

BUMPER CHRISTMAS NUMBER!

The MAGNET



BILLY BUNTER DOES IT IN STYLE!

No. 1,191. Vol. XXXVIII.

EVERY SATURDAY.

Week Ending December 13th, 1930.



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Here your Editor is pleased to answer questions and discuss topics of general interest. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

WELL, chums, here you have our specially enlarged Christmas Number, and I sincerely hope that, of all the good things you sample this festive season, you will find this issue of your old paper one of the best!

My staff join with me in extending the heartiest good wishes to you all, and in wishing you

THE VERY MERRIEST OF MERRY CHRISTMASSES AND THE HAPPIEST OF HAPPY NEW YEARS!

May you have all you wish yourselves, and may the festive board be groaning under the weight of good things! But don't have too many of them or you may be doing the groaning afterwards!

We've done our best to make this issue of the MAGNET like a Christmas pudding—full of "plums"—and we hope we've succeeded!

Those of you who are giving parties over the holidays, or who are attending parties given by your chums, will be interested in the following reply to Ted Hawkins, of Birmingham. Ted wants to know a few

TRICKS FOR THE CHRISTMAS PARTY.

Here are one or two which "Mr. X" has passed along:—

Borrow a sixpence from a chum and wrap it in a handkerchief. Then ask him to hold the sixpence through the handkerchief. Now take hold of a corner of the handkerchief, and announce that you are going to make the coin disappear. Flick the handkerchief and shake it when, to the amazement of everyone, the coin will be found to have vanished!

You use your own handkerchief for this trick, and beforehand you must have prepared it by putting another sixpence in the hem of the handkerchief. When you pretend to fold your chum's coin in the handkerchief, you push up the coin which is already in the hem, and this is the one he grips. You take his coin away in the palm of your hand, and then, when you flick the handkerchief, your coin, of course, remains in the hem!

You can do this trick equally well with a matchstick. Have a matchstick in the hem of the handkerchief. Borrow another, and wrap it up. Then push the matchstick, which is in the hem, into your chum's hand, and ask him to break it. After he has done so, and is certain that the matchstick is in two pieces, just unroll the handkerchief, and show the borrowed match to be perfectly whole! The broken match, of course, is in the hem, where no one can see it!

THE THREE MATCHBOX TRICK

is another amusing puzzler. Place three matchboxes on the table. Pick up

the first with the left hand, shake it, and prove that it is empty. Then pick up the second and shake it, with a like result. But when you shake the third it will rattle. Put the three boxes in front of you on the table, move them about a little, and then ask your chums to pick up the full box, whichever box they pick up they will find it to be empty.

The secret is very simple. All the boxes are empty, but you must have a half full box up your right sleeve. Naturally, when you pick up a box with your right hand and shake it, the box up your sleeve will rattle, and give the impression that the box you hold has matches in it!

Can you PUSH A TUMBLER THROUGH THE TABLE?

It sounds impossible until you know how! Sit at the table and take a tumbler and a sheet of newspaper. Cover the tumbler with the paper, and press the paper into the shape of the glass. Then, with your right hand you smash down the paper flat and produce the tumbler from under the table with your left hand.

In this trick, when you have covered the tumbler, you move it backwards to the edge of the table, and allow it to drop into your lap, picking it up quickly with your left hand and placing it under the table. The paper will still retain the shape of the tumbler, and you push the paper forward again. When you bring down your hand, the paper crumples up, and the effect is just as though you had actually pushed the tumbler through the table!

If you practise these tricks beforehand, there is no reason why you should not gain the reputation of being a modern wizard when you perform them in public.

I THINK I have space for just one Greyfriars limerick, which has been sent in by E. Boswell, 4, Lodge Place, Lancaster, who earns a dandy pocket wallet for his fine effort.

Alonzo, the Greyfriars duffer,
Many sneers and jibes has to suffer.
But where courage is needed,
It must be conceded
He may be a fool, but no bluffer!

Now I have a number of queries to answer in

RAPID FIRE REPLIES.

What is Yttrium? asks a Glasgow reader. This is a rare metal, which was discovered at Ytterby, in Sweden. Hence the name.

What place has the shortest name in the world? G. D., of Berwick, wants to

know. There is a town named "Oo" in France, and also a lake with the same name. There is also a river named "Aa" in France, and a village called "Wz." Curiously enough, a man who lived in the latter village rejoices in the name of "Monsieur Wza." But please don't ask me to pronounce it!

Is a mongoose the only animal that can kill a snake? (H. L., of Warwick). No, other snake-killers are the wild pig, the hedgehog, the opossum, the eyed-lizard, the crane-hawk, the armadillo, the alligator, the

serpent-eagle, the swallow-tailed kite, and the secretary-bird. Some snakes also kill members of their own tribe, such as the king cobra, and the glass snake.

Tom Gardiner, an enthusiastic wireless "fan," who lives at Guildford, asks how many wireless stations is it possible to hear? An American claims to be the champion listener in the world. He lives in California, and reckons he has heard 605 broadcasting stations in the past three years—490 in the States, and 115 in other parts of the world. Can any of you beat that?

Robert Hennessey, of Littlehampton, wants to know which is the best Annual on the market. Well, Bob, for six shillings, one cannot beat "The Holiday Annual," but if you want something cheaper why not get the "Popular Book of Boys' Stories," published at 2s. 6d.?

THERE'S just time for a laugh at this yarn, which has been sent in by Thomas Longworth, of 18, Linton Street, Harpurhey, Manchester, and which wins a pocket knife for this lucky reader:



Enthusiastic Motorist: "Yes, she'll do eighty-five!"

Wag: "Per hour, per gallon, or 'per-haps'?"



There's still time for you to win a knife or pocket wallet, so send along your yarn or your limerick!

And now we come to a most important item—next week's programme of attractions. First and foremost comes:

"THE MYSTERY OF CAVANDALE ABBEY!"

in which tip-top yarn of the Greyfriars chums, Frank Richards continues their adventures during the Christmas vacation. As is usual with Frank R's stories there is plenty of humour intermixed with real good thrills, and for holiday reading I am sure that there is nothing to beat next week's contribution from his pen.

Many thanks to the readers who have sent in enthusiastic letters regarding "Up, the Rovers!" You'll enjoy the coming instalment, I can assure you! And you'll also enjoy the "Greyfriars Herald" supplement, "Old Ref's" talk, and the usual shorter features.

Holiday-time without your copy of The MAGNET would be well-nigh unthinkable, so you'd better order next week's copy without delay, if you haven't already done so!

YOUR EDITOR.

DO IT NOW!

Send along your Joke or your Greyfriars Limerick—or both—and win our useful prizes of leather pocket wallets and Sheffield steel penknives. All efforts to be sent to: c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS!

BY
Frank Richards.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Off for the Holidays!

MAKE room for a fellow!"

"Oh dear!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Rats!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Billy Bunter glared into the carriage through his big spectacles.

His fat face was pink with wrath.

"There's room for one!" he bawled.

"What's the good of that to you?" demanded Bob Cherry. "You want room for two, at least."

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

There was a hustling, bustling crowd on the platform of Courtfield station.

Greyfriars School had broken-up for the Christmas holidays. Crowds of fellows swarmed in the station, and there was an incessant buzz of voices, clattering of feet, and banging of baggage. The Famous Five, of the Remove, had bagged a first-class carriage in the train for Lantham. The sixth place in that carriage was vacant; and the chums of the Remove did not expect it to remain vacant in a crowded train at a busy time. But they did not want Billy Bunter to fill it.

They had a sort of feeling that they had seen enough of Billy Bunter during the term, and did not want any more.

Moreover, they knew their Bunter! It was not merely for the sake of their fascinating society on the run to Lantham that Bunter had tracked them to that carriage.

Bunter had a way of sticking on in holiday-time. Once he had stuck on, it was difficult to make him come unstuck, so to speak. His stickfulness, as Hurree Singh expressed it, was terrific.

Any other man in the Remove was welcome to that vacant seat. But not Bunter.

Five heads were shaken at the Owl of the Remove. A large foot—belonging

Christmas is coming . . .

So is Bunter!

But nobody wants Bunter for Christmas.

Where's he going to eat His Christmas dinner?

to Bob Cherry—was lifted in the doorway. Bunter, in the act of clambering in, backed away from that foot. It looked as if it meant business.

"You rotters!" roared Bunter.

"Make room for a fellow! I'm going to have that corner seat."

"Corner seats all taken!" said Harry Wharton cheerfully.

"Then I'll have a middle seat."

"No room!" said Frank Nugent.

"Look here, go along the train," growled Johnny Bull. "We've had enough of you, Bunter; we're fed-up. Bunk!"

"Beast!"

"Lots of room along the train," said Bob Cherry. "Buck up and get in before the crush, old fat bean."

"I'm coming into this carriage!" said Bunter, with a determined blink through his big spectacles. "If you jolly well don't let me in, I'll jolly well make you!"

"Bow-wow!"

Bunter blinked round over a fat shoulder.

"Porter!" he howled.

There were several porters busy with baggage on the swarming platform. They were too busy to heed Bunter.

"Roll on, Bunter!" said Nugent. "Let's shut the door! It's rather parky with that door open."

Bunter put a foot in the carriage.

Bob Cherry stamped with a terrific stamp, missing the foot by six inches. He meant to miss it; but Bunter was not aware of that. He jerked his foot away with a howl.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter?" asked Bob.

"Beast!"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Merry Christmas, fatty!"

"Shut the door!"

"I say, you fellows, don't be beasts, you know. I shan't see any of you again till next term, and I'd like to go as far as Lantham with my old pals."

"Where are they?" asked Bob. "If you've got any pals on this train why not look for them at once, and get in along with them?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Is this what you call proper Christmas feeling?" said Bunter bitterly. "This what you call peace and good will and things?"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Bob uncomfortably.

"Oh, let's let him hop in!" said Harry Wharton.

"Let's!" said Nugent.

"Jump in, fatty, and be blowed to you!" said Johnny Bull.

Bob's foot was withdrawn from the fairway, and Billy Bunter clambered into the carriage.

He immediately squatted down in the nearest corner seat, which Bob had momentarily left unoccupied.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's my seat!" said Bob.

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"If you're going to be selfish, Cherry, I'll—"

"Look here—"

"You know I like corner seats, Cherry! They're more comfortable."

Bob Cherry burst into a laugh and dropped into the middle seat. As Billy Bunter had been admitted, he was bound to act like Bunter. It was no use expecting him to act like anybody else.

"I say, you fellows! Got anything to eat on the journey?" asked Bunter.

"No, fatty."

"There's still time to cut across and get a lunch-basket."

"Cut across, then, old fat man."

"The fact is, I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"Oh, ye gods!" growled Johnny Bull. "I thought we'd heard the last of that postal order for a bit! Shut up, Bunter!"

"If you fellows like to lend me ten bob—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"If you're going to be mean and selfish beasts at Christmas-time—"

"What did we let him in for?" sighed Bob Cherry. "We jolly well knew what to expect! Shall we sling him out again?"

"Good egg!"

"Hallo's here's a carriage!" It was the voice of Coker of the Fifth, on the platform. "Stop here, Potter—"

"It's full," said Potter.

"Only fags! Clear out, you fags!" said Coker, staring into the carriage. "This train seems to be crowded—you can catch the next."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

Coker stared at them.

"What are you cackling at? I've told you to get out! This way, Potter! This way, Greene! Shift these cheeky fags!"

Coker tramped into the carriage. Apparently, Coker of the Fifth, supposed that the juniors were going to be shifted to make room for the more important Fifth-Formers. If that was Coker's idea, it was erroneous.

Five juniors jumped up as if moved

by five springs at the same instant. Five pairs of hands were laid on Horace Coker.

What happened next Coker of the Fifth, hardly knew. He discovered, however, that he was sitting on the platform, which he had smitten with a mighty smite. And all the crowd in the crowded station could hear him roaring.

"Whoooooooooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Doors slammed. The engine shrieked. Potter and Greene helped the gasping Coker to his feet. A porter pushed him back as he made a move towards the moving train. He shook an infuriated fist at a carriage window crammed with laughing faces.

Bob Cherry waved his hand in cheery farewell.

"Good-bye Coker! Merry Christmas!"

And the train rushed out of Courtfield, and the wrathful roar of Coker of the Fifth died away behind.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

No Takers!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. settled down comfortably for the run to Lantham. At Lantham Junction they had to change trains, and there, for a time, they were to separate and go their different ways, meeting later in the holidays. They had plenty to say to one another, and plenty of plans and arrangements to make. Bunter had to speak three times before his fat voice was heeded.

"I say, you fellows!" roared Bunter. "Oh, dry up, Bunter, old man!" said Bob.

"Look here, you beast—"

"Well, what is it?" asked Bob impatiently.

"Got any chocolate about you?"

"No!" roared Bob.

"Got any toffee?"

"No, bother you!"

"Any of you other fellows got any?"

"Bless you, no!"

Billy Bunter grunted, groped in his coat pocket, and extracted therefrom a packet of toffee, which he proceeded to devour.

The Famous Five stared at him.

Apparently Bunter had only wanted to make sure that there were no other supplies to be drawn upon before he drew on his own.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob.

"You fat porker!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! I'm sorry I can't offer you any of this toffee—there isn't really enough for me. Don't be greedy."

"You podgy porpoise!" bawled Johnny Bull. "Do you think I want any of your beastly, sticky toffee?"

"Eh? Shut up, then!" said Bunter.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Good old Bunter!" he said. "How they must love him at home, and how jolly glad I am that they're going to have him there!"

"The gladfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, with a nod of his dusky head.

Bunter grunted, but he had no more to say for a time. His fat jaws were busy. He was silent, save for the noise of mastication, which was considerable, until the toffee was gone. Then he re-started after the interval.

"I say, you fellows! Do listen to a chap, and don't keep on jawing! You fellows are like a sheep's head, nearly

all jaw! Look here! What about the hols?"

"I knew it was coming!" sighed Bob.

"The knowfulness was preposterous."

"My idea was," continued Bunter, "to ask the lot of you to Bunter Court. You'd like that! But, as it happens, the painters are in! The pater's having the place entirely redecorated, ready for a visit from royalty soon after Christmas. So that rather mucks it up."

"Oh crikey!"

"As I can't, after all, ask you fellows for Christmas, and as there won't be much doing at home," went on Bunter, "I'd rather like to spend the hols with one of you fellows. I don't really care which, as you're all my friends."

He blinked seriously at the Famous Five.

"Don't all speak at once," he said.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not all speak at once. They did not speak at all.

"I suppose you'll have something on at Christmas at your place, Franky?" asked Bunter, breaking the silence himself, as no one else seemed disposed to break it.

"Yes, rather," said Nugent.

"What will you have on, old chap?"

"My clothes."

"You silly ass!" howled Bunter. "What's the good of wasting time in idiotic jokes, when we shall be in Lantham soon. This has got to be settled before we get to Lantham."

"It's settled already, so far as I'm concerned," said Frank Nugent laughing.

"On second thoughts, Nugent, I shouldn't care to come home with you. Your pater is rather a fussy old donkey—"

"What?"

"A fussy old donkey. What about you, Bob? Will there be anything on at Cherry Place?" Bunter blinked inquiringly at Bob Cherry. "Of course, I don't expect a lot, like we have at Bunter Court. I know your people are poor."

"You fat idiot—"

"That's all right, old man—never be ashamed of honest poverty," said Bunter soothingly. "We can't all be millionaires. What sort of a Christmas are you going to have?"

"Pretty good, as you won't be there," answered Bob. "Your jolly old absence would make any Christmas jolly."

"I suppose you mean you're too poor to take a friend home. I say, Johnny, old chap—"

"If you talk to me," said Johnny Bull, in a growling voice, "I'm going to hit you on the nose. That's a tip."

Bunter sniffed.

"I was only going to say that I wouldn't be found dead in your place at Christmas, Bull. I say, Harry—"

"Go and eat coke!" said Harry Wharton.

"You're taking Inky home with you?"

"Yes. Shut up!"

"Bit rotten for you with no company but a nigger," said Bunter. "Look here! If you want me, I'll come."

"I don't want you."

"Bunter will come, all the same!" said Johnny Bull sarcastically. "A little thing like that doesn't worry Bunter."

"I wish you'd shut up, Bull, while I'm talking to Harry. We shall be at Lantham soon. What will you have on at Christmas, Harry, old chap?"

"I shall have a boot on, for one thing, and I shall plant it on you hard if I see anything of you," said the captain of the Remove.



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"Yah! I'm sorry now that I didn't accept Mauleverer's invitation," said Bunter. "He pressed me to go to Mauleverer Towers. He——"

"Yes, I heard him pressing you," said Bob. "He said that if you showed up, he would tell the footmen to kick you off the place."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Smithy was awfully keen on my coming with him," said Bunter, turning a deaf ear. "He's getting a run abroad. I'm rather sorry I turned the old Bunder down now."

"Turn him up again at Lantham," suggested Bob. "He's on this train."

Bunter passed that suggestion unheeded. Herbert Vernon-Smith was about the last fellow at Greyfriars to be landed with Bunter for the holidays.

The Owl of the Remove grunted, and sat back in his corner, with a dissatisfied frown on his fat face. Harry Wharton & Co. resumed the conversation the fat Owl had interrupted. Bunter blinked out of the window. The train was drawing near to Lantham now, and from the train the Lantham racecourse could be seen at a distance out of the town. There was a big crowd, tiny figures in the distance, as Bunter blinked at them.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh dear! He's wound up!" groaned Bob.

"Do give a man a chance to speak!" snapped Bunter. "I say, do you know that there's racing on at Lantham to-day—steepchases, you know?"

"What about it, fathead?"

"Well, look what a chance it is!" said Bunter, his little round eyes glistening behind his big, round spectacles. "We're out of school now—no beastly prefects looking after us, and safe from old Quelch's gimlet eye! What about breaking our journey at Lantham and seeing the races?"

"Ring off!"

"Dash it all, bo sportsmen!" urged Bunter. "I'll stand the admission—you can leave that to me, if that's what's worrying you. Of course, one of you fellows would have to lend me the money——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here! We might pick up a lot of money backing our fancy, you know. I've read in the papers about a wonderful horse called something or other, which belongs to Lord Thingummy, and is expected to beat every other gee-gee in the What-do-you-call-it race."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I remember now," said Bunter eagerly. "The horse is called Maharajah, and belongs to Lord Cavandale. You must have heard of him?"

"Fathead!"

"He's up for a big race—the Lantham Thousand Guineas," said Bunter. "I heard Loder of the Sixth talking about him. It's only lately come out what a ripper he is; and Loder says——"

"Blow Loder!"

"He says that the bookies wish that Maharajah would fall down and break his neck."

"Cheese it for goodness' sake!"

"You fellows ain't a bit sporting," said Bunter. "Look here, let's stop

over at Lantham for the races, and back Maharajah for the Thousand Guineas——"

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

"What are you cackling at?" yelled Bunter.

"I'm not so well up in racing matters as you or Loder of the Sixth," chuckled Bob. "But I happen to know that the Lantham Thousand isn't run till after Christmas."

"Oh!" Bunter looked dashed for a moment. "Well, never mind—we can back some other gee. What about it?"

"Dry up, ass!"

Evidently, Harry Wharton & Co. had no intention of breaking their journey home, to back horses on Lantham racecourse. Only Billy Bunter's powerful brain could have evolved such a brilliant idea as that; and there were absolutely no takers.

The Owl of the Remove snorted discontentedly.

"Well, you're missing a good thing,"

"Idiot!"

"Look here!" roared Bunter.

"What's he like?" asked Bob Cherry. "If you know the jolly old lord so jolly well, you know what he's like."

"Oh, frightfully handsome chap, —every inch a lord," said Bunter. "Good-looking and aristocratic, and all that."

"You frightful fibber! Lord Cavandale is the man who got his chivvy mucked up in the War," said Bob. "He was in my father's regiment, and I've heard about him from the pater. His face is disfigured all over—he got too near a shell when it went off."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean that—that's what I meant to say. I mean that he would be frightfully good-looking if—if he hadn't got disfigured. That's what I was going to say. If you fellows don't believe that he's a friend of mine——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lantham!" said Harry Wharton, and the train stopped in Lantham Junction Station, and the Famous Five streamed out of the carriage, Billy Bunter, with a fat, discontented face, rolling at their heels.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Only Way!

"I SAY, you fellows——"
"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Hold on a minute!" yelled Bunter. "It's important!"

There was a crowd at Lantham Station. Besides a crowd of Greyfriars men, looking for trains in various directions, there were a number of horsey-looking men, evidently drawn to Lantham that day by the races. Loud voices, and loud clothes, and big cigars swarmed on the platforms.

Billy Bunter grabbed at Harry Wharton's arm. The captain of the Remove had to stop, and he stopped impatiently.

"Look here, you ass——"

"Hold on a minute!" grunted Bunter. "Look here, if I'm not coming home with you, old chap——"

"You're not! Go and eat coke!"

"Well I've got to get home," said Bunter. "Who's going to lend me the money for my ticket? I'll settle up next term."

"You fat villain! You had your journey-money."

"The—the fact is——"

"The dear boy would rather spend somebody else's money," remarked Johnny Bull. "Bunter's frightfully economical with his own money."

"Beast!"

"Barge off!" grunted Wharton, shaking his arm free.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "There's a friend of yours, Bunter."

"Eh! Where?"

Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles.

Bob Cherry, with a chuckle, indicated a group of men standing at a little distance, apparently waiting for a train.

One of them looked like a trainer;

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EVERYONE, at Christmas, sends hearty greetings to his friends. Thus, my chums, I send to you, Cheery greetings, warm and true.

May you have just tons of luck;
Parties, presents, loads of tuck;
Stacks of gifts and hours of fun;
All things good for everyone.

Your Editor.

he said. "With me to help you, with my judgment and knowledge, you might win a big pot. Look here, if you'll stop over at Lantham with me for the races, I—I'll give you an introduction to Lord Cavandale."

"Friend of yours?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Exactly."

"One of your titled relations, perhaps?" grinned Bob.

"Well, not exactly a relation," said Bunter. "But a jolly old friend! In fact, he's dandled me on his knee when I was a kid."

"You must have weighed a lot less then than you do now."

"Yah! Well, what about it?" asked Bunter. "You fellows would like to meet a lord. I'll—I'll introduce you, if—if he's there. His racing stables are at Lantham, you know, though he lives at a thumping big place—Cavandale Abbey, I think. Cavandale Abbey, in Surrey—I know the place like a book."

"Ass!"

"If you fellows don't believe that he's a friend of mine——"

another like a bookmaker; but the third was rather a tall, lean, aristocratic-looking man—in a silk hat and a fur-collared coat.

He was a fine-looking man, in spite of the disfigurement of his face, which had once been handsome. One cheek was marked by a terrible scar, which puckered up the skin, and gave one side of his face a strangely twisted look. On the other cheek was a smaller, white scar.

Of his mouth and chin nothing could be seen, as he wore a thick, heavy moustache and beard, perhaps concealing other scars.

"Eh! Who do you mean?" asked Bunter.

"That's Lord Cavandale—"

"Eh?"

"Take us up and introduce us to your friend, old fat man."

"Oh!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

"I—I—I say, I—I won't interrupt him now—"

"No time like the present," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "We're quite keen to know your titled friends, Bunter. Here, collar him and make him."

"Yes rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

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

There was no reply.

Bunter was gone.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. went on their way, untroubled further by William George Bunter. Evidently William George did not want to be marched up to Lord Cavandale to perform introductions. Bunter promptly disappeared in the crowd.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter, when the crowd hid him from the Famous Five. "Rotters! Now, about that rotten ticket—"

Bunter grunted discontentedly. He had his journey-money; and there was no reason why he should not take his ticket on the railway like any other fellow. But Bunter had his reasons. He hated wasting money on railway tickets. There were so many better uses to which money could be put. On foodstuffs Bunter was prepared to expend cash with the wildest extravagance. But money that was not spent on tuck seemed to Bunter to be wickedly wasted.

Those beasts, with the selfishness Bunter really expected of them, had refused to take a ticket for him. Bunter had to buy one himself, or to travel without one.

The latter resource was risky, and could hardly be called honest. Bunter considered the risk, and forgot to think about the honesty. A fellow couldn't think of everything.

He had taken a ticket as far as Lantham. It was easy enough to enter any train he liked, without taking a further ticket. The trouble was that beastly inspectors and such persons might demand to see his ticket at any station; and a ticket which expired at Lantham was no use to show them.

But William George Bunter had had a lot of experience at this sort of thing. What Bunter did not know about bilking, was not worth knowing.

He blinked along the train till he found an empty first-class carriage. He rolled into it and shut the door.

Travelling without paying, Bunter naturally chose a first-class carriage, not a third. It was as well to be hung for a sheep as for a lamb.

He would have liked to sit down in a comfortable corner seat; but one drawback of being a bilk was that a fellow

could not travel in such comfort as if he paid his way.

The train was not booked to start for several minutes yet; and at Lantham Junction a railway inspector often came round to look at the tickets before the train went. Bunter knew that, for he had been caught thus on one occasion when making use of railway facilities free, gratis, and for nothing.

Having closed the door of the carriage, Bunter flattened himself on the floor, and rolled under the seat.

There he intended to remain until the train was safely out of the junction.

He hoped fervently that no other passengers would get in. If he had the carriage to himself it would be all right. If, on the other hand, other passengers got in, Bunter was booked for a rather uncomfortable journey—as he could scarcely let other passengers behold him emerging from under the seat.

He had to take his chance of that. A bilk, of course, had to expect to take chances.

Anyhow, he was booked for a free ride. When he got out he would pay for the distance from the last station but one—sixpence or so. He would have to pretend that he had been on the train only between two stations. But fibbing like that did not worry William George Bunter. One more fib was only a drop in the ocean to Bunter. Like many unthinking members of the public, Bunter regarded a railway company as "fair game." To do him justice, he did not realise that swindling the railway of a fare was as dishonest as picking a porter's pocket.

He settled down as comfortably as he could.

It was quite probable that he would have the carriage to himself. There was a rush on the third-class carriages, but no rush on the first class. Fares were too steep for that. Plenty of trains travelled with the third class packed like sardine-tins and the first class empty or nearly empty. Bunter hoped for the best.

He heard doors slamming along the train.

Then—almost at the last moment—the door of Bunter's carriage opened. A very elegant shoe and trouser-end passed within a few inches of Bunter's spectacles as somebody stepped in.

Bunter scowled at it.

Of course, some beast had to hop in at the last minute! The public had no consideration whatever for bilks.

However, Bunter was not in a position to raise objections. In fact, he was only too glad not to be observed by the newcomer.

That newcomer evidently had no suspicions that the carriage was already occupied. He sat down in the corner facing Bunter's hiding-place—but, of course, never dreaming of looking under the opposite seat. Bunter heard voices at the door. The man who was sitting in the carriage spoke, in a deep, clear, cultivated voice—a very pleasant voice.

"Well, good-bye, Boone!"

"Good-bye, my lord!"

Bunter started a little.

It was a "lord," who was travelling in that carriage! He wondered whether it was Lord Cavandale, who had been on the platform, and with whom Billy Bunter was not so well acquainted as he had told the Famous Five. All Billy Bunter knew of his lordship was that his lordship was owner of the celebrated Maharajah—

and he would not have known even that had he not heard some of the talk of the sporting seniors at Greyfriars. Billy Bunter rather liked the idea of travelling with a lord, though certainly he would have preferred it not to be in the present awkward circumstances.

"Let me know about Maharajah's trial run!" went on the deep, pleasant voice.

Evidently the passenger was Lord Cavandale.

"Certainly, my lord!"

"And tell your friends, Boone, to put their shirts on him for the Lantham Thousand!" added Lord Cavandale, with a laugh.

The trainer laughed, too, in a respectful way.

"They've got 'em on already, my lord; but nobody can get any more on him now—the odds are too short since the bookies found him out."

"And keep an eye open, Boone!" Lord Cavandale spoke in a lower key.

"I know I need not warn you, but there are plenty of men who would get at Maharajah if they could. A good many thousands were laid on the Black Prince before anything was known about Maharajah's form. But you're on your guard."

The trainer laughed softly.

"You rely on me, my lord! Maharajah's guarded night and day—watched and guarded every minute! There's six or seven big men will lose fortunes when he wins the Lantham Thousand; and he's bound to win. Black Prince is the pick of the rest; and Black Prince hasn't an earthly beside him. Why, sir, there's fifty thousand pounds at least on Black Prince. You rely on me to watch Maharajah, my lord. They won't get at him."

"I do rely on you, Boone! Well, good-bye!"

Lord Cavandale settled down in his seat, and Bunter heard the rustle of a newspaper. The carriage door closed; the trainer was gone.

There was the shriek of a whistle.

The train began to move.

It was actually in motion when the carriage door was torn open, a man jumped in, and the door slammed behind him.

A pair of boots and the trouser-ends, in a grey check, of the newcomer, passed before Bunter's vision. He heard the breathless gasp of the man who had barely caught the train.

"Close shave, sir!" said a husky voice, apparently addressing Lord Cavandale.

"Quite!"

His lordship's tone was civil, but evidently not intended to encourage conversation from a stranger. The newspaper rustled again. The man in the check trousers sat down in the corner seat facing his lordship, his heels almost touching Bunter's fat nose under the seat. The express rushed out of Lantham Station.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Baffled by Bunter!

"BEASTS!"

Billy Bunter did not utter that word aloud.

He breathed it to himself, silently, but with emphasis.

His hopes of having a carriage to himself, of being able to crawl out of his hiding-place and take his ease on cushioned seats, had been dashed to the ground. There was no cushioned seat for Billy Bunter that journey.

He lay under the seat, stifling his breathing as much as he could lest the passengers should hear. That, however, in the rumble and rattle of the train, was not likely.

It was stuffy there, and it was uncomfortable. Of course, it was better than wasting money on railway tickets. But there was no doubt that it was stuffy and uncomfortable.

Bunter had plenty of neck; but he had not neck enough to crawl out into view and reveal to two other passengers that he was swindling the railway company. By some obscure mental process, peculiar to his own fat brain, Billy Bunter was satisfied with his own manners and customs, and did not regard this as swindling. But he realised that other people would not take his own view of his conduct. Other people would regard him simply as a young scoundrel if they knew what he was up to. Indeed, they might—and probably would—hand him over to a railway inspector for investigation and judgment. While other passengers were in the carriage Bunter had to remain doggo.

He hoped fervently that they would get out soon.

Lord Cavandale evidently had been to Lantham to visit his racing stable there, where his horses were trained. Probably he was going home. If he was going home he would be changing trains before long. The other passenger might be going all the way, however. Bunter could only hope that he wasn't.

Billy Bunter settled down as well as he could as the train rattled and rumbled on.

He anticipated discomfort. That was really inseparable from bilking. But he certainly did not anticipate what was going to happen on that journey—not the remotest suspicion crossed his fat mind.

That tragedy was brooding over that carriage was a thought that never occurred to Bunter. That anything out of the common was going to happen he did not imagine.

When it happened, it happened with such swift, startling suddenness that it seemed like a wild dream to Bunter.

For ten minutes the boots and the check trouser-ends, close to his fat face, had not moved. The latest passenger was silent, still; and from Lord Cavandale came only an occasional rustle of the newspaper. All of a sudden the boots and check trouser-ends moved. Bunter heard a thud, a cry, a fall.

He fairly jumped.

What was happening? Almost Bunter fancied that he had gone to sleep under the seat, and was dreaming.

"You scoundrel!"

It was Lord Cavandale's voice, in panting tones.

A struggle was going on in the carriage for a second or two; then the heavy fall told that the assailed man was down.

Bunter gasped.

The man in check trousers—the man who had jumped into the moving carriage at the last moment—had suddenly, swiftly, without warning, flung himself across the carriage at the man seated opposite.

Lord Cavandale, taken utterly by surprise, gripped in fierce hands, went

crashing to the floor of the carriage, his assailant upon him.

Bunter gave a squeak of alarm and excitement, unheard by either man in the struggle.

In utter amazement and startled terror, Bunter put his head out from under the seat, like a tortoise's head from its shell.

Lord Cavandale was down on his back on the floor, struggling, but without a chance against his assailant. That assailant—a thick-set, stocky man—was kneeling on him, pinning the lean, slim gentleman down with sinewy knees and heavy weight. His back was to Bunter as he bestrode the fallen man. Bunter could not see his face; only the back of a bullet head, with a black

As Bunter watched from his hiding-place the ruffian raised the loaded stick for a smashing downward blow at the upturned face and unprotected head of the fallen man!



bowler-hat jammed down tight, almost to the ears.

Bunter blinked at the startling scene, his eyes almost starting through his spectacles.

One of Lord Cavandale's feet actually touched Bunter's chin as his lordship lay extended on his back. His panting voice was heard again.

"You scoundrel!"

The assailant did not speak.

To Bunter's frozen horror, the ruffian's right hand came out of his coat with a weapon in it. It was a short, thick life-preserver; a deadly weapon at close quarters. The hand was flung up with the loaded stick in it for a smashing downward blow at the upturned face and unprotected head of the fallen man.

Bunter shrieked.

It was not robbery—it was murder! Almost unbelievable as it was, it was murder that was intended. That crashing blow, if it landed, would crack the skull of the fallen man like an egg-shell. Bunter knew it—there was no doubt of it. The blow was not intended to stun; it was intended to kill. He shrieked; and, fortunately, he did more than shriek. Billy Bunter was not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

Had he stopped to think, the helpless man might have been murdered under his eyes. Impulse, luckily, came before thought. How he did it, Bunter never knew. But he squirmed out from under the seat, and both his fat hands, behind the assassin, caught at the upraised arm, grasping it frantically.

There was a sharp cry from the ruffian—a cry of astonishment and alarm. Obviously he had never dreamed that anyone was in the carriage but himself and his victim. The grasp on his arm took him by surprise, and Bunter dragged the upraised arm back over the rascal's shoulder, and the loaded stick slipped from the man's grasp and fell to the floor.

The next instant the ruffian was turning on Bunter like a tiger. Amazement mingled with rage in his face at the sight of the fat schoolboy.

"Help!" yelled Bunter.

A thousand stars danced before Bunter's vision as the ruffian struck. He crashed down on the floor.

"Whooooop!"

Swiftly the ruffian turned on his victim again. Lord Cavandale was grasping him, and the loaded stick was gone; it had rolled under a seat. The peer was struggling desperately to throw the ruffian off. He could not throw him off, and two savage hands were grasping at his throat.

Bunter, half-stunned by the furious blow, gasped on the floor. Like a fellow in a dream, he heard the panting voice of Lord Cavandale.

"Help!"

"Oh! Ow, wow! Ow!" gasped Bunter.

His fat chin felt as if it had been knocked through his head. But he sat up, blinking dazedly.

"Help! Pull the cord, if you can, boy!"

Bunter staggered up.

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He understood.

The man in the bowler-hat released one hand from his victim and made a grab at Bunter.

But Cavandale grasped at him fiercely and dragged him back. Bunter, barely escaping the clutch of the ruffian, grabbed the communication cord and dragged at it frantically.

There was a hoarse oath from the ruffian. The train was slowing down. He wrenched himself away from the fallen man and leaped up, panting. Bunter yelled with terror; but the rascal was not heeding him now. The train was slowing down; the alarm was given, and the attempted murderer was thinking only of escape. He flung the carriage door open and, under Bunter's terrified eyes, leaped through.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! Oh crikey!"

He stared dizzily through the open door. He saw the man roll down a steep embankment, his bowler-hat flying from his head, pick himself up, clamber over a fence, and vanish into a leafy lane.

He was gone. It had been a risky leap. But the train had slowed down sufficiently to give the rascal a chance. And he was gone!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. Lord Cavandale struggled to his feet. Billy Bunter blinked at him, dazed and dizzy, the railway carriage and his lordship swimming round him.

"You've saved my life!" Bunter heard the words as through a mist. Everything floated before his eyes. And what happened next Bunter did not know. He had fainted.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Brave Bunter!

"**B**RAVE lad!" Billy Bunter heard the words faintly. His eyes opened.

For the moment Bunter did not remember. He blinked round him wildly. There was a pain in his fat chin, of which he did not recall the cause for the moment. He was aching all over. His fat brain was in a whirl.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "He's coming to, my lord!"

"Thank goodness! The brave lad——" "I say, you fellows, where's my specs?" Bunter was mumbling. "I say, gimme my specs! If you break my specs, you'll have to pay for them!"

"My dear boy"—it was a deep, pleasant voice, strangely familiar to Bunter's ears—"here are your glasses!"

Bunter jammed his spectacles on his fat little nose and blinked round him in bewilderment.

He was lying on a sofa in a room. Sitting on a chair close by was a lean and elegant gentleman, whom he knew to be Lord Cavandale. Another man—apparently a railway official—was standing by, looking down on him with sympathetic concern. There was a buzz of voices from the distance.

Bunter sat up. Lord Cavandale's arm passed behind his fat shoulders and supported him.

"I—I say, what—what's happened?" gasped Bunter. "I say, I wasn't travelling without a ticket!"

"What?" "I—I lost my ticket!" gasped Bunter. "That is all right, my boy," said the peer, with a smile. "Don't worry about your ticket."

"Oh dear! Wharrer marrer with my chin? I'm hurt!" Bunter passed a fat hand over a fat chin. "Ow! I'm hurt! Wow!"

"The Magnet Library.—No. 1,191.

"You had a hard knock," said Lord Cavandale. "The brute struck you hard. You fainted."

"I didn't!" said Bunter promptly. "Eh?"

"I may have been stunned!" Bunter remembered it all now. "But I didn't faint. No fear!"

His lordship smiled. "Do you feel better now, my boy?"

"Well, I'm hurt," said Bunter. "I'm injured! But I didn't faint! Don't you go saying I fainted, you know! They'd never let me hear the end of it in the Remove! I didn't faint, of course!"

"Well, well, you lost consciousness," said Lord Cavandale.

"I may have lost consciousness," admitted Bunter cautiously. "I say, where am I? I—I thought I was in a train!"

"You have been unconscious some little time," said Lord Cavandale. "You are now in the stationmaster's room at Pooting Station. You remember you pulled the communication cord and the train stopped?"

"I—I remember! I—I say——" Bunter blinked round uneasily through his spectacles. "Where's that awful beast?"

"The man who attacked me has escaped——"

"You see, having lost my ticket, I—I was afraid I might be—be suspected of travelling without one!" stammered Bunter. "So I—I nipped under the seat."

"Oh!" said the Pooting stationmaster. He uttered only that monosyllable; but he contrived to put a lot of expression into it.

"It is immaterial," said Lord Cavandale hastily. "Quite immaterial. The boy's presence saved my life. Any question of his fare may be left to me."

"In the circumstances, my lord, the question will not be raised," said the Pooting stationmaster.

"That's all very well," said Billy Bunter. "But that doesn't satisfy me. If I'm going to be suspected of travelling without a ticket——"

"No, no!" said his lordship. "Well, I want it clear," said Bunter sulkily. "A fellow doesn't like being called a bilk. I think a Public school chap is entitled to have his word taken. Nobody at Greyfriars would dream of doubting my word. If my friends had happened to be on that train, they would tell you so. They all saw me take my ticket."

"You are a Greyfriars boy?" asked Lord Cavandale. "Yes, rather—I'm in the Remove." "The son of a friend of mine—Major Cherry—is in the Greyfriars Remove," said his lordship, with interest. "No doubt you know him."

"One of my best pals," said Bunter. "He came to Lantham to see me off in that train, with a crowd of my other pals." He blinked at the stationmaster. "If you think I was travelling without a ticket, you can jolly well ask Bob Cherry——"

"Not at all, sir," said the stationmaster, perhaps not uttering his real thoughts. "Please do not mention it."

"Here is the doctor," he added, a moment later.

Lord Cavandale and the Pooting stationmaster left Bunter in the hands of the medical gentleman. The medical gentleman did not seem to think that Bunter was so fearfully injured as the Owl of Greyfriars supposed; but he bandaged his fat chin.

Bandaged, and feeling a little better, Bunter rested on the sofa. He noticed that faces were continually put in at the door to glance at him. At first he fancied, with inward trepidation, that these people were looking in at a suspected "bilk." But he discerned sympathy, concern, and even admiration, in the curious faces; and it dawned upon his fat brain that they were interested in him as the schoolboy who had saved Lord Cavandale from a ferocious attack.

His lordship had stated that Bunter had saved his life; and, in fact, there was no doubt about it. Bunter had.

Bunter began to feel bucked.

How he had ever found the pluck to fling himself upon that desperate and murderous ruffian in the railway carriage was now a mystery to Bunter. But he had done it.

On that point there was not a shadow of doubt; no possible shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever.

Bunter had done it! He had saved Lord Cavandale's life—saved the life of the celebrated sporting peer; the owner of Maharajah; the nobleman famed for his record in the War, and for the terrible scars that the War had left him. That was a happy and pleasant reflection to Billy Bunter. He was thinking less of Lord Cavandale than of what it might mean to him.

Of course, it was jolly to have saved a man's life, especially a nobleman's life—the life of one of the heroes of the

(Continued on page 10.)

HERE'S A CHRISTMAS PRESENT

for H. R. Driffield, of 14, Havelock Road, Dartford, Kent, who submitted the attached Greyfriars limerick:

Said Fish to Bob Cherry one day:
"Old Bunter's a fatheaded jay;
He scoffs all good fare,
Then lolls in a chair,
And sleeps for the rest of the day!"

Send in YOUR limerick, chum,
and win a HANDSOME
LEATHER POCKET WALLET.

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I mean, I'm glad he's not here! He's broken my jaw! I—I don't want to see any more of him! Oh crikey!"

"Your jaw is not broken," said Lord Cavandale reassuringly. "But you have a bruise."

"Ow! It hurts!" groaned Bunter. He caressed his damaged chin tenderly. "Wow! It hurts! Ow!"

"The doctor will be here any minute," said the stationmaster. "Perhaps the boy will explain how he came to be travelling in the carriage under the seat."

Bunter thought he discerned suspicion in the official's eye. Perhaps the stationmaster of Pooting had had to deal with bilks before in his time.

"I—I lost my ticket——" gasped Bunter.

"No doubt. But why did you get under the seat? It appears that you must have been under the seat from the time the train left Lantham, unknown to his lordship or to the villain who attacked him."

"Yes; you see——" stammered Bunter.

"It was very fortunate for me that the boy was there," said Lord Cavandale, though his glance was rather curious at Bunter. "There is no doubt whatever that he saved my life."

"Very fortunate indeed, my lord; yet——"

"Half-Time" Gossip!



CONFESSION, so it is said, is good for the soul. I have a confession to make this week, and it is to the effect that I am "stumped" in respect of the proper decision concerning a series of incidents which happened during a recent game in Scotland, and of which particulars have been sent to me by a Dundee reader.

If you are among the lads who read my notes regularly you will remember that I had something to say, two or three weeks ago, about players leaving the field, and not being allowed to come back until they had reported to the referee and received his permission to resume. The problem which now reaches me from Scotland touches on this selfsame point, and so far as my experience goes it is an absolutely novel situation.

Here are the facts:

During a match complaint was made of the condition of the studs on the boots of one of the players. After examination the referee told the player that he must retire to the dressing-room to have the studs attended to.

Now this was one of the occasions when a player cannot return to the field of play without the consent of the referee, and clearly he must wait until there is a stoppage in the game for that consent to be given. The referee would obviously want to see that the "offending" studs in the boots of the player had been put right.

Well, in due course, the player emerged from the dressing-room, and stood behind the goal waiting for a stoppage during which he could report to the referee and ask for permission to return to take an active part in the game. While the player was waiting thus, an attack on his side's goal became very serious. So much so that while the goalkeeper was some distance out of his goal a shot was sent in which was going right for the net.

Getting very excited, and being desperately keen that his side should not lose a goal, the "dismissed" player dashed on to the field and fisted the ball out from under the post, thus saving a certain goal.

What was the correct decision which the referee should give in such circumstances? When I first thought about this question it looked easy, but on further consideration I came to the conclusion that it was really difficult.

I BELIEVE if I had been faced with the above problem I should, on the spur of the moment, have given a penalty kick against the player who had dashed on to the field and saved a goal by the use of his hands. But I am not at all sure that such a verdict would have been good law. A point to be borne in mind is that the player, having been dismissed from the field in the circumstances named, had no right to come back to take any part in the game without the referee's sanction. Therefore, it can be suggested that for the time being, at any rate, he was not a player; that he was in the same position as a spectator, and, consequently, the only thing the referee could do would be to throw the ball down.

If he had given such a decision, however, the referee would rightly have been accused of an injustice to the side which had thus been robbed of a goal. In the absence of a ruling by the authorities responsible, however, I incline to the view that to throw the ball down was the really correct decision. I give this verdict in a doubting spirit, however, because as I said at the outset the question bristles with so many difficulties that I have a feeling of being "stumped" by it. Indeed, I am inclined to ask:

"Why do players do these things?" They ought to know better than to set problems which cause us to sit for hours with a wet towel round our heads thinking out the proper course of action.

POSSIBLY you will agree that having had to puzzle a long time over this question I am justified in asking you to think over one for a bit. I admit quite frankly that this is a catch, but I should ponder over it before you read on to the solution. Can the same player score two successive goals in a match without any other player of either side touching the ball? Don't say it can't be done, because it can, despite the fact that the ball has usually to be kicked off from the centre by the side which lost the goal.

If you "give it up" I will now tell you the circumstances in which the same player can score two goals in a match without another player of either side touching the ball meantime.

The centre-forward scores a goal with the very last kick of the first half. As his team lost the toss, this same centre-forward had to kick off when the second half started. He took a hefty kick at the ball from the centre of the field in kicking off, and then dashed up to his opponents' penalty area while the ball was still in flight.

Arriving there, the centre-forward was fouled by one of the opposing full-backs. A penalty kick was awarded, and the centre-forward, being deputed to take it, scored from the twelve yards spot.

There you are—the same player scoring two successive goals without any other player of either side touching the ball.

WE are all interested in the young lads who make good in football, and I take it that such interest has inspired a question which reaches me from Burnley. This is it:

Who is the youngest player who has ever been on the winning side in a Cup Final?

I am not sure that I can answer that question with any degree of confidence. It is now over fifty years since the Cup was first played for and the record books do not give any indication of the ages of the players in the various winning teams of long ago.

While I would not be dogmatic, however, I should think that last year's Cup winning team—the Arsenal—contained one of the youngest players who has ever gained the most coveted prize which is played for by footballers—a Cup winner's medal. This player is Clifford Bastin, the outside-left of the Arsenal, who was only eighteen years of age when the side for which he played won the Cup last season. A lucky lad, eh?

In regard to this question of young footballers, I think it can safely be said that there never was a time when there were so many boys playing in top-class football. Youth is having its fling to a remarkable extent. Eric Houghton, who played for England against Ireland a few weeks back, is now only twenty years of age, and there are several players in the leading sides of to-day who are even younger.

I would have you remember, however, that a footballer cannot be signed by a club as a professional until he is seventeen years of age.

"OLD REF."

BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS!

(Continued from page 8.)

Somme. That was jolly; but still more jolly was the anticipation of the form that the peer's gratitude might take.

The man was bound to be grateful. That stood to reason. He could hardly fail to be grateful to the fellow who had saved his life at fearful risk, and was now lying with his fat face bandaged in consequence.

Bunter had had rather dismal anticipations for that Christmas. His pals at Greyfriars had let him down—as he chose to regard it! After all he had done for them, they had let him down for the hols.

Home, sweet home, did not appeal to Bunter. The society of brother Sammy and sister Bessie did not appeal to him. Indeed, he had told his father that he would be away for the Christmas holidays, taking it for granted that he would be able to land himself on some Remove man.

Mr. Bunter was certain to be surprised, and not at all certain to be pleased, when he turned up at home after all. No doubt Mr. Bunter was fond of William George; but it was undoubtedly a case where absence made the heart grow fonder.

In spite of the ache in his fat chin, Bunter's reflections were pleasant ones, as he lay at ease on the stationmaster's sofa. He smiled cheerily as he saw Lord Cavandale come back into the room.

But the smile died off his face as a police-inspector and a constable followed his lordship in.

He gave a squeak of alarm.

Back into his mind came the horrid remembrance that he was a "bilk," and the grim suspicion in the stationmaster's eye. He was going to be run in for bilking the railway company!

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Keep off!"

"What—?" began Lord Cavandale.

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter.

"You—you what—?"

"Keep them away! I'll pay for the ticket!" howled Bunter. "You tell that beast of a stationmaster to come here and I'll pay for the ticket! I'll pay excess fare! I'm not going to be run in! Help!"

"Is the boy delirious?" asked the police-inspector, staring at Bunter in great astonishment.

"I—I think he is under a—a misapprehension," gasped Lord Cavandale. "My boy, this gentleman has come to—"

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter. "I wasn't! Look here, I lost my ticket—"

"To question you about the man who attacked me—"

"Eh?"

"In the railway carriage."

"Oh!"

"He is here to take your statement, and any description you can give of the villain!" said Lord Cavandale.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I thought— All right! I—I thought— I—I mean, I didn't think—that is, I—I wasn't—"

"This gallant lad saved my life, and at great risk to himself," said the peer, addressing the police-inspector. "He received a brutal blow, and is naturally somewhat upset."

"No doubt," said the inspector, looking very curiously at Bunter. "Now, if you are able to answer a few questions, sir—"

Billy Bunter smiled again.

"Right-ho!" he said. "Go ahead!"

Lord Cavandale had described him as a gallant lad. It was a fitting description, as Bunter realised—no description

could have fitted him better, in fact. Obviously, his lordship was grateful; and it was practically certain that his gratitude would take a substantial form.

Bunter had already decided in his fat mind what form it was going to take—if he could wangle it! In spite of the ache in his bandaged chin, it was a bright and cheery Bunter who sat on the sofa and answered the police-inspector's questions.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Fixes Up for Christmas!

"BELIEVE me," said Lord Cavandale, "I am very grateful." Billy Bunter was glad to hear it.

The Pooting police-inspector, having taken Bunter's statement, was gone. No doubt he had taken a statement from Lord Cavandale also, concerning the murderous attack in the train; but Bunter had heard nothing of that.

Neither had he given it a thought. Bunter was not bothering about that attack, or the reasons for it, or the escape of the bullet-headed man in the bowler hat.

Bunter was thinking of other things.

The hospitable stationmaster of Pooting did not seem to mind how long his private room was taken possession of. No doubt he was pleased to be of service to the celebrated sporting peer, and to the gallant schoolboy who had saved him from a murderous hand. But it was time to get a move on.

Lord Cavandale, though perfectly calm and self-possessed, was feeling the effects of the savage attack. He had been saved from serious injury, but he was bruised and shaken, though he showed little sign of it. He was anxious now to be on his way, and Bunter was aware that a car had been telephoned for, from Lantham, to carry him homeward, his lordship not feeling equal to the train journey and changing trains. His lordship was under the impression that he was travelling home to Cavandale Abbey alone in that car. Billy Bunter was under the impression that he wasn't.

"Grateful—indeed grateful!" His lordship's voice was deeply earnest. "I am fully aware of what you have done for me—of what you have saved me from, my boy. Inexplicable as it is that any man should seek my life, it is beyond doubt that that dastard intended to kill me. I feel that it is an honour to have made your acquaintance, Bunter."

Bunter smiled.

He wondered what those beasts, Harry Wharton & Co., would have said if they could have heard that!

They would hardly be able to make out now that he wasn't acquainted with Lord Cavandale!

"My old school is keeping up its old traditions," said his lordship. It appeared that Lord Cavandale had been at Greyfriars in the old days before the War—he was an Old Boy. Probably he was not much over forty now, though the terrible scars on his aristocratic face gave him an older look. "I am glad to see that Greyfriars is still turning out good stuff."

Bunter purred.

It really was rather rotten that no Greyfriars fellows were present to hear all this! Never had Bunter so much desired an audience.

"Now, my boy, I must see that you are sent safely home before I go myself," said his lordship kindly; "and

if there is anything else I can do for you—"

He paused a moment.

"Believe me," he said, "you have made a friend in me. Command me if I can serve you in any way."

Bunter coughed.

Bunter had fully made up his mind in what way he desired Lord Cavandale to serve him. But it was a delicate matter to tell his lordship about it, and undoubtedly required tact.

"The fact is—" said Bunter, blinking at his lordship through his big spectacles. "The fact—er—is—"

"Yes?" said the peer kindly.

"The fact is, I'm in rather a hole."

"Indeed?" The kindly gentleman's manner became more kindly, more keenly interested. Anyone could have seen at a glance that he was glad to hear that there was something that he could do in return for the immense service that Billy Bunter had done him.

"Can I help you?"

"The fact is—" Bunter hesitated.

"Speak out freely, my boy," said the peer encouragingly. "I was not speaking idly in saying that I am grateful, and that I desire to serve you. Anything in my power—"

"I've got left, over Christmas!" explained Bunter.

"In what way?"

"Some fellows I relied on for the Christmas holidays turned me down at the last minute," said Bunter.

"That was rather awkward," remarked his lordship. He had adjusted an eyeglass in his right eye and was looking at the Owl of the Remove rather curiously.

"They let me down," said Bunter, "after I'd written to my pater to say that I shouldn't be coming home for the hols."

"Yes?" His lordship was sympathetic, but evidently did not see, so far, how he could help. Still, it was obvious that he was willing, indeed eager, to help if he could.

"In the circumstances," said Bunter, "I don't want to go home! Owing to— to certain—certain circumstances— family matters, you know—I'd rather not butt in at home. But my friends have let me down. That leaves me stranded for the holidays."

"That is very unfortunate," said his lordship, with a sympathetic yet puzzled look.

"So I was—was wondering—"

"Yes?"

"Whether—" stammered Bunter.

"Proceed!"

"Of course," said Bunter, "I'm not the fellow to fish for an invitation. That is a thing I have never done, as any Greyfriars man would tell you if you asked him. In such matters I've always been very delicate—very delicate indeed! But"—he blinked at his lordship—"you'd hardly notice one more, in a big place like Cavandale Abbey—"

Bunter stopped.

Even Bunter dimly realised the colossal cheek of what he was asking Lord Cavandale. And kind as was the expression on his lordship's face, it was growing a little colder. A sort of defensive expression came over it, an expression often seen on the faces of people who had to deal with William George Bunter.

But Bunter meant business. If the man was grateful, as he said, he was bound to play up. It was a terrific "neck" to ask for an invitation to Cavandale Abbey. But Bunter was, as he had said, stranded, and it was a case of neck or nothing.

There was a short silence.

Obviously Bunter had taken his lordship by surprise. Kind as he was, grateful as he undoubtedly was, highly as he thought of this schoolboy who had saved his life, Lord Cavandale seemed to have had a sort of shock.

When he spoke—after a short silence which seemed to the fat junior terribly long—there was a slight change in his voice and manner, as if they had had a touch of the refrigerator.

"Certainly!" he said.

Bunter smiled again.

"If it would give you any pleasure to pass your school vacation at Cavandale Abbey I should be delighted!" said the peer.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Good!"

"I must tell you, however, that you will probably find it very dull," said Lord Cavandale. "There is no young society. I am an unmarried man—with no near relations. Friends who stay with me are, generally speaking, of my own age. The place is large and very old, probably you would find it very lonely. I fear that you would scarcely enjoy a holiday there, Bunter."

Bunter wondered whether his lordship was hedging. He knew that he wasn't jolly well going to let him hedge, anyhow.

"I'd like it no end," he declared.

"If you are sure of that——" said the peer doubtfully.

"Oh, quite!" said Bunter.

"Then we will consider it arranged," said Lord Cavandale, his eyeglass glimmering very curiously at Bunter. "But I must say again that you will find it dull. At the present time, apart from the servants, I have only one friend staying in the house—Captain Lankester—and he, although a young man, is, of course, far too old for his society to be of any use to you."

"Well, I might ask a few friends!" said Bunter brightly.

"Eh?"

"A few Greyfriars men——"

"Oh!"

"Cheer the dull old place up a bit!" suggested Bunter.

"H'm!"

"So if you'd really like me to come, sir——"

There was a fraction of a second before the peer replied.

"Please do!" he said. "I shall be—h'm—delighted!"

"Then it's a go!" said Billy Bunter cheerfully.

And a "go" it was.

Five minutes later Billy Bunter was seated in a big, well-cushioned car by the side of Lord Cavandale, rolling away for Surrey.

Bunter had "fixed-up" for the Christmas holidays. He was going to be the guest of a peer of the realm. He was going to ask Greyfriars fellows there and "show off" to his fat heart's content. The grub, it was certain, would be good; Bunter had not inquired about that, but he felt certain that that would be all right! And if that was all right, everything was all right!

Billy Bunter was feeling quite happy and glorious as he rolled away in the car with Lord Cavandale! He talked cheerily as he rolled, telling Lord Cavandale all about Greyfriars, the hosts of friends he had there, and how they liked him and admired him.

His lordship, perhaps, was not feeling so happy and glorious as Bunter, for he was very silent, and the Owl of the Remove had the conversation nearly all to himself.

That, however, did not worry Bunter. He rather liked the "one-way traffic"

idea in conversation. If his lordship had nothing to say, Bunter had enough to say for two, and said it. Bunter, at least, felt jolly as the car rolled away, and that, after all, was all that mattered.

But if William George Bunter could have looked a little into the near future, his anticipations of Christmas with Lord Cavandale would probably not have been so happy and glorious. Little did he dream of the shadow of tragedy and terror that hung over the coming days. If he could have peeped into the future, probably Bunter would

sunshine of his native land. In winter the Nabob of Bhanipur felt like an Arctic explorer.

"Next station Wimford," said Harry, turning from the window. "Feeling the cold, Inky?"

"The feelfulness of the esteemed cold is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh. "But, as the proverb remarks, what is the oddfulness so long as the happiness is preposterous?"

"Half an hour, and we'll be toasting before a big log fire at Wharton Lodge," said the captain of the remove comfortingly.

"The toastfulness will be an esteemed boonful blessing!" confessed the



Under Bunter's terrified eyes the attempted murderer leaped through the carriage door, to go rolling down the steep embankment!

have wished himself anywhere but in Lord Cavandale's car, heading for Cavandale Abbey.

But Bunter, of course, couldn't!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

An Unexpected Meeting!

HARRY WHARTON looked from the train windows, over the Surrey downs. There had been an early fall of snow, and the downs were powdered white in the wintry sunshine. It was a cold, keen December day; a sharp wind rushed by the train, with light flakes whirling on it.

Harry Wharton was glad enough to see signs of a snowy Christmas; but Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, muffled in greatcoat and mufflers and a thick rug, wasn't. Even in summer, Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh missed the burning

Nabob of Bhanipur. And his tone implied that another half-hour seemed to him a rather long time.

The train rattled on to the country station of Wimford, the nearest railway station to Wharton Lodge, but at a considerable distance from that mansion.

Wharton and Hurree Singh were alone now. Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Frank Nugent had left them en route, to depart to their respective homes. They were to meet later in the holidays; but home claimed them first. The nabob, of course, could not go "home" in the vacation, his home being at Bhanipur in far-off India, and his holidays were always spent with one or another of his friends, generally at Wharton Lodge.

Wharton was looking forward to getting home, to seeing his uncle, the colonel, and his aunt, the kind-hearted Miss Amy Wharton. Hurree Singh, no

doubt, was looking forward to seeing the colonel and his sister; but there was still less doubt that he was looking forward to seeing the big log-fire that his chum had mentioned. Coats and mufflers, scarves and rugs did not protect the Oriental youth from the penetrating cold of an English December.

"Here we are, old bean!" said Wharton, cheerfully, as the train stopped in Wimford Station. "Now a run in a taxi, and we're home!"

They descended from the train. Hand-luggage, rugs, and coats they carried, and a porter trundled their bulkier baggage after them. But outside the station a surprise and a disappointment awaited them.

"No taxis!" said Wharton, with a whistle.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh suppressed a groan. He wanted to get to that log-fire, and he wanted to get to it quick. Light flakes of snow were falling in Wimford. Roofs and window-sills were whitening, looking like a Christmas-card. It was pretty enough to look at, but the junior from India's coral strand shivered.

Wimford was a small place; there were generally four or five taxicabs—no more—at the station. Evidently there had been a run on them; none were left for the Greyfriars juniors.

"Bother!" said Harry.

"The botherfulness is terrific!"

"Like to wait while I phone home for the car to fetch us, or walk?" asked Harry. "It wouldn't take long for the car to get here."

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh shivered.

"The walkfulness is the proper caper," he answered. "The warmthfulness of the esteemed walkfulness will be better than the execrable coldfulness of the waitfulness!"

Wharton nodded assent. Certainly it was warmer walking than waiting, and it was possible, too, that Colonel Wharton's car might be in use and not at home in the garage.

Waiting for a taxi to turn up did not appeal to either of the juniors, as there was none in sight. On a rainy or snowy day taxicabs always ran short in a place like Wimford.

"Let's, then!" said Harry.

And, leaving their baggage at the station to be sent on, the two juniors started walking. They left Wimford and swung on down the road towards the lodge, considerably more than a mile distant.

"Coming on a bit thicker!" remarked Wharton, as a gust of wind brought a cloud of snowflakes in his face.

"The thickfulness is preposterous!"

There was not much snow, as a matter of fact; but the wind from the downs was keen as a knife. Wharton liked the healthy sting of it in his face, but it was only too clear that Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh was not enjoying it.

"Might get a lift on the way," remarked Harry, as a car buzzed past. "If we spot anybody who knows my uncle, I'll stop him and ask for a lift. The main road passes the Lodge, you know."

Hurree Singh nodded, and they walked on. Wharton kept his eyes open as cars passed—a good many of them on that busy high-road. Any friend of Colonel Wharton's would willingly have given the schoolboys a lift as far as the Lodge gates. But nobody that Wharton knew by sight seemed to be on the road just then.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Harry suddenly.

A handsome Rolls-Royce was coming up the road behind the juniors, and Wharton had glanced back at it, hoping to see some acquaintance of Colonel Wharton's in it. What he saw was an acquaintance of his own, and he saw him with great amazement.

"My hat! Billy Bunter!"

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh stared round.

Both juniors fixed their eyes on the car that was rapidly approaching. Although it was closed, they could see the two occupants clearly enough in the sharp winter sunlight.

One of them was a lean, aristocratic gentleman, no other than the scarred gentleman they had seen at Lantham, and who, Bob Cherry had told them, was the well-known sporting peer, Lord Cavandale.

There was nothing surprising in seeing Lord Cavandale there, as his home, Cavandale Abbey, was in Surrey, and not a very great distance from Wharton Lodge.

What was surprising was to see a fat schoolboy in big spectacles sitting by his side—no other than William George Bunter, the Owl of the Remove.

"My only hat!" gasped Wharton.

"The only hatfulness is terrific!" ejaculated Hurree Singh, equally astonished.

The Famous Five had taken it as a matter of course that Billy Bunter was fibbing when he had claimed the acquaintance of Lord Cavandale.

Bunter, of course, had been talking out of the back of his fat neck—as usual.

The chums of the Remove had taken that for granted. And here he was—in Lord Cavandale's car, sitting beside his lordship; evidently on terms of acquaintance, if not of friendship.

They gazed at him blankly.

Bunter's fat chin was bandaged. But the rest of Bunter had its usual familiar aspect.

He blinked at the two juniors by the roadside, through his big spectacles, and grinned as he recognised them.

He grinned with glee.

These beasts had made out that he didn't know Lord Cavandale! Now was the time to convince them that he did!

The chums of the Remove saw him speak to the scarred gentleman, saw Lord Cavandale glance at them and signal to the chauffeur to stop.

The big car drew to a halt at the roadside.

Bunter threw the door open.

"I say, you fellows!" he squeaked.

"Bunter!" said Harry blankly.

"The esteemed and preposterous Bunter!"

The juniors raised their hats to Lord Cavandale, but their astonished eyes were on the Owl of the Remove. The peer gave them a nod.

"Going home?" asked Bunter.

"Yes."

"Walking?" grinned Bunter.

"Couldn't get a taxi at Wimford," answered Harry.

"My dear chap, you should have telephoned to my place," said Bunter patronisingly. "The pater would have sent you along one of the cars from Bunter Court."

The juniors made no reply to that. In the presence of a peer of the realm they did not want to tell the fat Owl what they thought of him.

"But I'll tell you what," said Bunter.

"I'll give you a lift—I mean, Lord Cavandale won't mind giving you a lift. We shall pass near your place, Wharton."

He blinked at the peer,

"Would you mind, sir?" he asked. "These chaps are schoolfriends of mine. They're going to Wharton Lodge, about a mile on."

"Certainly!" said Lord Cavandale. "Get in by all means, my boys."

Wharton and the nabob hesitated. Bunter, as usual, had sought to "stick" on for the Christmas holidays, and had been unceremoniously pushed off. In these circumstances, Harry Wharton certainly did not like accepting a favour from him, and it was from Bunter that the favour came, as they did not know Lord Cavandale.

"Jump in!" said Bunter. "Lord Cavandale will be pleased—won't you, sir?"

"Certainly!" said Lord Cavandale.

Bunter had required plenty of "neck" to wedge into his lordship's car himself. More neck was required to wedge his schoolfriends into it. But if Billy Bunter ever lacked anything, it was not neck! His neckfulness, as Hurree Singh would have said, was terrific!

But, as a matter of fact, Lord Cavandale was rather interested in one, at least, of the juniors on the road. He turned his eyeglass on Wharton.

"You're going to Wharton Lodge?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," answered Harry.

"I had the pleasure of meeting Colonel Wharton once," said Lord Cavandale.

"You know my uncle, sir?"

"Your uncle?" said his lordship.

"You are the colonel's nephew? Then I'm glad to meet you. It's many years since I met your uncle—and then it was only for a few minutes." He smiled a smile that was very pleasant, in spite of the terrible scars that rived his face. "Your uncle lent a hand getting me on a stretcher after I'd been too near a bursting shell. Jump in, my boy, and your friend, too."

The two juniors could not hesitate after that. They stepped into the car, and the chauffeur started again.

Billy Bunter grinned at them.

He was quite aware of their amazement at seeing him sitting beside Lord Cavandale in the Rolls. He thoroughly enjoyed their amazement. They did not know how he came to be on such friendly terms with the peer—and Bunter preferred them not to know. He preferred to let them suppose that the acquaintance was of ancient date.

Lord Cavandale had been very silent hitherto, in Bunter's company. But now he talked quite freely—to Wharton! Apparently he liked the junior's looks, and was naturally interested, too, to meet the nephew of a man who had been with him in the terrible days on the Somme. Needless to say, Wharton was pleased and gratified by the peer's attention—not because he was a peer, which counted for much less with Wharton than with Billy Bunter—but he had a boy's natural admiration for a man who had been through the War from start to finish.

But Wharton Lodge came in sight very soon, and the car stopped at the gates. When Wharton and Hurree Singh alighted, Lord Cavandale shook hands with them very cordially.

"By the way," he said. "my young friend Bunter is staying at my place over Christmas."

His young friend Bunter gave the juniors a vaunting look, fortunately unseen by the peer.

"It will be rather dull for my young friend," went on Lord Cavandale. "There is no young society there."

(Continued on page 14.)

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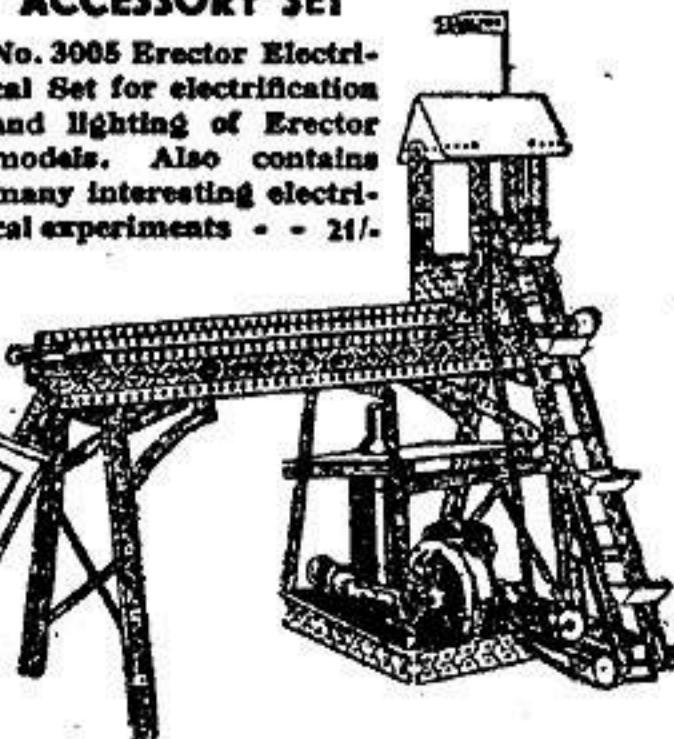
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BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS I

(Continued from page 12.)

Any time you lads care to run across you will be more than welcome."

"Thank you, sir," said Harry.

"The thankfulness is terrific, honoured sahib!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. A remark that made his lordship start slightly.

"Yes, do come, you men," said Bunter. "I'll be glad to see you. In fact, I'll phone later, and we'll talk about it. Good-bye!"

The car rolled on, leaving two astonished schoolboys standing by the gates of Wharton Lodge, staring after it.

"Well, my hat!" said Harry. "This beats it!"

"The beatfulness is preposterous!" agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"That fat boulder knows Lord Cavandale, after all!"

"The knowfulness is an esteemed fact."

"Blessed if I understand it!" said Harry. "I thought the fat ass was talking out of his hat, as usual. But he must know him pretty well, if he's going to his place for Christmas. I wonder what his chin was bandaged for?"

"Perhaps a painfulness caused by the terrific jawfulness!" suggested the nabob.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I like Lord Cavandale; but I don't think I shall run across," he said. "We get enough Bunter in the term."

"Too much," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "In fact, the too-muchfulness is terrifically preposterous!"

"He was telling the truth for once," said Harry, still lost in wonder at that remarkable circumstance.

"The esteemed age of miracles is not past, after all!" assented the nabob.

And, wondering a good deal at that unexpected and surprising meeting, the chums of the Remove walked up to the house, where Hurree Singh was soon happily toasting himself over a big fire, his dusky face glowing with warmth and satisfaction.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Shots from the Park I

BILLY BUNTER smiled the smile of satisfaction as the Rolls-Royce rolled on past Wharton Lodge.

The meeting with the two Removites had been quite unexpected; but nothing could have happened better from Bunter's point of view.

Seeing is believing, and the beasts had to believe now that he was on very friendly terms with a peer of the realm. Bunter had made the statement, in the first place, from sheer fatuous swank, but happy chance had enabled him to substantiate it. Bunter felt quite braced.

Lord Cavandale, too, who had hitherto been very silent, and not particularly cheerful in Bunter's company, seemed more cheerful since the meeting with the Greyfriars juniors. Bunter was not likely to guess it, but he had gone up in the peer's estimation since Lord Cavandale had seen his friends.

Grateful to Bunter for having saved his life, his lordship undoubtedly was. Genuinely anxious to do anything in return that was in his power, he most assuredly was. But Bunter's "planting" himself on him for a holiday at the Abbey had certainly given his lordship a shock, and Bunter's conversation

since had somehow deepened the effect of it.

Bunter, in those tragic minutes in the railway carriage, had acted with a courage rather foreign to his usual character. But his lordship was not aware of that; and, a brave man himself, he valued courage highly. He was under a deep obligation to Bunter, and prepared to meet any draft that the fat junior drew on his gratitude. But a sort of depression seemed to have settled on him in the car as he listened to Bunter's talk.

Now he was brighter.

"I am glad I have met some of your friends," he remarked. "A very fine young fellow, Wharton."

"Oh, not a bad chap at all!" said Bunter. "I take a good deal of notice of him at Greyfriars."

"Oh!"

"Of course, being popular and all that, I don't have a lot of time to give to any particular chap," explained Bunter. "A fellow with so many friends can hardly call his time his own."

"Oh!"

Lord Cavandale was becoming monosyllabic again.

"But I take notice of him," said Bunter cheerfully. "Of course, he's glad to be taken up by a fellow in my position in the school!"

"Oh!"

"He was in my study when he first came to Greyfriars," rattled on Bunter. "I stood by him, and saw him through—fought his battles for him, and all that. I can't say he's as grateful as he might be. But I'm used to that."

"Oh!"

Depression once more seemed to be settling on his lordship.

Bunter, however, did not notice that. Had he noticed it, certainly he would not have realised that there was anything in his conversation to have a depressing effect on anybody.

Lord Cavandale relapsed once more into silence; and Bunter, not getting even an "Oh!" in return for his remarks, presently gave his fat chin a rest.

The car rushed on through a glimmer of snowflakes. Billy Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, were on the watch for Cavandale Abbey. Bunter had once passed that great establishment on a bike—which was, hitherto, the full extent of his acquaintance with Lord Cavandale and his mansion. It was, he knew, a huge place—in ancient days an abbey, bestowed on an ancestor of Lord Cavandale's by that rather predatory old gentleman, King Henry VIII. Much of it had been rebuilt in more modern times; but much of the ancient buildings remained, in the midst of a vast park. The drive from the lodge gates to the house was half a mile long, between stately rows of oaks and beeches, so Bunter had heard. Now he was going to make a closer acquaintance with that magnificent mansion.

Over the park walls, over the high tree-tops, the soaring roofs of the mansion appeared in sight at last—more roofs and chimneys than Bunter could count. His fat heart thumped with excitement. A bowing lodge-keeper opened the great gates for the car, and the Rolls glided up the famous avenue. For in the distance, through innumerable trees, twinkled innumerable lights from the many-windowed facade.

Bunter wished that all Greyfriars could have been present to see him now—arriving at one of the "stately homes of England," sitting beside a peer of the realm, in that peer's magnificent Rolls.

The car glided smoothly up the long, shadowy drive. Great ancient trees lined it with wide-spreading branches, leafless now in the winter winds.

Bunter, about to arrive at that splendiferous abode without baggage, without even a clean collar, might have been expected to feel a little disconcerted. But he was not in the least disconcerted. Bunter was accustomed to travelling light. Generally he relied on other fellows for anything he wanted. His baggage—such as it was—had gone on in the train. But Bunter was not bothering about that. Having saved the life of one of the richest men in England, and having an undoubted and acknowledged claim on his gratitude, Bunter had no doubt that his lordship would see him through. In fact, his lordship would have to. It was not a matter of choice with his lordship. Bunter was a little excited, but he was not in the least dubious or disconcerted. He knew that he was a fellow born to grace the highest circles with his distinguished presence. What could a fellow want more than that?

The car glided on, up the stately avenue, beneath over-arched, gigantic branches. Bunter blinked round him with great interest.

"This is bigger than Bunter Court!" he remarked modestly.

"Eh?"

"Tip-top place!" said Bunter heartily. "In fact, spiffing!"

"Oh!"

"You see— Oh crikey!" yelled Bunter suddenly.

"What—"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter, staring from the car window, while his lordship sat looking straight before him, jumped almost out of his fat skin.

Half hidden behind a massive trunk was the figure of a man. To Bunter's utter amazement and horror, the sunlight glinted on something in the half-hidden man's hand, as his arm was thrown up. It was an automatic pistol; and it was levelled at the car.

Bunter let out a yell of terror. Amazing as it was, incredible as it was, that dim figure lurking under the thick trees on the Abbey Park had lifted a firearm to fire on the car as it came level with him.

"Yaroooooh!"

Bunter flung himself down in the car. "Good gad!" ejaculated Lord Cavandale. "What—what—"

His impression was that the fat junior had fallen in a fit. There seemed no other explanation for the moment.

He stooped over Bunter, greatly concerned.

Smash! Crack!

A bullet smashed through the side window, and buried itself in the cushioned seat behind Lord Cavandale, as he bent over Bunter.

Had his lordship been sitting upright, the bullet would have passed through his body. As it was, it missed him by inches! His movement towards Bunter had saved his life.

The crack of the automatic echoed and re-echoed through the silent park. Lord Cavandale gave a convulsive start.

"What—what—"

He stared round dazedly.

There was a cry of alarm from the chauffeur.

Instantly the car leaped into lightning speed. It shot away like a flash; and a second bullet from under the beeches missed it by a yard. A third shot rang out as the car flashed on round a turn of the winding avenue, missing by yards.



As the dim figure lurking under the thick trees lifted a firearm, Bunter, looking from the window of the car, let out a yell of terror!

"Great gad!" spluttered Lord Cavandale.

Hoodless of danger, lost in amazement, he put his head from the window and stared back. But the racing car had rushed round a winding turn, and a mass of trees hid the man with the automatic from sight.

"Owl!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crikey! Oh lor'! Wow!"

The car halted before the great entrance of Cavandale Abbey. A great doorway was wide open; several servants in livery could be seen. The chauffeur leaped down and opened the door of the car.

"My lord!" he gasped.

"Good gad!" said his lordship. The surprise had passed; and he was perfectly cool. His eyes were fixed on the bullet-hole in the back of the seat. He shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"I had a glimpse of him, sir!" gasped the chauffeur. "I put on speed, my lord. He was firing—"

"You acted very sensibly, and very promptly, Hudson," said Lord Cavandale. "The fellow meant business."

"Oh, my lord! Won't you get into the house—quick? He may be coming up the avenue—"

The chauffeur stared back along the drive, with distended eyes.

"Not likely, Hudson," said his lordship tranquilly. "He has missed—owing to my young friend here. Depend on it, he is running now."

He stepped quietly from the car. "The danger is over, Bunter," he said soothingly. "Step out, my boy."

Bunter jumped out. His little round eyes blinked round him through his spectacles. Bunter was still shuddering.

Lord Cavandale's hand dropped kindly on his shoulder.

"Come with me, my boy."

"Oh dear! Yes! All right!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, I—I wasn't frightened, you know! Sure he—he ain't coming after us!"

Lord Cavandale smiled.

"Quite sure!" he answered.

"I—I say, he—he fired at us!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, I—I believe it was the same man in the train—"

"Quite probable!" said his lordship tranquilly. "The man seems determined to get his work done. Come!"

He led the shuddering Owl of the Remove into the house.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Pig in Clover!

"PILKINGHAM!"

"My lord!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the plump, florid, clean-shaven, almost majestic personage who answered to the name of Pilkingham. This personage, evidently the butler of Cavandale Abbey, seemed rather to swim than to walk. Bunter had seen all sorts and conditions of butlers; but he admitted to himself that Pilkingham took the cake. A sense of his own majesty below stairs, mingled with a due sense of the majesty of his master above stairs. In the butler line, Pilkingham was what Fisher T. Fish of the Remove, would have called "the goods."

The butler, while he gave his respectful attention to his lordship, eyed Bunter from the corner of one eye. If he was surprised to see a fat schoolboy with a bandaged chin in Lord Cavandale's company, he did not, of course, betray it. No emotion, except that of a self-respecting respect, was ever allowed to appear on Pilkingham's well-trained visage.

"This young gentleman, Master Bunter, will be staying for—h'm—some time," said the peer. "You will make every arrangement for his comfort."

"Quite so, my lord."

"I may tell you, Pilkingham, that this young gentleman has twice saved my life to-day."

"Indeed, my lord!"

Bunter's idea was that that ought to have made the butler jump. But Pilkingham did not jump. Only a sudden

electric shock could have made Pilkingham jump.

"No doubt you will see it in the evening papers," said Lord Cavandale. "An attack was made on me in the train from Lantham. This boy saved my life. I have just been fired on in my own park, possibly—indeed probably—by the same man. Owing to Master Bunter the bullet missed its mark. I am telling you this, Pilkingham, so that you will fully understand that Master Bunter is a very honoured guest in this house."

Possibly the peer was aware that Pilkingham, on first appearances, did not think much of Master Bunter. He was making the matter quite clear.

"I understand, my lord," said Pilkingham.

"Very good!"

"I heard a shot, my lord," said Pilkingham. "Is it possible that the shot was fired at your lordship?"

"Quite. The man, whoever he is, is a doocid good shot, too," said Lord Cavandale. "Had I not moved at the moment, owing to Master Bunter, I should be a dead man now."

A gravely shocked expression appeared on Pilkingham's face. An attempt on the life of a peer of the realm was sufficient cause for Pilkingham's professional calm to concede that much.

There were six or seven footmen in the hall at a respectful distance. In their faces was a trace of excitement.

"You may send men to search the drive, Pilkingham," said Lord Cavandale. "I have no doubt that the man is gone, however. Is Captain Lankester in the house?"

"No, my lord! Captain Lankester went to the station some time ago, to meet your train."

"Ah, I changed my plans and came

(Continued on page 18.)



(Continued from page 15.)

by car," said Lord Cavandale. "Bunter, Pilkington will show you to your quarters."

"Not just yet, sir!" said Bunter. "I think I'd better go and look for that man with the revolver, sir."

As Lord Cavandale had no doubt that the man with the revolver had already fled, Billy Bunter was ready, indeed eager, to lead the search for him.

The peer smiled and shook his head. "I cannot think of letting you go into danger, my boy," he said.

"That's nothing, sir," said Bunter valourously. "The—the fact is, sir, I—I rather like danger. It bucks me."

"No doubt; but I cannot permit it," said Lord Cavandale. "I shall report this occurrence to the police; it is their affair. Besides, the man must be gone before this. Go with Pilkington, Bunter."

"Just as you like, sir," said Bunter, gracefully yielding the point. "I'd be

jolly glad to lay that villain by the heels; but, of course, it's for you to say, sir!"

"I think we shall be able to make you comfortable here, Bunter," said the peer. "You will in every way regard the house as your own during your stay."

"What-ho!" said Bunter. "I—I mean, thank you, sir!"

Lord Cavandale smiled, a kind smile, and Bunter followed Pilkington. The peer looked after him thoughtfully. Grateful as he was to Bunter for his timely aid in the Lantham train, Lord Cavandale possibly had not been delighted by the fat junior butting into his palatial establishment. Yet if Bunter had not come home with him in the car his lordship knew that he would now be lying with a bullet in his body—dead or dying. Bunter, certainly, had not shown a lot of courage on the second occasion—far from it; but equally certainly, he had saved the peer's life a second time. One obligation piled on another like this could not help but make the peer feel very kindly towards the Owl of Greyfriars. If Bunter's conversation in the car had given the impression that he was a fatuous ass, the peer was unwilling to receive that impression, and tried to dismiss it.

Half a dozen of the apparently innumerable footmen of Cavandale Abbey left the house to search the avenue, led by the chauffeur to the spot where the shot had been fired. Lord Cavandale went to the telephone to speak to the police on the subject. Billy Bunter accompanied Pilkington, with a cheery grin on his fat face.

That sudden and almost tragical happening on the avenue had startled and scared Bunter; but impressions never remained long on his fat mind. Within

the stately walls of this mansion he was safe; and when he was safe Bunter defied danger. He was thinking now of other and more important things. He was in clover to begin with. And he was hungry. He had not lunched that day—and it was long past lunch-time. It would have been nearly tea-time at Greyfriars. What the meal-times were at the Abbey Bunter did not know—but he knew that the next meal-time, for himself, was going to be very soon. Lord Cavandale had said that he was to regard the house as his own during his stay. Obviously, that included the food-stuffs.

Billy Bunter, owing to his peculiar propensity for butting in where he had no concern, had had a rather unusual experience of various establishments—some of them on a large scale. But Cavandale Abbey was the most tremendous establishment into which Bunter had ever butted. The oak-panelled hall, adorned with armoured figures and priceless statuary, was immense in extent. A double staircase gave access to the oaken gallery that surrounded it on three sides, and from this wide, lofty gallery opened more corridors and staircases than Bunter could have counted. He wondered that the inhabitants never lost their way in the building.

A grave gentleman—whom Bunter later learned was the groom of the chambers—met Pilkington, and they spoke together in low tones for a few moments, unheard by Bunter. Then Pilkington swam on again with Bunter at his heels.

A door was opened by the groom of the chambers. Pilkington stood aside, and Bunter rolled into the room.

It was a large, lofty, pleasant room, overlooking the great park. It was
(Continued on next page.)

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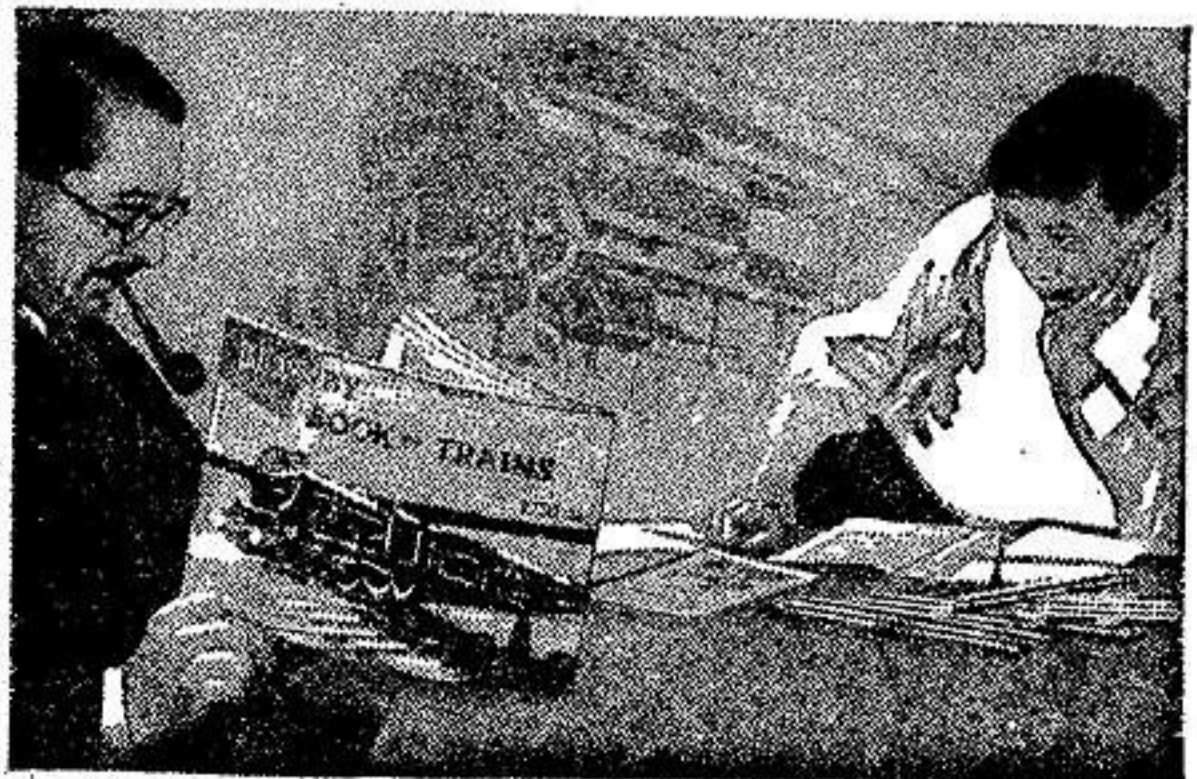
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furnished with great elegance and comfort. Already—as if by magic—a manservant was igniting a log fire on a wide hearth. Lofty windows—the middle one a french window—gave on a balcony.

Pilkingham swam in and opened a farther door.

"Your bed-room, sir."

Bunter realised that he was being accommodated with a sitting-room and a bed-room as well. There was no lack of accommodation at Cavandale Abbey, and no lack of service. No lack of anything as far as Bunter could see.

Pilkingham opened another door.

"Your bath-room, sir."

There was a private bath-room as well! Bunter, however, did not enthuse. He had no great use for a bath-room.

In the doorway on the corridor a young man appeared, a footman with a professionally wooden face.

"Albert!" said Mr. Pilkingham, barely noticing the existence of this young man. "This is Mr. Bunter, upon whom you'll be in personal attendance during his stay."

Bunter almost chuckled! He was going to have a footman to himself! If only all Greyfriars could have been there to see it!

"This bell, sir," said Pilkingham, "will summon Albert should you require him. The telephone, sir, is here."

There was a telephone, too!

"Dinner, sir, is at seven!" said Pilkingham.

Something—dinner or not—was going to be a jolly long time before seven, Bunter told himself.

"Your luggage, sir—" said Pilkingham, and at last, like Brutus, he paused for a reply.

"My luggage!" said Bunter. "Ah! That went on in the train. There was not much of it—only a dozen suit-cases and a few trunks. And a couple of hat-boxes. And—and my gun cases! We changed our plans"—Bunter spoke of Lord Cavandale and himself as "we" as became an old friend of the peer—"and there was no time in seeing about the luggage. It's rather unfortunate."

"Quite so, sir," assented Pilkingham.

"In fact, doocid awkward," remarked Bunter. He felt entitled to use Lord Cavandale's "doocid" over again. "I must dress for dinner. Doocid awkward."

"Quite, sir."

Pilkingham was respectfully sympathetic. Bunter wished, however, that he could have read what was passing behind Pilkingham's imposing forehead. He wished he knew what was going on behind Albert's wooden face. Bunter liked this stately sort of attendance; but it was rather a drawback not to be able to guess what these blessed funkeys were thinking of a fellow!

"Is this place anywhere near a town?" asked Bunter.

"Ashwood is three miles, sir."

"Any tradesmen there—tailors, and so on?"

"Quite a large number, sir."

"I mean, anything decent?" asked Bunter. "I don't expect Saville Row in the country, of course. But anything fairly decent?"

"His lordship sometimes employs Mr. Wooster, the tailor at Ashwood, sir."

"Very good," said Bunter. "What's the time, Pilkingham?"

Bunter did not see why he should take the trouble to look at his own watch while there were servants about.

"Four o'clock, sir."

"I will take a little refreshment in my room," said Bunter. "Nothing much, you know—say, a cold chicken.

And a pie! Some asparagus! And pate de foie gras. A cake or two. Some biscuits. A little fruit! Just a snack to keep me going till dinner."

If Mr. Pilkingham felt any surprise he did not show it.

"Very good, sir."

Mr. Pilkingham swam away.

The fire was now burning nicely, and the servant who had lighted it glided away. Albert remained.

Outside the house the December dusk was deepening.

"Put on the light, James!" said Bunter. He had not forgotten that his personal attendant's name was Albert. But Bunter had a belief that it was aristocratic to forget servants' names.

GREYFRIARS! CORRESPONDENTS.

No. 22.

The MAGNET'S special Rhymester has lost his Rhyming Dictionary, but the loss hasn't materially affected his weekly contribution! The character of Bolsover major, of the Remove, leaps vividly into life in the portrait verse below.

DEAR PATER,—Your letter has vexed me,
And made me exceedingly sore;
Its contents have greatly perplexed me;
You've never reproached me before.
You say it has come to your knowledge
That I am a bullying lout,
Who spends all his leisure at college
In knocking small infants about!

I want you to understand fully
That I'm a most popular chap;
If anyone says I'm a bully
I'll banish him clean off the map!
I'm beefy and brawny and burly,
My biceps bulge out of my suit;
And sometimes I'm sullen and surly,
But no one can say I'm a brute!

Just ask all the jags in the Second
Their candid opinion of me;
By them I have always been reckoned
As gentle as gentle can be!
I never start pulling their noses,
Or twisting their delicate arms;
In fact, everybody supposes
That I possess wonderful charms!

The light was switched on, and Albert coughed respectfully.

"Albert, sir!" he hinted.

"Ah! Yes, Albert!" yawned Bunter.

"My valet at home is named James—excuse the mistake, Albert. Take my boots off!"

Bunter reclined, with ease if not with grace, in the softest and easiest of easy chairs, and stretched out his fat little legs. Albert removed his boots.

"Find me some slippers, George!"

This time Albert did not remind the young gentleman that his name was Albert. He glided from the room, and returned with slippers, which he placed on Bunter's aristocratic feet.

"Doocid awkward to lose one's luggage, Frederick!" said Bunter.

"It must be, sir!" assented Albert.

"A fellow must dress for dinner, you know."

"Quite so, sir."

"When the dickens is the grub coming?" added Bunter peevishly.

"The—the what?"

"I mean the cold collation. I'm hungry," said Bunter. "Look here, you cut off and buck them up, George!"

"Certainly, sir."

Albert cut off, closing the door softly behind him. Billy Bunter stretched out his fat toes to the fire, and grinned. Some fellows might have been put out by a stately butler like Pilkingham and an army of menservants in livery. Not Bunter! Bunter flattered himself that he knew how to handle servants. The thing was to let the menials see that a fellow was accustomed to this



They call me their dear Uncle Percy;
They never go down on their knees
With passionate pleadings of "Mercy!"
Or "Spare us, good Bolsover, please!"
They run to my arms like a family
When daddy comes home every week;
Their dear little faces rest family
And happily, close to my cheek!

So, now that I've made their confession,
I hope you will no longer nurse
The false and fantastic impression
That I am a bully—or worse.
I hope you will realise, pater,
That I am both gentle and meek
(And if my young minor turns traitor,
His nose I'll assuredly tweak!).

Your letter contained no enclosure,
An oversight, Pop, on your part.
To add to my peace and composure
And gladden my manly young heart,
Please send me a nice postal order—
I'll ask all the fellows to tea,
I'm not a mean, miserly hoarder,
But your loving son, PERCY B.

sort of thing, and thought nothing of it. That, Bunter had no doubt, he was doing. He was feeling happy and satisfied. He might not, perhaps, have felt so satisfied could he have heard what Albert respectfully murmured to Mr. Pilkingham and what Mr. Pilkingham condescendingly said in reply to Albert. Fortunately, he could not hear.

There was a discreet tap on the door. It opened.

Albert re-entered, followed by two other servants bearing trays. Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his big spectacles.

With soft and silent footsteps the servants placed a table beside Bunter, and set the table. Bunter sat up and took notice. At a glance he saw that the grub was going to be good at Cavandale Abbey. It was only a "cold
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,191.

collation," but it was excellent; and, still more to the point, it was ample.

Billy Bunter proceeded to enjoy himself.

There was no doubt that he was in clover. He kept Albert in the room to wait upon him while he ate; and Albert was kept fairly busy. Albert was a well-trained young man, trained under the skilled and experienced Pilkington; but surprise, and then astonishment dawned on his wooden face as Bunter travelled through the foodstuffs. He wondered whether Mr. Bunter was ever going to finish, and whether he would burst before he had finished, or after he had finished.

Bunter finished at last. He finished with regret, for there were still foodstuffs on the table. But even Bunter had a limit.

"Herbert!"

"Sir!"

"You may bring me a box of cigarettes."

The table was cleared—Bunter had not left much to clear except crockery—and Bunter leaned back in an arm-chair and lighted a cigarette. He was not at Greyfriars now; and the gimlet eye of Quelch could not fall upon him. So Bunter could let himself go.

He was careful, however, not to smoke the cigarette through. He had a misgiving that it might disturb the foodstuffs he had packed away.

"If you don't require anything more, sir—" ventured Albert.

"Don't talk, Herbert."

"Oh! Very good, sir!"

Bunter lay at ease, the cigarette between a fat finger and thumb. Albert, apparently, would have been glad to retire. Bunter did not see it! If Albert was his personal attendant, Albert could attend him! What the thump did Lord Cavandale pay him his wages for?

Albert waited.

Bunter was thinking. Thinking was a slow process with Billy Bunter, and Albert had to wait for the outcome.

Bunter had to dress for dinner at Cavandale Abbey. Probably Lord Cavandale would not have minded if he hadn't—might not even have noticed whether he had or not. But there were the servants to be considered. Bunter had to keep his end up there. The menials had to respect him. They would not have respected a fellow who dined with his lordship in a jacket that had seen service in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, that had rather shiny cuffs and elbows, and more than a trace of dried jam here and there. He had missed his luggage—not that that mattered very much, for there were no dress-clothes in his luggage. On the morrow, Bunter was prepared to give a liberal order to the Ashwood tailor. It would be Lord Cavandale's privilege—and, no doubt, his pleasure, to pay the bill. Still, that didn't fix Bunter up for this evening.

"Robert!"

"Sir!" said Albert.

"I shall require a car for an hour or so."

"Very good, sir."

"Tell them to have it ready in ten minutes."

"Very good, sir."

"If Lord Cavandale inquires for me, inform his lordship that I have gone to see a friend, and will be back for dinner."

"Very good, sir."

Albert left the room. Billy Bunter sat and grinned at the cheery fire. Albert had not turned a hair when

Bunter told him that he would want a car. Evidently Bunter could have a car when he wanted one. Guests at Cavandale Abbey had little to complain of. Bunter was going to enjoy his Christmas holidays.

There was no doubt about that! There had been doubt—very serious doubt—but there was none now. Bunter was deeply thankful that he had not been able to hook on to the Bouncer for Christmas—that he had failed to glue himself to Harry Wharton & Co. Better than any of these was Christmas with Lord Cavandale—much better! William George Bunter was a pig in clover!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Dresses for Dinner!

"MASTER HARRY!"

"Yes, Wells!"

Harry Wharton was unpacking when Wells, the butler of Wharton Lodge, put his head in at

NOW HE'S GOT
A SPANKING PENKNIFE!
All he did was to send me a
funny story. Have you heard it?



Willie (whispering): "Say, Jimmy, show teacher your mumps and he'll let you go home."

Jimmy: "No fear! I want the whole class to catch 'em, so as I can have some of the boys to play with!"

Congratulations to Stanley Armstrong, of 16, Whitehall Parade, Ormeau Road, Belfast, Ireland. Hope you'll find the pocket knife useful, Stanley.—Ed.

the door, with a cough. Hurree Janset Ram Singh had finished unpacking, and was in Wharton's room, his dusky face glowing before a bright fire. Both the juniors were very cheery after a good tea. They noticed a rather curious expression on the face of Wells.

"Mr. Bunter, sir!" coughed Wells.

"Bunter!" ejaculated Wharton.

"He has arrived, sir!"

Wharton opened his lips—and closed them again. If Bunter had arrived it could hardly be to stay. His friendship with Lord Cavandale could hardly have come to so sudden an end.

"Mr. Bunter is now waiting in the hall, sir," said Wells, "as I was unaware whether—h'm!—whether—"

"I say, you fellows!"

Mr. Bunter evidently was not waiting in the hall. He had followed Wells up to Harry Wharton's room.

"The esteemed Bunter has turned up like a ridiculous bad penny after all!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Wells, with a peculiar expression on

his face, faded away. Wells, from old experience, knew of the butting-in propensities of William George Bunter; and he had no doubt that William George was butting in now. But he left Master Harry to deal with him.

Bunter rolled into the room.

Wharton fixed a rather grim look on him. How Bunter had landed himself on Lord Cavandale was a mystery to Wharton. But if he had become unlanded, so to speak, Wharton did not want him landed at Wharton Lodge. He had made that plain to Bunter, and he was prepared to make it plainer.

Probably Bunter, short-sighted as he was, read something in the face of the captain of the Remove. His fat lip curled in a sneer.

"I've dropped in for a few minutes," he said. "If you think I've come to stay, you're jolly well mistaken—see!"

"I don't think so," answered Harry cheerfully. "I was afraid you thought so."

"Yah!"

"My esteemed ludicrous Bunter—" "Don't jaw, Inky; I've no time to waste. I can't keep my friend Lord Cavandale waiting for dinner!"

"Don't keep him waiting, by all means," said Harry; and he turned to his unpacking again.

Bunter blinked at his back.

"I've run across here in a car," he said—"one of the many cars my friend Lord Cavandale has placed at my disposal. Lucky it's only a ten-mile run; I shall have time to get back for dinner. Sorry I can't ask you to come, Wharton."

"Nothing to be sorry about, old fat bean. I shouldn't be likely to go out my first evening at home."

"Or you, Inky. Later on, perhaps. But I couldn't very well spring a nigger on my friend Lord Cavandale the first day!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter—"

"Don't chatter, old chap—I'm rather pressed for time. You might give a fellow a little attention, Wharton. Owing to my friend Lord Cavandale changing his plans rather suddenly, and going home by car instead of train, my luggage went on to Bunter Court. I'm stranded, without even a change of clothes. It's doocid awkward!"

"It's what?" asked Harry, staring.

"Doooid awkward! That's why I've run across here. I want you to lend me—"

"Money's tight," said Wharton, shaking his head. "Still, I dare say I could find five bob!"

"If you think I'd borrow money of you, Wharton—"

"Eh?"

"I'm not the fellow to borrow money, I hope," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"Oh crikey!"

"I want you to lend me some clobber."

"Oh! I—I see!"

"We dress for dinner at Cavandale Abbey," explained Bunter. "They keep up as much style there as we do at home at Bunter Court. Quite as much."

"Even a little more, perhaps?" suggested Wharton.

"My luggage having gone astray, it's doocid awkward!" said Bunter. "I want you to lend me your dress-clothes."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And a shirt, and a collar and tie, and so on," said Bunter. "To-morrow my tailor will fix me up. But a chap has to look decent. Not your second-best, you know. Your best." Bunter blinked at the staring captain of the Remove. "You only wear dress-clothes on special occasions here. You won't want them this evening. I hardly see

what you want them at all for in your humble home. Well, shove them out, there's a good chap. I'll change here."

"Great Christopher Columbus!" gasped Wharton.

"I'd rather you didn't keep me waiting," said Bunter; "I can't be late for dinner. We're rather particular about such things at Lord Cavandale's. Where's the clobber?"

"But, you fat dummy, how are you going to get into my clobber, when you're three times as far round as I am?" demanded Wharton.

"That's all right. I've worn your clothes before," said Bunter. "Last time I was here I had to borrow your clobber, as I came without any luggage. I can split the waistcoat up the back."

"Eh?"

"I'll pay for any damage done!" said Bunter scornfully. "In fact, I'll stand you a new suit, if you like, at my tailor's at Ashwood. It will all go on the bill—I mean, I'll treat you generously. Nothing mean about me, I hope. Hand out the clobber, will you? I simply can't keep Lord Cavandale waiting for dinner—I mean, my friend Lord Cavandale!"

Harry Wharton looked long and hard at the Owl of the Remove. It was true that Bunter had worn his clothes before—and Wharton remembered the condition he had left them in. Certainly he could not have donned Wharton's waistcoat without splitting it up the back—which hardly improved the garment. The dinner-jacket would be in danger of bursting. The trousers would certainly not be out of danger. Buttons were likely to fly off right and left whenever Bunter moved. Bunter was prepared to take the risk of all this; but Wharton felt a natural hesitation.

"You're not going to let me down?" asked Bunter anxiously. "I'm relying

on you as a friend. After all I've done for you—"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here! I'll have you at my friend Lord Cavandale's place for Christmas. It's an invitation. There!"

"Take it away and boil it!" answered Wharton ungratefully. "I'll see what I can do, you fat chump! It's like your thumping cheek! But—"

"You're wasting time," pointed out Bunter. "My car's waiting for me! Do buck up and don't jaw so much!"

Harry Wharton breathed hard. But he was good-natured. And Bunter certainly was in rather a hole if he was dining with Lord Cavandale, and had not so much as a clean collar. The one he was wearing looked as if it had been through a dog-fight, as Bunter's collars generally did.

"Of course, Cavandale would lend me anything I liked," said Bunter. "But he's not my size."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The mental picture of the fat Owl stuffing himself into the clothes of the tall, lean peer was too much for Wharton. He yelled.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here! Are you going to lend me some clobber?" demanded Bunter.

"I'll do my best," said Harry, laughing.

He sorted out evening clothes. Billy Bunter looked them over with a critical eye.

"These ain't your best!" he said accusingly. "You've had new ones since these. This mark on the jacket is where I dropped the pie last time I borrowed it!"

"You might drop some more pie!" explained Wharton.

"I can't wear your old clothes, Wharton. You can hardly expect it,

when I'm dining with my friend Lord Cavandale!"

"Please yourself."

"Where's your new lot?" demanded Bunter.

"Wherever it is, it's going to stay there!"

Billy Bunter breathed hard and deep. The scorn that irradiated his fat countenance could not have been put into words.

"Very well," he said at last. "Very well. If you're too mean to lend me your best suit, very well. It's what I might have expected of you. I knew you'd be green with envy at my staying for Christmas with one of my nobleman friends. I must say I despise you. I'm bound to say that!"

There was a soft chuckle from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"The kickfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed Wharton!" he remarked.

The expression on Wharton's face hinted that he was in agreement with the Nabob of Bhanipur. But he remembered that it was Christmastide, and that he was seeing no more of Bunter; at least, that was his present belief. As a matter of fact, he was destined to see a great deal of Billy Bunter during those Christmas holidays.

"You fat blighter!" he said, and paused.

"Eh?" Bunter blinked at him. "Not getting your rag out, are you? What's the matter?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

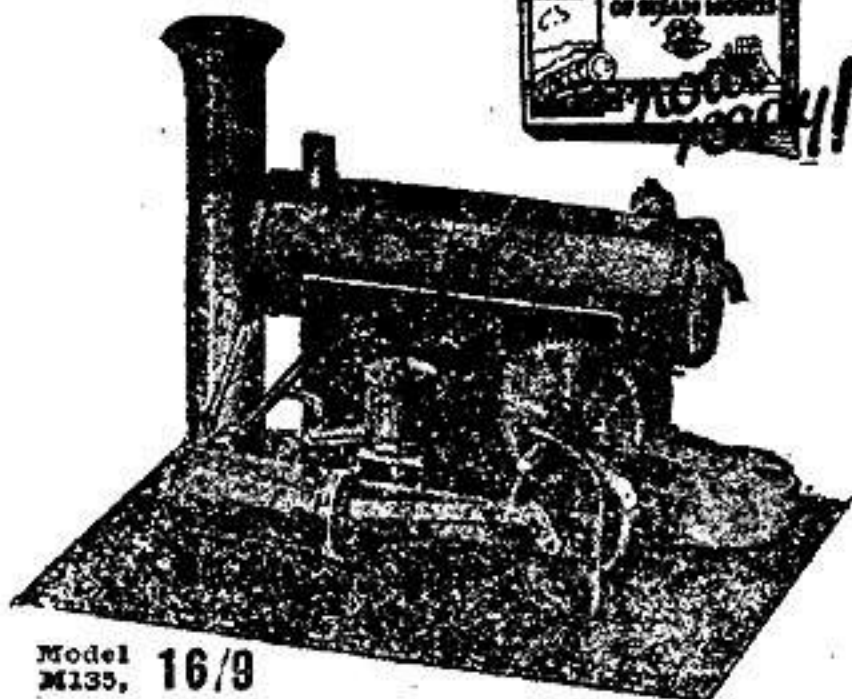
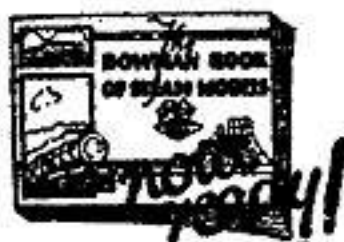
"All serene, fathead! Take the clobber if you want them, and bunk! Bunk soon!"

"I'm going to change here. I may want your help," explained Bunter. "My valet at the Abbey could help me better, of course, but—but—I'd rather he didn't see me changing into
(Continued on next page.)

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your old clothes. I'll dress here, and you can help."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I suppose you're going to help a chap," said Bunter warmly. "I suppose you can lend me a hand. I suppose you—"

"Oh, all right! For goodness' sake, buck up."

Billy Bunter proceeded to change.

As he proceeded, it was clear that, if Bunter was to keep his end up before the menials at Cavandale Abbey, it was just as well not to let one of those menials help him to dress.

The waistcoat had to be split up the back and tapes pinned across to keep the front in something like position. Albert, probably, would have been astonished at that. Obviously, that was not the usual mode of dressing for dinner at Lord Cavandale's.

The dinner-jacket, however, covered this ingenious arrangement from sight. Bunter filled the jacket like a sausage in its skin. Every seam was on the point of starting. How he squeezed into it was a mystery. But he had done it before; and he did it again. Certainly, it had to remain rather unusually wide open. That could not be helped.

The trousers were tight as a drum when Bunter got them on—after considerable efforts and with the aid of both Wharton and Hurree Singh. They crammed him into them at last.

Shoes and socks, fortunately, were an easier fit. Billy Bunter was breathing hard when he had changed.

But he surveyed the result in Wharton's glass with considerable satisfaction. A gleaming white shirt front and a clean collar and a nice tie looked well. The evening clothes, if they looked rather tight, as certainly they did, were nice clothes and well cut. So long as Bunter was careful how he moved he was likely to escape disaster. Had he bent down hurriedly, it was certain that something would have gone. Bunter had to be careful not to be caught bending.

"Better lend me a topper, old chap," he said. "I can't very well wear a cap with these. Your best topper."

Wharton, in silence, handed out his second-best topper.

Grunt from Bunter.

"Well, gimme my coat! Where's my coat? Oh, I left it down in the hall. By the way, I'll have that five bob you spoke of."

Wharton handed over the five bob.

"Anything else?" he asked with a touch of sarcasm.

"You've got a ruby pin, I believe, Inky?"

"The answer is in the esteemed affirmative," assented the nabob.

"Lend it to me, will you?"

"The answer is in the ludicrous negative."

"Beast! Well, I'll be going! I can't waste my time here," said Bunter. "See you men later, when my friend Lord Cavandale can spare me. Ta-ta."

Bunter rolled to the door. As soon as his back was turned Wharton and Hurree Singh became aware of a circumstance that Bunter had not seen in the glass. One of the tapes that secured the split waistcoat at the back had come loose under the strain and was streaming out below the back of the dinner-jacket.

"Hold on, Bunter!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Can't stop."

"But I say—"

"Don't bother."

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Bunter rolled away.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha! Bunter—I say, Bunter, you—"

"Yah!"

Bunter was gone.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious I

"**B**UT the motive, my lord—"

Lord Cavandale shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Unimaginable!" he answered quietly.

Inspector Chapman of Ashwood, sat on the edge of a chair, his notebook in his rather plump hand. The plump, ruddy-faced country police-inspector was obviously utterly perplexed; as well as a little overcome by the noble presence in which he found himself. An attempt upon the life of a nobleman like Lord Cavandale was a shocking thing to Mr. Chapman; and it was more perplexing than it was shocking. Search in the park had, as was expected, revealed no trace of the man with the automatic; he had fled instantly after his failure to "get" his lordship. Inspector Chapman was keen, anxious, eager to lay the villain by the heels; but the task before him might have daunted the keenest man at Scotland Yard; might, in fact, have puzzled Ferrers Locke himself.

"You can suggest no motive, my lord?"

"None whatever."

"Some enemy—"

"So far as I am aware I have no enemies," said Lord Cavandale. "Certainly I have never dreamed of having an enemy who would attempt my life."

"Yet your life has been attempted twice in one day."

"That is certainly the fact. I am completely at a loss," said the peer.

"But I leave the matter in your hands with confidence, Mr. Chapman."

"You are very good, my lord. But—" Mr. Chapman chewed the end of his pencil. "Unless the man is a lunatic he must have had some motive—and a very powerful one. It is your impression that the man who fired in the park is the same man who attacked you in the train from Lantham?"

"That is my impression; for the reason that it is hardly possible that two desperate unknown persons can be seeking my life at the same time," said Lord Cavandale. "One is surprising enough."

"The distance is considerable—"

"I came on from Pooting by car after a long delay. The man had ample time to get to Ashwood by train. Probably he knew that I was returning home—he may even have watched the car at Pooting. No doubt he cut across country by train and reached Cavandale Abbey long before I arrived here in the car."

"It seems likely," assented the inspector. "I must question the boy, Bunter, as he actually saw the man who fired on you in the park. The lad seems to have saved your lordship's life."

"Twice," said Lord Cavandale. "There is no doubt whatever on that point. It was fortunate for me that he was in the car."

"The description of the man in the train is a little vague. The inspector glanced at his notes. "A common-place looking man of medium size, in check clothes and a bowler hat. H'm! And you can think of no motive for this amazing attack, my lord?"

Lord Cavandale shook his head.

"None," he answered. "If the man is mad there is method in his madness. That is all I can say."

"Both attempts were very desperate and determined," said the inspector. "It is unquestionable that the man had a powerful motive. You must pardon me, Lord Cavandale, a question I must ask."

"I am quite at your service, Mr. Chapman."

"In the event of your—h'm—demise, my lord, who will be the chief beneficiary?"

"My nephew, Colonel Cavandale, of the Loamshire Regiment, will inherit the title and the entailed estates," answered the peer with a faint smile. "He is at present stationed in India."

"Quite so, my lord, but apart from the entailed estates, I understand—if you will pardon me—"

"I am bound to afford you every assistance, sir," said Lord Cavandale. "My personal fortune is disposed of by will; but that will is locked up in my solicitor's safe and the contents are known only to me. Relatives—sisters, nieces, and nephews—will benefit under the will; and certain charities; and, of course, persons in my service."

He smiled again.

"I am aware, sir, that a gentleman of your profession cannot afford to be a respecter of persons," he said. "But it is certainly in some other direction that you must look for my assailant."

"I have no doubt of it, my lord!" said Mr. Chapman apologetically. "But the total absence of a motive—"

He rose from his chair.

"If I may see Master Bunter—"

"I am sorry to say that my butler has informed me that he has gone out in a car," said Lord Cavandale. "He does not appear to have realized that he would be wanted. I am truly sorry."

"With your lordship's permission I will see him to-morrow," said Mr. Chapman, and he took his leave; the most puzzled police-officer in the county of Surrey.

Lord Cavandale remained with a thoughtful shade on his brow. He was as puzzled as the police-inspector; but his scarred face showed no sign of perturbation. The man who had had four years under fire was not likely to be easily perturbed.

The door opened, and a young man came in.

Lord Cavandale gave him a friendly nod.

"The inspector has just gone, Lankester," he said. "A puzzled man, by Jove! The whole thing's rather a bore."

Captain Lankester lounged across the room, and stood leaning a shoulder on the mantelpiece. He looked about thirty-five; a sinewy, but rather elegant young man, in perfectly fitting evening clothes. His face, clean-shaven, save for a tiny moustache, was handsome, though the outlines were hard.

He lighted a cigarette, in a short, amber holder, before he answered.

"Rather more than a bore, I should say, Cavandale," he said. "The man, whoever he was, meant business."

"Quite."

"You've no idea—"

"None."

"Some homicidal maniac—"

"I think not. But I am hopelessly at sea," said the peer. "No man in existence, so far as I know, has any motive for harming me. However, no doubt the police will find the rascal sooner or later."

"It does not appear to disturb you much."

Lord Cavandale gave a slight shrug.

"But, dash it all, the man must be secured," said Lankester. "He may try the same game on again."

"He will hardly venture here again, I imagine. The keepers have been warned to keep a look-out; and the household is certainly on the alert," said Lord Cavandale. "And"—he laughed—"I have a sort of mascot in the house."

"That fat schoolboy—"

"He saved my life twice to-day, Lankester."

"No doubt. But I had a glimpse of him going out to a car," said the Army man. "I have never seen anything quite like him before. Who and what is he, Cavandale?"

"His name is Bunter—he is a schoolboy—of Greyfriars. My old school."

"But why here?" asked Lankester.

"He seemed to like the idea. Why not?" Lord Cavandale became grave. "Be kind to the boy, Lankester. I'm under immense obligations to him, and I would not have his feelings hurt for worlds."

"He seems a very queer young ass!"

"Possibly; but as I have said—"

"My dear fellow, I shall treat him as if he were the apple of my eye!" drawled the captain. "No doubt he cannot help being a bounder; and he seems to have been a very useful bounder, anyhow."

Lord Cavandale compressed his lips a little. "Bounder," no doubt was an accurate description of William George Bunter. But it jarred on the man whose life he had saved.

"My dear Lankester—"

"My dear Cavandale," said the captain, becoming grave, too. "Surely you can rely upon me to be decent to a boy who has saved my best friend—the only friend who has stood by me—a friend who—"

"Of course—of course!" said Lord Cavandale hastily. "Say no more, my dear fellow. By Jove! There is the dressing-bell."

"We are going to have a snowy Christmas," said the captain. "It's coming down thicker. Look!"

He stepped to the window of the smoke-room, and drew aside the heavy curtains that covered it. Lord Cavandale joined him at the window.

Outside, the December darkness was thick; the light from the window fell across the broad terrace in front of the great house. Snow lay on the terrace, and the flakes were falling faster now. Dimly in the distance great leafless trees, white with snow, stretched their ghostly branches against the gloom.

Captain Lankester stared out of the window at the spectral trees and the falling snow. The peer stood by his side.

"A fit night for the ghostly Abbot of Cavandale to walk!" drawled the captain.

Lord Cavandale laughed.

"The ghost has not walked in my time," he remarked, "though he is said to walk when a Cavandale is doomed to die. No doubt the phantom abbot knew I should escape to-day, and did not bother."

The captain laughed, too.

He threw open a casement; and the keen December wind whistled in, bearing a snowflake or two. Lord Cavandale shivered a little.

"A snowy Christmas!" repeated the captain.

"It looks like it," agreed the peer.



The snowball flew from Bunter's fat hand, and crashed on the back of the assassin's neck. As it did so, the report of the revolver levelled at Lord Cavandale rang out in the night air!

"A cold one, at all events." He gave a slight start. "Did you see—"

"What?" asked his companion.

"Something—beyond those shrubs—I thought I saw something move—"

Lord Cavandale broke off.

From the December darkness came a sudden flash and a ringing report. Lord Cavandale staggered back and fell headlong to the floor.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter on the Spot!

BILLY BUNTER jumped. The car suddenly rocketed.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

The car had turned in at the lodge gates, and was half-way up the long winding avenue, when it skidded.

The snow had been falling thicker and thicker; the avenue was carpeted with it. The headlights of the car glared through dim darkness.

Bunter, in paying his visit to Wharton Lodge, had only been thinking of the matter in hand—bagging Harry Wharton's dress-clothes. He had not taken heed of the falling snow, but on his

return journey to the Abbey he had to take heed of it, for it was dangerous driving in the snow, and several times it seemed to Bunter that the car was going to skid—in fact, for a good many miles Bunter passed through the thrills of incessant imaginary skids and crashes.

In the avenue it came suddenly. At a turn in the long drive there was a skid, and Bunter jumped as he felt a heavy bump.

Instantly in his fat imagination the car crashed into fragments, and Bunter was reduced to a thousand small pieces. But the reality was not so bad as that. The car bumped on a tree beside the avenue and stopped, right side uppermost; and Bunter, except that he was pitched off his seat, found that he had sustained no harm.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He scrambled up. Under his overcoat there was a sudden "pang." One of Wharton's buttons had gone.

Bunter did not heed that. He glared from the window of the car.

"What the thump—"

"Sorry, sir!" The chauffeur loomed in the darkness. "Skid, sir—it was the snow—"

"You silly idiot!"

Lord Cavandale's chauffeur was not, perhaps, accustomed to that mode of address. He stared at the fat face in the car.

"Might have killed me!" snorted Bunter. "You silly chump—"

"I could not help the skid, sir—"

"Then you ought to help it, you dummy! Look here, get going, and don't skid again, you fathead!"

The chauffeur seemed to breathe hard. Possibly he was wondering whether his place was worth too much to him for him to indulge his strong desire to pull the nose of his master's guest. No doubt he decided that it was, for he did not pull Bunter's fat little nose.

"I'm afraid I can't go on, sir."

"What?" yelled Bunter.

"There's something wrong with the engine, sir. That bump on the tree—"

"You idiot!"

"Look here, sir—"

"You fathead!"

The chauffeur turned away from Bunter. This kind of conversation seemed to afford him no satisfaction.

Billy Bunter leaned out of the car and glared at the dim form of the chauffeur, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"You can't go on?" he howled.

"No!" said the chauffeur, forgetting the "sir."

"Then what am I to do?" hooted Bunter.



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BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS!

(Continued from page 23.)

The man did not answer. Possibly he regarded that question as a riddle, and he was not good at riddles.

"How far are we from the house?" hooted Bunter.

"About a quarter of a mile by the drive, sir."

"Do you think I can walk a quarter of a mile in the snow?" shrieked Bunter.

"I hadn't thought about it, sir."

"Don't be cheeky!" hooted Bunter. "Mean to say I'm stranded here? You howling idiot. How long will it take you to get the car going?"

"I'm afraid I can't get it going, sir! I shall have to fetch another car and give it a tow to the garage."

Bunter spluttered with wrath. Half-way from the lodge gates to the mansion, in the middle of the immense avenue, it was like a wilderness of snow and darkness. An establishment on the scale of Cavandale Abbey had its disadvantages at times.

"I can't wait here all that time!" howled Bunter. "Look here, what am I going to do?"

"It's a short way by the park, sir, if you follow the path—it saves half the distance," said the chauffeur.

"Oh!" said Bunter.

He was about to step from the car when he remembered that he had put on Wharton's evening shoes. A tramp in the snow would certainly have ruined those shoes. Bunter snorted, and sat down again to change back into his boots. He slipped the shoes into his overcoat pockets, and stepped from the car and blinked round him.

The chauffeur had the bonnet open, and was peering into it. Bunter gave him an angry scowl.

"Show me where that beastly path is!" he snapped.

The chauffeur pointed out the path that left the avenue, and lay through the leafless trees. Bunter grunted.

"It will take you to the terrace, sir," said the chauffeur.

"You'll see the lights in the windows."

"Br-r-r-r!" grunted Bunter. "I suppose you haven't an umbrella?"

"No, sir!"

Billy Bunter turned away. The chauffeur stared after him for a few moments, and then gave his attention to the car again. Bunter, in an angry and discontented frame of mind, tramped away under the over-arching boughs of the great trees.

In the distance through the leafless trees, he could see the many-twinkling lights of the great house front. There was little snow on the path, the branches above sheltering it.

But as the Owl of Greyfriars drew nearer the house the trees thinned, and the snow was thicker underfoot, and the flakes fell more thickly on Wharton's silk hat. Bunter snorted angrily.

It was true that he could see many lighted windows in the distance, but light in the distance only made the surrounding murk murkier. Now that he was more in the open the path was hidden under snow. Bunter blinked round him savagely, and then wound his way among scattered frosty trunks, his temper growing more embittered with every step.

"Beast!" he breathed. "I'll jolly well get Cavandale to sack him! Brute! Blow him!"

How long Bunter might have wandered among the gaunt trees, trying to pick his way towards the distant lights, cannot be said—but all at once he found himself walking in footprints. Someone had passed along before him, and evidently recently, for the falling snow had not had time to obliterate the tracks.

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

The track led towards the distant lights, and evidently whoever had made it had been going towards the house.

Bunter had a guide now, and he had only to follow it to arrive at the building. He followed it, carefully blinking at the footprints in the gloom.

He was not, after all, very far from the house. The lighted windows became clearer to his vision, and he arrived at the broad granite steps that gave access to the terrace.

This was not the main entrance, he knew, but he had only to mount the steps and pass along the terrace to the great door. The footprints that guided him were clearly marked in the snow on the steps.

Bunter tramped up.

On the terrace he paused to blink about him. Almost exactly opposite him, across the wide terrace, was a lighted window, at which a casement was open.

Two men were standing at the open casement full in the light. He recognised one of them as Lord Cavandale—the peer's scarred, bearded face was not to be mistaken, even by a short-sighted fellow like Bunter. The other was a

(Continued on page 26.)



When you chaps are holding your Christmas party get your pianist merchant to thump out the old song tunes suggested in the novel feature below. Then sing the "Greyfriars" version of these popular ditties. The result will amuse and entertain you.

(Tune: "John Peel.")
 ALL: D'ye ken the boys of Greyfriars School?
 We're here before you, fresh and cool,
 To wish you a very happy time this Yule;
 For we're all going home in the morning.
 WHARTON: D'ye ken Harry Wharton of Greyfriars School?
 SKINNER: D'ye ken Harry Wharton—he is rather a mule?
 CHERRY: He's the captain of our Form, and the fellow
 is a jewel,
 And we're all going home in the morning.

CHERRY: D'ye ken Bob Cherry with his tangled hair?
 NUGENT: D'ye ken Bob Cherry—he is fair and square?
 SKINNER: Cherry's all right, but (confidentially) he isn't
 quite all there;
 And we're all going home in the morning!

HURREE SINGH: The Hurree Singhfulness is most terrific as
 we go;
 BULL: He's as black as a nigger; but the whitest
 man I know;
 SKINNER: And he never needs to wash his neck; the
 dirty marks don't show;
 And we're all going home in the morning.

NUGENT: D'ye ken Frank Nugent—
 SKINNER: With his namby-pamby grace?
 BULL: D'ye ken John Bull—
 SKINNER: That is he, behind the face!
 ALL: And d'ye ken Harold Skinner, who is merely a
 disgrace?
 For we're all going home in the morning.

(Tune: "Sally in our Alley.")
 ALL: Of all the boys who are so fat,
 There's none so fat as Bunter;
 BUNTER: Oh, really, Wharton, don't say that.
 ALL: Yes—none so fat as Bunter.
 His little nose—it upwards grows,
 He's daily getting bigger;
 BUNTER: My face is handsome, I suppose,
 And stately is my figure.

(Tune: "Will ye no come back again?")
 WHARTON: Billy Bunter's come to stay;
 Tries the same old bilking dodge;
 Going home through Reigate way,
 Sliding into Wharton Lodge!

ALL: Will he go away again?
 Will he go away again?
 BUNTER (smirking): You chaps, I know, won't let me go
 ALL: Yes, yes—please go away again.

(Tune: "Billy Boy.")
 WHARTON: Where have you been all the day,
 ALL: Billy boy, my Billy boy?
 CHERRY: Where have you been all the day, my Billy
 boy?
 BUNTER: I've been sneaking ginger-pop
 Out of Mrs. Mimble's shop;
 Mrs. Mimble wasn't nimble,
 So I caught her on the hop.

(Tune: "Annie Laurie.")
 SKINNER: Where Catford's braces are bonny,
 There stands an old pigsty,
 And the place is low and horrid—
 The smell, of course, is high!
 The smell is very high;
 The walls are damp and short;
 Old Bunter bought that sty,
 And he called it "Bunter Court."

(Tune: "The Keel Row.")
 BUNTER: A whopper, a whopper,
 I'll tell my dearest popper,
 He'll whop you, my stunter,
 And that will stop your tricks.
 Our mansion, our mansion,
 Has very great expansion;
 'Twas built by Baron Bunter
 In fifteen-eighty-six.

(Tune: "Oh dear, what can the matter be?")
 NUGENT: Oh dear, what can the matter be?
 BULL: Oh dear, what can the clatter be?
 WHARTON: Oh dear, way down in Battersea,
 Bunter Court now can be found.

(Tune: "The Minstrel Boy.")
 CHERRY: Old Hurree Singh to the East has gone,
 In India you will find him;
 He's packed his things in a trunk and box—
 And he's left them both behind him.
 SKINNER: My fatherful parent waits me there,
 HURREE SINGH: In me his trust confiding,
 He'll say, "My boyfulness right welcome home,
 SKINNER: I owe you a jolly good hiding."

(Tune: "John Brown's Body.")
 ALL: Greyfriars School is a-breaking up to-day,
 'Buses are waiting to take the chaps away,
 Tall chaps, short chaps, miserable and gay,
 They all go marching off.

WHARTON: Doctor Locke looks a bit the worse for wear,
 NUGENT: Quelchy has packed up all his birch-rods in
 despair,
 CHERRY: A jolly sound of laughter comes a-ringing
 through the air,
 As we go marching off!

BULL: We've packed all our belongings in our
 boxes, trunks and grips,
 SKINNER: We've made a slide along the drive on which
 each person slips,
 WHARTON: The page, whose name is Trotter, and old
 Gosling wait for tips,
 As we go marching off!

(Tune: "Good King Wenceslaus.")
 ALL: We snowball poor old Gossy's lid,
 And he says, "No more trickses."
 Wharton gives him half-a-quad,
 SKINNER: Skinner gives him nixes.
 ALL: Page and Gosling forth they go,
 Muttering Christmas wishes,
 One to sweep the falling snow,
 One to dust the dishes.

(Tune: "Rule Britannia.")
 ALL: Now we go home again for Christmas Day,
 The time, the time will soon have passed away,
 The time will soon have passed away, have
 passed away.
 Meanwhile we wish you—our chums both far
 and near—
 A Merry Christmas and a Bright New Year.

Wel-come Christmas, we give it three times
 three,
 Boys shall never, never, never tire of thee.
 Wel-come Christmas, to-night we'll merry be,
 Boys shall never, never, never tire of thee.

THE END.

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BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS!

(Continued from page 24.)

young man in evening clothes, whom Bunter had not seen before.

The fat junior was about to move on when he gave a sudden jump, and then stood rooted to the snow on the terrace.

"Oh crikey!" he breathed.

Between him and the lighted window of the smoke-room, a little to one side, was a mass of ornamental shrubbery, thick with snow.

Bunter had noticed, without particularly heeding, that the tracks in the snow ran directly towards it. Whoever had left the trail in the snow had gone across the terrace as far as that shrubbery.

Against the snow a dark figure caught Bunter's staring eyes.

He blinked in astonishment at it. He had a back view of a raincoat and a hat.

Bunter's heart thumped.

The man was crouching behind the mass of shrubs, peering round it at the open casement where the peer and his companion stood. From the window he was hidden, but from Bunter, who was behind him, he had no cover. In spite of the gloom Bunter saw him plainly enough. He was quite near at hand.

The man did not look round. Bunter's footsteps had made no sound in the snow, and he evidently did not dream that anyone else was on the terrace in the snow and darkness.

Bunter trembled.

Back into his mind came the murderous attack on the peer in the Lantham train, and the shot that had been fired in the park. And he was not surprised, though he was almost frozen with horror, when he saw the lurking figure behind the shrubs lift his right arm, with something in the hand that was levelled at the open, lighted window.

Lord Cavandale, full in the light at the window, was an easy mark. The unknown, lurking behind the shrubs, was taking aim at him with a revolver.

For a second Bunter stood frozen.

He dared not approach that crouching figure. The automatic might be turned on him. Hardly knowing what he did, the fat junior grabbed up a double-handful of snow. Any second the death-shot might ring out. The snowball flew from his fat hand and crashed on the back of the assassin's neck.

At the same moment the shot rang out.

Bunter heard a gasping exclamation of surprise and rage—he knew that it came from the man whose aim he had spoiled even as he was pulling the trigger. He saw the figure whirl round towards him.

He did not stay to see more.

Like a frightened rabbit he bolted along the terrace, yelling.

"Help, help, help!" shrieked Bunter.

The great door was open when he reached it. Three or four startled servants were staring out into the darkness. Bunter bolted in like a fat rabbit into its burrow.

"Sir!" gasped Pilkington. "Sir—what—Oh!"

Bunter did not even see him as he crashed. The stately Pilkington sat down suddenly.

Bunter reeled from the shock.

"Ow! Shut the door!" he yelled.

"He's there—help! Yaroooooh!"

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THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

LORD CAVANDALE sat up dizzily. His hand was to his head.

Captain Lankester had spun round from the open casement, his face white, his eyes starting. He flung the casement to, and it closed with a crash.

"Cavandale!" he panted.

He sprang towards the fallen man.

In sheer amazement he stared at the peer. Lord Cavandale had gone head-long to the floor under the bullet, yet in a moment or two he had sat up, and now he was rising unsteadily to his feet.

Lankester stood transfixed, his eyes on the peer, too astounded, apparently, to lend him a helping hand. He seemed rooted to the floor.

But as Lord Cavandale stood on his feet again unsteadily the captain stirred. He reached the peer, and gave him a supporting hand.

"Cavandale! You are hurt—wounded! Good heavens!" The captain's voice was hoarse and husky.

"My dear fellow, you are—"

Cavandale leaned heavily on his arm.

"I am not hurt." He panted a little.

"By gad, it was a shock—I was knocked over—but—" He passed a hand along his temple and shivered a little.

"Gad, it was a close thing! Keep cool, Gerald, I'm not hurt."

"Not hurt!" gasped the captain. "I—"

"The bullet grazed my head! The fellow's losin' his skill, or else something spoiled his aim," said Lord Cavandale.

He was perfectly cool again now. "By gad, this is beginnin' to remind me of the old days in Flanders, Lankester—sniping, by Jove! I wonder what made him miss! He couldn't have had a better target, with the light behind me."

Captain Lankester panted for breath. The startling incident seemed to have disturbed him more than the victim of the attack.

His face was absolutely colourless. The arm upon which Lord Cavandale leaned was trembling as if with the ague.

The peer drew himself from the captain's arm, a faint smile on his scarred face.

"Brace up, old man!" he said. "I'm not hurt! You seem more knocked out than I."

"I—I thought—" Lankester's voice was husky, choking. "I—I thought—"

"I understand, my dear fellow," said Lord Cavandale, with a softer note in his voice.

"But pull yourself together—"

"I'm not hurt! Barely a graze, the skin hardly broken! Somethin' spoiled the brute's aim, I fancy. Somebody's yelling out there. I suppose he was interrupted—"

The wild howling of Billy Bunter penetrated the closed windows. It was followed by sounds of disturbance in the great hall.

Lord Cavandale, with a reassuring glance at the captain, went to the door, and threw it open. The smoke-room was one of the innumerable apartments that opened off the vast oak-panelled hall.

"Bunter!" ejaculated Lord Cavandale.

"Ow! I say! He's there! I say—" Billy Bunter blinked wildly at the tall, lean figure of the peer. "I say—Oh dear, ain't you killed? Oh dear!"

"Not quite, my boy!" said Lord Cavandale. "Bunter's muddy boots and snowy hat, which was still on his head, showed that he had just come in.

"Did you see him, Bunter?"

"Oh dear! Yes! Ow! I say—Ooooh!" gasped Bunter. "Keep that door shut, Pilkington! He's just outside! Oh crumbs!"

Captain Lankester came striding through the hall. His face was still white, his eyes burning. There was a heavy Malacca in his hand. Lord Cavandale gave him a quick look.

"He may be there still; there may be a chance of getting the scoundrel!" the captain flung over his shoulder, and the next moment he had dashed out into the snow and darkness.

"My lord—" gasped Pilkington.

Pilkington had hardly recovered his usual calmness. Bunter had nearly winded him.

"I was fired at at the smoke-room window," said Lord Cavandale, with perfect calmness. "Let a search be made on the terrace, Pilkington."

"Instantly, my lord!"

Lord Cavandale looked at Bunter. The fat junior was recovering himself now. He took off Wharton's hat.

"So you saw the man, Bunter?"

Bunter shuddered.

"Yes! Oh dear! He—he was just going to shoot—oh dear!—and I bunged a snowball at the back of his head, and I thought it would make him miss, and—and—oh dear!—he ran at me—oh dear—Ow!"

Lord Cavandale's eyes dwelt on Bunter, curiously, almost whimsically. Something, he knew, must have disordered the aim of the assassin in the act of pulling the trigger and spoiled a point-blank shot at close range. He knew now what it was.

"By Jove!" said the peer. "I told Captain Lankester that you were my mascot, Bunter! It looks as if you are! The bullet missed by the fraction of an inch! You've saved my life again."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"It was a fortunate hour for me when you came here, my boy," said Lord Cavandale. "You seem fated to stand between me and that confounded sniper. You heap obligation on obligation, by Jove!"

Bunter grinned cheerfully. He was quite himself again now.

"Jolly lucky I was here, sir, ain't it?"

"Very lucky indeed!"

Lord Cavandale smiled, and turned away. Billy Bunter beckoned to Albert, who was among the startled servants in the hall.

"Take me to my room, George."

"Yes, sir."

Bunter did not yet know his way about the vast interior of Cavandale Abbey, and he had only the vaguest idea where his room was. Albert guided him there, turned on the light, and stirred up the fire.

"Your coat, sir!" said Albert.

Bunter sat down, still in his overcoat. He was uneasy lest his late exertions should have caused any disaster to Wharton's dress-clothes, and he did not want Albert to take his coat off.

"That's all right! Take my boots off, Herbert! Put these shoes on for me! That will do! You can go, George."

Albert went.

Then Bunter peeled off his overcoat and surveyed himself carefully in a tall pier-glass. He was considerably relieved. A button had gone; but nothing had burst, fortunately.

Bunter grinned with a pleased grin at his reflection. It was, to Bunter's eyes at least, a picture well worth looking at. Having no eyes in the back of his head, he could not see a long tape

streaming down from under the back of Wharton's dinner jacket.

Bunter smirked at the glass, gave a touch or two to his hair, smirked again, and went down to dinner.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Tragic Parting!

LORD CAVANDALE smiled.

Captain Lankester grinned.

Bunter did not know why.

He, of course, could not have been the cause of either the smile or the grin. There was nothing to smile at, or grin at, in the sight of a handsome fellow in well-cut evening clothes.

Captain Lankester was the only other guest at Cavandale Abbey, and, as they were not yet acquainted, Lord Cavandale introduced them.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Master Bunter," said the captain, and he gave Bunter a sinewy grip of the hand that made the Owl of Greyfriars wriggle. "I hear that you have displayed remarkable courage—"

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I mean, nothing to me," explained Bunter. "Any fellow at Greyfriars will tell you that I'm as brave as a lion."

"Really?" ejaculated the captain.

"The fact is, I rather like danger," said Bunter. "It bucks me! Sort of exhilarates me, you know."

"Oh! Ah! By Jove!" said the captain. "Well, certainly your — h'm! — remarkable courage has been very serviceable to Lord Cavandale."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Bunter. "Jolly lucky I was around! But I always was the right man in the right place. That's me, all over."

Lord Cavandale coughed.

Another man entered the dining-room at this moment, with a quiet tread and a deferential manner. Bunter blinked at him. He saw a young man with a lean face and gold-rimmed glasses. This young man was introduced as the peer's secretary—Mr. Parker.

Bunter gave him a careless nod.

He was rather surprised that Mr. Parker was going to dine with Lord Cavandale. Bunter, anyhow, hadn't a lot of politeness to waste on a mere employed person.

A footman placed a chair for Bunter at the table. Being behind Bunter, he had a view of the tape streaming out under the black dinner-jacket.

Bunter heard a faint, instantly suppressed sound from him. He blinked round at the man.

But the footman's face was immediately expressionless. Bunter gave him a suspicious blink, and sat down.

His fat face beamed over his soup. It was excellent soup. He was dining with a peer of the realm! He blinked over the great table, gleaming with glass and silver, under shaded electric bulbs; he gave a blink at the stately butler and gliding footmen; and he liked what he saw. More than ever he realised that he was in clover for Christmas.

The fish was as good as the soup. It

was so good that Bunter had three helpings.

How many courses there were to that dinner Bunter did not know. But he knew there were many; he knew they were all good; and he knew that he did the fullest justice to all of them.

Mr. Parker peered at him through his gold-rimmed glasses, more curiously than ever. Doubtless he was wondering where Bunter was putting it.

Pilkingham must have wondered, too. Once the Owl of the Remove caught Pilkingham gazing at him, open-eyed, almost open-mouthed.

Bunter did not heed.

Bunter was having the time of his life. As usual, when he had a tempting

Lord Cavandale rose. Inspector Chapman was waiting to see him. Captain Lankester rose. Mr. Parker rose, Bunter—slowly, almost quaking—rose.

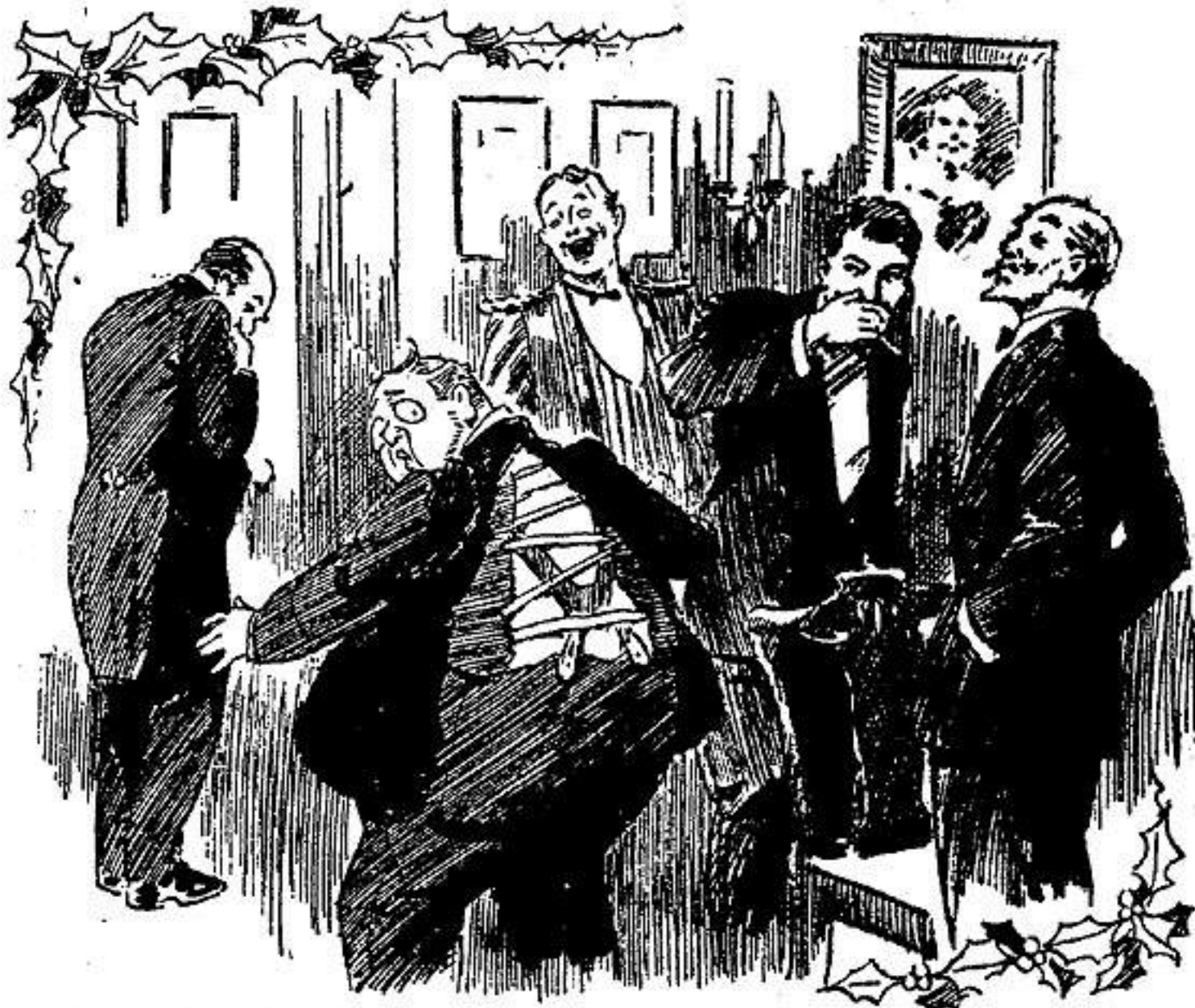
Pop!

There was a gurgle from somewhere. One of the footmen had failed to suppress his emotions. Pilkingham's stately eye should have withered him; but Pilkingham's stately eye was fixed on Bunter, as if fascinated.

Bunter hardly dared to breathe. He could not afford to lose many more buttons!

He moved—cautiously! Perhaps he moved too cautiously. His foot slipped on the polished floor.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter,



As Bunter stumbled on the slippery floor there was a loud, rending noise and his dinner-jacket split right up the back. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lord Cavandale and Pilkingham.

spread before him, Bunter forgot all about the Plimsoll line. He was accustomed to taking his provender aboard in bulk.

From the soup to the savoury Bunter packed away the foodstuffs as if he were provisioning the inner Bunter for a long siege.

There was something like alarm now, in the way Mr. Parker peered at him. Captain Lankester was grinning. Bunter did not know why. Lord Cavandale's face twitched, as if he suppressed smiles. Some hidden emotion seemed to be doing its best to upset Pilkingham's stately gravity. Once Bunter heard a footman gasp.

Pop!

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

A button had gone!

Dinner was over. Before dinner, those clothes had fitted Bunter like the skin of a drum. Bunter had had to move carefully in them. Now he wondered, with dismay, whether he dared to move at all.

An awful feeling rushed on him that something might happen if he did. If the rest of the buttons went—if the waistcoat burst—if the dinner-jacket split—

Pop!

He stumbled. That did it!

There was a loud, rending crack.

It was the dinner-jacket. Nobly, up to that moment, it had stood the strain—a strain that no dinner-jacket had ever been planned to bear. Now it gave way, and parted.

It split right up the back, to the very neck. The two halves dropped apart. The parting revealed a criss-cross of tapes, by which the two sections of a slit waistcoat were held together.

Lord Cavandale's eyeglass dropped from his eye. Captain Lankester gave a suffocated gurgle, Mr. Parker a gasp. Pilkingham, motionless, struggled with emotions unworthy of a butler.

But it was in vain.

The repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere failed Lord Cavandale. The stately traditions of butlerhood failed Pilkingham.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter fled.

THE END.

(Now look out for the next topping yarn in this special Christmas series, entitled: "THE MYSTERY OF CAVANDALE ABBEY!" Boys, it's a real corker!)

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UP, *the* ROVERS!



By **JOHN BREARLEY.**

(Opening chapters retold on page 30.)

A Smashing Victory!

PHEEP! Tim touched the ball to the inside-right, and the two teams sprang into life. Jimmy's deputy, Grayson of the Reserves, nervous in his first appearance for the League team, fumbled the pass, and a Westhampton man robbed him. Before the latter had gone a stride, however, a slender figure darted in front of him, and what followed brought joy to the Railton supporters.

Ball at his toes, Tim swerved on his heel, tricked the Westhampton centre, and, like a weasel, zigzagged electrically through the huddle. One instant he was the centre of a bobbing crush, the next he was out on his own, had beaten the centre-half, drawn another; and, fast and true as a brown bullet, the ball went flying through the gap to where Payton picked it up at top speed. In a solid line the Rovers' attack swept gloriously goalwards, the ball came across, and Tim, bobbing up from nowhere, got his head to it.

"Goo-oooh!"
By the very tips of his fingers the Westhampton 'keeper had reached it, tipping it over the bar. But the terrific attack, right from the muffed kick-off, set Railton alight.

Payton's corner kick went behind; the ball came downfield, Harvey trapped it, feinted to pass to Miller, but pushed it to Tim instead. The Westhampton pivot rushed in, seemed to slip at the last moment and fall—Tim was away again. The end of an uncanny dribble saw Miller in possession unmarked, and once again only a splendid save by the visiting goalie saved a score.

From his seat in the crowd, Jimmy watched silently, shining-eyed. No wonder old Bill Nye had been satisfied; no wonder Detective-Inspector Daniels had proposed his scheme so confidently.

Apart from the fact that he looked less like a Scotland Yard man than anyone in the world, Tim Osborne was a born footballer. As a centre-forward he was immense.

During the next few minutes Railton supporters took him to their hearts. They forgot his lack of weight and queer, thin figure; all they could do was cheer as he went swaying and weaving through the Westhampton defence, never selfish, but never parting with the ball till exactly the right moment, and then passing with a flashing decisiveness that sent the man ahead without a second's loss of pace.

For the first time that season Railton had a worker in the middle; a centre-forward who "led" his line, made openings himself, yet was always up to finish

A long streak of skin and grief is Tim Osborne, but he proves A REAL SURPRISE PACKET on the footer field!

off a raid. Westhampton crowded him, tried to knock him off the ball. But he was never there. His body bent beneath burlier shoulders, yet somehow his twinkling toes kept the ball glued tight and the would-be charger sat down to a howl of laughter. Jimmy would have given his heart to be out there, working beside him, as the visitors' defence struggled against the storm.

The Miller-Atkins wing, sharing lightning passes from the centre, ran circles round the Westhampton right-back—only Grayson, steadier now, but uninspiring, dimmed the brilliance of the Rovers' attack. And no one minded that, because—next week—"Young Jimmy" would be there to take his place!

Curiously enough, it was Grayson who opened the scoring, letting fly at a first-time pass from Tim that reached him three yards in front of goal. A pretty raid by Miller and his partner let Payton in from the other wing to score with a dazzling cross-drive; and almost on the nick of half-time Tim got the ball just outside the penalty area, put the visiting backs on the wrong foot with a feint to Grayson, and ran lightly through on his own.

"Shoo-out!"

A bellow from the crowd—the thud of a shot—and the Westhampton 'keeper dived at full length. In the last yard of its flight the rousing shot swerved dizzily away, beat his outstretched hands by inches, and curled hissing into the side of the rigging.

Then "half-time" went, and the Rovers were leading 3-0.

No trace of excitement or exuberance showed on Tim's quiet face as he ran off through the storm of cheering. He knew he was playing the game of his life, and he meant to keep it up, partly for the Rovers' sake, but chiefly because he had to make a name for himself in Railton as a footballer. Once he was talked about, once he was firmly fixed in people's minds as a Rovers' "star," then experience told him he would have all the disguise he needed.

The second half was another dazzling whirl of attacks. Made desperate by the first-half swamping, the Westhampton men rallied fiercely, fighting for their share of the game. A goal ten minutes after the interval rewarded them; another just afterwards made the score 3-2. A hard-breathing home crowd grew fidgety and anxious.

But then George Harvey & Co. decided that that was enough of that. They settled down; and the Rovers' line came into action again. Once more the

intricate attacks Tim started swept down the field, although he was not dribbling so much now, for the strain of his first game was beginning to tell. Yet he was still all there, and Westhampton knew it.

From a lovely centre by Payton he just beat the right-back and nodded his second goal, after which, cutting out an opening for Miller, he slipped the ball through for the inside-right to put the Rovers five up. Westhampton fought gamely, but they were a beaten side now. A crashing clearance by Riley was trapped by Grayson, who passed it to Tim, who switched the attack in a flash to Payton. And the outside-right, breasting down the ball, crashed it mercilessly home. When the whistle went at last Railton were leading 6-2, their best and biggest victory of the season.

And the crowd knew to whom that victory was due. The frail, slim "boy" they had laughed at when the game began was nearly mobbed before he could burst through into the dressing-room. Jimmy Brennan was the first to meet him there, a flushed, laughing Jimmy, whose bandage had slipped over one ear and whose freckled face was as red as his hair. He gripped Tim's hand with a strength that hurt.

"Th-thanks!" he exploded.

Tim grinned his quaint smile.

"Satisfied now, Jimmy?"

And all Jimmy could say, as he thought of the games ahead and the chances of his beloved Rovers, was:

"Fathead!"

He had almost forgotten Tim's "mission" already!

Burglary at the Firs!

BUT Tim Osborne had not.

Late that night, soft as a wraith, he let himself into the grounds of the Firs, crouching beneath a laurel shrub for over an hour with the rigid patience of an Indian. Old Jeff, the butler, hobbling out to lock the garden gate, passed within a few yards of him; once he caught a glimpse of Mr. Thurgood, the Railton banker and present owner of the house, as he paused before his study window, cigar in mouth, for a brief stare into the night. One by one the lights that stabbed the darkness went out; the old house sank into a great blur of shadow. Tim waited another few minutes, then prowled from his hiding-place.

Across the shrouded lawn he crept until he came to the veranda steps, his rubber-soled shoes making no sound as he stole up the worn stones. At the top he paused to take a bearing, having, in his methodical way, found out the lie of the land beforehand from Jimmy—although Jimmy wasn't aware of it!

"First two windows—drawing-room; next—the study!" he murmured, and moved along the veranda, hugging the rail. In a few moments he was opposite his goal, peering into the darkness of the room beyond.

A little grim smile twitched the corners of his mouth, but his eyes were hard and wary. With a firm, cool hand he gently tested the window-catch, found it fastened, and, taking a thin, pliant steel blade from his inside pocket, went to work quickly. The little smile deepened on his lips.

Click!

A faint sound, scarce louder than a dead leaf rustling on the path, and the

catch was lifted upwards and back. Inch by inch Tim pushed the window open and sidled into the room. A dying fire murmured on the hearth, cigar smoke hung in the air. There was a silence everywhere that told of a sleeping house.

For a long minute Tim Osborne stood there, every nerve on the alert. In this room, he knew, was the key to the mysteries surrounding young Jimmy. James Brennan had met his death here—someone had glided through the window to kill him, just as Tim himself had come the same way to find that killer. What was the meaning of the message the dying man had tried to gasp? Tim's smile faded suddenly, and he stole forward.

Skilfully he picked his way to the fireplace, guided by the last glow of the ashes, and after another pause began his task—a long, painstaking examination of the big oaken mantelpiece, fantastically carved by hand. It was a nerve-wearing business, there in the silent study, but the young detective, confident in his "hunch" carried on calmly, exploring every cranny, curve, and crevice in the mouldings, listening intently while he tapped the woodwork with a tiny rubber hammer.

All down one side he went, across the front and down the other; tap—tap—searching—pressing. Another tap—again; he bent forward, eyes gleaming. For the first time the little hammer had returned a different note.

Holding his breath Tim tried it again. Yes, it was right; there was a cavity hidden in that solid structure. Now for the spring! His hands, long, slender, and sensitive, crawled among the carvings like spider's legs until—his heart gave a sudden leap—a small raised leaf on the inner edge of the mantelpiece sank beneath his middle finger.

James Brennan's secret safe slid open before his eyes.

And, although neither Tim nor anyone else in the world knew of its existence, the moment the panel slid back a burglar alarm, fixed by James Brennan many years ago, shrilled in an upstairs bed-room and did not cease until the hidden cavity in the study was closed again.

Meanwhile, unaware of possible danger, Tim was examining the "treasure" he had found by the aid of an electric torch no thicker than a fountain-pen. He drew a long, deep breath. All he had hoped to find was there: the missing passbook, with "James Brennan" on its vellum cover;

THE FIRST CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD.

James Brennan, owner of the Railton Rovers F.C., decides to spend three thousand pounds to secure a new centre-forward. The deal does not materialise, however, for Brennan is robbed of his savings by means of a forged cheque and then fatally injured by some unknown assailant. Further disasters follow until Jimmy Brennan, the dead owner's son, is forced to sell his house for five thousand pounds in order to carry on. To add to Jimmy's misfortune, Thomas, the Rovers' only centre-forward, is ordered off the field, for striking an opponent. Determined, without rousing suspicion, to find out who is at the back of the plot to wreck the Rovers, Scotland Yard connives that Tim Osborne, late of the Canadian Secret Service, should take Thomas' place. A jovial roar from the Rovers' supporters greets the speedy new centre-forward as he lines up with the ball at his feet for the match against Westhampton Town.

(Now read on.)

the fatal cheque for £3,000; some accounts; and a faded photo, that made him grin crookedly.

"Gee!"

In the midst of his triumph he froze to a statue, ears cocked and eyes narrow. He had heard something—his face became masklike in its cold hostility. Quickly but carefully he stuffed the papers and book into his inside pocket, and his hand dropped to his hip. Before he could move again the study door flew open, electric light flooded the room, and Charles Thurgood, his pink, jolly face mottled with grey, stood with a heavy army revolver raised to shoot.

But he had no chance—no chance even to get a clear view of the burglar. From Tim's right hand, so fast that the whip-like reports merged into one, two rapier strokes of red fire darted. Thurgood's gun was twitched from his numbed hand as though by invisible fingers, the electric light disappeared in a million fragments, and plunged the room into darkness.

With a last shot into the ceiling to discourage pursuit, Tim flung himself through the french window, hurdled the veranda at top speed, and vanished into the darkness.

An Unpleasant Morning!

"ANOTHER OUTRAGE AT THE FIRS!

ARMED BURGLAR SURPRISED!

SHOTS AT WELL-KNOWN BANKER!"

"The Firs, once the residence of the late Mr. James Brennan, of Rovers fame, and now the property of Mr. Charles Thurgood, of the Railton Bank, was the scene of another sensation last night. Shortly before midnight Mr. Thurgood was awakened by a mysterious bell, and on proceeding to his study surprised an armed man there who had entered through the french window. The intruder, on being discovered, immediately fired three shots, the second of which smashed the electric light, before making good his escape under cover of darkness.

"Careful search of the premises afterwards revealed the fact that nothing had been stolen, apparently. Mr. Thurgood, who was found suffering severely from shock, described his assailant as a ruffian of gigantic physique, and we congratulate our popular townsman on his plucky and timely intervention. We are informed by the police that they have every hope of effecting an arrest before many hours have passed."

"M-my sainted aunt!"

Jimmy Brennan, staring at the flaring headlines on the front page of the "Railton Sunday News," scanned the story in astonished silence and passed the paper across the breakfast-table to Bill Nye.

"Huh! Railton's gettin' worse'n Chicago, I reckon!" grunted the veteran trainer when he, too, had finished the news. "Three shots—gigantic physique—sufferin' from shock! Yes, I'll bet he is. Charles Thurgood ain't the sort to like bein' shot at, I know!"

"Well, does anybody?" snorted Jimmy, remembering that the hearty bank manager had acted as a friend in need to him as quickly as anyone in the

town. "I'll go over and see the poor old hoss straight away."

He was as good as his word. The moment breakfast was ended he strolled along to the Firs, not without a pang at entering his old home once more, and found the Railton banker huddled in an armchair in his dead father's study. It was plain at once that Thurgood had received a thorough shaking-up through his midnight adventure; for his ruddy face was drawn and his eyes, encircled by deep black rings, had a queer, hunted gleam as he glanced up sharply at Jimmy's entrance. His usually jovial manner had disappeared also, and to the youngster's first words

of greeting he gave only a surly growl and nod.

"Mornin', Mr. Thurgood! Sorry to hear of the trouble, but I'm glad the blighter didn't bag anything."

Thurgood looked at him sourly.

"Is there anything worth bagging in this crazy house?" he growled; and Jimmy, when he was sure he had heard aright, gulped in surprise at the contemptuous reply. Then, realising that his host's nerves were somewhat frayed, he shrugged and grinned disarmingly.

"Why, I dunno! But surely you're as good a judge of that as I am by now, aren't you?"

If his innocent reply had been a

deadly insult the effect on Thurgood could not have been more devastating. In a flash the man was on his feet, his broad face haggard with rage, and something very like fear; while his voice, when he found it, rose to a cracked screech.

"What do you mean by that? What're you getting at? Are you insinuating— Bah! I wish I'd never seen the rotten place!"

Jimmy rose from his chair quietly, white to the lips. Badly rattled or not, Thurgood's remark was too much.

(What's bitten Thurgood? Is he playing a double part in the mystery overshadowing Jimmy? Read next week's grand instalment, boys; it's tip-top!)

dear Dad

Please thank Mother for her last letter. I hope you are quite well. Last week I was second in maths. Not long now to Christmas. I wonder

When Dad receives your letter he will know exactly what is coming next—and because he knows, you may be sure he will give you Meccano this Christmas!

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The Chronicle of the Greyfriars

CATCHING BREAKFAST

THEIR "NET" RESULT

By H. VERNON SMITH

Wharton has asked me to look up the old records and discover, if possible, what was the routine of the Monastery in the days of the Grey Friars. 'Searched.

At seven o'clock the brethren had to show a log and begin washing-up the previous evening's supper things. When they had finished washing the bottles, they had to take their rods and lines and go down to the river to catch their breakfast. The "net" results (Ha, ha!) were shared out equally—a brother who had only a sardine, going halves with a brother who had a whale.

Then the monks had to attend "call-over" and any brother who was late bagged five hundred lines from the Father Superior. After that, the brethren had to go out to give each peasant exactly what he didn't want. A man who was starving, got a basket of coal; a peasant who was cold was presented with an ice-cream, and a man who had ear-ache was given crutches.

After this the brethren had to cook the dinner. For dinner there was always seven courses—meat, bread, and five haricot beans.

In the afternoon the monks would take their arithmetic lesson by counting beads, and then they would go up to the dorm and make their beds. After that they would write out all those funny old documents, and then they would get out the bottles for supper.

Ten o'clock was "lights out" in the Monastery, and at ten every evening the monks would get in bed and the Father Superior would snuff the candles.



MONK DISCOURSETH ON ENGLAND

THIS FAYRE COUNTRIE

Revised by BOB CHERRY

(NOTE: It should be explained that writing was a long business in olden times, and one single document often took a month years to finish. This is why the article is a little vague. Changes were taking place quicker than the monk could write them.—Bob Cherry.)

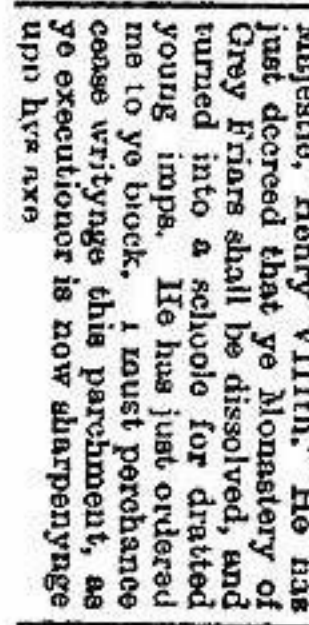
This fayre countrie of England it do flourish exceeding well, and is prosperous withal. Hys Gracious Majesty, Henry VIII, siteth upon ye throne, and his mooste evereign will, it is obeyed by alle hys subjects.

Ye peasants and labourers of ye countrie, they have they're daily bread, and when they hunger, behold they come unto ye Monastery of Grey Friars, and ye monks give unto them of their substance. Hys Gracious Majesty, Edward VIII, who sitteth upon ye throne, hath decreed, through hys ministers that ye Monastery of Grey Friars shall receive an hundred mark's per annum as a grant.

There do be troublous tymes over ye countrie for sure, and ye throne of Hys Gracious Majesty, Edward VIII, is most unquiet. Behold, Hys Gracious Majesty, Richard IIIrd, getteth hym away untoe battle at Bosworth field, and alle hys subjects do hope most devoutly that he will defeat the villainous Henry—I mean, Hys Gracious Majesty, Henry VIII.

Alle the English people do love their king, but, lo, the king chaungeh so quickly that it is hard to know which kinge it is that is being loved withal. As regards Hys Gracious Majesty, Henry VIII, everybodie loveth hym and wisheth hym well.

A plague on Hys Villainous Majesty, Henry VIIIth. He has just decreed that ye Monastery of Grey Friars shall be dissolved, and turned into a schoule for dratted young imps. He has just ordered me to ye block. I must perforce cease writinge this parchment, as ye executioner is now sharpenyng his axe.



Hanged for Finding Wine

Barbarous Methods in Ye Goode Olde Days

By MARK LINLEY

I have had the task of deciphering some of the old documents from the School Library. This was not an easy job, but here's some I've managed, anyway.

In 1582 a villager named Cowls was sentenced to death for stealing a rabbit, "which sayd rabbit was on ye lande of ye brethren of Grey Friars." Fanny being sentenced to death for poaching a mere rabbit!

The Monastery of Grey Friars belonged to the Abbey of Clere in Normandy, and they were obliged to send each year a good large sum of money and various kinds of produce to the French Abbey. In 1611 the boat which was taking the Grey Friars consignment



to France, was wrecked on the Black Pike, near Pegg village. The goods in the boat were washed ashore, and were collected by the villagers, who no doubt thought them fine luxuries.

When the Grey Friars heard of it, they appealed to the King, and orders were sent to collect all the produce still in existence and to punish the offenders. This they did, and three villagers were condemned to be hanged for stealing the wine.

The village sent a petition to Parliament, with the result that the villagers were let off. But the Abbot of Clere rose in his wrath and re-sentenced the villagers to be hanged. With the Church behind him, the State dared not do otherwise. The poor villagers were hanged on the spot.

The Famous Five and other Members of the Staff of the "Greyfriars Herald" wish all readers every-where a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

Ancient Documents Genuine and Otherwise

By Harry Wharton

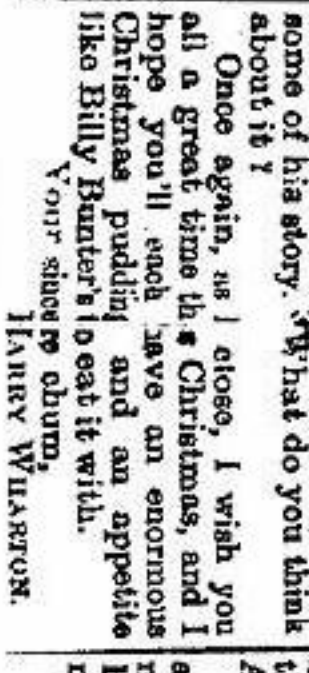
Dear Chums,—The issue of the Herald may surprise you a little. As a special Christmas Number, I asked the fellows to rub out all the old documents which were written by the monks in pre-dissolution days. I wanted my merry band of authors to take out all the interesting bits, so that we could put them at Christmas time and give an old-fashioned tone to our paper.

Some of the things have done so, but I am suspicious of certain other contributions. Harold Skinner, for instance, is a confirmed leg-puller, and I have a good idea that the villain has been pulling my leg in his little article. And that fabulous stamp, Bob Cherry, is not above having a game with me. His contribution seems rather fishy, but I have had to pass it.

Frank Nugent has wroughed in with some adventures which he discovered in an old document, and Smithy has brought to light facts about the ancient Grey Friars monastery which I have not seen anywhere else, and I suspect why, ha, ha, either. But the hints were reached when Dirty Nugent brought along a story which he tells me was written by the "monks." The story was so flagrant and outrageously improbable, that Dirty hit the passage with his neck. He went a my cawing a horrible little spase still open. I have printed some of his story. What do you think about it?

Once again, as I close, I wish you all a great time this Christmas, and I hope you'll each have an enormous Christmas pudding and an appetitive Billy Butcher's I eat it with.

Your sheepish chum,
Harry Wharton



Six Referees Laid Out

Monkish Combat "Attaboy"

Discovered by H. SKINNER

I have just discovered an interesting old document giving a detailed description of a moral combat at Grey Friars Monastery in the year 1420. It seems that the Abbot of Courthill referred to the Grey Friars' Father Superior as a "doddering old jesser," and the Father Superior retorted by putting his tongue out at the Abbot. Result, the Abbot challenged the Father Superior to a ten-round contest with maces in the gym.

The contest was fought on Ye National Sportsyng Clubbe rules, and this is the story of the fight, as recorded on the old documents. ROUND ONE.—As the going went, the Abbot swung his mace



high into the air and brought it down with rushing force on to the referee. The ref was cleared away, and a new ref appointed.

ROUND TWO.—The Father Superior knocked the Abbot neck over knees into the bath-room. "Behold, that is the stuff to give them!" "Yes, verily! Have hys gone!" "Attaboy!" The Abbot climbed back and threw his great iron mace. The Father Superior dodged, and once again the ref got the full benefit of it.

A third ref was appointed. ROUND THREE.—The Abbot aimed a wicked blow with his mace at his opponent, but the Father Superior avoided it, and the mace knocked a great hole in the

floor. The ref immediately fell down this hole, and a fourth ref was appointed.

ROUND FOUR.—The Abbot, playing it low down, donned a heavy suit of armour. The Father Superior appealed to the ref, but the ref took no notice. The Father Superior thereupon ran round behind his opponent and swung his mace. CLANG! The Abbot bounced into the air and fell on the ref, which squashed the ref completely, and a fifth ref was appointed.

ROUND FIVE.—The Abbot caught the Father Superior in the bread-basket, and doubted him up. But just as he was about to finish the job, the ref got in the way. A sixth ref was appointed.

ROUND SIX (AND LAST).—The Abbot rushed at the Father Superior, whirling his mace, but his opponent stuck out a foot and the Abbot hit the floor. His armour was so heavy that he could not lift himself to his feet again, so the Father Superior had him at his mercy. He proceeded to hammer the Abbot out as flat as a tin of sardines, amid frantic cheers from the Grey Friars.

YE MONK'S REVENGE

GREAT STORY Dug up by DICKY NUGENT

Found by F. NUGENT

X. R. SIZE & Co., L.P.D., Sports Outfitters, Finsdale.—Come too us for all sports goodies. Bows and arrows strong/ye made—2 pieces of eight. Boulders for battering-rams—10 duozats. Maces, pykes and swords going cheap. Now lye in battle-axes. CLEAVE YOUR FRIEND TO YE CHINE WITH A "BEANO" BATTLE-AXE. Only a guinea each.

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VARIABLE FOR SALE. Excellent slave. Eats verie little, and works all ye better for a touch of ye whip. Will take one dollar for ye whip, or will exchange for whye rabbit.—BARON BRISKER, Courthill.

LOST, STOLEN OR DELAYED. A postal ordere from a tylded relation. Ye postal-ordere has been expected to arrive sene ye hoodo, but has not yet come too hands. If any scurrilous knave has stolen it, while he bryngs it at once to BROTHER BONSHERE, Stude No. 7, ye Monastery of the Grey Friars.

It was a dark nite on the coast of Kent. The Grey Friars Monastery was rapped in gloom. Brother Ebbynzeer looked out of the cell window and larted.

"He, he!" he rored. "Tonighte the dark deed will be didd. I shall stab the Abbot in the turnny in the dormitory in the middle of the nite and in the most brutal fashion!"

And why did Brother Ebbynzeer want to stab the Abbot? This was Revenge! A horrible, brootal, wreekenes Revenge!

Only that morning the Abbot had tiked him off in front of all the other monks.

He crepp owt of his cell, and made his way to the Abbot's dorm. He sid in the Abbot's room and looked at the silent sleeper. The Abbot's chest rows and fell as he brothed, and from out of his nose came a sound like a organ in pain.

Brother Ebbynzeer looked at him and pondered. He greeved the fact that he was giving something away for the first time in his life. He was giving the Abbot a stroke of the dagger, and it wounded him—the thought didd. For a long minute there was silence, save for the rore of the sleeper. Then the dagger was raised on h, and gleaming down in a flash of life.

There was a shriek. The Abbot woke upp. He saw Brother Ebbynzeer rolling on the floor, with the dagger berried to the hilt in his breast. He saw what had happened. He saw what Brother Ebbynzeer had been too selfish even to give away the stroke of a dagger. He wanted it himself.

