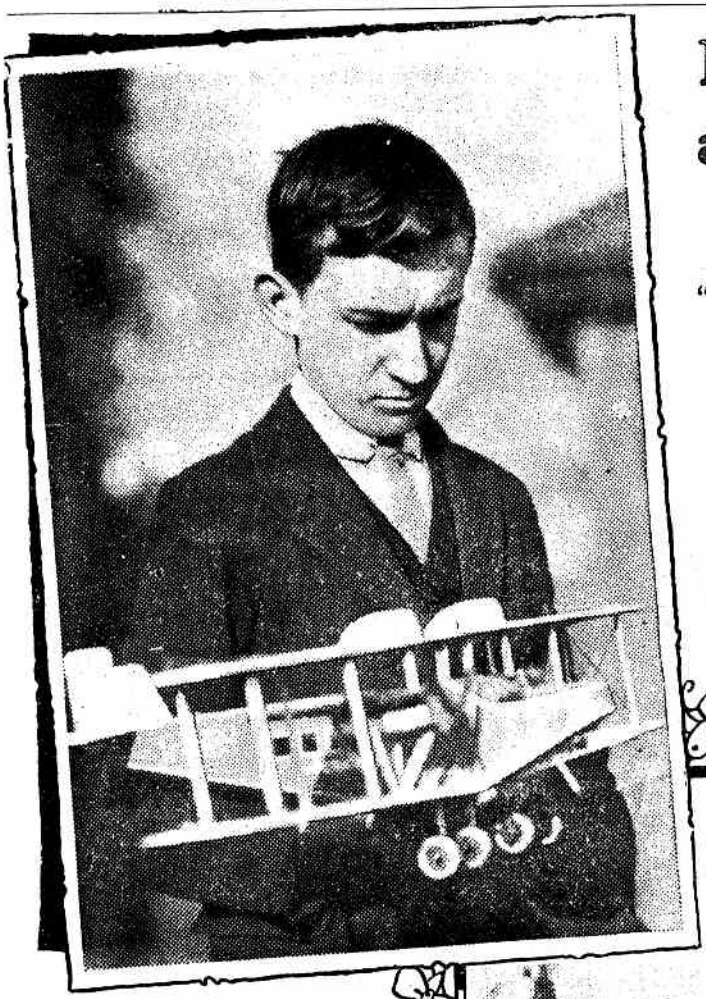
"THE BOY FROM THE EAST!"

This week's ripping long school story of Greyfriars.

WHAT DID BUNTER OVERHEAR?

(A dramatic incident from the grand school story of Harry Wharton & Co. inside.)

News Pars and Pictures.



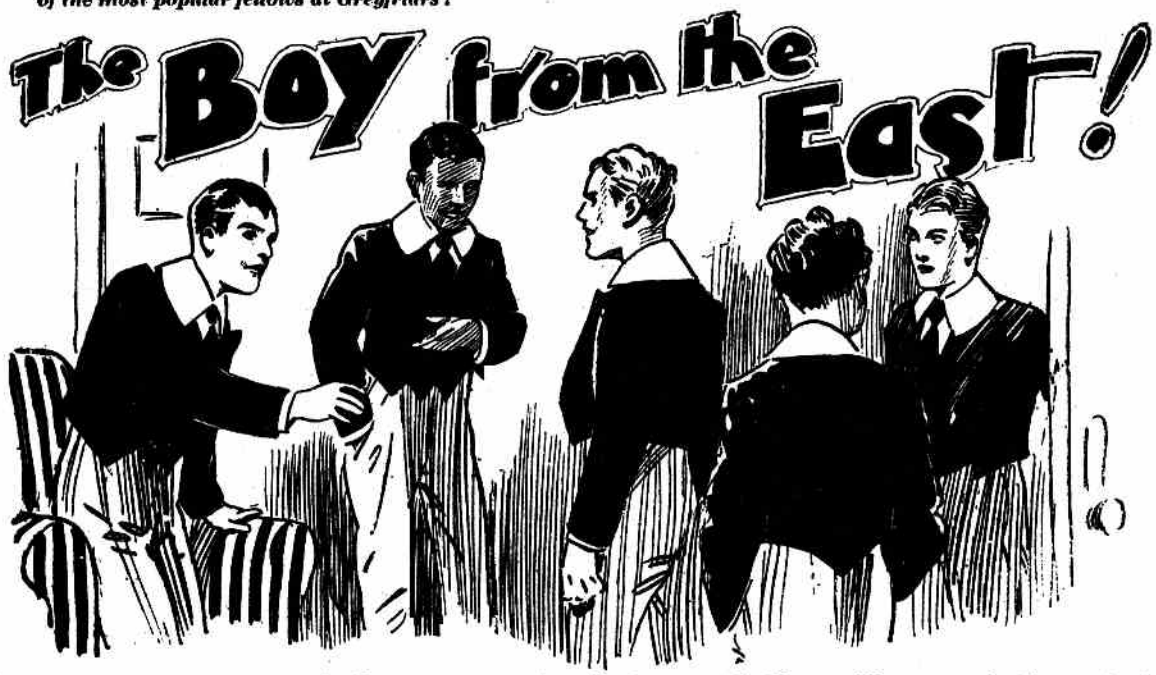
"JOLLY GOOD, KENNETH!"

This topping little model of a Handley-Page passenger-carrying plane is only one of the many examples of Kenneth Winkley's craftsmanship and ingenuity with pieces of wood and wire. All Kenneth's models are made to scale and true to detail, so much so that leading aircraft firms have commissioned him to build models of their machines. This clever young fellow started making models of planes seven years ago, and he's only nineteen now. Wants some beating, doesn't it?

A LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE!

In the old days life in the Royal Navy was anything but pleasant; bad food, little pay—sometimes none at all—and uncomfortable quarters. But in the Royal Navy of to-day Jack's health and comfort are studied with scrupulous care. The pay is good and regular, the grub is good, quarters are comfortable and Jack's physical fitness is well looked after. Our photo shows some of the merry tars on H.M.S. Marlborough doubling round the quarter-deck in an exercise spin before brekker. They look a sturdy set of fellows, don't they, typical of the thousands of gallant sea-dogs who go to make the finest Navy in the world.

THE NEW BOY'S MISSION! ***Boys from all parts of the globe are represented at Greyfriars; but the news that a Eurasian is expected causes quite a sensation. Yet this newcomer isn't just an ordinary schoolboy—sent to school to "learn things." He's there to carry out the dastardly plan of a man who is out to ruin Harry Wharton—one of the most popular fellows at Greyfriars!***



The opening story in a brilliant new series dealing with Harry Wharton & Co. and the coming of a new boy to Greyfriars By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Not Detained!

"INKY!"

"Where's Inky?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh—generally called Inky to save time, as well as on account of his beautiful complexion, did not answer to the call.

Four members of the Famous Five of Greyfriars had gathered on the House steps, ready to start. The dusky member of the Co. was conspicuous by his absence.

"The ass!" remarked Frank Nugent.

"The fathead!" observed Johnny Bull.

"Inky!" bawled Bob Cherry.

Really, it was too bad.

Minutes were precious.

Harry Wharton & Co. had arranged to bike over to Lantham that afternoon, to see as much as they could of a county cricket match that was going on there.

It was the third day of a three days' match, and, according to report, the finish was going to be closely contested, and well worth watching by fellows who were keen on the summer game.

They rather fancied themselves at cricket in the Greyfriars Remove. Still they admitted that they might have something to learn from county players.

In the circumstances, many Remove fellows considered that Mr. Quelch might very well have granted them a special whole holiday for such a special occasion.

That thought did not appear to have crossed Mr. Quelch's mind, however, and no member of his Form ventured to suggest it to him. Mr. Quelch did not encourage suggestions of that sort.

So the Famous Five had to make the most they could of the half-holiday. It was nearly ten miles to Lantham, and they wanted to start immediately after dinner. But Bob Cherry had had lines—the unfortunate result of sailing down the banisters instead of descending the stairs in the ordinary way. His chums had waited until those lines were written, and duly handed in to Wingate of the Sixth. Then all was ready—excepting Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. The dusky junior seemed to have disappeared.

"Well, of all the chumps!" said Harry Wharton, in exasperated tones. "We may be late for the finish, anyhow. There isn't a minute to waste if we're going to see anything at Lantham."

"Inky!" roared Bob.

"I say, you fellows——"

A fat junior rolled out of the House and blinked at the four Removites through his big spectacles.

"Seen Inky, Bunter?" asked Harry.

"Yes; he's detained."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The howling ass, to get detained now!" exclaimed Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, it's all right," said Bunter cheerfully. "Quelchy called Inky into his study a few minutes ago. I saw him. But it's all right. You fellows are going over to Lantham. I'd come with you, only my bike's a bit crocked. Well, as Inky can't come, I'll borrow his bike, see? I suppose you'd rather have me than Inky?"

The Co. glared at Bunter.

Only Billy Bunter knew what a fascinating fellow he was, and what pleasure was to be found in his company.

Other fellows had no idea of it.

Bunter's supposition, therefore, that the chums of the Remove preferred his company to Inky's, was wholly, totally, and completely unfounded.

"You silly owl!" said Bob Cherry, in measured tones.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You footling ass!"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Roll away, barrel!" snapped Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really Bull——"

"Look here, Bunter! How do you know that Inky's detained?" asked Harry Wharton. "Quelchy might call him into his study without detaining him."

"Oh, he's detained all right!" said Bunter. "Take my word for that. Let's get off at once, shall we? You fellows want to see the cricket at Lantham, and I'm awfully keen on it. You know what a cricketer I am."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I heard you mention that you're going to have tea afterwards at the Lantham Pagoda!" said Bunter. "They do you frightfully well at the Pagoda at Lantham. Quite town style. Their cream-tarts——"

"Is Inky under detention or not?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Yes. Quelchy was scowling frightfully when he called him into his study. He looked quite wild—murderous, in fact. I think it's a licking as well as a detention. Never mind Inky. Let's get off, you chaps. We shall be late for tea at the Pagoda—I mean, for the cricket. I say, you fellows, if you like, I'll go straight to the Pagoda, and wait for you there. It will save you the cost of admission for one——"

"Save us?" asked Bob.

"Well, one of you chaps would have to stand the admission for me, as I happen to be stony to-day. It would save you that. I don't really mind missing the cricket——"

"So long as you get a feed at the Pagoda?" asked Bob sarcastically.

"Exactly! I mean nothing of the sort. I'm only thinking of saving you fellows expense. You could lend me five bob to get a snack while I'm waiting for you, see? Then I'd have tea with you when you come. I say, you fellows, let's start before Inky comes out——"

"If he's under detention he won't come out!" said Johnny Bull, with a suspicious glare at the Owl of the Remove.

"I—I mean——"

"You mean that Inky isn't under de-

tention at all, and you want to bag his bike and his tea!" said Bob.

"Nunno! Stands to reason he's detained. What else could Quelchy want him for on a half-holiday? I say, you fellows——"

"My esteemed chums——" said a voice in the doorway

It was Hurree Jamset Ram Singh at last.

"Oh dear!" ejaculated Bunter.

The sudden appearance of the Nabob of Bhanipur had a rather disconcerting effect on William George Bunter.

Evidently he had hoped to get clear of Greyfriars on Inky's bike before the nabob had finished his interview with the Remove master.

"Are you detained, Inky?" demanded Johnny Bull.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shook his head.

"The answer is in the esteemed negative," he said.

"That fat villain——"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Bump him!"

"I say, you fellow—leggo!" roared Bunter. "I—I didn't mean that Inky was detained, you know—I mean to say—— Yaroooooop!"

Whether that was what Bunter meant to say or not, that was what he said, as he sat down on the stone steps with a hefty concussion.

"Ow! Wow! Oh! Beasts!" roared Bunter

"Have another?" asked Bob.

"Ow! Beast! Keep off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter wriggled away in a great hurry—in so great a hurry that he rather overlooked the fact that he was on the top step. There was a wild roar from the Owl of the Remove as he rolled down into the quad. He landed on the hard, unsympathetic earth, and for some moments at least, the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Change for the Better!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH grinned.

But his dusky face became serious again at once.

His interview with his Form-master did not seem to have bucked the dusky junior from India's coral strand.

"My esteemed chums——" he began.

"No time for jaw, old chap," said Bob Cherry. "We're late already, owing to those rotten lines. Come on."

"The regretfulness is terrific——"

"Never mind the giddy regretfulness. Get a move on!"

"The sunshine of contentment has been clouded by the terrific frown of adversity!" said the nabob sadly. "You fellows get off—I am boundfully compelled to remain."

"You said you weren't detained, ass."

"There is no detainfulness: but the esteemed and ludicrous Quelchy has requested an execrable favour——"

"Oh, my hat! Give it a name."

"This afternoon, an esteemed and ridiculous new fellow is bookfully due to arrive at Greyfriars."

"Well, let him arrive," grunted Bob Cherry. "He can arrive without your help, I suppose. In fact, his arrivefulness can be terrific."

"It is a new fellow from my own esteemed country," explained Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "He is coming to Greyfriars in the chargefulness of a legal johnny, of the solicitor species, of the honourable name of Gedge. Some time during the afternoon he will reach this ridiculous school: and the esteemed Quelchy desires that I remain to greet him."

Bunter picked himself up.

"I say, you fellows, are we going to have another nigger in the Remove?" Bunter inquired, from the bottom of the steps. "I say, that's rather thick, isn't it?"

"Shut up, Bunter."

"Oh really, Wharton——"

"Is the new fellow an Indian chap, Inky?" asked Wharton.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shook his head.

"No! He is only in part an esteemed countryman of my own: the rest of him is of an inferior quality."

"Oh, my hat!"

"He is what we call in India a Eurasian," explained the nabob.

"Half Asia and half Europe!" said Bob.

"Exactly. A half-caste—though if you call him a half-caste, you had better guard with your esteemed left at the same time: it is not a word liked by Eurasians!" grinned the nabob. "His name is Da Costa. The esteemed and excellent Quelchy thinks it will be nicer for him to meet the only man at Greyfriars who knows his country, on the day of his arrival: and he has therefore requested me to remain within gates."

"Rotten!"

"The rottenfulness is terrific!" agreed the nabob. "I have no great love for esteemed half-castes, but that is one of the many things our ludicrous Form-master does not know. But it is impossible to refuse a request from the honourable and preposterous Quelchy."

That fact was self-evident: and the chums of the Remove did not argue the point. A request from a Form-master was a good deal like an invitation from Royalty; not to be declined.

"We'll stay in, too!" said Bob, with a great effort. "We can root up something to do. It's some time since we've ragged Coker of the Fifth."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shook his head decidedly.

"My esteemed chums will go bikefully to Lantham, as arranged," he answered. "Buzz off at once: and leave me to it. No good wasting your half-holiday also."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!" roared Bob.

"Shan't! Look here, you fellows, this has turned out quite luckily," said Bunter, blinking up the steps at the Removites. "Inky ain't detained, but he can't go, so it comes to the same thing. I'll come instead."

"Go and eat coke."

"You'll lend me your bike, won't you, Inky?" urged Bunter.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh hesitated. A bike that was borrowed by Bunter was never likely to be returned to the owner in the same state as when it was lent. But Inky was the soul of good-nature. He nodded.

"That's all right, then," said Bunter. "Come on, you fellows—we don't want to be late."

The chums of the Remove were hesitating.

It was hard luck on Hurree Jamset Ram Singh to have to remain within gates, on that glorious summer's afternoon. Still, as the nabob had said, it was of no use for the others to lose their half-holiday also.

"My esteemed chums, you are losing time, and punctuality is the cracked pitcher that goes longest to the well, as the English proverb says. Cut off!" urged the nabob.

"Well, I suppose we may as well," said Bob. "It's hard luck, Inky. Blow the Eurasian!"

And the four juniors started for the bike-shed: William George Bunter rolling after them. Bunter, at least, was satisfied. In fact, from Bunter's point of view, matters could not have turned out better.

The quartette wheeled their bikes out: Bunter following with the handsome jigger that belonged to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hold on a minute, you fellows," called out Bunter, as the juniors were mounting in the road.

"What for, fathead?"

"This saddle is too high for me. I haven't got spindle shanks like yours, Bob Cherry, thank goodness. Put it down for me."

"Look here, Bunter, you're an ass to start for Lantham," said Harry Wharton. "You'll crock up long before you've done ten miles."

"I'm a better cyclist than any other fellow here, and chance it," said Bunter disdainfully.

"We can't wait for you on the road," said Harry impatiently. "We're going to see as much as we can of the cricket. We're going all out."

"I fancy I could give you a lead, if you go all out. You're not much of a man on a bike, Wharton."

"You silly ass—"

"You're wasting time," Bunter pointed out. "The sooner we start, the sooner we shall get to Lantham. I'll help you up the hills in turn."

"You cheeky chump!" roared Johnny Bull. "You'll crock up at the first hill."

"Well, I won't ask you to help me," sneered Bunter. "You'll have bellows to mend before we're past Redclyffe. Yah!"

Bob Cherry put the saddle of the bicycle down to its lowest extent and Bunter scrambled on board. The five juniors started at a good pace.

For the first mile, Bunter kept level without much difficulty. Then he dropped behind.

"I say, you fellows!" he squeaked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"There's no need for all this hurry. We shall get to Lantham in lots of time for tea."

"Fathead!"

"Better chuck it, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "We may not have tea at the Pagoda at all: it depends on how long the match lasts. If they keep it up late we shall stay for the finish, and we may have only time to cut back to Greyfriars for calling-over."

"I suppose you won't miss tea!" gasped Bunter.

"Amazing as it seems, we shall miss tea, if the cricket doesn't shut down in time for it."

"Well, you silly idiot!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove chuckled and pedalled on. William George Bunter laboured on behind. His little scheme of waiting at the tea-shop for the other fellows had to be given up now—if they might not come there at all. In Bunter's present financial state, it was obviously useless for him to visit the Pagoda, or any other place of refreshment, unless the other fellows were with him. Such sordid details as the settlement of the bill presented difficulties.

Evidently, it behoved William George Bunter to keep the other fellows in sight: even if he had to watch the cricket with them. If they really were idiots enough to watch the cricket instead of going out to tea, the least they could do would be to stand Bunter

Billy Bunter wriggled away from the Removites in so great a hurry, that he rather overlooked the fact that he was on the top of the House steps. There was a roar from the Owl of the Remove as he rolled down into the quad to land on the hard, unsympathetic earth. "Yarooooh!" (*See Chapter* 1.)

a small loan, so that he, at least, could act more sensibly.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Good-bye, Bunter."

They were on Redclyffe Hill now. Good-natured as the chums of the Remove were, they did not see missing the object of their trip, for the purpose of keeping company with Billy Bunter on the road. They had been willing to give up the trip for Hurree Singh's sake: but to give it up in order to propel a fat junior along a hilly road was quite another matter.

"I say, you fellows, we'll walk this hill!" yelled Bunter.

"Ta-ta!"

"Lend me a hand, Bob!"

"Fathead!"

The four juniors ground at their pedals, and skimmed up the long slope of Redclyffe Hill. William George Bunter, panting for breath, bedewed with perspiration, dismounted, and wheeled Hurree Singh's bike after them. In a few minutes the four were out of sight.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Cheap Ride!

"BEASTS!"

Billy Bunter leaned on the bike and gasped.

Riding that bike up Redclyffe Hill was a matter of impossibility for the Owl of the Remove. Wheeling it up was a fatiguing business, and Bunter was very quickly fed-up with it. Harry Wharton & Co. had vanished from sight, and with them vanished Bunter's hope of tea at the Pagoda.

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

He felt a very ill-used youth.

The juniors could have taken it in turn to free-wheel Bunter up the hills. On the downward slopes he could have managed for himself. Certainly, they would have arrived too late to see any cricket on the Lantham ground. But they would have arrived in time for tea at the Pagoda. That was really the important point.

But—with the selfishness to which Bunter was sadly accustomed—they had gone on their way regardless, just as if the cricket match at Lantham was the important matter, and as if Bunter's tea did not matter at all.

"Beasts!"

Bunter leaned on the bike and mopped his brow. Before starting on a ride, Billy Bunter never had any doubt that he could beat any other fellow that ever pushed at a pedal. Before starting and after starting, however, were different matters. A mile was enough to convince Bunter that shortness of wind was not an advantage to a cyclist—two miles made him realise with painful clearness that he had an unusual amount of weight to carry. If those other fellows had been really nice fellows—like Bunter, for instance—the Owl of the Remove could have sat comfortably in the saddle, while he was propelled over all the hills between Greyfriars and Lantham. But they weren't!

Hoot, hoot, hoot!

Bunter—with his usual consideration for others—had stopped in the middle of the road to rest.

He blinked round peevishly.

A motor-lorry was grinding up the road, and the driver was sounding his horn angrily. He did not want to slow down his heavy vehicle on the upward slope of a hill because a fat schoolboy had selected the middle of the road to lean on a bike and rest.

Crash!

Bunter believed in the maxim of "safety first."

As soon as he perceived the heavy lorry charging at him he let the bike drop in the road, and bounded for safety.

Really he was in no danger, as the lorry was still a good twenty yards off. But Billy Bunter was not taking any chances with his valuable person. He leaned panting on the fence beside the country road, leaving Hurree Singh's bike sprawling across the middle of the way.

There was no room for the lorry driver to go round that bike, and he seemed to have some objection to going over it. He brought the lorry to a halt a couple of yards short of the bicycle, glared at Billy Bunter, and proceeded to tell him what he thought of him.

Bunter blinked at him.

The lorry was empty, doubtless returning from delivering a load at Courtfield. The thought of a lift on his way immediately occurred to Bunter.

"I say——" he began.

"You young idjit!"

"I say——"

"Are you going to lift that blinking bike outer the road, or are you not going to lift that blinking bike outer the road?" demanded the driver of the lorry, categorically and emphatically.

He added one or two expressions

which he had probably learned with the Army in Flanders.

"I say, what about a lift?" asked Bunter. "I'll give you half-a-crown for a lift to Lantham, if you're going there."

Some fellows would have offered a shilling for a lift in a returning lorry. Bunter generously offered half-a-crown.

As he had neither a half-crown nor a shilling in his possession, however, he could afford to be generous—in his offer, at least.

The lorry-driver moderated his observations.

"I ain't going fur as Lantham," he answered. "I stop at Seven Elms, a mile this 'ere side of Lantham."

"That's all right," said Bunter. "I can bike the rest, if you give me a lift."

"'Op in," said the lorry-driver.

"Lift the bike in, then."

The lorry-driver looked at him, and seemed about to expend some more of the expressive words he had picked up in Flanders. However, he answered:

"If you can't stick that blinking bike into the blinking lorry your blinking self, you can leave it on the blinking road!"

Bunter shoved the bike in at the back of the lorry, finding that he could do it himself. He crawled in after it, and lay down to luxurious rest on a heap of sacks.

The lorry lurched on again.

It was a heavy vehicle, but it covered the road at a good speed. At the top of the long hill, Bunter, as he lay on the sacks, heard a sound of bicycles and voices. He was passing the chums of the Remove before they had reached the hill-top.

In the interior of the lorry, Bunter and Inky's bike were out of sight. Harry Wharton & Co. had no idea that the fat Owl was passing them.

Once past the hill, however, the four juniors let themselves go down the opposite slope, and passed the lorry again, leaving it far in the rear.

They kept their lead until they came to the long hill that led up to Seven Elms.

Then machinery beat muscle once more, and the lorry passed them, and Bunter grinned inside it as he heard the Remove fellows behind.

From that point Bunter kept well ahead, and the cyclists dropped far out of sight.

A mile out of Lantham a side road led to Seven Elms, and there the lorry-driver brought his vehicle to a halt.

"'Ere you are, sir!" he called out.

"Right-ho!"

Bunter rolled out of the back of the lorry.

"Hand out my bike," he said.

"Can't you git it out yourself?" asked the driver.

"No!" snapped Bunter.

"Leave it there, then," answered the driver cheerfully. "It'll do for a birthday present for my little boy."

Bunter found that he could get the bike out.

He wheeled it into the road and prepared to mount, the driver staring at him expressively.

"'Ere, you!" he shouted.

Bunter blinked round.

"What do you want?" he asked haughtily.

He had no further use for the lorry-driver, so he could afford to be haughty. When Billy Bunter could afford to be haughty, Eastern emperors were not in it with Bunter. Supercilious disdain gleamed from his very spectacles.

"Wot do I want?" repeated the man on the lorry, staring. "Why, I want 'arf-a-crown for that there lift, that's what I want!"

Bunter started. He had quite forgotten that detail. Still, it was a matter of small importance, at the end of the ride. At the beginning it would have mattered.

"Sorry," he said calmly. "I find I've left my purse at home."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Give me your name and address, if you like, and I'll send it on," said Bunter carelessly. "Sorry, and all that, but there you are!"

The man gave him a fixed look.

"Young bilk!" he ejaculated. "Blinking young bilk!"

"I don't want any impudence," answered Bunter haughtily. "If you can't be respectful, my man, I shall not pay you at all."

The driver gave him another look, and began to descend from his seat. Obviously he had no hope of collecting half-a-crown from his passenger, and it was probable that he did not think that it would be useful to give Bunter his name and address, on the exceedingly thin chance that that half-crown would reach him by post. But he seemed to be possessed by a strong desire to get to close quarters with Bunter. The look on his face was quite alarming.

Bunter was short-sighted. But he could see that the lorry driver looked dangerous. He lost no time. He threw a fat leg over Hurree Singh's bike, and started.

The lorry driver jumped into the road, and made a rush after him.

Bunter pedalled for his life.

Fortunately, there was a slope on the road, down to Lantham, at that point—fortunately for Bunter, at least.

The fat rider fairly flew.

For a dozen yards the lorry driver raced on in hot pursuit; but again machinery beat muscle. The fat cyclist was out of his reach, and gaining at every yard. Bent over Inky's handlebars, Bunter raced for his fat skin. And the lorry driver, breathless and enraged, stalked back to his lorry, and drove on to Seven Elms, making remarks as he went which showed that he had, in his time, done his bit in the trenches.

For half a mile Bunter fairly flew. Then he ventured to blink over his shoulder, and saw that the road was clear. He was puffing and blowing and panting, and he dismounted for a much-needed rest.

"Cheeky beast!" gasped Bunter. "Calling me names! Blessed if I know what the lower-classes are coming to! Cheeky rotter!"

Bunter leaned the bike against a tree, and sat down in the grass by the road-side to rest. He was only half a mile from Lantham now, and he could afford to rest. Sooner or later Harry Wharton & Co. would come in sight. And Bunter grinned at the thought of their surprise when they saw him ahead of them. He had no intention of mentioning the incident of the lift in the lorry. He had beaten them on the road, which was a proof that he was a better man awheel than the heroes of the Remove. Bunter and veracity were not closely acquainted. Indeed, they were on the most distant terms.

He waited and watched the road.

A bunch of dusty cyclists came in sight at last, grinding on to Lantham. Billy Bunter rose to his feet, and waved a fat hand.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!"

"Great Scott!"

"Bunter!"

"Billy Bunter!"

Four cyclists almost fell out of their saddles with astonishment, at the sight of Billy Bunter ahead of them on the road. They stared at him as if they

could hardly believe their eyes—as, indeed, they hardly could.

Bunter gave a disdainful sniff.

"I say, you fellows, I've waited a jolly long time for you! If you can't ride, why the dickens did you start to bike it at all? For goodness' sake, get a move on! We shall never get to Lantham at this rate!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Some Cyclist!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. had halted, and jumped off their machines. From that point up to Lantham there was a rise in the road, and a few minutes rest came in useful. They had ridden hard and fast, and only at one specially steep hill had they dismounted to wheel their jiggers. So the discovery of Billy Bunter ahead of them was absolutely astounding. How Bunter had done it was a mystery. And they were prepared to spend a few minutes elucidating that mystery, while they rested before the last pull into Lantham.

"How on earth did you get here?" demanded Harry Wharton.

Bunter tapped the bicycle.

"How do you think?" he asked. "I didn't fly."

"You never passed us," said Nugent.

"No. I got ahead of you without passing you," said Bunter sarcastically. "Sounds likely, doesn't it?"

"Well, we never saw you," said Bob Cherry, greatly puzzled.

Bunter grinned.

"You all had your noses down over your handle-bars when I shot by," he explained.

"You shot by!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes. Passed you like a flash of lightning," said Bunter calmly. "You were grinding on with your noses down, mopping up the dust. I hope you liked the flavour? He, he, he!"

The juniors could only stare. Motor-cars and motor-bikes had passed them on the road, and a motor-lorry. But certainly they were unaware that any push-bike had passed them. Indeed, they rather prided themselves that no bike could pass them, when they really went all out. It was possible, of course, that a faster rider might have passed unseen, when they had their heads down grinding up a hill. But Bunter?

The fat junior chuckled.

"You see, the fact is, you can't ride," he said. "I told you I could beat you to Lantham, and I've done it. I just sailed by you. You weren't looking round, and so you didn't see me. About two miles back."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob.

"But we left you behind, the other side of Redclyffe," said Harry Wharton, in great perplexity.

"That was only gammon," explained Bunter. "I knew I should have to wait for you fellows before the finish, so I took it easy at the start—see?"

"You were pumped out!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"You never passed us on the road."

"Well, he must have, old chap, as he's here!" said Frank Nugent. "Blessed if I can understand it! But here he is!"

"I say, you fellows, we're wasting time," said Bunter. "Let's get on! You've wasted enough time already, crawling along like snails, and keeping me waiting for you here. We shall be late for tea. I mean——"

"You never passed us!" repeated Johnny Bull.

"I decline to argue the matter with you!" said Bunter haughtily. "I'm a better rider than any man here, and you don't like to admit it! I'm accustomed to this sort of paltry envy. The fact is, you can't ride, Bull! You sit on a bike like a sack of coke."

"Do I?" breathed Johnny Bull sulphureously.

"You do! And Bob Cherry does the same—just like a sack of coke just going to fall off."

"Thanks!" said Bob cheerily.

"And look at Nugent—the way he rides, I mean," said Bunter. "Pushing at the pedals as if every push was going to be his last."

"You cheeky owl!"

"And Wharton——"

"Well, what about me?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"You can't ride, old chap! You're pumped out now, before the finish. And look at me! Quite fresh! To tell the truth, I never came across such a bunch of hopeless duds! You can't ride, and that's what's the matter with you! If you hadn't been so cheeky I'd have kept with you, and helped you up the hills in turn. It would have saved time. But you can't expect a chap to help you if you're cheeky."

"You fat rotter!" roared Johnny Bull suddenly. "You got a lift!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Wharton. "That's it, of course!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"We never saw him pass us on anything," said Nugent.

"We never saw him pass us on a bike, either," grunted Johnny Bull. "He got a lift—that's the only explanation. I remember an empty lorry passed us on the road. Bunter got a lift in that!"

"You fat spoofer!" shouted Bob Cherry indignantly.

"That's it!" said Harry.

"Of course it is!" growled Johnny Bull. "As if that fat frog could pass us on the road! As if he could ride as far as Lantham, anyhow, for that matter!"

Billy Bunter's fat lip curled.

"Go it!" he said sarcastically. "Make out that I got a lift because I've beaten you to Lantham!"

"Didn't you?" demanded Wharton.

"I disdain to discuss the matter. As for a lorry on the road, I never saw one. Besides, it turned off the road at Seven Elms, half a mile back."

"Oh, my hat!"

"He got a lift from Redclyffe Hill as far as Seven Elms Lane," said Bob Cherry. "That accounts for the milk in the cocoanut."

"Nothing of the kind!" roared Bunter. "I've biked every inch of the way! And here I am, miles ahead of you! You're beaten, and you don't want to own up! That's what's the matter with you. I must say I'm disgusted! Making out I had a lift in a lorry! There was no lorry on the road at all. And I wouldn't have asked that cheeky driver for a lift, in any case. He was disrespectful. I—I mean there wasn't any driver, not being any lorry I——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I think you fellows might own up when you're beaten by a better man."

"So we will—when we are!" grinned Bob Cherry. "If you can beat us on the road, Bunter, beat us to Lantham now. It's another half-mile; and if you're in sight behind when I ride into the town, I'll make you a present of my bike."

"Same here!" grinned Nugent.

"And here!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"And here!" said the captain of the Remove laughing. "Chance for you to bag four bikes at one fell swoop, Bunter! Get on!"

The four juniors jumped into their saddles, and rode on towards Lantham.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter.

Bob looked back with a grinning face.

"Come on, Bunter! Watching for you to pass us like a flash of lightning, old fat bean!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Start level!" shrieked Bunter.

"All right—wait for you to come up!"

Billy Bunter clambered on Hurree Singh's bike again, and pedalled. He came up with the four, and got ahead of them.

"Ready!" chuckled Bob. "Bunter's got three yards start—I don't think it will make much difference!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Go!" said Wharton laughing.

And the cyclists went.

Four of them streaked away at a racing pace—and William George Bunter fagged on behind, perspiring and panting.

In less than a minute the winding of the road hid the four from sight. When Bunter followed on round the bend, they had vanished.

"Oh, dear!" gasped the fat junior.

Perhaps Bunter repented then that he had bragged so recklessly. He was not specially keen on the company of the four, but they were absolutely necessary to him if he was to have tea at the Pagoda that afternoon. If they got into the cricket ground, they were gone for ever—for Bunter had not the wherewithal to pay for admission to the Lantham ground. Really, the Owl of the Remove had talked a little too much—a misfortune that often happened to William George Bunter.

He fagged on desperately to Lantham.

But the hill was too much for him, and presently he was walking and wheeling the bike again, gasping for breath, and mopping his fat, perspiring brow.

Harry Wharton & Co. had put up their machines, and gone into the enclosure, and were watching the last stand of the Lantham batsmen against the county bowlers when a fat and gasping junior wheeled a dusty bike feebly into Lantham. Bunter had lost the race. He had won the first lap, with the assistance of the motor-lorry, but he had hopelessly lost the second!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"BEASTS!"

Billy Bunter was almost in despair.

There was no tea at the Pagoda for Bunter. He was, of course, hungry. He had risen from the dinner table that day with a feeling that he could have done with a few more helpings. It was hours since he had eaten his dinner; since when he had used no other, as it were. Tea at the Pagoda tea-shop was exactly what he wanted—a good, solid, substantial tea—something like a couple of lunches and a dinner rolled into one, which was what Bunter considered a real, genuine tea.

But Bunter's possessions, in the financial line, were limited to one penny; which was still in his possession because it was a French penny, and nobody would take it from Bunter as legal tender.

Bunter, in a burst of generosity, had

nearly given that dix-centime piece to a blind beggar on one occasion—Bunter could be charitable. But he had prudently reflected that the French penny, though not legal tender, might be used in an automatic machine when no eye was upon him; and therefore, it still reposed in his pocket. Swindling an automatic chocolate machine was not a matter likely to weigh heavily on Bunter's conscience—his fat conscience had much more serious matters than that to deal with, if it ever got active.

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

With a piece of ten centimes in his possession, merely that and nothing more, it was quite useless to present himself at the Pagoda, or any other tea-shop in Lantham.

When Bunter dropped into a bun-shop, he liked to have a friend with him. Bunter knew the value of friendship—its cash value, at least. But he was alone and friendless in Lantham now. Crowds of people passed him in Lantham High Street, and not one of them cared whether Bunter was hungry or not. The heartlessness of the world was borne in sadly upon Billy Bunter's mind. It was true that he did not bother to think whether there might be anything amiss with any of the passers-by. But that, of course, was quite a different matter. The beginning and end of all things in the universe, to William George Bunter, was W.G.B. A famine that might lay waste a continent, was not of so much importance as that sinking feeling under his tight waistcoat.

The question was, what was to be done—or who was to be done?

Harry Wharton & Co. had vanished from his eyes long since, and he had no hope of finding them again. With the selfishness Bunter had long learned to expect from them, they had gone into the Lantham enclosure to watch the cricket, regardless of Bunter.

The fat junior blinked at the entrance, but even if he had succeeded in stealing in, he was not likely to pick out the four juniors in the swarming throng inside. From the remarks of people about him, he learned that Lantham had yet four wickets to fall, which meant that the match was going on probably till light failed; in any case too late for tea at the Pagoda. Those beasts were certain to stay till the finish, or as near the finish as they could; heartlessly disregarding Bunter, even if they knew for a fact that he was waiting for them at the Pagoda. William George Bunter felt absolutely bunkered.

Getting back to Greyfriars was all that was left for him. Riding back on Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's jigger was not to be thought of. Bunter had reached Lantham alive, owing to the lift in the lorry. But he could never have survived a ten-mile ride home. He had thought the matter out carefully, too. Fortified by a substantial tea at the Pagoda, he would have been fit for a long ride—and each of the other fellows could have helped him, in turn, up the hills on the way home. But there was no tea at the Pagoda, and no fellows to help in turn on the way home. Bunter did not even think of riding back to Greyfriars on the bike. But how else he was to get home was a mystery.

There was the railway, of course. But the railway people—selfish like all the people with whom Bunter ever came into contact—made a sordid stipulation on the matter of paying fares before they would take passengers. Bunter would willingly have handed over his French penny; but obviously that was of no use for the purpose. Still, the Owl of the Remove was not quite without resources. He had bilked the railway before, and he could bilk the railway again—at least, he hoped that he could.

Taking the bike home by railway was impracticable. It would have to be paid for. The bike being of no further use to Bunter, he was tempted to leave it standing on the kerb, and wash his fat hands of it. But certain consequences had to be considered—such as being kicked along the Remove passage by Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Bunter did not leave the bike standing in the street. He wheeled it into a cycle shop, and as an excuse for leaving it there, ordered a new mudguard for the machine. He stated that the bike would be called for later, and left it. That disposed of the machine, and William George Bunter rolled away to the railway station.

Now he had cause to be thankful for the prudence which had retained the French penny in his pocket. That French penny worked the automatic machine from which platform tickets were extracted. With a platform ticket in his fat hand, Bunter rolled on the down platform whence the express left for Courtfield a little later.

Lantham was a junction, and many passengers from London changed there. When the express came in, there was always a crowd. In that crowd, Bunter hoped to slip unseen into the train.

There are, unfortunately, many people who do not think it very dishonest to swindle a railway company. Bunter, however, did not think out whether it was honest or dishonest. He did not think at all.

Only the difficulties of the transaction presented themselves to his fat mind. Tickets might be demanded en route—but that trouble could be dodged by hiding under the seat, if he could get into an empty carriage. Tickets had to be given up at Courtfield if not taken on the way; but Bunter pinned his faith to a statement that he had lost his ticket. He was, in fact, quite an old hand at this game.

Quite a number of people were standing in groups, or strolling about the platform, some waiting to meet friends arriving by the express from London, some intending to take trains. Billy Bunter's fat form was lost in the crowd. He mouched about for a little while, and ascertained that the train that was to start for Courtfield, when the express came in, was already waiting in the station. The London train, not being due yet for a quarter of an hour, no passengers had yet taken their seats in the Courtfield train, which was booked to take on the express passengers who were going on to Courtfield.

This was rather lucky for Bunter. He moved along the waiting train, blinking into the carriages, and finally dived into a first-class compartment. When Bunter was travelling in the ordinary way, he generally travelled third, for financial reasons. But when he was stealing a ride he could afford to do himself a little more expensively. So he selected a first-class carriage and ensconced himself in it, sitting there with an air of casual carelessness until he was sure that no eyes were upon him, and then slipping down to the floor and rolling under the seat.

He was in luck again; for some railway seats are not to be rolled under by a fellow of Bunter's circumference. In this case there was room for Bunter.

It was not pleasant under the seat. It was warm and it was dusty. But beggars cannot be choosers; neither can bilkers.

Bunter hoped fervently that no one would get into the carriage. In that case he would be able to emerge in safety when the train left the station. But he had to take his chance of that. He had to get back to Greyfriars School somehow—and this was the only "how."

He heard the roar of the London express coming in at the other platform; and the hurrying and buzzing voices of passengers and porters. People came along the train; but for a time no one entered Bunter's carriage.

Then all of a sudden he heard the door open; and he squeezed more closely under the seat. If it was a porter—a suspicious porter—his horrid fate would be to be dragged out by the collar, and summarily ejected from the station, if not handed over to the police. There were drawbacks to bilking the railway.

But it was not a porter. Bunter heard a sharp, rasp-like voice speaking.

"This is an empty carriage, this will do! Get in here."

"Yess!" said a more youthful voice, a voice with a strange, soft lisp, which made the word sound as if it ended with a double "s."

Bunter, under the seat, had a view of the lower half of a pair of black trousers, the tail of a frock coat, and a pair of elastic-sided boots. These appurtenances evidently belonged to the gentleman whose voice resembled a rasp. A pair of neat shoes that accompanied the boots belonged to the owner of the lisping voice—undoubtedly a boy.

Billy Bunter suppressed a groan.

His hopes had been high that he would have the carriage to himself—that he would be able to crawl out and breathe more freely, when the train started; and it was due to start in less than a minute now. His hopes had been dashed to the ground—at least, to the floor of the carriage. There were two passengers with him now; and if Bunter might have chanced showing himself in the presence of the boy, certainly he would never have dared to show up in the presence of the rasp-like gentleman. That raspy voice did not inspire confidence. William George Bunter resigned himself to his dusty fate, still nourishing a faint hope that these beasts might get out at the next station. Beasts they were undoubtedly. Anyone who caused W. G. Bunter any kind of inconvenience was a beast!

"Sit down, Arthur," went on the raspy voice, as the door slammed. "Sit in the corner, so that the carriage will not seem to be empty."

"Yess."

The raspy gentleman sat in the other corner opposite the lisping boy.

Apparently he wanted to keep the carriage to himself—just as Bunter under the seat wanted to.

A moment later the door was tried by a passenger on the platform. Bunter could not see the action, but he was aware that the raspy gentleman was holding the handle on the inside, to prevent the door from opening. Bunter wished him luck. He did not want any more passengers in the carriage.

The door did not open. Perhaps the man outside thought it was jammed, or perhaps he had no time to think about it as the train was about to start. He went on to the next carriage.

The whistle shrieked, and the train moved. Then the rasp-like gentleman

Billy Bunter leaned panting on the fence, leaving Hurree Singh's bike sprawling across the middle of the road. "You young idjit!" roared the lorry driver. "Are you going to lift that blinking bike outer the road or not?" *(See Chapter 3.)*

sat back in the corner seat and released the door-handle.

"We shall have thiss carriage to ourselves, Mr. Gedge," said the lisping voice.

"Yes—that is what I want, Arthur. I have a few words to say to you before we reach Courtfield, after which I shall have no opportunity of speaking to you in private."

"Yess, Mr. Gedge."

Billy Bunter cudgelled his fat brains in his hiding-place. The name of Gedge was familiar to him—quite familiar. He had heard it recently, that very day, in fact. Suddenly it flashed into his mind. Gedge was the name of the "legal johnny" Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had mentioned, who was bringing the new boy, the Eurasian, to Greyfriars that afternoon. The lisping lad, evidently, was the Eurasian—which accounted for his soft, lisping speech.

Bunter scowled at Mr. Gedge's elastic-sided boots.

The discovery did not please him. The Eurasian was going to be a Greyfriars man; so, had he been alone, Bunter could have shown up, and perhaps even "touched" him for his fare in case of necessity. But a legal johnny was quite a different proposition. The raspy voice sounded anything but pleasant—it sounded exceedingly unpleasant; and a legal johnny was not likely to sympathise with a bilk. he was more likely to hand him over to the porters at the next station—especially as he had said that he wanted the carriage to himself for a private talk.

Less than ever now, therefore, was William George Bunter disposed to reveal his presence. These beasts were going to Greyfriars; therefore they would not get out of the train until Courtfield was reached; therefore, again, Bunter was doomed to dust all through the journey. The fat junior glared inimically at the elastic-sided boots.

There was only one comfort for Bunter. He was about to hear a private conversation that did not concern him in the very least.

To William George Bunter that was a solace.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
What Bunter Heard!

MR. GEDGE did not seem in a hurry to speak.

Bunter, perspiring under the seat, breathed stertorously, but the rumble of the train drowned any sound he made.

Of his fellow-passengers, he could see only the boots; of him, his fellow-passengers could see nothing.

Even curiosity to hear what did not concern him, would have kept Bunter there, had he been able to emerge. But he dared not emerge; and he soon found consolation for his discomfort in listening.

"I have fully explained the matter to you, Arthur," was Mr. Gedge's first remark.

"Yess."

"There is no need, therefore, to go into details again."

"No."

Bunter was rather disappointed at that. He liked the fullest possible details of other people's business.

"Captain Marker gave you full instructions before you left India," went on Mr. Gedge.

"Yess."

"Very well. I have only a few words to add," rasped Mr. Gedge. "In an hour from now you will be at Greyfriars. You will be, I think the only Eurasian in the school. You need not fear, at Greyfriars, I think, any of the prejudice you must have encountered from purely white boys at your school in Lucknow. In this country very little thought is given to colour distinctions."

"Yess."

"You will probably make friends there. You will be well supplied with pocket money; and human nature, I presume, is much the same at a public school as elsewhere. A fellow with plenty of money in his pocket will never want for friends."

"It was so at Lucknao," said the Eurasian softly. "I had little money there, but there were some with much money, and I hated them for their airs, but I was their friend so far as they would let me be."

"Nice sort of blighter!" was Bunter's unspoken comment under Mr. Gedge's seat.

At the same time, Bunter was beginning to feel a friendly interest in this new fellow.

Any fellow who was going to be well supplied with pocket-money could count as a certainty upon Bunter's kindest regards.

If this chap felt lonely at his new school Bunter was the man to rally round him—at least, so long as that good supply of pocket-money lasted.

"It will be your object to make friends as much as you can, Arthur."

"Yess."

"Make yourself as popular as you can, that is the best way of averting suspicion."

"Yess."

Bunter blinked under the seat. Suspicion of what? This sounded very mysterious to the Owl of the Remove. He was getting quite interested now.

"You will work hard in class, and please your Form master, and any other master with whom you come in contact. That will be quite easy for you. The school work is nothing to an industrious boy with a good memory. And you, of course, have a good memory; I believe all Hindus have."

"I am not a Hindu, sir," said the lisping voice. And there was a note in it like a snarl.

"No, no; but it comes to the same thing in this matter," said Mr. Gedge. "I have come in contact with many Hindu students. They learn nothing, or next to nothing, but their memories are

so prodigious that they pass examinations more easily than white men who really study. Doubtless it is the same with you, as you are Hindu on one side. Probably you will not understand a tithe of what you learn at Greyfriars, but you will memorise all sorts of things you do not understand, and come out ahead, in a Hindu way. You will do your very best to give satisfaction."

"Yess."

"Arrangements have been made for you to enter the Remove—that is, the Lower Fourth Form—at Greyfriars, Harry Wharton is a member of that Form."

"Yess."

"It will be your object to make a friend of Wharton, and you will hesitate at nothing to that end."

"Yess."

"Flatter him, if necessary; lend him money, if he desires it, and forget to ask for repayment. Find out any weaknesses in his character, and play upon them. But I need not point this out to a Hindu; such things would come natural to an Oriental, I have no doubt."

Mr. Gedge did not seem to entertain a high opinion of Orientals, though, judging by his talk, he was not himself a very creditable specimen of a higher race.

"I am not a Hindu!" repeated Arthur da Costa, and the snarl in his voice was more pronounced.

"Tut, tut!" said Mr. Gedge. "By the way, what race are you exactly, Arthur? Your name is a foreign one."

"I am a Da Costa," said the boy, with a note of pride in his voice.

"And what is a Da Costa?" rasped Mr. Gedge.

"A descendant of the Portuguese conquerors of India," snapped the boy.

"I have never heard of the Portuguese conquerors of India," said Mr. Gedge. "The conquest cannot have been very extensive or very lasting, I imagine."

"The Portuguese still hold territories in India, conquered from the natives centuries ago."

"Do they?" said Mr. Gedge. "I have never heard of it."

Mr. Gedge's geographical knowledge was bounded chiefly by Chancery Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields. In that salubrious quarter he had his den, where he lived like a weasel in a burrow, regardless of the great world outside. Bunter heard the Eurasian sniff, but the boy from Lucknow made no answer to the solicitor's remark.

"Have you any English blood in you?" added Mr. Gedge.

"Yess."

"All the better. What a mixture!" rasped Mr. Gedge. "Portuguese, Hindu, English. Anything else?"

"No," snarled the boy.

"You will not find the Greyfriars boys care anything about that. If you are careful you may rise in the school and become prominent there. You play cricket, I believe? Captain Marker said so."

"Yess."

"In speaking to Wharton you will, of course, be extremely careful not to give the faintest hint of your purpose at Greyfriars."

"I am not a fool, Mr. Gedge."

"I am aware of that. If you had been a fool Captain Marker would never have picked you out to send over here to carry out his purpose. But you are only a boy of Wharton's own age, after all, and you must be on your guard."

"In India we are older," said the half-caste. "We had centuries of wisdom behind us when the English were still wandering in the woods, like Red Indians, and dressed in the skins of wild beasts. We are an older race, and a wiser. A boy in India is more cunning than a white man of middle age."

"I know that," answered Mr. Gedge. "Captain Marker could never have found a white boy to serve his purpose at Greyfriars School. Nevertheless, be careful. I have made inquiries concerning this lad, Wharton, and he is no fool. He is captain of his Form, and though this probably means that he is good at games, it shows that he must have a certain amount of character. He may not be easy to deal with."

"I understand."

"You know the reward you are to receive the day Harry Wharton leaves Greyfriars. Remember that!"

"Yess."

"If you are in doubt or difficulty at any time you can always consult me. I shall put aside any other business on account of this. You feel that you have confidence in yourself, Arthur?"

"Yess."

"Good!" said Mr. Gedge.

"But——" said the Eurasian lad.

"Well?"

"I have taken on this task," said Da Costa. "I had little choice. The offer from Captain Marker was too good to be refused. I was poor—an orphan—my fees at the school at Lucknao were grudgingly paid. I was despised by the sons of white officers and by the rich Eurasians. It was a life from which I was glad to escape on any terms. I would almost have run away and begged for my bread in the bazaars. But——"

"Well?" snapped Mr. Gedge.

"I am a Eurasian," said Da Costa sullenly, "and Captain Marker is a white officer. But I would not do what he is doing. If I had a free choice I would not go to Greyfriars, I would not harm this boy, Wharton, whom I have never seen. If he despise me for my colour, if he look down on me, I shall hate him, and then I shall work for Captain Marker with pleasure. But if not—if not—and he may be a kind-hearted white boy; I have met a few such, even in India——"

He broke off.

"Are you hesitating now, at the last moment?" asked Mr. Gedge, in a low, rasping tone of menace.

"No. I have said that I have no choice. I may as well be a rascal at a school in England as an outcast and toady at the school in Lucknao."

"You will have your reward. You will go back to India rich. What more do you want?"

No answer.

There was silence in the carriage for some time as the train rumbled on. Billy Bunter lay under the seat, breathless and perspiring, and lost in wonder at what he had heard. His fat brain realised that this unknown boy from a distant country was going to Greyfriars as an enemy of Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, whom he had never even seen. A military man in India and a solicitor in London were in the scheme; that much was clear. It was so utterly amazing that Bunter doubted whether his fat ears had heard aright. But it was clear now why Mr. Gedge had not wanted any other passengers in the carriage to hear that extraordinary conversation.

It was the half-caste who broke the silence, as the train was nearing Courtfield.

"There is one thing, sir, that I have not been told."

"More than one thing, probably," rasped Mr. Gedge. "But what are you alluding to, Arthur?"

"Why has Captain Marker laid this plot?"

"He has told you nothing of that?"

"Nothing."

"Neither have I anything to tell you," snapped Mr. Gedge.

"He must have a reason—and a powerful reason," said the Eurasian. "He is spending money like water. It is very expensive to send me across the sea, to maintain me at Greyfriars, to supply me with money there, to pay me my reward when I have succeeded. And you, sir, are not acting for nothing; you are making a good thing of it, or you would not touch it. Yet Captain Marker is a poor man, and people in Lucknao know that he has long been in the hands of the native money-lenders. I do not understand."

"It is not necessary for you to understand," answered Mr. Gedge coolly. "You understand what you have to do at Greyfriars. That is sufficient."

"But you know his reason?"

"What I know I have no intention of confiding to you."

"There is money at stake, I am assured," said Da Costa. "There must be much money at stake. But I do not understand how the disgrace of this boy Wharton can benefit Captain Marker."

"I have said that it is not necessary for you to understand!" snapped Mr. Gedge. "You are here to obey orders and carry out your instructions. You do not want to be sent back to Lucknao?"

"No!"

"Then say no more."

And no more was said, while the train ran on to Courtfield, and at last hummed into that station, where the new boy for Greyfriars and the estimable "legal johnny" alighted.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tribulations of a Bilk!

BILLY BUNTER rolled out from under the seat, dusty and perspiring. It was a warm afternoon, and under the seat in a railway carriage it was much warmer than elsewhere. Bunter's fat face was streaming.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

It was a relief to be able to gasp aloud at last.

Mr. Gedge and Da Costa were clear of the train now. Bunter peered cautiously out of the doorway.

The squeak of elastic-sided boots was dying away along the platform. The sound guided Bunter's blink in the direction of Mr. Gedge.

He saw a rather tall, spare man, dressed in black, with a slim youth walking by his side. That was all he could see of them, and they disappeared a few moments later in the crowd.

Bunter rolled out of the train.

The amazing talk he had heard was still buzzing in his ears and his fat brain. But he had to dismiss the mysterious matter from his mind, as he was confronted by the difficulties that naturally beset a "bilk" in a career of bilking.

Tickets were being taken at the barrier at the end of the platform—and Bunter had no ticket to hand over.

Had he possessed so much as sixpence, he might have made the ticket-collector believe that he had come from Redclyffe, and paid the fare from that intermediate station. Dodges like this were not new to Bunter. Indeed, he would have been astonished to learn how many terms of imprisonment were

justly due to him for his various exploits in the bilking line.

But he had not a sixpence. Even his French penny had been left at Lantham, had that been of any use in the present emergency.

Bunter had succeeded in arriving at Courtfield Station; but how to get out of that station was his next problem, and a harder one. Bunter was not accustomed to looking ahead; he was content to meet difficulties as they arose. On that system he often found himself landed in inextricable scrapes. He began to realise that he was in such a scrape now.

He loafed about the platform until all the passengers were gone, hoping that the ticket-collector would clear off and leave him a free passage.

The ticket-collector did clear off; but he closed a gate behind him, and Bunter could not negotiate that gate.

A porter passed along and glanced at him, perhaps wondering what he was doing there in the long interval between trains.

Bunter loafed into a waiting-room.

The waiting-room was cover, at least; he could lie "doggo" there for a time and think out his problem.

He concentrated his fat intellect on that problem.

All he could think of was a statement that he had lost his ticket; after which he could give his name and address, and go.

This had its drawbacks. Twice already that term Bunter had rolled out at Courtfield with a statement that he had lost his ticket. On the first occasion he had given his name and address as William Jones, of High Street, Friardale. On the second occasion he had laid claim to the style and title of George Smith, of River Lane, Courtfield. In dodges of this kind Bunter's circumference was against him. Both his circumference and his diameter, as it were, leaped to the eye, and were not easily forgotten. The Courtfield station-master had remembered him, and declined to believe that he was both William Jones and George Smith. Without being an unduly suspicious man, the station-master considered it improbable.

Fortunately, on that second occasion Bunter had had money in his pocket; he had been bilking, not from necessity, but from motives of economy.

So he had paid up and escaped.

Now he couldn't pay up; and a third name and address, obviously, would not hold water. Giving his real name and address would land him in trouble at Greyfriars. The Head was an old-fashioned gentleman; and Bunter knew that he would have no sympathy whatever with persons who considered a railway company fair game. A report to Bunter's father, a flogging from the Head, and perhaps the sack from the school loomed in the offing. Bunter knew that the headmaster, so far from admiring his cleverness in travelling without payment, would characterise his clever dodges by the nasty, common name of swindling.

What—or who—was to be done? There seemed nothing to be done—and nobody to be done! Indeed, Bunter began to feel that, after all his cleverness, it was W. G. Bunter who was going to be done—and done brown!

Trains came and went, people came and went. Bunter remained doggo in the waiting-room, growing funkier and funkier every moment.

He wished that he had not borrowed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's bike that afternoon; he wished that he had sold it, instead of leaving it for repair; he wished that he was out of this awful scrape and safe back in the Remove passage at Greyfriars—he wished anything and everything, except that he had been honest in the first place. It did not occur to him to wish that.

The setting sun warned him that it was time to get back to the school for call-over. By this time those beasts would be home; they would not be late for calling-over. Indeed, if the Lantham innings had ended early, they might have been back long ago. Having missed their tea at Lantham, they would have a spread in Study No. 1 when they got back; and Bunter's mouth watered at the thought of that spread. If only he could have been rolling into the Remove passage, instead of lurking in a dusky corner of a waiting-room at a beastly railway station, like a pickpocket in fear of the grasp of a policeman! Undoubtedly the career of a bilk had its drawbacks.

In those dreadful moments Bunter resolved fervently that he never, never would travel again without paying his fare. But these good resolves, though they might come in useful in the future, could not help him now. How was he going to get out of this scrape?

Suppose he presented himself boldly at the barrier, asked to see the station-master, stated that he had lost his ticket, offered to pay the fare, and demanded to be allowed to telephone to Greyfriars for the money? That would see him through all right—if there had been anyone at Greyfriars willing to bail him out, as it were.

But was there? He thought of his minor, Sammy of the Second, and dismissed that idea at once. In his mind's ear he could hear Sammy's fat chortle when he learned of his major's predicament. But in his mind's eye he could not see Sammy hurrying to Courtfield to bail him out.

He thought of various Remove fellows. Lord Mauleverer had plenty of money, and was eminently good-natured. If he could get through to Mauly—— But he knew that even if he got permission to speak to a chap on the phone the news that Bunter wanted him on the phone would be enough to keep Mauly at a safe distance from the phone.

He thought of his Form master and shuddered. He could visualise the cold glint in Mr. Quelch's eyes if he was told of Bunter's present position. He might have telephoned to the Remove master

from Lantham and stated his difficulties. He could not telephone from Courtfield and state them; they were of a different nature now.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. "Beasts!"

He even regretted that he had not made a forlorn attempt to "touch" Mr. Gedge, or the Eurasian, for the money. Thinking of them brought back into his fat mind what he had overheard in the railway carriage; and with that remembrance came illumination. That nigger—who did not like being called a nigger—was going to Greyfriars to injure Harry Wharton—to disgrace him somehow, and get him turned out of the school. It seemed a wild and fantastic idea, but that was the only possible meaning of the talk Bunter had overheard.

Bunter could put him on his guard. Bunter could warn him against a treacherous enemy, a snake-in-the-grass. He could even make out that he had specially dogged and spied upon the precious pair on Wharton's account. In these circumstances, it was up to Wharton to bail him out. The fellow could not do less, considering all that Bunter could do for him. If Wharton had returned to the school by this time, as was most likely, Wharton was the man to whom to telephone for help.

Bunter did not feel quite sure that this was a winner. But it was his only resource. He could not have a night out at Courtfield Station, that was certain.

He rolled dismally out of his lair at last.

Another train was in. Passengers were going out. Bunter made an attempt to squeeze through unnoticed. But William George Bunter was not of the build to squeeze through unnoticed.

"Ticket, please!"

An arm across his fat chest stopped Bunter, and he had to stop till the other passengers were through. Then the collector eyed him with cold suspicion.

"Ticket, please!"

"I've lost my ticket."

"Where from?"

"Lantham—I mean, Redclyffe," said Bunter hastily.

"Ho! Lantham—you mean, Redclyffe," said the ticket-man sardonically. "I've seen your sort before."

"Look here, my man——" said Bunter haughtily.

"Stow it!" said the railwayman quite rudely. "You says you came by that train from Redclyffe or Lantham, you don't know which."

"Redclyffe," said Bunter firmly. "That's sixpence."

"That train was a local from Woodend."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Sure you don't come from Woodend, now you come to think of it?" asked the ticket-man, with withering sarcasm.

"I—I—I mean——"

"Yes, let's 'ear what you mean!" said the collector, with interest; and several other men also gathered round, interested, too, and apparently amused, to judge by their grinning faces.

Bunter's heart was sinking.

"I—I mean, I never came by that last train. I came by the train before that," he stammered.

"And 'ung about the platform 'arf an hour before getting out?"

"Ye-e-es."

"Why, I saw that bloke on the platform more'n an hour ago, nearer two hours ago," said a porter.

Bunter nearly said "Beast!" But it was futile to tell that porter what he thought of him.

"The—the fact is——" he stuttered.

"Go it!" said the sceptical ticket-collector. "Listen 'ere, you fellers! We're going to 'ear the facts now!"

"If you can't take my word——" said Bunter.

"I'm 'ere to take your ticket! Never mind about your word! I'll take your ticket, or the blooming fare!"

"I shall pay the fare, of course!" said Bunter, with lofty disdain.

"You will!" said the railwayman, with emphasis. "Or else you'll be run in for bilking."

"I happen to have come out without much money in my pockets," said Bunter. "Having lost my ticket, I can't pay my fare at the moment——"

"Better try!" said the man.

"I demand to see the stationmaster!" said Bunter haughtily. "I don't want any cheek from you, my man. I've lost my ticket, so I shall have to pay my fare over again. I know that. I shall have to telephone to my friends."

"I'll take you to the stationmaster," grunted the collector. "But don't you try to stuff him that you've lost your ticket. He's been there before, you see."

William George Bunter was escorted to the stationmaster's office. That official listened to his story with grim disbelief written in every line of his speaking countenance. Possibly he recalled Bunter as the young gentleman who had once been named Jones, and once Smith. After some argument, however, he consented to allow Bunter to telephone, and the Owl of the Remove, in a state of shivering funk, which was a full punishment for his rascality, went to the instrument and rang up Greyfriars.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The New Fellow at Greyfriars!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH yawned.

The Nabob of Bhanipur had yawned considerably that afternoon.

He missed the cheery company of his chums, and he missed most of the Removites, who had gone out of gates that half-holiday. Fellows who saw the nabob loafing about idly, cheerily invited him to join them—never had a fellow so many kind offers.

Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing were having a boat out on the Sark, and they asked the nabob to come. Ogilvy and Russell were going for a spin. Lord Mauleverer was taking the air in a handsome car from Courtfield garage. Peter Todd was going for a swim. Other fellows had all sorts of stunts on, and they all called out to the dusky nabob to join up.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was popular in the Remove. He was so good-natured and good-tempered that he could hardly be anything else, added to the fact that he was the deadliest junior bowler at Greyfriars. Fellows were surprised to see him left on his lonesome own, and any fellow would have been glad of his company; but the nabob had to stay in. It was extremely hard cheese. The afternoon was gloriously sunny, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh yawned, and sighed once or twice.

He was more than willing to oblige his Form master, Mr. Quelch; but he wished that he had been able to oblige Mr. Quelch in any other way instead of this.

There was a cricket match going on on Big Side—Sixth against Fifth—and Hurree Singh watched the seniors for a while. Wingate of the Sixth was well worth watching at the wickets; but on this occasion he had bad luck, being caught in the slips by Hilton of the Fifth.

Hurree Singh strolled off Big Side, and loafed away to Little Side, where the Shell were at games practice. But Hobson & Co. of the Shell did not interest him much, and he walked back to the House. There he found a not very enthralling entertainment in reading the notices on the board over again from beginning to end. But at last a taxicab from Courtfield arrived, and Mr. Gedge stepped out with Arthur da Costa.

Hurree Singh, at a little distance, gazed at the Eurasian.

In his own country he had seen many Eurasians before, and he had no great liking for them. Even Mr. Quelch, with all his stores of learning, did not quite grasp matters affecting race and caste in the great Empire of the East. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh belonged to the hill country of the North, and was as different from a Bengal Hindu as a Scotsman from a Portuguese or Spaniard. Da Costa came from the South.

India, with its widely different races and climates, is more truly a continent than a country—in race, in language, and in other things, there was nothing at all in common between Hurree Singh and Arthur da Costa. They both belonged to India, just as a Norwegian and a Sicilian both belong to Europe, but the resemblance between them was not much more than that between Norwegian and Sicilian.

To the nabob Da Costa was simply a half caste—and not one of the races from which he drew his mixed descent was in any respect "pukka." Neither by the white man nor by the black man is the man of mixed blood liked or esteemed.

It is said that East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet. But they meet in the Eurasian, not generally with happy results.

Da Costa was a handsome fellow in his way. His skin was a dark olive, his eyes large and dark and expressive, his features well cut. His expression was alert, almost suspicious, like that of a fellow quick to see and to take offence. He was as slim and graceful in form as Hurree Singh himself. He was dressed quietly—there were certain rules at Greyfriars on that subject, to which the new fellow conformed—but the natural gaudiness of the East showed here and there—in a glittering tiepin, and ruby cuff-links, and a ring on his finger. These little details, which were bad form at Greyfriars, were likely to be eliminated before he had been long in the school.

He went into the House with Mr. Gedge, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh waited and loafed idly, waiting for a call from his Form master. The call was a long time coming. But at last a fag came to tell the nabob that he was wanted in Mr. Quelch's study.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh proceeded thither, his dusky face showing no sign of what he was thinking on the subject. Politeness came before most other considerations with the nabob. He was a prince in his own country; and to a prince of India, a half-caste is little more than one of the pariah dogs that howl in the streets of the cities. But Hurree Singh had been long enough at Greyfriars to unlearn many of the prejudices of his native country, and what remained of them remained hidden behind an invariable courtesy. Anyhow, Da Costa was now a Greyfriars man, on

William George Bunter was making an attempt to squeeze through the station barrier unnoticed when an arm was thrust across his fat chest. "Ticket, please!" said the collector, eyeing him with cold suspicion. *(See Chapter 7.)*

an equal footing with any other Greyfriars man, and India was a long way off.

Mr. Gedge was not in the study now. Apparently he had finished with the Remove master. Da Costa was there with Mr. Quelch. His dark, searching eyes turned instantly on Hurree Jamset Ram Singh as he entered, with gleaming suspicion in their depths. It had been a little of a shock to Da Costa to learn that there was an Indian junior at Greyfriars, in the Form he was to enter, and it made him uneasy. He did not for a moment expect a fellow from his own country to take him on trust, as the English boys might.

Mr. Quelch gave the nabob a benignant smile.

"Come in, Hurree Singh! This is Arthur Da Costa, the new boy in the Remove. Da Costa, this is Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, of your Form."

The Remove master evidently expected the two to shake hands; and Hurree Singh extended a dusky hand to the new fellow. He had to remember that he was not in India now.

"The pleasantfulness to meet the esteemed Da Costa is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh politely.

The Eurasian spoke excellent English, though with the lisping accent that betrayed his origin. Hurree Singh's remarkable variety of that language, learned in early days from Mook Mookerjee, the wise old moonshee, at Bhanipur, struck him as entertaining. Not that it was new to his ears; he was well acquainted with the weird variations of English spoken by the "educated" natives of India.

"You boys will be friends, I hope," said Mr. Quelch.

"Certainfully, sir," said Hurree Singh.

"You will have much in common, as the only boys at Greyfriars from India," added Mr. Quelch.

Hurree Singh marvelled at the abysmal depths of ignorance that were possible in a very learned gentleman.

But his polite, dusky face expressed nothing.

"The wishes of the esteemed sahib are commands," he answered.

"I should have liked to place Da Costa in your study, Hurree Singh, as he is a countryman of your own," went on Mr. Quelch. It was the first time that the nabob had ever suspected Mr. Quelch of being fatuous. "But other arrangements have been made."

Hurree Singh did not say that he regretted that other arrangements had been made. Politeness was important, but something was due to veracity.

"Da Costa is sent here by Captain Marker, a gentleman in a military post in India," explained Mr. Quelch. "Captain Marker is an old acquaintance of Colonel Wharton, the uncle and guardian of Wharton of the Remove. For this reason I have been requested to place him in Study No. 1 in the Remove, with Wharton and Nugent."

"Quitefully so, sir," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Is Wharton now within gates?"

"He has gone with his friends to see the cricket match at Lantham, sir," answered the nabob. "There is an esteemed county match going on there."

"Very well. Perhaps you will show Da Costa about the school, Hurree Singh, and introduce him to his study-mates when they return."

"Yes, sir."

"You will go with Hurree Singh, Da Costa."

"Yess, sir," said the Eurasian, in his lisping voice.

And he left Mr. Quelch's study with the Nabob of Bhanipur.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Tea in Study No. 1!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. rode up to the school tired and rather dusty, but in a cheery mood. They had seen quite an exciting finish to the county match at Lantham—the last wickets had gone down rather quickly—and, though there was no time for tea at the Pagoda, there was ample time left for the ride home to Greyfriars. The four juniors put up their machines and walked to the House. They were not, as might have been supposed—by Billy Bunter, at least—wondering what had happened to Bunter. They had forgotten the existence of the Owl of the Remove. Having cut tea at Lantham, they were as hungry as hunters, and thinking chiefly of a substantial spread in the study before calling-over. In a cheery mood they walked into the House, and met Skinner of the Remove, lounging about idly, as usual.

"Seen the new chap, you men?" asked Skinner.

"Eh? No. Is there a new chap?" asked Bob Cherry. "Oh, I remember now. What's he like?"

"Oh, looks all right—rather a foreign-looking cove," said Skinner, "but flashy. Inky's been showing him round. He's in your study, Wharton."

"What is he doing in my study?" asked the captain of the Remove.

Skinner grinned.

"You've got him for keeps," he explained.

"Quelchy's put him in our study?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Just that."

As Wharton and Nugent had had Study No. 1 to themselves for a long time, and, naturally, rather wanted to keep it to themselves, the news was not particularly pleasing, which was the amiable Skinner's reason for handing it out.

"You can't complain," he said argumentatively. "There's only two in your study. There's three in mine—four in some studies. I don't see that you fellows can grumble."

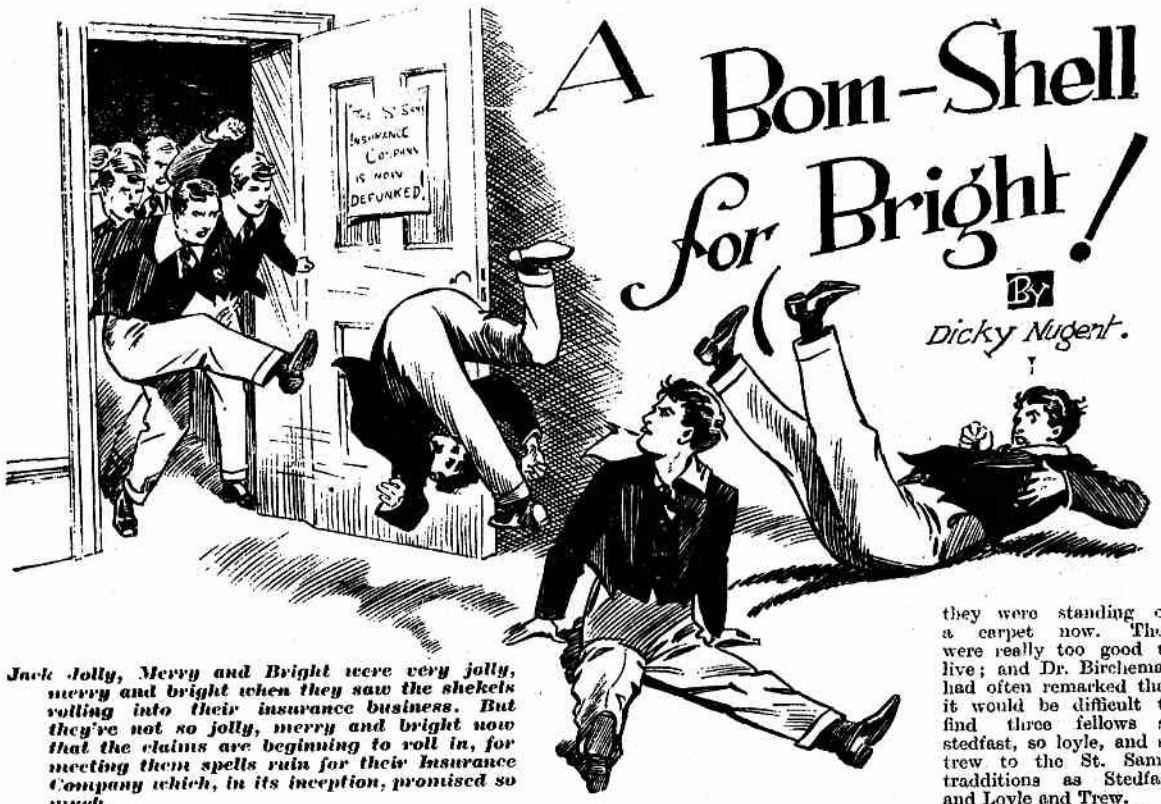
But the chums of the Remove were not to be "drawn" by Skinner.

"Not at all," said Harry. "Plenty of

(*Continued on page* 16.)

A Bom-Shell for Bright!

By Dicky Nugent.



Jack Jolly, Merry and Bright were very jolly, merry and bright when they saw the shekels rolling into their insurance business. But they're not so jolly, merry and bright now that the claims are beginning to roll in, for meeting them spells ruin for their Insurance Company which, in its inception, promised so much.

I.

"ROLLING in riches!" ejackulated Bright, of the Fourth, with a sattisfied smirk. "That was a wunderful wheeze of mine, you fellows, to form an Insurance Company at St. Sam's! It's worked like a charm. Nearly every fellow in the skool has insured himself against something or other, and our coughers are in a most healthy state."

"Ripping!" said Jack Jolly.

"Top-whole!" chortled Merry.

There was a musical chink of munny in No. 1 Study—the head offis of the St. Sam's Insurance Company.

Billy Bright, the general manager, was counting out shillings, and sixpences, and coppers, and arranging them in piles on the table.

Certainly the coughers of the company were in a healthy state. The week's takings made an imposing array; and the juniors squeezed their hands together, and gloated like misers over their horde.

"We've taken all this in premiums," said Bright, "and we've not had to pay out a penny. There's not been a single claim on the company. That fat ass, Tubby Barrell, gave us a fright the other day, by jolly nearly getting eggspelled. And we'd insured him against eggspulsion, to the tune of fifty quids! Luckily, we managed to beg him off in the nick of time."

"Rether!" said Jack Jolly. "Now what about collecting the next premiums, you fellows? They fall dew to-day."

"I'll put a reminder on the notiss-board," said Bright.

And he promptly did so. The "reminder" was worded as follows:

THE ST. SAM'S INSURANCE COMPANY.

NOTISS TO ALL KONSERNED!

The next premiums fall dew at dew-fall, and must be paid in at the offices of the Company—No. 1 Study—without fail; otherwise, the polliey will laps, and the polliey-holder will not be entitled to any bennyfits.

(Sined) BILLY BRIGHT,
General Manager.

That notiss aroused quite a storm of indignation in the Fourth. And when dew-fall came, No. 1 Study was beseeged by an angry crowd.

There was Stedfast, and Loyle, and Trew; and Weekling and Frayle; and Frank Fearless, and others.

"What's all this rot about premiums falling dew?" demanded Frank Fearless, glaring at Jolly and Merry and Bright. "I paid my premium last week. I remember handing you the threepence, Bright."

"True, O king," said Bright calmly. "But that threepence only insured you for one week."

"Eh?"

"You don't suppose that a paltry premium of threepence would cover a whole term or a year, or a lifetime?" said Bright, with sarkazzum.

"Look here!" growled Frank Fearless. "This is sharp practiss! You never made it clear, at the start, that premiums had to be renewed every week."

"Didn't we? That must have been an oversite," said Bright coolly. "Anyway, we've made it clear now. Hand over your next premium, or the polliey will laps."

"Pay and look plezzant, Frank!" grinned Jack Jolly.

Frank Fearless paid, but he looked anything but plezzant.

"Thanks!" said Bright, sweeping the coppers into the table drawer. "All retributions thankfully reseeved, as the saying goes. Walk up, gents, and pay your premiums!"

Stedfast and Loyle and Trew stepped forward. This tree-o of fellows were the goody-goodies of the Fourth. They never got into hot water, eggsept when they took their baths. They never got licked, eggsept by affeckshunate dogs. And they were never "on the carpet"—though they were standing on a carpet now. They were really too good to live; and Dr. Birchemall had often remarked that it would be difficult to find three fellows so stedfast, so loyle, and so trew to the St. Sam's tradditions as Stedfast and Loyle and Trew.

But they were scowling now, and they were just as reluctant to "part up" as Frank Fearless had been. More so, in fact, for their premiums were hevvier. They were insured against birchings from Birchemall, lickings from Lickham, swishings from Swishingham, chastisings from Chas. Tyser, and injustis from Justiss. This cost them one-and-threepence per head; and it would be no jeak having to pay out such an enormus sum every week—espeshally as the goody-goody tree-o never got into any sort of trubble, and were never likely to bennyfit from the insurance.

However, they paid up, and another three-and-ninepence was swept into the table drawer.

"Look here, Bright," said Stedfast. "We've paid up, but we've paid under protest. We consider we've been done. We thought that our first premium of one-and-threepence would insure us against lickings for the rest of our lives!"

"Yes, rather!" said Loyle. "If we've got to renew our premiums every week, we shall jolly soon be broke!"

"Only too trew!" said Trew.

Bright waved his hand to the door.

"Hop it!" he said tersely. "Can't you see we've got a crowd of clients waiting?"

Stedfast and Loyle and Trew were looking grimly thoughtful as they quitted the insurance offis. They were not revengeful fellows, as a rule, but they were wondering how they could get their own back on the St. Sam's Insurance Company.

Weekling and Frayle were the next clients to pay their premiums. They, too, had been insured against lickings. And the Company had been quite safe in insuring them, for they were such a frayle, feeble, aneemick pair that they would have collapsed at a caning, fainted at a flogging, and been cut in half by a birching. So frayle and week were Weekling and Frayle that the masters left them severely alone, not wishing to be had up for kidslaughter.

"There's our munny," said Weekling,

"but I consider we've been swindled, and if I wasn't such a weekling——"

"And if I wasn't so frayle," chimed in Frayle, "we'd wipe up the floor with you fellows!"

Jack Jolly & Co. meerly larfed. And then a sudden puff of wind came through the open window, and Weekling and Frayle blew out of the study—just as Sharp and Erleigh blew in.

"Still they come!" said Bright gaily. "Sharp and Erleigh are insured against getting late for brekker in the morning. Not that they are ever likely to be late. They've been sharp and early ever since I can remember. Pay up your premiums, you chaps!"

Sharp and Erleigh paid up—though not without many protests. And there were more protests from those who came after them.

The fact was, the St. Sam's fellows were getting "fed-up" with the Insurance Company. They didn't see the fun of paying premiums every week, and getting no bennyfits in return.

That evening there was an indignation meeting in the junior common-room.

If Jack Jolly and Merry and Bright had been present at that meeting, and heard the deep, dark plot that was hatched, their rosy dreams of getting rich quick would have promptly evapporated.

II.

IT was Sharp and Erleigh who started the trouble.

For the first time in history, that usually punctual pair came down late for brekker.

St. Sam's was half-way through its eggs-and-bacon when Sharp and Erleigh strolled casually into the hall, yawning drowsily.

Jack Jolly glanced at the clock.

"Ten minnits late!" he growled. "And they are insured against being late for brekker!"

"Under the conditions of their insurance," said Bright, "we shall have to stand them a free feed at the tuckshop."

"Oh, lor'!"

Mr. Lickham, at the head of the Fourth Form table, beckoned to Sharp and Erleigh.

"You boys are late for brekker!" he snapped. "You will each write out a hundred times, 'Punctuality is the theef of time.'"

"Oh, help!" groaned Bright. "We've insured Sharp and Erleigh against impotts, too!"

Mr. Lickham glared along the table.

"I fail to see Fearless in his place," he said. "Where is Fearless?"

"Please, sir," piped Tubby Barrell, "he's in the sanny."

"Oh!"

"What's the matter with him?" wispered Jack Jolly, an awful suspishun forming in his mind.

"Hooping-cough," chuckled Tubby Barrell. "But he's quite happy about it; you see, he's well insured!"

But Jack Jolly wasn't at all happy about it. Neither were Merry and Bright.

"Another bennyfit to pay out!" growled Bright. "It never rains but it pours. What will happen next, I wonder?"

What happened next was a battle royal at the brekfast-table. The ammunition konsisted of breadcrumbs, eggshells and bad eggs, and the war was waged between Stedfast and Loyle and Trew, on one side of the table, and Weekling and Frayle on the other. Eggsactly how it started, nobody knew; but the air was soon thick with flying missiles.

Crash! Smash! Squelch!

One of the eggs, which was long past its prime, and must have been one of Macauly's Lays of Ancient Rome, flew wide of its targett. It was intended for Weekling, but it got delivered at the wrong address, so to speak.

It was Mr. Lickham who stopped that egg—with his nose!

Squelch!

"Oooooch! Gug-gug-gug!"

Mr. Lickham gurgled and spluttered, and dabbed frantickally at his beak with a hangkerchief.

"Who biffed that egg at me?" demanded Mr. Lickham, in a terrible voice.

"Me, sir!" said Stedfast promptly.

To say that Mr. Lickham was annoyed was to put it mildly. He tore his hare, and nashed his teeth, and ordered Jack Jolly to go to his study and fetch a cane.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Jack Jolly, with visions of more insurance munny to be paid out.

With lagging footsteps he fetched the cane, and a sollum hush desseuded upon the hall. It was broken only by the clatter of knives and forks, the crashing of crockery, and the noise made by Dr. Birchemall in drinking his coffy.

The Head and the other masters left their brekfasts, and came towards the Fourth Form table, to inquire what was wrong.

Mr. Lickham eggsplained, and his colleegs were furious that one of their number should have been treated so outrageously.

"We'll all give you a hand, Lickham, in flogging these young rascals!" said the Head. "Go and fetch my birch, somebody!"

The birch was brought, and several more canes; and then Stedfast and Loyle and Trew went through the mill. It was their first eggsperience of a flogging, and they fervently hoped it would be their last.

The masters took it in turn to administer whacks. A stroke from the Head's birch was followed by a lash from Mr. Lickham; then a swish from Mr. Swishingham; then a cut from Mr. Chas. Tyser; and then a jab from Mr. Justiss. The angwished yells of Stedfast and Loyle and Trew ekkoed and reekkoed through the hall.

Weekling and Frayel did not escape.

"I know you are frayle, Weekling, and I know you are a weekling, Frayle; but I should myself be a frayle weeklingif I shirked my duty!" said Dr. Birchemall sternly. "Get across that form!"

And there were fresh yells of angwish as those poor frayle weeklings, Weekling and Frayle, went through the mill.

Jack Jolly & Co. looked on, ringing their hands. And they had ample cause to ring their hands, for after brekfast the offises of the St. Sam's Insurance Company were beseeged by fellows who had come to draw bennyfits.

Stedfast and Loyle and Trew came bounding in; and Weekling and Frayle came crawling in; and Sharp and Erleigh were there, sharp and early.

Frank Fearless, who had made a lightning recovery from his hooping-corf, was also prezzant; and the Insurance Company was farely bombarded with claims.

"I want twenty-five bob!" demanded Stedfast. "I've had a birching from Birchemall, and a licking from Lickham, and a swishing from Swishingham, and a chastising from Chas. Tyser, and an injustiss from Justiss—five punishments, at five bob a time! Pay up!"

"You owe me twenty-five bob, too!" said Loyle.

"Same here!" said Trew.

"And you owe us free feeds at the tuckshop, and sixpence each for impotts!" said Sharp and Erleigh.

"And you owe me——" began Frank Fearless.

"Dry up, for goodness' sake!" groaned Bright. And Jack Jolly and Merry groaned, too, in a dismal corus. "There's not enuff munny in our coughers to settle your claims in full. If you'll wait——"

But the eager claimants had no intenshun of waiting. They had come for their pound of flesh, and they renched open the table drawer and helped themselves.

As Bright had said, there was not enuff munny to meet all the claims in full; but the claimants completed their compensation by giving Jack Jolly and Merry and Bright the bumping of their lives. Then they marched out of the study, highly sattisfied, leaving the St. Sam's Insurance Company to langwish in angwish.

Not a penny now remained in the coughers of the Company; and there was nothing for it but to close down.

A little later, the following notiss was pinned outside the door of No. 1 study:

"THE ST. SAM'S INSURANCE COMPANY IS NOW DEFUNKED!"

THE END.

(Look out for another rollicking fine yarn of St. Sam's next week, chums, entitled: "BRIGHT'S AUCTION SAIL!" It's a real rib-tickler!)

The battle was raging feercely when an egg, intended for Weekling, flew wide of its target and smote Mr. Lickham full on the nose. Squelch! "Oooooch! Gug-gug-gug!" spluttered the Fourth Form master!

(*Continued from page* 15.)

room for one more in our study. Thanks for telling us, Skinner."

And the juniors went on up the staircase, leaving Skinner feeling rather discomfited. Skinner would have preferred to hear a "grouse" on the subject, which he could have retailed to the new fellow afterwards, mischief-making being one of Harold Skinner's many pleasant little ways.

Bolsover major met the four on the Remove landing.

"New chap in your study, Wharton," he said.

"Just heard it," answered Harry.

"Flashy sort of bounder—studded all over with diamonds and things," said Bolsover, with a grin.

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors went on to the study.

"I dare say Inky's got tea ready," said Harry. "We'd better ask the new kid, as he's in the study—what?"

"Oh, yes, of course!" said Nugent.

Bob Cherry hurled open the door of Study No. 1.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he roared.

"My esteemed Bob——"

"Oh, here you are, Inky!"

The juniors came into the study, where the table was spread for a late tea. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was a thoughtful fellow in these matters, and he had considered it probable that his friends would come in hungry.

A slim, olive-skinned fellow rose from the armchair as the juniors entered. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh indicated him with a wave of a dusky hand.

"Da Costa, the esteemed new chap," he said.

"How do you do?" asked Wharton, with the off-hand civility of the Lower Fourth. "I hear that you're landed in this study, Da Costa."

"Yes," said Da Costa. "Mr. Quelch has told me that I shall be here with Wharton and Nugent."

"I'm Wharton, and this chap is Nugent," said Harry. Frank Nugent gave the new fellow a nod. "These two chaps are Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry—they dig farther up the passage. I see you've got tea ready, Inky, old bean."

"The readiness is terrific, and only the boilfulness of the esteemed kettle remains," said Inky.

"You'll join us at tea, Da Costa?"

"Thank you very much, yess."

"Find a chair for the new kid, Franky. I'll have this box. You bag a chair along the passage, Bob."

"Right-ho!"

"Squat down, Da Costa. Had a good journey down?"

"Yess; it was very pleasant."

"Good! Jolly warm to-day—though not after India, I suppose. Inky finds the summer frightfully chilly over here."

"Inky?" repeated Da Costa.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We call Hurree Singh Inky—nobody can remember his name from end to end. Inky, doesn't mind, do you, Inky?"

"Not in the leastfully, my ludicrous chum."

Tea was soon going strong in Study No. 1. Arthur da Costa sat at the table with the Famous Five—rather a crowd round the study table, but a very cheery and good-humoured crowd. There had been a thoughtful, almost sullen, expression on Da Costa's face when the juniors came in; it was gone now. If he had supposed—as probably he had—that Greyfriars would be anything like his school at Lucknow, he found out his mistake now.

There was nothing in the manner of the juniors to indicate that they noticed that Da Costa was of a different race from themselves, or that they cared anything about it if they noticed it. Matters that were of almost tragic consequence in India were trifles light as air to healthy, cheery fellows in a healthier country, where more thought was given to keeping a healthy mind in a healthy body than to brooding over invidious distinctions.

The juniors talked of the county match at Lantham, and that reminded them of the existence of Billy Bunter.

"Has that barrel rolled in yet?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I have not seen the esteemed Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But I am sure he has not returnfully arrived, or his esteemed and ridiculous presence would have been butted into this study."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Then he's still on the bike! If he's riding back from Lantham, he will get home with the milk in the morning."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He got a lift going, and he may get one back," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "He might come home by rail. I suppose you changed trains at Lantham, Da Costa?"

"Yess."

"Did you see anything of a fat fellow with big specs, and a face like a full moon, and a mouth like a lift-shaft?"

Da Costa laughed.

"No. I saw no one like that."

He little dreamed, as he spoke, that the fellow thus described had seen him, and overheard his talk with Mr. Gedge.

"You'll see him later," said Harry. "He's Bunter, of our Form. As you're a new chap he will make your acquaintance first shot, and ask you to cash a postal-order for him. New fellows are Bunter's game. Did you get any cricket in India?"

Da Costa's eyes brightened.

"Yess," he said. "At my school at Lucknao I was considered a good bat. I have not played over here."

"You'll get a chance here. Games practice to-morrow," said Harry. "I'm glad you're a cricketer. This is a cricketing study, you know. Hallo! What do you want, young Nugent?"

Nugent minor, of the Second Form, put his cheeky face in at the door of No. 1 Study.

"You're wanted!" he said.

"Oh, rot!"

"Wingate's sent for you to go to the prefects' room," said the fag. "Like his cheek, sending a Second Form man on messages to the Remove! What?"

"Young ass!" said Frank, laughing.

"What does he want?" grunted Wharton.

The captain of the Remove was not at all disposed to go to the prefects' room without having finished his tea.

"Licking, I expect," answered Dicky Nugent cheerfully. "He looked stuffy. Better put some exercise books in your bags."

And the Second Form man walked away down the passage, whistling shrilly to intimate to the Remove how little he cared about the Lower Fourth.

Wharton rose from the table.

"Better go, I suppose," he growled.

"Who is Wingate?" asked Da Costa.

"Sixth Form man. Captain of the school," answered Harry.

"Must you go if he sends for you?"

Wharton stared.

"Eh? Well, yes, rather! He's a prefect."

And Harry Wharton left the study. And tea in No. 1 proceeded without the presence of the captain of the Remove.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Called to the Rescue!

WINGATE of the Sixth was frowning when Harry Wharton presented himself in the prefect's room.

"Anything up, Wingate?" asked Harry.

"Yes. This won't do!"

"What won't do?"

"When there's a telephone put into the Remove passage—if there ever is—you kids can phone one another on it," said the captain of Greyfriars. "The telephone here is for use by the prefects only—see?"

"Yes," said Harry, in wonder.

He glanced at the instrument, and saw that the receiver was off.

"Bear that in mind!" grunted Wingate.

"Yes, Wingate."

"But you can take the call," added the captain of Greyfriars. Old Wingate's bark was always worse than his bite. "The young ass seems to have got himself into some trouble, and he wants to speak to you. Take the call, and don't let it happen again!"

Harry Wharton might have remarked that if any fellow chose to ring him up on the telephone he really could not help it, and was not in a position to see that it did not happen again.

But he did not explain all that. Argumentativeness from juniors was not encouraged by the great men of the Sixth. Speech might or might not be silvern; but silence undoubtedly was golden.

Wingate walked away to the end of the room, where he talked to Gwynne and North of the Sixth, and dismissed such insects as Remove fellows from his mind altogether.

Wharton went to the telephone and picked up the receiver. He had already guessed that the call was from Bunter, and wondered whether the fat junior was stranded at Lantham.

"Hallo!" he said, speaking through the transmitter.

"Hallo! Is that you, Wharton?" came a fat, discontented voice.

"Yes, you fat duffer!"

"You've kept me waiting."

"Go hon!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You fat ass! You know you've no right to ring a fellow up on this telephone! There was a row last time!"

"I had to phone, you ass! They won't let me come out till I've fixed up this rotten affair!"

"Are you speaking from Lantham?"

"No. Courtfield."

"Well, if you've biked as far as Courtfield, you can bike the rest, I suppose. Good-bye!"

"Hold on!" shrieked Bunter. "I say, Wharton, I came here by train!"

"Then where's Inky's bike?"

"I left it at Lantham."

"You fat villain!"

"I couldn't get the bike on the train without paying for it. It's all right. I left it at a bike shop to have a new mudguard put on. I'm standing Inky a mudguard for lending me the bike."

"Inky may not want a new mudguard, you fat spoofer!"

"I didn't ring you up to talk about Inky's rotten bike, Wharton! Look here, I'm in a fix!"

"Travelling without a ticket—what?" snapped Wharton.

He knew the manners and customs of William George Bunter.

"I did it for your sake."

"Eh?"

"If this is what you call gratitude, Wharton——"

"You burbling chump, what are you burbling about now?"

"I'll explain when I see you. We shall get cut off. That cat at the exchange has made me take a second call already. Look here! I'm in the stationmaster's office at Courtfield. Owing to my tracking down those villains, I've got landed here without a ticket!"

"Eh? What villains?" gasped the astonished captain of the Remove.

"I'll tell you when I see you. There's no time to waste now. I'm hungry—frightfully hungry! I shall be kept here till somebody pays my fare from Lantham, and pays for these telephone calls. You've got time to get here before call-over, if you hurry!"

"Why, you—you—you——" gasped Wharton. "I've done twenty miles on a bike to-day. Do you think I'm biking down to Courtfield, because you've been swindling the railway company?"

"They're going to send for a policeman!"

"Good!"

"Beast!"

"You'll never stop these tricks till you're run in, Bunter. The sooner the better! Good-bye!"

"Hold on!" yelled Bunter. "I say, old fellow, I got into this scrape tracking down those plotting villains! I can tell you the whole plot from beginning to end! You're in danger, old chap!"

"Oh, my hat! Danger of being spoofed by a fat scallywag?"

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I'll tell you the whole thing when you come and get me out! I heard them plotting against you!"

"Gammon!"

"Beast!"

"Give the stationmaster your name and address, and that will make it all right."

"That's no good—he won't take my word! He makes out that I've given him false names and addresses before."

"You fat rascal!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Go and eat coke! You should have 'phoned to Quelchy, not to me!"

"And get a licking?" hooted Bunter.

"Well, a licking is what you want—a thundering good licking, too," answered the captain of the Remove.

"Beast! After the fearful risks I've run on your account!" gasped Bunter. "Why, if they'd seen me, they might have flung me out of the train!"

"Eh? Who might?"

"Those conspirators."

"Have you been drinking anything, Bunter?"

"You silly chump!" shrieked Bunter. "I did it to save you! This is all the thanks I get! Talk about ingratitude being a serpent sharper than the thankless tooth of a child!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you beast? I shall be cut off in another second! Come and get me out, and I'll warn you about that awful plot. Otherwise I shan't say a word, and you will be dished."

"You frabjous ass!" said Harry. "If you've gone off your fat rocker, I suppose you will have to be looked after; and it sounds like it. I'll get out my bike and come along, and I'll jolly well give you the kicking of your life for giving me the trouble!"

"Beast!"

With that fervent expression of his thanks Billy Bunter rang off. Harry Wharton replaced the receiver, and left the prefects' room. He was greatly puzzled. Bunter's statements on the telephone were simply mystifying. That there was anything in it, Wharton did not believe for a moment; but he wondered what the fat Owl had got into his obtuse head now.

Bunter's twin gifts of unveracity and imagination led him to relate many a wild and weird narrative, which the Remove fellows generally discounted by a hundred per cent. Still, the statement that he had overheard a plot against the captain of the Remove was rather out of the common, even for the unveracious Owl, and Wharton wondered what it meant; if it meant anything.

There was no time to lose, if he was to get to Courtfield and back before call-over. Without returning to No. 1 Study, therefore, the captain of the Remove left the House, hurried down to the bike-shed, and wheeled out his machine. He had been in the saddle a good deal that day, but he made good speed to Courtfield, and arrived at the station.

William George Bunter, at long last, was bailed out.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Mysterious!

BILLY BUNTER blinked at the captain of the Remove, as they came out of the railway station at Courtfield, with a blink that was quite expressive but did not express anything like gratitude. Bunter had been rescued from a position that was extremely uncomfortable, to say the least, and which might have had very serious consequences for him. But Bunter, under the station-master's grim eye, and Bunter out of the radius of that grim eye, were two quite different Bunters. Out of the scrape, Bunter dismissed it from his fat mind, and all he was thinking of now was that he was hungry—famished, in fact—and that it was a mile and a half to the school by the shortest way. These matters were now the most important in the universe, as Bunter's detention in the station had lately been.

"You kept me waiting a jolly long time," he grumbled. "A fellow expects a pal to buck up when a fellow's in a scrape."

"Oh, quite," agreed Wharton. "Why didn't you telephone to a pal, then, instead of bothering me?"

Grunt from Bunter.

"Get a move on, fatty," added the captain of the Remove. "You've got a long walk home, as you left Inky's bike at Lantham."

"You know I can't walk it, you beast. You'd better lend me five shillings for a taxi."

"Fathead!"

"I can get one of those country buses part of the way, and walk the other bit," said Bunter. "Lend me a bob?"

"You can do that on threepence," said Harry.

"If there's one thing I never could stand, its meanness in money matters," said Bunter in disgust. "I suppose you can understand that I must get a snack somewhere before I start for Greyfriars. I've had nothing since dinner."

"You'll be late for call-over, if you

(*Continued on next page.*)

hang about here feeding," said Harry. "For goodness' sake shut up and get a move on. Anyhow, I've got to get back."

"You haven't handed over that bob."

Wharton groped in his pocket and produced three pennies. Bobs of which Bunter spoke so carelessly, were not really as common as blackberries in the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars. Some of the fellows, certainly, had plenty of money; but the majority had to count their shillings. As Wharton had just paid Bunter's railway fare from Lantham, he was not disposed to hand out any more of his rather slender store of cash, to save the fat Owl from a little walk before tea. He had left his own tea unfinished, and had mentioned that circumstance to Bunter—but to the fat junior that was a trifle light as air. Nobody's tea but Bunter's mattered.

"That will get you a lift on the bus as far as the end of the common," said Harry. "Now hook it, ass!"

"Beast!"

"What did you mean by that piffle you were talking on the telephone?" asked Harry, suddenly remembering. "Something about a plot or some rot."

"You can call it rot, if you like," sneered Bunter. "I jolly well tracked them down and heard the whole thing. It was a—a fiendish plot, just like they have on the films."

Harry Wharton chuckled. He was strongly inclined to suspect that it was from the films that Bunter had got the idea.

"What sort of a plot?" he asked. "Do you mean something from Ponsonby and the Highcliffe cads?"

Bunter sniffed.

"Of course not! It's a frightful plot, with a lot of villains in it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass, what are you cackling at?"

"The frightful plot, and the lot of villains," chuckled the captain of the Remove. "Did you go to sleep in the train and dream it?"

"No!" howled Bunter.

"Well, what was it all about, then? Buck up and cough it up—time's passing, you know."

"I can't tell you while I'm hungry—fearfully hungry and famishing. Let's go into the bun-shop——"

"No time."

"Let's take a taxi to the school, then. You can put your bike on top."

"Fathead!"

"I'll pay the fare, if that's what you're afraid of," said Bunter, with a scornful sneer. "You can leave that to me."

"I'd have liked to leave your Lantham fare to you, only there was nothing doing," grinned Wharton. "Don't talk rot, old fat bean."

"You would have to lend me the money, of course. But I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow——"

"Oh cheese it! I'm off!"

"I shan't warn you about that plot, if you don't stand me a taxi to the school!" yelled Bunter, as Wharton put a leg over his machine.

"I'll try to worry along, all the same," chuckled Wharton. "Better get a move on, or you'll be late for roll."

"Look here, you tell Quelchy at roll-call that you saw me in Courtfield, and I was helping a poor blind man home, and then he will be all right about my missing call-over."

"Sorry, old bean—you must tell your own lies," said the captain of the Remove, and he started his bicycle, and pedalled away for the school, leaving William George Bunter snorting with indignation.

Harry Wharton was very soon back at Greyfriars, but Billy Bunter's journey was a longer one. He rolled into one of the little horse-buses that plied on the Courtfield Road, and it dropped him at the Greyfriars end of the common. Thence he had a quarter of a mile to walk to school; a walk that would have been saved him, had the captain of the Remove expended five shillings on a taxi for him. Naturally, Bunter felt indignant as he rolled wearily on to Greyfriars. He rolled in at the gates just as Gosling was coming down to close them, and rolled on to the House.

There was no time for tea, or even a snack, before calling-over; fellows were going into Big Hall now. Had Wharton reported to the Remove master that Bunter was engaged in helping a poor old blind man home, no doubt the fat Owl would have been excused for missing call-over, and might have had time to root through the Remove studies for provender while the other fellows were answering to their names in Hall. But Wharton had inconsiderately told Bunter to tell his own lies; useless advice, for it was quite futile for Bunter to make that statement to Mr. Quelch personally. With a sinking feeling under his extensive waistcoat which amounted to anguish, Billy Bunter rolled along with the other fellows to Hall.

It was not till he was standing in the ranks of the Remove in Hall that he noticed the new fellow and turned his big spectacles on him. Arthur da Costa was beside Frank Nugent, and speaking to him in a low voice, and Bunter blinked at him very curiously, and sidled along to get a closer view of him. A fat thumb nudged Da Costa in the ribs, and he started and looked round. Nugent gave the Owl of the Remove a grin.

"So you've got back, Fatty!" he remarked.

"Beast!"

"That's Bunter, Da Costa," said Nugent. "Don't lend him anything on a postal-order—he's just going to tell you about it."

Da Costa laughed.

"Nothing of the kind!" hooted Bunter. "So you're the new fellow, what?" he went on, his big spectacles gleaming at the Eurasian.

"Yess."

Bunter grinned at the sibilant "yess," which he had heard before in the Lantham train.

"He, he, he!" he chuckled. "Old Gedge gone?"

Da Costa stared.

"Do you mean Mr. Gedge?" he asked.

"Yes," grinned Bunter. "Nice old blighter, what? What a voice! Filing saws isn't in it."

"What do you mean?" asked Da Costa blankly. "Do you know Mr. Gedge?"

"I dare say he heard Inky mention his name," said Nugent, who was staring at Bunter. "But I don't see how he knows anything about his voice. What do you mean, Bunter?"

"He, he, he!"

"I dare say he saw Mr. Gedge at Lantham Station," said Harry. "He seems to have come on to Courtfield about the same time as Da Costa, only he was hung up at Courtfield Station, hanging about waiting for a chance to dodge out."

"Bilking?" asked Nugent.

"Beast!" said Bunter. "I was hours and hours in that waiting-room at Courtfield—dying of hunger! Lot you fellows care!"

Apparently the Remove fellows did not care. At all events, they chuckled, as if they saw something comic in William George Bunter dying of hunger in a railway waiting-room.

"I could tell you something, if I liked!" sneered Bunter. "Something that would jolly well make you open your eyes."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the latest?" asked Bob Cherry, with a chuckle.

"That's telling!" answered Bunter mysteriously.

"Ass!" said Bob.

"Silence in the Remove!" called out Gwynne of the Sixth. "Now, then, not so much chatter."

And talk in the Lower Fourth ceased, and Mr. Quelch came in to take the names. After which Billy Bunter was free to roam up and down and round about, like a lion seeking what he might devour.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter in Search of a Supper!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

The fat face and glimmering spectacles of William George Bunter peered in at the doorway of Study No. 1.

Wharton and Nugent were at prep there.

Da Costa, the new fellow, had no prep to do his first evening, and he was not in the study. Billy Bunter blinked round the room and ascertained that fact. Then he rolled in.

Wharton waved his hand to the door.

"Prep!" he said.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Buzz off," said Frank Nugent impatiently. "You'll get scalped in the morning if you don't do your own prep, Bunter."

"I'm too jolly hungry to do any prep."

"Well, we've got ours to do, so roll away."

Instead of rolling away, Billy Bunter shut the door of the study behind him and stood blinking at the chums of the Remove, with a sort of dramatic mysteriousness in his face which made them stare.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hook it, Bunter!"

"I've come here to give you the tip, Wharton."

"Never mind, go and give it to somebody else."

"You silly ass! It's you they're plotting against."

"Fathead!"

"If you want to be ruined and disgraced and turned out of Greyfriars, all right," said Bunter, with a sneer.

Wharton jumped.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Potty?" asked Frank Nugent, staring at the Owl of the Remove in great astonishment.

"I know what I know!" said Bunter mysteriously.

"The fat idiot was burbling this on the telephone," said Harry. "He burbled it again at Courtfield. He's got it on the brain! Can't you go and tell Toddy instead of me, Bunter? He's your keeper."

"Toddy's not in danger, you silly ass!"

"Well, am I in danger?" asked Harry, laughing.

"Frightful."

"Won't it keep till after prep?" asked Nugent.

"No; I'm hungry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Captain Marker is your deadly foe, Wharton," said Bunter dramatically, "and he's sent Da Costa specially from India to get you disgraced and expelled from the school! See?" Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent jumped simultaneously to their feet. (*See Chapter* 12.)

"I've had practically nothing since I came in," said Bunter pathetically, "and I missed tea. I went to the House dame and explained that I missed my tea owing to stopping out to carry a parcel for a poor old lady——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"She looked as if she didn't believe me," said Bunter sorrowfully. "Suspicious cat, you know. She didn't give me anything to eat. I told Toddy that I'd missed my tea, and all he said was that it would help to bring down my fat. Nasty jealousy of a chap's figure, you know. I should be starving now if I hadn't found a cake in Smithy's study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've had nothing but that cake and some biscuits that Squiff left on his table," said Bunter. "I've come here for supper."

"Like your cheek! Ask next door."

"Considering that I've run fearful risks to save your life, Wharton——"

"Oh crumbs! Is my life in danger now?"

"Yes!" said Bunter impressively.

"Hold me while I tremble!" said Wharton, without, however, looking very much alarmed.

"You can cackle," said Bunter, "but if you knew that a fellow had been sent specially to Greyfriars to plot against you——"

Frank Nugent pushed away his books.

"This is better than prep!" he said. "Go it, Bunter."

"I shan't tell Wharton about his fearful danger unless you fellows stand me some supper," said Bunter. "That's only fair! I can't say exactly what the villains intend—it may be kidnapping or——"

"Kidnapping!" gasped Wharton.

"Or murder——"

"Great pip!"

Wharton and Nugent stared hard at Bunter. Had the fat junior been to the films that afternoon it would have accounted for this. But he hadn't! They could not make head or tail of it. Things happened on the films that never happened, and were not likely to happen, elsewhere. But Bunter had not been inspired by the films this time.

"I can lay my hands on one of the plotting villains now," said Bunter. "The other has gone. What about it?"

"Is there a giddy plotting villain at Greyfriars, then?"

"Yes, and in this study."

"You mean a fat villain plotting to get a study supper on the cheap?"

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I don't mean anything of the kind. I mean that a fellow has been sent over specially from India to get you disgraced and expelled and kidnapped and murdered."

"Rather a big order," said Harry, laughing. "Is he going to pull it off at one fell swoop, or on the instalment system?"

"You're sure about the kidnapping and murdering?" asked Nugent, wiping his eyes. "Is Wharton going to be kidnapped first and murdered afterwards, or murdered first and kidnapped afterwards?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I admit they didn't say anything about kidnapping and murdering," confessed Bunter. "But they're capable of it."

"Who are, you burbling ass?"

"Those plotting conspirators. Mind, I'm not going to put you wise unless you stand me a supper. That's fair. You can go on in danger, with the villain in this study watching for his chance, if you don't do the decent thing. I wash my hands of it."

"Well, a wash won't do them any harm," said Harry. "They don't get one too often."

"You silly chump! Talk about Pontius Pilate fiddling while Carthage was burning! You're in frightful danger, and all you can do is to cackle."

"Well, give it a name," said Harry. "If I'm in frightful danger, I'd like to know the details. I should hate being kidnapped, and I have an awfully strong disinclination to being murdered. It would muck up the cricket, for one thing."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent.

"You've got an enemy!" said Bunter dramatically.

"Some fellow whose nose I have punched?"

"No, you ass! A deadly foe!"

"Good! Who's the deadly foe?"

"A man in India."

"Sounds awfully probable," agreed Wharton. "I don't know anybody in India, and nobody in India knows me. Can't you make up an easier one?"

"Have you ever heard of Captain Marker?"

"Never."

"Well, he's heard of you," said Bunter.

"He's welcome to," said Harry. "I hope he's heard what a nice chap I am."

"He's sent an enemy over here to ruin you."

"Sub-title—'Ruined by a Deadly Foe!'" said the captain of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass! I'm not telling you about a film!" yelled Bunter.

"Oh! My mistake: I thought you were."

"The fellow has been put in your study——"

"Eh?"

"I heard that Da Costa was put in this study——"

"Da Costa is put in this study, certainly," said Harry Wharton blankly. "But what has Da Costa to do with your funny story?"

"He's your deadly foe."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Sent specially from India by Captain Marker, to get you disgraced and expelled from the school!" said Bunter. "Da Costa's one of them, and the other is the man Gedge! See?"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent

jumped simultaneously to their feet. William George Bunter had succeeded in surprising them, at least.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Doubting Thomases!

BILLY BUNTER blinked at the captain of the Remove. He had let loose his thunderbolt, as it were. This warning of peril was worth, at the very least, a supper in the study. He expected to see Wharton's face blanch: to see horror and alarm depicted there.

His expectations were not realised.

Harry Wharton was silent for some moments, staring at Bunter: but only because the fat junior's astounding statement had taken his breath away. When he found his voice, it was not to ask Bunter for details of this alarming plot. It was to utter the remark:

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Well, this takes the cake, even for Bunter," said Nugent. "You fat chump, can't you see you're over the limit? That chap Da Costa will knock spots out of you if he hears that you're using his name like this in one of your spoofing yarns."

"It's true!" howled Bunter.

"Don't be an ass!"

"I found it out to save Wharton's life—I mean to save him from being ruined," said Bunter. "This is the gratitude I get."

"If you're not out of your senses, tell me what you mean by saying such a thing about that new chap," said Harry Wharton. "It can't be true, of course: but something must have put it into your silly head. You get a lot of spoof from the films, but this isn't a film story. What do you mean?"

Had Billy Bunter been able to tell a plain, unvarnished tale, the juniors might have been convinced by it, strange as the tale was.

But it was an impossibility for the Owl of the Remove to tell a plain unvarnished tale.

To tell a story without adding trimmings to it was not in Bunter's line. His fertile imagination was his undoing.

Moreover, in this case he felt bound to make out a strong claim to the gratitude of the captain of the Remove. A study supper depended on his success. And a tale of how he had hidden under a seat and overheard a conversation was not thrilling enough for Bunter. He had to make it a little more exciting than that.

"You fellows remember I was stranded at Lantham this afternoon, owing to your disgusting selfishness," he began.

"We'll take that as read: get on."

"Beast! I went to Lantham station to get home, and spotted those two villains on the platform," said Bunter impressively. "That nigger, Da Costa, and the lawyer johnny."

"Plotting on the platform?" asked Nugent, with a grin.

"Exactly! As I came by, the man said 'Hist!'" went on Bunter. "Hist! Just like that!"

"Sounds probable!"

"I knew there was something up," pursued Bunter. "I tracked them into the train, and hid under the seat to watch them."

"You couldn't watch much of them under the seat. Was there anything suspicious about their boots?"

"You silly asses! I heard all they said. Gedge had a voice like a rasp," said Bunter. "I listened to the whole plot. They mentioned Captain Marker—I don't know who he is——"

"Neither does anybody else, I fancy. But get on."

"He took Da Costa away from a school in Lucknow, to send him over here to Greyfriars, to plot against you."

"Why?" asked Wharton.

"I don't know."

"And what's the giddy plot?"

"You're to be disgraced and expelled from the school."

"How?"

"I don't know. Da Costa is going to work it, somehow."

"I can see him doing it! Anything else?"

"Yes: he's going to make friends with you, and get into your confidence, and that sort of thing. Plotting villain you know. There's a lot of money at stake."

"Whose money?"

"I don't know."

"There seems to be a thumping lot of things you don't know. Didn't you think this yarn out at all before you made it up?"

"I haven't made it up!" shrieked Bunter. "It's the truth. I suppose you fellows know me well enough to take my word."

"We know you well enough not to," chuckled Nugent. "Is that the lot, or is there anything more to come?"

Billy Bunter proceeded into details. As a matter of fact, he did not remember half of what had been said in his hearing in the railway carriage. But that did not deter Bunter. When memory failed, he had always his fat imagination to draw upon. He drew upon it liberally.

"There," he wound up, "what do you think of that?"

"Precious little," said Harry laughing. "This isn't one of your best stories, Bunter. You could improve on it."

"I suppose he really was in the railway carriage," said Nugent. "I suppose he went to sleep and dreamed all this."

"Very likely," assented Wharton. "There may be a grain of truth somewhere in it, though I wouldn't like the job of sorting it out."

"It's all true!" yelled Bunter.

"You fat spoofer! You've told us that you suspected those two on the platform at Lantham, and tracked them into a railway carriage, and hid under the seat and listened to their talk?"

"Yes—for your sake, you know—as a pal——"

"And how did you get under the seat without their seeing you, if they were in the carriage?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent, quite entertained by the expression on Bunter's fat face.

"Did you happen to have a cloak-of-darkness, or something of the kind in your pocket?" asked Wharton.

"Nunno! Of—of course not! I—I—I mean——"

"You mean to bag a supper by telling that idiotic yarn?"

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I mean—I—I mean——"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"I—I mean, I—I didn't exactly track them to the railway carriage. That was what I really meant to say."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton. "And if you didn't get into the carriage, how did you hear the giddy plotting?"

"I—I was under the seat. I got in first," confessed Bunter. "That's what I really meant. Then they got in."

"You told us you got under the seat to watch them."

"So I did; to save you from——"

"How did you know they were going to get into that special carriage?"

"Eh?"

"Yes; how did you know that?" chuckled Nugent.

"I—I didn't——"

"Then how were you going to watch them from under the seat in a carriage they might never have got in at all?"

"I—I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean I was—was under the seat, and—and I didn't know they were getting in, but—but they did get in. It's true, you know. The—the fact is, I—I never noticed them on the platform at all—not till they got in the train."

"You said you did."

"That—that was only a—a figure of speech."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You never noticed them on the platform—not even when the man Gedge said 'Hist!'—just like that?"

"Nunno! He didn't exactly say 'Hist!' I mean very likely he did say 'Hist!', only, I never heard him, you know, not noticing him till he got into the train."

"My only summer bonnet!"

"In fact, he said 'Hist!' after he got in," said Bunter. "I remember now that he said 'Hist!' in the carriage."

"Any other passengers there?"

"No."

"And he didn't see you under the seat?"

"No."

"Then why did he say 'Hist!' if there was nobody there to hist?"

"I—I mean he didn't exactly say 'Hist!' I mean——"

Wharton sat down at the table again and drew his books towards him.

"Go and tell the rest in some other study," he said. "But look out for Da Costa's boot if you tell yarns about him. A yarn like this might get you a caning from Quelch, too."

"If you don't believe me, Wharton, I——"

"Believe you! My hat!"

"Look here, what about supper?"

"Nothing about supper," said the captain of the Remove, with a chuckle. "Little Tommy Tucker sang for his supper; but his singing must have been better than your yarning if he got any. Buzz off!"

"I've warned you——"

"Scat!"

"That fellow, Da Casta——"

"Leave Da Costa alone, you fat idiot. Can't you understand that it's a serious thing to talk about a fellow like that?" exclaimed Wharton. "Why, Da Costa might go to the Head about it if he heard!"

"It's true!" howled Bunter.

"If you could make the Head believe so, all right. He would jolly soon pack Da Costa off back to India. Go and tell the Head."

"He—he might not believe me——"

"Probably not. Shut the door after you."

"Look here, Wharton——"

"Oh, buzz off, you fat duffer! We've got our prep to do," exclaimed the captain of the Remove impatiently.

Billy Bunter glared at Wharton and Nugent with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. But there was evidently nothing doing. His startling story had not earned him a study supper. The elaborate details Bunter had added to it had deprived it of any probability it might otherwise have had. If there was any truth among the fiction, Wharton was not disposed to take the trouble to

sift it out—especially as he did not believe there was any.

"You silly chump!" gasped Bunter at last. "I've warned you——"

"Rats!"

"I wash my hands of the whole thing now!" roared Bunter.

"Wash your neck at the same time," suggested Nugent. "It needs it."

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter departed from Study No. 1 supperless, and in great wrath and indignation. The door of that apartment closed after him with a terrific slam.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent looked at one another across the table before they resumed prep.

"There couldn't be anything in it," said Frank.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Of course not! How could there be?" he said. "Why should a man in India, of whom I've never heard, want to do me any harm? A captain in India, a solicitor in London, and a new fellow at Greyfriars mixed up in a plot against a fellow they've never seen or heard of. Bunter's been reading something of the sort in a novel. He may have gone to sleep under the seat and dreamed something or other. Anyhow, it's all rot."

"I suppose it is," assented Nugent.

"Of course it is! Let's get on; we're due for boxing in the Rag after prep."

And prep was resumed in Study No. 1, and Billy Bunter and his remarkable yarn were dismissed together.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Drawn Blank!

"AND this is the esteemed Rag!"

"The Rag?" repeated Da Costa.

"We call it the Rag because in this esteemed apartment the ragfulness is sometimes terrific," explained Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Da Costa laughed.

That celebrated apartment, on the ground floor of the School House, was deserted now. It was used as a common-room by the juniors, and the juniors were at prep. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, constrained by courtesy and Mr. Quelch's desire that he should befriend the new fellow, had cut prep short, and was taking Da Costa round the House. During the afternoon he had shown the new fellow most of the sights of Greyfriars out of doors. Now he was going the rounds indoors.

Whether Mr. Quelch desired the nabob to carry his courtesy to the new fellow to the extent of cutting prep was rather a question. Probably the Remove master would have expected Inky's politeness to stop short of that point. But the nabob did not see why he should not oblige himself a little, as well as Mr. Quelch.

The two juniors walked round the long room, with its windows looking on the dusky quad and the long table that bore the marks and carvings of generations of Greyfriars fags. Da Costa seemed interested, but every now and then his keen eyes searched the nabob's face sharply, surreptitiously. Of that scrutiny Hurree Singh appeared completely unaware.

What he thought of Eurasians in general, and Arthur da Costa in particular, was not betrayed by Hurree Singh's good-humoured face. Mr. Quelch had asked him to show the new fellow some attention, and he was doing as his Form master had asked—and doing it civilly and obligingly. That was all there was about it. If Da Costa, as a half-caste, felt any superiority over a fellow who was wholly of native Indian blood he took good care not to give the slightest hint of it. It was his cue to make friends in his Form, and he had already observed that Hurree Singh was held in high estimation by the other Remove men. He had observed, too, that Inky was one of Wharton's special circle of friends, and for that reason alone he desired to ingratiate himself with the nabob, if he could.

But he knew too much of his own country to trust to the smiling and suave exterior of the nabob. He was quite well aware that no Oriental's face indicated his thoughts, unless he chose that it should do so. He felt, rather than thought, that if there was danger for him at Greyfriars—danger of discovery, danger of defeat, that danger lay in the direction of the polite and smiling nabob.

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the Rag.

Da Costa had no prep that night, and Inky had chucked prep to take the fellow round the House. Bunter had chucked prep because he was still short of a supper.

Study No. 1 had been drawn blank, and Billy Bunter was still roaming at large like a lion seeking what he might devour.

The school supper was not due yet—besides, the school supper was of little use to Bunter. By this time the Owl of the Remove was prepared to negotiate a meal of Brobdingnagian proportions—if he could get it. For which reason Bunter had rolled in quest of the new fellow, as a sort of last resource. The new fellow probably had something in his box—new fellows often had—and if there was anything in the edible line in Da Costa's box, Bunter thought it a shame that it should blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air. True, many fellows, knowing what Bunter knew, would not have been disposed to pal with the Eurasian for the sake of what might be in his box. But William George Bunter was not particular in little matters such as these. The one outstanding fact, in the general scheme of the universe, at that moment, was that Bunter was hungry. When Bunter was hungry, all other considerations whatsoever paled their ineffectual fires.

So he rolled into the Rag after the two juniors, and bestowed quite a friendly blink on Arthur da Costa.

"Looking for you, old bean," he said affably.

"You are very kind," said Da Costa.

"Not at all, old chap! You're new here; I'm an old hand! I'm always kind to new kids. It's my way," explained Bunter. "You remember how I stood by you, Inky, when you first came to Greyfriars."

"The rememberfulness is not terrific."

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"I remember that you borrowed five shillings from me, my esteemed Bunter and——"

"Look here——"

"And I also remember that the repayfulness was not terrific."

"Oh, cheese it, Inky! Look here, you can't have done your prep! You buzz off and leave me to look after the new chap!"

"Bow-wow!" said Inky cheerfully.

"The fact is, I want to speak to Da Costa," said Bunter. "It's something rather private."

The nabob chuckled.

"You are going to tell Da Costa that you are expecting a postal-order," he remarked. "I remember you told me so when I came to Greyfriars."

"Oh, dry up, Inky! I say, Da Costa, what about your box?"

"My box?" repeated Da Costa.

"Yes. I suppose it's come?"

"Yes. It is in the dormitory now."

"I dare say you've brought rather a spread to Greyfriars in your box, what?"

"Oh, no!"

"You haven't?" ejaculated Bunter.

"Nothing of the kind!"

"Well, I must say you are a silly ass! New fellows always bring some grub from home," said Bunter. "Not even a cake?"

"Not even a cake!" grinned Da Costa.

"Well, look here! The school shop's closed now, of course, but Mrs. Mimble would oblige a chap. It's locked up now, but I know how to get out of the House. I've wangled a supper before like that. What about it?"

"The superfluousness of the idiotic Bunter is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Roll away!"

"I'm speaking to Da Costa! Don't you butt it, Inky! The fact is, Da Costa, I'm expecting a postal-order," Billy Bunter proceeded to explain. "I was rather disappointed about it this afternoon. Owing to some delay in the post, it won't be here till the morning. I suppose you could lend me the ten bob and take the postal-order when it comes?"

"'Fraid not!" grinned Da Costa.

"You'd lend it to Wharton fast enough!" snapped Bunter.

Da Costa stared.

"What do you mean?"

"I know what I mean," said Bunter. "I know all about it. A fellow may have been under a seat in a railway-carriage from Lantham this afternoon, and he may not. He may have heard a lot of talk about a certain subject, and he may not. See?"

Da Costa stood quite still. This revelation that something, at least, was known of his scheme at Greyfriars, came so suddenly, so utterly unexpectedly, that he was taken aback. He stood as if rooted to the floor, his breath coming quickly, his dark eyes dilated. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh looked from one to the other.

"Are you talking out of the back of your esteemed neck, Bunter?" asked the astonished nabob.

"That chap knows whether I am or not," said Bunter loftily. "I'm speaking to Da Costa, Inky, not you. Don't you butt in."

"I have no idea whatever what you are talking about, Bunter," said Da Costa, and his lisping voice was cool and calm. "I do not understand you in the least."

"Oh, come off!" jeered Bunter. "What was old Gedge saying to you in the railway-carriage?"

"Mr. Gedge gave me some advice about my new school," said Da Costa. "But I do not see how you know anything about it."

"Suppose a fellow was travelling without a ticket?" grinned Bunter. "Suppose he was under the seat in the carriage—what?"

Da Costa breathed hard.

He understood now.

But he was quite possessed of his self-control. His olive face betrayed nothing, even to the keen eyes of the nabob.

"If you were hidden under the seat, as you say, you can have heard nothing I care about," he answered. "Any passengers in the carriage might have heard all that Mr. Gedge said to me."

"There weren't any other passengers," grinned Bunter. "Old Gedge took jolly good care of that. What about Captain Marker, eh?"

"If you heard Mr. Gedge speaking to me, no doubt you heard him mention Captain Marker," said Da Costa calmly. "Captain Marker is the gentleman in India who sent me here."

"And what did he send you for?" jeered Bunter.

"It is no business of yours, Bunter; but Captain Marker befriended me because my father was in his regiment, and saved his life in a fight with the Pathans in the hills," said Da Costa. "It is no secret that my fees here are paid by Captain Marker."

Billy Bunter blinked at the half-caste. Da Costa's manner was so cool and normal that the fat junior was quite staggered. He wondered whether he had, after all, heard aright from his hiding-place in the railway-carriage. Certainly Da Costa did not seem in the least uneasy.

"Mean to say that old Gedge didn't tell you specially to make friends with Wharton here?" he demanded.

"Certainly he did. Captain Marker is an old brother officer of Colonel Wharton, and he certainly desired me to make friends with his old friend's nephew, and Mr. Gedge repeated his advice. I have already told Mr. Quelch so."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at Da Costa's calm face. He had fully expected the new fellow to crumple up on hearing that his plot was known. Not only one supper, but many suppers and gorgeous spreads, that little secret should have been worth. But Bunter was quite nonplussed now. Had he, after all, fallen asleep in the carriage and dreamed it, or had he misunderstood what he heard? His fat mind was all at sea now.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was not speaking now, but he was looking very curiously at the Eurasian.

"Mean to say that old Gedge didn't talk to you about getting Harry Wharton sacked from Greyfriars?" demanded Bunter at last, firing, as it were, the last shot in his locker.

Da Costa laughed aloud.

"Mr. Gedge is the trusted legal representative of a military gentleman in a high position in India," he said, "and a friend of Colonel Wharton. He would not be likely to talk any nonsense of the kind. You seem to have misunderstood very strangely what you heard by spying and listening, Bunter. Don't talk to me any more. You are not the sort of fellow I want to speak to."

"Perhaps you'd like me to go and tell Quelchy!" sneered Bunter.

"You may go and tell Mr. Quelch anything you like," answered Da Costa contemptuously. "He will not be likely to believe a foolish story from a fellow who, on his own showing, was swindling the railway company while he was spying."

And Da Costa turned and walked away with the nabob.

Bunter blinked after him.

His fat mind was in quite a whirl. But if he had entertained any idea of acquainting Mr. Quelch with the matter, Da Costa's last words drove that idea from his fat mind. What Mr. Quelch would say and do if he learned that a member of his Form had "bilked" the railway company, Bunter did not need telling. He seemed to hear already the acid tones of the Remove master and the swish of his cane.

Arthur da Costa gave the Owl of the Remove no further heed. He walked out of the Rag with Hurree Singh.

Bunter rolled away dismally. Da Costa, like Study No. 1, had been drawn blank. If the matter was as Bunter supposed, from what he had overheard, the fellow from Lucknow had a nerve of iron, added to the cunning of the serpent. Wharton had laughed at the story, Da Costa had laughed at the accusation, and Bunter realised sadly that there was, at all events, nothing in it that might be "wangled" into a benefit for his fat and fatuous self. And as the matter was of no profit to William George Bunter, he naturally dismissed it from his fat mind and returned to the Remove passage, in the hope of picking up some unconsidered trifle there in the way of provender.

Da Costa chatted easily with Hurree Jamset Ram Singh after leaving Bunter in the Rag. If the nabob was observing him, there was nothing for Inky's keen eyes to read in the olive face.

After prep there was boxing in the Rag, and Da Costa was among the crowd of juniors there. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh—perhaps on account of his Form master's request, perhaps on account of some lingering thought at the back of his keen mind, remained with the new fellow. He did not make any reference to Bunter's talk, and seemed to have forgotten it. But it was in his thoughts; and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had a long memory. But the new fellow's manner was quite cool and normal, and the nabob had to confess that if Arthur da Costa had any secret to keep he knew how to keep it.

It was not till lights were out in the Remove dormitory that the Eurasian relaxed the guard that he had kept over his face; in the darkness he could with safety throw aside the mask.

Long after the rest of the Remove were sleeping the boy from Lucknow lay awake, his dark eyes staring into the gloom, his olive face almost haggard with anxiety.

To Bunter he gave little thought—he had already taken Bunter's measure, and he had little doubt that the fatuous Owl would forget the whole episode in a short time, if there was no profit in it. Neither did he think that the other Remove fellows would take any heed of so wild a tale if Bunter told it in the studies. Only the dusky face of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh haunted him with a sense of terror. The nabob had appeared to notice nothing—to take no heed of Bunter's talk; to have forgotten the incident entirely. But to Da Costa, half an Oriental himself, that went for nothing. Only too well he knew the impassive, implacable astuteness of the East. If there was danger for him at Greyfriars, it lay in Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

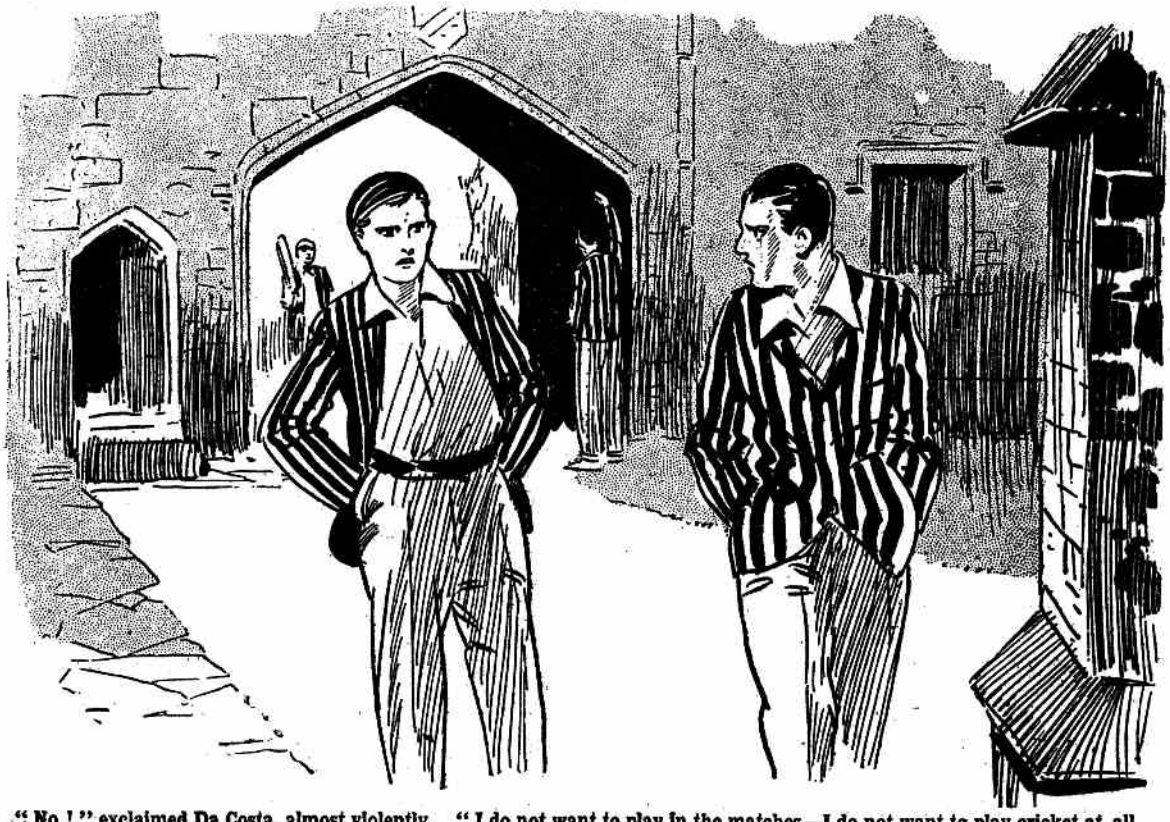
But it was not only the haunting thought of danger that clouded Da Costa's face with anxiety and uneasiness. He was thinking of Harry Wharton, too—of the Remove captain's cheery, unsuspicious cordiality; and there was remorse, as well as fear, in the troubled mind of the new fellow at Greyfriars.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Harry Wharton!

ARTHUR DA COSTA took his place in the Remove the following morning, without exciting much attention in that Form. New fellows were of no great importance in the eyes of the Remove.

The fact that Da Costa came from India, and that he was partly of native blood, rather marked him off from the



"No!" exclaimed Da Costa, almost violently. "I do not want to play in the matches—I do not want to play cricket at all here! I will never touch a bat again at Greyfriars. I wish—oh, I wish that I had never come here!" Harry Wharton stood rooted to the ground, staring at the new boy in blank amazement. *(See Chapter 15.)*

other fellows. His foreign look, and his soft, lisping voice and silky, smooth manners, were uncommon in the Lower Fourth; but he was hardly so conspicuous as the Nabob of Bhanipur. The diamond tiepin and the ring on his olive finger had already disappeared—the Eurasian was quick to learn. To slip easily into the normal life of the Form, to make all the friends he could, and no enemies at all, was Da Costa's object; and he seemed likely to succeed.

Bolsover major pronounced him too soft and smooth by half, but took no special notice of him; Skinner, who never could see a weak spot in any fellow without wanting to give him a dig there, adopted the subject of half-castes as a topic when Da Costa was in hearing; but as the new fellow declined to be drawn, Skinner tired of that amusement. Most of the fellows gave him no heed. Only Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, as he was in their study, made it a point to be civil to him, and Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry followed their lead. Of the Famous Five only Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rather avoided the new junior—though so tactfully that even Da Costa could not feel certain that the nabob was avoiding him.

New as he was to the school, and to the work of the Form, Da Costa gave Mr. Quelch satisfaction that morning. Also, unseen by Mr. Quelch, he supplied Billy Bunter with an answer he needed for a question, much to Bunter's satisfaction and relief, as well as surprise. Bunter decided that the fellow, after all, was not such a beast as he had supposed.

In third lesson there were papers to write, and Bunter blinked over Da Costa's shoulder, to save his own fat intellect the trouble of exertion. Da Costa shifted a little, in order to give Bunter an easy view of the paper. When the papers were collected Mr. Quelch was surprised to see how well William George Bunter had done.

Bunter began to feel rather pleased that Da Costa had come to Greyfriars. If this sort of thing went on, Bunter was likely to be saved a lot of trouble in class—though not when examinations came round. But the Owl of the Remove was not accustomed to looking ahead.

Bunter even wished that the new fellow had been put into his study instead of Wharton's. It would have saved him a lot of work over his prep.

The episode of the Lantham train was already fading from Bunter's obtuse mind.

Had Harry Wharton taken his warning seriously, or had Da Costa "squared" him to keep it dark, it would have been different. As the matter stood, it had no special interest for Bunter, and it faded out of his thoughts.

Indeed, the Owl of the Remove—on reflection—was almost as anxious to keep it dark as Da Costa could have been, in view of the peculiar circumstances in which he had overheard Mr. Gedge. He had escaped the consequences of his rascality; but if the matter came to Mr. Quelch's knowledge it would have been reopened, with painful results to the "bilk."

That afternoon there was games practice on Little Side; but Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was not there. He had to leave to go over to Lantham to fetch his bike—where he had the additional pleasure of paying for the new mudguard Bunter had ordered. It was likely to be a considerable time before even the good-natured nabob lent his jigger again to William George Bunter.

"Games practice, old bean," said Bob Cherry, tapping Da Costa on the shoulder after class. "I hear that you've played cricket in India."

"Yess," said Da Costa.

"You're keen on the game?" asked Harry Wharton, noticing how the olive face brightened.

"Yess," said Da Costa. "I think, perhaps, you will not think me very good here. But I am eager to learn."

"Good man!" said the captain of the Remove cheerily. "We'll be glad to see how you shape."

"A rod in pickle for Highcliffe, perhaps!" grinned Bob.

"Perhaps!" said Wharton, laughing.

Wharton had not given the new fellow much heed, except in the way of cheery civility to a study-mate. But the obviously keen interest Da Costa took in the summer game interested him. It was genuine, and a fellow who was keen on playing a good game had a passport to Wharton's esteem. All the half-caste's cunning was not likely to serve him so well as that one little bit of sincerity.

Wharton did not, as a matter of fact, expect very much from the new junior; but he was the fellow to give any keen player any amount of encouragement. Da Costa looked very handsome in his flannels, and keen as mustard; and if any remembrance of Bunter's strange tale lingered in Harry Wharton's mind he dismissed it when he saw Da Costa on the cricket ground.

"You've got a jolly good willow there," Wharton remarked, with a glance at the bat under Da Costa's arm. "Let's see how you shape with it. Here, Smithy, send down a few to Da Costa."

(Continued on page 28.)

AILEN'S PUBLICITY STUNT! ***Sir Aubrey Ailen's determined that when his "White Hope" enters the ring to fight Pal Jordan, the American "Dentist," the Olympus Hall shall be crowded to capacity. Read how Sir Aubrey sets out to ensure this!***

The Man of Iron

By Walter Edwards

A rousing story introducing "Tiny" Scannan, who turns the scale at eighteen stone, and packs a punch that a world-beater would envy!

Harry the Rat!

LITTLE more than an hour had elapsed since the sensational happenings in the Olympus Boxing Hall, when Tiny Scannan had gone down before the tigerish onslaught of Pal Jordan. Yet neither Tiny nor Ailen appeared to be the least bit worried about the one-round defeat as they took supper in a private room of the Hotel Regal. Indeed, to judge by the bottles in the ice-bucket it looked as though they meant to celebrate the occasion.

"We've got Pal and Maulstein on toast, my dear fellow," declared Sir Aubrey, twirling the slender stem of his wine glass between his thick fingers, "and this fifty thousand pounds is as good as in my pocket!"

The Man of Iron looked up from his sweet and brought his bushy eyebrows together in a ferocious frown.

"Your pocket, Ailen?" he asked pointedly.

"I mean our pocket, of course," laughed the baronet. "Really, dear boy, you're a most touchy individual! Haven't we agreed that we're going fifty-fifty over this business?"

"Sure," nodded Scannan. "I just wanted to remind you of the fact! As you say," he ran on, his fierce expression changing, "this fifty thousand looks like a gift for us! You can bet your life that Pal Jordan thinks he's on a soft thing after what happened to-night, and it's a thousand to one that he won't trouble to go into strict training!"

"That's so, dear boy," beamed Sir Aubrey, "and that's going to make things a cast iron certainty for us! As for you, I think you'd better do your serious training in private, in case Maulstein's got any spies about! He's as cunning as an old fox is Abe, and he doesn't believe in taking chances!"

A low chuckle broke from the Man of Iron.

"I didn't know there was so much easy money lying around idle," he said, his little eyes twinkling. "D'yer know, Ailen, I'm going to wade in and knock Pal's block off in the first round, and after that I'm going to put my hat on and sail for the States!"

"The States?"

"Sure!"

"And you're going to sail immediately after the fight, I suppose?" queried Sir Aubrey, with a grin.

"Well, I'm not goin' to lose any time, I give you my word," returned the Man of Iron. "I can lick Pal with one hand strapped behind my back, so reckon I'm good enough for Harry Gran, the world's champion!" He sat back in his chair and stretched his massive frame. "Ailen," he said, "we're goin' to make so much money that we shall have a headache counting it!"

"That sounds like music, dear boy," chuckled the baronet, rubbing his fleshy hands together. "I like a fighter to be confident!"

"Confident!" echoed Tiny Scannan. "I'd back myself to put Pal Jordan to sleep in the first minute, for I've forgotten more about the mauling game than that cheap stiff ever knew."

He paused, shooting a swift glance towards the door; then, taking a pencil out of his waistcoat pocket, he scrawled two words upon the snowy tablecloth: "Keep talking!"

Ailen, quick on the uptake, understood what to do.

"Of course, dear boy," he said, his dark eyes gleaming as he watched Scannan creeping stealthily across the carpet, "there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, as the old saying goes. Personally, I think every fighting man should look upon himself as the greatest scrapper in the world, and—er—well"—Scannan's fingers were closing round the door-handle by this time—"you understand——"

His oily voice trailed off as the door was wrenched open and the Man of Iron made a fierce grab. Within three seconds the door closed again and the eavesdropper was being carried bodily across the room—held out at arm's-length by his neck! The inquisitive stranger was an undersized, rat-faced little fellow, with sharp, beady eyes and a wisp of moustache; and the large ears which stuck out at right angles were out of all proportion to the size of his narrow head.

"Sorry you're too late for supper!" growled the Man of Iron, tossing his burden into an armchair, "'cause there's nothing like having a quiet chat over a meal, is there?"

The rat-faced little man shot a venomous glance at Scannan.

"Youse can cut that stuff right out!" he drawled, "'cos I guess this is a fair cop, Mr. Plug-Ugly! What youse goin' to do about it?"

"What part of little old New York do you come from, Shifty?" countered Tiny Scannan, with a knowing grin. "And what's your moniker?"

The undersized stranger shot a furtive glance at his questioner.

"Guess I come from de Bowery," he answered, "and me moniker's Harry de Rat!"

"And the name fits you like a glove, you dirty little spy!" put in Sir Aubrey Ailen, scowling across at their uninvited guest. "What do you make of him, Tiny?" he asked. "What's his game, d'you think?"

"When you call him a spy, Ailen, you just about hit the nail on the head," returned the Man of Iron, "'cause there's not the slightest doubt about his being one of Maulstein's keyhole agents. Ain't that so?" he demanded, turning upon the shifty-eyed little man in the armchair.

"Aw, shucks!" ejaculated Harry the Rat, waving the suggestion aside. "Ain't a gent got de right to walk about de earth if he wants to? I happened to be passing de door of dis room——"

"That's just what you didn't happen to be doing, you lying skunk!" growled Tiny Scannan. "And if you don't come across with the whole truth in about ten seconds I'm likely to start something; and when I start something it's a thousand to one that some feller gets hurt. Got that?"

"Sure," nodded Harry the Rat, seeing the red light in the big man's close-set eyes. "Guess you're right when you say dat I'm working for Maulstein; but I tell you right now dat I didn't hear a t'ing, mister. Maulstein's a wise guy, and he likes to know what de other feller's doin', and he sent me along to get an earful. But youse was too quick for dis bird, mister."

"I ain't so sure about that!" growled Tiny Scannan, glowering at the Bowery boy, "and for two pins I'd clinch matters by wringing your neck! Me and Sir Aubrey were having a private business discussion, and if I thought you'd heard two words——"

"But I didn't, mister," cut in Harry the Rat. "Not a woird! And dat's a fact! And now," he ran on, as Scannan shot a questioning glance at Ailen, "what you two gonna do about

it? Guess I ain't done no harm, so if it's all de same to you, I'll reach for me lid and be goin'!"

"Not so fast—you!" growled the Man of Iron, bringing his thick black brows together. "Nobody saw you come in here, so there's no reason why I shouldn't pick you up and drop you out of the window. You'd travel about forty feet before you hit anything, and I'll bet a pound to a penny that Abe Maulstein wouldn't trouble to sweep up the pieces!" He thrust his massive jaw forward in characteristic fashion. "Got anythin' to say to that?" he demanded.

"Nope," answered Harry the Rat, shaking his sleek head, "'cept dat I happened to mention to de big stiff on de door dat I'd got an appointment wid you and Sir Aubrey Ailen And de big stiff fell for de bluff. Now, den, it ain't goin' to do you fellas no good to get mixed up in a police court job, so I guess you'd better kiss me on de baby brow and show me de door. Anyway, take another think and cut dat window stunt right out, old-timer!"

The Man of Iron coloured and breathed hard as he glared down at the rat-faced little fellow in the armchair.

"I'll draw the line at dropping you out of the window," he growled; "but I don't know that I shan't give you a beating up that will last you for the next month or so!"

"Put a paw on me, mister," said Harry the Rat, "and I go straight to de cops! I guess dat'll be some advertisement for Tiny Scannan, de British heavy-weight, 'specially wid de big scrap in sight! Sure!" He wriggled down from his armchair and stood up. "Reckon I'll be goin', boys!" he announced.

"Yes, I reckon you will!" growled Tiny Scannan, grabbing him by the back of the neck and carrying him bodily across the room. He flung open the door, and swung his diminutive victim in mid-air. "And here's something to take with you!"

That "something" was a hefty kick that sent Harry the Rat flying through space, and, on landing heavily upon the carpet, he turned a neat somersault and went shooting dizzily down a steep flight of stairs. He was still travelling at breakneck speed when Tiny Scannan returned to his private dining-room and slammed the door.

"Guess that'll teach the little skunk to be less inquisitive!" he growled, striding across the apartment and taking up a position before the fire. "Do you think he heard anything, Ailen?"

"I very much doubt it," answered Sir Aubrey, through a haze of cigar smoke. "Anyway, I'm not going to worry, for the thought of this easy money proposition makes me feel good! That fifty thousand is as good as in our pockets, Tiny, and you mustn't forget that the scrap will draw a record crowd to the Olympus!"

"I wouldn't be so sure about that, Ailen," said the Man of Iron, "for I'm of the opinion that the sporting public's getting a bit tired of the so-called 'big men' who demand the earth before they'll condescend to climb through the ropes. And even when you get 'em into the ring they seldom give value for money!"

"That's so," agreed Sir Aubrey, a cunning gleam creeping into his dark eyes; "but I've hit upon a scheme that's going to fill the Olympus from floor to ceiling. Don't make any mistake about that, Tiny."

Scannan nodded his close-cropped, bullet head.

"It's a straight scheme, of course?" he grinned.

"Of course it's straight!" snapped Ailen, flushing. "I am a man who always has the sweet cause of charity at heart——"

"When the said charity begins at home!" cut in Scannan. "Look here, old man, put your cards on the table and cut the bluff, for I can never picture you as an open-handed philanthropist. You're kind—I'll admit that—but you're always kind to yourself! What's the big idea?"

"I'm going to organise a charity match in aid of the Greater London Hospital," said Sir Aubrey, going straight to the point, "and you are going to turn out in that match, Tiny."

"But I said——"

"What you said doesn't count in this case," cut in the baronet a trifle testily, "for my sole reason for staging the charity match is to put you in the limelight. I've had a number of letters from West London United, all suggesting that we should arrange such a match; but up to the present I've turned the idea down, knowing there was no money in it. But now I can make the match a first class advertising stunt."

"Do you mean that this game will come off on the day I meet Pal Jordan?" asked Scannan, in wide-eyed surprise.

"That's exactly what I do mean," grinned Sir Aubrey. "I shall put the fight off for a week or two, in order to work up public interest, and——"

"But the season will be over by then," objected the Man of Iron.

"Well, and what does that matter?" asked Sir Aubrey. "You can run a charity match in midsummer, if you like. Anyway, you leave this business to me, Tiny, and if I don't fill the Olympus on the night of the fight I'll eat my hat! The idea will make a great appeal to the sporting public, and it will be up to you to play to the gallery a bit. What do you think of the idea?"

The Man of Iron thrust out a muscular paw.

"Great, old man!" he declared. "It's simply great!"

First Blood to Storrydene!

THE sporting sensation of the year was undoubtedly the forthcoming contest between Pal Jordan, the Pittsburg Dentist, and Tiny Scannan, Sir Aubrey Ailen's White Hope. The match was to be a twenty rounds affair for fifty thousand pounds aside, and there was not a boxing fan in the country who was not fully convinced that the American would get the verdict inside three rounds.

It looked like money for nothing, so far as Pal Jordan was concerned, but the Man of Iron and Sir Aubrey Ailen knew better, of course. As Ailen had said, they'd got Pal and his manager on toast.

INTRODUCTION.

Sir Aubrey Ailen, chairman of the Storrydene F.C., and a big gun in the sporting world, is convinced that the Storrydene goalkeeper—a giant of a man—could make mincemeat of Pal Jordan a pugalist with a big reputation from the United States. A bout is arranged in which Scannan, acting upon orders, allows himself to be "knocked out" in the first round. And after that the wily Sir Aubrey experiences no difficulty in arranging a second match for fifty thousand pounds aside!

(Now to read on.)

Ailen, putting his scheme into operation, had arranged for the fight to take place on the evening following the charity match in aid of the Greater London Hospital, and the afternoon of the great day found Tiny Scannan standing between the sticks on West London United's ground at Fulham.

The crowd, for some inscrutable reason, was inclined to regard the one-sided contest as a fine sporting event, as a further proof that a Briton never knows when he is defeated; and it was wholly on this score that Tiny Scannan found himself occupying the unusual role of popular idol when he made his appearance. Of course, nobody suspected that Tiny, in turning out for Storrydene Villa, was bringing off a clever advertising stunt. But such was the case.

The name of Tiny Scannan was upon every lip as the big fellow dwelt with rasping shots from Terry Carson and the others, but he was forgotten for the moment as soon as Jock Cappell appeared at the head of the famous London side.

The United looked very trim and workmanlike in their spotless white shirts and light blue knickers, and the Two Macs—McNally and McNault—came in for a special ovation.

Tall, lean-limbed and as bald as an egg, Jock Cappell had skippered the Londoners for eleven seasons, and he was still one of the best half-backs in the country.

Trotting across the smooth stretch of turf, Crabtree threw his cap into the back of the net and prepared to deal with a hail of shots, and he quickly had the home fans yelling wildly as he made save after save with his muscular, gloveless hands.

Everybody was in a bright humour when the referee appeared and held a short consultation with his linesmen, and then the official blew his whistle and the bandsmen scampered across the field.

Scannan won the toss and elected to kick with the steady breeze, and his initial luck brought a shout from the Storrydene folk, who had travelled through the night in order to see their "pets" do battle against the famous London side.

The Midlanders made no change in their team, so they lined up in the following order:

Goal, Scannan; backs, Grace, Hebble; half-backs, Denning, Thirlboy, Craye; forwards, Sceptre, Coyne, Carson, Noyle, Battle.

West London United's team was composed of: Goal, Crabtree; backs, McNally, McNault; half-backs, Baines, Cappell, and Grainger; forwards, Joyner, Crannock, Meadows, Craggs, Nixon.

Meadows opened the proceedings by touching the ball to Crannock, and the inside man promptly back-heeled to Jock Cappell, who lifted the leather out to Nixon, on the wing; and Nixon, who looked like an ill-nourished midget, with his pinched features and frail body, shot past little Battle and went away down the wing.

"Up, Nick!"

"Go away on your own, Nick!"

To go away on his own was obviously Nick's intention for, having passed Battle, he tricked Craye and shot off along the line; and the mere thought of the diminutive Nixon and Hefty Hebble coming to grips brought a reverberant roar of laughter from the mighty crowd. This was surely a case of David and

Goliath, and the fans saw the funny side of the affair.

And even Hefty could not help grinning as he ambled across to meet the little winger.

"Treat 'im gentle, Nick!" roared the delighted fans.

"Don't play rough, old man!"

Hebble certainly looked big enough to eat Nixon, but there was no sign of fear upon the little fellow's pinched features as he pulled up sharply and waited—the ball between his feet, a challenge in his eyes.

Hefty Hebble also pulled up, and for one long second the two players eyed each other whilst the crowd roared.

Then the burly back leapt, but he was not quick enough for Nixon. The winger dodged adroitly and went away towards the corner flag, and the perfect centre he dropped into the goalmouth was full of possibilities.

"Heads!" shouted the hoarse-voiced crowd, and a dozen eager players made an upward leap.

But it was the mighty fist of Tiny Scannan that shot out unerringly and sent the leather winging clean over the touchline.

It was a prodigious punch, a swing that was delivered with a speed that baffled the eye; and it made the fans gasp in astonishment.

It was a terrible blow, a blow that would have killed.

"Save one of them for Pal Jordan, Tiny!" yelled a shrill voice from the rear of the Storrydene goal. "He's collecting 'em!"

A shout of laughter welled up from all sides, and the giant delighted everybody by squaring up and giving a polished exhibition of shadow boxing. His speed was a revelation, and his footwork superb, and he looked every inch a champion as blow after blow flashed out and landed upon an imaginary opponent.

"That's the stuff, Tiny!"

"Go on! Upper-cut this time!"

Scannan must have been in unusually high spirits, for he entered into the spirit of the thing and amused the fans until the throw-in. Tiny was genuinely popular at that moment, but there were two persons, at least, who did not shout his name. Both were unmistakably American, for their clothes were of the Broadway cut and their hats broad-brimmed Stetsons. One was a fair-haired giant, a trifle on the fleshy side, and the other was a dark-skinned man with a Jewish cast of countenance.

"Say, did you see that, Pal?" drawled Abe Maulstein, his little eyes narrowing into slits; and Pal Jordan nodded thoughtfully.

"I sure did," he returned, lowering his voice. "That wallop was the undertakers' friend! I didn't know that the cheap stiff packed such a punch!"

"Nor me," put in Maulstein, a trifle uneasily. "Did you see it move? P'shew! It was like a flash of light!" Pal's backer removed his hat and mopped his shiny dome. "I hope he won't bring one of them sleep-pills to the hall to-night!"

Pal Jordan chuckled, a contemptuous grin twisting his lips.

"He may bring one with him, but it don't follow that I shall take it, does it?" he asked. "He may be able to punch a football, but he'll find that I'm a different proposition!"

Maulstein nodded, but he still looked uneasy.

West London United were swarming round the visitors' goal and pressing hard, and it was only Scannan's wonderful play that kept the Londoners out. The giant appeared to be unbeatable, for he leapt from one side of the goal to the other with an agility that brought hysterical shouts from every "fan" of the ground.

Pal and his manager watched him closely through half-closed eyes, a misgiving in their hearts. They found it difficult to believe that this agile, quick-thinking giant was the mass of sluggish manhood that had put up such a ludicrous, pitiable show at the Olympus Hall but a night or so before. Such a thing seemed impossible, incredible. This Tiny Scannan was as nimble and as light-footed as a ballet-dancer, whilst the other Tiny—Tiny the boxer—had been as slow as a hearse.

Again the Americans exchanged puzzled glances.

"I don't get this feller at all, Pal," declared Abe, speaking slowly. "D'you think he played the Johnny Raw with you? D'you think——"

"Aw, shucks!" grunted Jordan. "The big stiff's all right at this ball game, but he ain't no good with the mitts!"

"But one o' them wallops would knock a guy stone cold——"

"'Course it would!" broke in the scowling pugilist. "But he's got to find a boob who'll stand there and take it. He won't see me to-night, Abe. I shall be all over him in the first minute. What's got you, anyway? I'll smash him!"

"I ain't happy, Pal," confessed Maulstein. "I know somethin' about this Ailen, and I tell you that he ain't the sort o' open-handed philanthropist who'd stake fifty thousand of the best if he didn't think he was on a cert! No, sir; Ailen's as straight as a butcher's hook, and it looks to me as though he's handed us some dope. There's something about this scrap that I don't like, Pal. Ailen's got somethin' up his cuff, and I'd like to know what it is."

"Aw, can that stuff!" growled the Pittsburg Dentist. "You sure get me stiff, Abe! Ain't I said that I'm goin' to eat Scannan in the first minute of the fight? Ain't I said that he won't last a round? Ain't I said——"

"Sure!" nodded Abe gloomily. "You've said a mouthful—and then some!"

He turned his beady eyes towards the field of play, to find that Terry Carson had broken away, and was making for the Londoners' goal with only the two backs to beat.

"Up, Terry!" yelled the Storrydene "fans." "Right through, son!"

The Two Macs exchanged meaning glances and advanced to meet the visitor, Angus McNally taking the lead; and the West London supporters grinned amiably and waited for Terry to meet his Waterloo. Few were the forwards who were able to get past the Two Macs, for the backs worked with perfect understanding. But the thought of trying conclusions with the famous pair did not worry the "baby" of the Storrydene side.

Crouching slightly, with his elbows raised, McNally ran forward on his toes, with a jerky, chickenlike action. And he read something in Terry's brown eyes that gave him some information—a warning.

"He's going to dart away to the corner flag," the brown eyes seemed to tell him. And McNally chuckled inwardly as he prepared to circumvent the youngster. Making a quick feint, Terry took a step to the right, and McNally, having read the message in the brown eyes, made a wild leap. Terry, of course, changed his mind at the last moment, and a roar of laughter went up when he ran on and slammed home a shot just as McNally bore down upon him and sent him flying.

The great McNally had been beautifully bluffed.

The charge that floored Terry Carson was not particularly vigorous, but he was taken slightly off his balance. Yet he was more than recompensed for the shaking when a mighty roar announced the fact that his shot had found the net.

"Goal!"

"Well done, son!"

"Good old Terry!"

There were less than five hundred Storrydene supporters on the ground, but they had no difficulty in making themselves heard; and the local "fans" were not above cheering a brilliant individual effort.

The uproar was deafening, sweeping everything before it, yet an individual voice made itself heard long before the din had died away.

"Don't be greedy, you! Feed your wings, you selfish pup!"

It was the stentorian voice of Tiny Scannan that floated up from the far end of the field, for the Man of Iron was jealous of Terry's popularity.

The old Scannan, the bullying despot, had reverted to type.

. . . . . .

Tiny Scannan had mastered the art of making himself unpopular, and no sooner did his harsh shout echo round the ground than wild words broke from all sides, angry and threatening.

The "fans" had taken a great liking to Terry Carson, and Tiny's momentary popularity was forgotten.

"Leave the kid alone, Scannan!"

"Bully!"

"Well done, young 'un!"

The giant goalkeeper's queer collection of features went purple as insults and vituperation rained upon him, and his lips were drawn back in an ugly snarl as he swung round and shook a great fist at the solid wedge of people behind the net.

"I'll give you fellows something to shout about if I come after you!" he threatened.

(*Continued on page* 28.)

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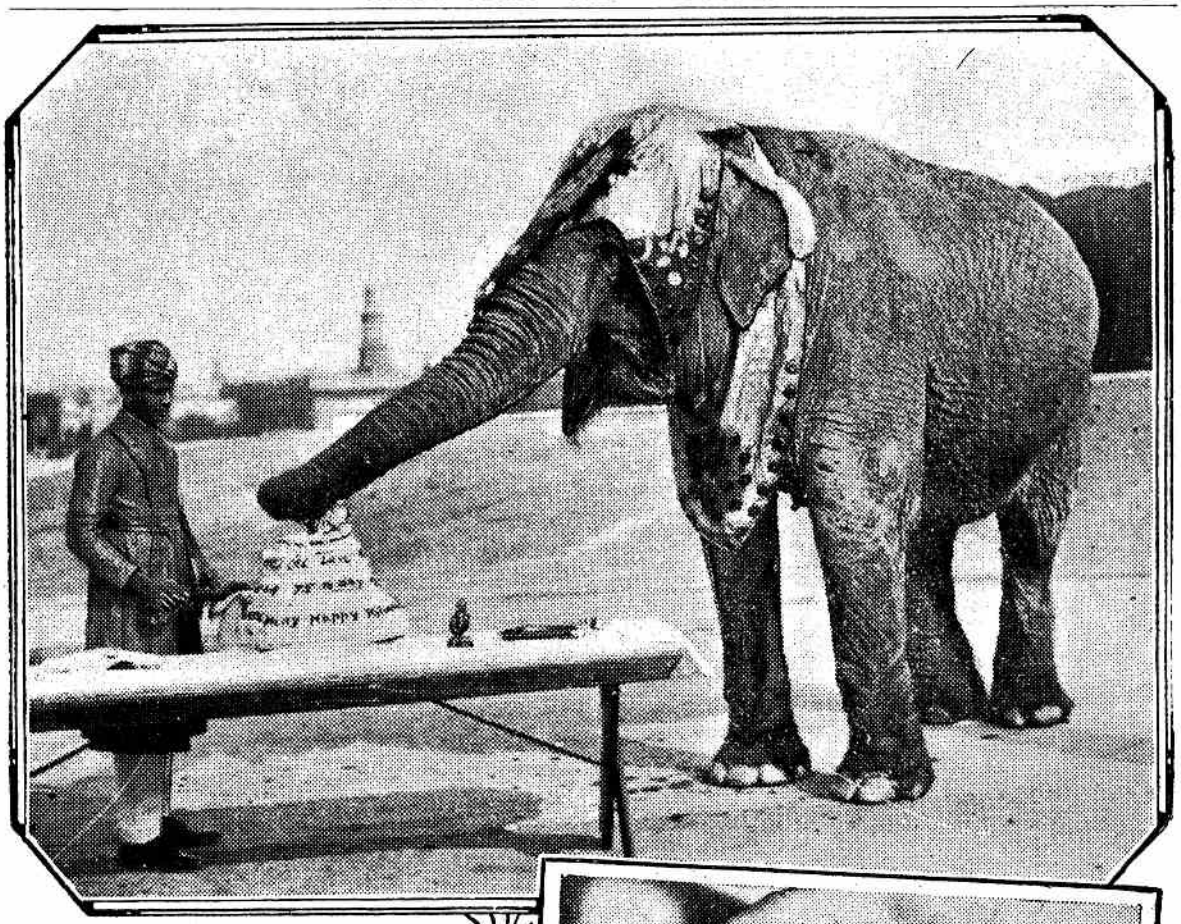

TINY TAKES THE CAKE!

They make quite a fuss of "Tiny" at the Belle Vue (Manchester) Zoological Gardens, even to the extent of providing him with a special, iced cake on his seventy-fifth birthday. By the way he's tackling that cake it is easy to see that Tiny, despite his creditable age, hasn't forgotten how to enjoy the sweets that delighted him in his youth. But in view of the fact that Billy Bunter can wade through a birthday cake and then still feel "peckish" we wonder just how Tiny felt when the last crumb had gone. Still, perhaps the birthday cake was just an hors d'oeuvre.

TELL US ANOTHER!

A number of American scientists interested in Pleistocene Palæontology—there's a couple of jaw breakers for you—are devoting a deal of their time to the toad shown in this picture. The story goes that a ball of rock, believed by scientists to be three-quarters of a million years' old, was broken open and—hey presto!—out popped a tiny toad, apparently none the worse for his incarceration of 750,000 years' duration. If the toad could only speak one gathers that he would have a story to tell that would save the scientists a lot of time—and trouble!

THE BOY FROM THE EAST!

(Continued from page 23.)

"One may be enough," remarked the Bounder, with a grin.

Smithy was a bowler only excelled in the Remove by Hurree Singh.

"Very likely," said Da Costa modestly. "I was thought a good bat at Lucknao, but I know it is different here."

"Well, let's see," said Harry.

Da Costa went to the wicket, and the Bounder winked at his friends as he took the ball. It was Vernon-Smith's intention to show the new fellow that whatever he might have done at Lucknow, Greyfriars bowling was too large an order for him.

But there was a surprise in store for the Bounder.

He sent down his best ball, and Da Costa snicked it away with obvious ease. Smithy stared a little.

"One mayn't be enough, Smithy," chuckled Bob Cherry.

The Bounder grunted.

"Let's have that ball."

Vernon-Smith bowled again and again. He made no impression on the new fellow's wicket.

"By gum, that chap can handle a bat!" said the captain of the Remove. "Here, Squiff, you send him a few."

Squiff took the ball from the Bounder, who was frowning. Smithy did not like to be beaten.

The Australian junior, a great bowler in the Remove, gave the new fellow his very best attention. But the result was the same—the ball was knocked right and left.

Bob Cherry clapped his hands with a crack like a pistol-shot.

"Good man!" he roared.

"By Jove!" said Harry Wharton. "If he keeps on like this he's going into the team to play Highcliffe."

"And he will make them open their eyes," said Nugent.

"Yes, rather!"

"We've got to leave out Mark Linley, now he's working for an exam," said the captain of the Remove. "This is the chap to take his place, I fancy."

If Da Costa had passed almost unnoticed in class that morning, he was not passing unnoticed now. A crowd of fellows looked on with keen interest as the new junior was put through his paces, as it were. Harry Wharton watched him with keen satisfaction. According to his own statement, Da Costa had not played cricket since he had left India, but his slim olive hands had not lost their cunning; he was a born batsman.

After games practice, Da Costa was walking back to the House, when the captain of the Remove joined him. He noted with some surprise that Da Costa's face, which had been bright and happy on the cricket ground, was now clouded.

"I say, Da Costa, you're as good a bat as any man in the Remove," said Harry. "I suppose you'd be glad to play in matches?"

"Yess."

"Well, you can take it as a cert that you'll be down to play for us against Highcliffe next week," said Harry. "We'll be jolly glad to have you in the team. Why, you're a real corker!"

Da Costa paused.

Of what was passing in the mind of the Eurasian Harry Wharton had not the faintest idea. Had he believed, or even remembered, anything of the fantastic story Bunter had told him in Study No. 1 he might have divined that on the cricket field, surrounded by healthy, cheery, happy-go-lucky fellows, the sense of his treachery had weighed like lead upon the new junior's mind and heart. All that was best in Da Costa had come to the surface there—all that was worst had been forgotten, only to be remembered, when the cricket was over, with bitter shame and remorse.

That, perhaps, was not likely to last, but for the moment the hapless fellow felt like a thing unclean in the presence of the cheery, unsuspicious junior who was speaking to him so cordially.

He stopped and faced Wharton. The promised reward, the instructions of Mr. Gedge, were gone from his mind. He felt an almost irresistible temptation to speak out, to confess, to warn Wharton to be on his guard, and then to leave Greyfriars for ever. But he could not—he dared not—and the black trouble in his face only astonished the captain of the Remove, who stared at him in wonder.

"No, no!" exclaimed Da Costa almost violently. "No! I do not want to play cricket at all here! I will never touch a bat again at Greyfriars! I wish—oh, I wish that I had never come here!"

And with that outburst Arthur da Costa turned away and hurried into the House, leaving Harry Wharton standing rooted to the ground, staring after him in blank amazement.

THE END.

(Now look out for the next story in this splendid new series, chums, entitled: "FRIEND OR FOE?" As it's one of Frank Richards' best yarns all Magnetites should make a point of ordering their copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)

(Continued from page 26.)

And the ill-timed words brought forth a wild howl.

The referee appeared to be deaf and blind to the ugly incident, and he did the wise thing, for no sooner was the game resumed than Tiny Seaman was forgotten.

Cranmock was not allowed to make much headway, for Coyne took the leather off his toe and pushed it out to Sceptre; and Sceptre, taking the pass in his stride, brushed past Joyner and went away, giving every indication that he was in a hurry to get somewhere.

Baines, a black-haired, stocky Welsh International, was quickly upon the scene, but he was all at sea when Sceptre suddenly changed his course and cut away towards the centre. Jock Cappell then took the matter in hand, and the cool, unhurried manner in which he relieved the winger of the ball was pretty to behold. There was no flurry and no effort, yet Sceptre was the victim of a neat daylight robbery; and the veteran made his way up the pitch with a long, easy stride.

"Go on, Jock!"

"Let's hear from you!"

Cappell, despite his years, was as speedy as any player in the country, but in Terry Carson the veteran met his master, for Terry swept in front of him, hooked the ball off his foot, and swung it across to little Battle, who was waiting patiently on the wing.

The diminutive Nixon was also waiting patiently upon the wing, and the two made a rush for the ball like two hungry sparrows darting for a solitary crumb; and the ground rocked with laughter at the hard tussle that followed. Battle managed to get the better of the argument, and a wild yell broke from the Storrydene fans when he broke away and went off down the touchline, his little feet twinkling.

(There's an exciting finish to this footer match, chums, which convinces Pal Jordan that Tiny Seaman is indeed a dangerous opponent, but you'll read about that in next week's fine instalment. Order to-day!)