

BILLY BUNTER'S HERE AGAIN THIS WEEK, BOYS!

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The **MAGNET**

EVERY SATURDAY.

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BILLY BUNTER'S BLUFF!

LONG COMPLETE — ADVENTURE — HUMOROUS — SPECIAL
SCHOOL STORY — SERIAL — SHORT STORY — "FOOTER" TALK, etc.



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

I HADN'T got space last week to tell you of a very interesting anniversary which fell on January 21st. This was the launching of the Great Eastern, the overrunner of our mighty steamships. She was launched in 1858, although they had tried to launch her for nearly three months before they succeeded.

Of all the unlucky ships she was the unluckiest. First of all the company spent all their capital on her, and she could not be run until a new company had been formed. On her first voyage an explosion took place, and ten firemen were killed and many persons seriously injured. Then she ran on a rock near Long Island, U.S.A., but was patched up and sailed again. Some time later her crew seized her because their wages had not been paid.

She was eventually put up for auction and sold for twenty-six thousand pounds, although she had cost about seven hundred and thirty-two thousand to build. Nevertheless, although she was such an unlucky ship, she marked a big step forward in ship construction, and was the first of the mighty leviathans of the deep. Incidentally, she was called Leviathan for some time. She finished her career by being broken up for scrap metal!

I've just sent a reader's letter round to "Mr. X," so while we are waiting for his explanation, we'll listen-in to one of this week's prize-winning limericks.

C. Neban, 20, Shirley Road, Vicarage Lane, Stratford, E.15, gets a leather pocket wallet for the following:

A fellow at Greyfriars named Skinner,
Once chanced to remark while at dinner:

"What a shame it would be
If our fat W. G. E.

Ever started to "waste" and got
thinner?"

Randale Taylor, of Clifton, York, provides the puzzler for "Mr. X" to solve this week. Randale went to a conjuring entertainment a little while ago and saw

A REALLY MYSTIFYING TRICK
which, "Mr. X" tells me, was really two tricks. So we'll take them one by one.

The first is known as "the diminishing card," and the effect is as follows: The conjurer takes a pack of cards in his hands, rubs them together, and then shows that they have diminished to a pack half the original size. He rubs them again, and the cards are shown to have vanished altogether leaving some powder in their place.

Well, first of all, it was not a pack of cards which he held. He substituted for the pack a "trick card" made in the following manner: A number of half sized cards are fastened to the back of an ordinary card, with their long edges showing at the top of the card. This makes the card look as though it was a full pack. When the conjurer "rubs" it he bends the card in two, turns it round, and exhibits the half-sized pack which has been behind all the time!

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When he "rubs" these cards he palms them in his right hand, and transfers to his left hand—which previously held the cards—a quantity of powder. While the audience are looking at the powder he drops the trick card away in a safe place.

Now for the second part of the trick, which is known as

THE MAGIC DRAWER.

The conjurer exhibits a small drawer, just large enough to hold a pack of cards. The drawer is opened and shown to be empty. The powder is placed in the drawer, which is then closed. The conjurer makes a pass of his hands over it, opens it again—and a pack of cards is revealed!

In this case the drawer is composed of two parts, and is actually a drawer within a drawer. The outer drawer fits tightly over the inner drawer, and when it is first exhibited the inner drawer is in the case, but the outer drawer is pulled out to show that it is empty. The powder is put in, and when the outer drawer is pushed back the inner one fits snugly into it. When it is opened again the inner drawer is pulled out inside the previous one, and, of course the conjurer had secreted another pack of cards in

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there, which were just waiting to be "discovered."

Sometimes a box is used instead of a drawer, but the principle is always the same—there is a secret box inside the one which is shown to the audience.

After mystery let's have a little mirth! Here's a yarn that should bring a smile to your faces. Leslie Cox, of 15, Compton Road, Wimbledon, S.W.19, wins a pocket knife for sending it in:

POOR FISH!

Mother (to small son):
"Have you given the goldfish some fresh water this morning, Monty?"

Monty: "No, mother, they haven't drunk the other yet!"



NOW, as the film producers say, "SHOOT!"

and let me have your questions. Here are my "Rapid-fire Replies" to the bunch I have received recently:

Jim Barlow (Ramsgate): Where is "Russian America"? This was the former name for Alaska, which was sold

by Russia to the United States in 1867 for the sum of £1,480,000.

"Buster" (Marlborough): A regimental band totals about thirty performers. It would need a colour plate to explain what a drummer boy's uniform is like, so I am afraid I cannot show you. But you might find one at your local recruiting office.

S. B. (Gateshead): Are there still Musketeers in the French army? No. The "Mousquetaires" were abolished in 1775. This corps was formed to act as a military school for the French nobility, and only nobles were allowed to serve in it.

T. Walker (Ashford): What did Newton say when the apple fell on his head? "How perfectly stunning!"

MORE ABOUT THE "TALKIES."

Some time ago I explained to you how "Talkies" were worked on the "sound on film" principle, but this week a reader wants to know how the "gramophone record" system is managed. In this system the records are made at the same time as the film, but the records are much bigger than those used on gramophones. They are fourteen-inch records, and work from the centre outwards. As they are recorded at a much slower rate, they contain more "talking" than an ordinary record, and, in fact, a fourteen-inch record contains as much dialogue as goes with a thousand feet of film.

Therefore a seven-reel film needs seven records, each of which begins when the film begins. At the end they are "switched over" from one record to another in the same manner as the film is switched over from one reel to another, and the apparatus which is used allows one record to begin at the very second the previous one finishes.

To guard against breakages, two sets of records are sent out with each film, and a set is only allowed to be played for a certain number of times, otherwise they would become scratched, and the quality of the recording would be marred. Electrical pick-ups are used, and, of course, the talk is amplified to the required strength.

Sufficient unto the day— Let's see what the black book says!

Here's a fine yarn that you will read next week—it's a "Frank Richards" at his best! You'll enjoy:

"THE MAN FROM SCOTLAND YARD" which tells of Harry Wharton & Co.'s efforts, combined with those of a man from the "Yard," to bring to heel the rascally Courtfield crackman who has caused such a great sensation in and around Greyfriars.

You won't want to lay down the MAGNET until you've finished every line of it!

Next on the list comes the grand opening chapters of

"FOR THE GLORY OF FRANCE!"

our new serial, further particulars of which appear on page 26 of this issue, and there's thrills galore in it! When you've finished with the thrills and want a little "light relief," you can turn to our centre pages, where you'll find plenty of smiles in the grand St. Sam's yarn which is Dicky Nugent's humorous offering.

The "Greyfriars Celebrities" deals with Horace Coker, and there's the usual special "footer" article. On my page I'll answer a number of queries which have been held over from this week's issue, and I'll try to interest you with a few paragraphs that are worth reading. So "so-long" until next week!

YOUR EDITOR.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter, Too!

"NO!"
 "Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "No!"
 "Beast!"

"No!" said the captain of the Remove, for the third time.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles, with a reproachful blink.

"Now look here, old chap," he said persuasively. "You know you can't leave me out."

"Bow-wow!"

"It's a half-holiday," said Bunter, "and I've kept it specially for my old pals!"

"Then buzz off and find your old pals, and let 'em know!" suggested Harry Wharton.

"I've turned Mauleverer down," said Bunter. "Mauly wanted me to go for a joy-ride with him, and I've turned him down."

"Turn him up again," suggested Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! Smithy was awfully keen on my going out with him this afternoon; but I can't stand Smithy!"

"Not to mention that Smithy can't stand you," remarked Nugent.

"Beast! Toddy's gone to the pictures, but I wouldn't go with Toddy, because—"

"Because he wouldn't stand the ticket?"

"No!" roared Bunter. "Because I was going out to tea with you chaps."

"What put that idea into your head?"

"Oh, really, you know! Look here, you can tell me where you are going, I suppose. I know you're going to tea. Is it Cliff House?"

"Guess."

"Is it Highcliffe?"

"Guess again."

"Is it the bunshop in Courtfield?"

"Keep on guessing."

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter, standing in the doorway of Study No. 1 in the Remove, and almost filling it from side to side with his ample proportions, blinked at the two juniors in the study with great exasperation.

He knew that the Famous Five were going to tea somewhere that afternoon. He had happened to overhear enough to tell him that. The things that Billy Bunter happened to hear—that did not concern him—were as numberless as the sands on the seashore.

But he did not know where. That was the unfortunate part.

Had he known where the tea-party was to foregather, Bunter would have rolled in at tea-time, and trusted to fortune not to be kicked out. If it was at Cliff House, a girls' school, fellows

"Fathead!" said Harry.

But there was some sign of relenting in his face.

The Famous Five were going over to tea at Cliff House, as a matter of fact; and on the way they were to be joined by Courtenay and the Caterpillar, their friends at Highcliffe.

Bunter was not required.

The chums of the Remove were good-natured enough to stand Bunter, on their own account. But inflicting the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove on Marjorie & Co. was quite another proposition.

Still, it was certain to be a ripping tea at Cliff House, so exactly the thing that Bunter would enjoy, that the captain of the Remove began to ponder whether, after all, Bunter might go.

While he was in that softening frame of mind it was just like Billy Bunter to butt in and spoil it all.

"Unfeeling's the word," said Bunter. "I'm not thinking of the tea. You fellows know I don't care much about tuck."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Nugent. "I'm thinking of Marjorie!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"Marjorie!" repeated Wharton.

"Yes, Marjorie! Do you think she'll enjoy a tea-party if I'm not there?"

"You fat idiot!"

"Jealousy apart, you know perfectly well that Marjorie is—well, spoons in my direction," said Bunter firmly. "If she's asked you fellows over to tea, you can take it for granted that she's only done so expecting that you'll bring me. You can bet on that."

Harry Wharton looked at him. He had been in a melting mood; but now, like Pharaoh of old, he hardened his heart.

"Think of her!" urged Bunter. "Looking out of window, perhaps, watching for me. Think of her feelings when she sees only you fellows."

"Oh crumbs!" said Nugent.

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An unusual long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., and Billy Bunter, the funniest schoolboy on record. By FRANK RICHARDS.

could hardly kick him out. If it was in Courtenay's study, at Highcliffe School, kicking-out was more probable, but still unlikely. Even at the bunshop in Courtfield the fellows might hesitate to apply the boot. Anvhow, Bunter was ready to take the chance, if he could only get on the spot. But how was he to get on the spot, when he didn't know where the fellows were going?

"If my company is unwelcome," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity, "of course, I should not think of coming—although I've kept the afternoon specially open for you. But you might tell a pal where you're going."

"That's all right—we've told our pals," said Nugent, heartlessly disregarding of the fact that Bunter claimed to be one of them.

"If it's Cliff House," said Bunter, unheeding. "It's rather unfeeling to think of leaving me out."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

At Last!

"You fat, flabby, frabjous fathead!" said Harry Wharton, in measured tones. "I'm accustomed to jealousy," said Bunter. "Good-looking fellows have to get used to that sort of thing."

"Oh crikey!"
"But there's a limit," said Bunter warmly. "When it comes to spoiling a girl's half-holiday, it's the limit. What about chivalry?"

"You frabjous ass——"
"If you're not going to Cliff House," went on Bunter, "I suppose you're going to Highcliffe."

"You can suppose anything you like, you fat chump! But go and do your supposing in some other study."

"Do Courcy would be jolly glad to see me," said Bunter. "We've got a lot of things in common, the old Caterpillar and me. Both of us belonging to ancient and aristocratic families, you know——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. If you're going to the bunshop it's all right, of course. I suppose you can rely on me to stand my whack?"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"
"Look here, you beasts——"
"Buzz off!"

"If you can't be civil, Wharton, I shall refuse to come with you, in any case——"

"That's putting a premium on incivility! Fathead! Ass! Burler! Jabberwock! Chump! Freak! Foozling fat-head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Now I won't come!" roared Bunter.

"Good!"
"Still, you might tell a chap what you're going to do!"

"Oh, all right!" said Wharton resignedly, coming towards the Owl of the Remove as he spoke. "I'll do that."

"Good! What——"
"I'm going to take a fat burler by the collar—like that——"

"Ow! Leggo!" yelled Bunter.
"And tap his silly head on the door—like that——"

"Yaroooh!"
"And sit him down in the passage—like that!"

"Bump!"
"Whoop!"
"And shut the door on him—like that!"

"Slam!"
"Beast!" roared Bunter.

The fat junior sat in the Remove passage, and blinked at the closed door—from the other side of which came a sound of laughter.

"Yah! Rotter!" roared Bunter. He scrambled to his feet, his very spectacles gleaming with wrath. "Rotter! Beast!"

But those furious epithets only elicited a fresh burst of laughter from the occupants of Study No. 1.

"Come out here, you rotter!" bawled Bunter. "I'll mop up the passage with you!"

Still no hand flung open the door of the study.

"Yah! Funks!"
There was a sound of footsteps crossing to the door of the study.

Bunter did not wait for them to reach it.

On second thoughts—proverbially the best—he decided not to mop up the passage with the captain of the Remove.

Only a few seconds had elapsed before the door opened again. But they were enough for the Owl of the Remove. By the time those few seconds had elapsed, Bunter had elapsed, too.

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BOB, old fellow!"
Bob Cherry grinned as he looked round at Bunter.

Bob was in his study, carefully adjusting a necktie to a nice clean collar.

Evidently Bob was going somewhere. As a rule, Bob's necktie was not carefully adjusted. Fellows in the Remove had remarked that it usually looked as if Bob had been trying to hang himself.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh was sitting on the study table, watching Bob's operations with the necktie, with friendly interest. Half a dozen times Bob had asked his dusky chum if it was straight, and a regard for truth had compelled the Nabob of Bhanipur to answer in the negative.

Bob was going on with it till he got it straight. Hope springs eternal in the human breast.

"I say, Bob, that's a beautiful necktie," said Bunter.

"Think so?" said Bob.
"Yes, old chap; and suits you splendidly."

"Thanks!"
"You don't often get a tie to suit a complexion like brick-dust," remarked Bunter. "You've been lucky with that tie."

"Thanks again," said Bob cheerfully.

"Not at all, old fellow. I like to see you careful with your dress," said Bunter. "If you can't be good-looking, you know, you can be well-dressed."

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh emitted a chuckle. Bunter, apparently, meant to be ingratiating. But Bunter had his own ways of doing things.

"You've been pressing your bags, too," remarked Bunter. "They look quite nice—not as if they'd been in a dog-fight, as usual."

"Fathead!"
"Oh, really, Cherry! By the way, I hear that you fellows are going out to tea somewhere," remarked Bunter casually.

"The helpfulness of the esteemed Bunter is frequent and terrific!" observed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Sorry I can't come with you," added Bunter. "No good pressing me. I can't come! That's one drawback of being a popular fellow—one's time is hardly one's own on a half-holiday. By the way, where are you going to tea, old fellow?"

"Echo answers where!"
"The wherfulness is terrific, my posterous Bunter."

"What I mean is this," explained Bunter. "Something might happen while you're gone, and you'd like a pal to let you know at once. Your father might die suddenly——"

"Wha-a-at?"
"If that happened, you'd like to know as soon as possible, I suppose?"

"You burbling idiot!"
"I'm only thinking of obliging you, Cherry! Your mater might be run over by a motor-bus——"

"Kick him, Inky!"
"Oh, really, Cherry! I think you might be civil when a fellow's trying his hardest to be obliging. Leave word with me where you're going, and I'll see that you're informed at once if there's any shocking news from home, or——"

"Get out!" roared Bob Cherry.
"You needn't roar at me, Cherry! As a matter of fact, I came here to speak to Inky. I say, Inky, old chap."

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh grinned. He was quite aware of Bunter's object in making these inquiries.

"My esteemed fatheaded Bunter——"

"There's been a lot of upsetting news from India lately," said Bunter. "I dare say you've seen it in the papers. You might get a telegram any minute from the India Office to say that there's a revolution in Bhanipur, or something like that. That old uncle of yours, Jampot Barker, or something——"

"The Jam Bahadur, my esteemed idiotic Bunter!"

"Yes, I knew it was something jammy," said Bunter. "Well, if he was suddenly shot, or beheaded, or torn to pieces by a raging mob, I'm sure you'd like to know immediately. Leave word with me where you're going——"

Whiz!
So far from feeling grateful for Bunter's concern for his welfare, Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh picked up a Latin grammar from the table, and hurled it at the Owl of the Remove with deadly aim.

Possibly the suggestion that his uncle, the Jam Bahadur, at Bhanipur, might be shot, or beheaded, or torn to pieces, had not had a soothing effect on him.

The Latin grammar landed on Bunter, just outside the place where he had recently tucked away a large dinner.

Bunter gave a spluttering gasp. "Gerrrooooooh!"

Bunter sat down in the doorway of Study No. 13.

He did not sit there long, however, as Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh proceeded to slam the door.

Bunter squirmed out of the way just in time.

"Beast!" he bawled through the keyhole. "Yah! Beast! Nigger!"

Having delivered that Parthian shot through the keyhole Billy Bunter hastily retired.

He rolled down the Remove staircase with a frowning fat brow.

Really, it was hard lines on Bunter. Some fellows would have felt it difficult to join the projected tea-party, because they hadn't been asked. But that did not trouble Bunter in the least. A more serious difficulty was in his way.

He was ready to roll in at tea-time, if only he knew where to roll. Four members of the famous Co. had failed him, and he was now looking for Johnny Bull, the fifth member of the Co., though with faint hope of eliciting the required information from him.

If he failed there, his last resource was to follow the party when they started. But that was a desperate resource, for the beasts were certain to walk fast and drop him behind, and if they spotted him, as they were sure to do, they mightn't head direct for their destination: in fact, they were beasts enough to lead him a dance for miles across country. Such things had happened in Bunter's experience.

Johnny Bull was sitting in the window-seat on the staircase, reading the "Popular Book of Boys' Stories" when Bunter came down. Bunter stopped on the landing, and blinked at him.

"I say, old fellow!" he began.

"Don't!" said Johnny Bull, without looking up.

"Eh? Don't what?"
"Don't say! Don't say anything! Just buzz off!"

Bunter breathed hard. His temper had been severely tried that afternoon, and he was strongly tempted to tell Johnny Bull what he thought of him.

But he refrained. Johnny was his last hope. Toddy had gone out for the afternoon, so there would be no tea in Study No. 7. Bunter's pecuniary resources were at a low ebb. Once more,

Hurree Janset Ram Singh sat on the study table and watched Bob Cherry's operations with the necktie with friendly interest.



as many times before, he had been disappointed about a postal-order. Obviously, it was not a time for telling Bull what he thought of him.

"I hear you're going out to tea this afternoon, old chap," he remarked gently.

"You hear a lot of things," said Johnny.

"I suppose it's at Cliff House?"

"You can suppose anything you like, old fat man."

"If it's Highcliffe, I'd like you to give a message for me to my friend Courtenay."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"When are you starting, old fellow?"

"When we go out."

"Well, when are you going out?"

"When we start."

"Look here, you beast! I—I mean, I say, old fellow—"

"For goodness sake Bunter, shut up, and let a fellow read," said Johnny Bull.

"I've promised to lend this book to Courtenay this afternoon."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter. "Then you're going to Highcliffe."

"Find out!"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter rolled away grinning. It was success at last!

If Johnny Bull was going to lend that book to Frank Courtenay, the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth, that afternoon, that settled it—to Bunter's mind, at least.

Johnny Bull glanced after him, as he rolled down the lower staircase, with a grin.

Johnny was going to take that book under his arm to Cliff House, to hand it over to Court—there, as the two Highcliffe fellows were coming to the tea-party in the school-room. But he did not mention that to Bunter. Bunter

was welcome to draw any conclusion he liked from what Johnny Bull had said.

Having drawn his own conclusion, Bunter was happy and satisfied. When, half-an-hour later, the Famous Five walked down to the gates in a cheery party, Billy Bunter blinked after them as they went, grinning. It was not necessary to follow their trail like an amateur Chingachook, now that he knew their destination.

Harry Wharton & Co. disappeared, walking at a good rate. At the bridge over the Sark, they met Courtenay and De Courcy, and walked on with them to Cliff House School.

They saw nothing of William George Bunter.

Bunter started a little later, and at a much more leisurely pace, and his footsteps led him in quite a different direction.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

CECIL PONSONBY, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, raised his eyebrows.

Pon was gracing the doorway with his elegant presence when Billy Bunter appeared in the office. Gadsby and Vavasour were loafing there with him. The three knuts of Highcliffe were discussing what they were going to do that half-holiday, when the fat figure and fatuous face of William George Bunter dawned on them.

"Greyfriars cad!" remarked Gadsby.

"Absolute!" said Vavasour.

"It's Bunter!" said Ponsonby. "I wonder what he wants."

Ponsonby glanced round him. Bunter was heading for the House, and he had evidently come over from Greyfriars

alone. It was an opportunity to rag a Greyfriars man—and Pon never lost such an opportunity.

The good feeling established between Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars and Frank Courtenay and his friends at Highcliffe, was gall and wormwood to Pon. Anything that Pon could do to trouble the waters, was certain to be done. Pon & Co. sedulously kept up the old feud with Greyfriars. Moreover, Pon liked a rag, when it involved no peril to his handsome features and elegant clothes, and certainly nobody was in peril from William George Bunter.

But as Pon looked round, he observed Dr. Voysey, the Head of Highcliffe, walking at a distance with a Form master in conversation. Langley, the captain of Highcliffe, was in sight, one of a group of Sixth Form men, all perfects. Under such observation, Pon realised that he could not deal with William George Bunter as he would have liked to deal with any Greyfriars man at any time. Especially was he afraid of Langley, the captain of the school, who at that very moment was discussing with his friends a football fixture with the Greyfriars first eleven. Langley was down on the endless rows between the juniors of the two schools.

Billy Bunter came on, in the full expectation of finding Harry Wharton & Co. at Highcliffe tea-ing in Courtenay's study. Otherwise, he would probably not have ventured into the enemy's camp. He had had many and painful experiences of Pon's ragging propensities.

"Can't handle the fat cad here, Pon," said Gadsby, reading his comrade's thoughts. "Too many senior men about."

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour. "It's rather a chance, too," said Gadsby regretfully. "Those rotters, Courtenay and De Courcy, are out of gates, and couldn't chip in. They would if they were here."

Ponsonby nodded. "More ways than one of killing a cat," he remarked. "Give Bunter the glad hand, and get him out of sight somewhere."

His friend chuckled. "Why, it's old Bunter!" exclaimed Ponsonby, as the fat junior came within hearing. "Trot in, old bean! This is a pleasure. Isn't it, Gaddy?"

"Oh, quite!" said Gadsby. "Absolutely!" yawned Vavasour. Billy Bunter blinked at the three. At first sight of them he had felt a little uneasy. But Pon's cheery welcome reassured him.

"I say, you fellows—"
"We haven't seen you for such a long time," said Pon, shaking his head. "You neglect your friends, Bunter."

"Too bad," said Gadsby. "Absolutely!"
Bunter smiled genially. "Well, the fact is, I get precious little time to myself," he explained. "A fellow's time is not his own, when he's popular in his Form. I say, you fellows, where's Wharton?"

"Wharton!" repeated Pon. "Yes, is he in Courtenay's study?" The three stared at Bunter. Apparently he had come over to Highcliffe supposing that Wharton was there.

Ponsonby was quick to catch on. "You've come over for Wharton?" he asked.

"Yes, old chap! You see, the fellows wanted me to come over to tea here with them, but they started first—some friends kept me back, and I couldn't very well get away, so I followed on. Where are they?"

"Come with me, old bean," said Ponsonby. "I'll take you up to Courtenay's study."

"Thanks, old chap."
Bunter roared to the staircase after Ponsonby. Gadsby and Vavasour brought up the rear.

Once the fat junior was safe in the Fourth Form quarters the cheery Highcliffians were safe to deal with him as they liked. Bunter was not likely to find a tea-party there, but he was certain to have an exciting time, when they had him to themselves.

But Ponsonby's luck was out. From the foot of the staircase he spotted Roper and Beauchamp of the Sixth, on the landing above.

He stopped. He could not deal with Bunter with two Sixth Form prefects in the offing.

It really looked as if Pon would have to lose this golden opportunity, and let the Greyfriars junior off without a ragging at all.

But Pon was a resourceful fellow. There were, as he had said, more ways than one of killing a cat.

He slipped his arm through Bunter's. "This way, old bean," he said, leading him away from the stairs. "I forgot, they're not up there. This way."

"Where—?"
"This way, old fellow," said Pon affectionately.

And with his arm in Bunter's, he led him away along the corridor on which Dr. Voysey's study opened. The coast was clear in that direction, at least, as Pon had seen the headmaster in the quadrangle only a few minutes ago.

Billy Bunter blinked round him. He had been at Highcliffe a good many times and knew his way about.

"I say, where are you taking me?" he asked.

"This way."
"But—but I say—" Bunter grew

dubious, and tugged at the arm that Pon was affectionately holding. "This is the masters' quarters—"

"That's all right, come on."
"But I say, leggo, you know," exclaimed Bunter.

Instead of letting go Pon held on tight, and fairly dragged the Owl of the Remove along the passage.

"Here I say leggo! Oh, my hat! Wharree, you up to? Yoop!" howled Bunter, as Gadsby behind helped him forward with an application of an elegant but emphatic boot.

Ponsonby threw open the door of the Head's study.

"There you are!" he said. "But—but I say, that's the headmaster's study—a fellow ain't allowed in there!" gasped Bunter, in alarm.

Crash!
Three pairs of hands were laid on Bunter, and he went spinning headlong into the sacred precincts of Dr. Voysey's study.

He landed on the carpet with a heavy concussion and a roar.

Ponsonby, quickly changing the key to the outside of the lock, drew the door shut and locked it.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Gadsby. Pon slipped the key into his pocket. "Beat it—quick!" he breathed.

The three young rascals "beat" it fast enough, heedless of the roar of dismay and indignation that followed them from the study. What they had done was enough to earn them a flogging from their headmaster if it came to his knowledge. They vanished from the spot like ghosts at cockcrow.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Gadsby, when they were at a safe distance. "There'll be a fearful row, Pon. The Old Man will be as wild as anything when he finds that freak in his room."

"Naturally," agreed Pon. "That's what I want."

"Bunter will tell him we shoved him in," said Vavasour, with a scared look.

"Well, we can tell him we didn't, and it's three to one—and that one a Greyfriars cad and a well-known liar!" said Pon coolly.

"Oh, my aunt!"
"I sav, Pon, isn't that rather thick?" murmured Gadsby uneasily.

"My dear man, if you want a floggin' you can ask for it," said Pon cheerfully. "Leave me out, though. Let's get out."

"But you've got the Head's key!"
"I dare say he can find another. He will naturally suppose, not finding the key, that that Greyfriars cad has locked himself in the study."

"Oh crikey!"
"Of course, he will think it's a Greyfriars rag—if he doesn't think the fat freak is there to steal somethin'—"

"Pon!"
"This may put a spoke in Courtenay's wheel," said Pon brightly. "A row with Greyfriars is what he doesn't want—and as he doesn't want it we do want it—bad! Let's get out! I'll drop this key into the Sark."

"Pon! It's too risky—"
"Shut up, you ass and come on!"

Ponsonby had his way, as he generally did in his own select circle in the Highcliffe Fourth. The three young rascals walked out, and the key of the headmaster's study was duly dropped into the river. How the rag was going to end Pon did not know, but he could guess that it would end unpleasantly for Bunter and if it led to trouble with Greyfriars, that was all the more grist to Ponsonby's mill. Trouble with Greyfriars was what he wanted.

There was quite a cheery smile on Pon's face as he sauntered on the tow-path with his friends.

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Tit for Tat!

BILLY BUNTER scrambled to his feet.

He gasped for breath and set his big spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and roared. "Beasts!"

He rolled to the door and grabbed at it. The knob turned, but the door did not move.

"Ow! The beast's locked me in!" gasped Bunter.

He thumped furiously on the door and yelled.

"Beast! Lemme out! Do you hear? Lemme out of this, you beast!"

But answer there came none. Ponsoby & Co. were gone.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

"Come back and lemme out!" yelled Bunter.

He ceased to thump and yell, however, as he realised that the Highcliffe fellows were gone.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked round him in terror and dismay.

He was locked in Dr. Voysey's study. What was going to happen to him when the Highcliffe headmaster came in? No Highcliffe fellow was allowed to enter that apartment without special permission, still less a fellow from another school. Bunter, of course, could explain that it was a rag, but would the headmaster give him time to explain? Dr. Voysey was not a genial gentleman, and he was sure to be annoyed. Moreover, in sprawling into the study, Bunter had knocked over a little table on which had stood a vase of flowers. The vase was smashed, the flowers scattered, and the water was drenching an expensive Persian rug.

Billy Bunter felt a deep and well-founded apprehension at the thought of being found there by Dr. Voysey.

He rolled across to the window.

There was nobody near the window outside, but quite a number of people were in sight. Among them was Dr. Voysey, coming towards the House, talking as he came to Mr. Mobbs, the master of the Fourth. Bunter popped back from the window.

A few minutes later there were footsteps in the corridor. A hand turned the knob of the door.

Bunter quaked.

"What is the matter with the door?"

It was the rather high-pitched, irritable voice of the old headmaster. "What? What?"

"It appears to be locked, sir," came the suave, deferential tones of Mr. Mobbs.

"What—what? How can it be locked, Mr. Mobbs?"

"Pray allow me, sir—"

The handle was turned again, and the door shook. But it did not open.

"It is certainly locked on the inside, sir," said Mr. Mobbs.

Bunter quaked still more. That utter beast, Pon, had taken away the key!

Of course, he was going to make out that Bunter had locked himself in the study. The fat junior could guess that easily enough.

"What—what? Some boy has had the impudence—the extraordinary impudence—to lock himself in my study!" exclaimed Dr. Voysey, aghast.

"It would appear so, sir."

Mr. Mobbs rapped sharply on the door.

"Open this door at once! Do you hear me? How dare you enter your headmaster's study and lock the door? Answer me!"

Bunter made no reply. From Mr. Mobbs' words it was evident that he supposed that it was a Highcliffe fellow

in the study. Bunter felt that it was judicious to let him go on supposing so.

Rap, rap, rap!
"Open this door at once!" shouted Mr. Mobbs.

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

Stand by, boys; our special rhymester has been burning more midnight oil, and this time his facile pen moves swiftly over the character of:

WILLIAM ERNEST WIBLEY.



SHADES of Tree and Garrick quail,

Your palmy days are fading;
And Irving's star is seen to pale,

His mighty acting shading
To amateurish, feeble art,
That's childish, poor and silly,
Beside the star that glows apart,
Of William Ernest Wibley!

Come, let me state it now and here,
With meaning most emphatic,
To one and all I make it clear,
Our Wibley is dramatic.
It's not a name he's merely won
Through plaudits not intended,
It's very plain to everyone,
His acting's simply splendid.

The other chaps at first were wild,
And, naturally, sardonic,
To give the lead to such a child,
In all things histrionic.
But soon the lad had proved his worth—
A second Henry Irving!
And as of actors there's a dearth,
They know his claim's deserving.

There's little time in Wibley's day
For anything but acting;
His mind is always on a play,
Rehearsals, too, are packed in.
What he can't tell of "L's" and "R's,"
Of "centre-stage" and "curtain,"
Of stage-craft, and dramatic stars,
Is not worth much, that's certain.

His footer's not much good, I'll own,
His cricket's quite erratic.
But in one sphere he shines alone,
The firmament dramatic.
And though he doesn't shine at games,
He's popular with many;
He's pals with lads of famous names,
And foes—he hasn't any.

So when you toast those heroes, who
Your praise are worth deserving,
Remember William Wibley, too,
A future Henry Irving.
He may, at least, from some large stage,
Bring glory to Greyfriars;
At any rate, he's on the page
Among her noble "triers."

No reply.
"Upon my word!" exclaimed the headmaster. "This—is this unheard-of! The boy shall be flogged—expelled!"

"I cannot understand it, sir," said Mr. Mobbs. "Such disrespect—such insolence!"

"Boy! Open this door!" boomed the headmaster.

"Disrespectful young rascal, admit your headmaster at once!" squeaked Mr. Mobbs.

There was no answer from the locked study.

"The boy must be out of his senses!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs.

"Is it a boy?" came the headmaster's rejoinder. "It may be some intruder—some thief."

"Surely, sir, in broad daylight—"

"No Highcliffe boy would dare do this!" exclaimed the headmaster, in agitated tones. "It is impossible! I should expel him instantly. No Highcliffe boy would dare to defy me in this way! Some extraneous person is in the room!"

"It—it is possible—" stammered Mr. Mobbs.

"What—what? I am sure of it! And his object can only be theft! There have been many robberies in this neighbourhood of late! There have been burglaries—many of them! Only last week my friend, Sir Hilton Popper, was robbed! Upon my word!

And my snuffbox is in that room—my Louis Quinze snuffbox! Of incalculable value, Mr. Mobbs—incalculable! Watch the door, Mr. Mobbs, while I obtain another key."

"Certainly, sir."

Bunter heard the Highcliffe headmaster rustling away.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Bunter.

Alarmed as he was, Bunter could not help grinning at the old gentleman's idea that there might be a burglar in the study in the broad daylight.

The Courtfield crackman, the mysterious marauder whose exploits had alarmed the whole neighbourhood for months past, was a daring rascal; but he was not likely to walk into a crowded school in the daytime, even to steal a Louis Quinze snuffbox of inestimable value.

Still, from Dr. Voysey's point of view, his alarm was not groundless; for it was quite certain that no Highcliffe boy would have dared to lock himself in the headmaster's study and refuse to open the door. And the old gentleman was, of course, quite unaware of Bunter's presence there.

Bunter blinked round the study.

Under a glass case, on a cabinet, was an object which he guessed to be the snuffbox to which the headmaster alluded.

Bunter did not know much about curios; and he was blissfully ignorant of Louis Quinze, and did not even know that that individual had been Louis XV., King of France. But even Bunter could see that the snuffbox was of great value.

It was covered with diamonds, and each of the diamonds must have been worth a few pounds, at least. It gleamed and glowed from a green velvet pad under the glass case, scintillating in the wintry rays that came in at the window. That mass of precious stones could scarcely be worth less than a thousand pounds; and as a curio, the thing was worth much more than that. It was, as a matter of fact, the apple of Dr. Voysey's eye.

Bunter rolled to the window.

He had to get out before Dr. Voysey came back with the key—that was certain.

He blinked out

Fortunately, the people who had been in sight seemed to have cleared off. Figures could be seen at a distance, but there was no one near at hand.

Bunter opened a casement softly. He did not want Mr. Mobbs to hear him. Then, as he was about to clamber out, he paused.

The way was open to escape. Bunter was no longer thinking of the tea-party in Courtenay's study; indeed, Ponsby's actions had been a pretty clear proof that the Greystriars fellows were not at Highcliffe. Bunter was only thinking now of getting clear.

But another thought worked in Bunter's fat mind.

He had been disappointed. He had been ragged! He had been bumped over! He had been scared out of his fat wits. The worm will turn! Bunter, having been made to "sit up," had a natural desire to make somebody else sit up, too. The alarmed ejaculations of Dr. Voysey had put the idea into his head. He stepped to the cabinet where the Louis Quinze snuffbox reposed.

The glass case that covered it was locked. But the case was small, and Bunter lifted it bodily from where it stood.

Under Dr. Voysey's writing-table was a waste-paper basket half full of torn and crumpled papers.

Bunter hooked them out, dropped the glass case containing the snuffbox into the bottom of the basket, and covered it with the papers.

Then he turned to the window again.

A moment more and he had dropped out and was scudding away. By the time Dr. Voysey returned to the study door with the key in his hand Billy Bunter was outside the gates of Highcliffe.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

LUCK!

MR. RICHARD STEELE, the new master of the Greystriars Remove, came out of the House and walked round to the garage with his springy step, and a cheerful expression on his square-jawed countenance.

Remove fellows who saw him glanced after him, and some of them exchanged nods and winks and whispers.

The strange suspicion that had been whispered about Mr. Steele since the first week of the term was still whispered. Harry Wharton & Co., the leaders of the Form, had nothing to do with it, and lately the Bouncer had joined their party on this subject; but there were plenty of fellows to keep the topic alive, especially Skinner & Co.

"That's the latest!" Skinner remarked to Snoop, as the athletic figure of the new master disappeared in the direction of the garage.

"What?" asked Snoop.

"The dear man's bought a car. You can guess what he wants a car for!" smiled Skinner. "The up-to-date crackman always has a car!"

"A jolly old motor-bandit, what?" sniggered Sidney James Snoop.

"Well, not exactly that, I think," said Skinner. "He has to be jolly careful. But, of course, he's going to use the car to help him cracking ribs. What else does he want it for?"

"But, I say, he can't take the car out of the garage at night without Barnes knowing, anyhow," said Snoop. "Barnes lives in rooms over the garage."

"I dare say Barnes would keep his mouth shut for a 'ip.'"

"Jolly risky, I think!"

"My dear man," said Skinner, "that's

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what he's got a car for—and you can bet on it! Where'd he get a car from, if you come to that, if he was just a Form master? Form masters don't have a lot of money to throw away on cars. It costs money to buy a car, even a little one."

"That's so," assented Snoop.

"He isn't like old Quelch, grown old at his job," said Skinner. "He's a young man, beginning; and he can't have saved a lot of money school-mastering. Yet he can go out and buy a car when he takes a fancy to. Where did he get the money?"

And Skinner nodded his head emphatically, quite convinced that Mr. Richard Steele had raised the money to buy that car by means that would not bear investigation—and that ought to have been very carefully investigated.

Unconscious of Skinner, Mr. Steele walked on his way. Probably he was not unaware of the nods and whispers among the fellows of his Form.

Certainly he knew all about the strange story that was told of him, and it could not have pleased him. But it did not seem to disturb his serene equanimity.

There were so many strange circumstances in connection with Steele that it was not surprising that that story had gained ground. But if he could have explained those strange circumstances, he never troubled to do so. He went on his way and made no sign, leaving the Remove fellows to think what they pleased—and every fellow formed his opinion according to his lights.

Barnes, the Head's chauffeur, was in the garage yard, and he touched his cap respectfully to the Form master.

Steele gave him a pleasant nod and a smile.

His glance lingered for a moment on the trace of a bruise on Barnes' left cheek.

"Taking the car out, sir?" asked Barnes.

"Yes, I was thinking of giving her a little trial run this afternoon," answered Steele. "It is a half-holiday for me as well as for my boys, Barnes."

Barnes smiled dutifully at that remark. But as Mr. Steele went into the garage and handled the car the Head's chauffeur watched him, and the smile quite died off his face, and the look in his eyes was strangely penetrating.

Mr. Steele had bought that car only a couple of days ago. Naturally, he kept it in the garage; and, naturally, the Head had given him a key of the garage. Possibly Barnes, who had hitherto been monarch of all he surveyed in that quarter, was not pleased to have a Form master rooting about the place.

Mr. Steele displayed quite a youthful enthusiasm about his car, and had fallen into a way of tinkering with it that brought him to the garage at many odd moments. Still, Barnes need not have objected to that; for his garage was as spotless, as spick and span, as a garage possibly could be, and everything about it showed what a model chauffeur Arthur Barnes was.

Mr. Steele's car gave Barnes no extra work or trouble. Barnes, in his obliging way, had offered to be of service; he had a fairly easy place, and a good deal of time on his own. But the Remove master declined to give him any trouble; he looked after the car himself entirely. That, perhaps, brought him about the garage more than Barnes liked.

Not that Barnes ever betrayed any feeling of that kind. Barnes' respectful manner was irreplicable.

Several times Steele had entered into a chat with the chauffeur; but Barnes, though very respectful, showed no

desire to chat. He would answer with the greatest civility; but nothing more. That, however, was nothing new, for Barnes had always been uncommunicative.

It was said that he was an ex-officer, and had once been something much more prosperous than a chauffeur; but if that was so Barnes never talked about it. Among the persons employed at Greystriars Barnes was considered a very superior young man, but rather: standoffish.

After that penetrating look at Mr. Steele's back Barnes moved away, and he had gone into his rooms when Mr. Steele brought his car out. If Steele had intended to chat he was disappointed; the chauffeur was not to be seen.

Before going in at his door Barnes had thrown away a half-smoked cigarette. If that excellent young man and first-class chauffeur had a vice, it was smoking; he was always smoking cigarettes when off duty.

Mr. Steele stopped his little car in the yard, and got off, to bend down and examine one of the tyres. He may or may not have observed the face of Barnes at his window over the garage.

But the car being between him and that window, Barnes certainly did not see Mr. Steele pick up the half-smoked cigarette, and was not aware that it was in his hand when he stepped into the car again and drove out of the gates.

Mr. Steele drove up the lane to the main road, turned the car in the direction of Courtfield, and drove through the town.

Beyond the town, on the Highcliffe road, he halted at the roadside, and not till then did he examine that stump of a cigarette that had been in the palm of his hand all the time.

It was the remnant of a fat Turkish cigarette, with part of the gold lettering still discernible.

Mr. Steele looked at the remnant thoughtfully.

"Turkish Glory!" he murmured. "Six a shilling, I believe! A rather expensive smoke for a chauffeur!"

He tossed the stump of the cigarette away, and sat back in his seat, a thoughtful pucker in his brows, as if ruminating.

Had any Remove fellow been a witness to his action, certainly that fellow would have thought the new Form master "queerer" than ever. Why he should take any interest in the brand of cigarettes smoked by the Head's chauffeur would certainly have mystified any Removeite.

As Mr. Steele sat in his car a fat figure came rolling along the road from Highcliffe School.

Steele glanced at it and smiled faintly.

Billy Bunter was not looking happy or contented.

Having escaped successfully from the Head's study at Highcliffe Bunter had lost no time in putting a safe distance between himself and that locality. Now he had slowed down to his usual pace, which was that of a very old and very tired tortoise.

His fat brow was frowning.

He knew that Harry Wharton & Co. had not gone to Highcliffe that afternoon. He had no doubt about that. So by that time he had guessed that Johnny Bull's remark, which had put him on a false scent, had not been unintentional. That beast, Bull, had pulled his leg; and Bunter had no doubt that the Co. were at Cliff House all the time.

But that knowledge came too late to be of any use to Bunter. It was close

on tea-time now, and Highcliffe was more than a mile farther from Cliff House than was Greyfriars. The fellows would be long gone by the time Bunter's fat legs could cover the distance.

Bunter realised that he had been "done," and his wrath was deep. He grunted and snorted as he rolled along.

As he caught sight of his Form master sitting in the little car Billy Bunter came to a halt and raised his cap.

He blinked hopefully at Steele.

The beast seemed to be hanging about doing nothing, and Bunter wondered whether there was a chance of a lift.

"You look tired, my boy," said Mr. Steele good-naturedly.

Bunter gasped and groaned, to show Mr. Steele how tired he was.

"A w'fully, sir! Fagged out!"

"Walking is a healthy exercise," remarked Steele. "But perhaps you have overdone it a little, Bunter."

"I'm blessed if I know how I shall get over to Cliff House, sir! But I've got to get there somehow—they're expecting me. A fellow can't fail to turn up when he's asked to tea, can he, sir?"

"It is a very long walk from here."

"Yes, sir. I—I thought if—if you were going that way, sir, you—might be kind enough to give me a lift part of the way, sir."

Mr. Steele reflected for a moment or two. Apparently he had come out in his little car that afternoon without any intention of going anywhere in particular. He gave Bunter a nod and a smile.

"Jump in!" he said.

Billy Bunter's fat face brightened up.

"Oh, thank you, sir! You're very good, sir!"

"Not at all!" said Steele good-naturedly. "It will not take me long to run across to the Pegg road. Jump in."

Billy Bunter gladly clambered into the car. Steele started up again, backed and turned, and the car raced away.

Bunter sank back in his seat with a satisfied grin on his fat face. This was real luck!

Not only was he saved a long, weary walk, but he would be in time for tea now. The beasts who had spoofed him, and left him out, were going to see him at Cliff House, after all! They were going to suffer all the pangs of envy and jealousy, while Bunter monopolised the attention of the girls. They were going to be hopelessly cut out by a good-looking, fascinating fellow, and serve them jolly well right!

Bunter's reflections, as he sat in Steele's car, rapidly eating up the miles, were quite pleasant.

Three elegant schoolboys were lounging on the Redclyffe road, which the car followed for a short distance after



"Here—I say—leggo—wharrer you up to—yoop!" howled Bunter, as Gadsby helped him forward with the aid of an elegant but emphatic boot.

leaving Courtfield behind. Billy Bunter blinked at Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour. They stared at him as they stepped aside out of the way of the car.

Bunter, safe in the car and the presence of Mr. Steele, grinned at them derisively from the open window, and put a fat thumb to his nose, extending all the fingers of his fat hand.

Steele glanced round.

"Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Bunter's extended fingers came away from his fat little nose as if that nose had suddenly become red-hot.

"What are you doing?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!" stammered Bunter. "Only—only scratching mum-mum-my nose, sir."

"Then please scratch your nose in a rather more circumspect manner," said the Remove master severely.

"Oh! Yes, sir! Certainly, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Beast!" he added under his breath. But he was careful not to let Mr. Steele hear that.

The car ran on and turned into the Pegg road, and stopped at a little distance from Cliff House.

There Bunter alighted, and Mr. Steele drove away.

The Owl of the Remove rolled on to Cliff House, with a fat grin on his face. He was going to give the Cliff House girls, and Harry Wharion & Co., a joyful surprise. The surprise, perhaps, might not be joyful for them; but it was going to be joyful for Bunter; and that, of course, was all that mattered. Bunter's grin extended from one fat ear to the other as he rolled on to Cliff House.

"I'll be a little late," mumbled the fat junior. "But better late than never."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Tea at Cliff House!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"My hat!"

"Bunter!"

Billy Bunter entered, grinning cheerfully.

The tea-party in the school-room at Cliff House did not grin. They stared blankly at William George Bunter.

The Famous Five did not seem pleased to see him. Frank Courtenay's face was expressionless. Only Rupert de Courcy, otherwise the Caterpillar, smiled faintly. Marjorie and Clara, and the other Cliff House girls looked surprised.

Bunter rolled in cheerily.

"Sorry I'm late!" he remarked.

"Too bad of you, Bunter," said the Caterpillar solemnly. "We've been missin' you frightfully."

"You fat villain!" breathed Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed fat Bunter—"

"Sorry, old chaps," said Bunter.

"The fact is, I was rather delayed. But better late than never. I take three lumps, Marjorie, old thing."

"Find Bunter a chair, somebody," said Marjorie.

Miss Clara found Bunter a chair.

Bunter sat down.

A cheery buzz of conversation had been going on when Bunter arrived. It ceased now.

But Bunter did not mind that. He was prepared to do all the talking that was required.

"I say, you fellows. I've been over to Highcliffe," he remarked.

"Why didn't you stay there?" grunted Johnny Bull!

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"How the thump did you get here, if you've been to Highcliffe?" asked Harry Wharton. "It's a jolly long way."

Bunter chuckled.
"You see, from something Bull said, I fancied you fellows were going to Highcliffe. You didn't make it quite clear where you were going. You fellows always muddle things. Thanks, I'll try the cake!"

Johnny Bull glared at Bunter. The Owl of the Remove had, apparently, fallen into the trap, and a visit to Highcliffe ought to have filled up his afternoon nicely. It really was a mystery how he had covered the distance to Cliff House in time for tea.

"I got a lift," explained Bunter. "I didn't stay long at Highcliffe. Ponsonby was cheeky." He blinked at Courtenay. "That cousin of yours is rather a beast, Courtenay."

Courtenay made no reply.
"Playing tricks on a fellow," said Bunter. "Still, I fancy I gave as good as I got! I rather think there's a row going on at Highcliffe by this time. He, he, he!"

"What have you been up to?" asked the Caterpillar.

"That's telling, old bean! But I fancy you fellows will find a row going on when you get back! He, he, he! Your headmaster's rather an old donkey, isn't he?"

"Think so?" asked the Caterpillar urbanely.

"Yes, rather—regular old fossil," said Bunter. "I fancy he's hopping about now, in a regular bate. He, he, he! As for that cad Ponsonby, I'm going to thrash him next time I see him. You don't mind my thrashing your cousin, do you, Courtenay?"

"Not at all," said Courtenay, with a smile. "But you may find it a rather painful process, Bunter."

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Bunter. "Any Greyfriars fellow could lick any Highcliffe fellow with one hand. Couldn't he, Bob?"

"Dry up, ass!"
"Why, I've heard you say so yourself!" said Bunter, blinking at him across the table. "Don't you remember?"

Bob Cherry crimsoned. If he had made that remark, he did not want it to be recalled in the presence of Highcliffe fellows with whom he was friendly.

"Will you have some more cake, Bunter?" asked Marjorie Hazeldene hastily.

"Yes, thanks! This is a jolly good cake!" said Bunter. "Not like the cakes I get at home, at Bunter Court, of course. But good!"

Bunter showed his appreciation of the cake by filling his extensive mouth, before he proceeded.

"You needn't worry about me, Courtenay! I'm going to thrash that cad Ponsonby! It's time that rotter was licked, and I'm the man to do it. In fact, I'd undertake to lick any two of them. Highcliffe men can't scrap!"

"Do you mind if I nitch Bunter out of the window, Marjorie?" asked Johnny Bull.

Marjorie smiled.
"Oh, really, Bull! Don't forget your manners!" said Bunter severely.

"You're in the presence of ladies now, not in the Remove passage, you know. Your manners ain't much to speak of; but don't forget 'em, such as they are."

"You got a lift, did you?" asked Miss Clara, by way of changing the topic.

"Yes, Wasn't it lucky?" asked Bunter.

"Oh, frightfully!" said Miss Clara.

with a sarcasm that was a sheer waste on William George Bunter.

"The luckfulness was preposterous," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"The luck was ours," said the Caterpillar gravely. "But for that lift, we mightn't have seen you, Bunter. It hardly bears thinkin' of."

"I'm jolly glad to see you, too, old chap," said Bunter affably. "These fellows never mentioned that you'd be here—in fact, they never made it clear that the party was at Cliff House at all."

"I wonder why?" murmured the Caterpillar.

"Oh, their usual muddling!" said Bunter. "I knew they weren't at Highcliffe from the way Po carried on. Highcliffe chaps wouldn't dare to rag a Greyfriars man, if there were other Greyfriars men about. They're a mingy, funky lot."

"Speaking of the senior match at Highcliffe—" said Nugent.

"Don't interrupt a fellow when he's



GLASGOW GETS GOING!

The following amusing storyette comes from a Scottish reader who carries off one of this week's useful penknives.

OF "FIRST" IMPORTANCE:

"Well, boys," said Uncle Joe, "how are you getting on at school?"

"I'm first in arithmetic," Jackie replied.

"I'm first in grammar," said Bertie.

"Fine!" said Uncle Joe, highly pleased. "Now what are you first in, Sammy?"

"I'm first in the street when it's time to go home!" retorted the youngster.

Sent in by Matthew Riggins, 469, Gallowgate, Glasgow, S.E. Don't delay—send in your rib-tickler to-day. You'll be no end pleased with one of our splendid prizes.

talking, Nugent," said Bunter. "It's bad manners! I say who do you think gave me a lift?"

Bunter paused for eager inquiry. But none came, and he resumed:

"It was Steele! Our Form master, you know! Did you fellows know that he'd got a car? One of those little two-seaters, you know. He keeps it in the garage at Greyfriars. I told him I was late for a tea-party here, and he ran me across."

"That was awfully kind of him, remarked the Caterpillar. "I dare say he guessed that everybody would be pinin' for your company."

"Yes, very likely. He was only running about in the car—not going anywhere special, you know," said Bunter. "I say, you Highcliffe fellows haven't seen Steele have you? He came at the beginning of this term, in old Quelch's place. He's really a burglar, you know."

"What?" ejaculated Courtenay, and even the Caterpillar seemed a little startled out of his urbane calm.

Bunter grinned. He liked to make a sensation by imparting startling news. "You've heard of the Courtfield cracksman, that's been in all the papers lately?" he asked. "Well, Steele's the man!"

"Shut up, you ass!" hissed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Cheese it!"

"Shan't! You see, we found him out," explained Bunter. "Every man in the Remove knows that Steele is really a burglar, but somehow or other the police don't seem to nail him."

The two Highcliffe fellows gazed at Bunter. Harry Wharton & Co. were red and uncomfortable. The strange story that was told about Richard Steele, the new master of the Remove, was not a matter to be talked of outside Greyfriars—in the opinion of anyone but William George Bunter.

"It's all rot, you men," said Harry. "Some of the fellows tell an idiotic yarn about Steele, but it's only bunkum."

"I imagine so," said Courtenay, with a smile.

"Oh, really, Wharton: You jolly well know—Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. "What beast stamped on my foot? Wow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If this is what you call manners," roared Bunter. "I can jolly well tell you—"

"Another cup of tea, Bunter?" asked Marjorie curiously.

"Yes. Three lumps, please! Pass the tarts this way, Bob if you don't want them all. You might give a fellow a chance with the tarts!"

Fortunately, the tea party at Cliff House had been almost over when Bunter arrived. It might have lasted longer; but now there seemed a general disinclination to prolong it. It ended rather abruptly. Bunter however, had not allowed his bright and interesting conversation to interrupt his gastronomic performances and he was looking fat and sticky and shiny when he rose from the table, and moved with a little difficulty.

"I'll come again soon, Marjorie," he promised, when the Cliff House girls said good-bye to their visitors at the gate—a remark that Miss Hazeldene did not, somehow, seem to hear.

The juniors walked down the road in a bunch, with a stern suppression of their feelings till they were out of sight of the Cliff House girls.

Then they stopped, and gathered round Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at them.

"I say, you fellows, what about having a taxi home?" he asked. "I'll pay for it, if one of you will cut down to the Anchor and telephone for it. I've been rather disappointed about some remittances I was expecting but one of you fellows can lend me a pound—Here, I say, wharrer you up to? Oh, crikey! Yooop! Yaroooh! Help! Murder! Fire!"

Hands grasped William George Bunter on all sides.

"Collar him!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Bump him!" panted Bob Cherry.

"Roll him over!"

"Burst him!"

"Squash him!"

"Ow, ow, ow! I say, you fellows—Yaroooh! Help! Whoop!" roared Bunter as he rolled.

Courtenay and the Caterpillar stood looking on at the exciting scene with

INSIDE INFORMATION!



By
The "OLD
REF."

Readers who want any knotty "soccer" problem solved should write, without delay, to "Old Ref."
The more ticklish the question, the better he likes it!

AMONG the readers with whose questions I have to deal this week is one who is obviously a student of History. He wants to know when the game of football was first heard of, and which is the oldest professional club.

Being still comparatively young myself, I cannot answer these questions from personal experience. In fact, I very much doubt if anybody, in these times, could definitely say when the game of footer really started. But it is on record in the musty books that royalty was worried about the game some six hundred years ago. In the year 1314, Edward the Second, then King of England, issued a proclamation forbidding football. A few years later his successor, Edward the Third, wrote to the Sheriffs of London asking them to do something about this progress of the game of football, declaring, to quote from his proclamation, "that skill in shooting with arrows is almost wholly laid aside for these unlawful games with large balls."

I think these two cases of royal interest in the game of football take us about as far back as we can possibly go in regard to the age of the game, and in any case they illustrate that there has been some sort of football played in this country for a good long time.

I am a trifle in doubt as to the exact meaning of the question as to which club claims to be the oldest of the professional sides.

The payment of players was legalised in 1887, but previously to then several well-known clubs, particularly in the county of Lancashire, had been paying their players certain sums of money for playing the game.

As to which club was the first to pay players can only be a matter for speculation.

However, I think it is fairly well established and admitted that the oldest of the clubs which now has professional players on its books is Sheffield United. This club was started in 1885 and has been in continuous existence ever since, embracing professionalism in due course.

IHOPE this History lesson hasn't bored my readers, but in any case I must now come down to modern times, and deal with some other questions. A problem point has been sent to me concerning a recent match. A fairly high shot was sent in against a strong breeze. Apparently the ball passed just over the bar, but was then caught by the wind and driven into play, a goal being scored and allowed immediately afterwards.

Was the referee right in allowing the play to proceed and the goal to be scored? That is the question. The answer is that the referee was wrong, provided the ball had once passed over the bar. If it did that then it was out of play, and the game should have been stopped and a goal-kick given. I doubt if any responsible official would make such an elementary mistake as that suggested by my correspondent but I do believe it possible that watchers may have made a mistake as to whether the ball went over the bar.

What has to be remembered in regard to this point—and it is something which is repeatedly forgotten, is that

the whole of the ball must pass over the line—whether in the air or on the ground doesn't matter—before it is out of play.

Often one hears spectators shout to the linesman when the ball runs along the line. But it is not out of play until the whole ball has passed over the line.

Charging the goalkeeper is another point over which many followers of the game stumble, and which is also raised by one of my readers. The one thing to be borne in mind in this connection is that so long as the goalkeeper is within his own penalty area he cannot be charged except when in possession of the ball. And please note this—all of you—that according to official explanation of this rule, the act of fisting the ball is not possession.

Already this season I have seen two goals scored—and allowed—in First Division matches in the following circumstances. A long shot has been sent in. As the ball was kicked towards the goalkeeper an opponent also dashed forward and just as the goalkeeper fisted the ball out he was charged by this opponent; sent "flying" as we say. The ball has then been shot into the net while the goalkeeper has been on the ground.

According to the rules no goal should be allowed in such circumstances, because the goalkeeper was not in possession and consequently could not be charged.

Another ticklish problem concerning the goalkeeper arises. Suppose he goes down to the floor in saving a shot, and lies there with the ball underneath him and opponents swarming around. Obviously there is only one way in which such opponents could charge the goalkeeper fairly, and that would be for one of them to go down on the floor beside the goalkeeper, and use shoulder against shoulder. Any other charge, or a dangerous kick at the ball, would be penalised by a free kick. These scrimmages are usually ended by the referee stopping the game for dangerous play, but if the opponents just stand off a little way then they can charge the goalkeeper who has the ball immediately he gets up with it.

THERE has been much argument this season over the question of whether International matches should be played on a Saturday or in mid-week, and I am asked to give my views. Like most other questions, there are two sides to this one. I think, for instance, that

it would be unwise to put all International matches back to mid-week, because they would thus lose some of their importance, and that would be a mistake in the long run.

On the other hand, it is quite easy to understand the attitude of the clubs towards these Saturday Internationals. They are called upon to release players when they have important games on their League programmes. Thus a club may lose two points in a match because it has two or three of its best men away playing in an International match, and many a club has only been two points short of championship winning at the end of a season, or has wanted two more points to save itself from relegation.

There is a rule on the books of the Football League that each club must play its best eleven in every League match. The argument of the clubs is that they are not playing their best eleven if their leading men are away on duty in an International match. This rule is important, and is enforced for all occasions except Internationals. Some time ago Newcastle United, being secure in their League position, and also being in the Cup Final, played several reserves in a League match a week before the final was due. The club was heavily fined for doing so.

"Old Ref" will be "in office" again next week. Watch out for his batch of "Answers to Readers."

BILLY BUNTER'S BLUFF!

(Continued from page 10.)

smiling faces. They did not take part in it; but the Famous Five were enough for Bunter—in fact, too much.

When they had finished with him William George Bunter lay in a breathless heap, spluttering.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, ow!" "There!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I feel better now!"

"The betterfulness is terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Give him some more!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Yaroooh!"

"Come on!" said Bob; and the Greyfriars fellows walked on with the two Highcliffians and left Bunter to splutter. Bunter sat up.

"Ow! Beasts! Rotters! Yooop! Ow! Wow! Beasts! Oh crikey!"

The juniors were out of sight before Bunter got his second wind. Then he crawled to his feet still gasping and gurgling—and, like the ploughman in the poem, wearily plodded his homeward way.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Pinched!

"SOMETHIN'S up!" drawled the Caterpillar.

"Looks like it!" agreed Courtenay. "I wonder what?"

The Caterpillar was mildly interested; Courtenay was surprised. The moment the two chums entered the House at Highcliffe they could see that something was "up."

Something, apparently, had happened while they were at Cliff House that afternoon with their friends from Greyfriars.

Smithson of the Fourth rushed up to them excitedly.

"You fellows heard?" he gasped. "Haven't had a chance yet, old thing," drawled the Caterpillar.

"What's the excitin' news?"

"Robbery!" gasped Smithson.

"Oh, gad!"

"The Head's snuffbox—"

"Never knew the Head took snuff!"

"Fathead! I mean that old snuff-box he keeps under a glass case in his study. Worth no end of money!" said Smithson impressively. "It's a Looey Cans—"

"A which?"

"Looey Cans!" said Smithson rather vaguely. "I don't know what it means; but anything that's Looey Cans is worth a lot of money."

The Caterpillar grinned cheerily.

"Louis Quinze, my benighted Smithson, was King of France in the days when gentlemen took snuff," he said solemnly. "Listen to the voice of the man who knows! Quinze being French for fifteen, they call him Louis Quinze, it being their odd custom to number their kings with cardinal numbers, instead of ordinal numbers—which is the English way, and, therefore, the right way. Perpend! Louis Quinze took snuff to tickle his royal nose—though in many respects he was not up to snuff. But I'm interruptin' you, dear man! Continue!"

"It's been pinch-d—"

"The snuffbox?" asked Courtenay.

"Yes—the Looey Cans snuffbox—pinched!"

"A very odd proceedin' on the part of some person or persons unknown," remarked the Caterpillar. "I suppose a lot of sportsmen must have taken pinches of snuff from that box—but pinchin' the box itself is rather an original idea."

"The Head's ragin'!" said Smithson.

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breathlessly. "I say, the whole place is upside down! They think the Courtfield crackman's been here."

"Oh crumbs!"

"You fellows heard?" Monson of the Fourth came up.

"We're just hearin'," said the Caterpillar. "Frightful bad luck to be off the scene when these excitin' events are takin' place! Have they caught the bold bad burglar?"

"No fear! But the fellows say that Grimes is coming—the police inspector from Courtfield, you know. The Head's in a frightful wax."

"But it's rot!" said Courtenay.

"How could a burglar get into the school in the daytime?"

"Some naughty boy pinched it for a lark and shoved it somewhere to make the Head sit up," said the Caterpillar sagely. "Was it you, Monson?"

"You silly ass!" gasped Monson.

"Only askin', dear boy. It was somebody, you know—and you're somebody," argued the Caterpillar.

"Look here, you fathead—"

"My dear man, you wouldn't like to be called a nobody, would you? Well, it looks to me as if you did this, Monson," said the Caterpillar, with great gravity, while Monson glared at him.

"I can prove it by means of a syllogism—which was the ancient philosophical method of proving things that weren't true. The snuffbox was pinched by somebody. Monson is somebody. Therefore, the snuffbox was pinched by Monson."

"You silly owl!" snorted Monson. "If you say I had anythin' to do with it I'll jolly well punch your nose! But, I say," added Monson, "do you think it's been hidden for a lark?"

The Caterpillar's clear head and cool judgment were much respected in the Fourth, and his opinion carried great weight. He nodded.

"Yes, that's what I think," he assented. "Everybody knows how the beak prizes that giddy old relic; and some fellow has shoved it out of sight to make him sit up. It's rather a shame—it's like takin' a rattle away from a baby!" added the Caterpillar, shaking his head seriously. "These old gents are touchy about their curios and things. A fellow ought to be kind to his head master. I don't approve of this. Go and put it back, Monson!"

"You silly idiot!" shrieked Monson. "I don't know anythin' about it."

"But I've proved syllogistically—"

"Go and eat coke!" snorted Monson, and he stamped away, leaving the Caterpillar smiling gently.

"I say, you know, they're making a frightful fuss about it!" said Smithson.

"From what I hear, the Head found his study door locked and the key gone. The pincher locked himself in the study, and seems to have bunked by the window while the old man was getting another key. When they got into the study they found a table knocked over, a vase broken, and the snuffbox gone."

The Caterpillar whistled.

"That wasn't a Highcliffe chap, Rupert," said Courtenay. "I can't imagine there's a fellow in the school would dare to play such a lark on the Head."

"The fellows say that the old man's telephoned for the police," said Smithson. "He's had all the prefects up, and raised Cain generally. I say, it's jolly exciting, isn't it?"

"Frightfully!" yawned the Caterpillar. "Franky, old bean, shall we retire to the study and get out of the excitement?"

The chums of the Fourth went up the staircase to the Fourth Form passage. On the landing were a group of three—Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour.

They were talking in low tones and looking startled and very serious. The three knuts glanced round at the newcomers.

"Heard—" began Gadsby.

"Just heard," said the Caterpillar.

"Ponsonby, my dear but erring youth, has it come to this?"

Ponsonby stared at him.

"What do you mean, you ass?" he snapped.

"How often have I warned you, my young friend, that the primrose path of dalliance leads to trouble in the long run?" said the Caterpillar, shaking his head. "Bettin' on gee-gees, and urg'in' the flyin' ball on the billiard table at the Three Fishers— Oh, Pon! Am I mistaken in supposin' that you pinched the old man's snuffbox to raise the wind to settle with Banks, the bookie?"

Ponsonby's face was a study for a moment. Gadsby and Vavasour grinned.

"You—you burbling idiot!" gasped Ponsonby at last.

"Not guilty?" asked the Caterpillar.

"You frabjous cuckoo—"

"Glad to hear it, old bean," said the Caterpillar amiably. "You'll come to it in the long run, of course; but I'm really glad to hear that you haven't come to it yet. Take warnin' in time—"

"Shut up, you ass!" said Courtenay, laughing.

"I'm only warnin' Pon for his own good," said the Caterpillar. "But if it wasn't Pon, which of you fellows was it?"

"You silly chump!" said Gadsby.

"Really, old chap—" said Vavasour.

"I can tell you who it was," said Ponsonby viciously. "It was a Greyfriars man, and I was just discussin' with these men whether I ought to go and tell the Head."

Courtenay's face grew stern; and the Caterpillar eyed Ponsonby very curiously.

"How dare you make a suggestion like that, Ponsonby?" exclaimed the captain of the Fourth angrily.

"I'm not makin' a suggestion; I'm statin' a fact," answered Ponsonby coolly. "It was a Remove man of Greyfriars who stole the Head's snuff-box."

"You're improvin', Pon!" said the Caterpillar admiringly. "You spend a lot of your valuable time stirrin' up a little harmless and necessary trouble with the Greyfriars blokes. Generally you don't get away with it. Do you think you'll get away with this? Hardly!"

"It's a fact!" said Pon.

"Your facts, old bean, have a strikin' resemblance to other people's fiction," remarked the Caterpillar.

"It's true!" said Gadsby.

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"There's not a word of truth in it," said Courtenay savagely; "and if there was, you'd have been to the Head about it before this."

"Yaas, why the delay?" asked the Caterpillar. "If you can accuse a Greyfriars man of stealin' Pon, and get home with it, you can feel that you haven't lived in vain. What are you lettin' him off for?"

Pon's lip curled in a sneer.

"I'm not lettin' him off," he said.

"But it means a lickin' for me, that's all! Of course I never dreamed that that fat idiot was a thief—it never crossed my mind that he would pinch anythin'! I suppose he saw the thing, and the temptation was too strong for him."

"You don't mean Bunter?" exclaimed Courtenay, remembering that the Owl of Greyfriars had mentioned that he had been at Highcliffe that afternoon.



Bunter, safe in the car, grinned at Ponsonby & Co., and then put a fat thumb to his nose and extended his fat fingers!

"I do mean Bunter."
 "The bold, bad Bunter!" said the Caterpillar. "My sainted aunt! Bunter is rather an ass, and he's as blind as an owl; but you don't think he took an old snuffbox for somethin' to eat, do you? Even if he did, he couldn't have eaten it—not without bein' an ostrich."

"He pinched the snuffbox," said Ponsonby.

De Courcy shook his head.
 "He didn't, old bean. I wouldn't trust Bunter within thirty million miles of anythin' he could put into his inside. But he couldn't put a snuffbox into his inside! Even Bunter couldn't! Bunter has his limit!"

"But how?" asked Courtenay, eyeing Ponsonby very dubiously and with unconcealed hostility.

That Pon would stop at little to break up the friendly relations with Greyfriars he was well aware; and an accusation of this sort would be "pie" to Ponsonby, if he could, as the Caterpillar expressed it, get home with it. But it was too terribly serious an accusation for the most reckless fellow to make without something to "go upon"; and Courtenay was beginning to wonder, with dismay, whether there was possibly something in it.

"The fat idiot butted in here this afternoon, thinkin' some other Greyfriars cads were here," said Ponsonby. "I took him along to the Old Man's study, and butted him in, an' locked the door on him."

"A rotten trick!" snapped Courtenay.

Ponsonby sneered.
 "Thanks for your opinion! I took the key away, and I supposed that the Old Man would find him there, and there would be a row. I never dreamed that he would pinch somethin' valuable and hook it by the window. But that's what he did."

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.
 "I'm bound to tell the Head where

to look for his snuffbox," said Ponsonby. "But"—he made a grimace—"it means a lickin' for lockin' Bunter in the study! I've been waitin' to see whether they tumble to it that it was Bunter, without my buttin' into the matter at all. Somebody may have seen him boltin' from the window; and if that comes out, there's no need for me to speak."

"Better wait a bit," advised Gadsby. "The Old Man's in a frightful wax; he's hardly safe to speak to now."

"Still, it would relieve his mind to know where he could get his snuffbox back—absolutely," remarked Vavasour.

"Yes; but it wouldn't have been missed at all if Pon hadn't larked with Bunter! It means a lickin'!"

Ponsonby nodded.
 "I'll wait a bit longer! It may turn out that somebody saw Bunter scootin' from the window. It's likely enough! I'll wait."

Courtenay and the Caterpillar walked on to their study—not in the least interested in that debate. Between his keen desire to level a disgraceful charge at a Greyfriars man and his dread of incurring the wrath of his headmaster for "larking" in the sacred precincts of that gentleman's study, Pon was in a very uncertain frame of mind. The chums of the Fourth left him to it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Thinks It Funny!

HERBERT VERNON SMITH came up the Remove staircase at Greyfriars, rubbing his nose as he came. Smithy's nose was a little swollen, and looked as if Smithy had been in the wars. He knocked at the door of Study No. 1, and threw it open. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were there, and they looked round at the Bounder.

"Seen anything of Bunter?" asked Smithy.

"Yes—too much," answered Harry. "Has he been at Highcliffe this afternoon?"

"Yes, he told us so." The captain of the Remove eyed Smithy curiously. "What's up, Smithy? Where did you get that nose?"

"I got it in Courtfield, from Drury, of the Highcliffe Fourth," said Smithy grimly. "Drury's gone home with a nose to match, and an eye that will be in mourning for a long time, I fancy! What has that idiot Bunter been up to? Is he in the house now?"

"He must have got in before this. But what's the matter? What have you been ragging with Highcliffe about?"

"I hit Drury in the eye, and he didn't seem to like it," said Smithy. "So there was a bit of a scrap."

Wharton frowned.

"I wish you'd keep clear of ragging with them, Smithy! We want to go over there to see the First Eleven match when it comes off. I know Drury is one of Ponsonby's pals; and that gang are always looking for trouble. All the same—"

"You'd have let him tell you that there are thieves at Greyfriars?" asked the Bounder sarcastically.

"What the thump—"

"According to what he said, Highcliffe's buzzing with it," said Smithy.

"They make out that a Greyfriars man has been there this afternoon, and stolen something belonging to their headmaster."

"Oh, my hat!"
 "What utter rot!" said Nugent.

"Well, you never know what Bunter may be up to," said the Bounder. "I hit Drury in the eye, on principle; but you never know what that fat idiot may have done."

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

"Rubbish! Bunter's not a thief!" said Wharton warmly. "I suppose he may have bagged a cake if he saw one. But—"

"Their old donkey of a Beak had some idiotic snuffbox that's supposed to be valuable. They say that Bunter got into his study and pinched it."

"Then they're lying," said Harry; "and if I'd been there I'd have given Drury another eye to match!"

"Better look into it, all the same," said the Bounder. "The sooner a thing like this is knocked on the head the better."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Here he is," said Nugent, as a fat face and a large pair of spectacles blinked in at the doorway.

"Come in, Bunter," said Wharton quietly.

"Certainly, old chap." Bunter rolled into the study. "I say, you fellows, that beast Steele's asked me for my lines."

"Never mind that now—"

"Eh? But I do mind," said Bunter. "You see, they've been doubled, and if they're not done this evening, I shall get licked. See? I want to know who's going to help me with those lines."

"Bother the lines, you ass!"

"That's all very well, but, you see, they've got to be done," explained Bunter. "There's two hundred. My idea is to begin them in case the brute looks at the fist, you know, and you fellows take it in turns to finish them. What about it?"

"You yerr at Highcliffe this afternoon?" snapped the Bounder.

"Oh, yes," Bunter blinked at him and grinned. "I say, Smithy, have you had a collision with a lorry? What's happened to your nose? He, he, he!"

"Did you go into the headmaster's study at Highcliffe?" asked Wharton.

"That beast Pon shoved me into it," answered Bunter. "He locked the door and took away the key. I had to get out of the window. But I fancy I left 'em something to think about. He, he, he!"

The juniors exchanged startled glances.

"Look here, Bunter, this is serious," said the captain of the Remove. "A Highcliffe man has told Smithy that something is missing."

"He, he, he!"

"A diamond-studded snuffbox," said the Bounder. "Do you know anything about it, Bunter?"

"He, he, he!"

"Did you see it while you were there?" asked Nugent.

"Yes, rather! He, he, he!"

"Well, did you touch it?"

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Bunter. "I fancy old Voysey will be sitting up about it! He, he, he! I fancy there's a fearful row going on at Highcliffe about this! He, he, he!"

The juniors looked aghast.

"You frabjous idiot!" gasped Wharton. "Mean to say that you took it away?"

"He, he, he!"

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"Then there's something in it," said the Bounder. "I could see that Drury believed what he was saying. Did you steal the snuffbox, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"For goodness' sake, Bunter, tell us what you've done!" exclaimed Wharton. "You're accused of stealing the thing."

Bunter jumped.

"Me!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, you ass! What did you do with it?"

"Only a lark," explained Bunter. "I wanted to pay them out for ragging me, see? I heard old Voysey talking to Mobby outside the door, and he was fancying that somebody was in the study after his silly snuffbox. So I hid it in the waste-paper basket."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You see, it will be found in the morning, when the waste-paper basket's emptied," explained Bunter. "It will be all right. But until then, I fancy old Voysey will be sitting up and howling! He, he, he!"

"You frightful idiot!" gasped Wharton. "You hid a thing that may be worth hundreds of pounds in a waste-paper basket?"

"Well, Pon shouldn't have locked me in the study," said Bunter. "Old Voysey would have made it hot for me if he'd found me there. The old boy will be on the warpath. He will raise Cain all over Highcliffe. Serve 'em right! Think I'm going to be pitched head first into a study and locked in, without making them sit up? No fear! I thought it a jolly good wheeze!"

"My only hat!" said the Bounder. "If the maid pitches the waste-paper away without looking at it, the dustman may collect that jolly old snuffbox, and it may never be heard of again."

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter; apparently that possibility appealed to Bunter's remarkable sense of humour.

"It's all right, you fellows," continued Bunter. "Nobody knows I was there, except Pon. If Pon talks about it, he will get a licking for bunging a fellow in his headmaster's study. That's what I want—see? I'm not going to lick the fellow myself—he's hardly worth soiling my hands on. But if he gets a licking from old Voysey—"

"You fat chump!" said Wharton. "Haven't you sense enough not to play tricks with valuables?"

"If you had as much sense in your head as I have in my little finger, you'd do," answered Bunter disdainfully. "It's all right! Old Voysey will sit up, and there'll be a frightful row, and I shall be safe all the time, as I'm not at Highcliffe. Rather a clever idea, I think. You'd hardly have had the gumptior to think of it, I fancy. Presence of mind, you know. That's me all over!"

"You fat idiot! They think the thing's stolen!"

"He, he, he!"

"They're already saying that you pinched it, and saying that there are thieves at Groyfriars!" snapped the captain of the Remove.

"Well, that's all right—they'll find it in the morning," said Bunter, cheerfully. "If Pon thinks that he'll very likely go to the old fossil and tell him I was in the study. Then he'll get licked! That's what I want."

"Drury said they've got the police in," said Vernon-Smith.

"He, he, he!"

Bunter roared. This seemed to him, apparently, the cream of the joke. The three juniors gazed at him. They already knew that Bunter was every known kind of an ass. But the Owl of the Remove was still able to surprise them.

"It's a scream, ain't it?" gasped Bunter. "Fancy the old donkey having the police in when the snuffbox is in his waste-paper basket all the time! He, he, he!"

"The only thing is to let them know at once," said Harry. "From what Smithy says, it's already the talk of the Lower School there. This will be simply pie to Pon and his set. It's sure to get to Dr. Voysey, and he will come over here about it, or ring up Dr. Locke. Before that happens you'd better let them know, Bunter."

"Catch me!" said Bunter.

"You frabjous ass! They'll tell Dr. Locke—"

"Let 'em!" said Bunter. "I shall deny it, of course, if my own headmaster speaks to me about it. My own headmaster can lick me—the Highcliffe headmaster can't! See?"

"Deny it!" repeated Wharton.

"Well, not exactly deny it, being a truthful chap," said Bunter. "But I shall be—well, diplomatic. I'm not going to owe up to a man who can lick me for it—that's not sense!"

"Look here, you born idiot—"

"And you fellows have got to keep it dark, of course," said Bunter. "I've told you in confidence. You can't give a man away."

"Can't you see—"

Harry Wharton broke off, as there was a well-known tread in the Remove passage outside.

Mr. Steele tapped at the door, and looked in.

"Is Bunter here?"

"Yes, sir," said Bunter, blinking uneasily at his Form master. "I—I'm just going to do the lines, sir. I—I didn't come here to ask these fellows to help me, sir—I wouldn't!"

"Follow me, Bunter," said Mr. Steele quietly. "Your headmaster desires to see you!"

"Oh lor!"

Billy Bunter followed the Form master in a state of considerable trepidation. Wharton and Nugent and the Bounder looked after him, and then looked at one another.

"Well, the fat's in the fire now," said Harry. "The Head's been told. If Bunter has sense enough to tell him the truth—"

He paused. Bunter was not gifted with much in the way of sense, and it was said in the Remove that he couldn't tell the truth if he tried—not that he had ever tried.

But there was nothing that the juniors could do. It was up to Bunter now, and the Owl of the Remove had to be left to follow the strange and mysterious workings of his own remarkable intellect.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Diplomatic!

DR. LOCKE did not look his usual calm and serene self when Billy Bunter arrived in his presence, under the wing of the Remove master. He looked extremely disturbed, troubled, worried, and ill-at-ease—and angry! Even Bunter could see that his headmaster was in a mood that boded trouble, and realised that all his diplomacy would be needed. Still, Bunter rather prided himself on being a diplomatic fellow. He was very wary, and prepared to assert, or to deny, anything that seemed judicious in the difficult circumstances. A regard for the truth had never been one of Bunter's weaknesses.

"Here is Bunter, sir," said Mr. Steele.

"Yes—yes!" said Dr. Locke. "Thank you, Mr. Steele! I have had an extra

ordinary—a most extraordinary—message from Dr. Voysey at Highcliffe School—a very disturbing and extraordinary message, Mr. Steele. Obviously, some absurd mistake has been made. That any boy at Greyfriars is capable of theft I cannot believe for a moment. Bunter?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "It wasn't me, sir."

"What? What? Listen to me, Bunter! Dr. Voysey has telephoned to me that—that a Greyfriars boy—yourself—was at his school this afternoon, and purloined an object of great value from his study. He makes this statement, as a matter of fact. Explain yourself! Have you given Dr. Voysey any grounds for this strange suspicion?"

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all! I—I'm as—as innocent as—as a baby, sir," said Bunter.

"Have you been to Highcliffe at all this afternoon?"

"No, sir. Nowhere near the place."

"One moment," said Mr. Steele. "I picked you up in my car this afternoon, Bunter, within a short distance of Highcliffe School. You were coming from that direction when I saw you."

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter had a bad memory; though he belonged to the class of persons who, according to the proverb, should have good memories!

"Thank you, Mr. Steele! Bunter, tell me the truth!" boomed the Head.

Bunter's fat knees knocked together. If he had thought of owning up—which he hadn't—that awful voice would have driven the idea from his fat brain.

"Yes, sir—certainly, sir! I—I always tell the truth, sir. Ask any fellow in the Remove, sir! I—I went over to Highcliffe to—to see a friend, sir. But he wasn't there, so I came away again."

"You have just stated that you went nowhere near Highcliffe at all!"

"D-d-d-did I, sir?"

"You did!" boomed the Head. "What do you mean by it, Bunter? What did you mean by that statement?"

"I—I—it was a—a figure of speech, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I really meant to say that—that I had been there, sir."

"Bless my soul! What an extraordinary boy!" ejaculated the Head. "What a very extraordinary boy indeed!"

"Bunter is uncommonly stupid, sir," said Steele. "At the present moment he appears a little nervous—"

"Quite so, quite so! Bunter, you have nothing to fear if you tell me the truth! Calm yourself! Did you enter the headmaster's study at Highcliffe?"

"Oh, no! No, sir!"

If this was diplomacy, the distinction between diplomacy and lying was not very strongly marked in Bunter's fat mind.

"You are sure of that, Bunter?"

"Oh, quite, sir! I wouldn't I don't even know where the headmaster's study is at Highcliffe, sir. I couldn't find it if I tried."

"Did you take anything away with you when you left?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"Did you see anything of a—a snuff-box?"

"I never even heard of it, sir."

"Dr. Voysey believes, for some reason that you were in his study this afternoon, Bunter. How do you account for that?"

"Well, sir, Dr. Voysey's well known to be a silly old ass—"

"What? What?"

"Doddering, sir, in fact," said Bunter.

"I've heard Highcliffe fellows wonder

why the governors don't sack him, sir, he's so old and doddering."

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head, while Mr. Steele turned his face away perhaps to hide his emotions. "Bunter! Bunter! How dare you make such remarks about Dr. Voysey?"

"But you asked me, sir," said Bunter.

"You see, sir—"

"You know nothing of a—a snuff-box that appears to have been abstracted from Dr. Voysey's study at Highcliffe?"

"Nothing at all, sir! Perhaps Ponsoby took it," suggested Bunter.

"He's that sort of fellow, I fancy."

"Nonsense, nonsense! I must go over to Highcliffe, and take you with me, Bunter. Dr. Voysey has the extraordinary impression that—the snuffbox is now in your possession. He demands to see you; in fact, he has stated that the police are in charge of the matter. Go and get your coat and hat at once."

Bunter quaked.

"If—if you please, sir—" he babbled.

"What? What?"

"I—I—I'd rather not go over to Highcliffe, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've got some lines to do for Mr. Steele, sir—"

"Silence!"

"And—and there's prep, sir—"

"Leave my study!" snapped the Head, in a voice that made Bunter jump. And the Owl of the Remove left.

"Mr. Steele, I am sure there is nothing in this, but I must look into it at once," said the Head. "A most extraordinary and disturbing occurrence—very disturbing indeed! Perhaps you will kindly tell Barnes to bring the car round."

Ten minutes later Dr. Locke and William George Bunter stepped into the car, and Barnes drove away from Greyfriars.

Bunter sat in his corner, in the car, in a state of quaking trepidation. He had not foreseen that he would be taken over to Highcliffe—it was not Bunter's way to foresee anything.

What was going to happen when he got there he did not know; but he had an apprehension that it was going to be something unpleasant.

He even wondered whether he would not have done better to speak the truth for once, and leave diplomacy alone.

But it was too late for that now.

He blinked several times uneasily at the Head, Dr. Locke sat bolt upright, with a grim face. Obviously, there was a lieing for Bunter if he told the facts now! And Bunter had a constitutional disinclination for telling the truth, anyhow. So he still nourished a faint hope that diplomacy would pull him through.

The run was a swift one. In quite a short time—much shorter than Bunter liked—the car reached Highcliffe.

Many eyes were turned on the Greyfriars headmaster, and Billy Bunter, as they were shown in to Dr. Voysey.

Barnes, while he waited, strolled away to the porter's lodge, and had a chat with the porter. That official gave him a graphic account of what was going on at Highcliffe; to which Barnes listened with interest. And his interest in the Louis Quinze snuffbox was so keen that the Highcliffe porter enlarged upon the subject, giving a full and detailed description of that valuable article; which passed the time very pleasantly for Barnes while he was waiting for his master.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery!

THE meeting of the two headmasters, in Dr. Voysey's study, was formally polite. They seldom met, except on account of some trouble cropping up between the boys of the two schools; and there was, perhaps, little love lost between them. Dr. Voysey had a fixed conviction that Highcliffe was, in every way, an establishment of a higher tone than that prevailing at Greyfriars; and Dr. Locke, at the bottom of his heart, had an opinion of the Highcliffe headmaster that tallied with Billy Bunter's disrespectful description of him. But the manners of the two old gentlemen, of course, were irreproachably courteous, though somewhat frosty.

"I regret—I regret extremely this unfortunate occurrence, and the trouble it has given you, sir," remarked Dr. Voysey, when the Head of Greyfriars was seated. "But in the circumstances—"

"Quite so!" assented Dr. Locke.

"But—"

"My first impression was that there had been a burglary here, in broad daylight. I sent for Inspector Grimes. Finding, however, that a Greyfriars boy had committed the theft—"

"Sir!"

"I dismissed Mr. Grimes," said the Head of Highcliffe. "I have no desire to place the matter in the hands of the police if my property can be recovered by less—less drastic methods. The thief is here!" he added, turning his spectacles on Billy Bunter. "If he has brought the article back with him, I see no occasion to make a public scandal. I am prepared to leave it in your hands, sir, to deal with the young rascal as you think fit."

"I am much obliged to you, sir," said Dr. Locke, with grim dignity. "But this boy denies all knowledge of your property; and I do not admit for one moment that any Greyfriars boy is capable of dishonesty."

"Dear me!" said Dr. Voysey, blinking at him. "I thought I had explained the matter fully on the telephone—quite fully."

"You have explained to me, sir, that a certain article is missing, and that you suspect Bunter. You must allow me to decline to permit you to act as judge and jury combined in this matter."

"My dear sir if you take that tone, I—"

"Most emphatically sir!"

"I am prepared of course, to let the matter go before a magistrate," said Dr. Voysey. "From consideration for your feelings, sir, I thought of avoiding a scandal."

"You need not consider my feelings in the matter at all, sir. I am of opinion that you are taking too much—altogether too much—of granted. I do not believe for one moment that this boy purloined anything here. Not for one moment, sir!"

"Dear me! Dear me!" said Dr. Voysey. "This makes the matter more difficult! Perhaps I should not have dismissed Mr. Grimes so soon. The boy has not, then, confessed?"

"Certainly he has not."

"A hardened young reprobate," said Dr. Voysey, blinking at Bunter.

"Evidently a very hardened young reprobate. The facts admit of no discussion, sir. The boy was in this study; he escaped by the window; and the room was entered. A valuable article,

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Read this week's

"GEM"

It's good!

sir—a Louis Quinze snuffbox, once the property of the Regent Orleans——"

"On what evidence, sir, do you state that Bunter was in this study?"

"On the evidence of a Highcliffe boy, Ponsonby of the Fourth Form here," said Dr. Voysey. "It appears that Bunter came here this afternoon, for what purpose I do not know and Ponsonby, in a spirit of foolish practical joking, pushed him into this study and locked the door on him. This, of course, would never have come to my knowledge; but, learning of my loss, Ponsonby felt it his duty to acquaint me with the fact that Bunter had been here—very properly."

"The charge then, rests on Ponsonby's statement?"

"Bunter will scarcely deny it, I think."

"Bunter does deny it!"

"Dear me! Dear me! Then I will send for Ponsonby, and you shall hear his statement with your own ears, sir."

Dr. Voysey rang, and Ponsonby was sent for.

He arrived very quickly—perhaps having been not far away. The dandy of Highcliffe came into the study with a properly serious expression upon his face. Dr. Voysey blinked at him.

"This is Dr. Locke, Ponsonby! He desires to hear the statement you made to me regarding the boy Bunter."

"Yes, sir," said Ponsonby. "I'm very sorry, sir, that I played a practical joke in your study, sir! I know it was very thoughtless——"

"Yes, yes; that is taken for granted, my boy," said Dr. Voysey. "In other circumstances, I should certainly have punished you very severely for such a prank—such a disrespectful, and unthinking prank. But in the present circumstances that is trifling; indeed, I thank you for having come forward and enlightened me as to the facts of the matter. Tell Dr. Locke what you know, Ponsonby."

"Very well, sir!" Ponsonby turned to the Greyfriars headmaster. "Bunter came here this afternoon, sir, and for a lark I pushed him into this study, and shut him in. I'm sorry, sir. That's all I can say. But, of course, I had no idea that he would steal anything."

"You left him in this study?"

"I did, sir."

"Locked in?"

"Yes, sir. I took away the key, and—lost it by accident. Dr. Voysey opened the door with another key, and that, I suppose, gave Bunter time to escape with the snuffbox." Ponsonby looked very penitent. "I feel I'm very much to blame, sir. If I'd only known that there were thieves at Greyfriars, of course, I shouldn't——"

"That is not a proper remark, Ponsonby," said Dr. Voysey. "Be silent!"

"Very well, sir."

"I decline to accept any statement made by this boy Ponsonby," said Dr. Locke. "On other occasions, I have known him to speak with deliberate and malicious falsehood."

Ponsonby coloured.

"Two other boys, sir, saw the incident," said Dr. Voysey stiffly. "Two boys named Gadsby and Vavasour. I have questioned them, and they bear out Ponsonby's statement."

"Surely, sir, Bunter doesn't deny having been in the study?" said Ponsonby in astonishment. Like many untruthful persons Pon was surprised and shocked by untruthfulness in others.

"I jolly well do!" said Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Ponsonby involuntarily. "Why you frightful fibber——"

"Oh, really, Ponsonby——"

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"Silence!" exclaimed Dr. Voysey. "Silence, both of you! Dr. Locke, this places me in a very awkward and difficult position. Three Highcliffe boys declare that Bunter was in the study this——"

"They never tell the truth at Highcliffe, sir," said Bunter. "They can't! Pon's an awful liar, sir! Ain't you, Pon?"

"You fat freak——"

"Silence! Dr. Locke, I leave it to you to have this boy Bunter searched, and any receptacle he may possess at Greyfriars searched, when I have no doubt that the snuffbox will be found. If it be restored, the matter ends, as far as I am concerned. I desire no scandal——"

Dr. Locke turned a troubled glance on Bunter.

As a matter of fact, low as his opinion of Ponsonby was, he had an impression that Pon was stating the facts this time.

Bunter's eyes were fixed on the waste-paper basket under Dr. Voysey's writing-table. It was three-parts full of waste paper, and there was no doubt that the famous snuffbox still reposed beneath those torn and crumpled papers.

"Bunter," said Dr. Locke, "give me your attention!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" said Bunter, detaching his eyes from the waste-paper basket.

"Before this matter goes further, Bunter, and takes a very serious turn, have you anything to tell me, or to tell Dr. Voysey?"

"Oh, no, sir! Only that I'm innocent, sir!" said Bunter. "I don't know anything about the snuffbox, sir. I don't believe it's been taken away at all, sir."

"What?" gasped the Head of Highcliffe.

"Bunter, do you dare to controvert Dr. Voysey's statement? Are you out of your senses?"

"Nunno, sir! But——"

"What do you mean then?"

"Well, sir, suppose some fellow hid it for a lark?" argued Bunter. "A fellow might have done it, to pull the Beak's leg, sir—just to see him raising Cain, sir!"

Dr. Voysey bestowed a glance of strong disfavour on Bunter.

"If the wretched boy means, by this extraordinary language, that some Highcliffe boy may have extracted the snuffbox for a practical joke, the statement is ridiculous!" he snapped.

"I think it's very likely, sir," said Bunter, "very likely indeed, sir. I shouldn't wonder if it's hidden in this very room at this very minute, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"It is at least possible!" said Dr. Locke thoughtfully.

"I regard the suggestion as utterly absurd, sir!"

"Bunter, have you any reason to suppose that some such trick may have been played, or are you speaking at random?"

"I—I think it's very likely, sir," argued Bunter. "I—I think some fellow might have shoved it, glass case and all, into the waste-paper basket, sir! I—I think it's very likely!"

"Absurd!" snapped Dr. Voysey.

Dr. Locke gave Bunter a very penetrating look. He had already observed the fat junior's eyes wandering incessantly to that waste-paper basket.

"The suggestion is worthy, at least, of investigation, sir," said Dr. Locke. "Has a search been made in this school?"

"Certainly not, when it is obvious

that the article has been taken out of the school."

"I—I'm sure it hasn't, sir," stammered Bunter. "I—I feel sure it's hidden about the place somewhere. I—I shouldn't wonder if—if it's in that very waste-paper basket under your table, sir."

"I decline to listen to such nonsense!" said Dr. Voysey stiffly. "Dr. Locke, if we cannot come to agreement on this matter, I can only place it in official hands."

Bunter quaked.

"I—I say, sir, I—I feel sure that—that it's about the place somewhere!" he gasped. "Shall I—shall I turn that waste-paper basket out, sir, and—and see?"

"Silence!"

"But I really think, sir——"

"I will telephone to the police station," said Dr. Voysey. "I will request Mr. Grimes to send a constable here——"

"Oh, crikey!"

Dr. Voysey stretched out his hand to the telephone receiver.

Billy Bunter stretched out his foot to the waste-paper basket.

Crash!

The waste-paper basket rolled over under Bunter's kick. Crumpled papers tumbled out on to the floor, to an accompaniment of the sound of breaking glass.

Ponsonby jumped. Dr. Locke stared. Dr. Voysey leaped to his feet in amazement.

On the floor, under all their eyes, amid crumpled papers and broken fragments of the glass case, lay the Louis Quinze snuffbox.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Sympathetic!

"BYRON——" said the Caterpillar thoughtfully.

"Eh, what?"

Frank Courtenay glanced at his chum absently.

The captain of the Highcliffe Fourth was looking worried and troubled. The Caterpillar's remark interrupted his thoughts—which, to judge by his looks, were not pleasant.

"Byron——" repeated the Caterpillar imperturbably.

He was lounging gracefully in an armchair, with his feet on another chair, and his hands behind his head—a picture of careless laziness. Courtenay looked at him rather reproachfully.

"What about Byron, you ass? I'm feeling worried!"

"Same here!" answered the Caterpillar. "I share your feelin's to the full, owin' to my sympathetic nature. But I was goin' to remark that Byron, in——"

"Bother Byron!"

"My dear man," remonstrated the Caterpillar gently, "you're generally much more willin' to discuss the jolly old poets and other such brainy products than I am. Now I bring up the subject of my own accord, and you shoo me off ruthlessly. You don't want to hear what I was goin' to say about George?"

"George?" repeated Courtenay.

"Wasn't his name George?" yawned the Caterpillar. "Anyhow, I was goin' to say that Byron, in one of the remarkable productions that our innocent ancestors took for poetry, because he told them it was, made the remark, 'There was a sound of revelry by night.'"

"Well?"

"Well, history is said to repeat itself," said the Caterpillar. "History is repeatin' itself at the present moment. There is a sound of revelry by night. And if you weren't plunged so deep in

the throes of glum and gloomy meditation you'd have noticed it."

Courtenay started a little and listened. There certainly was a sound from the passage outside, though it could hardly be said to be of revelry.

It was the voice of Cecil Ponsonby of the Highcliffe Fourth, raised in woe and lamentation and wrath.

Pon, apparently, had been suffering for his sins; and he was groaning, complaining, and—not to put too fine a point on it—fuming. That was one of the elegant Pon's little ways when he was annoyed. It was only necessary to scratch Pon's elegance to discover the hooligan underneath.

"What on earth's the matter with the fellow!" asked Courtenay. "Sounds as if he's been through it."

Ponsonby was the centre of the group; and his friends, Gadsby, Vavasour, Monson, Drury, Merton, and the rest, were listening to him—some of them trying to soothe him.

But Pon did not seem easy to soothe. His face was crimson his eyes bright with anger, and he wriggled in a way that hinted of a recent application of a cane in a vigorous hand.

Obviously Pon had been through it.

Courtenay looked at him from the study doorway. But the Caterpillar lounged gracefully along the passage to the group, assuming an expression of the deepest sympathy as he approached Ponsonby. In return for which Pon gave him a savage scowl.

"May a man ask what's been happenin'?" inquired the Caterpillar. "Am I

"No, you ass!" said Gadsby, laughing. "The Head's snuffbox has been found, I was going to say. That fat blighter Bunter never pinched it, after all. Pon told the old man he had—"

"You silly dummy!" snarled Pon. "Wasn't it as clear as daylight? You fellows agreed that it was, and agreed that I'd better go and tell the Head that Bunter was in his study."

"Yes, that's so; but, of course, we believed that Bunter had had it. Who'd have thought that the fat idiot hid it in the Old Man's own waste-paper basket for a fatheaded lark?"

"Oh, my hat! Did he?" ejaculated the Caterpillar.

"Well, that's what it looks like," said Monson. "Pon told the Head about



The waste-paper basket rolled over under Bunter's kick, and the Quinze snuffbox was revealed among the scattered papers!

"Let's go and see," said the Caterpillar, detaching himself from the armchair. "I've been sympathisin' with you, Franky, for a long time—"

"You've been asleep, I believe."

"I sympathise better with my eyes shut," explained the Caterpillar urbanely. "Silent sympathy is my long suit. Havin' sympathised with you silently, I'm goin' to sympathise with Pon audibly; my sympathetic nature is far from bein' exhausted. Let's go an' see what's the matter with Pon."

"I'm not curious!" grunted Courtenay.

"But I am, old bean. My besettin' sin," said the Caterpillar gently. "I'm simply burnin' with curiosity at the present moment. Besides, I think that dear old Pon may have come a mucker in his latest stunt, to judge by the delightful sounds that he's utterin', and the sad fact that he's talkin' like a bargee. And if that's the case, it may lift that cloud of disconsolate disquietude from your baby brow. What?"

"Oh!" said Courtenay.

He opened the door of the study and stepped into the passage. The Caterpillar smiled and followed him out.

Farther along the passage was a group of the nuts of the Highcliffe Fourth.

right in supposin' that you've had a lickin', old bean?"

"Find out!" snarled Ponsonby.

"That's why I'm askin'. Who's the wicked persecutor?" asked the Caterpillar. "Not Mobby? Our dear old Form master wouldn't lick his Pon; he'd never get asked to Ponsonby Place again if he did! Has the Head so far forgotten himself as to wallop our Pon? Tell me, you men; I'm eager to join the indignation meetin'."

"It's the Head," said Gadsby. "Poor old Pon put his foot in it bad."

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

Ponsonby snarled out a word or two which would have caused even Mr. Mobbs to cane him had that gentleman been within hearing.

"Dear man," said the Caterpillar gently. "I understand your feelin'; I've been there myself. But swearin' won't catch you any fish—and it's doocid ungentlemanly. Give it a miss, Pon, for the sake of my innocent young ears."

"Yes, it's no good cursin', old man," said Gadsby, shaking his head. "You put your foot in it—"

"In what?" asked the Caterpillar.

"The Head's snuffbox—"

"Pon put his foot in the Head's snuffbox?"

Bunter bein' there, and was let off, you know, because the Old Man was so pleased to get on the track of his jolly old snuffbox. Then the Greyfriars Beak brought Bunter over here, and the old man was goin' to call in a bobby for him, when Bunter kicked over the waste-paper basket—and there was the blinkin' snuffbox."

The Caterpillar chuckled.

"Of course, Bunter must have put it there before he skedaddled out of the window this afternoon," said Drury. "He didn't own up, did he, Pon?"

"No!" snarled Pon. "I fancy his headmaster saw how it was, though; and Bunter will hear of it at Greyfriars."

"And the Old Man looked quite sick, Pon says," went on Gadsby. "After all the frightful fuss he'd made, to find the thing in his own study, you know! Of course, he was glad to get it back; but he looked sick about it—and no wonder! Apologised no end to old Locke; took back all he'd said about Bunter, and—"

"And took it out of Pon?" asked the Caterpillar.

"Just that!"

"The blighted old fossil!" said Ponsonby. "He'd let me off once for ragging Bunter in the study; but after they were gone he wanted somebody to lick! He was feelin' like that, an' I got it. Gave me ten solid minutes' jaw about it—pushin' a fellow into my headmaster's study, an' all that, and takin' away the key and losin' it. I wouldn't have minded the jaw, but—"

Ponsonby wriggled painfully. "Thus bad begins, but worse remains behind, as jolly old Shakespeare remarks," said Caterpillar gravely.

"The old ruffian gave me a dozen," said Ponsonby. "Tough, too. I never knew the old fossil had so much muscle. It fairly made me squirm. Just for shoving Bunter into his study, and lockin' him in—and he'd never have known if I hadn't told him. Of course, he was really lickin' me because he'd made a fool of himself to the Greyfriars Beak. Ow, ow! Oh crumbs! I shan't be able to sit down till tomorrow!"

"My deepest sympathy, old bean!" said the Caterpillar. "You might have done better to hold your tongue, after all. But that's rather a weakness of yours, Pon; you never can hold your tongue when you think there's a chance of doin' mischief by waggin' it, can you?"

Pon gave him an evil look. "I thought Bunter had had it—so did these fellows!" he snarled.

"A suspicious mind, Pon!" said the Caterpillar, shaking his head. "If you hadn't been blinded by the charitable desire to have somethin' nasty to chuck at Greyfriars, you wouldn't have thought so! Let this be a warnin' to you, my young friend."

"Oh, shut up, you idiot!" "I'm speakin' for your good, dear man. Didn't I tell you that Bunter wouldn't take anythin' he couldn't eat? And, not bein' an ostrich, he couldn't eat a snuffbox!"

"The Caterpillar said from the first that some chap had hidden it for a lark," said Monson, with a nod. "He was right, as it turns out."

"Dear men, you'll find I am always right," said the Caterpillar. "This is what comes of bein' the only brainy man in the Form. But I think Pon

would have guessed it if he hadn't been so jolly keen to score off Greyfriars. I think the Old Man made a mistake in givin' you a dozen, Pon." The Caterpillar shook his head. "He should have made it two dozen!"

Some of the juniors grinned; and Ponsonby gave the Caterpillar a deadly scowl.

"You cacklin' rotter!" he snarled. "I've a jolly good mind to mop up the passage with you!"

"Don't, old bean!" said the Caterpillar, in alarm. "In your present wild an' whirlin' mood, you terrify me!"

The Caterpillar backed away hastily. That was enough for Pon. In his present state of temper he wanted to wreak his rage on somebody. As the Caterpillar retreated, the dandy of the Fourth made a rush at him.

"Here, Pon, chuck it!" exclaimed Gadsby.

"Mind your own bizney!" snarled Ponsonby. "Get out of the way, hang you!"

De Courcy dodged behind Gadsby. Taking that youth by the arms, from behind, he held him out as a shield against Pon.

"Here, hold on!" gasped Gadsby, as he narrowly escaped Pon's first furious drive.

"I'm holdin' on," said the Caterpillar. "Keep between us, old bean; I'm scared! Tremblin', in fact! You don't mind lettin' a pal tremble behind you, do you, while Pon's in this ragin' state?"

"Yaroo!" roared Gadsby, as Pon's next punch, intended for the Caterpillar, caught him on the chin. "Ow! Leggo, you ass!"

"That's all right—you're keepin' him off fine!" said the Caterpillar. "Stand to it, old bean! You see, your features can't be altered for the worse, and mine can."

"You cheeky ass—"

Gadsby wrenched himself away, and Ponsonby jumped at the Caterpillar. The next moment he was locked in De Courcy's arms; and suddenly, Pon hardly knew how, his heels flew into the air, and he was lying on the floor, gasping for breath, and staring dizzily up at De Courcy's smiling face.

"A simple wrestlin' trick, my

beloved 'erars!" said the Caterpillar. "It's all right, Pon—you haven't damaged the floor; it's harder than your head, though of similar material. Did you see how that was done, Gaddy? I'll show you if you like."

"You jolly well won't!" said Gaddy, jumping away.

"Shall I show you, Monson?" Monson backed away without answering.

"No takers?" asked the Caterpillar. "What about you, Pon? Jump up and have another go?"

Ponsonby, instead of jumping up, poured out a stream of savage words from where he lay. Evidently he did not want another "go."

The Caterpillar ambled gently back to his study.

"All serene, Franky," he remarked. "Pon hasn't brought it off; and you can unknit your brows, an' smile again! That's right; you're almost good-lookin', old bean, when you smile. Pon's got it—not where the chicken got the chopper, but—as they say in the House of Chin-wag—in Another Place, And he's not even grateful for sympathy. He's not grateful to me for showin' him clever wrestlin' stunts. It's an ungrateful world, Franky." The Caterpillar yawned. "Are you goin' to do any prep?"

"Yes, of course; and you—"

"Not little me. I'm goin' to tell Mobby in the mornin' that my uncle the marquis asked after his health. It's easier."

Courtenay laughed, and sat down to work, with a face quite cheerful now. The Caterpillar sat in the armchair and watched him—which was very frequently the way prep was done in that study. And in the Head's study, the "Old Man" was regarding his Louis Quinze snuffbox with relief and satisfaction in its old place on the cabinet—and little dreaming for how short a space of time it was destined to remain there!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Not Believed!

BILLY BUNTER grinned as Barnes drove the Head's car back to Greyfriars.

He could not help grinning. He would have chuckled aloud but for the majestic presence of his headmaster.

The matter had turned out in a perfectly satisfactory manner, so far as William George Bunter was concerned.

Really, it had been a brain-wave on Bunter's part, to kick over the waste-paper basket and reveal the hidden snuffbox.

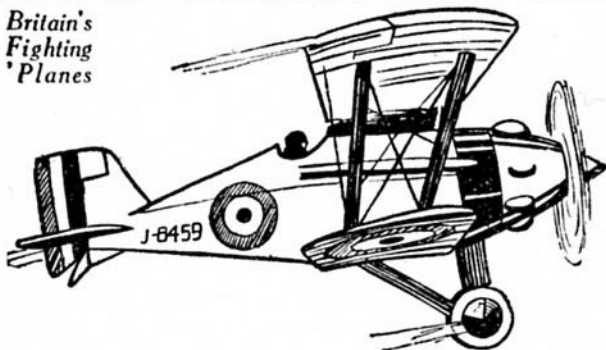
Bunter was conscious at all times of being a very clever fellow, but he had never been so pleased with his cleverness as he was now.

It had been demonstrated that the missing snuffbox had been in the study all the time. Old Dr. Voysey had been made to look an absolute, complete ass! That served him right, in Bunter's opinion. Perhaps he guessed that Bunter had hidden the snuffbox.

Bunter did not care about that. So long as his own headmaster did not guess, it was all right. When the visitors took their leave, Dr. Voysey had told Ponsonby to remain. Bunter could guess what he was to remain for. So, from all points of view, the matter had ended satisfactorily.

So Bunter grinned. Dr. Locke did not speak a single word during the drive back to Greyfriars. Bunter, stealing a blink every now and then at his face, could read nothing there. No doubt the Beak supposed

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that some Highcliffe fellow had hidden that snuffbox. Anyhow, Bunter was prepared to resort to diplomacy to any extent if the Beak questioned him. He was feeling that all was calm and bright by the time they arrived at Greyfriars.

"You will follow me to my study, Bunter," said the Head quietly, as Barnes drove the car away to the garage.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

He followed the Head with some diminution of his satisfaction.

In the study, Dr. Locke fixed his eyes searchingly on Bunter.

"Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir! It wasn't me!"

"This painful affair is, fortunately, at an end, and the charge of theft withdrawn," said the Head. "A charge that certainly ought never to have been brought; but Dr. Voysey's apology closes that matter. But—"

"Yes, sir, mum-mum-may I go now, sir?"

"You may not, Bunter! It appears to me very singular, Bunter, that you knew where the snuffbox was hidden."

"D-d-does it, sir?"

"It does, Bunter. How did you know?"

"You—you see, sir, I—I—I—"

"Did you place it there, Bunter?" asked the Head, in a deep voice.

"Certainly not, sir! I—I never touched it, sir! I never knew there was a snuffbox in the study at all, sir! I never saw it standing on the cabinet, sir!"

"How did you know that it was kept standing on a cabinet, Bunter, if you had never been in the study, as you informed me?"

"I—I—I didn't know, sir!" gasped Bunter, in alarm. "I—I hadn't the faintest idea, sir! Mum-may I go now, sir?"

"From your discovery of the hiding-place of the snuffbox, Bunter, it appears to me that you must have placed it where it was found. If not, how did you guess that it was there?"

"I—I—I'm rather clever, sir—"

"Bless my soul! Bunter, I command you to tell me the truth at once," exclaimed Dr. Locke.

"I—I think very likely Pon put it there, sir!" said Bunter cautiously. "Ponsonby's always playing tricks. Just like a monkey! I certainly never saw it before, never even heard it mentioned. I never heard what Dr. Voysey said to Mr. Mobbs when they came to the door. I couldn't, through the door, sir. Impossible!"

Dr. Locke gazed at Bunter.

"Then you were in that study, Bunter, when Dr. Voysey and Mr. Mobbs came to the door?"

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all!"

"Then how could you have heard what they said through the door?"

"I—I've just said I didn't, sir! Not a word! Old Voysey—I mean Dr. Voysey—just mumbles, sir! Nobody could have heard what he said, through that door. I never heard him mention the snuffbox, or say that he thought the Courtfield cracksman had been after it. I—I hope you can take my word, sir!"

"Take your word!" said the Head, almost dazedly.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Steele will tell you that I'm the most truthful fellow in the Remove. He has often praised me for it, sir, just like old Quelch—I mean Mr. Quelch, used to. I wasn't there, sir, when they came to the door, and never heard them talking about the snuffbox. Not a word. Besides, it was all Ponsonby's fault. I think his headmaster ought to cane him, sir, for—"

"For what?"

"Oh! Nothing, sir!"

"It is clear to me now, Bunter, that you were in Dr. Voysey's study, and that Ponsonby's statement that he locked you in was correct."

"Oh! No, sir! Not at all! I wasn't there! Besides, who could a fellow do when that beast took the key away, sir?"

"It is also clear to me, Bunter, that you hid Dr. Voysey's snuffbox in the waste-paper basket."

"Oh dear! I—I assure you, sir—"

"Why did you not admit this, Bunter, when I questioned you before going to Highcliffe?"

"I—I thought you'd be waxy, sir—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I never did it, sir! I—I couldn't admit it when I never did it, sir. That wouldn't have been truthful."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "I really hardly know how to deal with this boy!"

"Yes, sir! Mum-mum-may I go now?" asked Bunter anxiously. "I—I'm afraid I'm wasting your valuable time, sir!"

"There is a cane on my desk, Bunter."

"Is—is—is there, sir?" gasped Bunter.

"You may hand it to me, Bunter!"

"Wha-a at for, sir?" stuttered Bunter.

"What! To punish you, Bunter, for

How's this for a
**CLEVER GREYFRIARS
 LIMERICK?**
 A valiant young boxer named
 Russell
 Is the winner of many a tussle.
 And the fags in the Third
 Pay a "tanner," I've heard,
 For the pleasure of feeling his
 muscle!

Arthur Potts, c/o Mrs. Shaw,
 8, Turncroft Lane, Stockport,
 Cheshire, has been awarded a
 useful leather pocket wallet for the
 above winning effort. Pile in with
 your limericks, chums—there are
 more wallets waiting to be won!

causing so much trouble and unpleasantness by your reckless disregard for the truth," said Dr. Locke sternly. "Hand me that cane at once!"

"Oh lor!"

Bunter unwillingly fetched the cane. Dr. Locke swished it in the air with a sound that was distinctly disagreeable to Bunter's ears. Then he pointed with it to a chair.

"You will bend over that chair, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey! I—I assure you, sir, I—I never did it, sir! I shouldn't have been in the study at all if that beast Ponsonby hadn't pitched me in head first! And I was going to tell you all about it, sir, only I thought you'd be waxy! And—and I wasn't there, sir! I—I hope you believe me, sir!"

The Head gasped.

"Bunter! Bend over that chair at once!"

"Oh lor!"

Bunter bent over the chair.

Six times the Head's cane rose and fell. Six times the voice of William George Bunter was raised on its top note. It lasted only a few moments, but for those few moments, the Eull of Bashan, celebrated for his roaring, had nothing on Bunter.

"Bless my soul! Cease that ridiculous noise at once, Bunter!" gasped the Head.

"Yaroooh! Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"Bunter—"

"Whooop! Yoooop! Moooooooh!"

"Bunter. I shall cane you again, if you utter another sound," exclaimed the exasperated Head. "Leave my study at once."

Bunter contrived not to make another sound before he left the Head's study.

He indemnified himself when he reached the Remove passage, however.

"Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" was the sound that announced Bunter's arrival there. "Ow-ow-ow! Wow-wow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Licked?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Was the lickfulness terrific, my esteemed Bunter?"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Evidently the lickfulness had been terrific. Bunter tottered into Study No. 7, and collapsed into the armchair. He reposed there for about a millionth part of a second, and then jumped up with a howl. Bunter stood up to the table for prep. that evening. Bunter, as a rule could stand sitting, any amount of it. Now he preferred to sit!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

Two in the Dark I

"PAUSE in time, my dear, but errin' friend."

The Caterpillar's voice was quite soft, but it had a startling effect on the silence of the Fourth Form dormitory at Highcliffe.

Ponsonby jumped.

He was half dressed and sitting on his bed, putting on a pair of rubber shoes in the dark. He stared across in the shadowy gloom towards the Caterpillar. "You awake, you rotter?" he said.

De Courcy sat up in bed.

"Wide awake, Pon! Sleepy, but wide-awake enough to utter a word of warnin'! Pause in time, my young friend, reflect on the error of your ways, and go back to bed and sleep the sleep of the just."

"You silly ass!"

A sleepy voice came from Gadsby's bed.

"That you, Pon? Goin' out?"

"No!" growled Pon. "Shut your eyes and your head, and go to sleep."

"You're jolly civil!" yawned Gadsby. "Dry up!"

"But if you're not goin' out, what are you gettin' up for?" asked Gadsby. "If it's a run down to the Three Fishers, I'm game."

"It isn't! You silly owl, it's past midnight, too late for the Three Fishers, or anywhere else."

"Then what's the game?"

"Nothin'!"

"Oh, keep it to yourself, if you like," grunted Gadsby. And he turned over sulkily, to go to sleep again.

"You still awake, De Courcy?" sneered Ponsonby. "I suppose you can mind your own bizney?"

"My dear man! I can not only mind my own, but yours, too!" said the Caterpillar. "Give it a miss, Pon! Seriously, old bean, it's not good enough. I know you're not goin' out on the tiles at this time of night, or rather mornin', or I wouldn't interfere. Pluck-in' a brand from the burnin' is not my long suit. But—"

"Well, shut up!"

"You don't want sage advice from an elder?" sighed the Caterpillar.

"I don't want anythin' from you."

"Go it, then!" said the Caterpillar.

"A wilful man must have his way; and the same applies to asses. But—"

"I'm simply goin' to stroll about a

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bit, because I can't sleep," said Ponsonby savagely.

"Oh, quite!" murmured the Caterpillar. "That lickin' has made you rather restive, naturally. But you're rather an ass, Pon! After all, you deserved the lickin'! And Beaks are rather dangerous animals to play tricks on!"

"Who's goin' to play a trick on a Beak, you fool?"

"Aren't you?" yawned the Caterpillar.

"No, you idiot!"

"My mistake! I really thought that you were feelin' so sore an' savage about that lickin' that you were thinkin' of takin' it out of the Old Man."

"You burblin' chump, how could I take it out of the Old Man?" muttered Ponsonby, uneasily. "You can't get back on a Beak."

"Oh, there are ways and means," said the Caterpillar airily. "A fellow might get on the roof and drop a bundle of squibs down his chimney—"

"You howlin' ass!"

"Or he might sit under his window and yowl like a cat—"

"You blithering fathead!"

"Or he might sneak into his study and bung his Louis Quinze snuffbox into some place where he couldn't find it—"

Ponsonby started.

"You—you rotter! What's put that into your head? Of course, I'm not thinkin' of doin' anythin' of the kind."

The Caterpillar chuckled sleepily.

"You crass ass!" he said. "Don't you know you're as transparent as a sheet of glass? You've been cursin' and mutterin' revenge all the evenin', and if I'd been a bettin' man—which I'm not since I've enjoyed Franky's improvin' friendship—I'd have betted ten to one in ponies that you had a scheme up your sleeve for makin' the Old Man writhe. And havin' seen him writthin' to-day over the loss of his Louis Quinze nosebag, there was a stunt for you all ready made—savin' you the trouble of thinkin'—which is a fearful trouble for a fellow with an intellect like yours. Pon, old bean, own up."

"Go and eat coke!"

"What I mean is that the Old Man will probably tumble," explained the Caterpillar. "Where will you be then?"

"As I'm not thinkin' of anythin' of the kind, of course that doesn't concern me."

The Caterpillar sighed.

"Well, I've said my piece," he remarked. "When you're ratty, Pon, you lose your usual caution. I thought I'd warn you."

"Thank you for nothin'."

"Right!" murmured the Caterpillar, and he laid his head on the pillow again and closed his eyes indifferently.

Ponsonby scowled in the darkness and crept away to the dormitory door. His face was white and set and savage.

The Caterpillar had divined his intention easily enough, but Ponsonby was not to be warned.

All the bitterness and evil in his nature—and there was a good deal of both—had been roused by the punishment Dr. Voysey had handed out. It was very seldom that Pon was punished—his Form master would never have dreamed of caning his dear Ponsonby, and he seldom came in contact with the Head—and even the Head was not insensible to the influence of Pon's aristocratic connections. Punishment—especially a severe punishment—came as a surprise to Pon, and stirred him to bitterness and revenge.

He had been thrashed—by a dashed schoolmaster! The lofty and supercilious Pon, in his disdain for the world in general, regarded a schoolmaster as a

sort of upper servant; indeed, he almost openly treated Mr. Mobbs as one. Pon was not to be thrashed by a dashed schoolmaster, with impunity.

He crept away silently from the dormitory in his rubber shoes.

There was an easy way of "getting back" on the Old Man; what had happened that day, showed how deeply the old gentleman took to heart anything affecting that priceless possession, the Louis Quinze snuffbox.

The Caterpillar guessed that Pon intended to conceal the article, as Bunter had done—which certainly would have had the effect of "getting back" on the "dashed schoolmaster." But the Caterpillar, keen as he was, did not guess Pon's whole intention. Well as he knew the blackguard of Highcliffe, he had not plumbed the depths of Ponsonby's blackguardism. It was Pon's intention not to hide the snuffbox, but to stamp on it. With all his elegant manners and customs, Pon was a hooligan at heart, and very little was required to bring his hooliganism to the surface.

Pon's eyes glistened, as he crept silently down the stairs in the darkness.

That he was going to do irreparable damage to an article of not only intrinsic, but of historical value, did not matter a straw to Pon. All he was thinking of, was his revenge on the master who had punished him.

The Caterpillar knew—and Gadsby would guess—but they would not betray him. He felt safe enough—but he was not giving much thought to that. As the Caterpillar had remarked, when he was ratty, he was liable to lose his caution. And he was ratty now with a vengeance—burning with resentment for his punishment and humiliation.

Silently, with set face, Ponsonby threaded his way by dark stairs and shadowy passages.

He reached the headmaster's study at last.

He knew that the famous snuffbox had been left standing on the cabinet; without a glass case for the present. He had only to enter the room, carry out his rascally project, and steal back to the dormitory afterwards. In the morning there would be a fearful row; which Pon looked forward to with relish.

In the darkness, he groped over the door. Study doors were often locked at night; but the "Old Man" never locked his—if he ever intended to do so, he forgot. But Pon was rather surprised to find the door standing open. Even the "doddering" headmaster of Highcliffe was not accustomed to leaving it open.

Pon stepped silently into the study.

The blinds were drawn, and the room was in dense darkness. But—to Pon's intense amazement—a gleam of light showed in the blackness, in the direction of the cabinet where the snuffbox stood.

Ponsonby stopped, with a gasp of amazement and affright. It was the gleam of a tiny electric torch, in an unseen hand.

Someone was in the study.

At the sound of Ponsonby's startled gasp, the little gleam of light was shut off instantly.

There was a footstep!

Like a lightning flash, it came into Ponsonby's mind what it meant. It was not a Highcliffe man in the study—it could not be. A cry of terror broke from Ponsonby, as he understood what it was what it must be.

Something brushed against him in the black darkness. Shrieking, Ponsonby leaped away.

Then something struck him, and a

thousand lights danced before his dazzled eyes, as he went with a crash to the floor.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Startling News!

I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter fairly yelled with excitement.

It was the following day, and Harry Wharton & Co. were punting a footer about in the quad, while they waited for the bell for afternoon class, when the Owl of the Remove came rolling up, his fat face excited, his little round eyes almost bursting through his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Burglar—Ponsonby—Highcliffe—snuffbox—" articulated Bunter incoherently.

"Eh, what?"

"I say, you fellows, I've just heard!" gasped Bunter. "That blessed old snuffbox—the Courtfield cracksman's got it!"

"What?"

"Anything happened at Highcliffe?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!" trilled Bunter. "It's frightfully exciting. Burglary there last night."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I've just had it from Smithson—you know, Smithson of the Highcliffe-Fourth. He was going by on his bike, and he stopped to tell me. I say, you fellows, it's rather a pity that snuffbox wasn't left in the waste-paper basket, after all. He, he, he! The burglar's got it, and Pon's had his brains blown out—"

"What?" yelled the Famous Five.

"I mean knocked out—strewn all over the place. He was found dying—practically dying—in old Voysey's study. He said this morning that a burglar had knocked him over—"

"He said that, with his brains knocked out and strewn all over the place?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I mean, he was stunned. Somebody banged him on the napper in the Head's study at two in the morning—"

"What on earth was Pon doing in the Head's study at two in the morning?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Smithson thinks he heard the burglar, and went down—"

"I can see him doing it!"

"Well, I've done it myself, you know," said Bunter. "I did it the night the burglar came to Greyfriars last term—you remember—"

"I remember you went down after Coker's cake."

"Beast! Still, Pon hasn't the pluck I have," said Bunter thoughtfully. "He wouldn't go down after a burglar. No, I fancy not."

"The notfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Anyhow, he was there, and the burglar coshed him on the crampet. Smithson says he's got a big bruise and is in a frightful temper—like a tiger, Smithson says—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the snuffbox is gone," concluded Bunter. "I say, you fellows, the burglar's got the snuffbox! Smithson told me it's worth millions of pounds."

"Make it billions!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Well, I know it's worth a lot," said Bunter. "It's plastered with diamonds and things. It's a Looey Cans snuffbox—Looey Cans, you know. I suppose that's the trade-mark—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle

at. If it isn't the trade-mark, I suppose it's the name of the maker. The cracksman was there after it, when Pon butted in. He got the Looey Cans snuffbox, and left Pon with a bump on his onion. Smithson says that old Voysey is in a frightful bate. They've got the police in. I say, you fellows, do you know where Steele was last night?" added Bunter, with a fat wink.

"In bed, most likely."
 "You fellows know jolly well that he goes out prowling at nights. If he was out last night I can jolly well guess who had that Looey Cans snuffbox!" grinned Bunter.

"You benighted idiot—"
 "Well, my belief is that Steele's got it!" said Bunter positively. "You know as well as I do that he's the Courtfield cracksman."

"Fathead!"
 "I say, you fellows, where do you think he stores his plunder?" asked Bunter. "If it's hidden away here at Greyfriars—"

"You burbling chump—"
 "I dare say he doesn't keep it here—it would be risky. Still, this proves it was Steele, you know," said Bunter sagely.

"How do you make that out, you unspeakable ass?"
 Bunter winked.

"You see, he heard all about the jolly old snuffbox, when all that fuss was made yesterday. That was what put him on to it. It's been in old Voysey's study for donkeys' years without being burgled! Then Steele hears about it, and it's burgled the same night! What does it look like?"

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

The chums of the Remove exchanged a rather startled glance. It was at least a strange coincidence.

"It was Steele all right," grinned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, he's a regular Raffles, you know. He hears about a thing one day, and bags it the same night. And I'd jolly well let on, that I know all about it, too, only I should get a licking."

And Bunter rolled away to spread the news farther.

In a very short time it was all over Greyfriars.

This latest exploit, which showed that the mysterious, unknown cracksman was still at work in the neighbourhood, caused considerable excitement; all the more because of the fuss that had been made about Dr. Voysey's Louis Quinze snuff-box the previous day.

Skinner and his friends indulged in many hints and sly remarks on the subject of Mr. Steele, and many a fellow in the Remove wondered whether there was anything in it.

In class that afternoon many of the Remove regarded Mr. Steele with unusual interest. If the Form master was aware of it he gave no sign.

There was no doubt that the strange suspicion that had gathered about Richard Steele would cling to him till the Courtfield cracksman was taken by the police. But of that happening there seemed little hope. After classes that day several fellows cycled down to Courtfield for the early editions of the evening papers, which were eagerly devoured in the Rag when they arrived.

There was a report of the burglary at Highcliffe School, with an account of a gallant but reckless schoolboy who, hearing a noise in the night, had gone down to investigate and had been knocked down and stunned by the unseen marauder.

It appeared that that schoolboy had lain unconscious for some time, and



Something struck Ponsonby, and a thousand lights danced before his dazzled eyes as he went with a crash to the floor!

that when he came to his senses and was able to give the alarm the burglar and the snuffbox were both gone.

Fellows who knew Ponsonby well took the liberty of doubting the accuracy of that report, and wondered what Pon really had been up to.

But for whatever reason Pon had gone down in the night, there was no doubt that he had fallen in with the cracksman and had fared hard at his hands.

"Jolly plucky of Pon if it's true," said Bob Cherry. "I suppose it's true."
 "Is it?" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, the paper says so. Pon must have told them."

"What Pon says isn't evidence," remarked the Bounder. "Pon was up to somethin', lut—"

"Comin' back from the Cross Keys," suggested Skimmer; and there was a laugh.

"That wouldn't take him to the Head's study," said Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, perhaps he was going there to pinch the snuffbox himself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if Pon's done a plucky thing, he deserves the credit for it," said Harry Wharton. "I dare say we shall hear the facts, as we're going over to tea with Courtenay."

And the Famous Five wheeled out

their bicycles to ride to Highcliffe, very curious to hear the true story of that plucky conduct of Ponsonby's.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Hero of Highcliffe!

"WALK up, gents!" said the Caterpillar gravely.

"Eh?"
 "There's a show on," explained the Caterpillar. "You fellows mustn't miss it. It's worth seein'."

"I suppose you've heard?" said Courtenay.

"Yes. We've seen the papers," said Harry Wharton. "Ponsonby seems to have done a very plucky thing."

"The pluckfulness was terrific!" remarked Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh. "When shall his esteemed glory fade, my absurd friends?"

"Like to see him?" asked the Caterpillar. "Pon's holdin' a sort of reception in his study—quite a levee! As a rule, he has the bad taste not to like the company of you men; but on the present occasion, I'm sure he'll be glad to see you. He's baskin' in the limelight; and the more the merrier, you know."

The Famous Five went up to the

(Continued on page 27.)

PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!

By JOHN BREARLEY.



Round the ground Peter Frazer was carried, the Silver Band heading the procession.

INTRODUCTION.

Peter Frazer, a strapping youngster of eighteen, straight from a public school, arrives in the squalid industrial city of Maxport, to take over his strange legacy from his dead uncle—Frazer's Iron Foundry. Even before reaching his new home Peter falls into the hands of a gang of ruffians led by a scarred man, and barely escapes with his life. At the Works the youngster learns from his manager, Mr. Dimmock, that this gang were responsible for his uncle's death. Their activities have brought Frazer's to the brink of ruin, and Peter sets out to smash them. It is a hard fight at first, but when once the young ironmaster has won his own men over to his side the Scarred Man and his followers are practically beaten. The gang stake everything in a last desperate attempt to "get" Peter Frazer. They succeed in kidnapping him, but their triumph is short-lived, for they are tracked down and captured by a band of enraged foundrymen led by Moller, the Works foreman, and his son, Tim Osborne, late of the Canadian Secret Service. It is then that the identity of the Scarred Man is revealed. He is Mr. Dimmock! Next morning, at Peter's house, Moller tells the whole strange story of the Scarred Man's vendetta, from its beginning nearly thirty years before, until old Desmond Frazer's death and his nephew's inheritance. (Now read on.)

The End of the Story

"WELL, Peter," continued Moller, "the moment I saw you I knew trouble had arrived! You're your uncle all over again. That's why I told you bluntly that first evening to sell out and clear off. Dimmock pretended to sympathise, but really it was his words that made you stick—as he wanted. He was clever!"

"Then Tim arrived here with a batch of interesting information, and again I begged you to clear out.

"Of course we couldn't pin a thing on Dimmock; and, remember, I only found out that he was an escaped lunatic forty eight hours back! All
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we could do was to guard you! Believe me, it was a job—eh, Tim?"

Tim uttered not a word, but rolled his eyes to the ceiling.

"Well, you handled the men yourself, Peter, and we take off our hats to you! They're a tough crowd, all right, but they admire a plucky sportsman; and the night you crawled under that bath to unshackle Charles' bomb settled 'em, although I wasn't there to see it. Lad, I thought the foundry had fallen on me when that spanner landed!

"If only you hadn't knocked me silly, Tim and I might have had the bunch of them. It was Tim who fished you out of that cellar just before; but he couldn't stay, because he was lying low. That made him late."

Silently Peter reached out and gripped Tim's hand.

"Another item on the bill, Tim!" he said briefly.

"I think we made a fairly decent job of guarding you, Peter; they never reckoned on Tim's shooting, for instance. But we could never nab Dimmock! You see, I didn't want to seem too friendly towards you, but we formed a plan of always shadowing you and young Sparrow, and so long as Dimmock wasn't on the job we were content just to stop the gang. As soon as Dimmock took a hand, we meant to swoop!

"But he was too thundering cunning! Mad, remember. And, up to a point, that cunning suited us. We knew he wouldn't go for you when any suspicion could fall on himself—that wasn't his game at all—so we reckoned that while you were here with him in this house you were safe. Besides, if we'd persuaded you to stay somewhere else he might have smelled a rat.

"Anyway, as far as he was concerned, you were safe here. Outside it was different. What we didn't reckon on was Granger getting so desperate down in that cellar that, after he'd quarrelled with Dimmock, he came along here and yanked you out with a gun. He did it cleverly, too. There was no fake about the way they tied Dimmock up in that room yonder."

"And didn't any of Granger's men know who the Scarred Man really was?" asked Peter.

"Only Granger. That was where Dimmock was clever, too. He used his wig as a disguise against us, and then every time he met any of the gang to always wore the same clothes—macintosh cape and hat. And he always took off his hat, and there was his awful head—and the scar! Without his wig—well, he was a different man. That's all!"

Moller drew at his pipe.

"A clever man Peter!"

"But we've got him!" chuckled the inspector contentedly.

Tim said nothing, neither did Sparrow. And the only remark that Peter made was:

"Poor chap!"

The meeting broke up.

Two weeks sped past. Gradually the sensation—the biggest known in Maxport for many, many years—died down.

An official search-party laid bare the old slimy passages deep below Frazer's Foundry; Granger and all his gang, Charles Manston included, came up for trial, and got sentences that shattered the gang for ever.

But for John Manston—alias Mr. Dimmock and the Scarred Man—there

was no trial! Once more the distorted mind gave way. The flood of madness, kept in check with patient cunning these last five years, burst its bounds again, this time for ever.

Peter Frazer stood before the gate of his house, staring across the football field to where his great foundry chimneys smoked peacefully. His left arm was thrust through Moller's, and his other hand lay firmly on Sparrow's thin shoulder. The engineer drew deeply at his pipe, and on the face of the little slum-rat a great wide grin stretched from ear to ear.

Standing before them, hands in pockets, stood Tim Osborne. And to him Peter Frazer addressed these words of gratitude:

"If you talk any more about leaving us, young Tim Moller, I'm going to give you a punch on the nose!"

Moller and Sparrow chuckled. "Then, Peter, I'll stay!" said Tim, grinning.

The Cup Final!

MAXPORT was on holiday! The lovely ground of the famous Hornets was packed. The sun shone brightly, a little breeze whipped the flags round the touchline, and in the centre of the ground Maxport's Silver Band played merrily!

For that afternoon the Final of Maxport Works' Cup was to be played—Faulder's Albion v. Frazer's Foundry.

The supporters of the huge ship-building firm had turned up in their thousands. Packed solidly around the ground, they were in a very merry mood, and confident their team would win. But they couldn't damp the enthusiasm of the iron-men intermingled with them.

The lorry was there, of course! When it had rolled up to the ground, wheezing under its cargo of jubilant men, the officials on the gate had been surprised; but they had had the option of either letting the car in, or having a first-class fight on their hands. So the lorry came in.

In the dressing-room little Jimmy Nesbit was saying a final word to Peter before he led his men out.

"All the luck boy! You've deserved everything that's come your way! Pitch into 'em!"

"Thanks, Jimmy!" grinned Peter. "We will!"

"And let me tell you something! Watch their inside-forwards!" warned Jimmy. "They're the chaps who've brought 'em into the Final!"

Peter nodded. "I'll watch 'em!" he said grimly. "Time, Frazer's!"

At the head of his football team—the team he had fought for and made—Peter went out on to the sunny field. For the first time since he had come to Maxport he felt absolutely free from care. The Scarred Man, Granger and his gang, and all they stood for, had melted like an evil dream. Everyone in Maxport knew that Frazer's Foundry was firmly settled on the road to prosperity; and they pointed at Peter Frazer as one of the City's coming men.

But he wasn't thinking of that now. He wanted his team to win the Works Cup!

In the centre of the field he shook hands with Micky Ryan, Faulders skipper. The big Irishman grinned.

"A good game, sorr, and may the best team win!" he said cordially. "Rather!" returned Peter.

A minute later, amid a rolling roar from all round the ground, the Works' Cup Final was on!

"Fau-au-auders! Come on, Albion!"

"Fray-ay-azers! Up, the Iron-men!"

As the long-drawn war-cries rang out Tim touched the ball to Hammond. The inside-right tried to pass out, but Ryan nipped in. He kicked a trifle too hard, however, and Peter scoured the ball and swung it out to Baker like lightning. Off went the wing-man, over came his centre, and Tim brought the Albion goalie down to full length with a scorecher. The corner-kick went behind, and the teams took up position for the goal-kick.

Micky Ryan looked round him meaningfully. That brilliant attack made him think hard.

The next ten minutes was Cup-tie football. Both sides had plenty of weight—and they used it. Ryan and his halves set about Tim Osborne & Co. like bulldogs, and Peter and his men retaliated. It was a hectic ding-dong ten minutes. After that both sides settled down, Peter especially. He was beginning to appreciate Jimmy Nesbit's word of warning.

Faulders were a veteran side. Their defence with Micky Ryan as the mainstay, was like a rock. Their wingers, however, were a bit slow, and Mullins and Salmon held them easily.

But Faulders' inside trio were another proposition.

Two brothers named Roberts played at inside-right and left. They were

the Albion keeper made glorious saves from Tim.

Still Frazers were one down! The Roberts returned to their scheming, and Peter beat them back amid a din of cheers.

A cross shot from Baker hit Faulder's crossbar. Hammond let fly at the rebound, but a back got his head to it and Ryan cleared. The Faulder right winger fastened on, but Mullins ran him into touch. From the throw-in the Roberts began a clever passing movement across the field.

Then Hector McPherson nipped in, but luck was against him. As the Scotsman cleared, Faulders sturdy centre-forward leapt up and charged down the kick. The ball rolled towards goal, and Sparrow came out gallantly. Too late! The centre following up got there first, and Sparrow threw up his arms in a forlorn effort as the leather roared past his head into the net.

Faulders were two up.

"Come on, the foundry! Fray-ay-azers! Don't let 'em down, ye lads."

There was a note of appeal in the cheering from the lorry now. The team were grim as they lined up. After all they had gone through they weren't going to be defeated in the Cup now!

Tim looked a bit older and a bit sterner as he kicked off again. Hammond muffed the pass, but Peter running in knocked Faulders centre-

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oldish, hardbitten little men, who knew each other's play, and using their centre-forward as a spearhead, passed and schemed their way trickily down the middle of the field, discarding the slow wingmen altogether.

The centre-forward was a younger man, built like a speedy bull. He was not in the same class as his partners, but Peter realised what he was there for when, after fifteen minutes' play, the Roberts weaved their way right through, touched the ball perfectly to the centre at the last minute, and his cannon-ball shot from ten yards range left poor Sparrow helpless.

"Goal!"

One down!

"Come on, chaps! We'll get that back!" cried Peter cheerfully.

He set his jaw. That spearhead attack must be broken up before it pierced Frazers' defence again. He whispered to Elspeth McDonald who, lying up the field, stuck to that centre-forward like a brother! And Peter went for those schemers, the Roberts, like a terrier.

Their lightning passing kept him moving at top pace, but he felt fighting fit.

Every time they set up an attack a long, deft leg or a bobbing black head broke it up. Passes began to sail out to Baker and Haggerty, who took them on the run, drew Faulders defence wide open, and banged the ball into the middle, where three times in succession

forward off the ball. He swung his boot to send Baker off, when Tim called sharply:

"Peter!"

Peter flicked the ball to him—unmarked.

Ryan charged the wily youngster, but Tim swept past him like a shadow. Hammond called for a pass, but Tim wasn't listening. Up the field he went, in and out, swaying, sidestepping, and feinting, through the halves, past a back, past the other! The cheering round the touchline grew and grew, and reached one long hysterical yell as Tim ran on, with the goalie to beat now.

Boomp!

Tim shot as he swayed sideways. The leather whizzed hard and low to the goalie's left hand, and then swerved away. He touched it despairingly with his finger-tips—and Frazers were only one down!

Then came half-time.

The Winning Goal!

MORE of that, Timmy!" chortled Peter, in the interval, squeezing his breathless chum. "My stars, what a dribble!"

In the opposite camp Ryan was holding a consultation with the Roberts.

"Bedad!" cried the Irishman. "It's a marvel that lad is!"

"You're right, Mick. I've never
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big toll of his strength. Extra time might be fatal.

"A big effort, Frazers!" he called to his men.

From the throw-in, a Faulder half-back kicked mightily. The ball sailed down the field, Hector McPherson got his boot to it on the half-volley, and, like a meteor, it came back to Peter.

Pulling it down dead with his foot, he swung on his heel, tricked one of the Roberts, drew Ryan, and passed to Tim. Tim passed to Hammond who gave it back, and the lean centre ran towards the backs.

But Faulders closed up desperately. Looking ahead, Tim saw his road was blocked. Hammond was marked, Milligan and Baker were out of the picture.

"Tim!" gasped a voice behind him. Like a flash, a split instant before he was tackled, Tim heeled the ball back, and Peter took it in his stride.

His feet seemed like lead and he could hear Micky Ryan pounding at his heels. Raising his eyes, he saw an opening.

Peter steadied himself and swung back his foot as Ryan drew up alongside.

His eye on the rolling ball, Peter let fly with all his remaining might. Something hit him squarely on the shoulder. Down to the turf he went, turning over and over under the tremendous charge, and as he sat up dazedly, the air seemed to split asunder.

"Goal!"

He saw Tim leaping towards him, arms outflung. Other arms wound round him, hands wrung his and patted him on the back.

No sooner had the game restarted again, than the shrill of the referee's whistle sounded above the still-cheering iron-men.

There was a faint smile on Micky Ryan's face as he grabbed Peter's hands.

"Another two minutes, and, begorrah, we'd have had to play extra time. But what a game, bhoy, what a game!"

The teams were moving towards the stand. Frazers smiling and tired, Faulders disappointed.

Out of the stand, out of the lorry, from all round the ground, Peter's iron-men poured on to the pitch, and though they had cheered for ninety solid minutes, their lungs still held good.

Dizzily, Peter felt himself swung high in the air on to the shoulders of two burly men. Round the ground he was carried, the Silver Band heading the procession. They arrived in front of the stand, where Sir James Fossett sat beaming with the tall Works Cup before him.

The cup was presented, and the medals.

Peter, gasping, but beside himself with joy turned and waved it at the seething mob of his workmen and friends behind.

That evening, after a long and uproarious homecoming in the lorry, Peter himself took the Cup and installed it on its shelf in the gymnasium.

Turning, he held up his hand. "Chaps!" he cried. "Three cheers for Frazier's football team!"

They cheered. "And mates!" bellowed Baker. "Three more for Peter Frazier and Frazier's Foundry!"

They cheered again.

THE END.

played against a man who covered so much ground."

"Can we beat 'em, bhoy?"

But the Roberts wouldn't answer that! Although they were hard as nails, they were getting a bit old for football at this pace, and Peter's whirlwind methods were sapping their resources.

"Frazier may tire!" said one at length, cautiously. "But we're a goal up, anyway, Mick! Sit on that—tight!"

"I will that!" quoth the skipper. And he did. Faulders settled down steadily to win. Raid after raid poured over them in emerald green floods, brilliant dribbles by Tim and Hammond tied them into knots, and Baker, travelling like a train, ran rings round them, but still they hung on to their lead!

Pinned in their own half, they fought every inch of ground. Every now and then Ryan would sweep the ball to the Roberts, and the little men would begin weaving, with the centre just on ahead, waiting for a pass.

The pass never came—because Peter Frazier was in the way. His tackling gradually faded the little schemers out of the picture—his accurate feeding sent attack after attack towards the Faulder goal. And when the sturdy centre-forward tried battering his way through on his own, Elspeth McDonald smiled dourly—and put bin in his pocket, so to speak!

The Iron-men cheered with delight. But Frazers were still one down.

Then a brilliant run by Haggerty ended in a lovely square centre. Tim

just beat Ryan's head, but the clever Albion goalie fisted out. Sturdy Milligan trapped the ball, shook off an opponent, feinted to pass to Baker and then turned inwards. Ryan leapt to mark Tim, but Milligan slipped the ball over to Hammond who took it in his stride and raced right through Faulders defence.

The goalkeeper charged him. Hammond hesitated, side-stepped perkily, and, just as a back bundled into him, hooked the ball into the empty goal.

Frazers were level!

That woke Faulders up! The next ten minutes beggars description. Amid loud cheers and yells, both sides went at it for all they were worth! Sparrow saved magnificent shots twice in a minute from the heavy-shooting centre and turned a third over the bar. Heading out from the corner, Hammond sent the ball to Tim, who dribbled away. Ryan graced him, but Hammond got the ball again and sent Milligan and Baker racing up-field. Milligan's shot was saved, and then followed a hard-fought ten minutes of mid-field play.

Clever football went by the board; weight and pace was the order of the day.

Then Peter robbed Ryan and shoved the ball to Hammond. The inside-right passed feebly and the ball skidded into touch.

Out of the corner of his eye, Peter saw the ref. look at his watch. Although he tried not to show it, he was absolutely tired. His magnificent mastery over Faulders' inside trio had taken a

BILLY BUNTER'S BLUFF!

(Continued from page 23.)

Fourth Form passage with Courtenay and the Caterpillar. They had arrived at Highcliffe rather curious for news; quite prepared to give Pon the credit that was his due—if any was due—but with lingering doubts. And the droll look in the Caterpillar's eye rather strengthened their doubts.

Ponsonby's study door was open. The study seemed rather full. The squeaky voice of Mr. Mobbs, the master of the Fourth, was audible, as the juniors came up the passage.

"My dear Ponsonby! How is your head now?"

"A little better, sir," came Pon's reply, in a rather faint voice. "It aches, sir. But I'm not complainin'."

"Well done, my dear boy! I am proud of you—proud that you belong to my Form! This is a proud day in my life!" said Mr. Mobbs.

"Mobby's no end bucked about it," murmured the Caterpillar. "Pon's his favourite—he likes Pon even better than he does me—Pon's got more titled relations."

The Caterpillar led the Greyfriars men into the study.

Ponsonby was sitting in a heap of cushions in a big chair, with his head bandaged, and resting against another cushion.

He gave the Greyfriars juniors a supercilious stare; then, changing his mind, smiled and nodded.

"Come in, you men," he said. "You'll excuse me if I don't get up. I'm feelin' a bit knocked over!"

"Pray, do not move, my dear Ponsonby—please do not move!" said Mr. Mobbs anxiously.

He had no cause for anxiety; Pon had no intention of moving.

"We've seen it in the papers," said Harry. "I hope you weren't hurt much, Ponsonby? We—we thought it awfully plucky!"

"Oh, it was nothin'!" said Ponsonby airily. "A fellow could scarcely do anythin' else."

"Well, going down in the night to bag a burglar isn't a safe game, you know," said Nugent, eyeing Pon curiously.

"It was reckless," said Mr. Mobbs—"very reckless! You must never do such a thing again, my dear Ponsonby. We are all proud of your courage, but you must never run so terrible a risk again!"

"Feel equal to telling a fellow how it happened, Ponsonby?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I don't mind! You see, I woke up in the night, hearin' a noise," explained Ponsonby. "I can't say exactly what noise it was. It may have been only the wind. Anyhow, it came into my mind about the Head's snuffbox, and what I'd read in the papers about the burglaries that have been goin' on such a lot in this neighbourhood lately!"

"So you went down?"

"Well, you see, the Head sets such a store by that snuffbox," said Ponsonby gravely. "It's really a priceless sort of thing!"

"Of inestimable value!" said Mr. Mobbs. "Museums have made Dr. Voysey munificent offers for it!"

"I knew how it would grieve the Head, sir, if anything happened to it," said Ponsonby, "so—so I went down."

"Alone?" asked Wharton.

"Well, yes. You see, I wasn't certain there was a burglar. But when I got to the Head's study I found the door open, and then I was pretty sure."

"You should have hurried away at once, Ponsonby," said Mr. Mobbs, shaking his head. "Attemptin' to seize the burglar was a wildly reckless action!"

"Well, sir, there he was, at the cabinet, with his paw on the snuffbox," said Ponsonby. "I thought I ought to try to stop him. Only he gave me a crack on the head, and that settled it."

Ponsonby rubbed his bandaged head. "I must have been unconscious for a quarter of an hour or more," he went on. "When I came to, I gave the alarm. But it was too late. That's all. My goin' down didn't do much good. Still, a fellow likes to think that he's done his best!"

"No one can do more, my dear Ponsonby," said Mr. Mobbs. "Grieved as he is by his irreparable loss, Dr. Voysey has expressed himself in the highest terms regarding your action—the very highest terms!"

"Oh, it was nothin', sir!" said Ponsonby. "I—I think I'd like to rest a little now. My head's rather bad."

The Greyfriars fellows retired; and Mr. Mobbs having followed them, leaving his dear Ponsonby to rest, his dear Ponsonby was at liberty to light another cigarette, which he promptly did.

In Courtenay's study, Harry Wharton & Co. sat down to tea. They had complimented Pon, but they were still feeling some lingering dubiety. Courtenay's face expressed nothing. The Caterpillar's expressed a good deal, though they could not quite make it out.

"Pon's gettin' a lot of limelight!" remarked the Caterpillar thoughtfully. "That's only fair, after displayin' such

boundless pluck. I hope I'm not a funk; but I should hate to butt into a burglar in the middle of the night! Pon thinks nothin' of these things!"

"Oh, chuck it, Caterpillar!" said Courtenay, with a grimace.

"My dear man, I'm not sayin' a word outside this study!" protested the Caterpillar. "But surely a fellow's free to express his admiration of Pon's presence of mind?"

"Presence of mind?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes. It struck me as remarkable."

"When he went down for the burglar, do you mean?" asked Harry, puzzled.

"Nunno! When he told the Head that he'd gone down for a burglar."

"Oh!"

"Think of it!" said the Caterpillar. "Pon goes down from the dorm to play a rotten trick on the Beak—"

"Oh!"

"Butts unexpectedly into a burglar—never havin' dreamed that there was such an animal anywhere in the offing, and—"

"Oh!"

"Gets a crack on the crumpet before he can bolt—"

"Oh!"

"Comes to later on, and on the spur of the moment, hands out a fabrication that might make George Washington green with envy—"

"Oh!"

"That's what I call presence of mind," said the Caterpillar enthusiastically. "What do you call it, Franky?"

"I call it a rotten lie!" said Courtenay.

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"You express yourself, Franky, with your usual uncompromisin' vigour," said the Caterpillar. "But let's give Pon all the credit we can. Presence of mind is a jolly useful thing, sometimes. All Highcliffe is admirin' Pon for his great an' glorious pluck. I'm admirin' him for his presence of mind! So we're all admirin' him one way or another. An admirable character, whichever way you take him!" said the Caterpillar gravely. "Only I shouldn't recommend takin' him for an example."

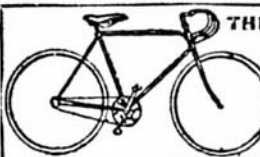
"And now—" said Courtenay.

"Quite!" agreed the Caterpillar urbanely. "Now we'll talk football, for which Franky has been yearnin' all this time—and give the hero of Highcliffe a rest."

And it was so.

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the next yarn in this magnificent series, entitled: "THE MAN FROM SCOTLAND YARD!" It shows Frank Richards at his best!)



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DIDDED BY THE FOURTH!

By DICKY NUGENT



Many a time and oft has Dr. Birchcreek didded the Fourth. This time, however, the wily old doctor undergoes the unhappy experience of being didded himself!

tinned to play drafts and tiddley-winks and leapfrog; utterly regardless.

At last, there was a tramp of heavy hoofs outside the Common-room door. A moment later Bowerer and Swankleigh and Oldbuck, and quite a crowd of other Fifth-Formers galloped in.

Bowerer's die was livid with rage. He had gone to a lot of trouble and eggspung to turn the Fourth into a race of slaves and chattels, and he had confidently eggspung something in return, now that Dr. Birchcreek had approved his prebush skoom. Instead of which, all he had got out of the Fourth, so far, was a fearful ragging earlier in the day, and now, complete disregard.

Bowerer & Co. glared at the Fourth, and the Fourth grinned cheerily at Bowerer & Co.

"Why, it's dear old Bowerer!" exclaimed Jack Jolly, in pretended surprise. "Why the honor of this visit, old sport?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth. The heavy Bowerer considered himself miles above the Fourth, and they saw the hemmious side of their leader's addressing him as "old sport."

Bowerer's brow grew thunderous and lightning flashed from his eyes.

"Stop this farther immaturity!" he stormed. "I've come for an eggspungation. My friends and I have been calling 'fag' for at least five minutes, and so far, none of you young sweeps have answered. What I want to know is why not."

"Because it wanted to get to the other side!" was Jack Jolly's surprising answer.

Bowerer jumped.

"Eh?"

"Because it wanted to get to the other side. That's the right answer to the riddle, isn't it?" asked Jack innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—how you know very well I wasn't asking a riddle, but you!" said Bowerer, in a strangled voice. "Tell me why you didn't answer, or be slawered whichever you please!"

"The Fourth, of course, were not a bit frightened of Fifth Form threats, but Jack Jolly realised that the time had now come to eggspung matters to these frowning old fogys."

does raise a certain amount of diffidence for you, especially if I've issued them to the entire Form. But what of it, anyway? You still have the satisfaction of knowing that the Fourth fag for you in theory, even if they don't in practice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry if you're still not satisfied, Bowerer, but you can't say I haven't done my best. If you feel like arguing the loss any further, pray trot along to my study, and I'll give you my point of view—with the aid of a birch!"

"Nunno, sir; I'm quite satisfied!" mumbled Bowerer.

"In that case, I will buzz off. Cheerroski!" concluded Dr. Birchcreek, lapsing into Russian with skollery ease. And he went on his way, rejoicing.

After he had departed the Fifth-Formers bestowed furious glances on the grinning Fourth.

"So you think this finishes it, do you?" asked Bowerer. "That's a just where you're mistaken. Eggspungtion cards or not, we're going to fag the Fourth from now on. Are you young welps going to be sensible and acknowledge us as fagmasters?"

"Likely, isn't it?" chorled Jack Jolly.

"Then in that case we'll use force to make you change your minds. Rush on!" yelled Bowerer.

If Bowerer had only been a little cooler he would have realised that to rush the Fourth was the worst possible thing he could have done. The Fourth were known as the "Fighting Fourth" at St. Sam's, and even the Sixth mite have been eggspunged for quailing at such a task. But Bowerer was not in the mood for looking at things in a sensible light, at present. He rushed into battle, his arms whirling like the sails of a windmill; and the rest of the Fifth rushed after him.

Let us draw a veil over the painful scene that followed, dear reader. Suffice it to say that by the time the seniors had been ejected from the Junior Common-room they were no longer recognizable as human objects. A passer-by might have taken them for Guy Fawkes, or the stock-in-trade of a rag-and-bone merchant's, but certainly not for dignified seniors belonging to a grade public-school.

The question of whether the Fourth should fag for the Fifth had been settled beyond all dispute!

II.

"ROT in, fathhead!" yelled the Head, in response to a thunderous rat-rat that sounded on the door of his study next morning.

The door opened, and the Head looked up. As he saw the newcomer a low moan of fear escaped his lips.

For the bigger standing before him was the blue-clad figger of a bearded perliceman!

"Dr. Birchcreek, I believe?" murmured the perliceman, baring his fangs in a somewhat sinister smile.

The Head choked.

"N-n-not at all!" he answered, between his chattering teeth. "My name is the Reverend Jack Johnson, as a matter of fact!"

A skeptical larf escaped the lim of the lor.

"Tell that to the maroons! You're Dr. Birchcreek, and you know it! Well, Dr. Birchcreek, I've called about your detts!"

The Head shuddered.

"I don't owe no detts, constable!" he cried, with his usual faultless grammar. "It's quite against my principles to owe

a penny to any man. Ask any of my friends; they'll all tell you I've got a hart of gold!"

"Rattus! Gilt is written all over your face!" was the perliceman's answer.

"What about the butcher and the baker? And what about the laundry bill you've been owing for the last year or so?"

The Head groaned.

"All right, constable! I can see it's no use denying any more. Only give me time!"

"You'll get time all right!" said the constable, with a heartless chuckle. "The magystrate's bound to send you to chokoy for a good long stretch when we read out your record!"

"Oh crickey! Is it any good appealing to you for mercy?" groaned the Head. "I can't possibly pay all my detts, but I mite be able to let you have something on account—"

The perliceman frowned.

"That's not in my orders, Dr. Birchcreek, but if you're prepared to make an offer—"

"Ten bob, then?" said the Head recklessly.

"Haw, haw, haw! Don't make me larf!"

"Fifteen, thank!"

"I think you'd better come along of me!" grinned the jim of the lor, perceiving a pair of handcuffs and some heavy manacles.

Dr. Birchcreek rung his hands in an agony of despair.

"I'll make it a quid, then—twenty-five bob, if you like—"

The perliceman took a step forward, and the Head jumped to his feet with a yell of fear.

"Thirty bob!" he gasped. "It's all I've got, and you simply must accept it! I know you will, sir; you've got a very kind face!"

The perlice-constable grinned, and, much to the Head's relief, pocketed the handcuffs and manacles again.

"Very well, sir," he said. "Seeing that this is all you've got, I have much pleasure in accepting it. Coff it up!"

Dr. Birchcreek counted out the munny, frowning as he did so. Parting with munny gave the Head a feeling like having a tooth eggspunged.

The officer of the lor counted the cash very carefully so as to make sure he had not been done, then he satrobed and withdrew, leaving the Head to mop the beads of inspiration from his brow and thank his lucky stars he was not at that moment being led away to durance vile.

Fortunately, Dr. Birchcreek was not able to see what happened after the perliceman left the study. Had he done so, he would have had a rather different opinion about the matter.

Instead of making for the front door of the Skool House, the man in blue made a B-line to the Junior Common-room, where, strange to say, he was greeted with loud and prolonged cheers.

"Walmidge it!" asked Frank fearlessly.

"Mark the giddy orake!" asked Merry.

"Yes, rather!" came the answer from the officer; and now his voice was no longer deep and ruff but boyish and musical and somehow familiar.

An instant later he removed a false beard and his helmet, and stood revealed as none other than Jack Jolly, the kaptein of the Fourth!

"Good old Jack!" roared the Fourth.

"Did you scare the life out of the old buffer?" grinned Bright.

Jack Jolly chuckled.

"I should think I did! His neeze rocked together and his face went as white as a sheet as soon as he saw me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He parted up with the thirty bob

like a lamb!" grinned the kaptein of the Fourth. "I fancy he'll get a shock when he discovers it was all a hekes. Fortunately for me, he'll never find out who the 'perliceman' really was! Now let's get along to the Fifth and give poor old Bowerer his share of the proceeds! Perhaps he'll consider things squared, then."

The Fourth fell in, grinning all over their faces, and followed their leader to the Fifth quarters.

They found Bowerer laying down the law to a crowd of Fifth-Formers.

"It's disgusting!" Bowerer was saying. "I've parted with fifteen bob for the privilege of fagging the Fourth, and I've got nothing for my munny. The least the Head ought to do is to return the cash!"

"Why don't you ask him for it back?" suggested Swankleigh. "Whatever argument he puts up won't hold water."

Bowerer patted vizzibly.

"What? Ask the Head for munny? It's impossible. Only a man with a face of brass and a nerve of iron could ask the Head for tin."

"Breefy, a man of metal is wanted," nodded Swankleigh. "Hallo! What do those inky ruffians want?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth. They had heard the little dialoge revealing that Bowerer was too nervous to ask for his cash back, and it struck them as funny that they had come for the very purpose of returning that munny.

The Fifth stared lottily at the historical juncture.

"Is this all you've come here for—to cackle?" asked Bowerer hawtily.

"In, ha! Not eggspung!" grinned Jack Jolly. "Matter of fact, the reason for our call is conserved with the bizney you're discussing. I believe you just mentioned that it required a sort of superman to get back that fifteen bob from the Head?"

"I should jolly well think it does!" snorted Bowerer. "I don't know anyone in the Fifth or Sixth who has the nerve for the job."

"In that case, it's just as well the Fourth have worked the oracle, isn't it?" remarked Jack Jolly blandly.

And with these words, the kaptein of the Fourth handed over fifteen bob in glittering silver.

Bowerer stared at the munny as though fascinated.

"Grate pip!" he eggspunged. "Mean to say you youngsters have actually indowed the old buffer to part up?"

"Looks like it!" grinned Jack Jolly. "Don't trouble to thank me, old chap. It's a pleasure to know you reckonise that the Fourth have got more nerve than the Fifth and Sixth rolled into one! After this, I'm sure you won't think it advisable to mention the subject of fagging us any more!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Fourth withdrew, still chortling.

It was a fitting climax to the events of the last two days. The Fifth, to a man, were as red as ponies as the Fourth went out, they spent the rest of the day running around kicking themselves.

And when, eventually, the whole skool got to hear the fool story of the dastardly attempt to turn our heroes into fags they had to admit that both the Head and the Fifth had been well and truly didded by the Fourth!

THE END

(Our clever young author supplies another long uproarious laugh in next week's *topping tale* of St. Sam's. He sure you read it, chums!)
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FA-A-A-G!"

The deafening cry echoed and re-echoed through the passages of the old Skool House at St. Sam's, and a number of other Fourth-Formers who happened to be in the Junior Common-room, grunted as they heard it. They had been eggspunging it for a long time—looking forward to it, in fact.

It was only a few hours since Dr. Birchcreek had yielded to the request of Bowerer of the Fifth that the Fifth might be allowed to fag the Fourth. By judiciously granting the Head a little loan of fifteen bob, Bowerer had secured his demands quite easily.

So far, this lanky, swanky senior was unwavering of the sequel that had followed. The sequel in question was that Jack Jolly, the kaptein of the Fourth, had obtained eggspungtion from fagging for every member of that important Form on payment of sixpence per head. Neither Bowerer nor anybody else in the Fifth knew of Jolly's little manoeuvre yet. The implacable revelation was in store for them.

Of course, the whole thing was a nice little stroke of bizness from the point of view of the Head. That cunning old fox had made fifteen bob out of Bowerer, and another fifteen bob out of the Fourth by the simple process of sinning one or two documents. In the solitude of his study he was at present counting out his ill-gotten gains and harping fit to bust. Never in the course of his checkered career had he made thirty bob so easily.

"Pa-a-ag!"

The yells of the seniors continued to permeate every nook and cranny of the Skool House.

Jack Jolly and his merry men continued to fag.

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