

YOU'RE LOOKING AT THIS WEEK'S BEST BARGAIN!

The

No. 1,010. Vol. XXXI. Week Ending June 25th, 1927.

Magnet 2^d

EVERY
MONDAY.

LIBRARY



NOT WANTED IN THE BOOT-ROOM!

(A diverting incident in this week's humorous long complete school story of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



THE TERRIBLE THREE!

THIS, let me hasten to explain, has no reference to those cheery chaps, Tom Merry & Co., who figure in our companion paper, the "Gem." It's simply the nom-de-plume of three ardent readers of the MAGNET. Now, these chaps are at loggerheads with each other over the question of who are the tallest men—Scotsmen, Irishmen, or Englishmen. I'm really anxious to see the "Terrible Three" all merry and bright again, so perhaps this information will do the trick. The average height of Scotsmen is 5 ft. 8½ ins.; Irishmen, 5 ft. 8 ins.; and Englishmen, 5 ft. 7½ ins. Let me add, too—or perhaps there will be another split in the camp—that Welshmen average 5 ft. 6½ ins.

"NOT WORTH HIS SALT!"

"How did this phrase come into being?" asks "John," of Hampstead. It came from the Romans, whose soldiers received a daily portion of salt as part of their pay. The word "salary" comes from the Latin "sal," so it is fairly easy to see how the expression "not worth his salt" originated.

JIMMY SILVER & CO.!

More than one reader has written in this week asking for information about Jimmy Silver & Co., who at one time figured in the "Boy's Friend." Surely these Magnetites have seen Chat pars dealing with this subject before, in which I have said that the "Popular"—that's our companion paper—is now the only journal featuring these sturdy chaps at Rookwood School. Just now, by the way, the "Pop" is delighting its readers with extra-long yarns of Jimmy Silver & Co.; dealing with their adventures out in the Wild and Woolly West. Interested Magnetites should make a note of this week's story, "Lovell, the Love-lorn!" and give an order for the "Popular" right away. It's a Tuesday paper, you know.

CANADIAN LONDON!

A Magnetite who has been lucky enough to accompany his father on a trip to Canada writes me a very fine letter describing his experiences and impressions of that country, and winds up with the news that whilst London—as we all know, of course—is a city on the Thames, in Ontario they are content

to name one of their suburbs after it. My correspondent felt rather wild about it, although, really, there's no reason to get waxy. I wonder if he knows, by the way, that the Canadian London has a Pall Mall, an Oxford Street, a Piccadilly, a Cheapside, etc.? I wonder if he knows that two of their bridges are named after ours, namely, Westminster and Blackfriars. I hope this information won't make him more waxy. It's rather a compliment to us, really, that our Dominion brothers should name their places after the famous landmarks of the Mother Country.

CHIMNEY-STACKS!

"It beats me," writes "Old Reader," of Hampshire, "why chimney-stacks don't fall down, for they're exposed to the full force of the elements." I, for one, am very glad that they don't "fall down"! But, seriously, though, a well-built chimney-stack has a very deep foundation, and it is possible for it to sway from three to four inches in a very high wind without any fear of its falling. If I may be facetious, I would urge "Old Reader" not to stand gazing at every chimney-stack he sees in order to test the truth of the above, or he may chance across a badly-built stack and—well, I leave the rest to his imagination.

NAUTICAL TERMS!

"A Reader" has just finished a sea story full of nautical terms which he did not understand. Here are some of them: "Avast," "poop," "abaft," "abeam," "scuppers," "port," "starboard," "fore and aft," "to weigh," "bowsprit." They mean respectively: Stop; the high deck at the stern; behind the ship; at right-angles to the keel; gutters at the side of the ship; the left side of the ship; the right side; the direction from stem to stern; to get up the anchor; the spar which projects beyond the bow.

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Next Monday's Programme:

"BOLSOVER'S BROTHER!"

By Frank Richards.

You'll enjoy this story of the Greyfriars chums, for it deals with the Bolsovers, as, of course, the title indicates, and these two characters have always made a great appeal. Don't miss this peach of a story, whatever you do!

"THE CURSE OF LHASA!"

I need not remind you fellows that you will be missing the treat of your lives if you miss a single instalment of this grand detective adventure serial. Next week's instalment is more thrilling than its predecessors.

"KIDNAPPED BY PIRATES!"

By Dicky Nugent.

And young Dicky Nugent's story of Jack Jolly & Co., the inimitable heroes of St. Sam's, is a "rib-tickler" of A1 quality. You'll enjoy it, take it from me. Order your MAGNET early, chums—saves disappointment! Cheerio!

s. d.! When two of the biggest snobs at Greyfriars suddenly evince an overwhelming desire to be friendly with Trotter, the school page, that cheery youth nearly collapses with astonishment. Little does he know at the time that it's money Skinner and Billy Bunter are after, for Trotter possesses hardly a bean. Yet money there is coming to Trotter, and Skinner and Bunter hope that they will each bag a share of it!

Taking Up Trotter!



A Rollicking New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the cheery chums at Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Where is Bunter?

“WHARTON!”
 “Yes, sir!”
 “Where is Bunter?”
 “Hem! I don't know, sir.”

Mr. Quelch frowned.

All the Remove were in their places, when Mr. Quelch came in to take his class, with the solitary exception of Billy Bunter.

William George Bunter, generally conspicuous by his circumference, was now conspicuous by his absence.

Mr. Quelch was himself a few minutes late for class. He had been delayed by the headmaster speaking to him in the corridor. Being the soul of punctuality, Mr. Quelch was annoyed. It had been impossible for him, of course, to get away before his chief had finished his remarks. Remarks from the Head, even on the subject of the weather, had to be listened to with attention and respect.

But Mr. Quelch was annoyed when he whisked into his Form-room. He was still more annoyed to find a member of his Form absent.

His unpunctuality was no excuse for Bunter's. Indeed, there was less than the shadow of an excuse for the Owl of the Remove, for had Bunter arrived two or three minutes later he would still have arrived before his Form master. He was more than two or three minutes late! Possibly somebody had stopped Bunter to speak to him in the passages, just as the Head had stopped Mr. Quelch. But a junior of the Lower Fourth could have told an importunate interlocutor to ring off. Mr. Quelch,

of course, could not have told the Head to ring off.

The Remove master frowned portentously.

Wharton, as head boy of the Lower Fourth, was asked where Bunter was. Wharton did not know.

Head boy of a Form had many duties that did not fall to the lot of common-or-garden members of the Form. But it really was not a head boy's duty to shepherd his Form-fellows into the Form-room when the bell rang. Mr. Quelch's frown, however, implied that the captain of the Remove was to blame somehow.

“Bunter is not here!” said Mr. Quelch. “Bunter is late! I will not allow unpunctuality in my Form. Unpunctuality is a very serious matter. Very serious indeed!”

If silence gives consent the Remove agreed with their Form master. Not a fellow made a sound.

Besides, unpunctuality really was a serious matter when the unpunctual fellow had to deal with a Form master like Mr. Quelch. The Remove master's expression hinted that it was likely to be extremely serious, in the present instance.

“Todd!”

Peter Todd almost jumped, as Mr. Quelch shot out his name like a bullet.

“Oh! Yes, sir!”

“You are Bunter's study-mate.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Do you know where he is?”

“No, sir.”

Mr. Quelch glanced at the Form-room clock. Five minutes, which ought to have been devoted to Roman history, had elapsed, unused and unimproved.

After that lesson the whole Remove would know less of the reign of Tiberius than they might have known!

“Scandalous!” ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

That loss of knowledge of the reign of Tiberius would not probably have worried the Removites very much. Indeed, had they missed the whole lesson they would have borne the loss with fortitude. The most inquisitive fellow in the Remove was not very curious to know what had happened in Rome in the reign of Tiberius.

But they were there to learn and Mr. Quelch was there to teach. So it was annoying, if not exactly scandalous, that when Mr. Quelch had arrived to teach, William George Bunter was not there to learn.

Absence is said to make the heart grow fonder. It did not have that effect on Mr. Quelch. He grabbed a cane from his desk.

“Does any boy present know where Bunter is to be found?” demanded Mr. Quelch, with a glinting glance over his class.

Information was forthcoming at once.

Whether the Removites were keen to put Mr. Quelch on the track of Billy Bunter, or whether they were eager to prolong the delay before the lesson began, was not clear. But they nearly all began to speak at once.

Bob Cherry had seen Bunter in the quad. Johnny Bull had seen him in the passage. Frank Nugent had seen him on the stairs. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had seen him, as he put

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it in his remarkable English, proceeding walkfully near the Sixth Form green. Russell had seen him going to his study. Vernon-Smith had seen him coming away from it. Tom Brown had seen him at the school shop. Skinner had seen him at the notice-board. Snoop had seen him reading a newspaper. Other fellows had seen him in different places at different times, and they all told Mr. Quelch so—and told him all at once. There was quite a chorus of information on the subject of the Owl of the Remove.

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Do not speak all at once!" "But I've seen him, sir——" "And I saw him, sir——" "I spoke to him, sir——" "And I, sir——"

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch. He strode to the door and tore it open and glared into the passage. No doubt he expected to see the rotund figure of William George Bunter rolling on its way to the Form-room. But, like Moses of old, Mr. Quelch looked this way and that and saw no man.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

A figure appeared round the corner of the passage. Mr. Quelch took a businesslike grip on his cane. But it was not Bunter; it was Trotter, the page, on his way to perform some of his many duties. Mr. Quelch called to him.

"Trotter!" "Yessir!" "Have you seen Master Bunter of my Form?" "No, sir." "Find him at once and send him to the Form-room." "Oh! Yessir."

Mr. Quelch whisked back into the Remove-room, much to the disappointment of the Removites. They had hoped that he would proceed in search of Bunter himself. Five minutes' loss of Roman history was good, but ten minutes would, of course, have been better. But there was no such luck for the Lower Fourth. The lesson began. Tiberius, who had not been popular in Rome, was still less popular in the Remove-room at Greyfriars. But, like the ancient Romans, the Removites had to make the best of him.

Meanwhile, Trotter was looking for Bunter in his own way. His way would not have commended itself to Mr. Quelch. Trotter retired to a window-seat in a deserted corridor and drew a crumpled periodical from under his waistcoat. For five minutes Trotter pursued with enhanced interest the thrilling career of Sweeney Todd, the demon barber. Then, with a sigh, Trotter returned his literature to its hiding-place under his waistcoat and ambled along to the Remove-room and looked in.

Mr. Quelch spun round as the Form-room door opened.

"You young rascal! How dare you—— Oh, it is you, Trotter!" Mr. Quelch had supposed that it was Bunter arriving at last.

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"Oh, sir!" ejaculated Trotter. "What did you say, sir?"

"I—I beg your pardon, Trotter! I—I supposed it was Bunter entering. Have you found Bunter?"

"I couldn't see him anywhere, sir," said Trotter truthfully. Trotter was a truthful lad. It was, indeed, impossible for him to have seen Bunter anywhere, as he had not looked.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard. "Very well! That will do, Trotter."

Trotter retired. Mr. Quelch laid down his book and picked up his cane. Bunter was more than ten minutes late for class now; and the matter was not merely serious—it was portentous.

"Wharton!" "Yes, sir!" "I shall trust you to keep order in this Form-room while I am absent for a few minutes."

"Certainly, sir." And Mr. Quelch, with a cane in his hand, and a look on his face that might have excited the envy of a gorgon, quitted the Remove-room to look for William George Bunter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bend Over, Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER was seated on an old oaken bench, under a shady elm in the quad. The sun was shining down on the old Greyfriars quadrangle, and the grey old buildings. Birds were singing cheerily. Fleecy clouds dotted a wide expanse of blue sky. It was very pleasant in the old quad; and any Greyfriars fellow would have agreed that it was more grateful and comforting to sit there under a shady elm than to turn up in a Form-room for classes.

Opinion on that point would have been practically unanimous all through Greyfriars. Nevertheless, the fellows had turned up for classes in the Form-rooms, with the exception of Bunter. Only Bunter had assumed the privilege of being a law unto himself that pleasant June morning.

Bunter was thinking. This was quite an unaccustomed proceeding on Bunter's part; and perhaps accounted for the fact that he had forgotten classes. Third lesson had vanished from the memory of W. G. Bunter.

He had forgotten the Form-room, and forgotten the Form master. He was thinking, with a wrinkle in his podgy brow, and a glimmer in the little round eyes behind his big spectacles.

A "Daily Mail" was open on his fat knees. Bunter, apparently, had been reading the newspaper. That was not surprising, in itself. Bunter was not a reading man; but he preferred a newspaper to a school book any day, if he did read. The information contained therein was perhaps less reliable, but it was a good deal more exciting. Still, it was surprising that anything in the newspaper should have interested Bunter to such

a degree as to make him forget classes.

It couldn't have been the cricket news. Bunter was not keen on games, and he did not know or want to know how the counties were getting on. It was not the City page. Bunter's father was a stockbroker; but William George never troubled to look in the paper to see how the Hanky-Panky Tin Mines or the Diddlem Trust were progressing. It was, indeed, quite a puzzle, that any item in the daily paper could have caused Billy Bunter to forget time and space in this remarkable manner.

But it had happened. Five or six times Bunter had read through a certain paragraph; and in the intervals between each reading he reflected with a wrinkled brow. Something in the daily paper had given him "furiously to think," as the French say.

So engrossed was the Owl of the Remove between the mysterious paragraph and his reflections thereon, that he did not even look up when a scholarly figure appeared quite near at hand, and two glinting gimlet eyes were fixed upon him.

Mr. Quelch had spotted his missing pupil at last.

With long strides and whisking gown, the Remove master came across to Bunter, a baleful light in his eyes. His grip on the cane was hard and business-like.

"Must be the same!" Bunter was muttering aloud as his Form master came up. "It's a common name, but must be the same! Stands to reason! Something to his advantage! That means a fortune! A million pounds, perhaps! My eye! Something to my advantage, too! He, he, he!"

Bunter chuckled a fat chuckle. "The surname's common enough; but Theophilus! Can't be a lot of Theophiluses! I'll jolly soon find out if his front name's Theophilus! Only got to ask him——"

"Bunter!" The fat junior jumped. Mr. Quelch heard the Owl's muttered words as he came up, but they were Greek to him. In fact, they were worse than Greek; for Mr. Quelch was quite at home with the tongue of Sophocles and Euripides, while Bunter's remarks were quite incomprehensible to him.

He was not interested in Bunter's remarkable remarks, however. He was interested in Bunter.

His sharp voice broke in upon the Owl's mysterious musings, and William George Bunter jumped up.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. In an instant Bunter crumpled the newspaper together, and jammed it under his jacket.

Apparently his object was to conceal it from view. But a daily newspaper, recently enlarged to twenty pages, was not concealed so easily as all that.

It bulged out enormously under Bunter's jacket, which was rather tight in any case, having a great deal of circumference to surround.

"Bunter!" "Oh, yes, sir!" Bunter blinked at



"Must be the same," muttered Billy Bunter, perusing the paragraph in the "Daily Mail" for the hundredth time. "Stands to reason! It means a fortune! A million pounds, perhaps! He-he-he!" "Bunter!" A stern voice smote upon the fat junior's ears, and he jumped. "Why are you not in the Form-room?" thundered Mr. Quelch. (See Chapter 2.)

Mr. Quelch. "I—I wasn't reading the 'Daily Mail,' sir."

"What?"

"I—I wasn't looking at an advertisement, sir."

"You utterly stupid boy! How dare you tell me such untruths?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bunter.

"There is no harm in your reading the paper, Bunter. But there is very great harm in your perusing it in lesson-time. Are you aware, Bunter, that you should have been in your Form-room a quarter of an hour ago?" demanded Mr. Quelch, in a formidable voice.

"Oh, lor'!"

"Do not utter ridiculous ejaculations, Bunter! How dare you remain here reading a newspaper instead of attending class?"

"I—I forgot—"

"You forgot!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. He seemed petrified. "You forgot classes, Bunter!"

The statement seemed amazing to Mr. Quelch. It almost indicated that Bunter must be out of his mind. Bunter was at Greyfriars to attend classes. Greyfriars, indeed, existed for classes to be attended there. How could any fellow forget what was, from a Form-master's point of

view, the beginning and the end of all things? Yet Bunter had forgotten class, just as if he thought it was a thing that did not matter very much!

"Are you in your right senses, Bunter?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh dear! Yes, sir!"

"You dare to say that you forgot class?"

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean to say I didn't forget, sir." Billy Bunter was willing to make any statement, or to withdraw any statement, to placate his Form-master. Like the witness in the old story, he was prepared to swear, in a general way, anything. Bunter was an accommodating fellow in such matters.

"You did not forget?"

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Then you have deliberately stayed out of class?"

"Oh dear! No, sir! Nothing of the sort!"

"What do you mean, Bunter?"

"I—I—I mean—" gasped the hapless Owl.

"Well," thundered Mr. Quelch, "what do you mean?"

"I—I—I mean I—I don't want to be licked, sir!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch stared at him blankly. Bunter's answer, for once, was quite truthful. More than once Billy Bunter had been punished for untruthfulness. But now that he gave an absolutely truthful answer, his Form-master did not seem to be pleased.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I—I believe you are the most utterly obtuse boy in the school. Bunter. I shall not waste further words upon you. Bend over that bench!"

"Ow!"

"Do you hear me, Bunter?" roared Mr. Quelch.

Certainly Bunter heard Mr. Quelch; he could almost have been heard at Friardale.

But Bunter did not seem in a hurry to obey. He blinked dismally at his enraged Form master.

"I—I say, sir, I—"

"Bend over that bench!"

"Oh, lor'!"

Billy Bunter bent over the bench at last. He bent over it in trepidation, in dire apprehension of what was to come.

His apprehensions were well founded.

Mr. Quelch's cane swept up and

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swept down. It landed on Bunter's tight trousers with a resounding whack.

"Yarooook!"

Whack! Whack!

"Yooooop!" roared Bunter.

"Whooooop!"

"Silence!" thundered the Remove master.

"Yaroooooooooooooooop!"

"If you repeat that absurd noise, Bunter, I shall cane you again!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Follow me!"

"Ow! Wow-wow!" moaned Bunter.

He made a manful effort to suppress the absurd noises as he rolled dismally after Mr. Quelch to the House.

Mr. Quelch whisked into the porch, with Bunter trailing dolorously after him. He whisked into the Form-room, and a buzz of voices died away with startling suddenness. Billy Bunter rolled in after him.

"Bunter!"

"Ow! Wow! I mean yes, sir."

"Drop that newspaper into the waste-paper basket!"

"I—I want it, sir—"

"What?"

"Oh, dear! I mean, may I cut out the advertisement first, sir?" gasped Bunter.

The Remove fellows stared at Bunter. Apparently it was interest in some advertisement that had kept him late for classes. Had a bag of tarts or a packet of toffee kept him late, it would not have been surprising. But it was very surprising that he should have stayed out on account of an advertisement in a daily newspaper, and still more surprising that he should venture to argue with Mr. Quelch, in that gentleman's present mood. That was a proceeding compared with which twisting a tiger's tail was a mild form of amusement.

Mr. Quelch did not answer Bunter. It appeared to him a time for actions, not words. He gripped the back of Bunter's collar and brought the cane into play again.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Ow! Wow! Yarooop! Help!" roared Bunter.

"Now drop that newspaper into the waste-paper basket, Bunter."

"Ow! Wow! Ow!"

Twenty pages of reading-matter plumped into the waste-paper basket. Bunter did not argue the matter further. Even Bunter's obtuse brain realised that it was not a time for argument.

"Now go to your place, Bunter!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"If you make another sound I shall cane you!"

Billy Bunter limped to his place. He tried hard to suppress the sounds of woc. But as he sat down on the form he jumped up again as if the old oak was red-hot, and gave a squeak of anguish.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes glittered at him.

"Bunter! I—"

"Oh dear! Yes, sir! Mum-mum—may I stand up for the lesson, sir?" spluttered Bunter.

Mr. Quelch stared at him for a

moment, and then his grim face relaxed into something remotely resembling a smile.

"You may stand, Bunter."

And Bunter stood, and was still standing when third lesson terminated.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Mystery of the "Daily Mail"!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. eyed William George Bunter rather curiously once or twice during third lesson.

Billy Bunter was, as a rule, one of the least important members of the Form, and his proceedings, though of great interest to himself, hardly ever interested anyone else.

But on this occasion Bunter had excited a little curiosity.

Had the Bunder cut class, to sit in the quad. reading a newspaper, no one would have been surprised—that would have been quite in keeping with Herbert Vernon-Smith's manners and customs. But Billy Bunter was not the fellow to rouse his Form master's wrath if he could help it.

Apparently Bunter had been so deeply engrossed in something he had discovered in the newspaper that he had forgotten class. That was really extraordinary. Many of the Remove fellows wondered what on earth could have been in the "Daily Mail" that morning which was of such entrancing interest. A good many glances turned on the waste-paper basket, where Bunter's newspaper reposed. Quite a number of the Lower Fourth were curious to look at it.

When the lesson ended, and the Remove left their places, Billy Bunter stopped at the waste-paper basket. He blinked uneasily at the Form master. A gimlet eye was upon him.

"Please, sir, may I take my newspaper?" squeaked Bunter.

"You may not!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Silence!"

Bunter rolled out of the Form-room. In the corridor he expressed his feelings by a discontented grunt. Some of the Removites gathered round him. For once, Bunter was an object of interest.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, old fat man!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, giving Bunter a cheery slap on the shoulder. "What's the jolly old news this time?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"My hat! What's the matter now?"

Bunter backed away and rubbed his shoulder.

"You ass! You've busted my collar-bone."

"But what's the news? Never mind your collar-bone!"

"Yah!"

"What is it, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Nothing!"

"You stayed out of class reading the 'Daily Mail,'" said Nugent.

"Oh, no! I haven't seen the 'Daily Mail' this morning."

"What!" roared Bob Cherry. "It was a 'Daily Mail' you had in your paw when Quelch marched you in, and you dropped it in the waste-paper basket. It's there now! You said you wanted to cut out an advertisement."

"I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean, you fat image?" asked Peter Todd. "Is there some special advertisement of jam-tarts at sale prices?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I was reading the—the cricket news," stammered Bunter. "I—I wanted to see how Middlesex was getting on. That was how I came to forget class."

"You told Quelch you wanted an advertisement—"

"Only pulling his leg, old chap. I was really looking out the cricket. You see, Surrey being my county, I wanted to see how Surrey had got on."

"Nobody expects Bunter to tell the truth," remarked Bob Cherry, "but why is he lying now? Does he do it for fun?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I suppose fibs come easier to him he's so used to them," remarked Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Why can't you tell us what was in the paper?" demanded Skinner.

"There was nothing in it," said Bunter—"nothing special. I happened to be looking at the news from China, you know, and forgot class—"

"Is China your county?" asked Peter Todd sarcastically.

"Yes—I mean no, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we can easily get another 'Daily Mail,'" said Skinner. "There are six or seven delivered at the school every morning. Bunter must have got hold of one of the masters' papers. We can do the same."

Bunter looked alarmed.

"Look here, Skinner, you jolly well leave the 'Daily Mail' alone!" he exclaimed. "It's my wheeze, not yours! I saw it first!"

"You saw what?" exclaimed two or three of the Removites.

"Oh, nothing!"

"Well, I'm going to see nothing, too," chuckled Skinner. "Capper takes the 'Daily Mail,' and I can get hold of it when he's finished with it."

Bunter grinned.

"You jolly well can't!" he said. "It was Mr. Capper's paper I had. He left it on the bench under the elms."

"Hacker takes it, too," said Snoop. "We can ask Mr. Hacker if he's done with his."

"I say, you fellows, you play the game!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "You've no right to butt into this."

"Into what?" yelled Bob.

"Nothing."

"What on earth was there in the paper this morning?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, quite puzzled.

"Nothing, old chap. Nothing at all," said Bunter. "Only the cricket news from China—I mean, the report



Tap! Trotter gave a startled jump, and the book he had been reading disappeared under his waistcoat in a twinkling. He stared round in alarm. "Yes, mum!" he said mechanically. Bunter grinned. "It's all right, Trotter, it's only me!" he said, reassuringly and ungrammatically. (See Chapter 4.)

of the civil war in Surrey—that is to say, the—the—the—"

"I'm going to ask Mr. Hacker for his paper," said Skinner, and he walked away with Snoop.

"Look here, you rotters—"

"Well, this beats Banagher!" remarked Micky Desmond. "I'm jolly well going to see that advertisement, too, whatever it was."

"It wasn't an advertisement," gasped Bunter. "It—it—it was the political news I was reading when Quelchy dropped on me. There's a speech by Ramsay MacBaldwin—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I—I mean by Sir Winston Chamberlain—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you think there was an advertisement about anybody we know at Greyfriars, you're barking up the wrong tree," gasped Bunter. "There was nothing of the kind. You can take my word, I suppose."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "An advertisement about somebody we know at Greyfriars! This is getting really interesting."

"The interestfulness is terrific."

"Who was it, Bunter?"

"Nobody!" said the Owl of the Remove. "The actual fact is—"

"Let's hear the actual fact," chuckled Peter Todd, as Bunter paused, apparently for the purpose of making up the actual fact. "Go it!"

"The—the actual fact is, there's an advertisement of—of furniture, on the Grage system," explained Bunter.

"I—I was reading it up, because I was thinking of getting a new armchair for the study. That was the advertisement I wanted. You pay five pounds down, and a pound a month, you know, and they send you the little grey books—I—I mean, they send you the armchair—"

"And it's the richest in cream?" asked Bob Cherry. "And it gives you that Crushem feeling?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you tell us what was in the paper, Bunter, you fat idiot?" asked Squiff.

"I've told you, you silly ass. I was thinking of getting a new carpet for the study, on the Beecham's Pills system—I mean—"

"Bump him!" said Harry Wharton.

"We might be able to bump the truth out of him."

"Good egg!"

"Beasts!"

Billy Bunter ran for his life.

He left the Remove fellows in puzzled discussion. They were really interested now. From Bunter's remarkable entanglement of fibs, they had learned that there had been an advertisement in the "Daily Mail" that morning, and that it referred to someone they knew at Greyfriars. How and why anybody at Greyfriars School should be mentioned in an advertisement in the "Daily Mail" was a deep mystery to the juniors, and naturally they were keen to learn more.

But there was nothing to be learned from Billy Bunter. Bunter was prepared to pile fib on fib, whopper on whopper, like Pelion piled on Ossa. But he was not prepared to give information if he could help it. Whatever the mysterious secret was, Billy Bunter intended to keep it to himself.

The Lower Fourth fellows at Greyfriars seldom, or never, looked at newspapers. If they ever looked, it was only at the pages that gave cricket news. But on this especial morning there was quite a keen desire on the part of the Lower Fourth to get hold of the "Daily Mail." Several copies of that journal were delivered at Greyfriars every morning. One, which had belonged first to Mr. Capper, and then to Billy Bunter, had been confiscated by the master of the Remove. But there were others—and quite a crowd of the juniors proceeded in search of those others, deeply interested in the mystery of the "Daily Mail."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Strange Proceedings of William George Bunter!

"BUNTER!"
"Oh!"
"Where are you going?" demanded Wingate of the Sixth.

"Hem!"

"You young rascal!"

Billy Bunter was about to descend the staircase which led to the regions below, where Mrs. Kebble, the House-dame, reigned over her staff. Those regions were, of course, barred to the Greyfriars fellows. No junior or senior was supposed to take any interest in the kitchen, the pantry, or the larder. Billy Bunter was probably the only fellow who was keenly interested in those departments of the Greyfriars establishment. If a pie happened to be missing, it did not need a Sherlock Holmes to trace it to Study No. 7 in the Remove.

So when Wingate of the Sixth spotted Bunter about to descend the servants' staircase, he called to him at once. Wingate had his ashplant under his arm, and he slipped it down into his hand, ready for use.

"So you are after the pantry again, you young cormorant?" he asked.

"Oh, no! Not at all, Wingate!" gasped Bunter.

"Then where were you going?"

"I wasn't going to the pantry, really, Wingate," said Bunter. "I—I—I never thought of it, really."

"You were caned the other day for sneaking a pudding."

"I never did it, Wingate. I never knew there was a pudding," said Bunter. "I hope I'm not the fellow to touch a pudding that doesn't belong to me. I never took it to my study. You can ask Toddy—he's my study-mate, you know. He was there at the time."

"At the time you had the pudding?"

"Nunno! At—at the time I didn't have it, I mean."

"Bend over!" said Wingate.

"But—but I really wasn't going to the pantry this time," wailed Bunter. "Word of honour."

"Then what were you going down for?"

"Only to—to—to speak to Trotter."

"Trotter?" repeated Wingate. "You're not allowed to go down to the boot-room, and you know it."

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"But—but—but Trotter's an awfully decent chap, Wingate," urged Bunter. "I'm no snob, you know. I don't look down on him because he's a boot-boy. I—I—I like him."

Wingate stared at William George Bunter. If William George Bunter was anything, he was a snob of the first water and given to making the very most of accidental advantages. Bunter never came into contact with a servant without giving that servant a powerful desire to kick him. Indeed, it was only a due regard for the value of his place that had prevented Trotter from kicking Bunter many a time and oft, and for the same reason, the housemaids did not box his fat ears.

"Well," said Wingate, quite astonished, "and what did you want to say to Trotter?"

"I—I wanted to ask him——"

"For a pudding?"

"No!" gasped Bunter. "I—I just wanted to ask him his name."

"What!" roared Wingate.

"I—I mean, his Christian name," stuttered Bunter.

"You were going down to ask Trotter his Christian name?" asked Wingate, almost dazedly.

"That's it," said Bunter. "Only that, Wingate. I just wanted to know if his name was Theophilus, that's all."

"You—you—you wanted to ask Trotter if his name was Theophilus!" ejaculated the prefect, like a fellow in a dream.

"Yes. No harm in that, Wingate."

"And you expect me to believe a yarn like that?" inquired the captain of Greyfriars, in wonder.

"Ye-es."

"Then you'll be disappointed. Mrs. Kebble has complained a lot of times about your raiding the pantry, Bunter. Bend over!"

"But, I—I say——"

"Bend over!" snapped Wingate.

"Oh dear!"

Whack!

"Whooooop!"

"Now cut off," said Wingate, tucking the ashplant under his arm. "And if I catch you hanging about the servants' staircase again, I'll give you six!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter cut off dismally. He rolled out of the House, wriggling as he rolled. Wingate had not whacked very hard, but Bunter had had some that morning already. Unlike lightning, the cane always struck in the same place. Bunter was feeling hurt.

And, amazing to relate, Bunter had for once been telling the truth. He had not been going down to the pantry. He had been on his way to the boot-room. Extraordinary as his explanation had sounded to Wingate's ears, it was actually true. Bunter had been going to ask Trotter whether his front name was Theophilus. Bunter had his reasons, though certainly Wingate or any other Greyfriars man was not likely to guess them.

Bunter stood in dismal thought in the quad for some time. He was not,

as might have been supposed, thinking of the space of time that still separated him from dinner. Generally, after one meal, Bunter's thoughts dwelt with anticipation upon the next. But the matter on Billy Bunter's mind at the present time banished even the thought of dinner.

He rolled away at last and circumnavigated the school buildings, blinking cautiously about him as he went. So exceedingly cautious was his manner that it drew at least a dozen glances on him as he went. Fortunately, however, no one was sufficiently interested in Bunter to do more than glance at him.

Bunter stopped at a little window which looked out on the kitchen garden. There was not much sunshine at that window, but it was open to let in what sunshine there was. Bunter approached close, drew himself with gasping efforts up on the sill, and blinked into the boot-room.

Trotter was there.

The knife-machine was in the boot-room, and Trotter was busy at the knife-machine. He was not, however, cleaning knives. He was busy with a periodical which gave a thrilling account of a ferocious barber of olden time who "polished off" his customers in a most unpleasant way. Trotter was much more interested in the Demon Barber than in the knife-machine.

Tap!

Trotter gave a startled jump, and the Demon Barber disappeared under his waistcoat in a twinkling. He stared round in alarm.

"Yes, mum?" he said mechanically.

Bunted grinned.

"It's all right, Trotter. It's only me," said the Owl of the Remove reassuringly and ungrammatically.

Trotter stared at the window. He had been startled, and he did not seem pleased to see Bunter. He glared at him.

"Spying on a bloke!" he said aggressively.

"Oh, really, Trotter——"

"You ain't allowed 'ere," said Trotter. "You know you ain't allowed to come nosing into the boot-room. You clear off!"

"The fact is, Trotter——"

"You clear off!" repeated Trotter. "S'pose Mrs. Kebble steps in and finds me talking with one of the young gentlemen. She'll say it was my fault. You get away from that winder, Master Bunter."

"I've looked in as a friend, old chap," said Bunter.

"What?"

"As a pal," said Bunter.

Trotter almost fell down.

If there was one fellow at Greyfriars who made himself unpleasant to the servants, and especially to Trotter, that fellow was Bunter. Bunter was convinced that he made his own superiority clear by turning up his fat little nose at fellows less fortunately placed. Bunter really liked to make Trotter feel that he was only a menial, scarcely worthy to walk on the same earth with William George Bunter. So his statement that he had looked in as a

friend and a pal was really astounding. It was not surprising that Trotter supposed that the Owl of the Remove was pulling his leg.

"I mean it," said Bunter, blinking it at the window at Trotter's astonished face. "I like you, old chap!"

"My eye!" said Trotter.

"I'm no snob," said Bunter brightly. "I don't despise you because you're a low blighter, Trotter."

"Ho!" said Trotter.

"Of course, you naturally wouldn't expect a fellow in my position to touch you with a barge-pole, would you, Trotter?" pursued the Owl of the Remove amicably. "But I'm going to take you up."

Trotter only stared.

"Have you seen the 'Daily Mail' this morning, Trotter?"

"No, I ain't," said Trotter surlily. "The likes of me ain't got time for reading noospapers."

"You've got time for reading Sweeney Todd," chuckled Bunter.

Trotter gave him a glare.

"Spying on a bloke at a winder!" he sneered.

"Don't be huffy, old fellow," said Bunter. "I say, I wanted to ask you something. Is your name Theophilus?"

Trotter breathed hard.

As a matter of fact, Trotter's name was Theophilus, and he found that imposing name a handicap. Fellow-servants chipped him about it. Mrs. Kebble thought it was rather presuming for a boot-boy to be named Theophilus. Trotter would have preferred to be named Tom or Jack or Dick. But his parents had bestowed upon him the name of Theophilus, and there it was. Trotter had to stand it. But he did not like it, and he was sore at being frequently chaffed about it. Chaff from his fellow-servants was bad enough, but chaff from the schoolboys on the same subject was altogether too thick in Trotter's opinion. And he had not the slightest doubt that Billy Bunter had found out, somehow, that his name was Theophilus and had come to the boot-room window to chip him.

"Is it?" repeated Bunter eagerly.

"What business is that of yours?" demanded Trotter hotly. "Can't a bloke be named Theophilus without you butting in?"

"Then your name is Theophilus?" exclaimed Bunter.

"Yes, it is. And well you know it, or you wouldn't be 'ere chipping a bloke about it," said Trotter. "You ain't got any right at that winder, Master Bunter, and if you're in the way when I shoves a mop out, that's your trouble, not mine."

Trotter grasped a mop that stood in the corner.

"I—I say, Trotter, old bean," gasped Bunter, "I— Oh! Ow! Yaroooh!"

Trotter shoved the mop through the window.

There was room to push it out without touching Bunter, had Trotter so desired. But he did not so desire.

The mop, which was wet and not clean, landed fairly on Billy Bunter's

fat little nose, and he yelled and gurgled horribly.

Trotter grinned and shoved,

Bump!

Bunter rolled off the window-sill and landed on the earth below. His yell rang far and wide.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Trotter.

"Yaroooh! Ooooooh! Oh! Ow! You low beast!" roared Bunter, scrambling to his feet. "You—you hooligan! I'll report this!"

"Report away and be blown to you!" snorted Trotter. "You leave a bloke alone to do his work!"

"Groogh! I—I mean, I won't report you, old chap—"

Slam!

Trotter closed the window hard and returned to the knife-machine. Billy Bunter dabbed his fat face with his pocket-handkerchief and sniffed and sneezed and snorted. Finally he rolled away.

For reasons—mysterious reasons—of his own, William George Bunter desired to cultivate the friendship of Theophilus Trotter, page and boot boy. But obviously the present time was not an auspicious one for the cultivation of friendship. Billy Bunter rolled away to get a wash, which he needed badly.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Still a Mystery!

"I F you please, sir—" Skinner's manner was very respectful as he addressed Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell. Three or four juniors were with Skinner, and they all looked as respectful and deferential as they could. But Mr. Hacker, master of the Shell, was rather a short-tempered gentleman. He cut the polite and respectful Skinner short at once.

"Well, what is it?"

"If you please, sir, if you've done with your 'Daily Mail,' sir—"

"What, what?" snapped Mr. Hacker.

"There's an advertisement of—of cricket bats, sir, I'd like to see in the paper, if you'd be so kind as to lend it to me," said Skinner.

"Oh! Certainly I have done with my morning paper, Skinner, and I should be pleased to let you have it," said Mr. Hacker more graciously.

"Thank you, sir."

"Only I have already lent it to Mr. Prout."

"Oh!"

"Possibly Mr. Prout will let you have it when he is finished," said the master of the Shell, and he went into his study, leaving Skinner & Co. in the corridor, looking rather blank.

"Let's try Prouty," said Snoop.

"Come on!" said Skinner.

Mr. Prout, the

master of the Fifth Form, was discovered in Masters' Common-room. Mr. Prout himself had the "Times" delivered to him at Greyfriars every morning. The "Times" was a newspaper more in keeping with the portly Mr. Prout's ponderous style. Still, he never failed to borrow the "Daily Mail" from Mr. Capper or Mr. Hacker. He preferred the "Times" to leave on his study table or in the Common-room, and the "Mail" for purposes of perusal. Still, as he was in Masters' Room now, Skinner hoped that he had finished with the "Mail." When Mr. Prout took a newspaper into the Common-room with him, it was the "Times."

The Fifth Form master's ponderous voice was heard as the Removites looked in at the door. He was laying down the law to Mr. Wiggins, of the Third, and M. Charpentier, the French master. Mr. Prout always was laying down the law to somebody.

He glanced round irritably as Skinner & Co. appeared in the doorway.

"What do you Lower boys want here?" snapped Mr. Prout.

"If you please, sir—" began Skinner.

"Is it a message?"

"No, sir; but—"

"Then go away at once!"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"I disapprove of Lower boys hanging about the passages," said Mr. Prout. "I have told Mr. Quelch so. I shall mention it to him again. Kindly retire this moment, Skinner."

"If you've done, sir—"

"What!" hooted Mr. Prout.

"I mean, if you've done with the 'Daily Mail,' sir—"

"Has Mr. Hacker sent you to ask me for his newspaper?"

"No, sir. I—"

"Then go!" boomed Mr. Prout. "Bless my soul! The pertinacity and impertinence of these Lower boys are amazing. I shall certainly report this to Mr. Quelch."

Skinner & Co. retired, still newspaperless. Out of sight of Mr. Prout, Harold Skinner shook his fist at the door of Masters' Common-room.

"Fat old frump!" he ejaculated.

"Blessed old image!" agreed Snoop.

(Continued on the next page.)



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"I say, Gosling takes the 'Daily Mail,'" suggested Stott. "Let's go and draw Gosling."

"Let's!" agreed Skinner.

Skinner & Co. left the House, and proceeded to Gosling's lodge. They found William Gosling, the ancient porter of Greyfriars School, sunning himself at his little window. Gosling eyed them with disfavour. Gosling regarded all boys with disfavour, his opinion being that most of them ought to have been "drowned;" as he called it, at birth. And he regarded Skinner & Co. with more disfavour than any other members of the Lower School.

"Good-morning, Gosling!" said Skinner agreeably.

Grunt, from Gosling.

"Did you get your 'Daily Mail' this morning, Gosling?"

Grunt!

"I'd like to see the 'Daily Mail' to-day, Gosling," said Skinner. "There's an advertisement of cricket bats I want to see."

"I dessay the noosagent hasn't sold out," said Gosling.

"Can't cut down to Friardale before tiffin," said Skinner. "Let a chap see your paper, Gosling."

Grunt!

"Look here, I'll give you the penny for it," said Skinner.

Grunt!

"I'll make it twopence."

Gosling eyed Skinner. As he had finished his morning paper—and, indeed, used part of it to make spills for his pipe, he had no objection to parting with it—or what was left of it—at a hundred per cent profit. But he did not intend to take the trouble of shifting out of his comfortable chair for nothing. He held a horny hand from the open window.

Reluctantly, Skinner placed two pennies in it. Skinner disliked parting with money, even coppers. He inwardly resolved to take it out of Bunter's fat carcass if there proved to be nothing of interest in the paper, after all.

Gosling rose, picked up his "Daily Mail," and handed it out to Skinner.

"I say, there's a leaf gone!" exclaimed Skinner.

"That's all right," said Gosling. "The advertisement of cricket bats is on the second page—that's there all right."

Skinner grunted.

Snoop and Stott grinned. Skinner was not interested in Messrs. Gum-mage's advertisement of a cheap line in cricket bats.

"Well, I dare say it's here, anyhow," said Skinner, as he walked away with his friends. "Sit down here, and take a few leaves each, and go right through it, and we'll soon find out what it was Bunter saw."

"Right-ho!"

The three juniors sat in a row on an old bench under the elms, divided the paper into sections, and proceeded to search through the columns.

There were plenty of advertise-

ments, and they had plenty to do. But after a long and wearisome investigation, they had found nothing of interest. Yet it was obvious, from what Bunter had let out, that there was an advertisement in that morning's paper referring to some person resident at Greyfriars.

"Must be on the missing leaf!" growled Skinner. "What the merry thump can it have been?"

"There's Bunter—ask him!"

"Lot of good asking that lying worm!" growled Skinner. "Still, we may as well. Here, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter had washed the traces of Trotter's mop from his plump countenance, and he was rolling in the quad now, thinking of dinner. He blinked at Skinner & Co. through his big spectacles, and gave a start as he saw the "Daily Mail" in their hands.

"I say, you fellows, have you found it?" he ejaculated.

"Found what?" asked Stott.

"Oh, nothing," said Bunter hastily.

"We know it's on page three or four," said Skinner. Pages three and four constituted the missing leaf of Gosling's paper.

"Tain't!" exclaimed Bunter at once, in a great hurry. "No good you fellows looking in the 'Personal' column; it's not there."

Skinner chuckled.

"So it's in the 'Personal' column, is it?" he said.

"No, you ass! I've just told you it isn't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Besides, it was my find," said Bunter hotly. "I'm going to take him up and take him under my protection, and see that he gets his rights."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Who?"

Bunter blinked at them. Those amazed ejaculations proved that they had not, after all, seen the mysterious paragraph in the "Personal" column of the "Daily Mail."

The Owl of the Remove grinned.

"Oh, nothing!" he said, and he rolled away.

Skinner & Co. exchanged glances.

"It's something in the 'Personal' column," said Skinner. "That's on the missing page. That idiot Gosling was bound to lose the page we want. Look here, one of us can cut down to Friardale on a bike after dinner and get a 'Daily Mail.' It won't take us long to find out what's in the 'Personal' column when we see it. You can go, Snoopey."

"I've got to see a chap after tiffin."

"Well, you can go, Stott."

"I've got to mend a puncture."

Skinner scowled.

"Well, if I jolly well have to go I jolly well won't show you the blessed paper when I get it!" he snapped.

And as the dinner bell rang just then Skinner & Co. joined the rest of the Remove going in to tiffin. A good many of the Removites were

discussing Bunter and his mysterious proceedings; but Skinner noted that no one seemed to have found the clue to the mystery. Apparently no one had succeeded in getting hold of a "Daily Mail."

But there was no doubt that there was a very considerable interest in the matter among the Removites. According to Bunter, there had been an advertisement in the paper concerning some person resident at Greyfriars School, and everybody wanted to know who that person was and what it all meant, anyhow. Why Bunter should want to keep it secret was so mysterious that fellows could not help being interested. The fat junior evidently had a reason, but his reason was very difficult to guess.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and after dinner Harry Wharton & Co., at least, dismissed the matter from their minds. They were thinking of cricket. The Remove were playing the Shell that afternoon, and Bunter and all his works disappeared from the remembrance of the Famous Five. But Skinner, more curious than ever, wheeled out his bicycle and pedalled down to Friardale to the newsagent's—to make the interesting discovery there that the "Daily Mail" was sold out. And Skinner, with feelings that could hardly have been expressed in words, but obstinately determined not to be beaten, rode away to Courtfield town, still in quest of the "Daily Mail."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Important!

"PETER, old chap."

"No."

"Oh, really, Peter—"

"No!" repeated Peter Todd cheerfully.

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "You don't know yet what I was going to say!"

Peter Todd chuckled.

"It's never very difficult to guess, old fat bean. Your postal-order hasn't come yet and you want a little loan—anything from a bob to a quid, according to the fatheadedness of the lender. What?"

"The fact is—"

"Dear man, I know the fact in advance! Save your breath. Besides, I've got to get down to the cricket."

"I've got a friend coming to tea—"

"Oh, my hat! You've asked somebody to a feed?"

"Yes, old chap."

"And you want me to stand the feed?"

"I happen to be short of money," said Bunter, with dignity. "But I don't think that sordid details like that, Peter, ought to matter between friends."

"Not at all," agreed Peter Todd. "Between friends—we're friends, I suppose?"

"Certainly, old fellow."

"Then, between friends like us it's immaterial who squares for the spread."

"That's just it!" said Bunter



Trotter coloured uncomfortably as Skinner entered the study. "I'd better go now, sir," he said hurriedly. "No, don't go," said Bunter. "Skinner don't belong to this study. What the thump do you want, Skinner?" "Oh, just looked in," said Skinner airily. "How are you, Trotter, old chap?" The school page almost fell down at Skinner's friendly greeting. (See Chapter 10.)

eagerly. "Quite immaterial! That's the way to look at it, Peter."

"Right as rain!" assented Peter Todd. "Let it go at that! It will be rather a new departure in this study, but I'm sure I don't mind. You square for the feed."

"Eh?"

"And I'll do it justice, I promise you that!" said Peter solemnly. "Rely on me for that, Bunter."

The Owl of the Remove blinked at him.

"You—you don't seem to catch on, Peter. You see, I've been disappointed about a postal-order. I'm stony!"

"I see," agreed Peter. "It's immaterial who squares for the feed so long as you don't. Is that it?"

"Well, you see—"

"I see—quite! Good-bye!"

"Don't hurry away when a fellow's talking to you, Toddy. You see, I'm in rather a fix. I've got a rather special guest coming."

"Let him come!" said Peter. "Let 'em all come! Is it a Remove man, by the way? If so, he will know that he will have to stand the feast himself—the whole Form knows your manners and customs by this time."

"It's not a Remove man," said Bunter.

"If you've asked a fellow out of another Form, old fat man, you want to be careful," said Peter, shaking his head. "He may cut up rusty when you try to stick him."

"It's not a fellow out of another Form."

Peter Todd, who was turning to the door with his bat under his arm, turned back in surprise.

"Not a fellow out of another Form! You've got a visitor from outside the school?"

"No!" said Bunter.

"Then what the thump do you mean? I suppose you haven't got a master coming to tea in this study?"

"Catch me wasting good tuck on a master!" said Billy Bunter disdainfully. "Not quite such a mug as that!"

"Blessed if I can make you out!" said Peter Todd, quite puzzled. "It isn't a Greyfriars man or a Greyfriars master or a stranger from afar. Who the merry dickens is it, then?"

"Trotter."

Peter Todd jumped.

"Trotter! The page?"

"Yes."

"Wandering in your mind or trying

to pull my leg, you fat image?" asked Toddy. "You know jolly well you can't have Trotter to tea in a study even if you wanted him, which you certainly don't!"

"I hope you're not a snob, Peter," said Bunter loftily.

"I hope not," agreed Toddy. "But you are—horrid! You've always made yourself beastly unpleasant to Trotter because he can't tell you what he thinks of you. Only last week I kicked you for calling him a lout! You remember?"

"It's different now, since I saw that paragraph—I mean—" Bunter stammered.

"What paragraph?"

"Nothing! I—I wonder what made me say that?" stuttered Bunter. "Nothing of the kind. There was nothing about Trotter in the paper, Peter."

"I know there wasn't, you fat ass! They don't report the stunts of boot-boys in the Society Column, that I know of. What are you burbling about?"

"The fact is, Peter, I'm taking Trotter up."

"Oh, my hat!"

"He's in a lowly position," said

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Bunter. "Poor but honest and all that. Why should we despise him?"

"No reason at all, unless we're silly snobs that want kicking."

"Well, then, I'm taking him up. I'm going to take him under my protection. I'm going to see that he gets his rights."

"Doesn't he get them already?" asked Peter blankly. "Mean to say that the house-dame doesn't pay his wages?"

"Nunno! I mean——"

"Oh, you mean something, do you?" asked Peter.

"Yes, you ass. I—I mean—that is—in fact, I'm taking him up," said Bunter. "It will do him good to associate with a gentleman."

"I'm not teaing with him, if that's what you mean."

"I was speaking of myself."

"You generally are. But who's the gentleman you mentioned?"

"Me!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you beast——"

"So you're taking Trotter up and giving him a chance to associate with a gentleman. Better tell him so. He mayn't know he's associating with a gentleman unless you tell him. He may judge by appearances."

"You cheeky idiot!" roared Bunter. "I don't want any of your rotten jokes, Toddy! I want——"

"I know what you want," grinned Toddy. "You want some of my rotten pocket-money. You've spun me this idiotic yarn about having Trotter to tea——"

"Tain't a yarn!" howled Bunter angrily. "I'm really having him to tea. The only difficulty is that there isn't any tea, so far."

"Only!" chuckled Toddy. "I should call that a big difficulty myself. Perhaps he will be satisfied with gentlemanly associations, and won't want any tea."

"Look here, Toddy, lend me ten bob——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can make five do——"

"You really mean that you're going to chuck up your no-class snobbery, and treat that kid Trotter civilly?" asked Peter.

"Yes, old chap."

"Well, if you mean that, I'd lend you my last copper for such a purpose," said Peter Todd.

"That's right, Peter, old chap," said Bunter affectionately. "I knew I could rely on a real pal."

Peter Todd ran his hands through his pockets, Bunter watching him eagerly. Peter's hand came out with a coin in it.

"There you are, old fat bean," he said, tossing the coin to Bunter.

The fat junior caught it and stared at it.

"I—I say, Peter, that's a ha'penny!"

"Exactly."

"Do you think I can stand a feed with a ha'penny?" howled Bunter. "Look here, you said——"

"I said I'd lend you my last copper. That's my last copper. Good-bye!"

And Peter took up his bat again and left the study.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

Peter Todd chuckled as he went down the Remove passage to the stairs. He did not believe for a moment that Billy Bunter really intended to expend hard cash in entertaining a guest from below stairs; it seemed to him the lamest yarn Bunter had ever spun for the noble purpose of extracting a loan. Still, Bunter was welcome to expend Peter's last copper in any way he wished.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the slacker!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Peter joined the Remove cricketers on Little Side. "You're late, Toddy."

"The lateness is terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous Toddy," said the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Bunter's fault," said Peter. "I let the fat idiot keep me talking. I begin to think that he's getting loose in the crumpet."

"Get into the field," said Harry Wharton. "The Shell are batting first."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

Billy Bunter was following Peter to Little Side. Peter had left him far behind; but Bunter was coming on at a run, panting and gasping as he came. He waved a fat hand excitedly.

"I say, you fellows, hold on!" he panted.

"What the thump——"

"It's important!" gasped Bunter.

The Remove cricketers were about to go into the field, but they paused as Bunter charged up excitedly. Wharton supposed that it meant a message from the Head, or from a Form master at least. Nothing less than that could have excused a fellow for butting in when cricket was the order of the day.

"What is it, Bunter?" called out the captain of the Remove.

Bunter came up, spluttering for breath.

"Just a tick, before you begin!" he gasped. "It's important, you fellows—awfully important!"

"Well, what is it, fathead?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Cough it up!"

"I've got a friend coming to tea——"

"What?"

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

The cricketers glared at Bunter as if they could have eaten him.

"I—I want you to lend me——"

"My only hat! You've stopped us to tell us that!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yes, old fellow. You see, it's important. I—Ow-wow! Wharrer you at? Leggo! Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as the exasperated cricketers collared him.

Bump!

"Yooooop!"

Harry Wharton & Co. went into the field, leaving William George Bunter strewn in the grass, struggling frantically to get his second wind. And the match with the Shell proceeded, regardless of Billy Bunter and of his friend who was coming to tea.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Solves the Mystery!

"SOMETHING to his advantage!" Harold Skinner grinned.

At long last Skinner had succeeded in getting hold of a "Daily Mail." At the newsagent's in Courtfield he became the possessor of twenty large pages in exchange for the moderate sum of one penny. News by wire and wireless, by land, sea and air, was now at his disposal had he been interested in the same. He wasn't.

He sought out the "Personal" column, or portion of a column. He sat on a fence on Courtfield common and proceeded to investigate the mystery of the "Daily Mail." There were quite a number of "Personal" paragraphs. In the first one, "Shy Girl" was invited to reply to the last letter from "Best Boy"; in the second, Skinner learned that a furnished flat in the West End was at his disposal, if he wanted one; in the third, he was tempted by the offer of a player piano, cheap, for which no reasonable offer would be refused; in the fourth, he discovered that a home from home was required by a middle-aged French gentleman who desired to learn English. All these Skinner passed by like the idle wind, which he regarded not. It was the fifth paragraph that riveted his attention—a paragraph which contained the name of Trotter, and which was evidently the one that had so deeply intrigued the Owl of the Remove that morning. It ran:

"If Theophilus Trotter, nephew of the late Ebenezer Trotter, of the Fried Fisheries, Gravesend, will communicate with Messrs. Fozzle, Moozle & Woozle, solicitors, of Gravesend, he will hear of something to his advantage."

Skinner grinned at that paragraph. He had elucidated the mystery.

The person resident at Greyfriars who was mentioned in the "Daily Mail" that morning was Trotter, House page and boot boy.

"Something to his advantage!" chuckled Skinner. "Something to Bunter's advantage, too, if he can wangle it."

Evidently that was the right paragraph—that was the advertisement which had caused William George Bunter to forget third lesson, with painful results to himself.

Bunter was deeply interested in that something which was to Theophilus Trotter's advantage.

Harold Skinner ceased to chuckle and looked thoughtful.

It seemed to him that the matter was worthy of some attention.

It was easy for him to follow Bunter's train of thought. Often, when a firm of solicitors advertised for a person, with the statement that he would hear of something to his advantage—that time-honoured phrase—it meant that that lucky person had been left a fortune.

Obviously, that was what Bunter supposed.

It was quite possible, Skinner

reflected. The address of the late Ebenezer Trotter indicated that he had been in the fried-fish business. Large fortunes, perhaps, were not made in that line. Probably the late Ebenezer Trotter had not been a millionaire, but he might have left quite a handsome sum to his nephew Theophilus—a few thousands, perhaps—perhaps ten or twenty thousand. There must be something in it—something to Trotter's advantage, or Messrs. Fozzle & Co. would not be putting themselves to the expense of advertising for him. At the very least, the late Mr. Trotter must have left enough to cover the cost of the advertisements.

Suppose it was a large fortune; suppose Trotter was going to be rich! After all, profits were made in fried fish. Mr. Ebenezer Trotter might have accumulated quite a large sum in supplying the wants of those residents of Gravesend who preferred to take their sustenance in the form of fried fish and chips.

Skinner considered it.

Harold Skinner was accustomed to thinking a great deal about money. He never had as much of that useful article as he wanted. He was used to tolerating the airs and graces of the Bounder because Smithy was rich, and Skinner came in for the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Often and often Skinner would have liked to shy a dictionary at Smithy, in return for some contemptuous jeer from his study-mate, and always he had refrained because it was not his policy to quarrel with a wealthy fellow.

If that grubby little beast, Trotter, was going to be rich, was he likely to be of any use to a fellow who was not over-scrupulous, and who was willing to pull anybody's leg if any advantage was to be gained thereby? That was the only important point in the matter, from Skinner's view.

Trotter, obviously, had not seen this paragraph. If he looked at the daily paper at all, he was unlikely to read the "Personal" column. His taste in literature was rather more lurid, and ran in the direction of demon barbers.

No doubt if the advertisement was repeated several times, somebody would notice it, and point it out to Trotter. But that had not occurred so far, or something would have been heard about it. If a boot boy in a school came into a fortune, the school would be sure to hear of it. Skinner hadn't heard of it so far.

Skinner was not a particular fellow—a little more particular than Bunter, perhaps, but not very particular. He was a snob of the first water, and made it a point to despise anybody who was less fortunate in circumstances than himself. Trotter was a servant—dirt, so to speak, under the feet of Harold Skinner, who never revealed at Greyfriars the awful secret that one of his aunts had been a cook. But Skinner, as a practical man, was quite prepared to throw over snobbery or anything else, with an eye to the main chance.

The loan of a fiver—not to be repaid—would have helped Skinner through the term very much; and it did not matter if the fiver had a fish-like smell. Surely a low rotter who was taken up and patronised by a public school man, would be good for the loan of a fiver—would even consider it an honour to be allowed to lend a fiver to a public school man!

Evidently Bunter thought so, at least!

A fiver—a tenner—possibly more! Skinner began to see that there was something in this—something to his advantage!

Pulling Trotter's leg would not trouble Skinner, any more than buttering up the sardonic, contemptuous Bounder. If Smithy lent a fellow a quid, he threw it at a fellow like a bone to a dog. Skinner was willing to take the insolence along with the quid; but he did not like it. If Trotter was coming into something handsome, he would be good for more than a pound note, and would be civil about it, which Smithy never was. No doubt he would leave his job at Greyfriars School, when he came into his inheritance. Out in the wide world he would find many Bunters and Skinners to relieve him of his new wealth. But the man on the spot would have the first whack.

For a fellow of Trotter's class to have a lot of money, when a fellow like Skinner was short of it, was a sin and a shame. It was almost a fellow's duty to relieve him of some of it.

Though not over dutiful as a rule, Skinner was prepared to perform that duty, and take a lot of trouble about it.

He nodded at last, over the newspaper, having made up his mind that there was something in it. He shoved the "Daily Mail" into a recess in the ditch beside the common, and cycled away towards Greyfriars. Nobody else was to see that advertisement. Fellows like Snoop and Stott, if they saw it, would be quite capable of making up to Trotter, like that fat cad Bunter, for his money! Skinner did not mean to give them the chance.

Skinner strolled into the school in a cheerful mood. He had been rather worried of late by several little debts he had been unable to settle. It seemed to him probable that he would now be able to settle them shortly.

Snoop and Stott met him as he came in. They had been too lazy to seek the "Daily Mail" themselves, but they were curious to know what Skinner had found out.

"Got it?" asked Snoop.

"Eh? Got what?" asked Skinner.

"Didn't you go to Friardale for the paper?"

"They were sold out," said Skinner. "Nothing nearer than Courtfield."

"Didn't you bike down to Courtfield for it?" asked Stott. "You've been a jolly long time."

"My dear man, it wasn't worth the trouble," said Skinner airily. "You can do it if you like."

And Skinner walked on to the House.

Snoop and Stott looked at one another, and looked after Skinner, and looked at one another again.

"He's seen it," said Snoop.

"That's plain enough," agreed Stott.

"Why won't the cad tell us?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Look here, Stott, you cut off to Courtfield and get a paper."

"I was just going to suggest that to you—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Same to you, then."

Harold Skinner put up his bicycle, and walked into the House. On Little Side, the Form match between the Remove and the Shell was going strong; but Skinner did not think of giving it a look-in. More important matters than cricket occupied Skinner's mind. He was going to see Trotter—not a bad fellow in his way—he was going to let Trotter see that there was one Greyfriars man, at least, who was no snob—one Greyfriars man who did not allow himself to be prejudiced by petty social distinctions. With that benevolent object in view, Skinner gave his friends the go-by for the afternoon, and looked for Theophilus Trotter.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Spread in Bunter's Study!

THEOPHILUS TROTTER, just then, was in a state of great astonishment.

Trotter couldn't make it out.

Trotter was seated in the armchair in Study No. 7 in the Remove.

Billy Bunter was there with him, and Billy Bunter was all smiles.

It was against the rules of the House for any member of the staff to visit the studies, except when duty called. Billy Bunter, when he asked Trotter to tea, disregarded that trifling matter. So did Trotter. It was a half-holiday for the Greyfriars fellows, but it was not a half-holiday for Trotter. Theophilus was supposed to be busy in his own department. Instead of which, he was sitting in the armchair in Bunter's study, in a state of astonishment from which it seemed that he was never likely to recover.

He couldn't understand it.

From fellows like Harry Wharton & Co., and Lord Mauleverer, even from the Bounder, Trotter was accustomed to cheery civility and good nature, when he happened to come in contact with them. He was accustomed to nothing of the kind from William George Bunter.

Yet Bunter had asked him to tea, and was evidently pleased and gratified by his acceptance of the invitation.

It was perplexing.

Bunter's visit to the boot-room that morning had been misunderstood by Trotter. Trotter understood now that Bunter really had wanted to be friendly. Bunter had made it clear.

Certainly, when Bunter had asked him to a spread in his study, Trotter

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had supposed that the Owl of the Remove was pulling his leg. But Bunter had convinced him. He had come. He was booked for a row with Mrs. Kebble if she learned of it. But he was risking that. Even when he walked into the study with Bunter, Trotter had half believed that it was a rag of some sort. But he had to be convinced, when he found the study table spread with good things, all ready for the feast. There was quite a stack of good things, and Trotter wondered where Bunter had found the money. He was quite well aware of the fat junior's financial circumstances. How Bunter had done it he did not know; but Bunter had done it, for there was a feast of the gods in Study No. 7.

"Sit down, old chap," said Bunter. "I'll have it all ready in a jiffy."

And Trotter sat astonished in the armchair, while Bunter dished up hot buttered toast, and scones, and poached eggs.

All was ready, and Bunter blinked at him amicably.

"Come on, old fellow!"

Trotter took a seat at the table.

"Old fellow" from Bunter astonished him more and more. Only a few days ago Bunter had had occasion to address him, and had called him a lout. Peter Todd had taken the trouble to kick Bunter for it. Now, apparently, Trotter was no longer a lout; he was an old fellow.

"I—I say, I'm much obliged, Master Bunter!" stammered Trotter. "But suppose your friends come in?"

"That's all right."

"Master Todd mightn't like to find me 'ere—"

"This is my study," said Bunter. "I'd jolly soon shut Toddy up if he said anything."

"But Master Dutton—"

"He's gone out, but he doesn't matter anyway—a deaf chump! I suppose I can have my friends here if I like. You're a friend."

"Oh, Master Bunter!"

"Don't call me Master Bunter," said the Owl of the Remove genially. "I'm Billy to my friends."

"Oh, sir!" said Trotter.

"Call me Billy, and I'll call you Theophilus," said Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Trotter.

"Pile in, old chap!"

The old chap, in a dazed state mentally, piled in. It was a splendid feed, howsoever it had been come by, and there was no doubt that Trotter enjoyed it. He liked Study No. 7 better than the boot-room. At the same time, he was feeling uncomfortable. Trotter did not, as Bunter

supposed, feel an awful sense of inferiority in Bunter's presence. His own view was that, in his own place, he was as good as anybody else at Greyfriars, and a great deal more useful than most.

There was no need, so far as Trotter could see, for Latin to be translated; but opening doors and answering bells were necessary things. Trotter had often felt a compassionate sympathy for the Greyfriars fellows, who had to grind at the difficult acquisition of useless knowledge, and say, "Yes, sir," and "Please, sir," and "Oh, sir!" and "No, sir," to exacting Form masters. Not for wide worlds would Trotter have exchanged the knife-machine for Virgil in the Remove Form-room, or Sophocles with the Sixth.

But Trotter was well aware that self-respect required a fellow to keep in his own place and not to take favours. He really ought not to have been teasing with a Remove junior. Still, it was an agreeable change for once; though if Trotter had been offered a permanent place in the Greyfriars Remove, he would have laughed at the idea. Trotter hoped to be a butler some day; and the Remove master, extensive as his knowledge was, could never have taught him to buttle, as it were.

Quite unconscious of Trotter's ideas on the subject, Billy Bunter expanded with fat patronage.

He urged good things upon his guest, and Trotter required little urging.

The feast, large as it was, disappeared at quite a good rate under the combined attack of Bunter and Trotter.

"Like it, old chap?" asked Bunter, beaming.

"Yes, rather, Master Bunter."

"Call me Billy."

"I mean Billy."

"I hope we're going to be friends, old fellow," said Bunter, with his mouth full.

Trotter eyed him doubtfully.

"I don't see 'ow we can be, though you're very kind, sir," he answered.

"Mrs. Kebble wouldn't allow it."

"Blow Mrs. Kebble!"

Trotter grinned.

"I can't blow Mrs. Kebble," he said. "She'd give me the sack."

"That wouldn't hurt you," said Bunter. "You've got rich relations."

Trotter's eyes opened wide.

"Never heard of 'em, if I have," he said.

Bunter smiled.

"You might hear of them," he said. "You might come into a fortune."

"Not likely."

"Stranger things have happened," said Bunter. "Suppose you had a rich uncle who left you a fortune."

"That would be prime," said Trotter. "But it ain't likely to happen. I've got a lot of uncles, but they ain't rich."

"You've got an uncle at Gravesend, I think?" said Bunter carelessly.

Trotter stared.

"I had, years ago," he answered. "He was in the fried-fish line. I ain't

heard of him since I was a nipper. Don't remember him."

"He may have remembered you," smiled Bunter. "He may have made a fortune in fried fish, and left it to you."

"No fear," said Trotter.

Bunter blinked at him across the table. It was not time to tell Trotter yet. When Trotter came into his fortune, some of that fortune would be shared by the fellow who had been kind to him at the school, regardless of the difference of position. He was bound to be grateful to that kind and benevolent fellow. But Bunter realised that Trotter's gratitude had to be given time to grow. This friendship was of very recent date—very recent indeed. A few days, at least, were required, to cement it. For a few days, at the very least, Trotter must remain in the dark, till he had learned to prize the generous and disinterested friendship of William George Bunter. So Bunter did not "let on." Instead of talking about Trotter, he talked about himself. William George Bunter was a more interesting topic than Theophilus Trotter. It was a topic of which Bunter never tired, though it was frequently observed to have a fatiguing effect on others.

Trotter listened.

He heard much about Bunter Court, and the noble and titled relations of the Bunter family; and did not state what he thought upon the subject. It would not have been courteous to do so.

"You'll be coming to Bunter Court next hole, old chap," the Owl of the Remove told him. "You'll like that, what?"

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Trotter.

"No other Greyfriars man would be likely to ask you home for the holidays, what?" grinned Bunter.

"Not likely, sir."

"I'm no snob," said Bunter. "Nothing of that kind about me. I don't look down on you because you're a rank outsider, old chap."

"Oh!" said Trotter.

"Some fellows wouldn't touch you with a barge-pole. I'm not that sort."

"Ho!" said Trotter.

"The fact is, I'm going to improve you," said Bunter confidentially. "Do you worlds of good to associate with a gentleman."

"Ho!" repeated Trotter.

"You'll drop your low ways in time, you know, and very likely become quite decent," said Bunter encouragingly.

Trotter looked at him fixedly. He was debating in his own mind whether he would reach across the table and pull Bunter's fat little nose. But he realised that the fat junior was not intending to give offence. So far from that, Billy Bunter was making himself as agreeable as he knew how. So Trotter suppressed his feelings, and Bunter's fat little nose remained unpulled; and Bunter never knew what a narrow escape it had had.

"Pile in, old bean!" said Bunter hospitably.

And Trotter piled in again, with the philosophical reflection that the feed was good, if the company was not.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

"O H, here you are, Skinner!" Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, spoke quite civilly. When it pleased him, the Bounder could be civil, and apparently it pleased him now. He greeted Skinner quite cheerily as he met him near the doorway of the House, after Skinner's return from Courtfield.

"Yes, here I am," said Skinner, not very enthusiastically. He was not keen on the Bounder's company just then. He had other fish to fry.

Skinner had just learned from a Remove man that Trotter, the page, had been seen going up to the Remove passage with Bunter of the Remove. Skinner knew what that meant.

Bunter was already playing the little game that Skinner intended to play. Bunter was first in the field.

But Skinner depended on his own resourcefulness to get the prize away from Bunter. He was cleverer than Bunter, and a good deal more unscrupulous. At the very least, he would demand "halves."

Knowing what he did, it was in his power to open Trotter's eyes as to the true inwardness of Bunter's sudden friendship. Therefore, the Owl of the Remove was bound to make terms. Trotter was going to find that there was not one, but two Greyfriars men who were indifferent to social distinctions, and who valued a chap merely on his merits. Snoop and Stott had to be left out.

Trotter was not a very bright youth, and not a suspicious one. But he would be certain to suspect something, if he made a whole crowd of friends in the school at one fell swoop.

Harold Skinner was about to go up the staircase when Smithy came along and hailed him. He halted unwillingly. Smithy, of course, thought that his study-mate was at his beck and call, Skinner reflected bitterly.

The purse-proud outsider considered that Skinner was, as it were, hanging on a nail to be taken down whenever the Bounder wanted him, like a hat or a toasting-fork. With his new prospects in view, Skinner felt that he could afford to undeceive the arrogant Bounder on that point. He had no time to waste on the Bounder this afternoon, and it would be quite pleasant to let Smithy know it.

The Bounder was at a loose end. His breach with the rest of the Remove was not quite to his satisfaction. He was out of the Form games, and that hit the Bounder rather hard, though he gave no sign of it. He would have given a good deal for a place in the eleven that was playing the Shell that afternoon, though nothing would have induced him to tell Harry Wharton so. Smithy was accustomed to being

sought by Skinner on a half-holiday, and he would take Skinner up, or turn him down, as the spirit moved him.

On this particular afternoon Skinner had been otherwise occupied, and most of the other fellows were on the cricket ground, either playing or watching the play, and the Bounder did not care to join the onlookers on Little Side. He would not show any interest in a game from which he was excluded. So he was feeling rather stranded, and was quite pleased to see Skinner come in, and greeted him with unusual friendliness.

"Comin' for a stroll?" he asked. "Lots of time before tea."

"I think not," said Skinner carelessly.

"Might go as far as the Cross Keys."

"Shouldn't care for it."

"I'll lend you some tin, if you're stony," said the Bounder, with a curl of the lip.

Skinner's lip curled also.

"You fancy that a fellow is always after your money," he sneered.

"You generally are," said the Bounder coolly.

"Well, I'm not after it now," said Skinner. "Keep your money, and your company, too, if you can't speak like a decent chap."

The Bounder stared at him. This was quite a new line for Harold Skinner to take.

"What's bitin' you now?" asked Smithy carelessly. "After all, it's nearly tea-time. Come up to the study."

"I'm goin' somewhere else."

The Bounder laughed.

"I've got rather a spread," he remarked. "I had a hamper from home this morning. Lots of stuff in the study cupboard."

Even then Skinner did not "enthuse." Generally he was keenly interested in the hampers that came for the millionaire's son. But he was more interested now in the nephew and heir of Ebenezer Trotter, of the Fried Fisheries, Gravesend. He could afford to be standoffish.

"I shan't be teaing in the study," he answered, with studied carelessness.

"First time you've missed one of my hampers," remarked the Bounder cynically.

"Bother your hampers!"

"Look here, are you comin' to my spread, or shall I ask another chap?" snapped the Bounder impatiently.

"I'm not coming, at any rate."

"Something better on?" asked the Bounder, puzzled and angry.

"Yes, if you want to know. You're not the only pebble on the beach, though you fancy you are," said Skinner, and he lounged away up the staircase, leaving the Bounder frowning.

Herbert Vernon-Smith walked out into the quad with a knitted brow. It was really an unusual spread that was to take place in Study No. 4, and Skinner was well aware what a hamper from home meant to the Bounder. It was amazing that Skinner should turn down such a

chance, and it was annoying, too. Vernon-Smith handed out favours to his impecunious study-mate in rather a scornful manner, but he did not like them to be refused. Neither did he want to "tea" alone. He had intended to talk "geegees" over tea with Skinner, and it was quite mortifying to be let down in this way by the fellow he contemptuously patronised.

In the quad he came on Snoop and Stott loafing. They did not turn down his invitation when he asked them to tea. They jumped at it.

"Jolly glad to come, old chap," said Snoop.

"Yes, rather!" agreed Stott.

"Come on, then," said Vernon-Smith, and the three Removites went into the House and strolled up to the Remove passage.

Snoop and Stott looked quite anticipative as they entered Study No. 4 with the Bounder. Smithy's study was often a land flowing with milk and honey, especially when he had had a hamper from home. Snoop and Stott had assumed their pleasantest smiles.

Herbert Vernon-Smith threw himself into the armchair.

"Trot the stuff out," he said. "It's in the cupboard."

"Right-ho, old chap!"

Sidney James Snoop opened the door of the study cupboard. He looked in eagerly, and then a very peculiar expression came over his face.

He had expected to see the cupboard stacked with good things. Instead of which, almost bare shelves met his eye. There was a loaf. There was a chunk of cheese. There was a tin of sardines. There was nothing else.

Snoop turned away from the cupboard with quite a bitter look. He took it for granted that Smithy had been pulling his leg. Sidney James Snoop had no appreciation for a joke of that kind.

He crossed to the door sulkily.

"Where are you going?" asked Vernon-Smith.

Snoop gave him a look.

"I dare say it's very funny," he said, "but I think a joke like that is in rotten bad taste, Smithy."

"What joke? Like what?"

"We all know you've got more money than we have," sneered Snoop. "We all know you get whacking hampers from home, and we don't. You could stand a spread if you liked. I suppose you think it's rather clever to bring a fellow here for nothing. Check, I call it—purse-proud cheek! Go and eat coke!"

And with that Sidney James Snoop shook the dust of Study No. 4 from his feet, and slammed the door after him as he departed.

"Is Snoop off his rocker?" asked the Bounder in wonder, staring at Stott, who looked astonished.

"Wandering in his mind, I should think," said Stott. And Stott stepped across to the study cupboard to hand out the good things. Then he understood why Snoop had been wrathful.

"You silly chump!" he roared.

"What?"

"Call this a joke?" demanded Stott angrily.

"What do you mean, you footling fathead?"

"You think a fellow's glad to come to tea with you, and you think you can make a fool of him!" said Stott. "Just your sort. The fellows knew you all right when they named you the Bounder!"

Vernon-Smith jumped up from the armchair. He was perplexed, and he was angry, too.

"What the thump do you mean?" he snapped. "Are you gone off your rocker, like Snoop? What the——"

The Bounder broke off as he looked into the study cupboard. He seemed astounded by what he saw; or, rather, by what he did not see.

"Where is it?" he ejaculated.

"Think I've come here to tea on bread and cheese?" sneered Frederick Stott. "Thank you for nothing! I can do better than that in my own study."

"There was a spread here!" roared the Bounder. "A whole stack of things. I unpacked the hamper here after class!"

"Gammon!"

"I tell you there was a tiptop spread——"

"And I tell you there wasn't!" sneered Stott. "If there was, where is it?"

"Somebody's raided it!" hissed the Bounder.

"Rats!"

"I tell you——"

"Bosh!"

And Frederick Stott tramped angrily out of Study No. 4, slamming the door as he went.

The Bounder stood staring into the empty cupboard. Snoop and Stott had no doubt whatever that Smithy had been pulling their leg, taking a mean advantage of the fact that they were always keen on coming to a spread in Study No. 4. But the Bounder knew that he had unpacked a hamper in the study that day, and that he had placed the goodly contents of it in the cupboard. Obviously, there had been a raid.

"The fat rotter!" hissed Vernon-Smith.

When there was a raid in the Remove passage, a fellow's suspicions turned on William George Bunter, as a matter of course. Proof was not really required. The Remove knew their Bunter.

Herbert Vernon-Smith did not think of wasting time in inquiry. He picked up a cricket-stump, and started along the Remove passage for Study No. 7.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

After the Feast, the Reckoning!

"NOT a bad spread, what?" asked Bunter.

"Jolly good!" said Trotter heartily.

"Have some more, old fellow."

Trotter shook his head. He had done remarkably well at the festive board in Study No. 7—perhaps a

little too well. He did not feel equal to any more.

Neither did William George Bunter, for once. There were still good things on the table—jellies and cakes and fruity biscuits and preserved ginger—all sort of good things. But William George Bunter had filled up every available inch of space within the limits of his wide circumference. He was, in fact, loaded above the Plimsoll line, and he breathed with some difficulty, and felt extremely disinclined to move. But he had enjoyed himself and Trotter had enjoyed himself, and the friendship between the two was quite established.

Theophilus Trotter was as far as ever from understanding what it all meant. He had never been so mystified in his life. He would have supposed that Bunter was the last fellow at Greyfriars or in the world to have a boot-boy to tea in his study and lavish upon him unlimited quantities of expensive tuck. But he had to believe his eyes. There was Bunter, there was Trotter, there was the spread! Trotter gave up trying to understand it.

Bunter leaned back in his chair and stuck his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat in the objectionable way he had. He was a picture of fat contentment and podgy good-nature. Perhaps the recollection of how he had come by that handsome spread troubled Bunter a little. Perhaps he had some lingering dread of the wrath to come. But Bunter never met troubles half-way. It had indeed been a fortunate circumstance that Study No. 4 had been so well supplied at the time when it was absolutely necessary for a spread to be given in No. 7.

"Much obliged, sir," said Trotter, rising from the table. "I shall have to be going now, Master Bunter."

"You mean Billy!" said Bunter affectionately.

"Yes—Billy."

"That's better, Theophilus."

"Must be potty!" Trotter murmured to himself. "He isn't such a fat little beast as I thought, but he's as mad as a hatter. That must be it."

Bunter, ignorant of Trotter's unuttered opinion, beamed on him.

"Don't go yet, old bean. Won't you try the jelly?"

"Mrs. Kebble will be arter me, sir—Billy," said Trotter. "She will jaw me, anyhow."

"You'll be done with Mrs. Kebble before long, old fellow," said Bunter. "I'm going to look after you."

"Oh, my eye!"

"You see——"

Harold Skinner, arriving at the study just then, opened the door and looked in. Bunter blinked at him.

Skinner stared in sourly.

He expected to find Trotter there with Bunter. He knew that the Owl of the Remove was first in the field with the heir of the Fried Fisheries. But the spread on the table surprised Skinner. Much had been consumed, but much remained. Unless Bunter's celebrated postal-order had come at

last, Skinner was at a loss to account for it.

Trotter coloured uncomfortably as he saw Skinner.

Bunter, for inexplicable reasons, had taken up the boot-boy. But Trotter did not expect other Remove fellows to take the same line. And Skinner was a very unpleasant fellow, always likely to make himself disagreeable to a fellow who could not answer back. Skinner had a chance now of being extremely disagreeable.

"I'd better go now, sir," said Trotter hurriedly.

"Don't you go," said Bunter. "Skinner don't belong to this study. What the thump do you want, Skinner?"

"Oh, just looked in," said Skinner airily. "How are you, Trotter, old chap?"

Trotter almost fell down.

"Old chap" from Bunter was astonishing enough, but "old chap" from a sneering, snobbish fellow like Skinner was the limit. It was a day of miracles.

"Had your tea here with Bunter, kid?" asked Skinner very agreeably.

"Yes, sir," stammered Trotter. "Master Bunter asked me. No offence, sir, I 'ope."

"Certainly not," said Skinner. "Why shouldn't you tea here if you like? Glad to see you in our quarters."

"Oh crumbs!" said Trotter. He was beginning to wonder whether this was some extraordinary dream.

"Come to tea with me to-morrow," said Skinner.

"Eh?"

"Glad to have you," said Skinner affably. "The fact is, Trotter, I've never seen so much of you as I should really have liked."

"Oh!" gasped Trotter.

"Of course, there's a bit of difference in our positions here," said Skinner. "But who cares for that? Why shouldn't we be friends?"

"My eye!"

"A man's a man for all that, and so on, you know," said Skinner. "The rank is but the guinea's stamp. The man's the gold for all that, as some poetical johnny puts it. I've always noticed that you were a fellow far above your position, Trotter."

"Ave you, sir?" gasped Trotter.

"I have," said Skinner. "You are t of place in the servants' hall. Trotter. There are Greyfriars men whom I consider your inferiors."

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Trotter.

He gazed at Skinner in open-mouthed astonishment.

Theophilus Trotter was quite willing to believe that he was a superior sort of fellow. Indeed, he had long had a secret persuasion that that was the case. But to have the fact recognised in this way by Greyfriars fellows was startling. Harold Skinner was the last fellow he would have expected to see it or to admit it if he saw it.

Skinner had seldom had anything to say to him hitherto, but when he had had anything to say, so far, it had always been something unpleasant. All of a sudden, it seemed,



Vernon-Smith strode at Skinner, gripping the stump. "You rotten outsider!" he roared. "What the thump—I don't catch on—yaroooooh!" howled Skinner, as the cricket-stump came down across his shoulders with a terrific whack. He leaped up, sending his chair flying, and dodged round the study table, catching another swipe of the stump as he fled. (See Chapter 10.)

he had recognised this superiority in Trotter. Never before that afternoon had he given a sign of it. It had come suddenly—remarkably suddenly—just as in Bunter's case.

"I'll join you," went on Skinner affably, taking a seat at the table and slicing the cake. "No objection, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter was blinking dumbly at Skinner.

He had listened to Skinner's remarks in petrified astonishment. But the explanation dawned at last on his fat mind. Skinner had seen Messrs. Fozzle's advertisement in the personal column of the "Daily Mail." Skinner had learned that Trotter was the heir of the Fried Fisheries at Gravesend. Skinner was at the same game as his fat self.

Bunter grew purple with indignation.

His contempt for a fellow who was willing to take up another fellow simply on account of his money was unbounded. It was just like a mean rotter of Skinner's sort. And Skinner's check in thus coolly butting in after Bunter's prize was intolerable. Bunter found his voice at last.

"Skinner, you cheeky cad——"

"Hallo!" said Skinner, with his

mouth full. "What's the matter with you, Bunter?"

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Bunter.

"Anything wrong?" smiled Skinner.

"I jolly well know what you're after!" howled Bunter indignantly.

"You mind your own business, Skinner. Keep off the grass! I found it out first. I——"

Bunter broke off. Obviously, it would have been injudicious to let Trotter know what he had found out.

Trotter did not know, so far, why he had suddenly become the object of all these kind regards. He did not know what to think. But he would have known what to think soon enough had he heard Bunter and Skinner quarrelling over the prize.

"My dear chap," said Skinner smoothly, "don't rag. We've got a guest here!"

Bunter spluttered.

"If you don't want me to tea here——" went on Skinner, with a very significant look at Bunter.

Bunter gulped.

"I—I don't mind," he gasped. He realised that he had to make terms with Harold Skinner.

"That's all right, then," said Skinner cheerily. "I'll tea here. I hope you haven't finished yet, Trotter?"

"I 'ave, thank you," said Trotter. "I've got to be getting away, sir. Mrs. Kebble will want me."

"Right-ho, then!" said Skinner. "I'll see you again, Trotter."

"Certainly, sir, if you want to."

"Tea in my study to-morrow," said Skinner. "What time can you get off for tea, Trotter?"

"I could get 'arf an hour, sir, about five o'clock," said Trotter, lost in wonder.

"That's a go, then. You come, too, Bunter," added Skinner. "We're both friends of Trotter's."

Bunter suppressed his feelings, and nodded. He quite understood. It was a case of "halves."

Trotter, in a state of bewilderment, went to the door. Bunter detached himself with an effort from his chair.

"I'll come down with you, Trotter, old chap," he said.

"Ta-ta, Trotter, old bean!" said Skinner. "Don't forget you're teeing with me to-morrow."

"No, sir!" gasped Trotter. "Thank you, sir!"

And he left the study with Bunter.

Harold Skinner grinned cheerily as the door closed behind them. He had made a beginning, and Bunter fully understood that he had to "whack out" Trotter with his rival. It was

obvious that Trotter was gratified, as well as astonished, at being made up to in this way by Greyfriars men. There was little doubt, if any, that when his money came along, it would be easy to "touch" him for a loan—a considerable loan—he could scarcely prove ungrateful to these fellows who had been so kind to him.

Why, the fellow might have thousands! And pulling his leg was the easiest piece of trickery that Skinner had ever undertaken; even Bunter had been able to pull his leg successfully. Those little debts which had worried Skinner all through the term would be cleared off now, and there would be something over. This was rather a better prospect for Skinner, than screwing small loans out of the Bounder, with the Bounder's sardonic sneer to accompany them.

And this feed was excellent, too. How Bunter had raised the funds to stand such a feed was a mystery to Skinner; but there it was. It was a feast of the gods; and Skinner enjoyed himself thoroughly in clearing the well-supplied table. It was tea-time, and he was hungry after his ride to Courtfield. Skinner helped himself liberally, and what had been left over by Bunter and Trotter, disappeared rapidly under Skinner's attacks.

But even a third hungry fellow could not quite clear off those ample supplies. There were still many good things left on the table, when Harold Skinner leaned back in his chair, satisfied.

He heard a hurried footstep in the Remove passage outside, approaching the study. He grinned, supposing that it was Bunter returning.

The door flew open. It was not Bunter who entered, however. It was Herbert Vernon-Smith, with a savage scowl on his face, and a cricket-stump in his hand. Skinner looked at him.

"What—" he began. The Bounder stared at Skinner, and stared at the table. He had expected to find his tuck, or what was left of it, in Bunter's study. But he had not expected to find Skinner disposing of it.

"You!" he ejaculated. "What's the row?" asked Skinner, puzzled.

"Why, you—you—you cheeky scoundrel!" roared the enraged Bounder. "I thought it was Bunter—"

"Eh?"

"And it was you!"

"What?"

"So that was why you turned up your cheeky nose at my spread!" shouted Vernon-Smith. "Because you'd bagged it already from my study."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I wondered at your turning my spread down, you rotter, but I never thought of this."

The Bounder strode at Skinner, gripping the stump.

"You rotten outsider! I suppose you thought I might spot you if you took it to your own study, so you brought it here! I'd never have known, only I took it for granted that it was Bunter, and came here. Now you're jolly well going to pay for it!"

"What the thump—I don't catch on! Yarooooogh!" roared Skinner, as the cricket-stump came down across his shoulders with a terrific whack.

Skinner leaped up, sending his chair flying. He dodged round the study table, catching another swipe of the stump as he fled.

"Keep off, you potty idiot!" howled Skinner. "What are you pitching into me for, you mad duffer?"

The Bounder did not trouble to answer; he pursued Skinner round the table with brandished stump. All was clear to Smithy, or he thought it was. Skinner had turned down his feed, most unexpectedly; and the explanation was that Skinner had bagged it already; and with deep duplicity, he had taken his loot to another fellow's study to devour, instead of to his own. That seemed absolutely clear to the Bounder, and he did not see any use in wasting time in words. It was a time for action, not for words. He pursued Skinner round the table, swiping with the stump.

Skinner fled, and dodged, and yelled, and roared. The Bounder seemed to think that he was beating a carpet.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooh! Stoppit! Oh, crikey! Yoooooop!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooh! Keep off, you dangerous maniac!" shrieked Skinner. "Wharrer you think you're at? Oh, crumbs! Oh, scissors! Yaroooh!"

Whack, whack!

Skinner got to the door at last, tore it open, and fled into the Remove passage, yelling with anguish. The Bounder, not yet satisfied, rushed after him, still landing out with the stump. Skinner caught it again as he dodged out of the study, and caught it again in the passage. Skinner's frantic yells rang from one end of the Remove quarters to the other.

Billy Bunter came up the Remove staircase, and stared at the scene through his big spectacles. The sight of the Bounder alarmed him; Bunter had reasons for not wishing to meet the Bounder, especially when he had a cricket-stump in his hand.

But Smithy did not heed him. He was pursuing Skinner ferociously, still swiping with the stump.

Skinner dodged into his own study, and slammed the door, and turned the key in the lock. The Bounder had to stop then.

"I—I—I say, Smithy, what's the matter?" asked Bunter, in great

trepidation, as the Bounder came back rather breathlessly along the passage. "Wha-a-at are you pitching into Skinner for?"

"Bagging my tuck!" growled the Bounder.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "He took it to your study, Bunter—"

"D-d-d-did he?" stuttered Bunter. "Yes; and I came along with this stump, thinking it was you who had cleared out my cupboard."

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"So I found the cheeky cad in your study scoffing my feed. I don't think he'll play that game again in a hurry."

"I—I—I say, what an awful rotter!" gasped Bunter. "Fuf-fuf-fancy bagging a fellow's tuck, and—and taking it to my study! What a neck!"

"I fairly caught him in the act!" growled Vernon-Smith. "Well, I've had my money's worth out of his hide; I've jolly nearly broken this stump on him."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "Serve him right!"

And Bunter rolled away cheerily. He had wondered, with a good deal of trepidation, what would happen when Smithy missed his magnificent spread from Study No. 4. After the feast, according to the proverb, comes the reckoning. Bunter had had the feast, and Skinner had had the reckoning. And that division was extremely satisfactory to William George Bunter at least.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Keeping It Dark!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. wondered what it meant. For two or three days they wondered.

It was a mystery to them, and to the other fellows in the Remove. Hurree Janset Ram Singh declared that the mysteryfulness was terrific; and the Remove agreed that it was.

The proceedings of William George Bunter seldom interested the Remove. The proceedings of Harold Skinner had little interest except for his own shady set.

But now, the proceedings of Bunter and Skinner excited surprise and interest all through the Remove.

The fellows had heard of that spread in Bunter's study, and wondered why on earth he had had Trotter to tea. If it had ended there, they would have been surprised. But it had not ended there.

Bunter was pursuing his friendly acquaintance with Trotter. So was Skinner. All the Remove observed it.

They wondered. Had Theophilus Trotter been some very specially nice and intelligent youth, rather unfortunately placed in the world, kind-hearted fellows might reasonably have taken him up and shown him kindness, regardless of minor considerations.

But there was nothing specially nice or intelligent about Trotter; he

ANSWERS

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was an absolutely commonplace young person. And neither Bunter nor Skinner was of the kind-hearted, generous-minded variety.

Nobody disliked him, but there was nothing special about him to like, if it came to that. Yet both Bunter and Skinner obviously saw some great attraction in him.

At every opportunity Bunter or Skinner, or both of them, would seek Trotter's society, treating him in the most friendly manner.

Skinner had been seen walking arm-in-arm with him. Bunter had been seen sharing a packet of toffee with him.

It was amazing.

Trotter—unknown to Mrs. Kebble—had "tea'd" with Skinner in Study No. 4. Smithy had been astounded when Skinner told him that Trotter was coming to No. 4 to tea. He supposed at first that it was some extraordinary joke. But he found that Skinner was in earnest.

"If you don't like it, you can tea out!" Skinner said.

"But what's the game?" demanded the astonished Bounder.

"Game? There's no game."

"Even you wouldn't be borrowing Trotter's wages, I suppose?" said the mystified Bounder.

"I disdain to answer that!" said Skinner loftily.

Certainly, even Skinner would have drawn a line there. Certainly he was not after Trotter's wages.

"Then what does it mean?" snapped Vernon-Smith. "You can't have the boot-boy to tea, and you know it."

"I can, and I will," retorted Skinner. "If you're a snob, I'm not."

"Well, I'm not, but you are," said Vernon-Smith. "You're the silliest snob I ever struck, except Bunter and Snoop. Still, have him to tea if you like. I'll have Gosling, perhaps."

The Bounder "tea'd" out on that occasion. He was, as he had said, no snob, but he had no desire whatever for Trotter's company at tea. Skinner most certainly was a snob, and that made his conduct all the more puzzling.

It was obvious that he had an axe to grind, but the Bounder could not guess what it was.

Nobody else in the Remove could guess.

The juniors did not think of connecting this mysterious development with the mystery of the "Daily Mail" which had so interested them on Wednesday morning.

They had, in fact, forgotten all about that by this time.

Trotter himself was more surprised than any of the Remove fellows. He did not understand it, and, as a matter of fact, he did not wholly like it. The two Removites had taken him up, but that was no guarantee that they would not drop him again just as suddenly. And Trotter, though flattered, did not like or admire either of them.

Still, he played up. Conscious of his own superiority over other dwellers below stairs, Trotter was

pleased and gratified to have his superiority recognised by Greyfriars men. And Skinner had a honeyed tongue when he was handing out flattery. It was easy for poor Trotter to believe that Skinner had noticed what a superior fellow he was, and felt drawn towards him as a kindred spirit.

Snoop and Stott were deeply annoyed. They argued the matter with Skinner hotly. Skinner disregarded them utterly. He was plainly willing to throw over both his old friends, rather than drop his peculiar new friend. Snoop and Stott simply couldn't understand it, and they were exasperated, and they almost cut Skinner these days. Skinner did not mind.

"Jevver see anything like it, you men?" asked Bob Cherry, on Saturday afternoon, as the Famous Five strolled in the quad.

In the distance they could see Skinner and Trotter in talk. Skinner's manner was overflowing with cordiality.

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Harry Wharton. "Skinner can't be the measly snob we've always thought."

"What on earth can he make out of Trotter?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Nothing," said Nugent.

"That's rot! He's on the make, of course," said Johnny. "That's the only way to account for it. But what can he make?"

"The makefulness does not seem to be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the mystery is great."

"I say, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Trotter's other pal!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Tell us what the little game is, Bunter."

Bunter blinked at the perplexed chums of the Remove through his big spectacles.

"Have you fellows seen Trotter?" he asked. "I'm looking for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trotter was in full view, but the short-sighted Owl of the Remove was not aware of the fact.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter. "I hear that Trotter has an afternoon off, so I'm taking him to the pictures."

"Skinner's got him," grinned Bob Cherry.

Bunter gave a snort.

"That cad butting in again! Just like Skinner!"

"But what does it all mean, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton. "What have you made friends with Trotter for?"

"I've taken him up," explained Bunter loftily. "Nothing snobbish about me—there never is, you know, about really well-born and well-connected fellows. Trotter's all right."

"Right as rain," agreed the captain of the Remove. "But—"

"Blessed if I can understand it, unless Trotter's coming in for a fortune," said Johnny Bull.

Bunter started.

"Nothing of the kind, of course!" he exclaimed hastily. "Don't you fellows get it into your heads that

Trotter's coming into a fortune. Look here, you're jolly well not going to butt in like Skinner."

The Famous Five stared at Bunter. Johnny Bull had not made the suggestion seriously, but the Owl of the Remove had evidently taken it seriously.

"Is Trotter coming into a fortune, then?" demanded the captain of the Remove blankly.

"Nunno! Nothing of the kind. He hasn't any rich relations—specially not a rich uncle at Gravesend," said Bunter. "If you think his uncle has left him a fortune, you're making a mistake. I—I've taken a fancy to him because he's so nice, you know."

"His rich uncle at Gravesend has left him a fortune!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Is that it?"

"No!" howled Bunter. "I've just told you it isn't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How did you know he had a rich uncle at Gravesend, Bunter?"

"He hasn't—I didn't—so far as I know, he never had any relations at all in the fried fish business," answered Bunter. "As for lawyers advertising for him, that's all rot. Why should they?"

"Lawyers advertising for him!" gasped Bob.

"No! Nothing of the kind. Don't you fellows get such an idea into your heads," said Bunter anxiously. "Trotter's about the last fellow in the world to hear of something to his advantage."

"Well, my hat!" said Harry. "So that's why you've made friends with the kid, you fat, spoofing bounder?"

"Certainly not. I—I like him, you know," said Bunter. "He's a nice chap. I'm not the fellow to make up to a chap because he's going to be rich, like that cad Skinner. I wouldn't touch his money, of course. He might cash a postal-order for me. No harm in that, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, if you fellows know where Trotter is, shut up cackling, and tell a chap," said Bunter peevishly. "I'm going to take him to the pictures."

"Have you told Trotter that he's being advertised for?"

"Not yet—I mean, no fear—that is, he's not being advertised for at all, and I don't believe he ever had an uncle at Gravesend."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter caught sight of Trotter then, and rolled away to claim his pal from Skinner. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another, surprised but greatly entertained. They had a glimmering now of what it all meant.

"So far as I can make out, Trotter's being advertised for because his uncle in the fried fish line at Gravesend has left him something, and Bunter has seen the advertisement," said Wharton.

"That's about it," grinned Bob Cherry; "and Skinner's seen it, too. They're after the loaves and fishes—the fried fishes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They've not told Trotter," went

on the captain of the Remove. "They ought to have told him at once."

"Making friends with him first!" chortled Nugent.

Wharton frowned.

"I suppose that's their game," he said. "But if this is true, Trotter's got to know at once. I wonder where Bunter saw the advertisement?"

Bob Cherry gave a yell.

"I've got it! Ha, ha, ha! That was what Bunter saw in the 'Daily Mail' the other day, when he was late for class, you remember."

"Oh, why, of course!" exclaimed Wharton, at once.

"Certain!" chuckled Nugent.

"The certainfulness is terrific. We must get an esteemed copy of last Wednesday's 'Daily Mail,'" chortled the nabob of Bhanipur. "Or perhaps the advertisement may be repeated dayfully, as the esteemed Trotter has not yet answered it."

"Likely enough," agreed Wharton. "We'll get Quelch's 'Daily Mail' and look. If there's anybody advertising for Trotter, the kid's going to know at once."

"Yes, rather!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked to the House. Bunter and Skinner, still whacking out their prize on the principle of "halves," had both started for Courtfield with Trotter, to entertain that interesting youth at the pictures. Bunter and Skinner gave one another rather inimical looks, but both put on their friendliest smiles to Trotter. Meanwhile, the chums of the Remove obtained possession of Mr. Quelch's "Daily Mail," and took it to Study No. 1 for investigation. The investigation was thorough, and it revealed at last the paragraph which was inserted daily by Messrs. Fozzle, Moozle, & Woozle, Solicitors, of Gravesend.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here it is!"

"Something to his advantage!" chuckled Bob. "Good egg! Trotter will be pleased to see this. Those rotters have been keeping it dark. What price making friends with Trotter and having him to tea in the study before we tell him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll show it to Mrs. Kebble and ask her to give it to Trotter when he comes in," said Harry. "Then we can get off on the bikes."

"Good!"

And when Theophilus Trotter came in later, Mrs. Kebble, with benevolent smiles; pointed out that interesting paragraph to him, much to Trotter's surprise and delight, while Skinner and Bunter had the pleasure—or otherwise—of finding all the Remove in possession of the facts. Loud laughter greeted Trotter's new pals when they came into the Rag. Skinner was surprised till Bolsover major pointed out a cutting from a newspaper that was stuck on the wall of the Rag. Somebody had cut it out of a "Daily Mail" and stuck it there for all the Remove to read.

Skinner stared at it and bit his thin lip hard.

"That's news!" he remarked.

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"Not news to you, you spoofer!" said Russell. "Think we don't know now why you've been buttering up Trotter?"

"Of course I never knew."

"Cheese it!"

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter blinked at the cutting in dismay. "I—I say, you keep off the grass, you know. I found it out first. I say, don't all you fellows get butting in like Skinner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner walked out of the Rag, biting his lip, and William George Bunter rolled after him. They left the Rag in a roar.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Trotter's Windfall!

"G RATTERS, old bean!" "Thank you, Master Cherry!"

"The congratulatefulness is terrific, my esteemed Trotter."

Trotter grinned.

"Thank you, sir!"

"Any news yet?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Not yet, sir," said Trotter.

"There ain't time yet. I've wrote to the legal gentleman about it."

"Best of luck," said Johnny Bull.

"I hope it will turn out to be a fortune."

Trotter rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Well, I don't see 'ow it could," he said. "Fortunes ain't made in the fried fish line. But it may be something 'andsome. I 'ope so."

"We all hope so," said Frank Nugent.

It was some days since the discovery of the advertisement in the "Daily Mail," and the Famous Five, spotting Trotter in the passages, had stopped him to inquire. They were quite interested in Trotter's windfall, more especially as they had been the means of bringing Messrs. Fozzle's paragraph to Trotter's knowledge.

Certainly, it had not occurred to the chums of the Remove to "pal" with Trotter because he was coming into money. Such a scheme as that was likely to occur only to a fellow like Skinner or Bunter.

But they were very pleased by his good luck, and their congratulations were cheery and sincere.

"Let's hope it will be something substantial, old bean," said Bob Cherry. "And don't blow it all in riotous living when it comes along."

Trotter chuckled.

"And don't be in a hurry to give up your job, kid, even if you've got something in the bank," advised Johnny Bull.

"No fear!" said Trotter.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled up the passage, his very spectacles glinting with wrath and indignation. "You let Trotter alone!"

"What?"

"Trotter's my pal, not yours. Ain't you, Trotter?" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "You fellows keep clear!"

"You frabjous idiot!" roared Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You footling chump!"

"You needn't call me names because I'm protecting Trotter from a lot of greedy fellows who are after his money," retorted Bunter. "I must say I despise you. Just like Skinner, butting in——"

Billy Bunter did not get any further. Five pairs of hands descended upon him, and the Owl of the Remove was swept off his feet.

Bump!

"Yaroooh!"

"Give him another!" gasped Bob.

Bump!

"Yow! Ow, ow! Owwhooooop!"

Trotter departed, grinning, and the Famous Five strolled away, leaving Bunter sitting on the floor and roaring.

The next day there was a letter for Trotter from Messrs. Fozzle, Moozle & Woozle, of Gravesend. Below stairs there was a great deal of excitement on the subject. Trotter was regarded with much more respect than usual by the cook and the maids. Even Mrs. Kebble was more gracious. The news leaked out that Trotter's presence was required by Messrs. Fozzle to claim the inheritance from his uncle—a sum in hard cash, of which the amount was variously stated. After class that day two figures—one thin and the other very fat—might have been seen making their way round the school buildings to the boot-room window. Skinner and Bunter glared at one another as they arrived together at the boot-room.

"Look here, Skinner. What do you want here?" demanded Bunter morosely.

"What do you want?" sneered Skinner.

"I'm going to speak to a pal," said Bunter loftily.

"Same here."

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

"Shut up, you fat ass. You know it's halves."

"I must say I despise you, Skinner, sneaking after a chap because he's coming into a few thousands!"

"And what are you doing, you fat frump?"

"I disdain to answer that question, Skinner. I hope I can be kind to a fellow I like without being misunderstood!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"You fat idiot!"

"You sneaking rotter!"

Trotter looked out of the open window. Trotter's face was very bright. Exactly what Trotter thought of his new friends it would be difficult to say. Without being unduly suspicious, he might have suspected that both Bunter and Skinner had known about Messrs. Fozzle's advertisement when they so suddenly selected him as a dear pal. Still, it was charitable to believe that they had not known till Trotter himself knew. Probably Trotter did not think much about it at all. He was fully occupied in thinking of his good luck.

"Well, what's the news, old man?" asked Skinner genially, suddenly ceasing to scowl at Bunter and smiling at Trotter.



"Come on, Trotter," said Skinner, with a scowl at Bunter. Skinner had one of Trotter's arms, and was trying to draw him away to Study No. 4. Bunter had his other arm, and was seeking to jerk him towards Study No. 7. Between his two enthusiastic pals, who were so glad to see him, Trotter seemed likely to suffer! (See Chapter 13.)

"Splendid, sir," said Trotter, beaming.

"Something handsome?" asked Bunter, eagerly.

"Very 'andsome, Master Bunter."

"You mean Billy," said the Owl of the Remove, chidingly. "Don't stand on ceremony with your best friend, old chap."

"For goodness' sake, shut up, Bunter, and let old Trotter speak!" said Skinner. "Is it hard cash, Trotter?"

"Yes, sir—'ard cash—more money than I ever thought I should 'ave in a lump in my life!" beamed Trotter.

"How much?" gasped Bunter.

"A 'undred pounds!" said Trotter impressively.

The two Removites stared at him.

To Theophilus Trotter a hundred pounds was an enormous sum of money. Probably he had never possessed more than two or three pounds at once in all his days hitherto.

But Skinner's thoughts had run to thousands, and Bunter had dreamed of millions!

It was a crushing disappointment. But they rallied at once. After all,

a hundred pounds was a hundred pounds. What could a fellow like Trotter do with a hundred pounds—unless he had good and loyal friends to advise him in the spending of it? Quite a number of magnificent spreads could be stood for that sum—that occurred to Bunter at once. A loan of a tenner could easily be made from such a sum—Skinner realised that.

So, disappointed as they were, they succeeded in grinning at Trotter quite enthusiastically.

"S-splendid!" stammered Bunter.

"Oh, fine!" said Skinner.

"Reglar windfall for me," said Trotter brightly. "I've got leave to go and see the lawyer blokes; I'm going to-morrer morning. There's jest one thing that worries me a bit."

"You can tell a pal what it is," said Skinner.

"You can confide in me, old chap," said Bunter.

"You see, the lawyer blokes ain't handing anything over till they see me," explained Trotter. "That's all right, of course. But the fare up to London from 'ere is pretty steep. Then, if I 'ave to stay over the night,

that runs into money. I shall want a couple of pounds, at least, to carry me through."

"Oh!" said Skinner.

"Um!" said Bunter.

There was a remarkable diminution of enthusiasm on the part of Trotter's pals.

"You young gents, being my friends—" said Trotter.

"Rely on me," said Bunter. "If my postal-order comes before you start, Trotter, I'm your man. The trouble is that it's possible that it may not come till Saturday."

"Frightfully unlucky that I should happen to be quite stony," said Skinner regretfully. "If you'd mentioned this yesterday it would have been all right. To-day I'm absolutely on the rocks. I dare say Mrs. Kebble would see you through if you asked her."

"You see—" began Trotter.

"Hallo, there's the bell!" exclaimed Skinner. "See you later, old fellow."

And Skinner walked away rather quickly.

"Mustn't be late for tiffin," said

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Bunter, hastily. "See you again, Trotter, old fellow!"

And Bunter rolled after Skinner.

No doubt Mrs. Kebble came to Trotter's rescue, for the next morning he was gone from Greyfriars to interview Messrs. Fozzle; Moolze & Wozzle, at Gravesend.

His friends waited anxiously for his return. Skinner was quite annoyed because the inheritance had not run into thousands. Billy Bunter parted very regretfully from his dream of millions. But a hundred pounds was, after all, a very solid and useful sum. With a hundred pounds in his pocket Trotter was well worth cultivating by two hard-up and unscrupulous fellows—at least, till the hundred pounds was gone. When it was gone no doubt Trotter's devoted pals would be gone, too. In the meantime, they were prepared to devote themselves to Trotter, to take him under their protection, to see that he was not imposed upon by needy, greedy fellows, and to be kind to him generally, regardless of being misunderstood and sneered at in the Remove.

Billy Bunter had already planned an extensive series of spreads, for which his friend Theophilus was to foot the bill. Skinner had already told Mr. Banks, at the Cross Keys, in Friardale, that he would be able to settle up very shortly, and had arranged with that frowsy gentleman to put a fiver on Bonny Boy for a race the following week. Trotter was to see him through. It was scarcely possible that Trotter, bursting with ready money, would refuse to whack it out to some extent with fellows who had taken him up and become such fast friends—there was no doubt on that point. Once Trotter returned with the cash in his possession, all was plain sailing. And Skinner and Bunter were very anxious for his return.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The End of a Friendship!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's the giddy heir!"

It was the following day, after class, and Harry Wharton & Co. had gone to No. 1 Study in the Remove for tea. Through the open doorway of the study Bob Cherry spotted the plump figure of Trotter, and his plump, beaming face.

Trotter grinned cheerily at the Famous Five as they came to the door.

"All serene, kid?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes, sir, thank you," said Trotter. "I thought you'd like to 'ear that it was all right, so I came up."

"Jolly glad," said the captain of the Remove. "You've seen the legal johnnies?"

"Yes, Master Wharton, and it's all right—a 'undred pounds!" beamed Trotter.

"Gratters, old bean!"

"The gladfulness at the esteemed news is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows," Bunter came up with a rush, "is that you,

Trotter? So glad to see you again, old chap! I—I've missed you awfully!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

Skinner was on the spot the next moment. He slipped his arm through Theophilus Trotter's.

"Glad you're back, old fellow! Is it all right?"

"Puffically all right, sir," said Trotter.

"Come along to my study and tell me all about it," said Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

"Do shut up, Bunter!"

"Sha'n't!" hooted Bunter.

"Trotter's my pal, not yours! Come along to my study, Trotter, old fellow! You'll want some tea after your journey."

"Come into ours, Trotter!" chuckled Nugent. "We'll celebrate the event without borrowing any of your hundred pounds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You shut up!" roared Bunter.

"You clear off, Skinner. Come on, Trotter, old fellow—don't take any notice of those cads!"

Skinner had one of Trotter's arms, and was trying to draw him away to Study No. 4. Bunter had his other arm, and was seeking to jerk him towards Study No. 7. Between his two enthusiastic pals, who were glad to see him, Trotter seemed likely to suffer the fate of the ancient Patroclus.

"I—I say——" gasped Trotter.

He would have preferred to accept the kind invitation into Study No. 1, but his friends were not to be denied. Skinner succeeded in getting possession, and Trotter was landed, rather breathless, in Study No. 4. Billy Bunter rolled in after them. Bunter was not to be left out.

"Hallo! Your friend coming to tea again?" grinned the Bounder, who was in Study No. 4.

"Yes; and if you don't like it you can shift!" snapped Skinner.

"Bless your little heart, I don't mind!" said Vernon-Smith. "Glad to hear of your good luck, Trotter!"

"Thank you, Master Vernon-Smith," gasped Trotter.

"Take a tip from me, and keep your money in the bank," added the Bounder. "Don't lend it to anybody."

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"You can keep your advice to yourself, Vernon-Smith," said Skinner, with a sneer. "Trotter doesn't need advice from you; Trotter has his own friends when he wants to ask advice."

"That's all right, sir," said Trotter cheerfully. "I ain't got the money with me, of course."

Skinner jumped.

"You—you haven't——"

"You said it was all right!" gasped Bunter.

"So it is—right as rain," said Trotter. "You see, the hundred pounds is in the War Loan—same as ready money."

"Oh! Of—of course!" said Skinner. "You have to sell War Loan to get the ready money, that's all."

"Only I ain't allowed to," said Trotter cheerfully.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"You see, that was in Uncle Ebenezer's will," explained Trotter. "He's left me a hundred pounds in War Loan, but I'm not to touch it till I'm twenty-one."

"Oh!"

"Ooooooh!"

"The interest goes on accumulating for me," said Trotter. "Mr. Fozzle advised me to 'ave the interest put into savings certificates as it comes along. He's seeing to it for me; he's a very kind gentleman."

Skinner stared at Trotter. Bunter blinked at him, with his eyes nearly bulging through his big spectacles. For a moment there was an awful silence in the study.

It was broken by a roar of laughter from the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner gave a furious look.

Bunter groaned.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Vernon-Smith. "It's only a bird in the bush, after all! You'll have to stick to your new pal for some years yet, Skinner, before your ship comes home! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling rotter!" hissed Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Very kind of you to ask me to tea," said Trotter. "I could peck a bit arter my journey."

Skinner gave a snarl. The hospitality of Study No. 4 had come to a sudden end, so far as Trotter was concerned. There were five years to wait before Trotter's inheritance took the form of ready cash. Obviously, his inheritance was of no use to Harold Skinner.

"Oh, dear!" said Bunter.

He rolled out of the study.

Skinner pointed to the door.

"Get out!" he said.

"Eh?" ejaculated Trotter.

"Get out!"

"You asked me to tea——"

"I don't have boot boys to tea," said Skinner savagely. "You can come here when my boots want cleaning; not at other times. Get out!" All the angry malice in Skinner's nature had been brought to the surface by his bitter disappointment. "Get out of this room, you lout!"

"Well, my eye!" said Trotter.

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

"It come into my 'ead that you was thinking of my money, Master Skinner," said Trotter, "but I wouldn't think such a thing of a Greyfriars young gent. Now I think——"

"Don't talk to me!" snarled Skinner. "Get out!"

"Don't do anything of the kind, Trotter," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "Stay to tea with me, old scout. Skinner's hardly fit for a decent fellow to sit down to tea with, so he's going out to make room for you!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Trotter.

"You checky cad!" yelled Skinner.

"Are you going?" asked the Bounder.

"No!" howled Skinner.

(Continued on page 28.)

YOU CAN START READING THIS AMAZING SERIAL TO-DAY, BOYS!

THE CURSE OF LHASA!



Introduction
on page 26.

Featuring **FERRERS LOCKE**,
the world-famous detective, and
his plucky boy assistant, **JACK
DRAKE**.

Playing upon the childish credulity of the priests that worship at the shrine of Buddha, Kang Pu, the fanatic who would set the world ablaze with war, cunningly fosters the fast-growing hate of the yellow races towards the white. Yet Kang Pu doesn't have it all his own way, for Ferrers Locke, England's intrepid detective, turns up in unexpected fashion and denounces him for the scoundrel he is!

The Deserted Monastery!

IN the cold light of early morning Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake set off with the Tomo on a winding path, invisible to any but a hillman, which led upwards towards the north-east. Ahead of them moved a string of shaggy, Tibetan mountain ponies. The leader of the line, the largest pony of them all, was an old veteran scarcely twelve hands in height. Ferrers Locke and Jack were clad in dirty blouses of coarse fibre and pantaloons of the same material. Their feet were thrust into knee-high woollen boots. Dirty, turban-shaped headgear sufficed for head-covering, and they were enveloped in thick blankets, which served to keep out the intense cold.

Further questioning of the Tomo could elicit nothing except that, when on a journey to Gyantse some months before, he had camped at the base of the rugged hillside on which were perched the ruins. During the night he had awakened to hear the chanting of a sonorous chorus by many voices. It had floated to him down the hillside, and then had come a wailing and shrieking which had filled his heart with terror. That terror had communicated itself to his ponies, for they had broken their picket-ropes and dashed off into the darkness. He, the Tomo, had followed, running blindly, and fearful of those ghostly voices.

He told his tale with a wealth of detail, nodding his head to lend emphasis to his words.

"We cannot reach Gyantse this night," he concluded. "So, if you doubt my words, you priests, and laugh to yourselves, and say, 'What a misbegotten

liar is this dog of a Tomo,' then it well may be that you will not doubt by morning comes. For to-night we camp below the Seven Monasteries, and who knows but what the ghostly voices may drone again their chorus!"

"You are not afraid?" inquired Ferrers Locke.

"Afraid? Not I! Have I not two worthy sons of Buddha to protect me?"

And, chuckling hoarsely, the Tomo rode on. It was as Ferrers Locke had explained to Jack. Totally lacking in imagination, the half-developed mind of the fellow could only sense danger when danger stood visible before his eyes. Should the voices be heard again during the night, then the chances amounted to a certainty that he would flee in terror, to return when morning came, swaggering, blustering, forgetful of his fear.

In war, if it had been explained to him that the cold, silent barrel of an enemy machine-gun might belch sudden death, he would doubtless have listened carefully, then charged straight at it. He could not visualise danger, and such has often been taken for courage, but it is not courage.

They camped before darkness fell, the ponies picketed in a circle about them. No sign had Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake seen of any pursuit, but they knew that the danger of capture would be increased enormously on the morrow, when they rode down from the high land to the plain of Gyantse. The road to Lhasa passed through Gyantse, and through Gyantse they must go to reach the road. They had learned, by careful questioning of the Tomo, that it was impossible to make a detour, avoid

Gyantse, and join the road beyond the village. Precipitous cliffs, down which no path could be found, fringed the road, and Gyantse was the only gateway to the road—and Lhasa. Therefore, through Gyantse they must pass, and, without doubt it would be a passage fraught with peril for them.

"I have a mind, my friend," said Ferrers Locke, when they had eaten their meal of dried yak flesh, "to see these ruins above our heads. Does any path run upwards?"

The Tomo nodded.

"A road runs upwards," he replied; "but it has long fallen into disuse. They say that, in the ages when our fathers trod the land, countless pilgrims worshipped at the shrines of the Seven Monasteries, and their glory and splendour was equal only to that of Lhasa! But do you not know that, you runaway priests?"

"He who travels much, learns much," replied the detective; "and we who travel little can know but little!"

The Tomo grinned. The implied compliment was not lost on him. He was a free man, cursed of Buddha though he might be. It was his to come and go, not to exist hemmed in by four walls, like these miserable priests of Buddha.

Finding the direction in which the road lay, Ferrers Locke and Jack rose to their feet. The Tomo huddled himself in his blanket, and prepared to sleep. His attitude was one of complete indifference.

Leaving the circle of picketed ponies, Ferrers Locke and Jack set off along the base of the cliffs. It was not intensely
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dark, and they had little difficulty in finding the road which wound upwards to the ruins. It was strewn with boulders which had clattered down from the heights above during the years which had passed. For nearly an hour they stumbled upwards, then there loomed before them the black shadow of the first of the Seven Monasteries.

By the aid of his torch, Ferrers Locke disclosed an opening in the outer wall. They passed through, and emerged into a silent, deserted courtyard. For a long minute they stood listening, but not a sound disturbed the stillness.

Moving cautiously forward they reached the blacker shadow of crumbling cloisters.

"We seem to have the place to ourselves!" murmured Jack. "I wonder if that fellow was lying?"

"I do not think so. I have a theory, and—"

The detective paused, and from somewhere inside the ruins came the low drone of muffled voices. It rose, weird and unearthly, in a wave of perfect harmony, then died slowly away.

Jack felt a stirring at his scalp. It seemed, indeed, like the voices of some ghostly choir. Silence, oppressive in its intensity, settled over the ruined monastery.

"What—what was it?"

Jack's voice was husky, and he listened with straining ears.

"Come, but move as silently as possible, and keep your hand on your gun!" whispered Ferrers Locke, and together they moved step by step further into the shadows which shrouded the interior of the monastery.

The Voice of Kang Pu!

GROPINGLY they felt their way forward and came to what appeared to be a long corridor. At one end, so faint as to be almost imperceptible, there glimmered a faint, bluish light.

Hugging the wall, they approached it, moving silently and with infinite caution. The light grew stronger at every step, and Jack realised that it was the light from some inner room or temple glimmering through a thin curtain.

Reaching the curtain, they pressed close against the wall. With his forefinger, Ferrers Locke moved the curtain so as to allow them a view of what lay beyond. Jack stared through the chink, not knowing what to expect. Then, as his gaze became focused, he caught his breath sharply and stood rigid with astonishment.

Before them lay a huge temple lit by countless oil lamps fixed in brackets and suspended from plastered beams. Giant pillars towered high into the shadows of the dome-like roof. At one end of the temple squatted the figure of a colossal golden Buddha, a myriad lights above its head glinting brilliantly on its massive form. The air was reeking and heavy with incense, which curled upwards from long lines of braziers.

But what riveted Jack's attention was a tall, gaunt figure clad in robes of crimson, standing motionless before the figure of the giant Buddha. He was facing the god, his hands raised high above his head. But for him the temple was deserted. Then suddenly he spoke, his voice echoing sonorously through that vast place:

"To ye, O Buddha, do we come to restore thy vanished glories! We have heard the word of thy Chosen One, O Buddha, and even now we whet the sword which will bring under his domination the cities and peoples of the Western world. Through a sea of blood will we wade, O Buddha, till he shall sit secure on the rock of power in holy Lhasa! Let his spirit enter into ye this night, O Buddha, that thy servants may hear issue from thine own lips the message of war! Let him speak the words, O Buddha, the words which will spell the annihilation of the cursed peoples of the Western world!"

He paused, and from the shadows came the faint drone of many voices. Then slowly there merged into the light a long line of chanting priests. They formed a semicircle round the god, their voices rising to a thunderous chorus. Then, in an instant, their voices were stilled, and silence reigned, broken only by the quivering echoes, dying slowly away, for the gaunt, solitary figure in front of the god turned and faced the monks.

A stifled exclamation broke from Jack:

"Kala Dului!"

It was indeed he, that sinister monk from the Patong Lamasery. He took a chalice from a stand on the right of the Buddha and, raising it above his head, stood motionless, his lips moving inaudibly. Replacing it, he stood silent for a moment, then, raising one hand above his head, said harshly:

"The hour of sacrifice draws nigh! Then ye will depart, each following his own path, and will bear the message of war to the peoples of this land. And because ye have been chosen from the lamaseries and monasteries of Tibet to carry this message, ye shall hear for the first and last time the voice of thy master, Kang Pu, the Chosen of Buddha!"

He wheeled to face the god, the monks standing motionless.

Ferrers Locke drew his revolver, his finger on the trigger.

"O Buddha," droned Kala Dului, "let the spirit of Kang Pu enter into ye that these servants of thine may hear his message!"

He ceased speaking. No one stirred.

.....

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Prompted by the murderous activities of the all-powerful

KANG PU, the self-styled Chosen of Buddha and fanatic who, to satisfy his own monstrous ambitions, would set the whole world ablaze with war.

FERRERS LOCKE, the famous Baker Street detective, accompanied by his plucky young assistant,

JACK DRAKE, leaves England for Tibet, determined to discover the fate of an expedition led by

MAJOR BEVERLEY, which is believed to have fallen into Kang Pu's clutches.

Disguised as travelling lamas, Locke and Drake cross the Tibetan frontier and meet

KALA DULUI, a priest, and one of the zealous agents of Kang Pu. Suspicious of the detectives' bona fides, Kala Dului cunningly directs the twain to the Patong Lamasery.

By a strategic move, however, Ferrers Locke and Drake gain their freedom and make for the hills, where they come across

TOMO, an outcast, who, having suffered at the hands of the merciless priests of Buddha, offers to guide Locke and Drake to the monastery of Salai, which is alleged to be the secret haunt of Kang Pu.

(Now read on.)

The silence was intense. Then, as though from the very lips of the Buddha, came a voice, cold and emotionless:

"Listen to my words, for I am Kang Pu, the Chosen of Buddha, the scourge of the Western world! Go ye into the fastness of this land and bid my people prepare for war! Bid them prepare and await the signal, which shall come from holy Lhasa. The time is not yet ripe, for I, Kang Pu, work in my own way. But the day approaches when the white races shall be put to the sword, and I, Kang Pu, shall reign in Lhasa!"

The voice ceased. Kala Dului stood as though turned to stone. Ferrers Locke raised his automatic, the end of the barrel protruding through the chink in the curtain.

"He must not live, Jack!" he murmured, and Jack knew it was of Kang Pu he spoke.

"None know me, and none have seen my face!" continued the voice. "Greater than the Grand Lama am I, Kang Pu, lord of life and death! I—"

Bang!

Ferrers Locke fired straight between the eyes of the giant god. There issued from its lips a wild, long-drawn scream. Then, with Jack by his side, Ferrers Locke pushed his way past the curtain, which fell into place behind him.

Beyond Gyantse!

THE monks stood in stricken silence, staring at the two figures standing inside the curtain.

Kala Dului backed away till the knees of the Buddha stayed his further progress.

He glared at Ferrers Locke, his lips drawn back from his teeth in a snarl of fear and rage. The detective advanced, his gun in his hand, his eyes alert.

"Call on your master, Kala Dului!" he cried. "Call on Kang Pu, the lord of life and death!"

Kala Dului did not answer.

"Where is he now?" went on Ferrers Locke mockingly, as Kala Dului glared at him in silence. "Where is this lord of life and death who preaches war to these black-robed fools?"

He wheeled on the line of monks.

"Fools that you are!" he cried. "Get you gone to your monasteries and lamaseries, and lend not your ears to the lying words of Kang Pu!"

"No lying words are they, accursed one!" screamed Kala Dului. "And that ye shall learn! I know ye, ye violator of Patong!"

He waved wild arms above his head.

"At him, ye servants of Buddha!" he cried. "Pull down the dog that his carcass may rot in the streets of Lhasa! At him, that outraged Buddha may drink of his cursed blood!"

A low, ominous growl came from the monks, and they surged restlessly.

Ferrers Locke saw the danger signal. The first shock of surprise had passed, and the gesticulating figure of Kala Dului was likely to sway them to an assault.

"Listen, ye priests!" he cried imperatively. "And ye, thou hypocrite, Kala Dului! Here I stand before your Buddha and throw in his teeth the words of Kang Pu. War is not for ye, I say, nor for the peoples of Tibet! Call on your Buddha, Kala

Dului, or on his chosen one, Kang Pu, to say that I lie. Call on them, thou sorcerer, and if they answer that I lie, then indeed wilt thou be vindicated!"

The monks shuffled uneasily. Half-scared, half-expectant glances they cast at the god, but the Buddha sat silent and unresponsive. Who this stranger was they knew not. But Kang Pu had shrieked and been silent at his approach, and their superstitious, receptive minds were ill-at-ease.

"Ye know, Kala Dului, the death which I hold in my hand!" went on the detective. "And if thou refuse to call upon thy master, Kang Pu, then assuredly shalt thou die!"

Kala Dului licked his livid lips. He knew, as well as Ferrers Locke, the trickery with which he had sought to impress these superstitious priests. He might also have been able to answer a question which Ferrers Locke was asking himself. Had the voice which had spoken from the lips of the god been that of Kang Pu himself, or of someone acting for Kang Pu?

"I shall count three, Kala Dului!" Ferrers Locke's voice was tense. "And if thou still refuse to call on Kang Pu then thou shalt die!"

It was a shrewd stroke this of Ferrers Locke. If he could instil doubt into the minds of these monks then the message of war would be but a poor, half-hearted thing, lacking the power of conviction which it would carry were it preached by sincere fanatics. For should the message be delivered and priest-ridden Tibet rise in arms, then it might well be the spark which would fire the East and plunge the world into Armageddon.

"One!"

The word fell coldly from the detective's lips, and he raised his revolver till it covered the heart of the cringing Kala Dului. The monks stood as though spellbound, leaderless and unknowing how to act. Had one of them at that moment had the intelligence and courage to take the law into his own hands, then Ferrers Locke and Jack would have been overwhelmed by a rush of the black-robed ones. But Kala Dului was their high priest, and to Kala Dului they looked for action and not merely vituperation. Moreover, the majority were convinced that

their god would not allow this sacrilege to pass unpunished.

"Two!"

Ferrers Locke's finger tightened on the trigger. Kala Dului glared at him through blazing eyes, knowing full well that death was very close. His lips moved, mouthing strange oaths. Then, with a cry, he flung himself face downwards at the feet of the god, hammering with his hands and clawing with his talon-like fingers at the unresponsive metal.

"O Kang Pu!" he screamed. "O Buddha, strike down in thy wrath this defiler of thy holy temples!" It is worthy of note that he called on the great Buddha second. "Let the fire of thy righteous anger envelop him that the dogs of Lhasa may feast on his shrivelled bones! A sign—a sign, O Kang Pu, that these servants of thine may see with their eyes thine omnipotence! Strike down the infidel, O Kang Pu—strike down this desecrator of thy shrines, O Buddha!"

Kala Dului staggered to his feet swayingly, shakingly. He turned to the monks and threw out his arms in an impassioned gesture.

"At him, ye dogs!" he shrieked. "Canst thou not see that the great Buddha looks to ye? Canst thou—"

The words died on his lips. He swayed backwards and forwards, fighting for control, then his body went limp and he crashed to the floor. Outraged Nature had taken her toll, and the violence of his fear and emotion had brought about a complete collapse.

The monks started forward, but froze into immobility as Ferrers Locke wheeled on them.

"Read, then, that sign, if sign it be, ye priests of Buddha!" he cried. "Why lies your high priest thus, at the very feet of that false god? War is not for thee, I say, nor for this land of Tibet! Get you gone to your lamaseries, and pay no heed to the lying tongue of that arch-hypocrite Kang Pu!"

One monk, bolder than the others, stood forward.

"Who are ye?" he demanded harshly. "Ye who stand in this temple of Buddha, clad in the garb of a herder of asses?"

Ferrers Locke stared at the man. He knew he was holding these black-robed monks by the strange manner of his coming amongst them.

They were astounded, aghast! They knew not what to think. Their high priest, lying as though in death, at the very feet of the silent Buddha! This dominant stranger so full of strange words, so confident in those words!

When the detective spoke his voice was low and vibrant with emotion. He meant it to be. He was striving to drive home his domination over them. But he knew full well how thin was the ice on which he trod. One look, one word, one gesture betraying aught but the knowledge that he was supreme master of the situation, then the spell would be broken, and they would rush on him and tear him down.

"Ye ask who I am?" he said. "Know, then, that I am one who has journeyed far to guide thy feet from the path of war. For as surely as ye set foot along that path, then shall it lead you into the valley of death! Heed not the lying words of Kang Pu, else thy bones shall bleach by the wayside, and death shall stalk throughout this land."

He paused and knew that he had won. No fiery message of war would be preached by these monks. Doubting, they would return to their

lamaseries to ponder on the strange scenes enacted in the ruined temple of the Seven Monasteries.

Then, suddenly, without the slightest warning every light flickered out, plunging the temple into profound darkness. And in front of the god, where had lain the still form of Kala Dului, there leapt upwards a tongue of flame. From out of the very ground it seemed to come, and by its eerie, dancing light, it was seen that the body of Kala Dului had vanished. It grew in volume till the giant Buddha seemed enveloped in a sea of flame.

With a groan the monks threw themselves to the ground, whilst Locke and Drake watched with bated breath!

(Is this another trick on the part of that wily scoundrel, Kala Dului? Does it mean that Ferrers Locke has lost his hold on the superstitious monks? Next week's thrilling instalment will tell you, chums.)

DRIVEN FROM SCHOOL!

(Continued from page 15.)

want to start the holiday by making mincemeat of our respected headmaster!"

Like a snail startled by the sound of a garden-roller, the Head crawled hastily to safety. The Flying Fury dashed past him, and he had a glimpse of four grinning faces.

"Stop!" roared the Head. "Fearless, you young rascal! I want a lift to Winklesea! Stop at once!"

The only response was a burst of mocking laughter. Headless of the Head and his sorry plight, the Flying Fury went galloping out of gates, to disappear in a cloud of dust.

The Head scrambled to his feet. Purple with pashun, he shook his fists after the retreating car, at the same time giving vent to the most unskollerly egg-clamations.

"Blow! Bother! Dash! I'll birch those young rascals black and blue when I get to camp! Fancy them leaving me in the lurch like this!"

By this time the quadrangle was deserted. The captins and the kings had departed, so to speak, and there wasn't a single vehicle in sight.

Snorting with rage, the Head crossed to the bicycle-sheds and peeped in. Only one solitary bike remained, and that was no use to the Head, for it was a fag's bike. It would be beneath his dignity to ride to Winklesea on that.

However, there was a wheelbarrow in the woodshed, and the Head decided that he could travel in that without loss to his preshus dignity. He dumped his portmanto into the barrow, and perched himself astride it; then he commanded Fossil, the porter, to push him out of gates.

"Rather a novel way of going to camp, Fossil—what?" chuckled the Head, watching the aged porter grunting and groaning like a beast of burden. "We'll take it in turns with the pushing. You do the first mile, and I'll do the next."

But before the first mile had been covered, the Head had conveniently dozed off to sleep; and all Fossil's efforts to wake him proved unavailing. So the unhappy porter mopped the inspiration from his brow, and took up the shafts again, and plodded on his weary way.

And in this fashion they at last reached Winklesea.

THE END.

(Be sure you read: "KIDNAPPED BY PIRATES!"—next week's exciting yarn of St. Sam's. It's the goods!)

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"TAKING UP TROTTER!"

(Continued from page 24.)

"I think you are!" jeered the Bounder.

And the Bounder was right. Skinner went, whirled to the door by the Bounder's sinewy grasp, and hurled into the passage by the Bounder's hefty boot. He landed there with a crash.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?" called out Bob Cherry.

"Yaroooh!"

The Bounder explained, what time Skinner lay gasping on the floor.

"Trotter's staying to tea with me," added the Bounder. "If you fellows care to come, I'll be honoured."

"We'll come with pleasure," said Harry Wharton. "But we'll kick Skinner along the passage first."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The kickfulness is the proper caper."

Skinner scrambled to his feet in dire alarm. His alarm was well founded. Bob Cherry's boot landed, and Skinner yelled and fled. After him went the Famous Five, and three or four other Remove fellows, and Skinner was dribbled the length of the Remove passage, yelling frantically as he went. He fled into a box-room at last and locked the door,

and then the Famous Five walked back cheerily to Study No. 4 to tea with Trotter and the Bounder.

Tea in Smithy's study was going strong when the door opened and a fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered in.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"I don't mind coming to tea with Trotter, you fellows," said Bunter.

"I'm no snob. He's taken us in, and I think it's a swindle, really, but, after all, what can a fellow expect of the lower classes?"

"Oh, my eye!" said Trotter.

Bunter blinked at the well-spread

table, and sidled into the study. Trotter stared at him.

"Mind, don't want any familiarity from you, Trotter," explained Bunter. "I expect you to keep your distance when you're speaking to a gentleman. That's understood. Give me that chair."

"Eh?"

"You can sit on the fender. Good enough for you, you know."

"Oh!"

"In fact, you'd better not sit down at all," said Bunter. "I don't really approve of it. Pass the cake Smithy."

Smithy did not pass the cake. He jumped up, and his guests jumped up at the same time. More hands than Bunter could count were laid on the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove. There was a terrific crash in the Remove passage as William George Bunter landed there. Then the door slammed, and nothing more was seen of Billy Bunter, though his voice was heard for quite a long time.

The next day Trotter was at his accustomed duties again, dividing his attentions, as usual, between answering bells and pursuing the thrilling adventures of the Demon Barber. He had lost his two new friends, but he did not seem to feel the loss at all.

THE END.

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25-6-27



DRIVEN FROM SCHOOL!

By DICKY NUGENT

CRASH! Bang! Thud!

At the sound of that timid tapping on the door of his study Doctor Birchmell glanced up from the comic paper he was reading with a frown of annoyance.

"Come in, father!" he growled.

Instantly the door was thrown open, and a strange and grotesque figure appeared on the threshold. The figure was all in white, and it was jibbering and jesticulating wildly.

"The Head jumped to his feet, his face distorted by fear.

"A—a ghost!" he gasped, against Pannick-stricken, he stared at the mysterious apparition which stood framed in his study doorway. His few remaining hairs stood up on end, and he trembled like a frightened rabbit.

"His necks fairly knocked together.

"A—a fantum!" muttered the Head hoarsely. "A fantum—and in broad daylight!"

Closer inspection of his strange vizziter, however, reassured the Head that this was no speaker from the Land of Shaddogs. It was a creature of flesh and blood; it was, in fact, no other than Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth!

"My hat, Lickham!" cried the Head. "How you scared me! I thought you were a ghost! What is the meaning of this intrusion, and of your extraordinary appearance?"

Mr. Lickham waved his arms wildly. "Doctor Birchmell!" he ejaculated. "I have come to tell you that I have reached the limit of my endurance. I cannot stand—"

"Sit down, then!" said the Head, pushing Mr. Lickham into an armchair.

"I cannot stand this state of affairs any longer!" cried the master of the Fourth. "Ever since this school has been in the hands of workmen I have suffered every sort of annoyance and inconvenience. I cannot conduct mourning lessons with a gang of workmen in the Form-room banging and hammering loud enough to wake the dead! I have endured it for two days, and I can endure it no longer. Look at me, sir! I am covered with whitewash from head to foot!"

"So I perceive!" grinned the Head. "How did it happen?"

Mr. Lickham nearly choked.

"Either by accident or design—I suspect the latter—one of the men who was engaged in whitewashing the ceiling overturned a pail of whitewash and it descended upon me, covering me as with a garment. I am soaked with the abominable licker! My pupils seemed to consider it a matter for merriment. They had the ordascity to burst out laughing in my presence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Head.

"Why, you are laughing at me yourself, sir!" cried Mr. Lickham indignantly.

"Scuse me, Lickham!" chuckled the Head. "It isn't often that my rizzabily is eggsted, but you look such a fry that I simply can't help laughing. Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lickham turned as purple as his whitewashed face would permit.

"Sir!" he cried. "I cannot sit down—"

"You said a minute ago that you couldn't stand!" the Head reminded him.

"I cannot sit down under these taunts—"

"Why not take them lying down, then?" suggested the Head. "If you can neither stand nor sit down under them, that seems to be the only way!"

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"You mock me, sir!" eggscramed Mr. Lickham, white to the lips.

"The Head cocked his ears.

"I have the pattern of fairy feet in the corridor!" he murmured.

"Who comes?"

It was Mr. Justiss, the master of the Fifth, who entered. He stamped furiously along the corridor and burst into the Head's study like a siphon-bell. A large bump, the size of a billiard-ball, appeared on Mr. Justiss' nape.

"Sir," cried the master of the Fifth wrathfully, "I have come to tell you that I cannot stand—"

"Take a pew, then!" said the Head, pushing a chair towards his vizziter. "What's the trouble, Justiss?" he added soothingly.

"It's these workmen!" groaned Mr. Justiss, careering the bump on his head. "I have had neither piece nor privacy. I rest not, respice, since they invaded St. Sam's. They are making such a din in the Form-room that it is impossible for me to take the Fifth. I cannot conduct lessons with showers of paint and whitewash flying around and clumping hanging and hammering and clumping and thumping. At eleven o'clock I was obliged to dismiss my Form. It was hopeless to try and carry on. I came out into the quadrangle for a breath of fresh air, and what do you think happened?"

"Ask me another!" said the Head.

"A chimney-pot came crashing down on to my granium!" shouted Mr. Justiss. "There was a party of men working on the roof and they carelessly let the thing drop. It might have brained me!"

"Impossible!" said the Head. "You cannot brain the brainless!"

Mr. Justiss gave a snort.

"You are adding insult to injury, sir!" he cried hotly. "I have suffered enuff at the hands of these workmen, and so has Mr. Lickham, to judge by his appearance!"

"I have, indeed!" grunted Mr. Lickham. "These fellows have turned the school upside-down! Chaos and confusion—and whitewash—rains everywhere! And there is no sign of the newscane abating. I asked the foreman how long it would take for the repairs to be carried out, and his reply was a month. I cannot endure another hour, le alone a month, of this sort of thing!"

"Nor I," said Mr. Justiss. "It is impossible to carry on the normal school routine with these vandals in the place."

The Head was about to reply when another vizziter came into the study. This was Herr Otto Guggenheimer. He stout, short-sighted German master. He was limping painfully, and his garments

were covered with grime and cobwebs. His plump cheeks were florid with rage.

"Why, Guggy," cried the Head jentially, "what's the matter with you, man?"

"Hook! Strafe! Donner und blitzen!" spluttered Herr Guggenheimer.

"Same to you!" said the Head. "But let's have it in English, if you don't mind!"

"It is these workmen, doctor!" cried the German master. "They will be the death of me—strate them! They are taking up the floorboards in my Form-room, and they left a grate yawning hole, into which—being short-sighted—I tumbled mit meinsel!"

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

The German master glared.

"It vos no laughing matter, doctor!" he growled. "I might have broken my neck, sir! It is, as it is, I have twisted my ankle and ruined my clothes, and I come here to tell you that I will stand it no longer!"

Herr Guggenheimer glared round the study, meeting the sympathetic glances of Mr. Lickham and Mr. Justiss.

"We have come to see the Head about the same thing," said Mr. Lickham.

"We cannot carry on our duties while the place is being turned upside down. I suggest a strike, gentlemen, that we organize a masters' strike!"

"Here, here!" cried Mr. Justiss.

"Yes—here and now," said Mr. Lickham, jumping to his feet. "We will call a meeting of all the masters, and my proposal will be carried a non y-mously. Unless, of course, Doctor

at the exciting adventures of Jack Jolly and his chery chums of St. Sam's.

Let it rain, let it pour,
Laugh a lot, then laugh some more
at the exciting adventures of Jack Jolly and his chery chums of St. Sam's.

Birchemell agrees to turn these workmen out!" said the Head.

"Then we strike!" cried Mr. Lickham dramatically.

The three masters were on their feet, snorting delugance. The Head eyed them calmly.

"Calm yourselves, gentlemen!" he said. "There is no need to resort to these rash measures. I had already realized before you came to me with these complaints that the school routine could not be carried on whilst the workmen are on the premises. So I telephoned to the governors and insulted them on the matter. They have decided that the school shall take a camping holiday forthwith at Winklessea."

Instantly the masters brightened up. At the prospect of a camping holiday by the sea they started to caper round the study like frolicksome fags.

"Ripping!" cried Mr. Lickham. "Topping, by Jove!" beamed Mr. Justiss.

The Head chuckled.

"Ah, I thought that would please you!" he said. "The camp at Winklessea is at present occupied by Boy Scouts. They are quitting to-day and will leave the tents standing in readiness for our occupation. We start to-morrow."

"Hurrah!"

"You may return to your Form-rooms and broadcast the good news to the boys," said the Head.

"They will be awfully bucked or, as the vulgar would say, elated. Winklessea is a delightful spot, noted chiefly for its winkles. A holiday there will be a tonic. It will warm the cockles of our hearts, besides helping to strengthen

muscles of little shrimps like yourselves!"

"Really, sir—"

"Already, in my mind's eye, I can see myself squinting on the shingle eating winkles with a pin," said the Head. And he became so gleeful at the prospect that he burst into song:

"I do like to be beside the seaside,
I do like to be beside the sea!
I do like to stroll along the prom,
And hear the brass band play
'Tiddly-om-pom-pom'!"

"Don't you, gentlemen?"

But the masters had gone. The Head cracked base voice had sent them hither-sketter from the study, and they were soon engaged in breaking the good news to the St. Sam's fellows that the school was going to camp on the morrow.

II.

NEXT day, an epidemic of fever broke out at St. Sam's. But as it was only holiday fever, there was no need to send anybody to the sanny.

Everybody was wildly eggsted, from Burleigh, of the Sixth, down to the teeniest, weeniest fag. Even the usually stayed and sober masters had so far relaxed from their lofty dignity that they frisked and capered like two-year-olds. In the sunny quadrangle, there were scenes of the wildest animation.

A big motor sharrabong came rumbuling through the school gateway, and it was promptly beeseed and boarded by an eager crowd of fellows.

So fierce was the fight for a seat in the sharrabong that it looked as if a heavy Rugby scrum was in progress. A heavy wedged on the steps of the vehicle. There were shores and scuffles, and pushes and punches, and blows and howlings; and the weeklings were hurled bodily off the steps, to come to greet on the hard, unsimpherthick flagstones. As for their competitors, they swarmed into the sharrabong with whoops of glee. Owing to the Head's lack of four-sight, only one sharrabong had been hired to convey the St. Sam's fellows to Winklessea. The Governors had given the Head enuff munny to charter a whole fleet of sharrabongs; but Doctor Birchmell had decided to blug as little munny as possible on the undertaking, so that he might line his own pockets. The Head, you see, was inclined to be mesagery.

"Squeeze in, there!" shouted the Head, from his study window. "That sharrabong ought to accommodate three

hundred, with ease. Wedge yourselves in, my boys!"

But, in spite of the utmost squeezing and wedging, not more than fifty fellows were able to find room in the vehicle. The remainder turned helplessly to the Head.

"You'll have to order some more sharrabongs, sir!" said Burleigh, of the Sixth. "We shall want another five, at least."

"Ratts!" snorted the Head. "Do you think I'm going to fritter away the school funds, on transport? There is ample room in that sharrabong, if you sit three on top of each other."

"But think of the discomfort, sir!" said Burleigh.

"Bah! Likewise yah! If you are not willing to do as I suggest, you must find your own ways and means of getting to Winklessea. I refuse to be put to any further eggspense in the matter."

Burleigh shrugged his shoulders, and strode away to the shed in which his motor-bike was kept.

That was the signal for all sorts and kinds of conveyances to be brought into action.

The lucky few who owned motor-bikes were soon snorting their way out of gates. They were followed by an army of push-bikes; and these, in turn, were followed by a fleet of fairy-cycles, ridden by festive fags.

The masters—who had all been chucked off the sharrabong steps without a seremony, in the fierce fight for seats—looked like being stranded. But Mr. Justiss conceived the bright idea of hiring the station-hack, and jointly, sharing the eggspense. Half an hour later, the ancient vehicle, with its more ancient driver and still more ancient horse, came crawling into the quad.

The masters hurried their luggage on top, and scrambled into the hack.

"Make room for me, gentlemen!" yelled the Head, from his study window.

"Ratts!"

"Go and get coke!"

"This is where you get left, doc!"

The Head, pannick-stricken at the prospect of being unable to get a lift, snatched up his portmanteau and hurried out of the quad. The grinning faces of the masters peered out at him from the hack.

"Open this door, you rotters!" panted the Head breathlessly, as he tugged at the door-handle. "You can make room for a little one, I'm sure!"

But the masters, huddled together inside the hack, held the door fast; and the Head's frantic struggles were futile. The ancient driver cracked his whip, and the ancient horse—which was an old Derby winner in Victorian days—set off at a shambling gait towards the gates.

The Head still clung tenaciously to the handle, and was dragged along beside the vehicle, breathing threatening and slawter. But a sudden push in the chest from Mr. Lickham caused the Head to go sprawling on to the flagstones.

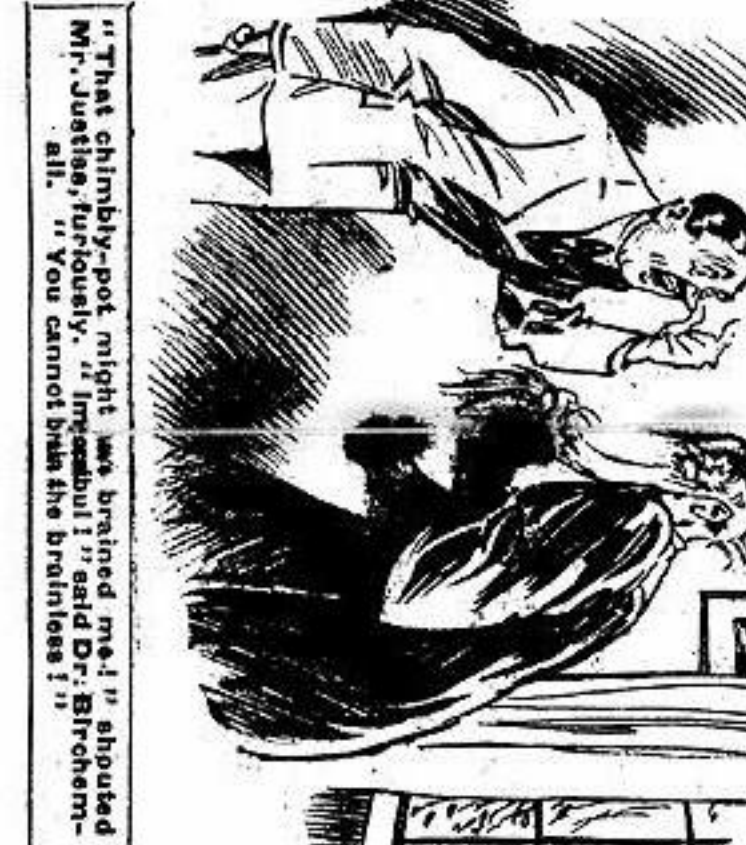
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the masters.

"The hack rumbled merrily on its way, and the Head sat up and glared after it. "Beasts!" he yelled. "I'll jolly well pay you out for this! You wait till we meet at Winklessea!"

Suddenly a warning foot-loot sounded behind the Head, and a long, lean racing-car bore down upon him. It was driven by Frank Fearless, of the Fourth, and it was Frank's famous car, the Flying Fury. On board with Frank were Jack Jolly and Merry and Bright, the heroes of the Fourth.

"Look out, sir!" yelled Frank Fearless, tooing at his horn. "We don't

"That chimney-pot might have brained me!" shouted Mr. Justiss, furiously. "Impossible!" said Dr. Birchmell. "You cannot brain the brainless!"



"You said a minute ago that you couldn't stand!" the Head reminded him.

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