "You can explain so much more on the phone than in a telegram. I suppose Bunter Court is on the phone, isn't it? Most magnificent country mansions are."

"Er—oh, yes."

"Quelchy is out. You can get into his study and use his phone," said Bob. "Cut off and get it done, Bunty!"

"But——"

"Buck up! Now's your chance, while Mr. Quelch is out!"

"But——"

"Get a move on, Bunter, old man! You're wasting time!"

Billy Bunter gave the Co. a blink—an expressive blink.

"Oh, all right! I—I'll phone!" he gasped.

And Bunter rolled out of the Rag. He rolled away—but he did not roll in the direction of Mr. Quelch's study.

He really had no use for Mr. Quelch's telephone.

Bob Cherry chuckled when the Owl of the Remove was gone.

"And now we can settle about the holidays!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Remove resumed the discussion of that important matter, just as if they didn't, after all, believe in the existence of Bunter Court!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Friend in Need!

"OH dear!"

Lord Mauleverer groaned.

It was a deep and dismal groan, and indicated that Lord Mauleverer, the laziest fellow at Greyfriars, did not find life worth living.

His lazy lordship was sitting in an extremely comfortable armchair in his study, No. 12 in the Remove passage. He really did not look as if life had used him harshly. A fellow who was an earl and a millionaire, who never could remember the number of acres and buildings that he owned, who had good health and a good temper and good friends, might have been expected to feel that life had used him rather well, in fact.

But there is always a fly in the ointment, as in the case of the princess who was distressed by a single crumpled rose-leaf in the couch of luxury.

Even an earl and a millionaire, being a schoolboy, had to turn up for class—and, with a Form master like Mr. Quelch, had to do some work. And Lord Mauleverer hated exertion in any shape or form.

But on this especial afternoon even that drawback to existence did not apply, for it was a half-holiday. There was nothing for Mauly to do till evening prep—and he was not accustomed to meeting troubles half-way, so he was not thinking about prep.

Nevertheless, there was trouble, as his deep and dismal groan testified. Life, according to Lord Mauleverer, was just one dashed thing after another dashed thing. And the "dashed" thing that had cropped up on this sunny afternoon was the grim necessity of taking a trip in a motor-car.

There were plenty of fellows in the Greyfriars Remove who would have welcomed a motor trip as a pleasant way of spending a half-holiday. But Lord Mauleverer suffered from the surfeit of wealth. To him a motor-trip was not a happy relaxation; it was an exertion. To his mind, a motor-car was simply a means of locomotion. If you had to get from one place to another a motor-car was the best way of doing it, as it implied the smallest exertion. Still, it implied some exertion, and was therefore a thing to be avoided if possible.

Lord Mauleverer had a letter in his hand. He was trying to concentrate his noble mind on it, but his noble mind refused to concentrate.

"Oh dear!" repeated his lordship. "Oh dear! It's really too bad! It's got to be done—no doubt about that! But—oh dear!"

Another groan.

"I say, Mauly!"

"Oh dear!" repeated Mauly, still more fervently, as a fat face and a pair of big spectacles glimmered in at the doorway of Study No. 12.

The sight of William George Bunter seemed to have a dispiriting effect on him.

Bunter did not seem to notice it—or perhaps he did not mind. He rolled cheerily into the study.

"Anything the matter, old man?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"Detention?" asked Bunter sympathetically.

"No, worse luck."

"Eh?"

"You see, if a fellow were detained a fellow couldn't be expected to motor over to Combermere, could he?" asked Mauly.

"I suppose not," said Bunter, blinking at him. "Are you motoring over to Combermere this afternoon?"

"Yaas."

"I'll come with you."

"That wouldn't make it any better, old bean. It would make it worse, by gad!"

"Oh, really Mauly——"

Lord Mauleverer glanced at his letter again and sighed deeply. Bunter blinked at it, and recognised the hand of Sir Reginald Brooke, Mauly's guardian.

"Old gent raggin' you in that letter?" he asked.

"No."

"Are you grousing just because you're motoring over to Combermere, you ass?"

"Yaas."

"Why not get another fellow to go, then? Lots of fellows would go, if you'd stand the car."

"I've thought of that," said Lord Mauleverer sadly. "I asked Wharton, but he's playing cricket or something. There's a match or somethin' on, with the Fourth, or somethin' or other."

Bunter grinned.

"The other duffers are playing, too," said Lord Mauleverer. "Cricket's catching', like measles, I believe. I asked Bob Cherry, and he told me he was playin'—and then Bull—and Nugent—and Peter Todd—and Smithy—all playing cricket! I thought of Hurree Singh, an' wondered whether the agent johnny would understand his English if he went—and when I made up my mind to chance it, and asked him, I found he was playin' cricket, too. Like measles, isn't it?"

"The agent johnny?" repeated Bunter.

"Yaas."

"You've got to see an agent at Combermere?"

"Yaas."

"What sort of an agent?" asked Bunter curiously.

"House agent."

"Great Scott! What on earth are you seeing house agents for?" exclaimed Bunter in amazement.

"Nothin'."

"Eh?"

Lord Mauleverer tapped the letter.

"Nunky wants me to," he explained. "Can't refuse nunky. Oh, dear! Combermere is fifteen miles if it's an inch. I wouldn't mind the run so much, you know—a fellow can doze in a car, and I've particularly specified that they're to send a decent car. But trottin' over a furnished house—talkin' to the agent—oh dear!" Lord Mauleverer sighed deeply. "And the agent's name is Pilkins! Of course, a fellow can't help his name, but it does rather offend a fellow's musical ear, doesn't it? Like Bunter."

"What?"

"I—I mean——"

"What are you going to look over a furnished house for, you ass?" demanded the Owl of the Remove. "Your people are not taking a furnished house for the holidays, are they?"

"Nunno! But a friend of nunky's is thinkin' of takin' Combermere Lodge for the summer—it's let furnished, you know. The Combermere people are abroad, and they've left the house with Pilkins, to be let, furnished, servants and all—all standin'. Nunky's friend has got in touch with Pilkins by the post, and it occurred to nunky that, bein' quite near Combermere—he calls fifteen miles quite near!—I might run across in a car on a half-holiday and look at the place. See?"

"I see!" assented Bunter.

The lodge-keeper had opened the gates and the car rolled in. The man stood hat in hand, as the car came in, and Bunter wondered whether he expected a tip. "Here, my man!" said the fat junior loftily. And he tossed the keeper a pound note. (*See Chapter* 5.)

"Of course, Sir Reginald thinks it a nobby idea," said Lord Mauleverer plaintively. "If I say the place is all right his old pal will come and look at it; if it isn't all right, it will save him a journey down from London. And he knows I'm an obligin' chap. Oh dear!"

Bunter grinned.

"It's a good idea," he said. "But any fellow could do it for you, I suppose. It's only to see that the place comes up to the description, and isn't a catch."

"Yaas."

"Well, I'll do it," said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I'd do more than that for a pal," said Bunter encouragingly. "Leave it to me, Mauly! Tell me where to pick up the car, and I'll go."

Lord Mauleverer eyed him dubiously.

It was a hot afternoon—quite hot. Mauleverers natural taste led him to a saunter by the river, and a rest—a long rest—in the shade under the trees. He did not want a rush along a dusty road in a rapid car, a talk with a bustling agent, an inspection of a furnished house. It did not even enter his mind to neglect his uncle's request, because Lord Mauleverer never said no to anybody if he could help it. But he would have given a great deal to get out of the task—always, of course, if it could be satisfactorily performed without his personal intervention.

Certainly, any fellow could do what was required.

It was merely necessary to inspect the place, and see whether it came anywhere near the estate agent's glowing description.

Billy Bunter, certainly, was capable of doing that—any fellow in the Greyfriars Remove could have done it quite well.

Lord Mauleverer hesitated.

"Call it a go!" said Bunter briskly. "You want to get out of the job, don't you, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"You know I can manage it all right?"

"Yaas."

"Then leave it to me."

Lord Mauleverer still hesitated. But it is well said that he who hesitates is lost! He thought of the cool shade by the river, the leafy branches shadowing cool waters, and he contrasted that mental picture with the picture of the dusty road buzzing with cars, the—probably—fat and perspiring estate agent named Pilkins—the walking up and down stairs and passages at Combermere Lodge—the bother of tipping the servants who were to show off the furniture——

He nodded.

"Bunter, old man, you're a good chap!" he said. "If you don't mind——"

"Not a bit, old man."

"It's fifteen miles in the car."

"That's all right."

"You'll have to let this man Pilkins join you in the car and run him to the Lodge," said Mauleverer. "You call at his office in the town. Most likely he will jaw all the way."

"Let him!"

"Well, if you really don't mind——"

"It's a go, Mauly."

"Right-ho!" His lordship was immensely relieved. "Now, I'll give you some particulars, as the estate agents say. Look at these dashed papers, will you, Bunter? And read these letters—see?".

And Lord Mauleverer leaned back in the armchair and closed his tired eyes, while William George Bunter went through the various letters and papers relating to that desirable furnished residence, Combermere Lodge, Kent.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not Bad for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER grinned cheerfully.

His fat face, in fact, was irradiated with satisfaction.

It was all very well for his lazy lordship to baulk at the task assigned him for that afternoon; but it was quite a different matter with Billy Bunter. He was going to enjoy himself.

Considering the magnificence of Bunter Court and the unlimited number of Rolls-Royce cars to be found there—according to Bunter—it might have been supposed that the fat Owl was fed-up with motoring, in the same bored state on the subject as Mauly. But it was not so. A motor trip was still quite a treat to Bunter—which really seemed to indicate that there were not so many Rolls-Royce cars at the Bunter home as the fat junior declared.

He knew that Mauly's car would be a good one—the Courtfield garage would send their very best goods for Mauly, knowing that the bills were not likely to be very carefully scanned. Bunter liked the idea of swanking about in possession of a good car. And money would be required—and in the circumstances, Mauleverer would have to stand the expenses—out of which there would undoubtedly be something left over for Bunter. Even the prospect of impressing Mr. Pilkins, the estate agent, as the accredited emissary of a lord, was pleasant to Bunter. Pilkins would be very civil; and Bunter liked people to kow-tow to him. Nobody was likely to kow-tow to Bunter on his personal merits. But as the representative of Lord Mauleverer, a certain amount of kow-towing would be essential from an estate agent who was desirous of letting a desirable—and expensive—country house.

So William George Bunter decided that he was going to have quite a good time; which was his real reason for relieving Lord Mauleverer of the task which irked his lazy lordship so much. It really was not Bunter's way to take on a task that he didn't like for the sake of another fellow. A task that he did like was quite a different matter.

Bunter was rather impressed by the description of Combermere Lodge in the papers that had been sent to Lord Mauleverer.

If the description was anything like the reality it was a splendid place, with innumerable rooms, stables, and garage, cars in the garage and horses in the stables, a well-wooded park, a magnificent terrace, valuable furniture in the stately apartments, butler, footmen, housekeeper, housemaids and parlour-maids—all sorts and conditions of maids, in fact—an establishment that rivalled Bunter Court itself!

Bunter wondered how on earth much money the tenant was going to pay for the hire of such an establishment. Certainly, it could only be within the means of a very wealthy man. He blinked through the papers and came on the details. The house was to be let for three months, while Lord Combermere was abroad with his family, and the rent was forty guineas weekly, tenant paying all charges.

"Forty guineas a week!" murmured Bunter. "Oh, my hat! Mauly's people must be rolling in money, and no mistake!"

He blinked at his lordship.

"I say, Mauly——"

No reply.

"This looks all right, Mauly! It's jolly like my own place at home, you know! But rely on me to see whether it comes up to sample. I say! Are you asleep, you ass?"

"Eh?"

"Wake up, you duffer!"

"Eh? What? I'm not asleep! I heard all you fellows were sayin'!" ejaculated Mauleverer, rubbing his eyes.

"He, he, he!"

"I—I mean, haven't you started yet, Bunter? I say, the car is to be at the gates at three," said Lord Mauleverer. "Isn't it close on three now?"

"My watch has stopped," said Bunter. "What's the time?"

"Look at my watch," said Mauly.

Lord Mauleverer's hands were behind his head, in the deep cushioned back of his chair. It did not seem worth while to him to change his position. Billy Bunter jerked his lordship's handsome gold ticker out and looked at it.

"Twenty to three," he said.

"You'd better get a move on, old man. I suppose you'll wash first."

"What!"

"I—I mean——" stammered Mauly.

"I shall want to know the time," said Bunter. "You may as well lend me your watch, Mauly."

"Right-ho!"

Bunter detached the gold ticker and the handsome chain. The Mauleverer crest was worked, in tiny diamonds, on the watch-case, and the value of the article was great. Bunter felt quite bucked as he fastened it upon his own well-filled waistcoat, where the chain glimmered among the traces of Bunter's last meal.

"I'll get going, then," said Bunter. "I suppose this Pilkins man is expecting you?"

"Yes. Sir Reginald has written to him that I shall be callin' this afternoon about the giddy house. That's all right. You'll find him waitin', and you can tell him you've come for me, see?"

"Right-ho! I'll go and change, then. Better put on a fellow's best clobber for a job like this," said Bunter. "You don't mind if I borrow one of your ties, do you?"

"Yaas."

"What?"

"I—I mean, no."

"And a collar and some of your studs—and a waistcoat," said Bunter.

"You'd never get a waistcoat of mine round your jolly old circumference, old scout!" grinned Mauleverer.

"That's all right—I can slit it up the back."

"Oh!"

"What about money?" asked Bunter. "It's usual to tip the servants when they show you over a furnished house, isn't it?"

"Yaas."

"Well, what shall I give them?" asked Bunter.

"Well, you don't want to chuck money about," said Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully. "It's rather bad form to be exudin' big tips. Give the butler a couple of pounds——"

"My hat! Don't you call that a big tip?"

"Nunno! But if he's very obligin', and seems to expect it, give him some more," said Mauleverer. "You can always tell the size tip a man expects, by his manner, if you're observant. It's quite an art, really. I generally hit on the right amount."

Bunter blinked at him.

"Is that your system of tipping, you ass?"

"Yaas."

"I should think servants must like showing you over houses. Well, shall I do the tipping, and tell you afterwards what it comes to?"

"Yaas."

"Oh, I forgot! I've been disappointed about a postal-order. What are you grinning at, Mauly?"

"Nothin', old bean. Take my purse."

"Right-ho! Of course, I shall be very careful with your money, Mauly. I'm a reckless and generous fellow with my own money——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But I shall be very careful with yours. I'll get off, then."

"Thanks!"

Lord Mauleverer looked really grateful. Bunter had saved him from a heavy task—and he was adding to the favour by taking himself off! The loss of Bunter's company alone was sufficient to make it a happy half-holiday.

Bunter rolled out of the study.

Lord Mauleverer made an effort and detached himself from the armchair.

He sorted out a straw hat, and walked down the passage and out of the House. In the distance he heard a shout from the cricket field.

"Bravo, Wharton!"

"Well hit!"

The Remove cricketers were playing Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth, and giving them plenty of leather-hunting, as usual. Lord Mauleverer glanced towards the cricket ground. He almost made up his lazy mind to walk there and watch the game from under a tree. But there was some exertion in watching cricket—and there was always the possibility of a fellow being called upon to return a stray ball. Lord Mauleverer walked on, and ambled gently down towards the river.

Meanwhile, William George Bunter was preparing for his trip.

He was going to swank that afternoon, and he was going to do the thing in style. As he was on Mauleverer's business he felt entitled to draw upon Mauleverer's wardrobe—not that he would have hesitated to do so, in any case. On a hot afternoon a straw hat was to be preferred to a topper, on grounds of comfort, but Bunter selected Lord Mauleverer's best silk hat. He made further selections from his lordship's possessions, and turned out finally in an extremely well-dressed state. Garments that did not extend far enough to enclose Bunter's podgy figure could be slit here or there—the damage to the garments did not really matter; they were not Bunter's.

Arrayed in Mauly's best clothes, with Mauly's best topper and Mauly's expensive watch and chain and cuff-links and tiepin, Billy Bunter surveyed himself in the glass and pronounced the result satisfactory.

He rolled down the stairs very pleased with himself and with things generally.

Coker of the Fifth spotted him as he went out, and grinned.

"Bunter's been washing himself!" he told Potter and Greene of the Fifth.

"His boots are clean!" said Potter in wonder.

"So's his collar!" said Greene. "What's the matter with you, Bunter? Are you ill, poor old chap?"

"Yah!"

Bunter rolled on. In the quadrangle he came on Ogilvy and Russell of the Remove. They shaded their eyes with their hands, as if dazzled by Bunter in his new glory.

The Owl of the Remove sniffed and rolled on. He came on Hobson of the Shell in the gateway, and Hobson chuckled, and shouted to him:

"Look out, Bunter!"

Bunter blinked round.

"Eh! Look out for what?"

"For the chap those clothes belong to!" chortled Hobson. "He mightn't like it, you know."

"Yah!"

Bunter turned a fat back on Hobson of the Shell, and rolled out of the gates. In an extremely happy and contented state of mind, the Owl of the Remove rolled towards a handsome car that was waiting in the road.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

In Borrowed Plumes!

THE chauffeur, who was standing by the car, touched his cap to Bunter with great respect, as the Owl of the Remove came up. Bunter gave him a lofty and patronising blink.

"I hope they've sent a good car?" he said, blinking over the automobile with the air of a fellow who knew all about cars.

"Yes, my lord."

"Eh?"

"You'll find it a good car, my lord."

Bunter left off blinking at the car, and blinked at the chauffeur again. He had never seen the man before, and doubtless the man had never seen him, and he realised that the chauffeur, sent there to pick up Lord Mauleverer at the gates of Greyfriars School, supposed Bunter to be his lordship.

The Owl of the Remove suppressed a grin.

The mistake was a natural one, as Bunter had come out of the school gates and walked across to the car to take possession of it. The chauffeur, naturally, had no knowledge of Lord Mauleverer, or of that slack youth's change of programme. But Bunter chose to attribute the mistake to his own distinguished appearance. He had always had a secret persuasion that he looked the part of a nobleman, and that if the Bunter tribe were not noble, at least they ought to be, on their looks.

It was like Billy Bunter to play up to the mistake instead of correcting it at once.

He would have liked to be a lord, but the next best thing to that was being taken for a lord.

"I'm accustomed to a first-class car, of course," he said in a condescending tone.

"Yes, my lord."

The chauffeur was very respectful indeed. Obviously his employers had told him to let his noble customer have plenty of civility. Doubtless it would be charged for on the bill.

He opened the door of the car for his supposed lordship.

Bunter stepped in.

Bang! The door closed, and the chauffeur took his place at the wheel. He had his instructions as to where he was to take Lord Mauleverer. There was no need for Bunter to give him any.

The car started, and Billy Bunter leaned back luxuriously upon a very comfortably padded seat. It really was a good car, and a very comfortable one. It was soon going at a great speed, and Greyfriars School vanished behind.

He grinned serenely as he rolled on.

The chauffeur was still under the impresion that he was driving Lord Mauleverer. Bunter, from sheer swank, had deliberately left him under that impression. As the car glided on Bunter was considering whether he would be able to make the same impression on Mr. Pilkins, the house agent at Combermere. It was quite a happy prospect for the impecunious Owl of the Remove, who really was nobody in particular, to spend an afternoon as a wealthy nobleman, bowed and scraped to by agents and servants and chauffeurs.

The deception was certainly easy enough. Lord Mauleverer had never seen Pilkins; had never, indeed, been at Combermere at all. All Mr. Pilkins knew of him was that Sir Reginald Brooke had written, stating that his nephew, Lord Mauleverer, would motor over from Greyfriars School on Wednesday afternoon, to take a preliminary glance at the furnished house.

Naturally, the agent would be expecting to see Lord Mauleverer. Mauly's idea was that Bunter would explain that he had come instead, and that had been Bunter's original intention.

But that little misapprehension on the part of the chauffeur had changed his plans.

He was going to be Lord Mauleverer for the afternoon, and he grinned complacently at the idea.

He had no doubt whatever that he was more suited to play the part than Mauleverer himself.

A genuine nobleman required to have a handsome presence, a distinguished apearance, a noble manner. All these Bunter had, or, at all events, believed that he had.

Undoubtedly, had Bunter had the good luck to be born a nobleman, he would have enjoyed the distinction more than Mauly did. The words "My lord!" tickled his fat ears very pleasantly.

Mauleverer hated people to kow-tow to him. Bunter, on the other hand, enjoyed it immensely.

"This place would be about right for my little party," said Bunter airily. "Did you say the rent was forty or fifty guineas a week? I forget." "Forty, my lord." "Well, it's immaterial, of course," said Bunter. "Oh, quite!" gasped Mr. Pilkins. *(See Chapter 5.)*

He realised that, in one afternoon, he could screw more real satisfaction out of Mauly's title than Mauly himself had extracted from it in fifteen years.

Fortunately, he was at least dressed for the part, whether he really possessed a handsome presence and a distinguished appearance or not. He was as well dressed as the dandy of the Remove ever was, having helped himself liberally from Mauly's wardrobe. Mauly's clothes did not look so well on Bunter as they looked on Mauly, that was true, though Bunter did not realise that. But at least they looked expensive; anybody could see that the silk-hat had not been picked up for half a guinea, in fact, that an alarming number of guineas had been expended on Bunter's outfit. And he was wearing Mauly's gold watch with the diamond crest on the case, and Mauly's gold chain, and platinum tie-pin, and gold cuff-links. The gold watch would not have been much in evidence worn by Mauleverer; worn by Bunter, it would be very much in evidence indeed, as he would pull it out to see the time whenever there was anyone at hand to be impressed by it. Best of all, he had Mauly's purse—a handsome Russia-leather purse, worth several guineas in itself, and stuffed with currency notes, with a little compartment well supplied with banknotes.

Lord Mauleverer, probably, did not know how much money was in his purse when he told Bunter to take it. He never knew how much money he had; having all his life been well supplied with that useful article, he never gave it much thought.

Bunter would need some pound-notes and ten-shilling notes for tipping, Mauly knew that. He expected Bunter to tip as much as was necessary, and bring home the balance. That, indeed, was what Bunter intended to do, feeling entitled also to stand himself a feed at Combermere for his trouble, but to a detail like that his generous lordship had no objection.

Bunter examined the purse and its contents as the car glided through Lantham and ran on towards Combermere, on the Kentish downs. The amount of cash in it made him open his eyes wide behind his big spectacles. He remembered that Lord Mauleverer had been to the bank in Courtfield the previous day to renew his supply of cash, a circumstance which Mauly had undoubtedly forgotten. Still, the money was safe with Bunter. Indeed, it should have been safer with Bunter than with Mauly, as Bunter was not in the habit of bestowing generous tips like his lordship. That, however, was when Bunter was handling his own money. Handling another fellow's, he was likely to err on the side of swank.

The Owl of the Remove returned the purse to his pocket, and leaned back again, surveying the landscape with a patronising eye as the car buzzed on. He was feeling greatly elated, and his fat mind was fully made up to play the part of "his lordship" all through his visit to Combermere and Combermere Lodge.

The car ran into the town at last.

It stopped outside the estate agent's office in the High Street. It was a rather dingy office, with bills and cards in the window to inform the public of a number of desirable residences that were to be sold by Mr. Pilkins, full information concerning which could be obtained within.

The car stopped, and a plump gentleman with an aquiline nose darted across the pavement and opened the car door, almost before Billy Bunter could move.

Mr. Pilkins did not bestow so much politeness as that upon all his clients. But a nobleman was a client whom Mr. Pilkins delighted to honour. Moreover, he was exceedingly anxious to let the Lodge at forty guineas a week, tenant paying all charges. Such a property was not let so easily and quickly as a four-roomed villa with kitchen and scullery combined, and room for a garage. Combermere Lodge, in fact, had been hanging on Mr. Pilkins' hands. Its noble owner had to let it owing to the general shortage of cash resulting from the war, and for the same reason other distinguished persons were unable to take it. Mr. Pilkins' commission on such a "let," as he called it, would amount to a very handsome sum, if he succeeded in letting it at all. So Mr. Pilkins had been very pleased to receive the communication from Sir Reginald Brooke; very pleased to hear that Lord Mauleverer was coming over from Greyfriars to view the property, and very pleased to greet his lordship with the most distinguished attention.

"Good-afternoon, my lord!" said Mr. Pilkins. "I was expecting you. I take it that you are Lord Mauleverer?"

Mr. Pilkins could not take off his hat, as he had left it in his office in his hurry to rush out to the car. But he bowed almost to the ground, his podgy face beaming with cordial and respectful welcome.

Bunter almost purred.

This was what he liked—and what he seldom received. Mr. Pilkins looked as if he would have been willing to kiss Bunter's boots—and Bunter would have been quite pleased to see him do it.

"I trust your lordship has had a pleasant drive this pleasant afternoon," hurried on Mr. Pilkins.

Bunter yawned.

"Oh, not so bad!" he said negligently. "Of course, this is only a hired car—not the sort of thing I'm accustomed to."

"Oh, quite so, my lord!"

"Let me see—you're Wilkins?" asked Bunter.

"Pilkins, my lord—Pilkins."

"Eh! Did you say Bilkins?" asked Bunter carelessly. Lord Mauleverer often forgot people's names, and Bunter felt that he could not do better than follow Mauly's example.

"Pilkins!" murmured the agent. He would willingly have made it Wilkins or Bilkins, whichever his lordship preferred. Still, it happened to be Pilkins.

"Pilkins!" repeated Bunter. "Yaas—oh, yaas! I remember now. Sir Reginald said Pilkins in his letter."

"Quite so, my lord," said Mr. Pilkins. "I have had the honour of receiving an esteemed communication from Sir Reginald Brooke. Your lordship will have the kindness to look over the Lodge. I am sure your lordship will be satisfied."

"Perhaps!" said Bunter loftily. "I shall expect something pretty decent, of course."

"Combermere Lodge, my lord, is——"

"Oh, yaas, yaas! I shall see it for myself. Hop into the car and tell the chauffeur the way."

"Yes, my lord. Sir Reginald said that you would be kind enough to give me a lift to the Lodge, my lord," said Mr. Pilkins. "If your lordship would care to step into my office for a few minutes——"

"I'd better see how much time I've got," said Bunter; and he pulled out Lord Mauleverer's watch.

Mr. Pilkins' manner became, if possible, more effusively respectful, as he spotted the diamond crest on the watch-case. Really, it seemed almost to dazzle him.

"I'll wait in the car," said Bunter, with dignity. "Look sharp, and don't keep me waiting long, Mr.—er—Wilkins."

"Pilkins, my lord."

"I mean Pilkins. Don't keep me waiting long," said Bunter.

"Two minutes, my lord——"

"Very good, Mr. Bilkins. Wait a minute."

"Yes, my lord."

Mr. Pilkins, who was turning away, turned back.

"I've got a description of the house here," said Bunter. "Sir Reginald sent it on in his letter. I think I put it in my purse."

Bunter opened Lord Mauleverer's purse.

He looked through each compartment, displaying, by apparent accident, a wad of currency notes and another of banknotes.

Mr. Pilkins gazed at that ample supply of cash with fascinated eyes.

"No, I must have left the paper at Greyfriars," said Bunter. "But it doesn't matter. Get me another, and I'll run through it while we're on the way to the Lodge."

"Yes, my lord."

Bunter slipped the Russia-leather purse carelessly into his pocket. Mr. Pilkins rushed back into his office for his hat. Billy Bunter winked at the back of the chauffeur's head. He was thoroughly enjoying his afternoon in borrowed plumes.

Mr. Pilkins did not keep his lordship waiting long.

He scudded to the car again, this time with his hat on, and bowed himself in. He pulled down a seat in front and sat down on the edge of it.

"This is an honour for me, my lord," he said.

Lord Mauleverer would probably have replied "Rubbish!" But Billy Bunter answered:

"Oh, quite!"

And the car moved on out of the High Street of Combermere, and took the road to Combermere Lodge.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Enjoys Himself!

"MY lord——"

"Eh?"

"This is the place!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the bronze gates, between two stone pillars surmounted by stone dragons.

Within, half hidden by trees and shrubberies, could be seen a neat little lodge; and from that building a lodge-keeper came hurrying out to open the gates as the car turned from the road.

Bunter was immensely impressed.

The place, whether or not it came up to the glowing description of the estate agent which Bunter had perused, undoubtedly was an extremely expensive establishment. That much was clear at the first glance.

Bunter was impressed; but he was aware that it was his cue not to be at all impressed. This was a fine place, but hardly equal to Mauleverer Towers. Bunter knew that, for, with his usual impudence, he had "wedged" himself in at Mauleverer Towers more than once. So he was not going to be impressed—outwardly, at least—as he was Lord Mauleverer for the afternoon!

He blinked through his big spectacles, and assumed a rather disparaging expression.

"Oh! This is the place, is it?" he asked carelessly.

"Yes, my lord."

"I understood that it was a rather extensive sort of show."

Mr. Pilkins coughed.

He had shown more than one prospective tenant over Combermere Lodge, and all of them had had the impression that it was too extensive for them. It was so extensive that Lord Combermere could not afford to keep it going all the year round, in fact.

Bunter seemed to think it small!

"I trust your lordship will find ample accommodation," he said. "Lord Combermere keeps up a rather large establishment when at home."

"Oh, I dare say," said Bunter. "That's a matter of comparison, of course. What seems large to Lord Combermere mightn't seem large to me."

"Oh, just so!" gasped Mr. Pilkins. Lord Combermere was a great man in Mr. Pilkins' eyes; but this Greyfriars fellow seemed to think him rather small beer.

"Still, I'll look at it," said Bunter.

The lodge-keeper had opened the bronze gates, and the car rolled in. The man stood, hat in hand, as the car came in, and Bunter wondered whether he expected a tip. Lord Mauleverer would have known, no doubt; but Bunter did not know, and—as Bunter—he certainly would not have handed out a tip whether the man expected it or not. As Lord Mauleverer he was prepared to tip anybody. It is said that a fool and his money are soon parted; but a fool and somebody else's money are parted still more swiftly.

"Here, my man!" said Bunter.

He tossed the lodge-keeper a pound-note.

The car rolled on up the drive between tall oaks and beeches. The lodge-keeper looked at the pound-note, and looked after the car.

"My eye!" he murmured. "One of them blooming noo-riches, I s'pose."

Bunter certainly did not guess that that was the impression he had made on the lodge-keeper.

The Owl of the Remove leaned back in the car, assuming a rather disdainful expression as Mr. Pilkins busily pointed out the old oaks and beeches, the green expanse of the park, the glimmering sheet of water that reflected the rays of the summer sun.

Undoubtedly Combermere Lodge was a fine place; and anybody who could afford to live in it might count himself a lucky man.

But Bunter was determined not to be impressed; even when, at a bend of the long drive the great facade of the house came into sudden view, the innumerable windows gleaming in the sunshine like silver.

"That is the house, my lord."

Bunter yawned.

"Not a bad little place," he said critically.

"Hem!"

"Hardly up to the style of Bunter Court," said the fat junior. "But not bad in its way, Mr. Wilkins."

"Bunter Court?" repeated Mr. Pilkins.

The Owl of the Remove realised that he had made a slip. Certainly he ought to have said Mauleverer Towers.

"I—I mean——"

"Yes, my lord?"

"A—a place where I sometimes stay in the vacations," Bunter explained.

Bunter leaned back comfortably on the settee and stuck his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, in the objectionable way he had. The great door opened again. Two footmen came in, carrying between them what appeared to Bunter a great tray laden with expensive china and, what was more important, comestibles! (*See Chapter* 6.)

"Rather decent—about twice the size of this."

"Oh!"

"I suppose a place like this wouldn't require more than about a dozen servants."

"About that number, my lord."

"We have fifty at home of course."

"Oh!"

Mr. Pilkins was not a specially refined or sensitive gentleman but he had a feeling that his present client was rather an unpleasant sort of a snob.

However, that did not matter to Mr. Pilkins, so long as he succeeded in putting the business through. An unpleasant snob's money was as good as anybody's else's. Mr. Pilkins was in agreement with the ancient Roman emperor who declared that the smell of all money was sweet.

If this fat fellow—in his own mind Mr. Pilkins had the cheek to think of his lordship as a fat fellow—if this fat fellow's people kept fifty servants evidently there was plenty of money about. It was probable, therefore, that the gentleman on whose behalf he was viewing the Lodge would be able to afford to take the place. And nothing else mattered very much to Mr. Pilkins.

"Of course, your lordship is well known to be very wealthy," he remarked. A remark which would have earned him a frozen stare from Manly, but which made Billy Bunter purr with satisfaction.

"Rolling in it, you know," said Bunter.

"Oh!"

"I come into eighty thousand a year when I'm of age," said Bunter, almost believing by this time that he really was Lord Mauleverer.

"Indeed, my lord."

"Of course, as a schoolboy I'm rather hard up, as I get only my allowance," said Bunter airily. "Sometimes I hardly know which way to turn for fifty pounds."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Pilkins.

Sometimes Mr. Pilkins hardly knew which way to turn for a pound-note!

"Still, I must say that my guardian shells out handsomely," said Bunter. "But, dash it all it's my own money, isn't it?"

"Certainly, my lord!"

Mr. Pilkins was impressed, but a little perplexed. As a man of experience he knew that people who were born to the possession of money never talked about money. His lordship was apparently an exception to the rule.

Bunter blinked with interest at the big house as the car rolled on. With all his swank, he was thinking inwardly how ripping it would be if the home of the Bunter tribe resembled this place even to the remotest extent.

With a "show" like this he could have made good his empty boasting in the Remove; he could have impressed Harry Wharton & Co.; he would have become a fellow to be sought after, a fellow worth knowing.

Swanky fellows, like Aubrey Angel of the Fourth, and Hilton of the Fifth, would have been glad to be asked home

with him for the vacations. He could have picked and chosen among the most "sidey" fellows at Greyfriars.

Really, it was rather rotten to compare the Bunter Court of his fertile fancy with the Bunter villa of reality.

If only he had a show like this——

Somebody—some friend of Sir Reginald Brooke—was going to take this place furnished, at forty guineas a week, paying all charges—servants' wages, and so forth. If only his plump pater could have taken it——

It wouldn't have been of much use to ask Mr. Bunter to do so. The stockbroker's total income did not amount to so much as was asked for the furnished rent and charges of Combermere Lodge!

It was all very well for Billy Bunter to dream that he dwelt in marble halls; but the dream was never likely to come true.

It was very annoying to the Owl of the Remove.

He was "landed" with Harry Wharton & Co. for the vac, owing to his reckless invitations. It did not occur to him that they were pulling his fat leg in pretending to accept his invitation; his idea was that he had to get "shut" of them somehow before the school broke up.

He had wondered whether he should plead an outbreak of measles at Bunter Court, or the fact that the decorators were in the house, or whether he should go the whole hog, as it were, and announce that Bunter Court had been struck by lightning and burned to the ground!

If only he could have taken this "show," and brought the Famous Five to it for the holidays. Really, it was rather hard cheese that he couldn't! How magnificently he could have swanked in that impressive establishment had he only the chance!

From that thought Bunter's mind moved on, and the glimmerings of an amazing scheme awoke in his active brain.

Suppose he reported that the place was no good, that the drains were bad, or the roofs falling in, or something. That would choke off Lord Mauleverer and his people! The place would still be to let. Mr. Pilkins believed that he was Lord Mauleverer, and would obviously be willing to let it to his lordship!

Why shouldn't Bunter take it?

The bare idea dazzled him.

There might be legal difficulties in the way. Certainly he could not sign Lord Mauleverer's name to any document. Even Bunter's fatuous folly was not so great as that.

Besides, a minor couldn't sign legal contracts, and Mauly was under age. Still, that had its advantage, because Bunter, being under age, couldn't be sued for the rent of Combermere Lodge—if he succeeded in getting hold of the place.

If!

It was an "if" of great dimensions.

Still, he allowed his thoughts to dwell on the dazzling possibility—if it were a possibility!

A magnificent country house, an imposing butler and retinue of servants—what a "facer" for the Greyfriars fellows who had declared that there was no such place as Bunter Court!

It would be easy enough to have "Bunter Court" written up over the gates. The tenant could call the place what he liked while he lived there.

Bunter was quite dazzled by the idea.

Mr. Pilkins, watching varying expressions flit over his lordship's fat face, wondered what he was thinking of. The car stopped.

"Will your lordship alight?"

Bunter woke up, as it were.

"Eh? Oh, yes!"

Mr. Pilkins jumped out and held open the door of the car for Bunter.

The fat junior stepped out.

"Hold on, Wilkins," he said.

"Yes, my lord."

"You can stay in the car," said Bunter. "The servants will show me over the house."

"Hem!"

"Chauffeur, take the car back to the gates and wait for me there."

"Yes, my lord."

"But——" began Mr. Pilkins, wondering what bee his lordship had got into his bonnet, so to speak, but certainly not guessing what bee it was.

Bunter waved a fat hand.

"I'm accustomed to having my wishes respected, Bilkins," he said. "Do you want me to see the place or not?"

"Certainly, my lord; but——"

"I do not require your presence," said Bunter loftily. "I prefer to see the place by myself."

"Oh, certainly, my lord. But, at least, I had better tell Walsingham, the butler, that——"

"Oh, yes!" said Bunter, realising that this was necessary, if he was to be admitted at all.

"This way, my lord."

Bunter did not move.

He was thinking. That wild idea was still at the back of his mind—somehow, by hook or by crook, to get hold of this place for the vacation, and impress the Remove fellows with the reality of Bunter Court. Whether it was possible or not he could not decide: but if it was possible he was going to do it, regardless of consequences—indeed, Bunter's fat brain seldom worked out any problem as far as the consequences.

Evidently, however, he could not instal himself at the Lodge as Billy Bunter with his guests if he was known to the servants as Lord Mauleverer!

Even Bunter realised that.

His little deception, his strutting in borrowed plumes, had impressed Mr. Pilkins; but it had now outlived its usefulness, so to speak.

Mr. Pilkins waited respectfully while Bunter was reflecting.

The great door of the Lodge had opened, and an imposing figure appeared in the great doorway. It was the figure of Mr. Walsingham, butler to Lord Combermere, who was to be "let" along with the furniture. Doubtless there was a profit on the transaction somewhere for Mr. Walsingham. Certainly he was as keen as Mr. Pilkins to see the place let.

Bunter glanced up the broad steps at the butler, and then blinked at Mr. Pilkins again.

"The fact is, Mr. Wilkins," he said slowly, "I hardly think this place would do for Sir Reginald's friend."

"Oh!" said Mr. Pilkins, his face falling. "But you have not seen it yet, my lord——"

"I've seen enough to see that it's too small," said Bunter.

"But——"

"Don't interrupt me, Mr. Wilkins. I'm not used to being interrupted. I was going to say that I was thinking of taking a moderate-sized place myself for the school holidays——"

"Eh?"

"This place would be about right for my little party," said Bunter. "Mind, I'm not making any promises, but I will consider it."

"My lord——"

"Did you say the rent was forty, or fifty guineas? I forget."

"Forty, my lord."

"Well, it's really immaterial, of course."

"Oh, quite!" gasped Mr. Pilkins.

"My uncle, Sir Reginald, will send you a cheque for the amount that's necessary. No need for me to be bothered with these sordid details."

"Not at all, my lord."

"Well, if I like the place it's a go!" said Bunter airily. "I promise nothing."

"My lord, I am certain you will like the place," said Mr. Pilkins eagerly. "I am assured of that."

"Possibly—possibly," said Bunter. "I have been offered a place on the river—a rather cheap place—only thirty-five guineas a week, if I remember correctly. Still, I must say I like this better in some ways. However, we'll see about that. Let's go in."

"Certainly, my lord."

"Another thing, don't mention my name before the servants," said Bunter. "I'm fed-up with being my-lorded here and my-lorded there! A fellow gets tired of it in the long run."

"Oh!"

"Just tell the butler that I'm going to look over the house; no need for more. See?"

"As your lordship chooses."

"If I don't take the place," said Bunter, "I shall compensate you for your loss of time, Mr. Wilkins. A tenner more or less is nothing to me."

"My lord, I really could not accept any——"

Bunter waved his fat hand.

"I shall insist," he said. "I am not accustomed to receiving services for nothing. A fellow in my position isn't."

"As your lordship pleases!" said Mr. Pilkins, who really would have been very pleased to get his grubby fingers on a tenner.

"Quite so!" said Bunter airily.

He ascended the steps, and Mr. Pilkins ushered him into the great house with a respect that was almost overpowering.

"Walsingham, this gentleman desires to view the house," he said. "You will show this gentleman everything, and explain anything to him that he desires to know."

"Quite so, Mr. Pilkins!" said the butler.

The butler had the gravity of a graven image, as was proper to a plump gentleman in his position. But his eye met the eye of Mr. Pilkins, and a wink passed between the estate agent and the butler. It was merely a wink—merely that, and nothing more—but it conveyed volumes. Mr. Pilkins, bowing to the floor, took his leave, and went back to the car, leaving Bunter with the butler; and the butler with the impression, conveyed by Mr. Pilkins' expressive wink, that this well-dressed young gentleman was an extremely valuable bird that was to be snared if possible.

So Mr. Walsingham turned on his very best butler manners for the valuable young gentleman—who was taking out his watch and glancing at the time in order to give the butler an opportunity of glancing at the crest in diamonds on the case.

"I am entirely at your service, sir," said Mr. Walsingham.

"Oh, yaas," said Bunter carelessly.

And he proceeded to view the house, which—if anything came of Billy Bunter's wonderful brain-wave—was to sink its identity as Combermere Lodge,

and to figure during the holidays as that well-known and much-discussed establishment, Bunter Court.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Makes Up His Mind!

BILLY BUNTER was a little tired a couple of hours later.

His fat little legs had seldom exerted themselves to such an extent.

He really did not know how many corridors he had traversed, how many staircases he had ascended and descended. They seemed to him innumerable.

But he had enjoyed himself.

Mr. Walsingham treated him with the most impressive deference, and his manner gave the cue to the rest of the staff at the Lodge.

Liveried footmen started up from all sorts of places, bowing and scraping to William George Bunter. A man could not open a door or move a chair for Bunter without being tipped. Lord Mauleverer had given him carte blanche in the tipping line, and Bunter spread himself. It was sheer luxurious enjoyment to the fat junior to throw money about—as it cost him nothing personally. Had Bunter been a millionaire, no doubt he would have spent money like water. Now he was spending Mauly's money like water, and he liked the process.

So did the staff of Combermere Lodge.

Even Mr. Walsingham—a stately butler, who had served the best families, and knew more about the nobility and gentry than they knew themselves—was quite dazzled by Bunter. After seeing pound notes showered on footmen and parlourmaids Mr. Walsingham naturally looked for at least a fiver for his more important self—perhaps even a tenner. He had shown the Lodge to more than one prospective tenant, who hadn't materialised, and generally he had not been tipped; and when he had been tipped, the tip seldom had exceeded a pound. Bunter was worth half a dozen such prospective tenants to him. From the bottom of his heart Mr. Walsingham hoped that this free-handed young gentleman would take the house. That opened before him quite a dazzling prospect of tipping.

Mr. Walsingham's pride had been gratified by serving Lord Combermere, who was a gentleman of great descent. But, like most noblemen of high descent, the master of the Lodge was not overburdened with cash, and so far from Mr. Walsingham receiving liberal tips from his master, there had been times—many times—when his wages had been in arrears. So there were drawbacks to serving the best families and the genuine nobility. Bunter seemed to Mr. Walsingham a fat, self-important, purse-proud young bounder; but the way he exuded money was grateful and comforting after a long experience of the penuriousness of the best families.

So Mr. Walsingham and his many assistants all hoped that this young Crœsus would take the Lodge for the summer—all the more because, if the place was not soon let, they would have to seek other situations; and the unemployment problem was as serious for menservants as for more useful members of Society.

In fact, Mr. Walsingham had heard from the absent proprietor, that if the house remained unlet for even a week longer, he was to shut it up and discharge the staff, remaining on himself in solitary state as caretaker.

That was an unhappy prospect for Mr. Walsingham; and he would have given a good many weeks of his arrears of wages to see the house taken by some newly-rich profiteer rolling in money.

From Bunter's looks, the butler judged him to be the heir of some bloated war-profiteer reeking with illgotten cash; at all events, there seemed to be no doubt about the cash, as Bunter was fairly throwing it around as if it were of no value.

After viewing the house, Bunter sat down in the great drawing-room to rest his tired legs. It was a vast apartment, twice as large as a Form-room at Greyfriars, with immense windows looking over a terrace. Mr. Walsingham, bowing respectfully before him, inquired whether it would please him to take tea before he returned to the car.

"What-ho!" said Bunter.

There was no doubt that it would please him.

It never displeased William George Bunter to take a meal.

"I will give instructions, sir!" said Mr. Walsingham.

Bunter held up a fat finger.

"Something to eat," he said.

"Eh?"

"I'm hungry! Something substantial—see?"

"Oh, yes, quite so!"

"Buck up, then," said Bunter, taking out Lord Mauleverer's watch again to dazzle the butler. "I have to get back to dine with the Head."

"Very good, sir."

Mr. Walsingham retired to give orders for tea.

Bunter leaned back comfortably on a settee, and stuck his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, in the objectionable way he had.

He had quite made up his mind to take the Lodge—if he could. The only question was, could he?

The great door opened again.

Two footmen came in, carrying between them what appeared to Bunter a great tray, laden with expensive china and articles still more valuable in Bunter's eyes—comestibles.

In solemn silence they bore their burden across vast spaces to Bunter, and stopped before him. Then legs suddenly appeared out of what had looked like a large tray, and behold—it was a tea-table, and it stood before Bunter; a table beautifully set and well supplied. Probably Mr. Walsingham had instructions from his master to treat with hospitality prospective tenants of the Lodge; or perhaps Bunter's currency

In the great hall the footmen were drawn up and Bunter passed between their ranks. Either they were there out of great respect for Bunter, or because they supposed that some more currency notes might come their way. If the latter was their anticipation it was realised. Pound notes fairly flew! (*See Chapter* 6.)

notes had done the trick. At all events, it was clear that the Owl of the Remove was to be provided with the fat of the land.

Mr. Walsingham reappeared, and waved the two footmen out of existence, as it were, and stationed himself to look after Bunter and supply his wants.

Bunter proceeded to eat and drink, but he was not allowed to pour out a cup of tea for himself, or even to reach across to anything he fancied. Mr. Walsingham's deft hand was there to do it for him. And Mr. Walsingham did it with an air that implied that this was the crowning satisfaction of his career—waiting on Bunter.

But for his professional gravity and self-control Mr. Walsingham might have displayed some surprise at the stowage capacity of the Owl of Greyfriars. He had presided at many feasts; but never had he seen so much foodstuff disposed of by a single individual before.

For half an hour Bunter was too busy to talk.

Then his efforts slackened down a little.

"I think I shall take this place, Walsingham," he remarked.

"I trust so, sir."

"It looks fairly comfortable," said Bunter. "A fellow could entertain a fair-sized house-party here—what?"

"Lord Combermere has entertained as many as sixty guests, sir—before the war, of course," said Mr. Walsingham.

"Hard up now—what?" asked Bunter.

Mr. Walsingham coughed.

"Lots of these swanking county johnnies are pretty nearly down to their uppers in these days—what?" chuckled Bunter.

Mr. Walsingham wondered what Lord Combermere would have thought of that description of himself, and whether he would have been willing to let his house to Bunter, had he heard it. However, Mr. Walsingham was willing to let it—more than willing—and that was really what mattered. Mr. Walsingham had hopes of collecting some of his arrears of wages out of the forty guineas a week as well as of making a regular income out of the tenant so long as he lasted.

"Well, I think I may say that I shall take the place," said Bunter. "I'm satisfied with it, Walsingham."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, sir."

"Of course, my father will settle business details with Mr. Pilkins," said Bunter carelessly. "There will be documents to sign, and all that."

"Yes, sir, that is customary."

"I shall keep you on, Walsingham. I shall probably require more servants than you've got at present. In that case you will engage them. I shall give you a free hand."

"Very good, sir!"

"I shall expect you to run the show—I mean, manage the house—attend to the tradespeople and all that," said Bunter. "I cannot be worried with accounts. Simply let me know what's to be paid, and I'll pay it. That saves trouble."

"It does, sir, undoubtedly."

Bunter yawned and rose.

"I'd better be getting off," he said. "I have to get back to Greyfriars for call over, you know."

"You belong to Greyfriars School, sir?"

"Yas—Bunter—William George Bunter, of Greyfriars," said the Owl of the Remove. "That's my name."

"Thank you, Mr. Bunter."

Bunter groped for Lord Mauleverer's purse.

"You're a civil fellow, Walsingham. I think we shall get on together. There's a fiver for you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Not at all!" said Bunter graciously.

"Shall I send a footman to fetch the car, sir?"

"Oh, no! I'll walk down to it!" said Bunter.

"Very good, sir!"

Bunter did not want Mr. Walsingham to exchange remarks with Mr. Pilkins. To Mr. Walsingham he was William George Bunter; to Mr. Pilkins he was Lord Mauleverer. Communication between the two for the moment was not to be desired.

Bunter got a move on rather slowly, for he was a little weighed down by the exceedingly good tea he had disposed of.

Mr. Walsingham backed out before him, as if Bunter had been a prince of the blood at least. In the great hall, the footmen were drawn up, and Bunter passed between their ranks. Either they were there out of great respect for Bunter or because they supposed that some more currency notes might be flying about.

If the latter was their anticipation, it was realised. Bunter was exactly in his fat element, tipping obsequious menservants.

Pound notes fairly flew!

Bunter's progress from the drawing-room to the door cost Lord Mauleverer seven or eight pounds.

Butler and footmen saw the fat junior off with great respect. Bunter jammed Lord Mauleverer's handsome topper on his head, and strutted away down the drive.

When his fat back was turned, Mr. Walsingham so far forgot the gravity of a butler's character as to wink at the footmen.

That, fortunately, Bunter did not see.

He rolled away, and arrived at last at the lodge-gates, where the car was waiting with Mr. Pilkins sitting in it.

Bunter stepped into the car.

The lodge-keeper opened the gates with a hungry eye on Bunter, and was rewarded with a pound note.

Then the car rolled out.

Mr. Pilkins eyed his client rather anxiously.

"It's all right," said Bunter. "The place won't do for Sir Reginald's friend. But it will suit me down to the ground."

"Very good, my lord!"

And Mr. Pilkins beamed.

Bunter wrinkles his fat brows in thought.

Thus far he had gone; but going further presented difficulties. The question was, could he "stuff" Mr. Pilkins to the extent of inducing that gentleman to let him the house. With the help of Mauly's clothes and Mauly's watch and Mauly's money, he had so far "stuffed" Mr. Pilkins and Mr. Walsingham successfully; aided by his own natural propensity for swank and humbug and lying. But he realised that there were rocks ahead, when it came down to actual business. He could only hope that the impression he had already made on Mr. Pilkins would enable him to carry the matter through with a high hand. So far, this had been his lucky day.

And Bunter's luck was not yet at an end, though its next turn was to be quite a surprising one.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Coker Going Strong!

"COME on!" said Coker.

Potter and Greene of the Greyfriars Fifth did not seem to hear.

As a matter of fact, they did hear; but they heeded not.

They were not interested in Coker, and they were quite interested in the cricket they were watching.

No doubt it was a tremendous honour for the Remove fellows for two Fifth-Formers to care about watching their game. But, as a matter of fact, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were putting up a tremendous innings, and any cricketer might have found pleasure in watching them, juniors as they were. Coker didn't; but then Horace Coker was no cricketer. Moreover, Coker was going out that afternoon on his motor-bike, and his thoughts were far from cricket.

"Come on!" he repeated.

Potter and Greene, leaning on the pavilion, kept their eyes on the game. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth were doing leather-hunting in great style. Temple & Co. never were quite up to the form of the Remove, but on this occasion the Lower Fourth batsmen were making hay of them. Harry Wharton at one end, and Bob at the other, did what they pleased with the bowling, and the runs were piling up at a tremendous rate, while the fieldsmen fagged to and fro and panted and gasped and wiped perspiration from their streaming brows.

Wingate of the Sixth had walked over from Big Side to give the game a look in. If the Greyfriars captain was interested there was no reason why Fifth-Form fellows shouldn't be; and they were. So Potter and Greene heeded not Horace Coker.

"Are you fellows deaf?" demanded Coker warmly.

Potter and Greene grinned. Even had they not been interested in the cricket they were not interested in Coker. If Horace had planned one of his expensive motor trips for the afternoon, and desired the company of his chums, the matter would have been different. But he only wanted them to see him off on his motor-bike and help him start, and they did not "see" it at all. Coker was going out on his lonesome own, and he could start all by himself, so far as Potter and Greene cared.

"Look here, what do you mean?" went on Coker. "Are you coming to see me off or are you not coming to see me off?"

"I dare say we should see you off if we saw you on!" remarked Potter humorously. "You spend as much time off as on, when you're doing motor-bike stunts."

"You cheeky ass——"

"I say, that was a jolly good hit!" said Greene. "Some of these Remove fags can play cricket."

"Cricket!" sniffed Coker. "Call that cricket! Mean to say you're watching fags at cricket? You'd better come and watch me when I'm playing cricket, if you want to see something like a game."

"Something like it!" assented Potter. "A distant resemblance, perhaps. Very distant, though."

"Very!" agreed Greene.

Coker breathed hard.

"Are you coming——"

"Well run!" shouted Potter. "Try it again; they'll never send the ball in! Bravo!"

"Bravo!" shouted Greene, joining in the cheering of the Remove fellows round the field.

Potter and Greene weren't really very keen on cheering the Remove, but it was an easy way of drowning Coker's voice. They had heard enough from Horace Coker.

Coker of the Fifth gave them a glare, and walked off the field. Potter and Greene exchanged a wink and resumed watching Wharton and Bob Cherry at the wickets.

Coker stalked off in lonely dignity.

He would never have confessed it, but he rather liked to have someone to help him start when he tackled his motor-bike. It was a fine bike, and an expensive bike; an aristocrat among motor-bikes. But it had, like its owner, a certain obstinacy of character, a will of its own that did not always coincide with Coker's will. Coker possessed a driving licence, but had tests of skill been exacted before licences were granted, it was doubtful whether Coker ever would have possessed that licence.

He had not killed anyone, so far; he had not even killed himself; in fact, his luck had been phenomenal. But Horace Coker, and quite a large number of the inhabitants of that part of Kent, had had very narrow escapes.

Now he was going out to look for another.

Without the help of Potter and Greene, Coker negotiated the start. The motor-bike chug-chugged cheerily. Once it went on its beam-ends to starboard, but that was luckily before Coker was sitting on it. After he was sitting on it the bike took a dangerous list to port. But again, with great good luck, Coker righted it, and he went off at a good speed—a better speed than he intended really. He shot away up the road towards Courtfield, and it was very fortunate for all the pedestrians who might have been using the road that they weren't using it just then.

Whether it was Coker's way of driving, or because the motor-bike had an independent will of its own, it turned into the Lantham road, instead of going on through Courtfield, as Coker had planned. Anyone watching Coker at that corner would have supposed that he had made up his mind to commit sudden suicide by charging the barn that stood there. Either he or the bike was undecided which road to take. But he pulled round in time, and went chug-chugging along the Lantham road. He missed a market cart by a foot, and a stray dog by two inches, and sailed merrily on.

Then he felt that he was entitled to let out, with a long, clear road before him.

So he let out and fairly ate up the ground.

Going at a terrific burst of speed, he came on the branch of the road that led away towards Combermere and Canterbury, just as a motor-lorry loomed up ahead in the middle of the road before him.

The lorry-driver fairly jumped at the sight of Coker rushing right at him in a terrific frontal attack. There was a cyclist on the right of the motor-lorry, and a taxi-cab cutting round on its right, too, so the Lantham road was nicely filled from side to side, and Coker was coming on like a cannon-ball.

Rather by instinct than design, Coker swung round into the Combermere road just in time, thus saving several lives. But he did not hear the expressive language of the lorry-driver.

He chug-chugged on towards Combermere, fortunately on a clear road. Had there been a crowded road before him Coker would have committed manslaughter on a huge scale.

But he did not slow down.

He was out for speed, and he was getting exhilarated. Narrow escapes had that effect on Coker. Fortunately, he was not particular about his destination. Having started for Courtfield, his bike had decided to go to Lantham, and a blocked road ahead had changed his objective to Combermere Had the next trouble happened at a cross-roads, doubtless Coker would have changed his destination once more, and all would have been well.

But when the next trouble came Coker was sailing merrily along a road that was shut in on one side by a high hawthorn hedge and on the other side by the park palings of Combermere Lodge.

He came round a bend at a terrific speed, naturally on his wrong side. When Coker turned a corner on the proper side of the road it was an accident—and of these accidents he had few.

Anyone might really have supposed that Coker, when he went for a ride, expected all the other inhabitants of Great Britain to stay at home. At all events, he never seemed to expect that anyone else wanted the use of the public roads. He never allowed for traffic ahead, and it always seemed to take him by surprise if he found any there.

Thus it was in this case.

A car came buzzing away from the gates of Combermere Lodge, with two passengers in it, one a shabby-genteel gentleman with an aquiline nose, the other a junior schoolboy in a large pair of spectacles. Had Coker had any eyes for the car he might have recognised one of the passengers as Billy Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove.

But he had no eyes for anything.

It all happened too suddenly.

Coker, whizzing round the bend, rushed headlong upon destruction, without even knowing what he was rushing upon.

Luckily, the chauffeur of Bunter's car had his eyes and his wits about him.

He had barely time to whirl his car out of the way when Coker rushed by, fairly shaving the mudguards as he flew past.

Coker heard a crash.

He did not stop.

Coker's powerful brain did not work quickly. Besides, it was fully occupied with the motor-bike, which really seemed to have taken the bit between its teeth now.

He rushed on and vanished into the landscape.

(*Continued on page* 16.)

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

Supplement No. 231. HARRY WHARTON EDITOR. Week Ending July 18th, 1925.

CAMPING CASUALTIES!

By BOB CHERRY.

ON three successive nights the tent occupied by Loder of the Sixth has blown down on top of him. Was it really due to the elements, we wonder? Or did a number of merry japers in the Remove convert themselves into a gale of wind for the occasion?

* * *

MR. PAUL PROUT has a hair-raising tale to relate. He says that at the witching hour of night a ghostly figure appeared at the entrance of his tent. "Seizing my trusty Winchester repeater," says Mr. Prout, "I fired six shots in rapid succession, and they went clean through the spectral form." We are inclined to doubt this, for the "apparition" is still very much alive. I know that for a fact, because it happened to be me!

* * *

A MAD bull at a cricket match! This alarming incident occurred yesterday, when we were playing cricket in the untented portion of the camping-ground. Nobody was tossed, however, for Johnny Bull was the mad Bull in question. He was mad because Coker of the Fifth, who was umpiring, wrongly gave him out "leg-before"!

* * *

THE Greyfriars Camp is guarded nightly by a squad of sentries, who volunteer for the task. Whilst patrolling his beat the other night in the "opake darkness," as Dicky Nugent calls it, Bolsover major tumbled head-first into the muddy dyke. He was yanked out with great difficulty by a rescue-party. The burly Removite often finds himself "in hot water"; but I believe he prefers this to his cold plunge in the dyke.

* * *

ANOTHER sentry, Temple of the Fourth, had the misfortune to walk plump into a tree in the pitch darkness. There was a terrific collision. We understand that the tree is progressing favourably.

* * *

THE rumour that Sammy Bunter, in his eagerness to see what was for dinner, fell into the soup-tureen, has not been confirmed. Shouldn't be surprised, though, if it turns out to be true. Young Sammy's always getting in the soup!

BILLY BUNTER declares that, while sitting in his tent in the cool of the evening, he was bitten by a mosquito. But that's absurd. Mosquitoes don't feed on fat worms.

KING SOL is gaily gleaming,
He sparkles on the sea;
Each boyish face is beaming
At thoughts of joys to be.
A truce to schoolboy quarrels!
We'll gather, friend and foe,
In tents beneath the laurels—
A-camping we will go!

Good-bye to Greek and Latin!
We're fated to be free;
Each study chair we sat in
Will now deserted be.
And Quelchy's voice, like thunder
That echoes deep and low,
Will no more keep us under—
A-camping we will go!

Old Gosling, in the morning,
Will tug the bell in vain;
In canvas tents adorning
Some distant mead or plain
We'll slumber sound and sweetly,
Till nine o'clock or so;
Enjoying life completely—
A-camping we will go!

Long days of lazy leisure
The slackers will enjoy;
And crowded hours of pleasure
Will lure each active boy.
When sunset spreads its glories,
We'll seek the campfire's glow,
Feasting, and spinning stories—
A-camping we will go!

Unfurl the flag of freedom,
And let us haste away!
Divine delights (we need 'em!)
We'll sample every day.
Even the greatest grouser
Forgets his tale of woe;
We're blithe and happy now, sir—
A-camping we will go!

No. 1 Tent,
Remove Lines,
Greyfriars Camp,
Somewhere-by-the Sea.

STANDS Greyfriars where it did? Certainly! But its entire population has migrated to a summer camp by the sea. Hence the above address.

For a whole glorious fortnight we are to enjoy immunity from lessons (loud cheers). The masters are with us in camp, not as disciplinarians, however, but as holiday-makers. All is merry and bright, and we are free to sample the delights of cricket, bathing, boating, exploring, and sleeping under canvas.

Some fellows will not agree with me that the last-named is a delight. Alonzo Todd, who has a wholesome dread of blackbeetles, earwigs, and "things that go bumpety in the night," would sooner sleep in his bed in the Remove dormitory than under a canvas canopy. And Billy Bunter, who shares a tent with four others, complains bitterly of overcrowding, and says he hasn't room to turn round in.

The majority of us, however, fairly revel in the joys of camp life, and we appreciate to the full—

"The magic mornings, the enchanted nights,
And all the changing wonder of the day."

I remarked just now that we were free; but this doesn't apply to the industrious staff of the "Greyfriars' Herald." The work of the world must go on, and to stop our merry little supplement just because we happened to be in camp would not be "sporty."

No. 1 Tent in the Remove Lines is as busy and bustling as a beehive, at the moment. By day, it serves as our editorial sanctum; by night, it becomes our sleeping quarters. We are working under difficulties, for our office equipment is of the crudest. There are no cosy armchairs; there is no cosy couch on which I may stretch my editorial limbs. Our surroundings are about as primitive as those of the editorial staffs of the "Timbuctoo Times" or the "Congo Clarion."

Such drawbacks, however, shall not prevent us from giving you a tip-top number, dealing with some of the humorous and numerous phases of camping-out.

Those of our readers who happen to be under canvas at the same time as ourselves will enjoy, we trust, the time of their lives.

HARRY WHARTON.

A Camping Comedy!

By Dicky Nugent.

The Story of a Midnite Escapade.

BOOM!

It was midnite, tinkling from the old clock-tower at St. Sam's. But none of the St. Sam's fellows heard it, for they were fifty miles away in their camp at Shrimpton-on-Sea.

"You fellows awake?" asked Jack Jolly of the Fourth, sitting up in his tent, and pearing through the opake darkness.

"Yes, rather!" answered Merry and Bright.

"Jump into your toggs, then, and we'll go and have our revenge on Bounder of the Sixth."

Our heroes promptly turned out, and dressed with alackrity. Before going to bed they had plotted a plot to wreck the tent occupied by Bounder of the Sixth.

Life in camp would have been a perfect picknick without Bounder. That beestly, boollying broot had been the one fly in the ointment, so to speak.

Although the Fourth-Formers were not in need of underware, Bounder had been giving them socks. He had made himself as narsty and offishus as possibul, and Jolly Jack & Co were now resolved to get even with him.

They knew where Bounder slept—if, indeed, his gilty conshance would allow him to sleep. The leering, lanky lout had a tent all to himself, in the Sixth Form lines. And it was towards this tent that Jack Jolly now led the way, through the opake darkness which has already been mentioned.

"We'll pull up all the tent-pegs, and untie all the ropes," whispered Jack Jolly. "Then the tent will come crashing down, and Bounder will be berried among the daybreak."

"The—the what?" gasped Merry.

"The daybreak. In other words, the litter."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Bright. "He means the deebriss."

"It's spelt like that, but its pronounsed as I said it," said Jack Jolly. "But we won't argew about it. Here's Bounder's tent. Let's get bizzy!"

The treeo halted for an instant, in the opake darkness which I think I have already mentioned.

Muttering sounds came from the interior of Bounder's tent. The juniors could catch such expressions as "Your deal!" "Mind you shuffle those cards properly!" and "You're cheeting me, you rotter.

Jack Jolly winked at his chums in the opake darkness.

"Bounder's talking in his sleep," he muttered. "Seems to imagine he's playing cards at a sorry."

"A what?" mermered Bright.

"A sorry—or a sorrec, as the French call it. Come along! We'll give Bounder a rood awakening!"

The three avengers walked round the tent, uprooting the pegs in the opake darkness. They loosened all the ropes, and the tent swayed and shook, and then came crashing down.

There was a muffled roar from beneeth the heap of daybreak.

"Ow-ow-ow! You young villens! You shall pay dearly for this outrage! I'll birch you black and blew, bust me if I don't!"

Jack Jolly & Co. stood as if turned to stoan. They blinked at each other in dismay, in the opake darkness.

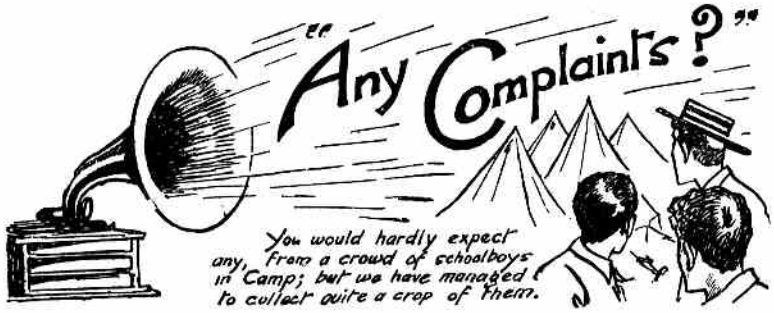
For the voice that fell upon their ears was the stern and dignified voice of the Head!

In a flash the juniors realised what had happened. The Head must have dropped into Bounder's tent for a game of cards, and a smoke and a chat. And the sacred person of Doctor Birchemall, as well as the less sacred person of Bounder of the Sixth, was berried beneeth that pile of daybreak!

"Come and sort me out!" roared the Head. "My legs are mixed up with the tent-pole, and Bounder's sprawling on my chest! I shall be jolly well suffeukated!"

"Quick!" panted Jack Jolly. "The old buffer hasn't rekkernised us! Let's cut!"

And the avengers, leaving the Head and Bounder to eggstricate themselves as best they could, scuttled back to their tent in the opake darkness!



"Any Complaints?"

You would hardly expect any, from a crowd of schoolboys in Camp; but we have managed to collect quite a crop of them.

BILLY BUNTER:

The cooking arrangements at the Greyfriars Camp are a skandle! The Head, who organised the camp, chose the wrong sort of sight, to begin with. He selected a lonely, isolated meddow, six miles from the nearest cookshop! True, we've brought the kitchen staff with us from Greyfriars, but they say they haven't got proper fassilities for making plum-poodings and apple-dumplings. Konsequently, we are eggsisting on the monnotonus daily diet of cold meat. Disgusting, I call it! Talk about the joys of camping out! The Head's wits must have been camping out when he desided to pitch camp in this one-eyed show! I'm sick of cold beef and cold mutton and cold pork! Why on earth couldn't we have camped next door to a cookshop, and enjoyed chops and stakes and steaming joints? Cold meat is an abommination! Presently I shall get quite warmed up on the subject, and then I shall let the Head have it hot!

ALONZO TODD:

I have not had a wink of sleep since we came to camp. My tent is invaded nightly by an army of blackbeetles, a navy of frogs and toads and other amphibious creatures, and an air force of mosquitoes. All manner of creeping things, crawling things, hopping things, and buzzing things surround me in the silent watches of the night. My cousin Peter sleeps serenely through it all, and so do Tom Dutton and Billy Bunter. How I envy them! I would ask the Head to transfer me to another tent, only I hear that all tents are infested in the same way. How happy I shall be to get back to my snug bed in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars!

GEORGE WINGATE:

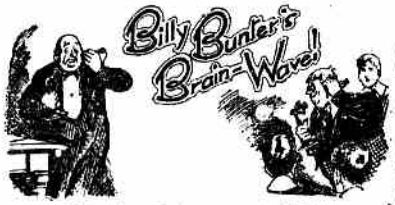
My only complaint of camp-life is concerning the tent which I share with my chum, Gwynne. We are "cribb'd, cabin'd, and confined," as Shakespeare says, and a fellow hasn't room to stretch his legs. Gwynne and I have to go to sleep curled up like dormice, and, on waking in the morning, we find ourselves moaning and groaning in a dismal duet owing to cramp. Apart from this drawback, we have nothing at all to moan and groan about.

PETER HAZELDENE:

I dare say you've heard the famous song, "Tom Brown's Body." Well, you'll find Tom Brown's body lying stiff and stark in our camping-ground one of these fine mornings! Browney has actually had the nerve to bring his gramophone to camp with him, and it churns out music (?) night and day. His tent-mates find it impossible to sleep a wink. Why didn't the Head put Browney in a tent by himself about two miles away? I feel strongly tempted to commit a felony by pinching the box of gramophone-needles. Then Browney will be helpless, and we shall be able to sleep in peace.

WILLIAM GOSLING:

My only complaint about camp-life is that I ain't there to share the fun. I'm a fixture at Greyfriars. I'm the guardian an' custodian of these 'istoric presinks, as ever was! I'm obliged to sleep with one eye open, in case burglars should try to break into the school in the absence of the boys. But p'r'aps it's jest as well that I ain't under canvas. Campin' out is no catch when the rain comes down by the bucketful; an' in such circumstances my rhoomatics would get wusser an' wusser. I 'ad a letter from the 'Ead this mornin'. "Dear Gosling," says 'e,—"I 'ope you are stickin' faithfully to your post, an' carryin' out your dooties in a sober an' efficient manner. I should not like to think that you were takin' advantage of my absence by imbibin' strong lickers." Jest like the 'Ead! 'E's always a-frettin' an' a-worritin' 'isself over nothin', bless 'is old 'eart! I'm jest goin' to drink 'is 'ealth!



(*Continued from page 13.*)

He did not even know that there had been an accident. He might have guessed, knowing that he seldom mounted his motor-bike without an accident of some sort. Still, he didn't guess; and he continued to streak along by highway and byway, scattering alarm and terror wherever he went, like Death on a Pale Horse.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Knocked Out!

"YAROOOOH!"

That was Billy Bunter's remark as he flew into the hedge.

The Owl of the Remove did not quite know what had happened.

He had been deep in reflection, on the subject of "stuffing" Mr. Pilkins, and bagging Combermere Lodge for the holidays, when the accident happened.

He was vaguely aware of a whizzing motor-bike that had appeared suddenly out of space, but that was all. The next moment the car was in the ditch, and Bunter was in the hedge.

He sprawled there and gasped and spluttered and yelled.

Whether anyone else had been hurt Bunter did not know, and certainly did not care. He was hurt, he knew that, and that was important. He was breathless, he had several scratches, and a bump or two. And he sprawled and roared, till the chauffeur picked him up and set him on his feet.

"Hurt, my lord?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

"No bones broken?"

"Nunno! I—I think not!" gasped Bunter, suddenly realising that he was not really hurt at all. "What happened?"

The chauffeur pointed to the car.

It lay on its side in the ditch; and Mr. Pilkins lay on the grass beside it. He did not move.

"I say, is he hurt?" asked Bunter.

"I'm afraid so."

"Oh dear!"

"Stunned," said the chauffeur.

"Phew!"

Bunter realised that matters might have been worse. He had had a shaking. But Mr. Pilkins had borne the brunt of the overturn.

"What on earth did you run into the ditch for?" asked Bunter.

The chauffeur eyed him.

"Didn't you see that motor-bike?"

"Oh! Yes! But——"

"I had just time, my lord. That mad idiot, whoever he is, was charging right at me. There might have been a very serious accident."

"Why didn't you stop him?"

"Because I was standing on my head, and he was going at about twenty miles an hour!" grunted the chauffeur.

"Oh!"

Bunter rubbed his bumps, and sat down in the grass, while the chauffeur, having done all he could to make the estate agent comfortable, went for help to get the car out of the ditch.

Bunter blinked at the insensible man. He was annoyed.

He was sorry for Mr. Pilkins, of course. But really he had little leisure to be sorry for anyone but himself.

Here were all his schemes knocked on the head by this unforeseen accident.

Obviously, Mr. Pilkins would be laid up now. While he was laid up the business would be in other hands. "Stuffing" Mr. Pilkins, and getting hold of the Lodge for the holidays, was no longer a chicken that would fight!

It was intensely exasperating, when the Owl of the Remove had made up his fat mind on the subject.

In fact, he scowled at the hapless Mr. Pilkins, as if that unfortunate gentleman had done him a personal injury by falling on his head when the car pitched over in the ditch.

The chauffeur came back at last, with some farmer's men to help him right the car.

Luckily it was not greatly damaged, and the driver was able to proceed.

Mr. Pilkins, still unconscious, was lifted into it, and the chauffeur drove back to Combermere.

He glanced round as he drove into the town.

"I'd better take him straight to the doctor's, my lord?"

"Eh! Oh! Yes, certainly," said Bunter. "I don't think he's much hurt, but you'd better. I'll take a taxi back to Greyfriars."

The chauffeur looked at him.

"Won't you come to the doctor's, my lord?"

Bunter saw no reason why he should. He had had trouble enough with Mr. Pilkins already.

"I'm rather pressed for time!" he explained. "Stop here, and I'll get out."

"Very good."

Bunter alighted in Combermere High Street. The car ran on to the doctor's house, and Bunter stepped into a taxi-cab at the station.

"Greyfriars School," he said to the driver.

And the taxi buzzed away.

It was a long and expensive drive, but that did not matter to Bunter, as there were still plenty of currency notes in Lord Mauleverer's purse. As he was on Mauly's business, Mauly had to pay for the taxi, of course. Mauly was not going to have any choice on that point.

Bunter's fat face was glum as he whizzed away back to Greyfriars.

His brain wave had come to nothing—so far! But he had not given up the scheme by any means. In spite of what had happened, somehow or other he was going to get hold of Combermere Lodge for the vacation, if he could. Somehow or other, "Bunter Court" was going to materialise.

Indeed, it occurred to Bunter, as he thought the matter over that the elimination of the hapless Mr. Pilkins might be a help, rather than a hindrance, to his wonderful scheme.

As the taxi arrived at the school gates a tired figure came ambling along from the direction of the river.

It was Lord Mauleverer.

Bunter waved a fat hand to him.

"Mauly! Here you are, old man."

Lord Mauleverer glanced up.

"You back, Bunter?"

"Yes, old chap."

The taxi stopped, and Bunter alighted. He did not trouble to glance at the meter.

"How much?" he said loftily.

"Thirty-seven-and-six, sir."

"Here's two quids."

A rather odd expression came over Lord Mauleverer's face as Bunter handed the taxi-driver two pounds from his lordship's purse.

But Mauly made no remark.

The taxi buzzed away again, and Bunter walked in at the gates with his lordship.

"Anythin' left in the purse?" asked Lord Mauleverer, with a slight inflection of sarcasm.

"Oh, yes, I think so!" said Bunter carelessly. "Of course, I tipped the servants pretty freely at the Lodge, you know."

"Oh, yaas."

"And I had to have a taxi back owing to an accident."

"Yaas."

"It was an awful accident."

"Yaas."

Bunter frowned.

Really, Lord Mauleverer ought to have become excited, or, at the very least, interested. But he seemed neither. Apparently he had no curiosity to hear about the accident.

"I was jolly nearly killed!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly.

"By gad! Were you?"

"Yes, you ass!"

"Sorry you weren't—I—I mean, sorry you nearly were!" said Lord Mauleverer lazily. "What happened to the car? Did the floor fall through?"

"Eh! No! Why should it?"

"Oh, I thought it might have!" said Mauly blandly. "You're a tidy weight, you know."

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

"By gad, it's past tea-time!" yawned Lord Mauleverer. "I believe I was goin' to tea with somebody! I think it was Smithy! Where's Smithy, I wonder? Is that cricket match over yet?"

"Don't you want to hear about the accident?" hooted Bunter.

"Oh, the accident! Oh, yaas!"

Bunter proceeded to describe the accident. Lord Mauleverer became serious when he heard of the injury to Mr. Pilkins.

"By gad, that's too bad!" he exclaimed. "I must telephone and ask how the johnnie is. What's the doctor's name where he was left, Bunter?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Didn't you see him safely there?"

"I hadn't time. You don't seem to be worrying about the frightful risk I ran!" hooted Bunter. "I've been risking my life for you this afternoon, Mauly!"

"I'll telephone to the man's office and ask after him," said Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully.

"I haven't told you about the house yet."

"Oh, bother the house, if the man's injured!"

"I say, Mauly——"

"Bother!"

Lord Mauleverer walked away to request the use of Mr. Quelch's telephone, and Bunter rolled discontentedly up to the Remove passage. He could not understand at all why Lord Mauleverer should concern himself about the estate agent—especially a lazy slacker like Mauly, who never concerned himself about anything. Apparently Mauly regarded the man's injury as a serious matter, though Bunter could not see why. Bunter rolled into Study No. 7, where he found Peter Todd, ruddy from the cricket.

"We beat them, old porpoise!" said Peter cheerily.

"Eh! Whom?"

"The Fourth, of course, you ass! Beat them by an innings," said Peter, "and more runs than you could count."

"Did you?" grunted Bunter.

"Wharton knocked up 80——"

"Blow Wharton!"

"And Bob——"

"Blow Bob! I've had something more important to think about than cricket to-day, Toddy! I've been making arrangements for the vacation!"

"Found somebody to stick on?" inquired Peter, with a grin.

"I'm taking a party to Bunter Court——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I may take you in the party, Peter, if you're decent. I shall expect you to be civil."

"Dear man, it would be a waste of civility!" grinned Toddy. "We should never get to Bunter Court this vac. Builders are so slow these days."

"Builders?" repeated Bunter.

"Yes but if they were ever so quick they'd never get Bunter Court built before break-up."

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "I jolly well won't take you now!"

And Peter Todd chuckled, apparently under the impression that he was not losing very much.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
Sticking To It!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. smiled as they spotted Billy Bunter in the quadrangle the following day.

The Owl of the Remove was walking slowly under the leafy old elms, with his hands in his pockets and a deeply thoughtful frown upon his fat brow.

The Famous Five exchanged grinning glances.

Bunter's invitation to the Court for the holidays was still accepted. With great gravity the chums of the Remove were keeping it up that they were going home with Bunter.

That the Owl had landed himself into a difficulty by his "swank" was pretty clear, but they had no mind to help him out of it. If Bunter owned up that he had been "gassing," well and good. If he didn't he could take the consequences—even if the consequences were the arrival of the five Greyfriars fellows at the modest Bunter villa, where in all probability there was not accommodation for guests to the number of five.

Certainly it would be a lesson to Bunter, if that happened—and when it had happened the Co. could get off to their real destination for the holidays, leaving the fat Owl to repent him that he had opened his capacious mouth so wide.

They felt that the fat junior deserved a lesson—he had asked for it, and he was going to have it.

What they expected was, that as the date of break-up grew nearer Bunter would begin devising reasons and excuses for not entertaining his guests at Bunter Court after all.

Such reasons and excuses the chums of the Remove were determined to disregard. Even if Bunter told them that the Court had been burned to the ground, they were determined to go home with him and see the ruins!

There was, in fact, no escape for Bunter. He had swanked not wisely, but too well, and now he was caught!

"The dear old fat man's thinking it out!" remarked Bob Cherry, as he noted the thoughtful frown corrugating Bunter's podgy brow. "I wonder what yarn he will spin us at the finish?"

"The yarnfulness will be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the heedfulness of our esteemed selves will be missing."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"The car won't come," he said. "But if it doesn't—not much 'if' about it—but if it doesn't, we'll take the train with Bunter."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Then he won't have any cash to pay his fare," went on the captain of the Remove. "Then he will lose his way getting home. But we'll stick to him till he's found the way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked round.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You let your pater know about that car, I suppose?" said Bob Cherry. "We can rely on it, what?"

"Oh, of course!"

"Good! I hope your pater will be home for the holidays," said Johnny Bull.

"I'm afraid not. Important financial business, you know——"

"I know!" assented Johnny Bull. "We'll be all right at Bunter Court by ourselves. We shall miss your pater, of course, but I dare say your mater will look after us all right."

"My mater will be away, too."

"Then your sister Bessie will be running the show, what?" asked Bob Cherry. "We shall get on all right with Bessie."

"Bessie's going home with some Cliff House girls," said Bunter, blinking at the serious faces of the Famous Five.

(*Continued on page* 18.)

ALL ABOUT THE TWO FAMOUS CRICKETERS

HERBERT SUTCLIFFE.
The Yorkshire Record-Breaker.

who form the subject of

This Week's FREE CUT-OUT ACTION PHOTOS.

J. B. HOBBS.
Surrey's Hero!

EVER since he could first get his fingers round a bat-handle, Herbert Sutcliffe has been keen on cricket. To play for his county was a boyhood dream—a dream that came true when he gained a place in the Yorkshire team just six years ago.

Keen play when he was a lad strengthened his natural ability as a batsman, and since that first game for his county he has earned himself undying fame. He was, of course, with the England team on tour in Australia last year; and even if we did taste defeat at the hands of the Aussies, it was Sutcliffe who nailed old England's colours to the mast, and showed them that we could go down with our flag flying. He played like a hero, and he put up no less than three Test match records.

The first of these records was a run of three centuries in three consecutive innings: In the second innings of the first Test match he scored 115 runs, and in the second Test he hit up 176 and 127. The two centuries in the one match—176 and 127—constitute another record.

In the fourth Test match Sutcliffe made 143 runs; this was his fourth century and his last in the series. No one had ever made four centuries in a single series of Australian Test matches before, and this feat formed Sutcliffe's third record.

In the whole of the series Sutcliffe scored a total of 734 runs, giving him the wonderful average of 81.55 runs for each innings.

Sutcliffe's county cricket last year was on a par with his work in the Test matches. He made no less than five three-figure innings for Yorkshire, his biggest score being 255 not out against Essex. In all he hit up 1,720 runs in county cricket, and further distinguished himself by making 122 against the South Africans at Lord's.

Herbert Sutcliffe was born on November 25th, 1894, at Dacre Bank, near Pateley Bridge, so that he is now in his thirty-first year—with many more years of cricket in front of him and, let us hope, many more cricketing laurels.

JACK HOBBS' birthday is December 16th, and he will be forty-three years old when that date comes round again. He is generally regarded as possessing the finest batting style in England, and his work with the willow is certainly very finished.

His visit to Australia with the Test team last year was his fourth. He knocked up three centuries, making a total of nine that he has hit up against the Australians. His highest score was at Adelaide in the 1911-12 tour, when he made 187.

In the second game of the last series he and Sutcliffe put on 283 for the first wicket in answer to Australia's first innings score of 600. The pair were still batting when stumps were drawn on the third day of the match, but Hobbs got out to Mailey without scoring the next morning, his total being 154.

Again partnered by Sutcliffe, Hobbs assisted in creating a first-wicket record partnership against the South Africans at Lord's last year, putting on 268 before they were parted.

The actual first-wicket record partnership for all Test match cricket was made at Melbourne in 1911—323 knocked up by Rhodes and Hobbs!

Last year, in county cricket, Hobbs made one score of over two hundred runs; this was 203 not out against Notts at Nottingham. His total number of runs in first-class cricket was 1,321, and he came second to Sandham in the Surrey batting averages. In all he made four centuries in county cricket last season.

The highest number of runs that Hobbs has ever scored in a single season is 2,827 in 1920.

It is not the fault of this magnificent batsman that England did not win the last series of Test matches in Australia. Jack Hobbs did his bit in the Tests—and something over! And when the Australians come to England next year, the first man picked for the England team will undoubtedly be J. B Hobbs.

NEXT WEEK.

C. H. PARKIN (Lancs.) and "PATSY" HENDREN (Middlesex).

Don't Miss Them! Order Next Week's MAGNET To-day!

"But it's all right. Our butler will manage the house while my people are away. Walsingham's a really efficient and reliable man."

"Walsingham!" murmured Bob.

"That's the butler's name. He's been in the family for years and years!" said Bunter. "The fact is, my people are away now, and Walsingham is managing the Lodge——"

"The Lodge?"

"I mean, the Court—Bunter Court!" said the Owl of the Remove hastily. "He is looking after the estate and all the servants—footmen and so on——"

"Oh, my hat! I mean, good man!" gasped Bob Cherry. "A butler like that is a real catch!"

"Oh, we always get good servants," said Bunter carelessly. "Really good families always do, you know. Servants like working for really high-class and well-connected people. Walsingham wouldn't leave our service for anything. Faithful old retainer, and all that, you know."

"Oh!"

"But you'll see him pretty soon, of course," said Bunter.

"Oh! Of—of course!" gasped Bob.

"There's only one thing," said Bunter thoughtfully, and watching the Famous Five out of the corner of his eye. "Walsingham has written to me that some of the rooms, especially the picture-gallery and the armoury, ought to be re-decorated."

"The picture-gallery!" murmured Bob.

"And the armoury!" murmured Nugent. "Oh, my hat!"

"Walsingham thinks that this ought to be done while my people are away," went on Bunter calmly. "Of course, if it was going on, I couldn't very well take a party home for the holidays, could I? So I've told him that he's not to have it done——"

"Ah!"

"Unless my pater specially tells him to."

"Oh!"

"In that case, of course, he must go ahead, and with the decorators in I can't very well take you fellows there. In that case——"

Bob Cherry bestowed a wink on his chums.

"That's all right, Bunter," he said. "We'll give the picture-gallery and the armoury a miss, so as not to interfere with the decorators."

"Certainly," said Harry Wharton with a nod. "There will be plenty of room for us in the rest of the mansion."

"In the vast dining-room," remarked Nugent.

"And the terrific drawing-room," assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "and the gigantic billiard-room."

"Not to mention the practically unlimited number of bed-rooms, morning-rooms, libraries, and so on," said Johnny Bull.

"Count on us, old chap," said Bob. "We don't mind decorators."

"Not a bit of it."

Billy Bunter blinked rather uncertainly at the Famous Five. If only his vague scheme with regard to Combermere Lodge came to fruition, well and good. But if it did not? And the chances, so to speak, were on the "if." In that case Bunter began to realise that there were difficulties ahead. The Famous Five seemed to be "sticking" on this occasion, as Bunter himself was accustomed to stick, and were not to be shaken off. Not, indeed, unless Bunter owned up to his swank, and admitted that there was no such place as Bunter Court in existence, which Bunter did not think of doing. He would as soon have admitted that he was not really expecting a postal-order, or that his titled relations were only figments of his fertile fancy.

"Well, you see," said Bunter rather slowly, "if Walsingham has the decorators in at all, I fancy he will give them a free hand, and have the whole place done while they're about it. It's always best to do a thing thoroughly, you know, on a job of that extent. It will save some hundreds of pounds, and in these days my pater has to be careful even of a few hundreds."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I see," said Bob thoughtfully. "The whole place may be mucked up with paint and plaster and so on?"

"That's it," assented Bunter.

"In that case, we shall help."

"Eh?"

"We're pretty handy fellows," said Bob with owl-like gravity. "We should certainly not like to loaf about in idleness with so much hefty work going on. We'd help the decorators. I should really like to try my hand at it."

"Same here," said Johnny Bull.

"The samefulness is terrific."

Bunter coughed.

"I say, you fellows, that's really impossible. I couldn't let you do anything of the kind. I'd rather chuck up the whole idea, and come away with you fellows for the hols, I would really."

"Not at all," said Wharton. "Of course, if you wouldn't like us to pile in and help the decorators——"

"Impossible!" said Bunter firmly.

"Well, in that case, we'd give the house a miss, and camp in the extensive grounds," said the captain of the Remove. "We'll take our camping outfit with us, you know, and camp in the huge park."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Bob Cherry heartily. "We'll make it a camping holiday in the park at Bunter Court if the decorators are in the house."

"That's settled," agreed Nugent.

"But——" gasped Bunter.

"Nothing going on in the park, is there?" asked Bob. "Walsingham won't have the decorators in the park, to paint the trees, I suppose?"

"Nunno! But——"

"Then it's a go," said Bob. "Rely on us, Bunter."

"Rely on us, old fellow."

And before the Owl of the Remove could make any rejoinder Harry Wharton & Co. walked on, leaving Bunter blinking after them in dismay.

"Oh dear!" murmured Bunter.

Evidently there were difficulties ahead with these fellows sticking on like this. It looked like owning up, or a show-up, for the fatuous Owl of the Remove, and neither alternative pleased him. There was only one way out, and Bunter set his fat wits to work desperately on that way out. If only he could get hold of Combermere Lodge for the vac!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

All Clear!

LORD MAULEVERER sighed and slackened down in his walk. He did not want to see Bunter. He did not want to speak to Bunter. He did not want to hear Bunter speak. Altogether he had too much Bunter, and did not want any more. But it was necessary to speak to Bunter, for once, and the schoolboy nobleman made the necessary effort.

Bunter blinked at his lordship, as the dandy of the Remove halted and nodded to him.

"Hallo, Mauly!"

"About that house, Bunter?" yawned Lord Mauleverer. "That dashed house that you went over to see for me yesterday, you know."

"I know," agreed Bunter.

"Well, I've got to let nunky know about it," said Lord Mauleverer. "Did you find it all right, old man? Up to sample, and all that, what?"

Bunter shook his head.

Whether he would be able to bag that lodge himself or not, by ways that are dark and tricks that are vain, he was not yet sure. But obviously it would not do to let Lord Mauleverer report to his uncle that the lodge was the desirable residence described by the estate agent. Bunter might or might not bag it, but if somebody else bagged it, obviously he could not.

"Well, I hardly think you'd like it, Mauly," he said in a very thoughtful sort of way. "The drains——"

"Great gad! Anythin' wrong with the drains?" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, of course, I'm not a plumber," said Bunter. "I wouldn't like to say that the drains are in a frightfully shocking condition, Mauly. It wouldn't be fair, as I'm not an expert on the subject, would it? Still, your uncle's friend may not mind the drains being in a shocking condition."

"He jolly well would!" said Mauly. "Anythin' else?"

"Well, I don't know whether there would be any objection to the rain coming in the roof?" said Bunter. "People say it's going to be a fine summer, and it mayn't rain any more."

"Oh, gad! I don't think nunky would like to rely on that, in this jolly old climate," said Mauly.

"I won't say anything about the gardens being choked up with weeds," said Bunter, or about the lake being covered with green ooze, and giving off frightful smells. A tenant might like it, for all I know."

"Great gad!"

"Still, I couldn't conscientiously recommend a man to take the house," said Bunter. "I'm bound to say that much."

Lord Mauleverer nodded.

"Much obliged, old man," he said. "It was jolly decent of you to run across for me, and if the place is in a state anythin' like that, it won't do for nunky's old pal, of course. I'll let him know, and he can wash it out. Thanks."

Bunter's little round eyes glimmered behind his big spectacles.

It was so easy to pull Mauly's leg, that really it was scarcely worth while to take the trouble. It did not even occur to Bunter's fatuous mind that he was acting like a young rascal, and that Mauly was so easily deceived simply because he did not suspect treachery.

Bunter, to do him justice, was quite unconscious of any wrongdoing in his conduct. He was so in the habit of considering only his own interest and advantage that it hardly occurred to his fat mind that anybody else had any claim to consideration at all.

This little matter had very easily been settled. Combermere Lodge was left free for Bunter to bag—if he could bag it. That, as Hamlet would have remarked, was the question. Could he?

"I say, Mauly, about that chap Pilkins," said Bunter, as his lordship was turning away. "Is he back at business yet?"

"No. He's knocked right out," said Lord Mauleverer. "The Combermere

doctor's ordered him into a nursing-home. It's not really serious, I gather; but he will have to be kept quiet for a few weeks."

Bunter grunted.

"Then he won't be back at his office?"

"No. Hard cheese on the poor chap," said Lord Mauleverer. "But you needn't worry about him, Bunter; I shall see him through. I've got through to the medical johnny at Combermere, and told him to have every care taken of poor old Pilkins, and put it down to me As he was on my business when he was knocked out, it was up to me, of course—you're not responsible in any way, old man."

Bunter grinned.

If Lord Mauleverer fancied that the fat junior was worrying about the injured estate agent, he was making a little mistake. Mauly often made the mistake of judging others by himself, to their advantage.

"So Pilkins is in a nursing-home. and he'll be away from his office for a few weeks," said Bunter thoughtfully.

"That's so," said Mauly, with a nod.

"And the Lodge is still to let?"

"I suppose so. There won't be many takers, I should think, from your description of it, Bunter."

"Eh! Oh! No! Quite!"

Lord Mauleverer walked away to exert himself to the extent of writing to Sir Reginald Brooke that Combermere Lodge was a washout. Billy Bunter walked away thoughtfully in the quad, thinking things out. Gradually it had dawned on his fat brain that, with Mr. Pilkins safely out of the way for a time, his scheme was rather more likely of success than otherwise. He had hoped to "stuff" Mr. Pilkins; but the stuffing of an estate agent was a task to tax the powers even of a pastmaster in the art of spoofing like William George Bunter. Now it was only a question of stuffing Walsingham, the butler at the Lodge, a much easier task, especially as Mauly's currency-notes had already paved the way, as it were.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, came out of the House, and walked away to the gates. Bunter watched him go, and then went into the House and entered the Remove master's study. His next move required the use of a telephone.

Having looked out the number of Combermere Lodge in the directory on Mr. Quelch's desk, Bunter rang up that establishment.

"Hallo!"

"Is that Mr. Walsingham?"

"I will call Mr. Walsingham. What name, please?"

"Pilkins."

"Hold the line, sir."

Bunter held the line, and grinned over the transmitter. His trick of imitating voices, which helped him in his ventriloquial stunts, came in useful now.

The fruity voice of Mr. Walsingham came through.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Pilkins!"

"Good-afternoon, Walsingham!" It was Mr. Pilkins' rather nosey voice to the life. "I've let the Lodge."

"Very good, sir. Did you nail that fat fellow, after all?"

"Eh?"

"That fat young bounder in glasses who came here yesterday."

Bunter ceased to grin.

He had been under the impression, so far, that he had made a tremendous impression on the Lodge butler. Certainly he had tipped him very liberally with Mauly's cash.

"Yaroooh!" That was Billy Bunter's remark as he flew into the hedge. But Mr. Pilkins, thrown out as the car went into the ditch, lay ominously still.
(*See Chapter* 8.)

It was a surprise—not a pleasant surprise—to find that Walsingham described him as a fat young bounder.

For a moment the Owl of the Remove was on the point of telling Mr. Walsingham what he thought of him. But he remembered in time that he was speaking in the character of Mr. Pilkins.

"Do you mean Mr. Bunter?" he gasped.

"Yes, that's the name."

"Please speak a little more respectfully of one of my most valuable clients, Walsingham!"

"Eh?"

"Mr. Bunter is not a person to be spoken of lightly."

"Eh! Oh! Sorry, sir," said Walsingham. "I noticed that he seemed a very wealthy young gentleman, Mr. Pilkins."

"His father is a millionaire, and he has more money than he knows what to do with," said the Owl of the Remove.

"A very good client for you, Mr. Pilkins."

"Oh, quite!"

"And he is taking the Lodge?" asked Walsingham, little dreaming that it was the fat young bounder who was his interlocutor.

"That's so; I am making all the arrangements, of course, with his father. He will come over and have another look at the place, probably bringing a friend with him; but it is all settled. You will be very careful how you treat him, of course. Such tenants are not obtained every day."

"Quite so, Mr. Pilkins. I suppose I shall see you later with regard to my commission."

"Eh?"

"My commission, Mr. Pilkins."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bunter.

He wondered whether Lord Combermere knew that the butler was "standing" in with the estate agent in the matter of letting the Lodge.

"Did you speak?"

"Oh! Yes! That is all right, of course. You will find that I shall treat you generously, Walsingham. At present I am confined to a nursing-home, owing to a motor accident leaving the Lodge yesterday——"

"Yes, I heard of that, Mr. Pilkins. I trust you were not very much hurt."

"The fact is, I am quite knocked up, and shall have to rest for a few weeks away from the office. It is fortunate, in the circumstances, that the Lodge is already let, as I cannot attend to any further business. When Mr. Bunter comes, you will receive him as the tenant of Combermere Lodge for three months."

"Very good."

"By the way, there is one more detail," said Bunter, still in the nasal voice of Mr. Pilkins. "It is Mr. Bunter's wish that the name of the place should be changed during his residence

there. He desires it to be known as Bunter Court."

"Really?"

"Yes. And as it is my business to meet my clients in every possible way, I have acceded, of course, to his wish. Let the name be placed over the entrance gates at once. All expenses of this kind will, of course, be met by Mr. Bunter."

"I will see to it, Mr. Pilkins. I suppose Lord Combermere would have no objection if this name is removed before his return."

"I am answerable for that, as his agent."

"Oh, certainly, Mr. Pilkins."

"Let it be done at once," said Bunter. "And order some new stationery for Mr. Bunter s use, with the new name of the house engraved on it. You understand?"

"Quite."

"And you will be very careful, Walsingham, to treat Mr. Bunter with every possible respect. A young gentleman of his immense wealth——"

"Oh, quite so, sir!"

And Billy Bunter rang off Mr. Quelch's telephone, and rolled out of the Remove master's study, with a fat grin on his face.

All was going well; in fact, all had gone well. The butler, obviously, had not the slightest suspicion. He naturally supposed that all business details were settled at Mr. Pilkins' office; and, owing to Mr. Pilkins' temporary retirement from business cares, he could not learn anything different. If Mr. Pilkins, in the nursing-home, was able to give any thought to business at all, certainly it would not occur to him that Combermere Lodge had been let without his knowledge.

Bunter chuckled.

It was "all clear" now, and Bunter Court was ready to receive Billy Bunter and his holiday party when Greyfriars broke up for the vacation.

As for the ultimate outcome of his scheming, Bunter did not give it a single thought. That he was entering into extensive liabilities was an uncomfortable reflection which it was more pleasant not to think of; and Bunter was not accustomed to meeting troubles half-way, or to meeting them at all if he could land them on somebody else.

If there was trouble at the end of his remarkable tenancy, it would be time to deal with it when it arrived; anyhow, it was certain that Bunter couldn't be made to pay all the bills he was running up, as he hadn't any money. But Bunter did not think about that at all; consequences never bothered him till they came along.

All he was thinking of now was the sensation he was going to cause by proving the genuine existence of Bunter Court, and swanking as the lord and master of a magnificent domain. That, Bunter considered, was quite enough for him to think about at present.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Proof Positive!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled.

"It's coming now!" murmured Bob Cherry.

And the Famous Five gave William George Bunter their best attention. They fully expected that, with the break-up now very close at hand, Bunter had evolved some masterly pretext for calling off his generous invitation. He had tried it on, as it were, before, and they had put paid to it, as Bob expressed it. Now he was going to try it on again, and they were going to display sticking powers once more equal to Bunter's own. The swanking fat junior was not going to be let off, unless he owned up in plain English that there was not, and never had been, such a place as Bunter Court, and that he had been talking out of his hat.

"Go it!" said Bob cheerily. "Anything fresh happened at Bunter Court, old man?"

"Those decorators in?" asked Frank Nugent. "Don't worry, old bean; we'll take our camping-things and put up in the park."

"The fact is, you fellows——"

"Let's hear the facts!" agreed Johnny Bull. "Bunter's facts are always so interesting."

"The factfulness is not generally terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, you fellows! I was going to tell you——"

"That Bunter Court has been burned down?" asked Bob sympathetically. "All right, old man, we're coming home with you to see the giddy ruins."

"No!" roared Bunter.

"It hasn't been burned to the ground?"

"No, you ass!"

"Then what's happened? Has Walsingham got the whooping-cough, and is it too catching for you to take a party home?"

"Look here——"

"Don't you worry, Bunter! If the jolly old butler's ill, we'll nurse him. If all the liveried footmen are ill, we'll nurse the lot."

"Yes, rather!"

"Rely on us, old man."

And the famous Five smiled benignantly on Bunter. That fat and fatuous youth grinned. He realised that, but for his masterly strategy he would have been in a rather disagreeable position. But as it happened, it was all clear, and he had a surprise in store for these doubting Thomases.

"I say, you fellows, do listen to a chap! I'm going to telephone to Walsingham——"

"And tell him to send on the car without fail?" grinned Bob. "We're relying on the Rolls-Royce, you know."

"Just that!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I'm now going to give my butler instructions about our arrival at Bunter Court," said the Owl of the Remove, with dignity. "If you fellows would like to hear me, you're welcome. You've had some doubts—— Don't deny it; you have. Well, come along to the phone with me, and see for yourselves."

"What's this game, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry, quite puzzled. "How can you telephone to Walsingham when—hem——"

"When what?" snorted Bunter.

"Well, when there isn't any Walsingham, you know," said Bob, laughing.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Billy Bunter gave Bob an indignant and disdainful blink.

"Will you come along with me and ring up Bunter Court?" he asked.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The Head's gone out, and we can use his phone. I'm waiting for you fellows!" said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at Bunter blankly.

How they were to ring up a place that had no existence was a mystery to them; but evidently Bunter was in earnest. They almost wondered whether there was some fraction of truth in Billy Bunter's many gaseous assertions on the subject of Bunter Court. If not, the Owl's present move was really inexplicable.

"Oh, we'll come," said Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I catch on, but we'll come and hear."

"The hearfulness will be terrific."

Greatly puzzled, the chums of the Remove followed Billy Bunter along the Head's corridor and into Dr. Locke's study—now untenanted.

Bunter picked up the receiver from the telephone. He blinked loftily at the perplexed five.

"You fellows can speak to the exchange," he said. "The number's Combermere 1-0."

"Right-ho!" grunted Johnny Bull, and he bent over the transmitter.

"Number, please?" came through.

"Cumbermere 1-0," said Johnny.

"Now you'll jolly well see!" sneered Bunter.

Johnny Bull picked up the Head's telephone directory, and began to look through it. Bunter blinked at him.

"As a matter of fact, the name's not there," he said hastily. "The pater doesn't care to have his name in the directory. The best people don't, as I dare say you don't know, Bull."

"I don't!" said Johnny.

"You wouldn't," said Bunter. "But if you can't take my word, Johnny Bull, you can take the call."

Johnny Bull held out his hand grimly for the receiver. He did not take Bunter's word, that was certain; and if Bunter had arranged some spoof on the telephone Johnny did not mean to be taken in. So he put the receiver to his ear, and heard a voice come through.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo!" said Johnny Bull into the transmitter. "Is that Bunter Court?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" ejaculated Johnny.

"Who is speaking?" came the voice, which sounded like a manservant's.

"Speaking from Greyfriars School," said Johnny. "I want to speak to Mr. Walsingham, Bunter's butler."

"Is it a message from Mr. Bunter?"

"He's here."

"Oh, very well. I will call Mr. Walsingham."

"Oh, my hat!" said Johnny Bull blankly. The Co., crowding close round the receiver, were able to catch most of what was said, and they exchanged looks of wonder.

"Great pip!" murmured Bob Cherry. "There can't really be such a place as Bunter Court, you know."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"The seefulness will be the believefulness," remarked Hurree Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

"Oh, really, Inky——"

(Continued on page 23.)

THE LONE TRAVELLER! *Across the arid wastes of the blazing veldt a solitary horseman jogs his weary way. That he is in search of something is evidenced by the way he continually shades his eyes from the glare of the sun. What is it he seeks?*

The VELDT TRAIL!

A magnificent story of detective adventure in South Africa, featuring Ferrers Locke, the world-famous detective, and his boy assistant, Jack Drake.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
The Big Bluff!

THE sun, like a brass disc suspended in the heavens, blazed mercilessly down upon the parched and all but lifeless veldt, shrivelling everything it touched, transforming what might have been a land of vivid green and gold into an arid, rust-brown, monotonous waste.

The tall, broad-shouldered, middle-aged man drew in his horse, steaming with perspiration, and slid wearily from the saddle.

Then, leading the all but exhausted animal a few yards, he came to a tiny running stream of crystal-clear water, almost hidden away by a group of grotesquely-shaped boulders.

He left the horse to drink its fill, and himself went farther along to where the stream was even narrower.

Here he dropped to hands and knees, scooped up some of the precious liquid in his cupped hands, and flung it, with a muttered exclamation of unutterable relief, over his face and head, allowing it to trickle deliciously through his hair and down his neck.

"Jove, that's good!" he muttered at last. "Another mile without a drop of water and I'd have collapsed altogether! Wonder what old Ferrers Locke would say could he see me now?"

Ferrers Locke, the great London detective—to whom, some three months previously, he had bade farewell at Southampton Docks—would indeed be surprised to see him now, to note the transformation in the erstwhile immaculately-dressed Sir Merton Carr, mining magnate, and owner of the now world-famed cone of gold known as the Golden Pyramid.

Instinctively Sir Merton's hand went to a pocket in his belt, and next moment the tiny pyramid was reposing in his nut-brown palm, gleaming and glittering in the sun's rays, bringing back, with a rush, all the memories of those stirring times with the great detective when the riddle of the Golden Pyramid was being solved.

A grim smile settled for a moment on Sir Merton's lips as his mind went back over the main incidents of that amazing case—the disappearance of his only son, Gordon Carr, now happily restored to his old position in the Remove at Stormpoint College: the loss and eventual discovery of the Golden Pyramid, and the solving of its extraordinary message; the trailing and ultimate capture of Gerald Bristow, otherwise Arthur the Dude, the notorious cracksman, who was at the same time Sir Merton's own nephew.

And now he, Sir Merton, was engaged upon the last lap of the seemingly endless journey across the bleak and barren veldt—the trail of the hidden treasure, left by the old Boer farmer, Piet de Jongh.

When Ferrers Locke had solved the riddle of the Golden Pyramid, the message it had conveyed had set Sir Merton on the right road—the road to Devil's Spruit, where, according to the Pyramid, Piet de Jongh's wealth was hidden.

After a while, man and horse set forth again, and some hours later, as the sun was sinking in a blaze of blood-red splendour in the west, they came at last to the end of the journey—to the winding stream of muddy water known as Devil's Spruit.

And less than one hour later, Sir Merton Carr himself was staring in blank amazement and disgust at a huge, much-battered old biscuit-tin which he, after considerable hard work with pick and shovel, had unearthed from about five feet of rocky soil.

Within the old biscuit-tin was a letter, written in the crabbed handwriting of the old Boer farmer—a letter full of the most absurd jargon; and a cheque, drawn on the National South African Bank, Ltd., payable to bearer, and made out for the sum of five hundred thousand pounds, with the scrawling, almost illegible signature "Piet de Jongh" at the foot.

That was all!

No treasure, not even the slightest reference to any such thing. Just an old biscuit-tin, a letter—written, apparently, by a man who had quite taken leave of his senses—and an obviously worthless cheque, already mildewy with age.

"Well, I'll be frog-marched!" gasped Sir Merton, uncertain whether to laugh or to lose all control of his temper. "All this confounded long journey for nothing—for—for a joke, a game of bluff! Well, it's a mighty good thing for Piet de Jongh that he's dead already. Otherwise——"

The dark but useless threat that roved impotently about in Sir Merton's angry mind was left unspoken; and soon afterwards the thoroughly irate and completely mystified mining magnate set out on the return journey, the ridiculous biscuit-tin and its still more ridiculous contents slung carelessly over the horse's saddle.

Double-Crossed!

EVEN the grim, hideous garb of the convict failed altogether to take from Gerald Arthur Bristow that air of polished suavity and grace which had earned for him, from crook and detective alike, the sobriquet of "Arthur the Dude."

True, the inevitable monocle was inevitable no longer. That had long since been confiscated by what Bristow had termed an utterly unimaginative and inartistic prison doctor, despite the efforts he had made, on the plea of deficient eyesight, to retain it.

And in the meantime, with the calm indifference of previous experience, Gerald Arthur Bristow had settled down to his fate as a long-term convict at Stonemoor Prison. And, in the wisdom which that past experience had engendered in his exceedingly artful mind, he had early made up his mind to give the authorities as little trouble as possible, thereby quickly earning many marks for good behaviour and the various small but greatly-appreciated privileges given by way of reward.

But though he was outwardly so well behaved, Gerald Arthur Bristow was inwardly seething. His cunning mind had never ceased to work, feverishly, on some plan of ultimate escape ever since the day when he had been found guilty

and had received a heavy but well merited sentence.

And now, two years afterwards, his long-debated plans seemed actually to be on the eve of fruition.

His good behaviour had earned for him, as for other similarly-behaved convicts, a measure of relief in the matter of supervision; and this relief he had put to the best possible use by chumming up with a fellow-prisoner, with whom he had worked side by side for the past six months.

They were as unlike as it was possible for two human beings to be, for Bristow's new-found pal, a sneak thief named Samuel Hedger, was short and stockily-built, coarse as to feature, shifty-eyed, and as crudely artful as a vanload of monkeys.

Hedger's sentence was now drawing to a close, and within the next few days he was to be given his release. Bristow had learned of this, and had seen in it the first glimmerings of his idea for ultimate escape.

Always a keen and shrewd student of human nature, Bristow recognised in his fellow-convict a man who might well be moulded to serve a very useful purpose.

This being so, the crafty ex-cracksman had taken Hedger, by degrees, to some extent into his confidence, and between them a plan of escape for Arthur the Dude had been discussed and finally decided upon.

It had been a long job, of course, for their opportunities for intercourse were few and far between, and one had to be so confoundedly careful, even as a "good behaviour" man, in such a strictly governed prison as Stonemoor.

But at length it had all been arranged.

Hedger, the sneak-thief, was to get busy as soon as he was released, taking full advantage of the heavy fogs which were, about this time, all too frequent on the bleak moorland where Stonemoor Prison was situated.

And after the escape had been carried out successfully, Bristow, by way of reward, was to go halves with Hedger in a little matter concerning a Golden Pyramid, a journey to far-off South Africa, and the obtaining of a vast accumulation of hidden wealth, rightfully belonging to Bristow's uncle, Sir Merton Carr.

It was an ambitious, a daring scheme. But Bristow was used to handling daring stunts, and was full of self-confidence, provided that Hedger carried out his side of the contract, the details of which had been discussed again and again to ensure that nothing had been overlooked.

Their plan, in itself, was surprisingly simple.

Bristow and Hedger had both been engaged, during the past few weeks, with a group of other convicts, in repairing a road-bridge on the moors, some three miles distant from the prison.

Thanks to his general good conduct, Bristow had been left rather more than was usual to himself. The warders had grown to trust him and had in consequence relaxed something of their customary vigilance.

Bristow, anxious only to protect his own interests when the time planned for the escape should come, had made a special point of justifying the warders' trust by the most scrupulous obedience to orders, and by an apparently complete indifference to more than one opportunity—unforeseen by the warders—of making a dash for freedom.

It was now the time of the year when heavy fogs descended, often without the slightest warning, upon the surrounding countryside. The arrangement between Bristow and Hedger depended on such an occurrence, it being understood between them that on the very first occasion of a heavy fog, after Hedger's release, the attempt at the get-away was to be made.

Hedger was to be there, in hiding, to give a pre-arranged signal and to have a racing car in readiness, together with a supply of clothing and food, for Bristow.

Both Hedger and Bristow knew the surrounding moorland as well as they knew the palms of their own hands, and they reckoned, with sundry other details of their scheme duly provided for, to make a clean get-away.

Afterwards, Bristow intended unearthing certain loot—proceeds of old burglaries, the whereabouts of which were known only to him—which would be realised upon at the hands of a "fence," or receiver of stolen property; and with the hard cash obtained in this way, both Bristow and Hedger would proceed as quickly as possible to South Africa, on the trail of the treasure of the Golden Pyramid.

In due course the day of Hedger's release dawned.

Only the previous night, the sneak-thief had contrived to convey to Bristow a renewed assurance of his fidelity to their plot; which made Hedger's action, on leaving Stonemoor Prison on this bleak, winter's morning, the more puzzling.

As the great iron gates clanged behind him, leaving him free to go where he pleased, Mr. Hedger turned and hurried down the hill on which Stonemoor was perched.

Reaching the foot, he paused and glanced back, his bead-like eyes glittering with a curiously cunning light, his thick lips parted in an evil grin, revealing a double row of broken, yellow teeth.

"You're very clever, Mr. Gerald Bristow," he muttered, as he gazed reflectively at the massive stone walls of the prison. "But for once your cleverness has overstepped itself! You little knew that I was already acquainted with all the details of the Golden Pyramid case—that I had actually seen and spoken to your uncle, Sir Merton Carr, while he was in England! Fifty-fifty, indeed! Not while Samuel Hedger can collar the whole blinkin' lot!"

And with a low, deep-throated chuckle, he hurried onwards, leaving Stonemoor and Gerald Bristow behind, forgetting them both almost as soon as they had passed from his sight.

"It'll be many years before Arthur the Dude gets his ticket from Stonemoor," Hedger thought, as he hastened away, "and by that time it'll be far too late for him to have so much as a finger in Sir Merton's little pie! 'Cos why? 'Cos yours truly will have got there long, long before!"

Back in Stonemoor Prison the days dragged on, merging into weeks and months. The heavy fogs came and went, and still there was no sign of Hedger, though Arthur the Dude became more and more alert as time went on.

Mystified at first, never for a moment doubting Hedger's intentions—for was not the reward well worthy of his trouble?—Bristow had possessed his soul in patience, hoping for the best, never quite believing that anything could possibly go wrong with their plan.

Until at last, he had been forced to accept the only possible solution of the mystery.

Hedger had gone back on his word. Hedger had double-crossed him!

Perhaps even at this moment Hedger was on his way to South Africa, to work this little stunt on his own account.

The mere thought of it set Bristow's brain afire with rage and bitterness, and gave birth to the most daring decision he had ever made.

He would escape from Stonemoor on his own account!

Hedger had let him down, but he would not let Hedger's traitorous behaviour stand in his way. His resourcefulness would be more than equal to the dingy cunning of that backsliding water-rat!

Bristow's brain began to work at feverish speed, and in due course his new plans had been made. They were put into execution even sooner than he had hoped.

The work on the road-bridge was still going on, having been to some extent delayed owing to a period of heavy rains. And the fogs were still hanging about, though the period of the year was that which was steadily approaching late winter.

Then one day, in the late afternoon, the heavy blanket of yellow-grey mist descended upon the moors almost without any warning at all, abruptly cutting off the last vestige of already fast-waning light and turning the surrounding countryside into an abysmal pit of darkness.

On the instant, Bristow saw his chance and took it.

His continual good behaviour had earned for him a gradually increasing trust on the part of the warders, who had left him more and more "on his honour," so that, when this fog descended, it was not altogether surprising that Bristow was working on an isolated patch, separated even from the other prisoners by several yards. The two warders in charge of the party were still farther away.

So swiftly did Bristow act, and so cleverly did he engineer the mode of his escape, that fully two hours had passed ere his absence was discovered.

Then the cry went up, and the prison guns boomed sonorously over the bleak, fogbound moorland. Parties of eager, anxious warders, armed with flaring torches and guns, scoured the ground for

Jack Drake was hurrying through the crowded network of streets adjacent to the Town Hall, when he was suddenly pulled up by the clutch of a man's hand on his arm. He turned to gaze into a curiously haggard, bearded face. (*See page* 24.)

miles in a great, ever-widening human fan, but all to no purpose.

Arthur the Dude had tricked them all too successfully this time!

And some weeks later, Gerald Arthur Bristow, unrecognisable in a thick brown beard, naturally grown, a suit of blue dungarees, and tanned and tattooed arms, signed on as a member of the crew of the s.s. Bluebird, outward bound with a mixed cargo to African waters.

He had been very busy indeed in the interim—busy collecting news regarding his treacherous prison pal, Samuel Hedger, busy realising on hidden loot, and still more busy eluding the ever-vigilant eyes of the police.

It had been a long and heartbreaking job, a job calculated to break the nerve of any man less courageous than Arthur the Dude. But to Bristow it had been well worth the trouble.

The hue and cry raised on the occasion of his escape from Stonemoor had set the whole country agog with excitement.

But it had died down now, and though the police were still actively alert, the newspapers had practically dropped referring to the matter, and the public had turned their attention to other and more interesting sensations, for all of which the soul of Gerald Arthur Bristow rejoiced.

"And now for South Africa," he muttered between clenched teeth, as the dirty-looking tramp steamer churned its way through the maze of shipping in the Thames, outward bound, 'South Africa, the treasure of the Golden Pyramid, and—Samuel Hedger!"

His eyes snapped dangerously as the name of his erstwhile accomplice passed his grimly-set lips.

And it was as well for Samuel Hedger that he was blissfully unaware of what was at that moment passing through the crafty mind of Arthur the Dude; otherwise there might have been little further peace of mind for the sneak-thief, for whom Bristow had solemnly promised himself the satisfaction of a very complete reckoning.

Bristow Calls on Ferrers Locke!

FERRERS LOCKE, the world-famous London detective, laid aside the large and bulky time-table of the South African Railways and turned with a smile to Jack Drake, his young assistant, who was busy fastening up the last of a pile of trunks and suit-cases.

"When you've finished that little lot, Jack," said the detective, "you might cut along to the cable office and send this message to London for me."

Jack Drake slipped the last strap into place and drew himself erect, mopping his perspiring face with his handkerchief.

"Right-ho, guv'nor!" he returned. "And mighty glad I'll be to see a sight of dear, dirty old London again. The heat of this country is about as much as I can stand. I'm steadily melting away!"

Ferrers Locke smiled sympathetically.

"Yes, South Africa is a pretty hot country, in more senses than one," he agreed, "and I reckon Johannesburg takes some beating, too! I'm not so sure about being glad to get home, though. Our visit here has been a brief and busy one, and hasn't really given me a chance to look around. There's a sort of fascination, a lure, about the vast, open spaces of the veldt, and especially about the Golden City with its roaring mines, which gets one! Personally, I'd have liked to be able to stay a bit longer!"

Ferrers Locke spoke with genuine regret. He and his assistant had only been in South Africa a matter of six weeks, engaged upon a mysterious case which they had now brought to a successful conclusion.

Most of their time had been spent in and around Johannesburg—the Golden City, as it is often called, owing to its being the centre of the Witwatersrand gold-mining industry—and Locke had, as he said, found little time to spare in which to make himself better acquainted with the country.

And now, their work concluded, they were on the eve of returning to England, where other and even more important cases awaited them—indeed, Locke had been positively pestered with cables for the past week or so, proving that, during his absence, work had been steadily accumulating at Baker Street.

"Pity we haven't had a chance to call on Sir Merton Carr, guv'nor," said Jack Drake suddenly, as he took the cable form from the detective and prepared to hasten out of the hotel. "I hear he's been away in Natal for some months, but that he returned to Jo'burg only the other day."

Ferrers Locke nodded thoughtfully.

"We could probably have squeezed in an hour or two to look him up had he been in Johannesburg a fortnight ago," he said, "but as it is, I'm afraid there's nothing doing. Our train leaves Park Station for Cape Town at six-thirty to-night, and I've got a big consultation on with Inspector Pyecroft and the local police this afternoon, so I'm pretty full up. I might manage to telephone to Sir Merton, though."

Jack Drake nodded, and a moment later had left the hotel and was hurrying

along the sun-baked streets of Johannesburg towards the cable office.

The time was about midday, and the sun hung overhead like a flaming ball, creating a shimmering haze in the air, and making even the lightest of clothing seem heavy and uncomfortable.

More than once Jack Drake mopped the perspiration from his face as he made his way along the crowded streets.

Then, having despatched the cable, he turned suddenly into a near-by cafe and promptly ordered an iced drink, after which he resumed his journey back to the hotel, where he and Locke, together with Inspector Pyecroft, were shortly due to partake of luncheon.

Inspector Pyecroft had not accompanied Locke to South Africa from London, but had followed the detective to Johannesburg some two weeks afterwards, the Scotland Yard man's presence being required at a certain stage of Locke's investigations.

Jack Drake was hurrying through the crowded network of streets adjacent to the town hall, when he was suddenly pulled up by the clutch of a man's hand on his arm.

He turned to gaze into a curiously haggard, bearded face.

The man who had so abruptly stopped him seemed to be about forty years of age, with slightly grizzled hair and a pair of steel-blue eyes which roved restlessly around him, seemingly incapable of looking steadily from beneath their bushy eyebrows.

In one swift glance Jack saw that the man was utterly unkempt in appearance —almost as down-at-heel as a tramp, in fact.

He seemed, too, to be consumed with a sort of nervous fear, and dragged Jack, ere he could raise any sort of objection, into a narrow and all but deserted side street.

"Your—your name's Drake, isn't it?" said the bearded man, in a hoarse whisper.

"Why, yes!" gasped Jack, mystified. "But what——"

"You're the assistant to Ferrers Locke, the London detective?"

"That's right," returned the boy detective. "But I'm afraid I don't know you——"

"Then you don't recognise me?"

Jack stared searchingly at him. Now he came to think of it, there was something vaguely familiar about the fellow, but try as he would, he could not quite place it.

He shook his head again.

"I'm afraid I don't," he admitted. "But what do you want with me, anyway, and how did you know that I—that Mr. Locke—was here in Johannesburg?"

"I didn't know it until this morning," answered the other. "Then I saw a notice in the newspaper about Mr. Ferrers Locke being on the eve of his departure for England after concluding a case on which he and Inspector Pyecroft had been engaged——"

"That's right enough," agreed Jack, still puzzled. "But——"

"Half a minute," cut in the other. "When I saw that notice I was half inclined to find Mr. Locke myself, but somehow I couldn't bring myself to—to—— Well, anyway," he added hastily, "I want you to take me to him now, right away, understand? I want to see him urgently, before he sails——"

"But—but who on earth——" began Jack again.

"Never mind about who I am," insisted the bearded man impatiently. "Just take me along to Mr. Locke now. You're going there, to his hotel, aren't you? Well, let me come with you. Oh, it's all right! I'll follow behind—I won't disgrace you by walking by your side——"

Jack Drake surveyed the man intently for a moment. Then he nodded his head.

"All right," he said. "You can come along with me, but, of course, I can't guarantee that Mr. Locke will see you."

"He will when he knows who I am," said the other, with a curious, twisted smile. "But you go on, young 'un—I'll follow!"

"Rot!" snapped Jack, who hated anything even remotely suggestive of snobbery. "You can walk along beside me, can't you?"

The man shot him a look and then, after a moment's hesitation, fell into step beside him.

Out of the corner of his eye Jack watched him. The man, for all his down-at-heel appearance, seemed to be educated, to possess some semblance of good breeding.

Jack Drake did not take to him, but he could not fail to recognise the note of culture in the man's voice, hoarse though it was, and the easy, swinging grace of his walk as he strode along beside him.

Presently Jack was about to turn into the traffic-congested thoroughfare known as Commissioner Street, when his strange companion again touched his arm, drawing him back.

"Mind if we keep to the side streets?" he asked in a low tone; and again Jack thought he detected that half-fearful, hunted look in the fellow's eyes.

"What's the matter?" he asked abruptly. "Afraid of being seen?"

The man nodded and smiled again.

"I am rather," he retorted. "Besides, these local police-constables have a way of looking one up and down—dashed uncomfortable, you know!"

Jack smiled in spite of himself. The cool cynicism of the fellow was intriguing, to say the least of it.

However, he silently acceded to his companion's request, and they resumed their march towards the hotel where Locke was staying.

Contrary to Jack's first expectations, Ferrers Locke raised no objections to seeing his strange visitor, and a few moments later the bearded man was shown into the detective's room.

Locke was alone, save for Jack, Pyecroft having gone out earlier in the day and not yet returned.

"'Morning, Mr. Locke!" said the stranger, as he entered. "Sorry to trouble you, but—well, this is a most desperate business——"

Ferrers Locke stared at the man curiously—searching his bearded face keenly for a moment.

Then he fell back with a gasp of sheer amazement.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "Why, you—you're Gerald Bristow!"

Complications!

"GERALD BRISTOW!"

As the name was spoken by Ferrers Locke, it was echoed by Jack Drake, who started forward and peered, in blank, incredulous amazement, into the face of the bearded man.

FAMOUS CRICKETERS' NAMES!

This list includes the name of every cricketer used in connection with the simple Competition on page 2.—Wire in, chums!

Abel, Abercorn, Abraham, Adams, Aitkin, Akroyd, Allen, Allsop, Anderson, Andrews, Antliff, Appleton, Arbuthnot, Armitage, Armour, Armstrong, Arnold, Ash, Ashley, Ashton, Astill, Atfield, Attewell, Awdry, Ayling.

Bacon, Bagshaw, Bailey, Baines, Bairstow, Baker, Banks, Bannister, Barber, Barclay, Bardsley, Barker, Barlow, Barnes, Barratt, Bastow, Bates, Bather, Bayes, Bean, Beet, Bell, Bennett, Bestwick, Bigwood, Birch, Bird, Bishop, Blackburn, Blades, Bland, Bligh, Bloodworth, Board, Boardman, Bolton, Boot, Borradaile, Bourne, Bousfield, Bowden, Bowley, Box, Boyes, Braddell, Brand, Braund, Bray, Bridges, Bright, Bristowe, Broadbridge, Brooke, Broughton, Brownlee, Bryan, Bryant, Buckle, Bull, Bullock, Burn, Burrell, Burrows, Bush, Butcher, Butler, Butterworth.

Cadman, Cadwalader, Caldwell, Campbell, Carless, Carpenter, Carr, Carroll, Carter, Carver, Castle, Catterall, Cave, Chapman, Cherry, Clay, Cole, Coleman, Collier, Collins, Constable, Conway, Cook, Cooper, Corder, Coverdale, Cox, Craven, Crawford, Crossland, Crow, Curtis.

Dakin, Dale, Dark, Davies, Dawson, Day, Decie, Denton, Diamond, Diver, Dixon, Dolphin, Douglas, Drake, Draper, Duck, Dunn, Durston.

Earle, Edwards, Emery, Evans, Ewbank.

Farmer, Faulkner, Featherstone, Fender, Field, Fielder, Fisher, Fletcher, Flint, Flowers, Ford, Foster, Fothergill, Fox, Freeman, Fry.

Gale, Garrett, Gatehouse, Geary, Gibson, Gilbert, Gilligan, Goodman, Gore, Grace, Greenwood, Gregory, Gregson, Grimshaw, Grundy, Gull, Gunn.

Hake, Hall, Hallows, Hammond, Hancock, Hand, Hardcastle, Hardman, Hardstaff, Hardy, Hare, Hargreaves, Harper, Hartkopf, Hartley, Hay, Hayward, Haywood, Head, Hearne, Hendren, Hendry, Heseltine, Hewitt, Hill, Hill-Wood, Hirst, Hitch, Hoare, Hobbs, Hogg, Holland, Hollingsworth, Hollins, Holmes, Howell, Hubble, Huddleston, Humphrey, Hunter, Hurst.

Illingworth, Inglis, Ingram, Ireland, Iremonger.

Jackson, Jardine, Jarvis, Jeacocke, Jeeves, Jephson, Jervis, Jessop, Jewell, Jones, Jupp.

Kaye, Kelly, Kennedy, Kenrick, Kerr, Kettle, Kilner, King, Knight, Knott, Knox.

Lacey, Lamb, Lane, Leach, Leaf, Lee, Leveson-Gower, Lewis, Lilley, Lillywhite, Lindsay, Lines, Lipscombe, Lock, Lockwood, Lord, Lorrimer, Louden, Lowe, Lucas, Lupton, Lyon, Lyttelton.

Macaulay, MacBryan, MacDonald, MacLaren, Mailey, Makepeace, Mann, Marriott, Marsden, Marshall, Matthews, McBeath, Mead, Middleton, Miles, Miller, Mills, Mitchell, Moon, Mordaunt, Mundy, Murdoch, Murrell.

Napier, Nawanagar, Needham, Newman, Noble, Norton, Nourse.

Oates, O'Brien, Oldfield, Oldroyd.

Page, Palairet, Palmer, Parker, Parkin, Partridge, Patterson, Payne, Payton, Peach, Pease, Peele, Pegler, Pellew, Penn, Penny, Pickering, Pigg, Pilch, Plank, Pollitt, Porter, Potter, Powell, Price, Pritchett.

Quaife.

Ranjitsinhji, Raynor, Reed, Relf, Rhodes, Richardson, Richmond, Riley, Robson, Rock, Rogers, Roper, Rose, Rowe, Rowley, Royston, Rush, Russell, Ryder.

Sachs, Sadler, Sanderson, Saunders, Scobell, Scott, Sedgwick, Sewell, Seymour, Sharp, Shaw, Shepherd, Sherwell, Shine, Slater, Spalding, Speak, Spofforth, Spooner, Staples, Staunton, Steel, Stoddart, Stone, Storer, Stork, Streatfield, Street, Strong, Strudwick, Studd, Sugg, Susskind, Sutcliffe.

Tarrant, Tate, Taylor, Tennyson, Thorp, Thresher, Thwaites, Tomkinson, Tower, Townsend, Trollope, Trotter, Trumble, Tubb, Tufton, Turnbull, Tyldesley.

Underwood, Upton.

Vallance, Vane, Veitch, Verulam, Vibart, Vine, Vizard.

Waddington, Wadsworth, Walden, Walker, Walker, Wall, Waller, Wallington, Ward, Warner, Waters, Watson, Wauchope, Webb, Wells, Wetherall, Whale, White, Whittaker, Whysall, Wilson, Winslow, Winter, Wood, Woodbridge, Woolley, Woosnan, Wright.

Yardley, Yates, Yonge, Young.

Zulch

"Sir Merton Carr murdered! My old friend killed!" For a moment Ferrers Locke stood there with closed eyes and working face. Then suddenly, impulsively, he sprang at Bristow and caught him by the throat. (*See this page.*)

Surely Locke had made a mistake!

The memory of Bristow's normal appearance, his gay, laughing manner, his immaculate clothes, his glittering eyeglass, came rushing back to Jack's mind now as he stared at this unkempt, down-at-heel fellow, with his straggling, ragged beard, his dirty, ragged clothes, his broken boots and grimy, gnarled hands.

Even his personality seemed to have changed, for as he stood now before Locke, his head was bowed, his hands twitched nervously as they clung to his greasy tweed cap, his feet shifted uneasily.

The old, audacious breeziness had gone and in its place had crept up something suggestive of the hunted animal, the rat in a trap.

"That's right, Mr. Locke," said Bristow at last. "But if you don't mind, I'd be glad if you'd drop calling me by that name. It—it's rather well known, even in this part of the world!"

Again that old mirthless laugh, strangely out of keeping with the man's general appearance.

Locke studied him in complete bewilderment.

"But—but what on earth is the meaning of this?" he said at last. "When I left England, the newspapers had recently been full of the details of your escape from Stonemoor. Obviously, you were never caught——"

"No; I was a bit too clever for them," interposed Bristow, with just a touch of his former aggressive pride. "I got clean away, as I swore I would!"

"And found your way to Johannesburg," went on Locke indignantly. "And now you have the brazen effrontery, the consummate audacity, to call upon me! I suppose you thought, in your ineffable conceit, that you could bluff me just as you have bluffed so many others? But I assure you you are mistaken this time! You are an escaped convict, and you are going to be handed over to the authorities without an instant's delay——"

As he spoke, Locke strode deliberately across the room to where a telephone stood on a table.

But he had barely covered half the distance when Bristow streaked after him, clutching at his arm with feverish, desperate eagerness.

"Wait a minute, Mr. Locke—wait, for mercy's sake!" he panted, all his coolness gone now, and in his place a fearful, hunted attitude. "This is no bluff, sir, I give you my word! I've come to you to ask you to—to help me——"

"To help you?"

Locke repeated the words as if he had not heard aright.

"Yes, yes, to help me," said Bristow, nodding his head energetically. "I'm in a terrible mess, Mr. Locke——"

"Of course you are!" snapped the detective impatiently. "An escaped convict usually is——"

"No, no, it's not that! Would to Heaven that was all my trouble! Would to Heaven I'd never attempted to make my escape from Stonemoor! At least I'd have saved myself from this frightful disaster——"

Locke swung round.

The man's face was haggard and lined, his eyes sunken, and full of an unspeakable dread. In spite of himself, the celebrated detective was moved to pity.

"What is your trouble?" he asked, in a more kindly tone.

But he was scarcely prepared for the answer.

"Mr. Locke!" Bristow took a step nearer, his voice dropping to a whisper. "The police are looking for me at this moment—not to re-arrest me as an escaped convict, but to charge me with another crime—for the murder of my uncle, Sir Merton Carr!"

Ferrers Locke fell back, his face suddenly blanching, his eyes becoming filled with horror. As for Jack Drake, he stood rooted to the spot, staring incredulously at Bristow.

"What's that you say?"

Locke spoke in a whisper, deadly calm.

"Sir Merton Carr's been murdered," repeated Bristow. "Killed in cold blood late last night at his house in Parktown. And the police are looking for me——"

"Sir Merton Carr murdered! My old friend dead—killed!"

For a moment Ferrers Locke stood there with closed eyes and working face. The blow was a terrible one to him.

Then suddenly, impulsively, he sprang at Bristow and caught him by the throat, forcing him back, shaking him as a terrier shakes a rat.

"You despicable scoundrel!" he cried, beside himself with grief and passion. "You've killed him—killed the one man in the world who had devoted his life to

your interests! I know how he slaved for you, how he strove with all his might to keep you straight, how broken-hearted he was when you were sent to prison, and now you've killed him, murdered him, you rat, you ingrate, you—you——"

Bristow gave a sudden howl of amazement as Locke sprang forward—a cry which was echoed in a different key by Jack Drake, who had never before seen his usually so well-controlled employer in such a white heat of anger.

"I tell you I didn't do it!" cried Bristow, staggering backwards, his arms sawing the air frantically but helplessly. "I tell you I don't know anything at all about it! I was as much surprised and—and shocked as you are! If I'd done it, d'you think I'd come here, to you of all people, as I have done——"

Locke released him and stood back.

The man's last words had suddenly impressed him. Apart from their unanswerable logic, there was something about the way in which they were uttered which struck the detective forcibly, even against his own will.

Bristow, for once in his disgraceful career, was speaking the truth—or so it seemed.

"Out with it!" snapped Locke. "Tell me all you know—here and now!"

Gerald Bristow moistened his lips, straightened his clothing, and coughed nervously between his laboured breathing. In the short, sharp tussle with Locke, the erstwhile Dude had been thoroughly shaken up, and his head was still spinning dizzily.

"It's soon told," he replied, in a low voice. "I escaped from Stonemoor, as you've heard. I managed—never mind how—to get across here, to Johannesburg, intending to track down a certain man—a prison pal who double-crossed me. Then I found myself down and out—broke to the wide. My uncle, so I'd heard, was away in Natal, his house closed up for the time being——"

"He returned two days ago," cut in Locke sharply.

Bristow nodded.

"I didn't know that—till it was too late," he replied bitterly. "I believed he was away, and I laid my plans accordingly."

"Meaning that you decided, once again, to rob your uncle?" interposed the detective, with ill-concealed contempt in his tones.

"I was broke, I tell you—starving!" retorted Bristow savagely. "I had to do something, and I'd not so far managed to track down that double-crossing traitor who—— But that's neither here nor there.

"As I was saying, I laid my plans, believing Sir Merton's house to be unoccupied. Last night I broke in by means of the french windows of his private study. I intended to help myself to some food and maybe to a little cash, not more than was absolutely necessary, mind you——"

"Go on!" urged Locke contemptuously.

"It was well past midnight when I got in. The room was, of course, in darkness, just as the rest of the house was. Then—then I stumbled over something on the floor. I had an electric torch, and I flashed it before me, and—and then——"

He broke off and dropped his face in his hands.

Locke waited in stony silence, and presently the man continued, though his voice was now shaky and uncertain.

"He—he was lying there—my—my uncle—with—with a wound in his back, and the—— Oh, my Heaven, it was too horrible!

"And—and even as I saw him he called out—he was not dead, you see, but I could see he had only got a few minutes left. He—he called out, as he caught sight of me. I—I thought that with this beard and these clothes, I was sufficiently disguised; but—but somehow I must have been wrong.

"Anyway, Sir Merton recognised me, for even as I looked at him he opened his eyes and called out, saying: 'You—you've killed me, you scoundrel, but I know you, Gerald——'

"And I swear I know nothing about it! I swear I had no hand at all in his murder!"

"What did you do next?" asked Locke, after a brief, tense silence.

"Me? I just—just cleared out," answered Bristow. "I just ran like lightning, putting as big a distance as possible between myself and—and the scene of the crime——"

"Without stealing anything?"

"Absolutely!" came the answer. "I was too scared. I just cleared, I tell you——"

"You said just now that the police were after you for the murder," said Locke suddenly. "How do you know——"

"I don't know," returned Bristow, "but I can guess, can't I? My uncle

(*Continued on the next page.*)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

OUR MAGNIFICENT FREE GIFTS!

MAGNETITES will be feeling pleased with themselves this week, for the first Two Free Gifts are in their hands, and the glorious prospect of more to come must bring a sparkle to their eyes. Aren't they simply top-hole, these cut-out photos? Of course, you are all saying "Rather!" Nothing like them has ever been presented to MAGNET readers before. Nothing so good in the way of "insets" has ever been placed before the reading public. I'm certain that all my loyal chums are determined to collect the complete set of photos. That's the spirit! But take a tip from me; order your copy of the MAGNET regularly—it saves disappointment. Now for a few hints on how to handle these cut-out photos.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

First, cut along the white line dividing the bases of the two figures with a pair of sharp scissors. Then bend the ends of the green bases where it says "Fold Here." It will at once be observed that a natural base is given to the photo, enabling it to stand upright in a realistic manner, the cut-out outline giving a wonderfully lifelike effect. That's simple enough, isn't it, boys? I expect some of you have already performed this little task, and given these superb action photos a place—a special place—of prominence in your den. Splendid! Think what an imposing array of world-famed cricketers you will be able to show to your friends when you have collected the set. But don't spoil it, boys. Do yourself a good turn now. Make certain of bagging Parkin, the demon bowler of Lancashire, and "Pat" Hendren, the Middlesex boundary hitter—

NEXT WEEK'S FREE GIFTS—

by ordering a copy of the MAGNET today. It's sound advice, and you are used to that from me. Jump along to your newsagent's now!

THAT COMPETITION!

What do you think of it? Isn't it deliciously easy? Rather! And you're all entering it. Bravo! Think of the handsome prizes. Don't they make your mouths water? Ten shillings a week for a year. Five shillings a week for a year—forty ripping prizes. Gee! Makes me wish I were a boy again! Now, look here, chums, those prizes have got to be won. I want you to swell the entry list of this competition into record figures just to show the rest of the world that there's no more appreciative reader than the Magnetite on the face of the globe, also that when he sees a good thing he goes for it, Pile in, and clear up those prizes. 'Nuff said!

"BUNTER OF BUNTER COURT!" by Frank Richards.

This coming story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, is a real corker. Billy Bunter excels himself, which is another way of paying a tribute to Mr. Richards, for this world-famous author created the one and only W. G. B. Don't miss this yarn, boys!

"THE VELDT TRAIL!"

Instalment two of this topping mystery serial will beat its predecessor. Ferrers Locke has bumped into as strange and intricate a case as it has been his lot to unravel since he started in the crime detection business. Look out, then, for instalment two—next week!

"SEASIDE."

Always a favourite word amongst young and old, for it conjures up a vision of the boundless sea, the blazing sun, and—holidays! Harry Wharton & Co. have wired in with a special supplement, using the seaside as their central theme. You'll enjoy this special feature. Watch out for it.

"PARKIN AND HENDREN."

In next week's MAGNET will be found short, pithy articles dealing with the record of each of these famous cricketers. You'll find them well worth reading, especially as you will have the cut-out action photos of these two giants of the bat and ball at your elbow, as it were. Get ready to receive them, boys. Au revoir till next Monday.

Your Editor.

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cried out as he saw me, openly accused me, and I'll swear his voice must have been heard elsewhere in the house, it—it seemed so loud——"

Ferrers Locke paced the room for some moments in silence.

The news was a tremendous shock to him, and it took him some moments to get the right perspective.

According to Bristow, he had broken into Sir Merton's Johannesburg house in the small hours of this morning. That would explain why Locke had not so far heard of the crime—why nobody, in fact, save perhaps the local police themselvee had heard of it.

Doubtless by now the whole story was in the hands of the newspaper reporters, and would make its appearance, in great "scare" headlines in the late afternoon editions of the "Star" and the "Evening Chronicle."

But in the meantime everyone in Johannesburg, save those immediately concerned, remained in blissful ignorance of the terrible tragedy which had occurred in their midst.

Suddenly Locke halted before the bearded, dejected figure of Bristow. The detective, as was sometimes his way, had made up his mind in a flash as to his whole plan of action.

"Look here, Bristow," he said quietly, "I don't, of course, know whether I can believe your story or not—as yet. But I'm going to look into it, and while I'm doing so, you will remain here, understand? Here, in my room, till I return.

"Meanwhile, I am going, with my assistant, Jack Drake, to Sir Merton's home, to investigate things on my own account. When I return we'll see what's to be done about you!"

Bristow nodded.

"I'll stay here, Mr. Locke," he said submissively enough. "I only want you to help me, to prove that I'm innocent of this crime. I'm quite willing to go back to Stonemoor on my old sentence if only I can be cleared of the murder of Sir Merton."

Locke nodded, but did not answer, and next moment he and Jack had left the room and were hurrying downstairs.

"D'you think he'll keep his word and wait till we return, guv'nor?" asked Jack Drake.

"I think so," replied Locke, with a grim smile. "He's got too much to lose by playing any game of bluff with me, and he knows it. Hallo! Here's Pyecroft, and by the look of him he's heard all about poor Sir Merton!"

As they were crossing the lounge hall of the hotel, Inspector Pyecroft suddenly appeared, his face agog with excitement. With him was another man, whom Locke quickly recognised as Supt. Vane, of the Johannesburg Police.

"Yes, I've just heard about it myself," said Locke, as Pyecroft began, in excited tones, to tell him of the tragedy. "No, never mind where or how I picked up the news—I'll explain all that later. Meantime, we'll hurry along to Sir Merton's house and have a look round, and perhaps Vane, here, will be good enough to tell me the facts, such as he may know them, as we go along!"

They all stepped into a waiting car and were soon being driven at a good speed away from the centre of the city and out into the beautiful, hillside suburb of Parktown, where Sir Merton's house was situated.

En route, Locke listened intently to Supt. Vane's remarks, but gathered very little from them.

"As a matter of fact, we've only just heard about it ourselves, Mr. Locke," he said almost apologetically. "You see, from what we can gather, Sir Merton had only returned from Natal two days ago, and had not had time to get settled down, having given all his staff a month's holiday and himself returned unexpectedly. He spent the first night, so we learn, at the Carlton Hotel, going out to his house the next—yesterday—morning, taking with him only his valet, a man named Griggs, and his secretary, Mr. Stephen Jarrad.

"According to our information, conveyed by phone from the local police-station, the valet was the first to make the discovery of the crime when he entered the library at lunch-time to-day. He had previously been instructed by Sir Merton, so he says, not to interrupt his master until lunch was ready——"

They arrived at the Ivy Lodge, as Sir Merton's house was called, and Locke immediately made his way to the scene of the tragedy.

His face paled slightly as he caught sight of the huddled figure of Sir Merton which still lay where it had fallen.

The detective crossed to it, and stood looking down into the still, set face for some moments, almost overcome with emotion.

Then he turned away and spoke a few terse words to the doctor, who had just concluded his examination.

"Knife wound, Mr. Locke," said the medico, in answer to Locke's inquiry. "He must have been stabbed from behind. Death would be almost, but not quite, instantaneous. No, sir, the weapon is not to be found anywhere."

Locke nodded, and with a word of thanks, turned away.

His glance roved round the room, his keen eyes taking in every detail of the place, storing it away in his memory for future reference.

A safe stood in the corner, its door open, and the contents of the safe scattered in confusion about the floor.

Locke's eyes glittered as he gazed on this, and next moment he had dropped on to one knee and was busy inspecting the chaos of papers, deed boxes, loose bank-notes and coins which lay scattered about on every hand.

In the midst of these was what looked like an old and much-battered biscuit-tin—a strange article to be found in such surroundings.

Locke picked this up gingerly and examined it all round before finally lifting the lid which had somehow got badly jammed, and required the leverage of a penknife ere it would give way.

Then he tipped the tin up, and there fell out the most weird assortment of articles he had ever seen.

(What bearing will this peculiar "find" have upon the case? Next week's magnificent instalment will enlighten you. Mind you read it!)

BILLY BUNTER'S BRAIN-WAVE !

(*Continued from page 20.*)

'The fellow's speaking," said Johnny Bull. "Listen, you chaps! Hallo! Is that Mr. Walsingham?"

"Mr. Walsingham speaking," answered a fruity voice.

"Butler at Bunter Court?"

"Yes, sir."

"Great pip!"

Johnny Bull, in a dazed frame of mind, passed the receiver to Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove bestowed a triumphant grin on the astonished juniors, and clasped the receiver to a fat ear.

"Walsingham! Mr. Bunter speaking."

"Yes, sir! I am at your orders, sir!" came the butler's reply, audible to the juniors crowding round the receiver.

"I have given you my instructions, Walsingham, with regard to the car coming here for me and my friends."

"Yes, sir. I have made a note of it."

"You will send the largest Rolls-Royce."

"Very good, sir!"

"Don't let the car be late, Walsingham. And you will see that a good lunch is ready for us when we arrive."

"Certainly, sir!"

"You have a perfectly free hand in the matter of expense, Walsingham. Only see that I have everything of the best, and plenty of it."

"Rely upon me, Mr. Bunter."

"I'm bringing five fellows with me. If I add to the party I'll let you know. In the meantime, have five rooms ready."

"Yes, sir!"

"That's all, Walsingham."

"Very good, sir! As you know, I am always at your orders, sir, and it is a pleasure to carry out your commands, sir."

"Right!"

Billy Bunter rang off. He jammed the receiver back on the hooks, and blinked at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. Utter wonder was written in their faces. The Owl of the Remove, for once, had completely taken the wind out of their sails. It was borne in upon their dazed minds that there really was such a place as Bunter Court, that there really existed a Bunter butler with the imposing name of Walsingham, and that knowledge was too unexpected and startling to be absorbed all at once.

They could only stare at Bunter blankly. The Owl's fat lip curled with lofty disdain.

"Well, what do you think now?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know what to think!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "I—I—I suppose it's some kind of spoof."

Harry Wharton rubbed his nose.

"He's got me beat!" he said.

"The beatfulness is terrific."

"Hold on a minute," said Johnny Bull grimly. He picked up the receiver again and rang up the exchange. Billy Bunter watched him rather uneasily.

"Excuse me," said Johnny Bull to the exchange, "can you tell me the address of Combermere 1-0?"

"Combermere Lodge," came the answer at once.

Johnny Bull put up the receiver again.

"The place was called Combermere Lodge before my father bought it," said Bunter casually. "We changed the name to Bunter Court."

Johnny Bull made no answer. He was too perplexed. Unless Combermere Lodge now belonged to the Bunters, it was inexplicable how Bunter was able to ring up the place and give instructions to anyone there. Quite puzzled, the Famous Five left the Head's study with Bunter.

"I think you fellows owe me an apology!" said the Owl of the Remove. "You've doubted my word. You practically made out that I was asking you to a place that didn't exist. Lots of fellows would turn you down for it. But I won't. You're coming home with me for the hols. It's all right. The Rolls-Royce will be here on time."

And Bunter rolled away, with his fat little nose in the air, elated with his triumph.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another. For some moments there was silence.

"Well, this beats it!" said Bob Cherry at last. "This beats the band!"

"It do—it does!"

"I—I say——" said Nugent dubiously. "It looks as if there really is a Bunter Court after all, and in that case we've fixed it with Bunter. We're bound to go."

"Oh!"

Harry Wharton nodded slowly.

"Can't chuck it now," he agreed. "If this is straight—and it looks it—we can't turn Bunter down. We're bound to go with him for the vac. We were pulling Bunter's leg, but it looks to me now as if we were pulling our own all the time. We're booked with Bunter."

"But—but is it straight?" said Johnny Bull.

"Looks like it."

And when Harry Wharton & Co. told other fellows in the Remove of that talk on the telephone, the other fellows admitted that it looked like it. Even Peter Todd confessed that it looked like it.

That evening William George Bunter was the cynosure of all eyes in the Rag. And the fat junior spread himself amazingly and swanked to his heart's content—as became the lord and master of that magnificent domain, Bunter Court.

THE END.

(What's going to happen now, boys? Will Billy Bunter be able to keep up this amazing fraud, or will he get it where the chicken got the chopper - in the neck? Next week's grand story—"BUNTER OF BUNTER COURT!"—will tell you. Don't miss it on any account!)