

THE MYSTERY OF CAVANDALE ABBEY!

Christmas Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co.

The MAGNET 2^o



The Bullet That Missed!



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.

JUDGING by my postbag, my readers must be very keen on jazz bands. This week I have another request from a reader who wishes to get into touch with "Magnetites" who can play jazz instruments. So, if your home happens to be in Birmingham, and you can "strike the lyre"—or coax music out of more modern instruments—will you drop this reader a line? His name is Claude Williams, and he lives at 255, Ieknield Port Road, Rotton Park, Birmingham.

All best wishes, Claude, and when you've got your jazz band going, drop me a line and let me know, won't you? I can see we'll have "Magnet Jazz Bands" all over the country before long.

The next letter this week comes from a reader who signs himself "Magnetite-Jock," and who has some very complimentary things to say regarding our little paper. Incidentally, however, he takes your Editor to task for one thing. You remember the "ladder puzzle" which I mentioned a little while ago? Well, Jock says that the person who carried the ladder around a corner in the space of a few inches would not have to be very stout! He ought to see our office-boy. He's so thin that when he stands sideways you can't see him—and I'm sure he could go round a corner in a few inches. Seriously, though, when I gave that answer, I was referring to the ladder, not the person who carried it.

A REGULAR READER," of Maidstone, wants MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GREYFRIARS.

Yes, there are several schools in Great Britain which are run on the same lines as Greyfriars, and which have Big Hall, Common Rooms, Prefects' Room, and so on. Almost all the big public schools of the country have. The average age of the boys of the Remove at Greyfriars is 14 to 15. The Fifth-Formers are all about 17, and the Sixth-Formers are 17 to 18, and generally go to a University after completing their time at Greyfriars. The fags of the school and Third Form range in age from 10 to 13.

Glad to know you like our present series of stories, "Regular Reader." I'll make a note of your request to bring in the fags more prominently in future stories. Meantime, I strongly urge you to get this year's Holiday Annual. In it you will find a host of interesting facts concerning Harry Wharton & Co. and Greyfriars. This popular annual costs 6s., but its worth double!

Here's one of this week's winning jokes which comes from G. Folson, of 20, Greenford Road, Harrow, Middlesex:

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.).



for a second or so, and then stood scratching his head. "Well, what about it?" asked the P.-c., producing his notebook.

"I dunno, I had a——"
"Now, I've heard that tale before. Anybody can see you haven't had a lamp there, 'cos there's no bracket."

"Yes," said the driver, "but, look here——"

"No good making excuses," said the arm of the law. "You've got no light, and that's flat."

"That's not what I'm worrying about," said the driver sadly. "What I'd like to know is—where is my blinkin' trailer?"



The prize of a dandy pocket knife has already been dispatched to G. Folson.

THERE'S a nip in the air to-day that seems to prophesy snow before very long, so the next query, which comes from H. Leekie, of Deal, is quite topical. He wants to know

SOMETHING ABOUT GLACIERS.

Where do they come from—and where do they go? Well, they are formed by snow which is compressed into ice in certain "collecting chambers" or depressions in high mountains. As further ice forms, that which is already there is pushed out and begins to move down the mountain side at the rate of a few inches a year. As the glacier reaches the warmer regions it begins to melt and the water trickles away from it, to form those mountain torrents which are a feature of such countries as Switzerland and Norway.

In the Arctic, however, the glaciers do not melt, but great masses of ice break away from them when they reach the sea, and these form icebergs—the most dreaded menace to shipping. In time, of course, the bergs melt, so that the water which first formed the glacier eventually goes back to the sea. In time, of course, water from the sea forms the clouds, and falls as snow again on the mountain tops—and so it goes on and on.

From ice to fire is a long cry, but J. M., of Wapping, asks me a few questions about

THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON.

There have been many great fires in London, but I take it that my chum

refers to that which took place in 1666. He asks how many people were killed in the catastrophe, and it may surprise him to know that, despite the tremendous conflagration, only eight people met their deaths in it. The extent of the fire, however, was 396 acres, and in the space of the four days during which it raged, no fewer than 88 churches were destroyed, including St. Paul's. The City Gates, The Royal Exchange, the Customs House, the Guildhall, Sion Colloge, and many other public buildings suffered, together with about thirteen

thousand houses! Two hundred thousand people were rendered homeless.

HERE is a curious yarn which I came across the other day, and which is well worth passing on to you. It concerns

THE LUCKIEST MAN ALIVE.

During the War thousands of men had wonderful escapes from death, but the escape of Captain Hedley, a Canadian flying officer, seems almost unbelievable, although it is vouched for by the pilot of the plane in which Captain Hedley was acting as an observer. They were attacked over the German lines, and their plane went into a sudden vertical dive. The observer was dislodged from the plane and fell several hundred feet in a direct line with it. By some means or other, he came into contact with the tail of the plane, and hung on there, being safely landed on earth from a height of nearly 10,000 feet. "Some fall," as Fisher T. Fish would say.

Have you won a pocket wallet yet? If not, you'd better get a move on and see if you can send along a limerick as good as the following. It was sent in by M. J. Smith, of 44, Milton Street, Liverpool.

The Famous Five planned a big spread
To consume when the beaks were in bed.
Alas, Bunter got wind
Of the wheeze, so he grinned.
Now the spread's inside Bunter instead!

NOW let's see what we have in store for next week. Your old friend, Frank Richards, is on the top line again, with

"THE PHANTOM OF THE ABBEY!"

—another of the Christmas holiday series of Greyfriars yarns. After reading this week's story, you'll be wondering what is going to happen to the Famous Five—to say nothing of the portly Bunter. Well, Frank R. won't keep you long in doubt, and when you get next week's yarn in your hands you'll want to sit down without moving until you've read every line of it.

"Up, the Rovers!" will continue its triumphant march, while there are some topical touches in the special issue of "The Greyfriars Herald." "Old Ref." will be in form, and so will our special rhymester. While, as usual, I will be waiting in the office to have a chat with you all.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MYSTERY OF CAVANDALE ABBNEY!

BY

FRANK RICHARDS.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Danger Ahead!

"GEORGE!"
"Sir!" answered Albert.
Billy Bunter blinked at his footman through his big spectacles.

Bunter was seated in the easiest of easy chairs in his room—one of his suite of rooms—at Cavandale Abbey.

Bunter had not been long at Cavandale Abbey. But he had already made himself at home there.

He was Lord Cavandale's guest for Christmas; and his lordship had requested Bunter to make himself at home. But the Owl of Greyfriars did not need requesting. He was the fellow to make himself at home, requested or unrequested.

Albert, the mild young footman specially detailed for Bunter's service while he was a guest of Lord Cavandale's, answered Bunter mildly and respectfully.

Perhaps Albert was surprised to see that guest in Lord Cavandale's Surrey mansion. Indeed, there was no doubt that he was surprised. Even Pilkington, the stately butler, a man above ordinary emotions, had betrayed surprise. But Albert was a well-trained young man. His reflections, if any, were carefully concealed behind a wooden expressionless countenance.

Bunter blinked at him suspiciously. He suspected Albert of grinning, behind that wooden mask that he used as a face.

Not that there was anything to grin at. The fact that Harry Wharton's dinner-jacket, being too tight for Bunter, had burst, was not comic. Or if it was, Bunter failed to see the comicality. Still, he realized that it might have struck the beholders as funny.

But Bunter's eyes, with the aid of his big spectacles, failed to discern any sign of amusement in Albert's face. Albert stood before him like a graven image. "Where's Lord Cavandale?" asked Bunter.

"His lordship is engaged with Inspector Chapman, from Ashwood, sir."

"Oh! Well, you may mention to him that I shall take my coffee and cigarettes in my room."

"Very good, sir."

"I shall not come down again to-night, Frederick!" said Bunter. Bunter had an idea that it was aristocratic to

Somewhere in the ancient pile of Cavandale Abbey lurks the mystery man—a would-be assassin! Who he is, and what his motives are, are questions that provide a thrill to Harry Wharton & Co.'s Christmas Holiday!

forget servants' names. "I am—ah!—doomed fatigued from my journey."

Bunter had picked up "doomed" from Lord Cavandale. Bunter's career had long been that of a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles.

"Very good, sir."

"You may bring up my coffee, Herbert! Don't forget the cigarettes."

"Very good, sir."

Albert departed with noiseless tread.

Billy Bunter leaned back in the chair, in an attitude of comfort if not of grace, and stretched out his fat toes to the crackling log fire.

Billy Bunter was in clover.

Harry Wharton & Co. had declined,

without thanks, the boon and blessing of Bunter's fascinating society over the Christmas holidays. Bunter was glad of it now. Any fellow in the Greyfriars Remove would have jumped at the honour and distinction of passing the Christmas holidays in the magnificent mansion of Lord Cavandale. And Bunter was there!

Tap!
It was a tap at the door, and as Bunter supposed that it was Albert coming back with the coffee and cigarettes, he did not speak.

Tap!
The knock at the door was repeated, and Bunter blinked round irritably.

"Come in, you silly ass!" he snapped. The door opened.

A rather handsome young man, in evening clothes, whose manner and carriage betrayed the military man, stood in the doorway. He looked at Bunter, perhaps surprised by his greeting. It was Captain Lankester, another of Lord Cavandale's guests.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter. "I—I thought it was another silly ass—"

"What?"
"I—I mean— Come in!" gasped Bunter.

Captain Lankester came in.

Billy Bunter blinked at him in surprise. He had met Captain Lankester at dinner, and had not liked him. He had an impression that the Army man was supercilious, and regarded him—William George Bunter—as a bounder. The Owl of the Remove was extremely obtuse in some ways, but he had a great deal of sharpness in other ways. And, as a matter of fact, he had divined Captain Lankester's opinion of him exactly. He had another impression—also correct—that the captain was not pleased to see him an inmate of Cavandale Abbey. So it was rather a surprise to receive a visit from the captain in his room.

Even now, though he was in Bunter's quarters, there was an expression on the captain's face which Bunter could only regard as supercilious.

The fat junior's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. He was Lord Cavandale's guest. His lordship was under deep obligations to him. He was not going to be patronised by this Army man.

He sat down, and waved a fat hand to a chair.

"Take a pew!" he said carelessly.

"Eh?"

"Squat down!" said Bunter.

Captain Lankester did not "squat" down, and he did not take a pew. He

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strolled across to the fireplace, and stood leaning on a corner of the mantelpiece, looking very elegant as he did so, and looking down on Billy Bunter. There was a faintly amused glimmer in his eyes, which convinced Bunter that he was a supercilious beast.

Bunter leaned back in the chair and crossed one fat leg over another, and yawned. He was going to show this supercilious beast that he didn't care two straws for him, anyway.

"So we are having the pleasure of your company here for some time, Master Bunter," said Captain Lankester.

"Oh, I'm staying over Christmas," said Bunter. "Cavandale seems rather keen on it."

"I had not noticed that."

"Oh, frightfully keen!" said Bunter. "I'm really sorry that I shan't be able to give Cavandale all the time he would like. But the fact is, I'm so crowded with invitations for the holidays, that I really can't do it. A fellow with hosts of friends—"

"Believe me," said the captain, "Lord Cavandale would bear it with equanimity, if you deserted him, and went to some other of your—er—friends—"

"Think so?" said Bunter, his fat lip curling offensively. "Well, I don't! So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it."

Captain Lankester made a slight movement. Billy Bunter did not realise how narrow an escape he had of having his fat ear pulled. Bunter often had these narrow escapes without knowing it.

"It seems that you performed some service for Lord Cavandale, on his way home from Lantham to-day," said Captain Lankester, after a long pause.

"I should jolly well think I did!" said Bunter complacently. "I saved his life when he was attacked in the train. I saved it again when he was fired at in the park here, in his car. I saved it a third time when the villain took a pot-shot at him at the smoke-room window. Only my boundless pluck and presence of mind saved his bacon. But for me, he would have been killed every time—"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean, of—of course, he couldn't have been killed three times," said Bunter. "What I mean is—"

"Quite!" said the captain. "Well, I came here, Master Bunter, to warn you to be on your guard."

"Wha-a-t?"

"A brave, indeed heroic, fellow like you, of course, would not dream of shrinking from danger."

"Danger?" stammered Bunter.

"But take every care. It would be a blow to Lord Cavandale if you were killed under his roof—"

"Kik-kik-killed?"

Billy Bunter sat upright.

His little round eyes were wide open behind his big round spectacles. He blinked at the Army man in great alarm—looking at the moment neither brave nor heroic.

"Look here, wharrer you mean?" gasped Bunter. "I—I ain't in any danger that I know of. Wharrer you mean?"

"The villain who has attempted Lord Cavandale's life three times is still at large," said Captain Lankester gravely.

"He seems to be an absolutely desperate and determined man. Three times, by the strangest of chances, you have stood between Lord Cavandale and the assassin. His feelings towards you must be bitterly revengeful—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

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"He may even think it necessary to get you out of the way, should he intend to make another attempt on Lord Cavandale—"

"Oh!"

"You had not thought of that?"

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter.

"Then I am very glad I came to give you the warning," said Captain Lankester, his eyes on Bunter's fat, alarmed face. "Pray take every care! If the wretch should fire at you at a window—"

"Ow!"

"Or penetrate into the house at night—"

"Wow!"

"Your courage would not fail, I am sure. But for everybody's sake be on your guard!"

"Oh!"

"Do not forget, for one moment, that you are in terrible danger—the deadliest danger—"

"Ooooooh!"

"That is all," said Captain Lankester. "Be on your guard, night and day. I felt bound to give you the warning."

And, with a nod to the dismayed Bunter, Captain Lankester strolled out of the room. Billy Bunter blinked at the door as it closed behind the Army man. His fat face was pale, and there were beads of perspiration on his brow.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, lor'!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

In the Dead of Night!

MIDNIGHT!

Twelve strokes boomed out from somewhere in the vast pile of Cavandale Abbey.

Billy Bunter counted every one of them.

It was seldom—very seldom—that William George Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, heard the chimes at midnight. Generally, at the witching hour of night, Bunter was safe and sound in the embrace of Morpheus. At that hour, as a rule, his snore would have drowned any ordinary chimes.

But Billy Bunter was awake now—wide awake. He was unable to sleep, his first night under Lord Cavandale's majestic roof.

He closed his eyes many times; but they came open again. Being awake, he heard every sound in the old house—and it was remarkable how many sounds there were in the stilly night. Ancient wainscot cracked or creaked; ancient ivy rustled at ancient windows; the December wind wailed round old chimney-pots. Snowflakes, borne on the wind, pattered softly at closed panes. Nocturnal sounds seldom, very seldom, worried Billy Bunter.

Now he heard every one of them, and every one of them worried him a whole lot.

It was partly due to the cigarettes. Now that he was safe from Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eye, safe from the ashplant of a prefect, Bunter saw no reason why he should not let himself go a little. In Lord Cavandale's hospitable mansion he could have anything he cared to ask for. So Bunter had spread himself. He had smoked several cigarettes; and they had a somewhat disturbing effect on the dinner he had packed away.

But it was chiefly due to that beast Captain Lankester. Perhaps the captain had felt bound, as he had said, to give Bunter a word of warning. But there was no doubt that that word of warning was costing Bunter his night's rest.

Some unknown enemy was seeking Lord Cavandale's life. Bunter had

saved the peer. It had seemed to Bunter quite a master-stroke to plant himself at Cavandale Abbey for Christmas, taking ruthless advantage of the obligation under which he had placed his lordship. He had felt that he was in clover for Christmas.

But he was not feeling in clover.

No doubt that supercilious beast Lankester would have liked to frighten him away. He did not like Bunter, and did not want him there. But the worst of it was that there was something in it. The man who had attacked Lord Cavandale was evidently an utterly desperate villain. Bunter had baffled him—three times! What was more likely than that he would deal with Bunter?

With that thought in his fat mind Billy Bunter was not likely to sleep. The thought had not been in his mind till Gerald Lankester put it there. But it was there now, and would not leave him.

Over and over Bunter turned in his luxurious bed—a bed much softer and more luxurious than his bed in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars—or even at Bunter Court!

He could not sleep.

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

He was thinking of Harry Wharton & Co. After all he had done for them they ought to have been glad to welcome him for Christmas with open arms. At the present moment—quaking in bed in the dark—Bunter would have been glad to exchange the magnificence of Cavandale Abbey for the comparative humbleness of Wharton Lodge.

One!

It was one o'clock in the morning!

Bunter groaned.

It was no use trying to sleep. Captain Lankester's warning had fairly done for that. No doubt the captain himself had never dreamed that it would produce such an effect. But it had! Possibly the captain desired Bunter to clear off on the morrow. But certainly he could not have foreseen that the fat junior would remain sleepless all night.

Bunter sat up.

It was useless to try to sleep. He resolved to turn on the light and sort out a book from somewhere. He was not much given to reading; but reading was better than nothing.

And then, through the silence of the winter night, his nervously-intent ears caught a sound.

His fat heart throbbed.

This time it was not a creak of the wainscot, or a rat scuttling behind an ancient wall. It was not a crackling branch or a wailing gust of wind. It was a footfall in the corridor outside his door.

It was a soft, stealthy footfall, so faint that Bunter would not have heard it had not his nerves been strained by sheer funk.

But he heard it now.

He did not turn on the light at his bed-head. He did not move. He sat and listened with thumping heart.

His bed-room had two doors; one into his sitting-room, one on the great corridor. Both, he was thankful to remember, were locked. But a lock was not much defence against a desperate man bent on vengeance. Bunter shivered from head to foot. He trembled. He shuddered.

The footfall passed his door.

Silence again.

Bunter breathed once more. But he listened and quaked with dread. The footfall had passed—but it might return! At that hour it could scarcely be any occupant of the house who was moving about the passages. It was

some intruder—Bunter felt certain of that.

If he was looking for Bunter, perhaps he did not know Bunter's room and was searching for it. Or perhaps—the thought struck Bunter suddenly—if it was the unknown villain perhaps he was going to Lord Cavandale's room. That stealthy footfall might mean another attempt on the peer's life in the hours of darkness.

Bunter suppressed a groan.

He had fancied himself in clover for Christmas! He did not feel in clover now! Christmas with Lord Cavandale had ceased to appeal to William George Bunter. Magnificent as that mansion was, the hapless Owl of the Remove wished himself anywhere else.

He listened, with straining fat ears. There was no sound but the ordinary sounds of a rough winter's night.

The footfalls did not return. And now it occurred to Bunter that the footfalls passing his door had been going towards the left.

In that direction was nothing but the end of the corridor, ending in a large window looking on a balcony — Bunter's being the last room in a long series.

It was strange that an intruder should go along to the end of the corridor — and stay there!

That he had stayed there was certain, for Bunter's straining ears would have heard the slightest sound of returning footfalls.

Whoever had passed Bunter's door was now at the window at the end of the great corridor, and had been there many minutes.

Bunter gave a gasp of relief.

It must be, after all, somebody belonging to the house — perhaps someone who, like Bunter, could not sleep, and had turned out of bed and taken a walk along the long corridor; just looking out of the window now at the wintry, snowy park; perhaps opening a casement for a breath of the keen winter air. Bunter felt deeply relieved.

He wondered who it was. The servants' quarters were not at hand. There was only one other guest in the house—Captain Lankester—whose rooms, Bunter knew, were farther up the same corridor. Probably it was the captain, or it might be Mr. Parker, the peer's secretary. It might be Lord Cavandale himself; Bunter did not know where his lordship's quarters were.

Anyhow, it couldn't be the unknown assassin, or an ordinary burglar. He would not have gone along to the window and stayed there. That was an absolute certainty.

Bunter turned out of bed.

There could be no doubt that the man in the corridor belonged to the house. After several hours of quaking in a sleepless bed, Bunter was simply longing for the sight of a human face, the sound of a human voice. Even that

supercilious beast's company for a few minutes would be better than none. Bunter crept to his door.

But he opened it very softly before he peered out. Certain as he was that the man outside belonged to the household, Bunter was not taking any chances. He was sure, but he was going to make assurance doubly sure.

The well-oiled key turned without a sound; the handle moved noiselessly. Bunter drew the door open a little and put his head out. He peered in the direction of the end window. It was pitch dark in the corridor, but the tall window gleamed with wintry starlight. A cold draught blew along the passage; one of the casements had been opened. A shadowy figure stood there, black against the starlit window. The back of it was towards Bunter.

"Quiet!"

He knew what it meant—what it could only mean. In those dark hours Lord Cavandale's life hung by a thread; and Billy Bunter, shivering from head to foot with dire terror, was all that stood between the peer and the hand of the assassin.

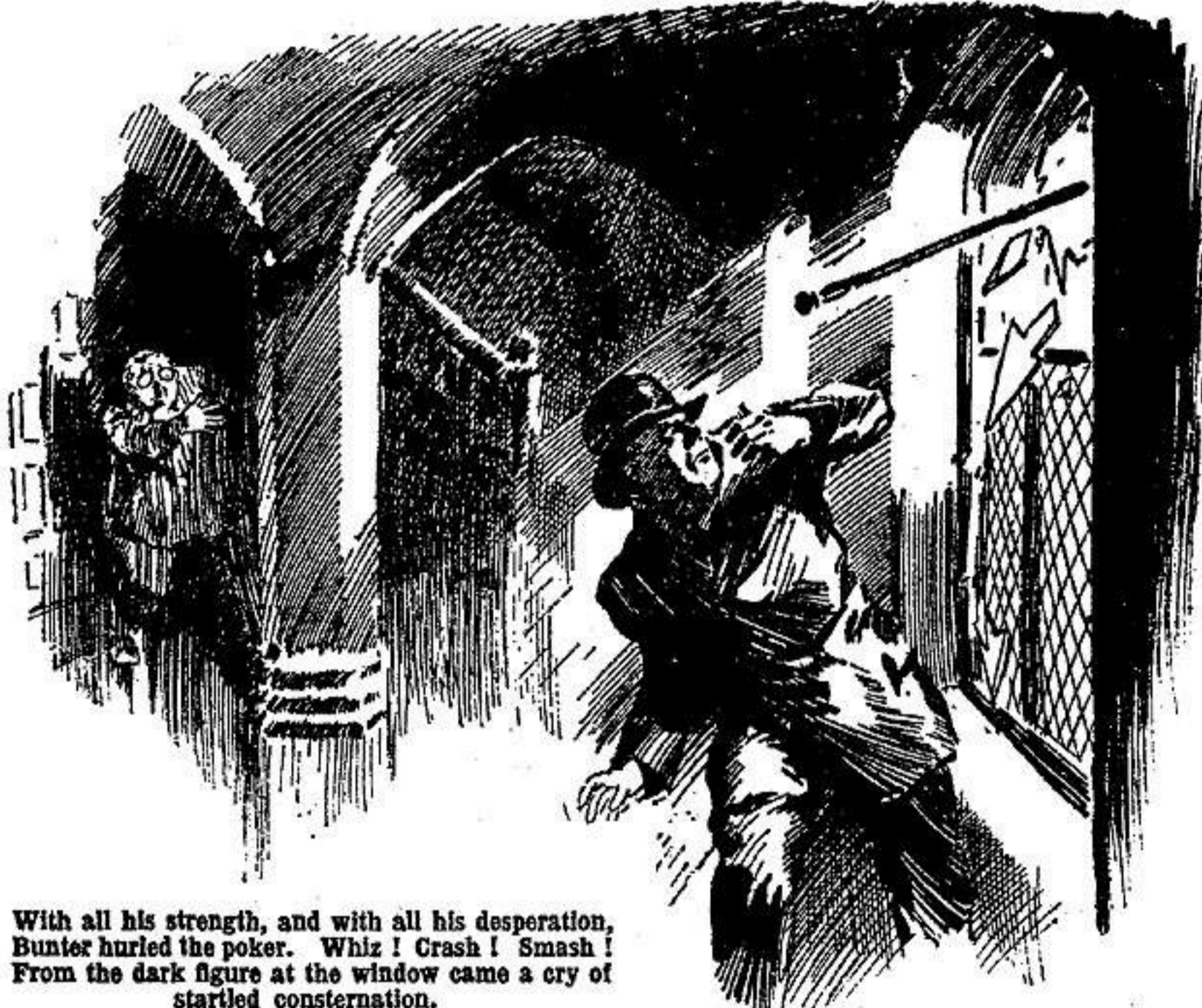
THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Up to Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER shuddered. His fat brain was almost swimming. Icy perspiration trickled down his back.

His first clear thought was to close his door silently, creep back into his room, and hide under the bed.

He had no doubt that that stocky figure by the end window was the man



With all his strength, and with all his desperation, Bunter hurled the poker. Whiz! Crash! Smash! From the dark figure at the window came a cry of startled consternation.

It was a faintly whispering voice. Bunter felt a thrill in his fat heart.

At the open casement the head and shoulders of a man appeared from outside. The dark figure within leaned a little, giving him a helping hand to enter. Bunter's heart thumped and stood still. Undoubtedly it was a member of the household who had passed Bunter's door and gone to the end window—and he was engaged in helping an intruder into the house! Amazement, even more than terror, petrified Bunter.

The second figure stood beside the first now—two dark silhouettes against the starlit glass. The second was stocky, thick-set, with a bowler hat jammed down close on a bullet head. Bunter could see only his outlines. But the outlines were familiar. It was the man who had attacked Lord Cavandale in the railway train from Lantham; and a member of Lord Cavandale's household was letting him secretly into the house at one o'clock in the morning!

Bunter's fat brain swam.

of the Lantham train—the man who had fired twice on Lord Cavandale from his own park. A traitor in the household had admitted him. Every minute was precious now.

Under his bed, behind a locked door, was certainly the safest place for Billy Bunter. But Bunter did not stir.

The hapless, fat junior tried to think what other fellows would have done—Harry Wharton, or Bob Cherry, or Johnny Bull. Certainly they would not have crept to safety, leaving the dastard to do his wicked work unimpeded.

And Bunter could not do it.

Terror chained him. As with the Ancient Mariner, "Fear at his heart, as at a cup, the life-blood seemed to sip!" But he could not do it. Lord Cavandale had been kind and generous to him. The peer had not, perhaps, received Bunter's cool proposal to pass Christmas at the Abbey with enthusiasm. But his gratitude to the fat schoolboy who had saved his life in the Lantham train had

stood the test. He had been kind and hospitable. And he was a man who had been through the War, and bore on his seamed face the scars of Flanders. Bunter was so scared that his very flesh crept. But somewhere in Bunter was a spark of British pluck. He could not—and would not—leave the master of Cavandale Abbey to his fate.

There was a faint whispering at the window.

The taller of the two figures bent a little towards the other to whisper. The sound of whispering reached Bunter, but not the words, or any recognisable tone of the voice. But his perceptions were sharpened now; the very terror that gripped him seemed to brace him and sharpen his faculties. He knew that the traitor in the house was giving the stocky man in the bowler hat directions to reach Lord Cavandale's quarters. Bunter certainly was not the destined victim, for the man had only to step along the corridor to reach his door.

The stocky man's whisper came—a whisper, but deeper and clearer. Bunter caught the words.

"I get you."

Another faint whisper from the taller man.

"Course it'll be quiet!" came the husky whisper of the stocky man again. "One crack from this—" His hand moved out from under his coat, and Bunter saw that there was something in it.

Another inaudible whisper, and the husky answer:

"Lead pipe wrapped in a sock! I've used it afore!"

Bunter saw the taller figure back a little, as if with involuntary repugnance. The husky voice spoke again in a less cautious whisper and a jeering tone.

"If you ain't keen on it, guv'nor, I ain't! I—"

"Quiet!"

Bunter heard that whispered word.

"Well, we're wasting time!" came the husky whisper sullenly.

"Wait!" Bunter's hearing seemed preternaturally keen, for he caught the faintly whispered words. "I must get back to my room."

"Ow long, guv'nor?"

"Five minutes."

"I'll wait."

The taller figure moved. It came to Bunter like a flash that to reach his room, wherever it was, the traitor had to pass Bunter's door again. The fat junior's head popped back into his room like that of a tortoise into its shell. He closed the door, but did not venture to latch it, lest the faintest of sounds should alarm the two villains. But the fact that the door was ajar could not be seen in the blackness of the corridor. Only by the end window was a glimmer of light from the stars and the reflection of the snow outside.

The stealthy footfalls passed Bunter's door again. They died into silence up the passage.

The man was gone. He would have to pass Captain Lankester's room, and Bunter hoped that the captain might awaken. But there came no sound from the corridor. Bunter drew his door a few inches open again and peered out. The corridor was dark, deserted, silent; but by the dimly starlit window at the end the stocky figure stood silent and motionless. The ruffian was waiting till his accomplice was back in his bed-room; evidently the man he had called "guv'nor" was careful to keep himself from any suspicion of being concerned in what was coming.

Bunter could have groaned with

horror. The wretch was waiting with a length of lead piping in his grasp—a deadly weapon meant for deadly use. One crack from such a weapon—

Bunter shut his teeth hard. To his own amazement, he was not so terrified now as he had been at first. Perhaps the very excess of terror had lent him a kind of desperate courage.

To give the alarm—to wake the whole household—without drawing upon himself a blow of that deadly weapon, was Bunter's problem. He had a few minutes to think, after the accomplice had disappeared; and the fat junior tried hard to think. When that black figure stirred from the window it would be too late.

A single cry might, and probably would, bring the ruffian springing at him. To close and lock his door and then yell at the top of his voice behind it—it was futile. How far away others might be, in that vast house, Bunter did not know. Captain Lankester, he knew, had rooms on the same great corridor; but Bunter did not know if they were near. Besides, the captain would be asleep, his door closed, and the doors at Cavandale Abbey were thick and solid, of massive ancient oak. With his door shut, and other doors shut, Bunter's loudest yell was not likely to reach other ears—except those of the man who was close at hand—the waiting assassin at the end window. Bunter shuddered at that thought.

What could he do?

He dared not venture outside his room. The man would hear him and then—

Once more the temptation assailed the hapless Owl of Greyfriars to creep into safe hiding and let things take their course. Once more he resisted it, and drove it from him. He must save Lord Cavandale.

Minutes were precious—seconds were precious. What could he do? In utter desperation, Billy Bunter thought and thought, sweat streaming down his fat skin in spite of the sharp cold of the night—sharp cold that Bunter did not even notice now, though he was crouching at an open door in his pyjamas. And in sheer desperation, he determined what to do. Silently, hardly breathing, he stepped back into his room, crept to the fireplace and groped for the heavy bronze poker. He crept back to the door, poker in hand. He peered out; the black figure was still motionless at the window, the casement still open, evidently left so, in readiness for the dastard's flight when his deadly work was done. The stocky figure had not stirred. As a matter of fact, though long minutes seemed, to Bunter, to have passed, it was not yet two minutes since the unknown accomplice had left the man standing there.

Bunter's fat hand gripped the poker almost convulsively. Slowly dragging himself against the pull of fear that held him back, Bunter emerged from his doorway into the blackness of the corridor.

He swung the heavy poker above his head. With all his strength and with all his desperation he hurled it.

Whiz!

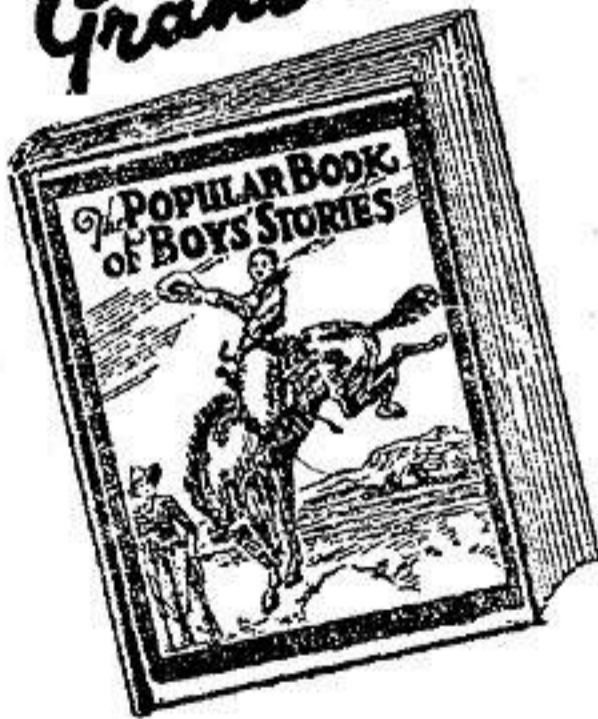
Crash!

Smash!

Bunter hardly heard the smash. He hardly heard the startled cry that broke from the man at the window. He bolted back into his room, turned the key in the lock, and dived under his bed. He had done what he could—he had done all that he could!

And he had done enough.

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Surprises the Natives!

SMASH!

The crashing of a large, thick pane of glass, smashed in the centre by the crashing poker, rang through the silent house. From the dark figure at the window a sharp cry broke—a cry of startled consternation. There was another crash as the heavy poker dropped on the balcony outside. The tinkling of broken glass followed as it fell in a shower. From silent corridor and staircase came the echoing of that sudden crash.

Had Bunter still been watching, he would have been aware that there was no further danger. For a second or two the dark figure stood as if too startled and amazed to stir; then it vanished by the open casement and the casement clicked shut after it. Already there was a sound of an opening door; a few moments, and electric light flashed on in the corridor. The alarm had been given; and the intruder had escaped only in time. Had he lingered even a few moments the sudden blaze of light would have revealed him there.

Bunter, squirming under his bed shivering with terror, listened. He knew that that terrific crash must alarm the household—it could not possibly have failed to do so. The alarm given, the man in the bowler hat was not likely to linger to attempt to carry out his purpose. But what if he rushed to Bunter's room—savage, revengeful—what if he burst in the locked door—

Billy Bunter groaned with sheer terror.

Footsteps in the corridor—footsteps at his door! Bunter squirmed into the farthest recess under the bed. He squeaked aloud in fear. Footsteps—and voices!

"What is it—what is it, Greaves?" It was Captain Lankester's voice; startled, excited; utterly unlike the usual cool drawl of the Army man.

"A window broken, sir—" It was a servant's voice that answered. Bunter remembered that the captain's man had a room near his master. It was the captain's servant who was answering.

Bunter gasped with relief.

If Captain Lankester and his man were both in the corridor there was no further danger. That terrible figure that had stood black by the starlit window must be gone. The accomplice was still in the house; but he, of course, would be lying very low—as low as he could. Bunter's fears were relieved and he crept from under the bed.

"A window—" It was Captain Lankester's voice again. It was almost husky with excitement.

"Yes, sir—the window at the end of the passage—smashed in the middle—a whole pane—"

"But—but what—have you seen anyone, Greaves?"

"No one, sir!"

Another voice broke in; Bunter recognised the fruity voice of Pilkingham, the butler.

"What has happened? What—"

"It's a winder, sir!" That was the voice of Albert, Bunter's own personal servant at Cavandale Abbey.

Evidently many members of the household were gathering on the scene.

Billy Bunter had quite recovered now. The danger was past—obviously past. Bunter's courage returned at a bound. When there was no danger Bunter was as bold as a lion.

He switched on his light and—conscious now of the December cold—

slipped on his slippers and put on his coat over his pyjamas. Then he unlocked his door and rolled out.

The corridor was ablaze with light. Near Bunter's door stood Captain Lankester in slippers and dressing-gown. His face was white as chalk, and he was staring towards the window. Close by the window stood Greaves, the captain's valet, with an astonished face blinking at the great jagged gap in the centre of a large plate-glass pane. On the other side of the captain, near the head of the stairs, stood Pilkingham—also in a dressing-gown. Albert was close at hand, in pyjama jacket tucked into trousers. Several heads showed on the staircase, coming up. Obviously the crash of the breaking window had reached, and startled, many members of the numerous household.

Bunter blinked towards the window. There were casements on both sides of the tall central window; and the one on the left had been open. It was shut now, locked by the spring lock that fastened automatically when it closed. Of the dark figure that had stood there there was no sign. Bunter had no

one could get through the broken pane. The casements are shut and locked."

"But the snow, sir—" said Albert.

"It must have blown in through the gap in the pane."

As the captain spoke a gust of wind threw several fleecy snowflakes through the gap. Outside snow was still falling.

"No doubt!" said Pilkingham.

"But, sir," said Albert, "this here snow, sir, is under the casement at the side—it couldn't blow there, sir—"

"You need say no more, Albert," said Pilkingham, in his most chilling tones.

And the footman drew back, abashed by the rebuke. Pilkingham ruled the household staff at Cavandale Abbey with a rod of iron. Albert had ventured to argue with a guest of Lord Cavandale. "You forget yourself, I think, Albert."

"Sorry, Mr. Pilkingham, sir!" stammered Albert.

Pilkingham waved him out of existence.

Billy Bunter rolled forward. Bunter was grinning now from sheer enjoyment of the situation. The danger was past, and Bunter was going to take the spotlight, in the centre of a startled crowd.

"Albert's right!" he said.

"Sir!" said Pilkingham.

"Quite right!" said Bunter.

"Indeed, sir!" said Pilkingham

freezingly.

"What do you mean, you young fool?" snapped Captain Lankester. "What do you know about the matter?"

"More than you do, I fancy," answered Bunter coolly. "And don't call me names, either! Lord Cavandale would have been murdered while you were snoring, but for me."

The captain started violently.

"What? What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say," answered Bunter. "Some of you go and call Lord Cavandale—"

"You will do nothing of the kind," said Captain Lankester harshly.

"Certainly not, sir," said Pilkingham. "His lordship's rooms are at a distance, and if he has not been disturbed, sir, I am sure you will not think it necessary to disturb him."

"Not in the least, Pilkingham," said the captain. "I see no occasion whatever to disturb his lordship."

"I tell you—" hooted Bunter.

Bunter did not seem to be getting the spot-light he deserved. A dozen startled servants were staring at him; Captain Lankester was frowning at him; Pilkingham regarded him with as much disapproval as he could venture to show towards a guest of Lord Cavandale. Bunter had rolled on the scene to take the game, as it were, into his hands. But somehow he did not seem popular.

"If you have anything to say, you can tell me!" snapped Captain Lankester. "You can know nothing about this."

"That's all you know!" snorted Bunter. "Pilkingham, go and wake up Lord Cavandale at once!"

"In the circumstances, sir, I am receiving instructions from Captain Lankester," said Pilkingham smoothly.

"Albert!" roared Bunter.

In the stress of excitement he forgot his aristocratic forgetfulness and did not call Albert George or Frederick.

"Yes, sir!" said Albert.

"Go and call Lord Cavandale."

Albert glanced at the butler.

"You will remain where you are, Albert," said Pilkingham. "At the present moment Captain Lankester is giving us instructions."

"Yes, sir," said Albert.

There was a quiet footfall, and another member of the household arrived on the scene. It was a thin gentleman with

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For the snappy Greyfriars Limerick set out below, Bernard Rayburn, of 62, Ruskin Avenue, Cheetham, Manchester, has been awarded one of this week's MAGNET pocket wallets.

A curious chap is the Bunder;
He's what you might call an
"all-rounder."
Though with cards and
the races
He's klooked o'er the traces,
At heart there is no'er a one
sunder!

Have you tried to win one of these useful prizes yet, chum?

doubt that the villain was getting away from the vicinity at his best speed; and he had gone only in time.

"But what—who—who—" Pilkingham almost stuttered, startled out of his stately calm.

"Can't make it out," said Greaves.

"I was woke up, hearing a fearful crash, and come out of my room and turned on the light. Then I saw that the window had been smashed."

"I—I heard the crash, also," said Captain Lankester. "It is—is inexplicable. Who can have broken the window?"

"I quite fail to understand, sir!" said Pilkingham. "It is a most extraordinary occurrence, sir."

"Somebody's been here, sir!" gasped Albert.

"What do you mean, Albert?" asked Pilkingham coldly.

"Look, sir! There's snow—"

"Snow?" exclaimed Captain Lankester.

"Yes, sir," said Albert excitedly.

"Somebody's been standing here and left snow off his boots. Look, sir!"

There was a quick gathering at the spot. Just within the left-hand casement, where the dark figure had stood, there were unmistakable traces of snow. Startled exclamations broke out on all sides. Captain Lankester's voice cut through them.

"Nobody can have been here. No

watery eyes and gold-rimmed glasses—Mr. Parker, Lord Cavandale's secretary.

"What is this disturbance, Pilkingham?" asked Mr. Parker. "I heard a noise—a deafening crash—"

"A window has been broken, sir," said the butler. "We are now trying to ascertain how—"

"I can tell you!" roared Bunter. "I broke it!"

There was a sort of jump from all hearers. Pilkingham started; Mr. Parker turned his gold-rimmed glasses and watery eyes on the fat junior; Captain Lankester made a movement towards him, and then checked himself. All the servants stared blankly at Bunter.

"You—you—you broke the window?" stuttered Pilkingham.

"I jolly well did!"

"Goodness gracious!" ejaculated Mr. Parker.

"You!" breathed Captain Lankester. Bunter was getting the spot-light now!

"Yes, me!" he answered, emphatically and ungrammatically, "and if I jolly well hadn't, Lord Cavandale would have been murdered in his bed."

"Are you mad?"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter.

"Wha-a-t!"

"Cheese it! I tell you that man—the man in the train—the man who tried to kill Lord Cavandale—has been here, and I—"

"Nonsense!"

"You can jolly well call it nonsense if you like!" hooted Bunter. "You wouldn't have saved Lord Cavandale. You'd have gone on snoring while he had his skull cracked with a lead pipe."

The captain started again.

"A—a—a what—" he stuttered.

"A lead pipe, wrapped in a sock—that's what the villain had!" roared Bunter. "I jolly well stopped him! You didn't! You can shut up."

"You insolent young rascal!" exclaimed the captain.

He made a step towards Bunter, his eyes flashing.

Billy Bunter blinked defiance through his big spectacles. He had been horribly afraid of the dark figure at the window; but he was not afraid of Captain Lankester.

"I said you can shut up, and I mean it!" hooted Bunter. "You'd be fast asleep now if I hadn't smashed that window—and Lord Cavandale murdered in his bed! You take a back seat, see?"

"You unspeakable young cad!" exclaimed Captain Lankester. "Do you imagine that you can insult a friend of Lord Cavandale's because you have forced yourself upon him in this house?"

"Rats!" retorted Bunter.

"What?" gasped the captain.

"Rats! R-A-T-S! Rats! That's what we say at Greyfriars to a fellow who talks out of his hat! Cheese it!"

"Upon my word!" murmured Pilkingham.

"You, Pilkingham, go and call Lord Cavandale!" roared Bunter. "Do you hear? Think I'm going to let him sleep when that man may come back, and be let into the house again—"

"Let into the house!" gasped Captain Lankester.

"Yes, let into the house!" hooted Bunter. "He was let in before, and he may be let in again. You didn't know that, did you, Mister Clever Captain Lankester? Well, you do now I've told you—see?"

"The boy is mad!"

"Nightmare, perhaps, sir," said Pilkingham, staring with wide-open eyes at Billy Bunter.

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"Don't be a silly owl, Pilkingham."

"Wha-a-t, sir? What did you say?"

"Don't be a silly owl! Go and call Lord Cavandale! If I knew where he was I'd go and wake him myself! Go and call him, you fool!"

"Fool!" repeated Pilkingham, as if he could scarcely believe his ears—as no doubt he scarcely could.

In all his stately and distinguished career as a butler Pilkingham had never been addressed like this before.

"Will you go and call Lord Cavandale?" roared Bunter.

"Not unless Captain Lankester instructs me to do so—"

"Certainly not!" said the captain.

"I tell you—" shrieked Bunter.

"I am here!" said a deep, quiet, calm voice. "Please calm yourself, my dear boy! I'm here!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Footprints in the Snow!

LORD CAVANDALE had arrived on the scene. Although his rooms were distant from the spot in the great house the peer could hardly have failed to become aware that something unusual was going on at that hour of the night. Evidently he had become aware of it. He came on the scene fully dressed, apparently not having hurried. There was an immediate hush, and all eyes turned on the tall, lean gentleman's face—once handsome and still not unpleasing, in spite of the terrible scars that seamed both cheeks.

"What is the trouble?" asked Lord Cavandale gently.

"I—?" began Bunter.

Captain Lankester broke in.

"Silence, boy! The fact is—"

"I know more about it than you do!" Bunter broke in, in his turn, "and I'm jolly well going to tell Lord Cavandale—"

The peer made a gesture.

"Please allow Captain Lankester to speak, Bunter."

"But—"

"Please!" said Lord Cavandale gently.

Bunter grunted, and was silent. Captain Lankester gave him a very inimical glance. It was fairly obvious at that moment that nothing would have pleased the young Army man better than to take Billy Bunter by the scruff of the neck, and bestow upon him the thrashing of his life.

"The fact is, we have not yet cleared up what happened, Cavandale," said the captain. "A window has been broken, and the crash appears to have awakened nearly all the household. My man, Greaves, I think, was the first out of his room. I woke when he turned on the light and called, and came out. We found the window smashed—that is all we know."

"Well, I know a jolly lot more than that!" snorted Bunter.

"This boy has apparently been suffering from nightmare," added the captain. "He has been making some ridiculous statements—"

"Oh, can it!" said Bunter rudely.

The captain compressed his lips in a tight line. Lord Cavandale suppressed a smile.

"My dear Bunter, please do not use schoolboy expressions to my friend Lankester," he said. "But it is your turn now. If you know anything about what has happened—"

"The whole jolly lot!" said Bunter.

"That is fortunate," said Lord Cavandale, smiling. "Please tell us the—ahem!—whole jolly lot."

"I woke up," said Bunter—"that is, I mean I hadn't been to sleep. I heard somebody pass my door and go to the window. Of course, I got out to see what was up. Being as brave as a lion, and absolutely without nerves, I looked into the matter. Looking out of my door, I saw somebody helping a man in at the window—"

"Good gad!" Lord Cavandale stared blankly at Bunter. Captain Lankester laughed. Pilkingham permitted himself an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders. Mr. Parker took off his gold-rimmed glasses and wiped them, put them on again, and blinked at Bunter. Some of the servants grinned.

"The man got in," went on Bunter. "You can see snow on the floor from his boots, where he was standing. The man who let him in whispered to him, and told him to wait five minutes while he got back to bed. Then I thought of alarming the house by chucking the poker through the window. I'd have tackled the brute myself, only he had a lead pipe. You remember he had a loaded stick when he went for you in the Lantham train, sir! This time he had a lead pipe. I—I wasn't a match for him, so—"

"It was the same man?" asked Lord Cavandale, watching Bunter's fat, excited face very curiously.

"Yes—the man in the bowler-hat. The man who went for you in the Lantham train, sir. He must have cleared off as soon as I gave the alarm—of course, I thought he would. I knew it would wake the house."

"You say you saw the man admitted by a member of the household?"

"I jolly well did!"

"Give Lord Cavandale the name of the servant who has betrayed his trust, Bunter!" sneered Captain Lankester.

"How should I know?" snorted Bunter. "Think I can see in the dark? Or do you think I'd turn the light on with that murderer only a dozen feet away?"

"But you saw the man?" asked Lord Cavandale.

"I saw him against the window, like a shadow."

Captain Lankester laughed again.

"You are short-sighted, I believe, Master Bunter?" he asked.

"What about it?" grunted Bunter.

"In spite of that defect of vision, you were able to recognise a man a dozen feet away in the dark?"

"You can say what you like!" snapped Bunter. "I knew it was the same man. I couldn't make out his face, of course. But he looked the same—same height, same figure, and a bowler-hat jammed down on his head to the ears. I jolly well know it was the same man!"

"And the man who admitted him?" asked the captain, in the same derisive tone. "Can you give a description of him?"

"Of course I can't!" snapped Bunter. "I'm not a cat to see in the dark. He was taller than the other man, that's all I know. About your height."

"Thank you!" said the captain, laughing. "I am the same height as Mr. Parker. It's between you and me, Parker."

The secretary laughed.

"Come, come!" said Lord Cavandale rather sharply. "This really is not a jesting matter, Lankester."

"My mistake, Cavandale! I thought it was."

"My lord," said Pilkingham, in his most stately manner, "if I am permitted to speak—" He waited for a

gesture of assent before he proceeded: "Then, my lord, I beg to assure your lordship that no member of your lordship's staff of servants is capable of the action attributed to him by this young gentleman. I will answer, my lord, for every member of this household below stairs, as I will answer for myself. It is not for me to contradict a guest of your lordship's, but I am bound to say, my lord, that such an action as that described is impossible, my lord."

"Lord Cavandale does not need assuring of that, Pilkingham," said Captain Lankester. "He is well aware that this extraordinary boy has been dreaming."

"Gammon!" said Bunter.

Lord Cavandale, without answering, stepped towards the end window. He bent his head and examined the traces of snow on the floor.

"Someone from outside appears to have been standing here, Lankester," he remarked.

"I fancy the snow blew in through the gap, Cavandale."

"Impossible! This spot is quite out of the line of the gap in the central window. Some snow is blowing in now, as you see, but it is nowhere near the spot."

The captain bit his lip.

"Then there is only one explanation," he drawled.

"What is that?"

"This boy has not dreamed the occurrence, as I fancied—"

"Oh! You know that now, do you?" interjected Bunter.

"He has not dreamed it—he has invented it," said the captain deliberately. "From a desire to make himself of importance, and to add to the obligations he has placed you under, he has invented the whole thing."

"Wha-a-at?" stammered Bunter.

He blinked at the captain blankly. "He has deliberately opened the case-ment, and strewn snow on the floor to give colour to his story," went on the captain calmly. "Certainly no murderous character has been here, and no member of the household has given such a character admittance. The mere supposition is an insult to your faithful servants, Cavandale."

There was a faint murmur of approval from the servants. Even Pilkingham permitted himself to join in it.

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Bunter. "You trying to make out that I'm a liar?"

"An imaginative lad, at least," smiled the captain. "Come, come, my boy, you have caused trouble enough! Now, own up that the whole thing was an invention."



"Feeling ill?" asked Wharton. "Oh, no!" answered Bunter. "I—I'd like another cigar, but—but perhaps it would spoil my lunch. I—I think I'll go to my room. I—I feel a little giddy!"

"It's a lie!" roared Bunter.

"Bunter!" said Lord Cavandale.

Bunter spluttered with rage.

"Think I'm going to be made out a liar, when I've saved your life?" he bawled. "I tell you that man was let in by somebody in the house. I tell you—"

"Calm yourself, my dear boy!" said Lord Cavandale, his keen eyes on Bunter's crimson face. "Lankester, I wish you had not made that suggestion. The boy may be mistaken—deluded—"

"The boy is lying!" said Captain Lankester uncompromisingly.

"Liar yourself!" bawled Bunter.

The captain turned quite pale.

"By gad! I will not tolerate this! I will—"

"Enough!" exclaimed Lord Cavandale. "Bunter, be silent! Lankester, govern your tongue, please! The matter may be easily put to the proof."

Lankester started.

"In what way?"

Lord Cavandale opened the casement. Outside, the light snowflakes were falling. He pointed to the snow that lay thick on the balcony.

"Look!" he said quietly.

Across the snow-covered balcony, to the bronze rail at the farther edge, lay tracks of feet. The light snowflakes had not yet had time to obliterate them. Captain Lankester stared out at the tracks in the snow.

"The boy—" he said obstinately.

"Come, come, that is mere obstinacy. Lankester. You can see from here

that those footprints were left by a man, not a boy."

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Bunter. "I hadn't thought of that—I mean, I was just going to suggest looking for the beast's footprints. What about that, Mister Jolly-clever Lankester?"

Lankester did not heed Bunter. He stared out at the tracks in the snow, glimmering in the pale starlight, and shook his head. Evidently he was not to be convinced.

"Trickery!" he said. "Trickery, to bear out the boy's desire to make a sensation. Nothing but that."

"Pilkingham!"

"My lord!"

"Go down and look outside under the balcony, and report to me whether you find footprints in the snow there."

"Immediately, my lord."

Pilkingham gave Bunter a glance—as scornful as a butler could venture upon. It was clear that Pilkingham was of the captain's opinion, and that he had not the slightest doubt that the whole thing was a foolish trick to cause a sensation, to add to the fat junior's self-importance. Obviously he had no expectation whatever of finding footprints below the balcony.

Lord Cavandale waited in silence. There was a sound of a door opening below. Captain Lankester moved restlessly. The group of menservants stood still. Mr. Parker eyed Bunter very curiously. Bunter grinned. As the snow had not hidden the footprints on the balcony, it was not likely to have

hidden those at the foot of the wall below. Bunter knew that the butler expected to find nothing; but he knew too what he must find, and he waited with a fat, grinning face for his vindication.

Pilkingham came back up the stairs at last, and came along the corridor to the waiting group near the window. There was a somewhat disturbed expression on his face.

"My—my lord—"

"Well, Pilkingham?"

"There are footprints below the balcony, my lord—in fact, very many of them! The snow certainly looks very trampled—quite as—as if someone had jumped down hastily and stumbled in it. There are traces of footprints both approaching and leaving the house."

"What did I tell you?" grinned Bunter.

Captain Lankester opened his lips and closed them again. He gnawed the underlip hard.

"Thank you, Pilkingham!" said Lord Cavandale quietly, "that settles the matter beyond doubt. The man has been here! Master Bunter's statement is perfectly correct—and I have no doubt that my life has been saved again by my young friend."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Very Pressing Invitation!

HARRY WHARTON waved his hand as the car drove away from the gates of Wharton Lodge, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh waved his hat. Colonel Wharton and his sister, Miss Amy Wharton, smiled back; and the car dashed on and disappeared towards Wimford. And the two juniors of Greyfriars walked slowly up the drive again to the house.

"It's rather rotten, uncle and aunt being called away like this," Harry Wharton remarked. "I hope they'll be back before Christmas. But—"

"The rottenfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "But your excellent aunt and ridiculous uncle could not turn the deaf ear to the call of esteemed and absurd duty."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's so, old bean. I believe Aunt Margaret is a very decent old lady, though I hardly ever see her. I had a holiday once with her at Bournemouth, and I fancy she was glad when I cleared. I'm awfully sorry she's ill—but I'm rather glad she didn't want to see me as well as her brother and sister. They were bound to go, of course, they're fond of her. But—now we're on our own, Inky, till Bob and Frank and Johnny come along."

Wharton looked thoughtful.

"Look here, Inky, with Aunt Margaret ill at Bournemouth, and Aunt Amy and my uncle gone to stay there—what about getting old Bob on the phone, and going over to him for a few days. We know he'd be glad to have us."

"A wheezy good idea, my esteemed chum!" agreed the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The excellent and absurd Bob Cherry would be terrifically pleased."

"It's a bit rotten here, without my uncle and aunt," said Harry. "Look here, I'll ring up Bob Cherry as soon as we get in."

"Yes, ratherfully."

There was a honk of a car behind the two juniors, and they glanced round. A rather handsome car was coming up the drive, evidently having

just turned in at the gates. From the window a fat face looked out.

"I say, you fellows!" trilled a well-known voice.

"Oh, my hat! Bunter!"

The Bunterfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

The car came gliding on through the snow on the drive and stopped. Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh stopped also; the former eyeing William George Bunter rather grimly. Bunter leaned from the window of the car and blinked at them amicably through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows! You didn't expect to see me again so soon, what?" chuckled Bunter.

"It's not exactly a surprise," said Wharton sarcastically. "What do you want this time?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You came last night to borrow my dress clothes. Have you burst them and come for another lot?"

"No!" roared Bunter. "If you think I've come here to borrow anything, Wharton—"

"Haven't you?" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

"No!" roared Bunter.

"Well, if you've come to stay, you'll have to think again," said Harry. "My uncle and aunt have gone away, and Inky and I are just going. You're just in time to say good-bye."

"If you think I'd stay in your humble home, Wharton, after what I'm accustomed to in the residence of my friend Lord Cavandale—"

"What on earth do you want, then?" demanded Wharton perplexed. If Bunter had not come to borrow, and had not come to stay, it was difficult to imagine what he had come for.

"You!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"You and Inky."

"My esteemed fat Bunter—"

The Owl of the Remove threw open the door of the car.

"Hop in!" he said.

Wharton stared at him blankly.

"Is that one of Lord Cavandale's cars?" he asked.

"Yes, rather! I can have a car whenever I like. In fact, I've the choice of a good many cars. So far as that goes, it's just like being at home at Bunter Court."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. Hop in."

"Do you mean that you want to take us for a drive?" asked the mystified captain of the Remove.

"I'm asking you to come and stay at Cavandale Abbey for Christmas."

"Wha-a-at?"

"It's all right—I've asked Lord Cavandale," said Bunter reassuringly. "He will be glad to have you—as friends of mine. On your own merits, of course, you could hardly expect to be asked to such a place. As my friends, however—"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! If that's your gratitude for being asked to a nobleman's magnificent residence, I shall withdraw the invitation."

"Fathead! Come on, Inky."

Wharton and Hurree Singh resumed their walk up the drive towards the house. Billy Bunter blinked after them in angry astonishment. Evidently Bunter had expected the chums of the Remove to jump at that offer with both feet. They showed no sign of jumping, however.

"I say, you fellows!" bawled Bunter.

The two juniors walked on without turning their heads. They had not the

slightest desire for a Christmas with Billy Bunter, even in so magnificent a mansion as Cavandale Abbey. Likewise, they were a little more particular than Billy Bunter in such matters. How Bunter had contrived to "plant" himself on the peer for Christmas, they did not know; but they certainly were not disposed to follow his example and "plant" themselves also on his long-suffering lordship.

"You silly owls!" roared Bunter. "Look here, if you don't jolly well hop in at once, I won't take you, so there."

Wharton and Inky, like Felix, kept on walking. Bunter glared after them with a glare that might have cracked his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows!" he yelled.

The two juniors disappeared round a bend of the drive. Bunter turned his blink on Lord Cavandale's chauffeur.

"Get on to the house!" he snapped.

The car rolled on through the snow. Billy Bunter sat down, snorting. He was strongly tempted to drive away and leave these ungrateful fellows to stew in their own juice, as it were. But he did not yield to that temptation.

Bunter had reasons of his own for desiring the company of the Greyfriars fellows that Christmastide—powerful reasons. Apart from his desire to "swank" as a friend and guest of a peer of the realm, Bunter wanted the Greyfriars chums at Cavandale Abbey—and wanted them badly. So he rolled on to the house in the car.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh went into the house. Billy Bunter landed from the car, and rolled in after them. Wharton, who was about to go to the telephone to ring up Bob Cherry at his home, turned impatiently.

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter. "I tell you I want you to come to Cavandale Abbey for the vac. Anyhow, for a few days. I really want you!"

"Well, if you really want us, we're sorry; but—"

"The sorrowfulness is terrific; but—"

"You'll have a good time," said Bunter. "Best of everything to eat! You should have seen the dinner I had last night! Twelve courses—"

"Did you burst my clobber?"

"As a matter of fact, the dinner-jacket went. I had an accident—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at! I'll buy you a new one," said Bunter scornfully. "You can give the order to my tailor. I've been seeing my tailor this morning; that's why I couldn't get over earlier to see you fellows. I've been rather busy with my tailor. I had a lot of things to order. Make hay while the sun shines, you know. I—I mean, I believe in giving as much custom as possible to the local tradespeople. I hope you don't think I'm going to leave the bills for Lord Cavandale to pay!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Of course, I shall foot the bills myself," said Bunter, with dignity. "I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Ye gods!"

"In fact, several postal orders, from some of my titled relations. You know how they rain generous tips on me at Christmas. I've told you."

"You've told me!" agreed Wharton. "I haven't seen you caught in the rain, though."

"Oh, really, Wharton! Well, look here, are you coming?"

"Thanks! No."

"If you don't think my friend, Lord Cavandale, wants you, you can ring him up and ask him! He's eager to see
(Continued on page 12.)

"Half-Time" Gossip!



Come on, you footer fans, fire in your quaries! "Old Ref" is never happier than when he is dealing with problems of interest to the soccer enthusiast.

THIS week I want to start by congratulating some of my readers on being early risers. They got up so soon in the morning that they even catch me asleep—or at any rate not so wide awake as I ought to be.

One reader has certainly caught me napping. A week or two back, when discussing cases of intentional handling by defenders—other than the goalkeeper—in order to save a certain goal, I stated that in no circumstances could a referee award a goal to a side unless the ball had passed over the goal-line between the posts and under the bar.

Upon that statement there has followed a query from a reader in Newcastle who clearly gets up early in the morning. This is how he writes to me:

"Are you quite right in your statement that a referee is never justified in awarding a goal unless the ball has actually gone into the goal—that is between the posts and under the bar?"

Now a query of that kind sets me thinking, because I know, from past experience, that there is usually more in it than meets the eye at first glance. And having carefully considered the matter I have to declare that I was wrong. Circumstances can arise under which the referee is justified, and correct according to rule, in awarding a goal even though the ball is not in the net or has not passed between the posts and under the bar.

Probably my very wise readers will twig the occasion. To save any further waste of grey matter, however, I will tell you. Thus is the wording of the rule which gives away the answer to the question:

"If from any cause during the progress of a game the cross-bar is displaced, the referee shall have power to award a goal if in his opinion the ball would have passed under the bar if it had not been displaced."

Under this regulation I should say that if, in the course of a match, the cross-bar was smashed, or came down so that it could not be replaced, the referee in charge would be justified in finishing the game and awarding goals whenever, in his opinion, the ball would have passed under the bar if it had been there.

IT is not difficult to understand how a rule of this sort is overlooked. In all my experience of football—and I wish my bank balance contained one pound for every match I have witnessed—I do not recall a single occasion when the cross-bar has been displaced in the course of a match.

The only conclusion at which I can possibly arrive is that the makers of goalposts and cross-bars do their work very well. I have seen fourteen stone goalkeepers hang on to the cross-bar time after time during the course of a match, but I have never yet seen these heavyweights bring the bar down, or smash it.

Actually, of course, it is against the rules for a goalkeeper to hang on to the bar—swing on it—as the ball goes over.

Such action comes under the heading of ungentlemanly conduct, and the goalkeeper who does it once should receive a caution about what will happen to him if he does it a second time. Usually, however, this offence of hanging on to the cross-bar is passed over without any comment or caution from the referee.

RATHER a quaint case has been brought to my notice by a reader who lives at Chester. He was playing in a match recently, so he says, when a goal was awarded against his side which most of the members of his side hotly disputed. However, the referee refused to alter his decision, and the ball was duly taken back to the centre of the field to be kicked off again. The centre-forward

of the team against which the goal had been given, however was so upset that he refused to kick the ball off from the centre spot. The referee told him he must do so forthwith or he would be sent off the field.

I don't know whether the referee was right or not regarding the goal which he awarded, but it is a certainty that he was wrong in ordering the centre-forward of the side against which the goal had been given to kick the ball off from the centre spot.

There is nothing in the rules which suggests that the centre-forward shall kick off after a goal has been scored. All that the rule says is that the side losing the goal shall kick off from the centre of the field.

What then, should the referee have done in place of ordering the centre-forward to kick off? My view is that he should have gone to the captain of the side and said that as the centre-forward would not kick the ball off to restart the game, some other member of the side should be deputed to do so. If no other member of the side could be found who would kick the ball off, then the referee would have had no option but to call the match off and report the circumstances to the local ruling body.

I AM not saying anything about the lack of sportsmanship shown by the centre-forward who refused to restart the game in the orthodox way. He should have been drawn over the coals immediately by his captain, because he was not displaying anything approaching the true spirit of sport. I have often had put to me the question of how I should define a sportsman. I am never quite sure of the real and complete reply, but I don't think many of us would fall short of deserving the label of a sportsman if we always accepted the decision of the responsible authority in any game. When we have learnt to do that, most of the other things which go to the make-up of a thorough sportsman would belong to us automatically.

WE have now got to the part of the football season when English Cup-ties are being played. This fact accounts, I suppose, for one of my readers putting the question of why so many clubs which haven't even a hope of winning the Cup enter the competition?

It is a fact that hundreds of clubs which haven't an earthly chance of winning enter the English Cup competition annually. There are about six hundred entries every season. The early qualifying rounds, the draws for which are made according to the area in which the clubs play, provide interesting games. And when we come to the later rounds,

there is always a hope that the miracle may happen and that some club will manage to worm its way so far in the competition as to meet a really big club in the third round proper.

This has often happened in the past. Two seasons ago Mansfield Town, a team of working lads, got to the fourth round of the Cup and then had the privilege of playing the mighty Arsenal at Highbury. That was indeed a great day for the players of the Mansfield Town team, and it was also a great day for the club itself, as they played before nearly fifty thousand people and shared in a gross "gate" which amounted to nearly three thousand pounds.

There is a wonderful glamour about the English Cup, and I fancy scores of lads, seeing this or that big team win it at the end of the season, saying to their pals: "We played in that competition last autumn."

"OLD REF."

THE MYSTERY OF CAVANDALE ABBEY!

(Continued from page 10.)

any friend of mine. Of course, you'll have to behave yourselves. Best manners, and all that! You see, as you're going there as friends of mine, you'll have to play up, and be careful not to let me down."

"But we're not going——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Good-bye, old fat bean!"

"You silly ass——"

"Good-bye, and a merry Christmas!"

"I say, you fellows, I—I want you to come," said Bunter. "I say, its no end of a swanky place! This is a mere hole to it!"

"My esteemed Bunter——"

"You've got to come, old chap! Look here, stand by a pal!" said Bunter.

Wharton stared at him.

"What on earth do you mean? Do you want us to hold Lord Cavandale back when he kicks you out?"

"You—you—you silly chump!" gasped Bunter.

"Well, what do you want us for, fat-head?"

"Because we're such pals, you know."

"Bow-wow!"

"And—and——" Bunter was driven to the truth at last—always the very last resource with William George Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows, I—I want you to come—you must come, because—because I daren't stay there another night unless you do!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Friends in Need!

HARRY WHARTON stared. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh opened his dusky eyes very wide. Bunter had succeeded, at least, in astonishing the chums of the Greyfriars Remove.

He blinked at them anxiously.

"You'll come?" he pleaded.

"What on earth are you driving at?" asked Harry, in utter amazement.

"Are you off your podgy rocker?"

"Look here, get in the car, and I'll tell you as we go along!"

"But we're not going!"

"If you're going to desert a pal in the hour of danger, Wharton——"

"What danger?" yelled Wharton.

"Not that I'm afraid of danger, of course. If you'd seen the way I tackled that murderous villain last night——"

"A—a—a murderous villain?" Wharton looked quite anxiously at the Owl of the Remove.

He really feared that William George Bunter was taking leave of his senses—such as they were.

"I'd better tell you the whole thing," said Bunter. "I want my pals to stand by me, because I'm in fearful danger. Mind, I'm not afraid. You fellows know what my courage is like——"

"We do!" chuckled Wharton. "But what danger can you be in, you frabjous fathead, in Lord Cavandale's house—except the danger of bursting?"

"Haven't you looked at the newspapers this morning?" snorted Bunter.

"If you had, you'd have seen that Lord Cavandale was attacked in a train yesterday, and his life was saved by an heroic schoolboy. I was the heroic schoolboy." Bunter drew himself up to his full height. "Me!"

"Great pip!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter——"

Bunter sat down.

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"Don't jaw a minute, and I'll tell you all about it," he said.

"Go it!" said Harry.

He was interested now. If Bunter really had been reported in newspapers as an heroic schoolboy it was worth hearing about. At Greyfriars he had certainly never been regarded as heroic; quite the reverse, in fact!

Billy Bunter proceeded to "go" it. Wharton and Hurree Singh stared at him in increasing astonishment, as he told them of the attack on Lord Cavandale in the Lantham train; and the strange and startling events that had followed.

Bunter's account did not err on the side of modesty. He forgot to mention his own terrors on those thrilling occasions. According to Bunter, he had gone through those perils with the coolness of ice, the courage of a lion, and a nerve of tempered steel.

He had not turned a hair. He had not known what fear was. Coolly, calmly, nonchalantly, in fact, he had faced peril after peril—and the perils he described wanted some facing, for they were much more fearsome than the actual facts.

The two juniors listened in almost stunned silence. They knew Bunter and his boasting; but they had never heard even Bunter "going it" like this before. When he had finished, he blinked at them complacently.

"Now, what do you think of that?" he asked.

Wharton found his voice.

"Think of it!" he gasped. "I think that you beat Baron Munchausen and George Washington and Ananias, all rolled into one. What on earth have you told us all those thumping fibs for?"

"Eh! Don't you believe me?"

"Believe you!" stuttered Wharton.

"Oh, my hat! Not quite!"

"The believfulness is not terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bunter snorted.

"Wells!" he hooted.

The Wharton Lodge butler approached.

"Bring the morning paper."

"Certainly, sir!"

Wells brought the morning paper. Billy Bunter opened it, and jammed it under the astonished eyes of Wharton and Hurree Singh.

"Look at that!"

They looked. Almost dazedly they read the account of the attack on Lord Cavandale in the train, on his lordship's way home after visiting his racing stable at Lantham. Lord Cavandale, the paper stated, was the well-known sporting peer, owner of Maharajah, the horse generally expected to win the Lantham Thousand Guineas. His life had been attempted in the train; he had been saved by the intervention of a schoolboy named Bunter. Particulars were few; but the name of Bunter stared at the chums of the Remove in actual type. They gazed and gazed and gazed!

"Well?" sneered Bunter.

"My only hat!" said Wharton.

"The esteemed hatfulness is terrific!"

Wells approached, with an apologetic cough.

"The telephone, sir!"

Wharton laid down the paper.

"I expect that's Bob," he said.

"Never mind the telephone!" hooted Bunter. "Let Wells take the call. Look here, Wharton, you know how the matter stands. I can't desert my friend, Lord Cavandale. The grub's simply gorgeous—I mean, I'm not thinking about the grub, of course. I can't let him down, see? But I ain't safe there—

that beast may be after me. I can tell you, I was awake all last night, after that sneering boast, Captain Lankester, told me I was in danger. I mean, I stayed awake all night to watch over my friend, Lord Cavandale——"

"Take the call, Wells."

"Yes, sir."

"Do shut up a minute, Wharton! I can't stay awake every night—that stands to reason. I want my pals with me. Look how I protected you when we went to China!" said Bunter reproachfully. "You remember how I saved all your lives over and over again——"

"Blessed if I do!"

"The rememberfulness is not terrific."

"Beasts! Now I'm in danger, and it's your turn to stand by me. I'm relying on you! Don't let a man down!"

Wharton and Inky looked at one another. The discovery that there was some substratum of truth in Bunter's amazing story, had completely astonished them. Amazing stories they were not surprised to receive from Bunter; but truth from the Owl of the Remove was quite startling.

"But we can't come, old fat bean," said Harry, at last. "We'd come all right if it was a question of standing by you in danger, and all that——"

"The stand-byfulness would be terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter. But——"

"But we can't butt in on Lord Cavandale——" said Wharton.

"The butfulness is not the proper caper."

"I tell you I can ask anybody I like," hooted Bunter. "I tell you I treat the place as if it were my own."

"Very likely; but——"

"Look here, I'll ask Cavandale to ask you——"

"Well, in that case——" said Wharton dubiously.

Wells came from the telephone cabinet across the hall.

"Lord Cavandale is speaking on the telephone, sir——"

"Oh, my hat!"

Harry Wharton went to the telephone. He spoke into the transmitter, and, a deep, pleasant voice answered. He remembered the voice of the scarred gentleman who had given him a lift in the Rolls the previous day with Bunter.

"Lord Cavandale speaking. I understand that my young friend, William Bunter, is calling on you this morning."

"Yes; he's here now," gasped Wharton.

"He desires you to join him here for the Christmas vacation, Master Wharton; you and any school friends who may be with you. I have rung up to say that I shall be delighted if you accept the invitation."

"Oh!" murmured Harry.

"I am under deep obligations to Master Bunter. He has saved my life more than once——"

"Oh!"

"Any friend of his would always be welcome here. I should be especially pleased to welcome the nephew of Colonel Wharton. So far as it does not interfere with other arrangements already made, I should be very glad for you and your friends to stay here for the holidays."

"You—you're very good, sir!" gasped Wharton. "As a matter of fact, our arrangements here have rather fallen through, as my uncle and aunt have had to go to their sister at Bourne-mouth, who is ill. If you would like us to come——"

"Delighted!" said Lord Cavandale. "Come back in the car with Bunter. You will be in time for lunch."

"One moment, sir!" Wharton looked out of the telephone cabinet. "Inky!"

"My esteemed chum—" The nabob came towards him.

"It's genuine! Lord Cavandale's asked us! Shall we go?"

"I say, you fellows, you simply must come! I'm relying on you as my old pals, you know; and after all I've done for you—"

"Shut up a minute, Bunter."

"Beast!"

"Let us go, my worthy and absurd chum," said Hurree Singh. "The pleasurable of my ridiculous self will be preposterous."

"It's a go, then," said Harry.

Wharton stepped back to the telephone.

"Thank you very much, Lord Cavandale. Hurree Singh and I will be delighted to come. We'll come back with Bunter in the car."

"I shall expect you to lunch!" said Lord Cavandale; and he rang off.

Wharton went back into the hall.

Billy Bunter grinned cheerfully.

"What did I tell you?" he asked.

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Harry. "But if you're in danger, old fat bean, we're the men to see you through. Looks like being a bit exciting this Christmas, Inky, if half what Bunter says is true."

"The excitement will be absurd and terrific," agreed Hurree Singh.

"Buck up!" said Bunter briskly. "Get your things! Quick! We can't be late for lunch! That's important."

In a very short time two suitcases were put on the car, and it rolled away with three passengers from Wharton Lodge.

Billy Bunter was grinning with satisfaction. He had not been able to "get away" with lofty patronage; but the fellows were coming, and that was the chief point. No more sleepless nights for Bunter! Deeply as he was attached to his friend Lord Cavandale, gorgeous as was the "grub" in the palatial establishment, it was doubtful whether Bunter would have ventured to pass another night there "on his own." Now it was all serene!

Bunter talked all the way, giving the chums of the Remove more and more details of the amazing happenings at Cavandale Abbey—drawing upon his fat imagination for many of them. Wharton and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh sat in astonishment; and they were still astonished when the car arrived at the Abbey.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Guests at Cavandale Abbey!

"THAT'S Captain Lankester!" Billy Bunter jerked a fat thumb towards a young man in plus fours, who was walking on the snowy avenue when the car turned in at the gates of Cavandale Abbey. Wharton and Hurree Singh glanced at the Army man, whom Bunter had mentioned many times in his thrilling narrative. They noticed that Gerald Lankester glanced back at them curiously.



"You lying rascal!" cried Captain Lankester. "How dare you tell me such foolish falsehoods!" Shake, shake, shake! "Grooh! Yaroooh!" spluttered Bunter, wriggling furiously.

They had gathered from Bunter that Lankester did not like him; which did not surprise them very much. That Bunter did not like the captain was clear; from the blink of scornful defiance he bestowed on him through his big spectacles.

Lankester made a sign to the chauffeur, who stopped the car on the avenue, and came towards it. He raised his hat slightly to the juniors; and they politely returned his salute. Bunter glared at him. Bunter had no politeness to waste on the supercilious young man who had sought to throw discredit on him.

"Master Wharton and Hurree Singh, I suppose?" said the captain agreeably. "Lord Cavandale has mentioned you to me."

"That's right," said Harry.

"The rightfulness is terrific, honoured sahib," said Hurree Singh.

Captain Lankester started a little, and looked at the nabob.

"Wha-at—what did you say?" he ejaculated.

"The rightfulness of your esteemed and absurd supposition is terrific and preposterous," answered the junior from India's coral strand.

"Oh gad!" said the captain.

Wharton grinned. He was not surprised at the captain's amazement. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh's flow of English often surprised strangers.

"I am glad to see you here," went on Lankester, recovering from the effect of Hurree Singh's variety of the English language. "I believe you are the nephew of Colonel Wharton; I served under him in Flanders."

"Indeed, sir!" said Harry, with some interest.

"I am really pleased to make your

acquaintance," said the captain. "Let me introduce myself—Gerald Lankester, once of the Loamshire Regiment." He held out his hand to Wharton, and the junior took it frankly enough. Then he shook hands with Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, over the side of the car.

Billy Bunter blinked angrily at him. The captain was taking no notice whatever of Bunter—the really important fellow in the car. He ignored Bunter's existence just as if Bunter were not there. Bunter was not to be treated like that by a supercilious beast!

"I say, you fellows, let's get on!" he said.

"You young fellows are staying here?" asked the captain, still oblivious of William George Bunter.

"Yes," said Harry, a little restively. Bunter might be a "bounder" more or less, but this was not the way to treat him in the presence of fellows who had come there as his friends. Wharton's idea was that the captain had either to acknowledge Bunter's existence, or else cut the interview short.

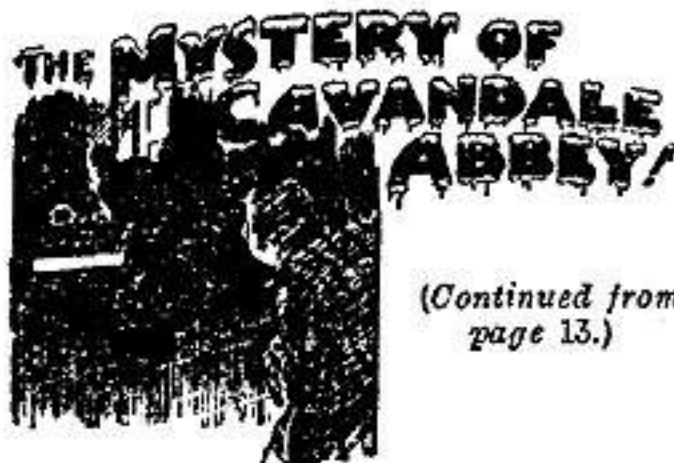
"Long?" asked the captain.

"That's hardly settled," said Harry. "It depends largely on Bunter."

"I've asked my friends here, with the permission of my friend Cavandale!" said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

The captain did not seem to hear. Apparently he was deaf and blind to the Owl of the Remove.

"In the circumstances, Master Wharton, I think I ought to give you a tip," said Lankester. "Several most extraordinary attempts have been made on the life of Lord Cavandale by some unknown person. My own theory is



(Continued from
page 13.)

that he is some lunatic with a fancied grudge against Cavandale—that, indeed, seems to be the only way of accounting for it. With such a character lurking about, recklessly using deadly weapons, I was a little surprised at Cavandale asking schoolboys here. It is, of course, not my affair—

"Only just thought of that?" inquired Bunter.

The captain's eyes gleamed for a second. But he went on without paying heed to the fat Removite of Greyfriars.

"But I cannot help thinking there is risk—for lads like you. It seems to me that your parents, or guardians, would hardly care for you to run such risks. The fact is, I feel uneasy about you."

"You're very kind," said Harry. "But we don't feel uneasy about ourselves. The fact is, we've really come because Bunter thinks there is danger."

"Oh!" ejaculated the captain.

"So there is danger—lots of it!" said Bunter. "And I shall feel safe with my pals round me. You jolly well pointed it out to me last night, Captain Lankester—I hadn't realised it before then. That's why I jolly well fetched these fellows over, see?"

And Bunter chuckled. Gerald Lankester did not want him at the Abbey; and did not want his friends there. It was quite a pleasure to Bunter to point out to him that he was the cause of the latter being called in.

Lankester's glance turned on the fat junior at last. The dislike and contempt in it might have offended a thicker-skinned fellow than Bunter—if there existed a thicker-skinned fellow in the wide world.

"I am certainly sorry if I am the cause of these boys coming here," he said.

"I dare say you are!" sneered Bunter. "You wanted to frighten me away! Instead of that you've got my friends here as well. He, he, he!"

Lankester compressed his hard lips. Probably he had not expected an obtuse fellow like Bunter to read his motives. But Bunter, like many obtuse fellows, had a rich vein of slyness in his nature. Good motives Bunter often missed, not suspecting that they were there; but he had quite a keen eye for bad motives. Certainly, he had not doubted why Gerald Lankester had warned him of the danger in which he stood at Cavandale Abbey.

Wharton and Hurree Singh felt exceedingly uncomfortable. They did not want to be dragged into Bunter's disputes with another guest of Lord Cavandale's. They could not help feeling, too, that Lankester, civil to them as he was, did not want them there—which was rather a cheek on his part, as he was only a guest himself. According to Bunter, he had tried to frighten the fat junior away; and it seemed as if his object was the same with the newcomers.

The Army man turned to them again. "Well, well, you boys doubtless know
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your own business best," he said. "But take my tip to be on your guard; bullets are no respecters of persons, and from what has already occurred it seems likely enough the bullets may be flying about here. I think—"

"Get on, driver!" said Bunter, leaning over and poking the chauffeur in the neck. "You're wasting time."

"Owl!" said the chauffeur, with a jump.

"Thank you, Captain Lankester!" said Harry hastily. "But we're not afraid—we're sticking to Bunter. Thanks all the same."

"The thankfulness is terrific!"

The car slid into motion again. Captain Lankester had to step back rather hurriedly as it moved. The chauffeur had halted at his signal; but Bunter was making it clear that he was "boss of the show," so long as he was in the car. He stood looking after the car with a lowering brow; and Bunter chuckled.

"That's the cheeky rotter I told you of," he said. "He doesn't want us here."

"I don't see why he should mind," said Harry.

"Oh, he's an interfering ass! Swanky, you know," said Bunter. "I jolly well put him in his place, I can tell you. He keeps on trying to butt in between me and my friend Cavandale. What are you grinning at? Blessed if I see anything to grin at! Hallo! There's the jolly old inspector! Bet you he hasn't found anything out!"

Inspector Chapman, of Ashwood, was visible on the terrace, under the balcony up which the unknown man had clambered the previous night. Judging by his expression, Mr. Chapman had not had a lot of success so far in picking up the trail of the attempted assassin.

The juniors alighted from the car and went into the house. His lordship was not visible; but Pilkington was there, evidently expecting them.

Faint surprise dawned in Pilkington's stately countenance at sight of them. The butler of Cavandale Abbey had not, perhaps, expected William George Bunter to produce such creditable friends. No doubt he had expected some more Bunters, and had not been greatly bucked by the prospect.

His manner was extremely respectful to the newcomers, after his majestic glance had dwelt on them for a moment or two—with a subtle difference from his manner to Bunter.

These fine distinctions, however, were entirely lost on William George Bunter, who was completely satisfied with himself, and did not care two straws whether Pilkington was satisfied or not.

"These are my friends, Pilkington," said Bunter. "I hope you've got the rooms ready."

"His lordship has instructed me, sir—"

"Yes, quite!" Bunter believed in interrupting servants. It helped to keep them in their place, from which Bunter always suspected them of trying to emerge. "You will have two extra beds made up in my bed-room for my friends."

"Indeed, sir! I was not aware—"

"You're aware now I've told you!"

"Quite so, sir!" said Pilkington, breathing hard.

"They will have a sitting-room each, but they will share my bed-room," said Bunter. "See to it, Pilkington!" Bunter's manner was quite that of a Roman emperor saying: "See to it, Tigellinus!"

"Very good, sir!"

"Come on, you fellows!" said Bunter;

and the juniors ascended the great oak staircase and followed Pilkington along the immense oaken gallery above.

Albert and another footman followed with the suitcases.

"Herbert!" rapped out Bunter.

"Sir!" said Albert.

"Put my friends' bags in my bed-room."

"Very good, sir."

"You fellows will like sharing my quarters, what?" said Bunter, when the juniors were in his room and Pilkington and Albert dismissed.

The juniors looked dubious.

"What's the big idea?" asked Harry. "The fact is, Bunter, we get enough of your snore in the dorm at Greyfriars."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"The sleepfulness will not be terrifically balmy, with the snorefulness of the esteemed Bunter so close to hand," suggested Hurree Singh.

"Oh, really Inky—"

"You see—" murmured Wharton.

Bunter raised a fat hand.

"I don't want any jaw!" he said. "I've brought you fellows here to give you a good time—a magnificent Christmas—under the superb roof of my friend Lord Cavandale. I don't expect gratitude; I know you too well. But I expect you to do as you're told. Got that?"

Wharton looked at him grimly.

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh grinned.

"So that's the programme?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"That's it!" said Bunter, with emphasis. "Don't make any mistake about it. I'm boss here!"

"You fat frump—"

"And I may as well say that I don't want any cheek! You'll have to remember your manners a little while you're in the magnificent mansion of my titled friend. You're not in the Remove passage at Greyfriars now, or in your own humble home!" added Bunter crushingly.

"Come on, Inky!" said Harry, turning towards the door.

"Certainly, my esteemed chum!" grinned the nabob.

Bunter blinked at them in alarm.

"I—I say, you fellows, where are you going?" he ejaculated.

"Out of this," answered Harry.

"Good-bye!"

"Oh crikey! I—I say, you fellows, come back!" yelled Bunter. "I—I want you to stay, you know! I'm relying on you! I say, you fellows, you're not going to turn down an old pal, are you?"

Wharton hesitated.

"I say, you fellows, I want you to camp in my room, in case that villain tries to get at me, you know!" urged Bunter. "You ain't going to desert a pal in the hour of danger, are you?"

"Oh, all right!" said Wharton resignedly. "I suppose you can't help being a silly chump, Bunter. But don't talk too much."

"I—I won't say a word!" gasped Bunter. "Not a word, old chap!"

"Keep to that!" said Harry, laughing.

And Bunter kept to it—for about ten seconds.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Smoke!

"FERRERS LOCKE!"

Captain Lankester repeated the name in startled tones.

He lowered the cocktail he had just mixed and stared over it at Lord Cavandale.

The peer was seated in a deep leather chair in the smoke-room, one long leg

crossed over the other. The wintry sunlight at the window fell upon his fine-featured face—strangely marked and scarred on both cheeks. Beard and moustache hid other scars, left on the handsome face by a bursting shell in Flanders in the War days. There was a thoughtful cloud on the peer's brow.

"Yes, Ferrers Locke!" he said. "The local police are not quite up to handling so strange a case as this, Lankester. I have thought of asking for a man from Scotland Yard. But, on the whole, I think that if Ferrers Locke is at liberty to come, and is willing to come, I should feel better with the matter in his hands."

"You are feeling—a little nervy?" asked Lankester. "True, it is not surprising in the strange circumstances."

Lord Cavandale gave him a look.

"I am not feeling in the slightest degree nervy, Lankester," he answered. "But no man likes being sniped by an unknown enemy. I am not allowing this matter to make the slightest difference to my usual avocations. But I am fully aware that I may be knocked over by a bullet any hour that I step outside my house—or, indeed, any hour within my house. Last night the man would have been successful but for the boy Bunter."

"I cannot believe—"

"You are prejudiced, my dear fellow. You do not like the boy." The peer smiled faintly. "Doubtless he has his faults. But it is a certainty that some member of this household admitted an intended assassin last night. That is a cause for very serious uneasiness. There is some man in this house who is not to be trusted, who is in league with the rascal who is seeking my life. That is assured."

"Inspector Chapman has examined every member of the household and questioned every one, and—"

"And discovered nothing," said Lord Cavandale. "Quite so. The matter is rather beyond him."

"But a private detective—a mere adventurer—"

"Ferrers Locke is hardly that. He is a man with a world-wide reputation. I have very little doubt that Locke would be able to put his finger on the clue to the mystery."

The captain drank his cocktail.

"Possibly you are right, Cavandale," he said; "at all events, it can do no harm if it does no good."

"I think he will clear up the matter if he deserves his reputation. And it cannot be cleared up too soon. Sniping in Flanders, in the way of duty, was one thing; being sniped in one's own park is quite another. I am rather keen to see that sniper with the handcuffs on his wrists."

"I only hope that Ferrers Locke may be able to put them there. And when is the great man coming?" asked Lankester, with a curious look at the peer. "You have spoken to him—"

"I rang up his office in Baker Street this morning," answered Lord Cavandale. "He was not there, however. He is, of course, a busy man, and I may not be able to obtain his services. His assistant, a young fellow named Drake, informed me that he was away at Dorchester on some business, and promised to inform him of my call. That is all, so far. No doubt I shall hear from him."

"In the meantime—"

"In the meantime," said Lord Cavandale, "I am taking some precautions, since last night's happening. If the dastard should be admitted to the house again, he will not find me unprepared. My door will be locked to-night; and my man, Harris, will sleep in my dressing-room. My old Army revolver will be beside my pillow." He smiled. "I should not be wholly sorry if the rascal tried it on again to-night."

"You think it possible?"

"I think it probable. The man, whoever he is and whatever his motive may be, is desperately determined. He has made that clear."

"It is difficult to imagine his motive," said the captain thoughtfully.

"Say impossible, rather. I never knew that I had an enemy! But the facts speak for themselves."

"I say, you fellows!" It was a well-known voice outside the door.

Lord Cavandale smiled; and the captain's brows knitted involuntarily.

"I say, you fellows, come in here and be introduced to my friend Cavandale!"

"By gad!" said Captain Lankester. "How you stand that unspeakable bounder in the house, Cavandale—"

"He saved my life," said the peer; "and, after all, there is no harm in him. He cannot help being a young ass."

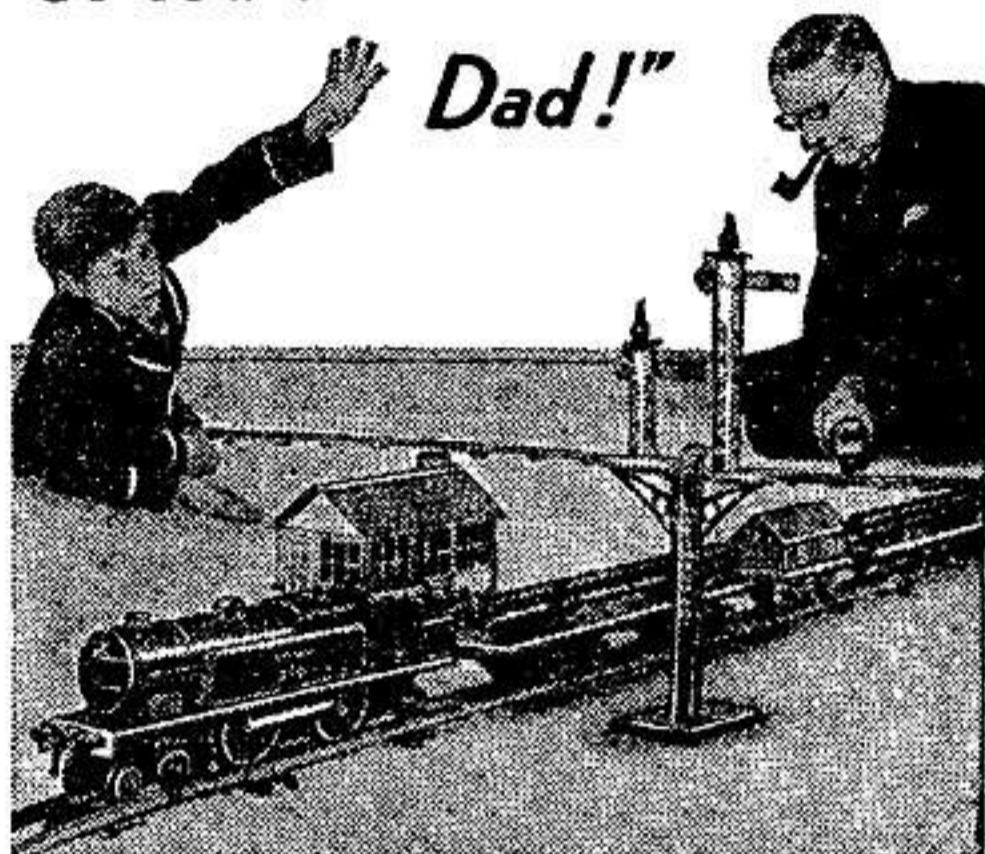
"Oh, cheese it, Bunter!" came another voice. "We met Lord Cavandale yesterday, and we're seeing him at lunch; and he doesn't want to be bothered with us. Let's get out."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

(Continued on next page.)

"Of course she'll take another."

Dad!"



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(Continued from previous page.)

"The stopfulness of the esteemed and disgusting snow falling gives us an absurd opportunity to walk aroundfully," came another voice.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Come on, Bunter! Let's take a run."

"Rats! Come in here and see Lord Cavandale! My friend Cavandale is anxious to see you. Not on your own account, of course—you're nobody, as you know! But because you're friends of mine."

"You fat chump—"

"You're not in the Remove passage at Greyfriars now, Wharton! Do try to remember that."

"You benighted ass—"

"Yah!"

The door opened and Billy Bunter rolled in. He blinked round through his big spectacles for his friend Lord Cavandale. The peer rose to his feet, and gave a kind smile to the two juniors who hesitated at the door.

"Come in, my boys! I am delighted to see you!" Lord Cavandale shook hands cordially with Wharton and Hurree Singh. "You've met Captain Lankester, I think. I suppose Pilkington has shown you your quarters here. I hope you find yourselves comfortable."

"More than comfortable, thanks," said Harry, with a smile.

"The comfort is terrific and preposterous, honoured sahib," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The delightfulness of our esteemed quarters is both ludicrous and absurd."

"I am glad to hear it," said Lord Cavandale gravely. "I fear that you may find it a little dull here—"

"Oh, that's all right," said Bunter. "I'm going to ask some more fellows for Christmas and we'll make it jolly lively."

"Oh, quite," gasped Lord Cavandale. "Liven up the old place a bit, what?" said Bunter.

"You have carte blanche in every way, Bunter! Your wishes in the matter are mine." Lord Cavandale glanced at the captain. "You're going, Lankester?"

"I'll take a turn on the terrace till lunch."

"I'll join you, my dear fellow."

And after a few more words to the juniors, the peer followed Captain Lankester. Billy Bunter grinned at his companions.

"The jolly old captain don't like us here," he said. "He can go and eat coke. Sit down, you men, and make yourselves comfy. Have a cigar!"

"No fear!"

"Oh, be a man, you know," said Bunter, selecting an Havana for himself. "We're not under old Quelch's eye now. Wingate isn't likely to come along here with his ashplant. He, he, he! My friend Cavandale has rather good cigars."

"You pie-faced, potty porpoise," said Harry Wharton in measured tones, as Bunter sat down in the chair Lord Cavandale had vacated, and snipped off the end of the cigar in a manner which he fondly imagined demonstrated that he was a finished man of the world.

"Are you going to smoke that?"

"Well, I'm not going to eat it!" said Bunter sarcastically.

"Look here, you ass—"

"Oh, help yourself to a smoke and be a man," said Bunter, applying a

match to the cigar. "We can do anything we jolly well like here. You fellows are a bit out of your depth in a place like this, but my tip to you is, keep an eye on me and do as I do. See?"

"My tip to you is to let that cigar alone!" said Harry.

Bunter blew out a cloud of smoke.

"This is a doocid good cigar!" he said.

"Are you going to make room for your lunch with it?"

"My dear fellow, I can smoke cigars! You should see me at Bunter Court in the vac.—a regular dog!" said Bunter.

"A regular hog, do you mean?"

"No, I don't!" roared Bunter. "And I don't want any cheek. For goodness' sake be a man and put on a smoke!"

"Fathead!"

"Well, watch me!" said Bunter; and he leaned back luxuriously in the chair, crossed one fat leg over the other, and puffed at the cigar with an air of great enjoyment. "A good cigar's something like a smoke, I can tell you!"

The two juniors watched him. They would have preferred to get out of doors, but they had a feeling that Bunter would need their help soon. Billy Bunter might be under the impression that he could smoke Havana cigars without disaster accruing; but that was only one of Bunter's many impressions that had no foundation in fact.

Bunter pulled at the cigar and surrounded himself with smoke. After a few minutes, however, he ceased to pull.

He removed the cigar from his mouth.

"Feeling the strain?" asked Wharton. "Nothing of the sort! I like cigars," said Bunter. "This is a doocid good one! Just what I like before lunch. Grooooooh!" he added suddenly.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing—only enjoying the cigar. Still, if you fellows are not going to smoke, I won't finish it."

"I wouldn't," agreed Wharton.

"The fact is, it's a good idea not to finish a cigar," said Bunter. "It gets rather stronger as you get through it. Ooooooh!"

"Trouble coming along?"

"Of course not! Think I can't smoke a cigar? Wooooh! I mean, I wish you fellows would put on a smoke and enjoy yourselves like—grooogh—I'm doing! A really good cigar is a— Yoooooh!"

"It's a what?"

"Moooooooooooh!"

Billy Bunter had turned quite pale. The half-smoked cigar dropped from a nerveless hand. Wharton picked it up and put it on an ashtray. Bunter leaned back heavily.

"I—I say, you fellows!" he gasped.

"Feeling ill?"

"Oh, no! I enjoy cigars! I think I'd like another, but—but perhaps it might spoil my lunch! Ooooo-er! Grooooooh! I—I think I'll go to my room!" gasped Bunter. "I—I feel a— a little giddy. I say, you fellows, you might help a chap! Ooooooo-er!"

"I thought you'd want help," agreed Wharton. "Lend a hand, Inky!"

The two juniors took a fat arm each and piloted Bunter out of the smoke-room and across the hall to the stairs. Bunter tottered between them. If the cigar had not affected him it was clear that something had, for the Owl of the Remove was evidently on the point of collapse. Slowly the juniors navigated him up the stairs.

"It—it wasn't the cigar!" moaned Bunter.

"Come on!"

"I can smoke cigars! I like 'em— love 'em, in fact! Oooo-er! Groooh!"

Bunter was rolled into his room. He was heaved on the bed. He lay there

with extended limbs and distended eyes behind his big spectacles. The interior of William George Bunter was heaving like a stormy ocean.

"I—I say, you fellows! I—it wasn't the cigar! It was a—oooooh—doocid good-cigar! If you fellows think I'm going to be s-s-sick, you're mistaken! I—I enjoyed that cigar. "I'm going to— Hooooooooooch!"

Billy Bunter did not appear at lunch.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Shot in the Picture Gallery!

A BRIGHT, wintry sunshine streamed in at the tall wide windows of the picture gallery.

The snow was falling again in light flakes. Outside Cavandale Abbey was a world of gleaming white. Careless of the falling snow, Captain Lankester had gone out after lunch; but Wharton and Hurree Singh did not feel that they missed his company. To the two chums, though not to Bunter, the captain was very civil; yet they had a feeling that he disliked their presence at the Abbey as much as he disliked Bunter's. So the juniors were not at all sorry when he disappeared after lunch. As for Billy Bunter, he was still in the seclusion of his own apartments, slowly recovering from the effects of the excellent cigar he had enjoyed so much. Whether Lord Cavandale actually found pleasure in showing two schoolboys round the historic picture gallery of his magnificent residence the juniors did not know, but certainly his lordship seemed to be quite pleased. The chums of the Remove were interested to ramble over a building like Cavandale Abbey, but they would have been satisfied had Mr. Parker, the secretary, been their guide, or even Pilkington. But the peer took the office of cicerone upon himself, with a polished courtesy that left nothing to be desired.

As a matter of fact, Lord Cavandale had taken a liking to both of them. A sense of gratitude for services rendered made him try to like Bunter; but he could not, as it were, quite get away with it. But Harry Wharton, healthy and cheery and unassuming; Hurree Singh, with his dusky smile, his kind good temper, and his amazing English pleased his lordship extremely, quite unconscious that they were doing so. It was probably a relief to his lordship to discover that Bunter's friends were so unlike Bunter. More visitors of the same brand would probably have put a very severe strain on his courtesy. He liked, too, their talk about Greyfriars, his old school; it was rather different from Bunter's talk on the same subject.

Certainly there was a very pleasant expression on the peer's scarred face as he led his young friends round the great gallery. There were portraits of many Cavandales, some modern and some ancient; and the Cavandale of Stuart times had been painted by Vandycck, and must consequently have been worth a great sum, though the peer did not refer to that circumstance.

"This is Sir Giles, of Charles the First's time," said the peer as they stopped before the picture. "I am supposed to resemble this particular ancestor," he added with a smile.

The juniors looked at the picture with interest. Sir Giles Cavandale had the pointed beard of the period, very like the beard worn by the present peer. It was a tall and handsome Cavalier that looked down on the schoolboys from the wall—a life-size picture in a massive frame.

"The likeness is quite striking, sir,"

The two mysterious dark figures passed on. Behind them, in the snow lay the senseless form of Harry Wharton, where he had been brutally struck down.



said Harry, after a look at Sir Giles. "Is that the chap who held this place against the Ironsides—I have heard about that."

"That is the man!" said Lord Cavandale. "He was killed in defending Cavandale Abbey, and, according to the legend, he was aware of his fate, the abbot having appeared to him the night before. The story goes that the phantom abbot appears to every Cavandale to warn him of approaching doom, and many such apparitions are on record, though not in recent times." He laughed. "Possibly the abbot has gone out of business in these modern days."

"Who was the abbot?" asked Harry. "Abbot Boniface, who was turned out when the abbey was confiscated in King Henry VIII's time. The first Lord Cavandale took possession—with rather a high hand, I am afraid," said Lord Cavandale, with a smile. "You will have learned about the dissolution of the monasteries at Greyfriars."

"Oh, yes, rather! We've had that with Quelch," said Harry. "So, the jolly old abbot haunts the place?"

"So the story goes. But I must admit that I have never seen him. Sir Giles was the brother of the Lord Cavandale of that time. The earl was with the royal army while Sir Giles was holding the abbey against the Parliament. He survived the Civil War—indeed, had he not done so there would be no Cavandales to-day. He died in his bed, long after the Restoration. Here is his picture."

The juniors moved along to another pictured Cavalier. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh looked back at Sir Giles, with a slight start. His keen ear had caught a faint sound, and it startled him.

"What is it, my boy?" asked Lord Cavandale, glancing at him.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh looked puzzled.

"It seemed to me, esteemed sahib, that I heard some ludicrous sound," he said. "Perhaps it was an esteemed rat behind the absurd wall."

"Possibly," said Lord Cavandale. "Behind this old oak there is a stone wall not less than six feet in thickness, and as likely as not a secret passage. The building is honeycombed with secret passages, many of them known, but others, I think, unknown. A plan is said to be in existence, and may possibly exist among the many old manuscripts in the library, which are in Mr. Parker's charge. They have not been examined for many years—possibly centuries; and Mr. Parker finds it a congenial task to examine and annotate them. But here is our young friend Bunter."

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter appeared in the offing. Apparently he had recovered from the excellent cigar.

"I've been looking for you fellows!" said Bunter. "Couldn't find out where you'd got to. What are you up to here?"

"Looking at the pictures," answered Harry.

Bunter blinked at them across the wide gallery.

"Well, my hat! You must be in want of something to do!" he ejaculated. "What on earth are you looking at pictures for?"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Precious lot

of old guys, aren't they?" said Bunter, with a disparaging blink at Lord Cavandale's ancestors. "Most of them in fancy dress, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter. "They are in fancy dress, ain't they? Owl! Oh crikey!"

The floor of the picture gallery was of polished oak. Bunter, coming towards the group, did not allow for the polish. His foot suddenly slipped, and he slid.

"Whooop!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, my hat! Look out!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Bunter felt as if he were skating. He made a desperate effort to recover his balance, and his heels shot from under him, and he plunged forward like a runaway lorry. There was a crash as he cannoned into Lord Cavandale.

"Ow!" roared Bunter, clutching at the tall, lean peer for support. "Hold me! Whooop! Save me! Yooooop!"

"Good gad!"

He sat down suddenly on the oak floor, with Billy Bunter sprawling over him. At the same moment a sharp, ringing report was heard in the gallery. A bullet crashed on a picture on the farther wall, smashing through the glass that covered the canvas.

"Ow! What's that?" yelled Bunter.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh, who had been starting forward to help Lord Cavandale, stopped, and spun round in blank amazement. Bunter sat and roared as the peer sprang to his feet. Lord Cavandale's eyes turned on the picture in which the bullet-hole showed. The bullet had passed exactly

over the spot where he had been standing before Bunter cannoned into him and hurled him over.

"Great gad!" ejaculated Lord Cavandale.

He stared round the picture gallery. No one was there, except the three Greyfriars fellows and himself.

"Who—who—who fired?" panted Wharton.

There was utter amazement in all faces. The bullet had been fired at Lord Cavandale, that was obvious, and it would have struck him down but for the fortunate accident of Bunter's arrival. Yet there was no one to be seen.

"Leave the gallery, my boys!" said Lord Cavandale. "You are in danger here. Leave the gallery."

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter leaped and ran. Wharton and Hurree Singh followed him more slowly. The shot had been fired from some hidden place. The whole gallery was open to their eyes, and the man who had fired was not to be seen. Lord Cavandale followed them out. He was breathing hard. Even his iron nerve had been shaken a little by that strange and narrow escape. Outside the picture gallery he smiled faintly.

"I was telling you of the secret passages," he said, and his voice was calm. "Evidently more of them is known to others than to me. The man who seeks my life is in the house—hidden from sight! Go into the library. Mr. Parker is there, and you will be safe. I must see to this."

"I—I say, you fellows, d-d-don't be afraid," gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'm with you, you know. D-d-don't be f-f-funky."

"We're not funky, fathead!"

"Bunter has saved me again," said Lord Cavandale, "by accident; but I begin to believe that he really is a mascot. Please go into the library, and remain with Mr. Parker while I look into this."

The juniors went into the library. Mr. Parker, as it happened, was not there; but Wharton and Hurree Singh, at least, did not feel in need of any

protection. They would have preferred to help in the search for the peer's mysterious assailant. Billy Bunter blinked round the great apartment uneasily.

"I—I say, you fellows, this is getting rather thick, ain't it?" he asked. "I—I say, this is going to be a lively Christmas if—if we stay here!"

"It was rather lucky for Lord Cavandale you were here, old fat man," said Harry. "That bullet was meant for him. If you hadn't slipped and cannoned him—"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I pushed him over on purpose, of course—"

"What?"

"To save his life," said Bunter. "Presence of mind, you know!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"While you fellows were blinking at silly pictures," added Bunter scornfully. "That's me all over."

"You silly ass! You slipped over by accident, and—"

"Just like you to run a fellow down, ain't it?" sneered Bunter. "It was presence of mind—sheer presence of mind. And pluck."

"Hallo, here comes the jolly old captain!" said Harry, glancing from a window. Captain Lankester appeared on the avenue, coming up towards the house.

"I'll jolly well tell him," chuckled Bunter. "He'll be no end pleased to hear that I've saved Cavandale's life. He, he, he!"

And Bunter rolled out into the hall to meet Captain Lankester as he came in.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Off at the Deep End!

PILKINGHAM, in the outer hall, was helping Captain Lankester off with his coat. A slight disturbance was visible in Pilkingham's stately face. Half a dozen footmen were engaged in searching the picture gallery and its vicinity, under the eye of Lord Cavandale.

The latest happening had startled the

household, already flurried by the strange events of the night. Pilkingham was feeling his equanimity a little upset. Such strange, startling happenings as these were out of place in a well-ordered household. Any household of which Pilkingham had charge was certain to be well-ordered. In his own department all was still well-ordered.

Pilkingham did not exactly blame Lord Cavandale for being shot at by an unknown assassin. But he could not help feeling that this sort of thing was not what a well-trained butler had a right to expect in a nobleman's house. He could not help feeling that, if there was much more of it, he would be driven to sever his connection with Cavandale Abbey, and retire to some other household where a butler's nervous system was not shaken up by such very extraordinary occurrences.

With these weighty reflections in his stately mind, Pilkingham was removing Captain Lankester's top-coat, when Bunter rolled along. There was a cheery grin on Bunter's fat face. That supercilious beast, Lankester, had been down on him all the time, pooh-poohed his heroism, and even tried to make out that Bunter exaggerated, and even fabricated! Bunter was going to enjoy telling him how he had saved the peer's life in the picture gallery.

"You're too late for the fun, Captain Lankester," he grinned.

The captain's cold eyes dwelt on him for a moment. He had adopted a way of totally ignoring Bunter; but Bunter was not to be ignored.

"Just missed it!" went on Bunter cheerily. "Not that you'd have been any good if you'd been there! He, he, he!"

"Has anything happened during my absence, Pilkingham?" asked the captain, icily ignoring Bunter.

Bunter replied before Pilkingham could speak. There was a stately deliberation about Pilkingham, none at all about Bunter. Bunter answered before Pilkingham had a chance to turn on his fruity voice.

"You bet there has!" said Bunter. "Lord Cavandale's been shot—"

The captain jumped almost clear of the floor. His elbow butted Pilkingham under his double chin in that startled jump, and the butler started back, top coat in hand.

"Ooooooh!" said Pilkingham involuntarily.

The Army man did not heed him. He glared at Bunter, all affectation of ignoring the fat junior thrown aside.

"You lying young rascal!" he bawled. "How dare you—"

Bunter jumped away. He fancied for a moment that the captain was going to collar him and shake him.

"Here, you keep off!" he stuttered. "I don't mean he was shot. I mean he was shot at—fired at—nearly killed, only I pulled him out of the way just in time—"

"When?" roared the captain.

"Eh? Ten minutes ago—"

"You wretched little liar!" Captain Lankester strode at Bunter and grabbed him by the collar. His eyes fairly glittered with anger. "How dare you tell me such foolish falsehoods?"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Groooogh! Yaroooh! Whoooop!" spluttered Bunter, wriggling frantically in the captain's grasp. "Leggo! Woocoooh!"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Yaroooh! Help! You'll m-m-make my glasses fuf-fuf-fall off!" yelped Bunter. "Leggo! If you break them—"



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grooogh!—you'll have to pip-pip-pip-pay for them—yarooooogh!"

Shake, shake, shake!
"Yooop! I say, you fellows! Help! Rescue!" yelled Bunter.

Harry Wharton and the nabob hurried to the spot. The rage in Captain Lankester's face startled and amazed them. Pilkingham stood staring on, the picture of shocked wonder.

Obviously the captain was intensely excited and angered; why, was a puzzle. The news that the peer had been fired at once more might anger and excite him, but not against Bunter. Yet it was clear that his rage was concentrated on the Owl of Greyfriars.

He shook and shook the fat junior till the hapless Bunter quivered like a jelly. His face was almost pale with rage.

"Rescue!" roared Bunter. "Groooh-hoooh! He's chook-chook-chook-choking me! I'm being chook-chook-choked! Grooogh! Draggimoff!"

"Sir!" gasped the shocked Pilkingham.

Shake, shake, shake!
"You young rascal!" roared the captain. "How dare you tell me such falsehoods, such stupid falsehoods, you young scoundrel!"

"Ow! It's true! Yaroooooh—"
Shake, shake!
"Groooh! Help! Ooooh!"

Harry Wharton ran up. Bunter might be an irritating ass; but the captain of the Remove was not going to see him treated like this. Neither could he imagine why the Army man was so enraged with Bunter.

"Let him go!" rapped out Wharton.

Bunter's face was crimson, his breath came in gulping gasps. The savage grasp on his collar half suffocated the fat junior. He sagged in the captain's grip, his fat knees clumping together, hanging almost like a sack from the sinewy hand that shook him.

Lankester gave Wharton a glare.
"Stand back, you young fool!"

"Let Bunter alone!" exclaimed Wharton, with a flash in his eye.
"How dare you handle the kid like that!"

"What? The lying young rascal! If I had my horsewhip here I would thrash him within an inch of his life for his lies!"

"Let him go!"
Wharton grasped the captain's arm and fairly dragged it off Bunter. The fat junior, spluttering for breath, sat down with a heavy bump.

For a second Lankester clenched his hands as if he would knock Wharton spinning.

Wharton did not flinch. His own hands were clenched, and he faced the Army man with flashing eyes and set teeth. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh leaped to his side.

"Sir!" gurgled Pilkingham. "Captain Lankester! Sir!"

Pilkingham was scandalised beyond measure. Such a scene, in such a place, took all the wind out of Pilkingham's sails.

Captain Lankester calmed himself with a visible effort. Apparently he realised that he was going too far. But that his rage was only checked, and was burning as fiercely as ever within, was evident from his gleaming eyes and hurried breathing. In those moments the Army man betrayed, what no one had guessed before, the frayed nerves that were concealed behind his customary affectation of indolent nonchalance.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!" spluttered Bunter breathlessly. "Ow! Keep him off! The awful beast! Pitching into me because I saved my friend Cavandale's life! Ow!"

"You unscrupulous, lying young rascal!" said the captain, staring down at him savagely. "How dare you tell me such a falsehood!"

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.
"Bunter has told you no falsehood, Captain Lankester," said Wharton, "and you've no right to lay hands on him even if he had!"

"No falsehood! What do you mean? He has told me a deliberate lie! He said that Lord Cavandale was shot at ten minutes ago—"

"That is true."
"What?" roared the captain. He made a movement towards Wharton as if he would treat him as he had treated Bunter.

Wharton's eyes gleamed at him.
"Hands off, Captain Lankester!" he said. "Take care, sir! You will not find me so easy to handle as Bunter!"

STOP FOR A LAUGH
at
THIS WEEK'S WINNING
JOKE!



Colonel (to sentry): "My man, if a bomb were to drop near your sentry-box, what would you do?"
Sentry (saluting smartly): "Go up with the report at once, sir!"
C. West, of 2, Council Houses, Garnant, Carmarthenshire, S. Wales, who sent in the above winning rib-tickler, has been awarded one of OUR USEFUL POCKET KNIVES.
More funny yarns wanted, please!

"Sir!" gasped Pilkingham, almost wringing his plump hands. "Sir! I beg you, sir! What—what will Lord Cavandale say? What will his lordship think? Sir!"

Lankester did not heed him. His eyes were fixed on Harry Wharton with an almost wolfish stare.

"Are you repeating that fat rascal's statement, Wharton?"
"Certainly," said Harry.

"Then you are as untruthful a rascal as he is!"
Wharton coloured with anger.

"I think you must be out of your senses, Captain Lankester!" he said coldly. "Bunter's statement was perfectly true—"

"Fool!"
"The truthfulness was terrific, sir!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh in wonder. "I myself was honourably present when the esteemed shot was fired at the estimable and ridiculous lordship."
"Hold your lying tongue!"

"My only esteemed hat!" ejaculated the nabob.

Wharton gave Bunter a helping hand up. The fat junior backed behind him, blinking nervously at Lankester. The young man eyed him evilly.

"Why, you are telling me this cock-and-bull story I cannot imagine," he said contemptuously. "I did not understand that you, Wharton, were a tattling, lying young rascal like this fat fool, Bunter—"

"I hope I am nothing of the sort," said Harry. "I can't understand you. If you cannot take our word for what has happened, Pilkingham will tell you. He knows, as everyone else in the house knows."

The captain started.
"Are you mad?" he almost hissed.
"I tell you that no shot has been fired at Cavandale in this house to-day, and cannot have been! I tell you—"

He broke off abruptly, and bit his lip so hard that a spot of blood showed on it. Pilkingham. "It is certainly true that are trying to deceive me, though goodness knows why they should! I suppose they think this is a matter for schoolboy jesting!"

"But, sir, it is quite correct!" gasped Pilkingham. "It is certainly true that a shot was fired at his lordship—"

"I tell you it cannot be!" said Captain Lankester. "I tell you—"

He checked himself again. "Pilkingham, tell me what has happened."

"His lordship was showing the young gentlemen the pictures in the gallery, sir, when a shot was fired."

"Impossible!"
"I assure you, sir, that such is the fact," said the butler. "His lordship and some of the servants are now searching the gallery, sir, for the man who fired."

Captain Lankester stared at him with a dazed look. He passed his hand over his forehead. Wharton and Hurree Singh looked at him in wonder. It seemed to be impossible for the captain to believe that a shot had been fired at the peer; yet after what had already happened it was surely not a surprising occurrence.

"Am I dreaming or are you?" said the captain huskily. "Pilkingham, are you serious? You assure me that—that—"

"Undoubtedly, sir!"
"Where is Lord Cavandale?" gasped the captain.

He seemed like a man in a maze. All his coolness, all his supercilious nonchalance, was gone now. The latest of the strange mysteries of the Abbey seemed to have knocked him completely off his balance.

"At the moment, sir, I think his lordship is in the armoury adjoining the picture-gallery—"

Without waiting for the butler to finish, Captain Lankester rushed away. Pilkingham's glance followed him disapprovingly. At that moment Pilkingham disapproved of the Army man even more than he disapproved of William George Bunter.

"Well, my hat!" said Harry Wharton blankly. "What on earth's the matter with the man?"

"The goodness only knows," said the nabob.
"I say, you fellows—"

"Poor old Bunter! Feeling a bit shaken up?"

"If we weren't under my friend Cavandale's roof," said Bunter, "I'd thrash that fellow—thrash him till he cringed! Only the fact that I have too much respect for Lord Cavandale to make a scene in his house saves him from the thrashing of his life!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really you fellows——"

Pilkingham put his hand over his mouth as he glided away. Even Pilkingham's gravity was shaken by the idea of William George Bunter thrashing Captain Lankester. Wharton and Hurree Singh—less severely trained than Mr. Pilkingham—chortled loud and long.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Voices in the Dark!

"GEORGE!"

"Sir!"

"Hasn't my tailor come?"

"Not yet, sir!" said Albert.

"It's doocid awkward!" said Bunter.

Whereat Wharton and Hurree Singh took the liberty of smiling. They were in Bunter's room, with Bunter, when he rang for Albert. It was half-past five; and at Cavandale Abbey, dinner was at seven. Billy Bunter blinked seriously at Albert through his big spectacles.

"Coming out for a run before dinner, Bunt?" asked Harry.

"Not! No! I'm expecting my tailor," said Bunter. "My man Wooster, from Ashwood, you know. I had him here this morning for measurements. He was to deliver my evening clothes in time for dinner."

"My hat! That's quick work!"

"You see, my luggage having gone astray on the railway, I was left in a doocid awkward hole!" explained Bunter. "Of course, I told Wooster that expense was no object. The simple thing was, that I had to have clothes. I told him he could charge what he liked, so long as he delivered the goods on time. Half-past five was the time he was to come and fit me. He's a minute late. This won't do."

"Oh, give him a minute and a half!" suggested Wharton.

"I expect tradesmen to carry out my instructions, Wharton! I always expect tradesmen to carry out my instructions to the very letter," said Bunter, with dignity. "I explained to this man, Wooster, that there was no time to get my own tailor down from Savile Row——"

"Oh crikey!"

"I told him I had to rely on him!" said Bunter. "It's scarcely conceivable that a tradesman would venture to let me down, isn't it? Yet he's late. Doocid late!"

Wharton and the nabob exchanged a joyous grin. With Lord Cavandale to pay the bills, Bunter was evidently spreading himself considerably. So long as he was staying with his amiable and hospitable lordship, Bunter evidently was going to play the part of a fellow of unlimited wealth. It was a part that Bunter liked. Seldom indeed did William George Bunter enjoy such an opportunity of throwing his weight about. Naturally, he was going to make the most of it while it lasted.

"Frederick!" rapped out Bunter.

"Sir!" answered the patient Albert.

"Go down and see whether Wooster has arrived. If he has, bring him here at once. If he hasn't, telephone, and ask him what he means by it."

"Very good, sir."

Albert departed. Bunter threw himself back into a chair.

"Doocid awkward!" he said, blinking at the chums of the Remove. "You see, I'm rather stranded without my luggage. Doocid awkward."

"Frightfully doocid!" agreed Wharton. "By the way, what's that fellow's name?"

"Eh? Albert."

"Then why do you call him George and Frederick?"

"Oh, I never remember servants' names!" said Bunter negligently. "You see, surrounded by menials at Bunter Court, I never could remember all their names. It's the same here. I don't remember that my footman's name is Albert, naturally. In fact, I've already forgotten that the butler's name is Pilkingham."

"Oh crumbs!"

"It would be different with you, keeping only a few servants," said Bunter, condescendingly. "But we've always had lots and lots. And the fact is, that my friend Cavandale keeps as many funkeys as we do at Bunter Court."

"Quite as many, I'm sure!" assented Wharton. "Possibly even one or two more. Well, are you coming out for a run before dinner? We want to get some fresh air, you know, and it's left off snowing."

"Impossible! I've got to see my tailor. Besides, it's dark, and cold, and that villain may be hanging about. Not that I'm afraid of him, of course. But I must see my tailor, or it will be doocid——"

"Oh, quite! You coming, Inky?"

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh cast a glance at the glowing fire before he answered. December cold never had appealed to the junior from Bhanipur in far-off India.

"The pleasurefulness will be terrific, my esteemed chum."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"But keeping near the fire would be still more terrifically pleasant, what?" he asked. "All serene, old man!"

"I say, you fellows, I want one of you to stay with me. I'm not going to be left alone. I——"

"All serene! Inky isn't keen on snow and a December wind," said Harry. "I'll trot out a bit. See you later, Inky."

And leaving the nabob basking in the heat of the fire, and Bunter impatiently expecting the arrival of Mr. Wooster with the evening clothes, the captain of the Remove went down, and donned coat and cap for a walk in the keen, cold air. He caught sight of Inspector Chapman in conversation with Lord Cavandale, as he went out; the Ashwood inspector wearing a worried and troubled frown on his ruddy face.

It was dark and bitterly cold when Wharton left the house and went down the steps from the terrace. The December night had set in black and few stars gleamed in the dark vault of the sky. The ground was covered with snow, but the flakes had ceased to fall. A bitter wind wailed through the leafless branches of the old oaks and beeches on the great avenue. Wharton turned up his coat collar, and stepped out cheerfully, enjoying the keenness of the winter air. He had a glimpse of a moving figure on the terrace as he went. A constable, muffled up against the cold, was pacing there, posted to keep watch by the Ashwood inspector.

In the long avenue, under the trees, it was densely dark. Wharton's surroundings were strange to him; but he could not lose his way so long as he kept to the avenue, which led from the house to the lodge gates half a mile away. He tramped on cheerily, his footfalls making no sound in the snow.

His thoughts, as he went, were busy on the strange mystery of Cavandale. The repeated attempts on the peer's life

were utterly inexplicable, and still more inexplicable was the unknown villain's knowledge of the interior of the house. Doubtless the man who had let the assassin in the previous night, was the man who had fired on Lord Cavandale in the picture-gallery—that seemed probable. Apparently he had taken the matter into his own hands, after Bunter's intervention had frightened off his confederate. He had, as it seemed, fired from some secret recess with a secret opening on the picture-gallery—which argued a knowledge of the interior of the house more extensive than Lord Cavandale's own.

It was strange enough; and still stranger was the astonishment, the incredulity, of Captain Lankester, when he heard that the peer had been fired on in his absence. After so many previous attempts on the peer's life, why should that have surprised the captain so strangely? Everything that happened at the Abbey seemed strange, inexplicable, wrapped in a fog of mystery. Wharton was by no means sorry that he had come at Bunter's urgent request; but he wished that his chums, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent, were with him there. Bunter had announced that he was going to ask them; and Wharton hoped that it would come off.

"I tell you, guv'nor, I don't know anything about it. I tell you, I ain't been near the place. Take me for a blinking fool!"

Wharton stopped dead.

The darkness about him, under the thick trees that over-arched the long avenue, was intense. He could see nothing but the gleaming snow, dim in the darkness before him. That husky muttering voice came out of space and darkness.

The Greyfriars junior caught his breath.

In the black darkness, under the trees on the edge of the avenue, in the middle of which Wharton stood, a man was speaking. He spoke in a subdued, husky voice; but in the stillness of the winter night the words came clearly to Wharton.

He felt his heart throb.

He knew that the speaker had not heard his approach. His footsteps had made no sound in the snow. He stood quite still.

Of what was the man speaking? Of what had happened in the picture-gallery? Wharton remembered that Bunter had said that the assassin had addressed the man who had admitted him at the window as "guv'nor." A thrill ran through the junior. Was it the assassin, in talk with the traitor in the household, who was speaking there unseen in the darkness? He could hardly doubt it, and he stood with his heart beating like a hammer.

A faint whisper came—too faint for Wharton to hear the words, but in another voice. It confirmed his suspicion, from his remembrance of what Bunter had told him of the whispering at the window the previous night. Then the husky voice spoke again.

"I don't get it! It beats me, guv'nor! How could I get into the 'ouse, if you come to that? I tell you, I don't know anything about it. There's another party arter his nibs. That's all."

Wharton was certain now. Those words could only refer to the attempt on the peer's life in the picture-gallery.

He strained his ears. The faintest of faint whispers came. The man who was answering the ruffian was cautious, wary, on his guard, although he evidently had no suspicion that anyone was within hearing in the winter darkness.

The husky voice broke out irritably. "It's another party, gov'nor! Another party's after him! I keep on telling you I ain't had a hand in it, not since last night! Not me! What you say? How should I know? There's more'n one party would jump for joy if his nibs was washed out afore January! What!"

The faintest of whispers again. Wharton strained his ears; he would almost have given one of them to hear that voice distinctly. Knowing that voice, it would have been only a matter of time and patience to put his finger on the traitor in Lord Cavandale's household. But, strain his ears as he might, only an indistinguishable whisper reached him.

"More'n one party, you can lay to that!" came the husky voice. "You and your friends ain't the only lot with big money at stake. There's others—plenty others—I'm telling you. If it's happened like you tell me, it means that there's another party in the game."

Harry Wharton set his teeth. In the blackness under the trees the unknown assassin was standing with his accomplice; that was certain now. And the junior resolved that he would learn who that accomplice was, at any risk to himself. With that secret traitor in his house, Lord Cavandale's life hung on a thread.

He groped in his pocket for a match-box and stepped softly through the carpet of snow towards the voices.

Silently, softly, till he could hear the sound of heavy breathing close to him. A match was in his hand, and he scratched it suddenly on the box. A flame flickered.

At the same moment there came a sudden blow from the darkness, and the Greyfriars junior staggered back and fell heavily in the snow. He had a vague, flashing glimpse of two dark, muffled figures—one taller than the other—then the match was out, and Harry Wharton lay senseless in the snow.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Where is Wharton?

BILLY BUNTER gazed into the tall pier-glass and smiled. He smiled the smile of complete satisfaction.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh smiled, too. Mr. Wooster, the tailor of Ashwood, also smiled. The tall glass reflected three smiling faces—Bunter's the smilingest.

"Rather decent—what, Inky?" asked Bunter. Arrayed in brand-new evening clothes, produced under pressure that day in Mr. Wooster's establishment, Bunter was quite satisfied with what he saw in the glass.

"The decentfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bunter," answered the nabob—a remark that made Mr. Wooster blink at him.

"Of course, hardly London tailoring," said Bunter. "One mustn't expect too much in the country. But you've done well, Mr. Wooster—very well indeed! You have given me satisfaction."

Bunter made that statement as if he expected it to make Mr. Wooster feel that life, at least, was really worth living. The Ashwood tailor did his best to play up. He rubbed his hands together as if he were washing them in invisible soap in imperceptible water.

"I shall want to see you again tomorrow," said Bunter. "While I've got the time I may as well get a few things. After all, it's one's duty to give one's

custom locally. A topcoat or two, some lounge suits, and a few other things. Come in the morning, Wooster."

Evidently Bunter was going to make hay while the sun shone. He would not always be a guest of Lord Cavandale's.

"That will do for to-day, Wooster," said Bunter. "You can go."

Mr. Wooster went—doubtless greatly impressed with the importance of Bunter. At all events, he appeared so. Bunter grinned at the nabob.

"All right—what?" he said. "I had to borrow Wharton's clobber yesterday, owing to my luggage going astray. I've made this chap work—I believe in making 'em work. Of course, I'm treating him generously. He can charge

"My esteemed Bunter, you look like anything but a lath!" assured the nabob with perfect sincerity. "There is not the remotest resemblance to a ludicrous lath."

"Nothing skinny about me!" said Bunter, with another admiring glance into the pier-glass.

"Nothing at all, my absurd Bunter! The skinniffulness is very far from terrific."

"Well, a fellow likes to be good-looking," said Bunter. "Of course, looks ain't everything—and that ought to be a comfort to fellows like you and Wharton. But they count for a good deal, Inky; I should hate to be one of those ordinary, common-looking fellows!

GREYFRIARS CORRESPONDENTS.

No. 23.

This week, Trotter, the page, steps into our portrait gallery. I think you'll agree that our Rhymester has hit him off to a "T."



DEAR MOTHER,—I'm perching quite proudly At Doctor Locke's desk, as I write; I'd better not chuckle too loudly In case the old cove comes in sight! I'm supposed to be cleaning his study Instead of composing a rhyme; The carpets are fearfully muddy, The windows encrusted with grime.

But I was engaged as a buttons; A charwoman's job is imposs. For work, many fellows are gluttons, But "Charing" has made me quite "Cross."

It makes me feel very inferior To labour with flannel and mop; What job could be duller or drearier? I'd rather serve sweets in a shop!

The life of a page-boy is onerous; No wonder I'm making a fuss! The wages with which people honour us Are really too mean to discuss. Of all the appalling absurdities Ten shillings a week is the worst; A beggarly wage, on my word it is! With fury I feel I could burst!

Old Gosling, who spends all the day-time Supporting the door of his lodge, I envy; his life is all play-time, His duties he'll cunningly dodge. At times he is rather a rotter, For when there's a job to be done, He just murmurs, "Leave it to Trotter!" And placidly basks in the sun!

One day, in a moment of bravery, I badgered the Head for a rise; I said I was sick of this slavery, And scoffed at my salary's size. His answer was sudden and snappy; It gave me no end of a start: "Well, Trotter, if you are not happy, Just pack up your box and depart!"

But, seeing that I'm indispensable, And Greyfriars would miss me a lot, I thought I had better be sensible, And so I remained on the spot. But hark! I hear footsteps majestic! I mustn't be caught by the Head; So back to my duties domestic I'll turn.—Your affectionate FRED.

practically what he likes; I leave that to him. I'm not the fellow to haggle; I'm quite indifferent to the bills."

"No doubt, in the esteemed circumstances," agreed the nabob. Perhaps Inky wondered whether Lord Cavandale would be equally indifferent when the bills came in. Bunter was not bothering about that. He blinked in the glass again with increasing satisfaction.

"Evening-dress shows off a good figure, doesn't it, Inky?" he remarked complacently.

"A—a what?" ejaculated the nabob. "A good figure!"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Certainly!"

"Wharton looks like a lath in evening-dress," said Bunter. "Now, I don't look like a lath, do I, Inky?"

I'm accustomed to seeing people glance round when I enter a room."

Hurree Janset Ram Singh turned a chuckle into a cough.

"I have myself observed the glance-roundfulness," he admitted.

Bunter nodded with satisfaction.

"What I like about you, Inky, is that you ain't jealous of a fellow's good looks like some of the fellows—Wharton and Bob Cherry and Nugent and some more. Of course, it wouldn't be much use you setting up as good-looking—with your black mug! He, he, he!"

"My esteemed, idiotic Bunter—"

"That's all right, Inky; you can't help being plain any more than I can help being handsome. It just happens."

said Bunter. "Some fellows happen to be lucky in that line and some don't. I must say I'm glad to be one of the lucky ones; but, after all, there's very little in it. Don't you worry about it, Inky."

"The worryfulness is not preposterous," grinned the nabob. "But perhaps you had better not look in the glass so much, my esteemed Bunter."

"Eh—why not? Think I'm likely to grow conceited?"

"Oh crumbs! Nunno! I was thinking of the possible crackfulness of the glass."

"You silly chump!" roared Bunter.

He rolled to the door.

"The dinner-bell's gone! Where's that ass Wharton? He hasn't changed yet. If he thinks he's going to dine here in a lounge jacket he's mistaken. I expect him to keep up appearances while he's here as my friend. Come on; we can't keep my friend Cavandale waiting."

Bunter rolled down to dinner, followed by the smiling nabob. Harry Wharton was not to be seen, and they went into the dining-room. Lord Cavandale, Captain Lankester, and Mr. Parker were there; Pilkington and his myrmidons were ready to serve dinner.

"Hope we're not late," said Bunter airily. "I've been rather busy. I say, isn't Wharton here?"

"Apparently not," said Lord Cavandale, taking his seat.

"Well, my hat!" said Bunter, as he sat down. "He went out for a walk an hour ago, the silly ass! He can't have come in."

"I hope he has not lost his way," said Lord Cavandale.

"Well, he's ass enough," said Bunter. "But don't think of waiting dinner for him. It's a good rule never to keep a meal waiting. I wonder where the duffer has got to? He was only going to take a trot along the avenue."

"Did you see anything of him, Lankester?" asked Lord Cavandale.

"I?" said the captain, starting a little.

"Yes. You were out, I think—"

"Only strolling on the terrace," said the captain. "I saw no one there but the Ashwood constable. I did not see Wharton."

"Oh, he'll turn up, like a bad penny!" said Bunter, guzzling soup. The soup was good, and Bunter dismissed Wharton and all other such trifles from his mind while he gave his attention to it.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh looked a little worried. It was not like Wharton to be late for so serious a function as dinner at Cavandale Abbey; and he had said that he would be back in good time. It seemed scarcely likely that he could have lost his way, with the lighted windows of the great house shining through the December night to guide him back if he had left the avenue. Yet that he could have come to any harm seemed less likely still. But the nabob was worried.

Dinner passed almost in silence. Captain Lankester, who generally had plenty to say, seemed plunged in thought, and Lord Cavandale was also in a thoughtful mood. A long search had revealed no trace of the man who had fired the shot in the picture-gallery, or of the secret recess where he must have been hidden. Strong as his lordship's nerve was, the strain of the strange situation was telling on him a little. Mr. Parker was always a man of few words; while the nabob was thinking about his absent chum, and Billy

Bunter, of course, was wholly concentrated on food.

Dinner over, Mr. Parker retired in his quiet, unobtrusive way, unnoticed. Billy Bunter was tempted to help himself to a cigar, and join Lord Cavandale and the captain in a smoke; but his earlier experience that day had warned him off, and perhaps, too, even Bunter's cheek was not quite equal to it.

"Come and have a hundred up, Inky," he said. "I'll give you fifty in a hundred, to give you a chance."

The two juniors left the dining-room, leaving the peer and the captain to their cigars. But Hurree Singh did not follow Bunter to the billiard-room.

"The esteemed Wharton has not come in," he remarked.

"Oh, blow Wharton!" said Bunter carelessly. "I suppose he's still on the go. Those fellows are always walking or running or jumping or something—never keeping still, like sensible chaps. Shall we have a fiver on the game?"

"I am terrifically uneasy about the worthy and absurd Wharton."

"I tell you, blow Wharton!" said Bunter crossly. "Think of me! I suppose I matter more than Wharton."

"The answer is in the esteemed negative, my excellent fatheaded Bunter."

"Look here, Inky—"

Hedless of the fellow who really

READERS PLEASE NOTE

that the next issue of the
MAGNET will be on sale
Friday, December 19th.

mattered more than anybody else in the wide universe, Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh lingered in the hall. He was uneasy and growing a little alarmed. He went to the door at last and opened it and looked out into the snowy night.

"You silly ass!" grunted Bunter.

"What is the matterfulness?"

"You should have called a footman to open the door, fathead! You'd better keep an eye on me and do as I do here!"

The nabob grinned for a moment; but his face became grave again as he looked out on the snow-carpeted terrace.

"My hat!" he ejaculated suddenly.

"What the thump—"

"Wharton!"

"Eh—what—where are you going, you ass?"

The nabob did not reply. He rushed out of the doorway and Billy Bunter blinked after him irritably. From the darkness of the avenue came the portly figure of Inspector Chapman—and leaning on his arm, his face white, with a streak of crimson across the colourless forehead, was Harry Wharton. The nabob reached him in a moment.

"My esteemed chum—" he gasped.

"All right, Inky—not much hurt," muttered Wharton. He smiled faintly. "I've had a crack on the head—owl! No damage done. Lucky the inspector found me, though."

And between the nabob and the Ashwood inspector, Harry Wharton was helped into the house.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Has His Suspicions!

LORD CAVANDALE tugged at his thick moustache. In the scarred face of the soldier-peer there was deep emotion. The cool calmness with which he faced the

dangers that menaced himself seemed to desert him now that he realised that the danger had fallen upon another—and that other, a schoolboy, who was a guest under his roof.

Harry Wharton lay back in a chair, his face showing white in the electric light, a bruise visible under his hair, and a cut from which blood had oozed. He had pulled himself together now but it was plain that he had been hard hit. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh stood beside his chum with a distressed, dusky face. Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. Captain Lankester, with a cigar still between his lips, regarded him curiously.

In the background hovered Pilkington—no doubt sympathetic, but shocked and disturbed and rather scandalised. Harry Wharton, in a low, clear voice, had told what had happened on the dark avenue, and all had listened intently—especially Mr. Chapman. The Ashwood inspector made notes of what the junior stated, and though, no doubt, he was sorry for what had happened to Wharton, it was easy to read that he was relieved to get, at last, something like information on the subject of the peer's mysterious enemy.

"You actually saw both men, I take it?" said Inspector Chapman.

"Just a glimpse, for a second," said Harry. "Only two dark figures, muffled up. I can't say anything except that one was rather short, and the other rather tall."

"That is Bunter's description of the two men last night," said the peer. "Evidently the same pair of scoundrels."

"Evidently!" said Captain Lankester, taking the cigar from his mouth. "You ran a terrible risk, Wharton. If the ruffian had been aware that you had been listening to him, he might have used a more deadly weapon."

"No doubt he merely supposed that someone was blundering into him in the dark—possibly that it was one of my men," said the inspector. "You would know the man's voice if you heard it again, Master Wharton?"

"I am sure of that."

"But the other man—the one he called the 'gub'nor'—"

"No," said Harry, "his whispering was too faint for me to hear."

"You don't think you would know his voice if you heard him speak?" asked Captain Lankester, eyeing the junior. "You realise how important that is—for to all appearance, he is an inmate of Lord Cavandale's household."

"No," said Harry. "All I can say of him is that he was taller than the other man. No more than that."

"About Captain Lankester's height, what?" asked Bunter, blinking at him. "That's what I noticed last night."

"Don't be an ass!" said Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I don't mean that he was Captain Lankester, of course."

"For goodness' sake, shut up, Bunter!" gasped Wharton.

He hardly dared look at the captain as the fatuous Owl of the Remove made his fatuous observations. But he was conscious of the savage glitter in the Army man's eyes turned on Bunter.

"I mean that was about his height," said Bunter. "That's something to go on, isn't it, Mr. Chapman? If you want a tip from me—"

"Please be silent," said Inspector Chapman, his glare showing how much



Coming from the avenue towards the mansion was Inspector Chapman—and leaning on his arm, his face white, was Harry Wharton!

—or how little—he wanted a tip from William George Bunter.

"Oh, really, you know! The fact is, I fancy you do want a little help," explained Bunter. "You don't seem to be making much of the case, so far, if you don't mind my mentioning it. My idea is this—"

Mr. Chapman seemed in danger of choking.

"Please say no more, Bunter," said Lord Cavandale, hastily.

"Now, my idea is this—"

"My dear boy—" said Lord Cavandale.

"My idea," said Bunter cheerfully, "is this! The man is about Captain Lankester's height—in fact, exactly his height—"

"If you mention my name again, boy, I will box your ears!" exclaimed the captain, in a tone of intense exasperation.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Here, you keep off!" he exclaimed. "I'm not saying it was you, am I? My idea is this—go over the whole household, picking out everybody the same height as Captain Lankester, and make 'em jolly well prove where they were at the time Wharton was banged on the head. Then you'll jolly well get hold of the right man!"

"Do you think I had not thought of that, you young donkey?" exclaimed Mr. Chapman angrily. "Be silent, sir!"

"Oh! If you'd thought of it, all right!" said Bunter, rather taken aback. "You didn't look as if you'd thought of anything, you know! To tell you the truth, you don't look as if you could, if you don't mind my saying so. If you like, I'll help you question them. They might spoof you—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"But they wouldn't be likely to spoof me," said Bunter complacently. "I'm rather wide, you know!"

"The widefulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Lord Cavandale smiled involuntarily. "You can begin with Pilkingham," went on Bunter. "He's the same height as Captain Lankester! Then there's Parker—"

"My lord!" gurgled Pilkingham.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Was it you, Pilkingham?" he asked.

"My—my lord!" gasped Pilkingham.

"I—I—if—if—I—I—"

"Pray take no notice of this absurd boy, Pilkingham," said Lord Cavandale, his face twitching. "Bunter, I must really beg you to be silent! You had better go and lie down for a little, Wharton, and no doubt your friends will remain with you. That bruise must be seen to at once!"

"That's all right, sir," said Harry. "Inky will look after me." He rose from the chair. "Come on, Bunter!"

"I'm going to help Inspector Chapman, old fellow. You see—"

"Come on, you fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Pray go with your friend, Bunter," said Lord Cavandale.

And Bunter, having blinked at Inspector Chapman, and discerned a quite alarming expression on that official's face, went with his friends. He caught a glare from Pilkingham as he went, and blinked at the butler with a suspicious blink.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, as Wharton lay on his bed, with Hurree Singh tenderly bathing his bruised head. "I say, that man Chapman's a fool!"

"Ass!"

"You saw how he refused my help—looked quite savage," said Bunter. "The man's under his eye all the time. Did you see how Pilkingham glared when I asked him if it was him?"

"What?" gasped Wharton.

"If over a man looked guilty, he did!" said Bunter.

"Oh crikey! The butler?"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter—"

"Well, I've got a strong suspicion of Pilkingham," said Bunter. "I fancy he

knows it, too—the way he glared at me."

"You benighted idiot!"

"Does that bruise hurt you much, Wharton?"

"Yes, a bit."

"You'll hardly be able to sleep much?"

"I'm afraid not."

"That's all right, then—"

"Eh?"

"You see, I want one of you fellows to stay awake to-night and keep watch! Can't take risks! With that pain in your napper, you'll be able to stay awake all right. See?"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"My esteemed fatheaded Bunter—"

"You can take your turn to-morrow night, Inky! Take it in turns, you know! I don't want you to over-do it! I never was selfish."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Well, I'll trickle along and see if my friend Cavandale would like a hundred up. He's frightfully keen on my society—never seems to want me out of his sight. See you fellows later."

"Good! The later the better!"

"Yah!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away in search of his friend Cavandale. Whether his lordship enjoyed his society cannot be said; but there was no doubt that the chums of the Remove enjoyed his absence.

THE END.

(Don't miss the next yarn in this grand Christmas series, entitled: "THE PHANTOM OF THE ABBEY!" It's a real corker!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,192.

UP, THE ROVERS!



THE FIRST CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD.

James Brennan, owner of the Railton Rovers F.C., 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 to Charles Thurgood, manager of the Railton Bank, in order to carry on. 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 play for the Rovers. Tim undoubtedly proves a great asset to the team. Reading in the paper some time later that an armed burglar has broken into his old home, Jimmy pays a flying visit to Thurgood, who, badly rattled, informs him that he wished he'd never seen the rotten place.

(Now read on.)

A Queer Business!

JIMMY BRENNAN, the young owner of the Rovers, was too good a sportsman to remind the shaking, wild-eyed Thurgood that it was he who had first suggested buying the Firs, and had not rested until the transaction was completed. Instead, he replied with stiff politeness that cut like a knife:

"I'm sorry the house doesn't satisfy you, Mr. Thurgood. One day I'll hope to buy it back, even if it is rotten! In the meantime, I've no idea what there is here to attract a burglar other than the silver or whatever else he could find. And I hope you'll recover your temper pretty soon. Good-morning!"

And he went out, a prey to whirling

thoughts. What on earth had bitten Thurgood all at once—popular, good-natured Charles Thurgood? The man must be a putrid funk at heart to get into such a state over an ordinary burglary.

Or was it an ordinary one? Or could it have been still another link in the mystery of his father's death, the forged cheque, the missing three thousand pounds? Jimmy halted in his stride as the thought struck him. Knowing nothing of Tim Osborne's activities he was in a mental fog. He was positive that the £3,000 in banknotes had never even entered the Firs, and as for the lost cheque and passbook he believed, like most people now, that his father's slayer had taken them in his flight. Yet why had Charles Thurgood gone off his chump at that casual remark? His eyes had glared like hot coals, and Jimmy could have sworn the man had been scared stiff.

"A darn queer business," he mused at last; and, registering a thought to tell Tim Osborne all about it as soon as he saw that deceptive young man, he strolled along for a Sunday morning visit to his uncle and Tony.

Opening the gate of their little house, which stood in a quiet back street beyond the footer ground, he was surprised to hear an angry voice through the open front window, and more surprised still when he recognised it as his uncle's, for Philip Brennan seldom spoke other than in a quiet pleasant

drawl. However, he was pitching into somebody pretty hard now in tones that any passer-by could have heard. And even as Jimmy knocked there came the slam of a furiously-closed door from inside the house.

The housekeeper—a tall, silent woman—admitted him and showed him into the small living-room, where he found Tony, immaculate as ever, sprawled on a sofa, negligently balancing a slipper on one elegant toe. There was a little smile on his cousin's handsome face, although his swarthy cheeks looked darker even than usual, and his eyes held the shadow of a scowl.

"Hallo, James! How's the head?" he nodded coolly. "Hear the rumpus just now?"

Jimmy managed a faint smile.

"I—er did hear something!"

Tony jerked a disrespectful head towards the door.

"The pater's somewhat ratty this morning," he drawled. "Been tickin' me off—bad lad, an' so forth!"

"Oh!"

Jimmy hesitated. During the last few weeks, with his cousin constantly in Railton now, the two had become thoroughly acquainted, and although Tony was quite a good sort, there was no doubt his earlier life in South Africa had made him as wild as a hawk. Since leaving Cambridge, as far back as the day of James Brennan's death, he had done little swotting for the law, as he was supposed to be doing,

and, although Jimmy naturally had allowed him to make use of the Rovers' training quarters, his appearances there had been rare. He preferred to make his own friends in the town. And some of those friends— Jimmy shrugged. They were a racy lot; but, after all, it was no business of his. At the same time, he didn't like to think of Tony playing the goat and upsetting kindly, patient old Philip Brennan.

Reading his thoughts, Tony laughed with airy frankness.

"Don't you worry, old bean—all will shortly blow over!" he smiled. "I've been having real bad luck with the gees lately, an' papa's been readin' the Riot Act. That's all!"

"You and your horse!" grinned Jimmy uncomfortably. "Why don't you chuck 'em? It's a mug's game!"

"Just what the pater says!" Tony yawned. "Don't you start preachin', old lad."

"But—"

"A-aach!"

Tony leapt suddenly from the sofa, lips drawn back and hands clenched so fiercely that Jimmy recoiled. For a moment he thought his cousin would hit him—he felt a vague shock at the almost ugly glitter in Tony's eyes as they bored into his own. Before he could speak, the other exploded:

"Rats! I'm fed-up with this life—sick of Raiton, England, everything. If I had my way—" His voice trailed off into thick, furious murmurs as he strode up and down the little room while Jimmy watched uneasily. If this was what racing did for people, he was glad he was a footballer, he thought.

At last, Tony's outburst subsided as quickly as it had sprung up. He gave a little shiver, as though an icy douche had hit him, and when he turned again the harsh set of his lips was the only sign of the tempest that had swept him.

"Sorry!" he jerked.

Jimmy grinned in relief.

"S'all right!" he mumbled. "You're off your feed a bit, I can see. Come for a decent walk and blow it off!"

"No!" Tony bit off the word sulkily. "Don't feel like it. Maybe this afternoon—oh, slush! Push off, Jimmy, like a good chap and leave me alone!"

There seemed nothing else to do. Jimmy wandered into the street again feeling like someone who has peeped behind a fair veil and seen an ugly sight. He was uneasy, too; the expression in Tony's reckless eyes filled him with misgivings.

What was the matter with everyone to-day? He felt a sudden desire to go and rout out some of the Rovers and enjoy himself in the clean sane atmosphere of football, where people didn't dive off the deep-end at a moment's notice over nothing at all. Yet his troubles were not ended yet, for in turning into the High Street, he nearly barged into someone coming round the corner. Side-stepping quickly, he looked up to apologise and found himself staring into the dry, lean features of Henry Sylvester, his late father's solicitor.

With a muttered word, he was striding past, when the lawyer laid a hand on his arm.

"Just a moment, James!"

Jimmy halted grimly.

"Well—Mr. Sylvester!"

The lawyer's mouth tightened a little as usual at the hostility in the youngster's tone, but he went on calmly:

"I am glad I have met you. Could you give me a call to-morrow at ten, please?"

"Why?"

"I—ah!—have something important to tell you about the—"

Jimmy's voice was soft.

"About the ground?"

"Precisely!" nodded Sylvester curtly.

It was the last straw in a thoroughly unhappy morning. A feeling of sharp exasperation made Jimmy square his sturdy shoulders ominously and step nearer.

"Well, you can keep it!" he gritted between clenched teeth right in the solicitor's face. "I want to hear nothing more about the ground—or you either. Ever. Now bite on that!"

Recovering himself, he took two steps away and looked back over his shoulder.

"As far as you and I go, Mr. Sylvester, I told you we're finished. And you know why!"

He left the lawyer standing there, looking after him with inscrutable eyes yet gnawing his underlip loweringly. And later on, he poured out a full and faithful detail of the morning's encounters to Tim Osborne.

"I can't understand why Sylvester wants me to sell that ground!" he burst out, when he had finished. "Blowed if I can. Can you?"

He cocked an inquiring eye at the youthful Scotland Yard man.

"P'raps he doesn't—now!" replied Tim absently. Which remark only added to Jimmy's bewilderment.

"Eh? What—"

But Timothy smiled. And all he murmured in answer was:

"Think you'll be fit for Wednesday against Heddenford, Jimmy?"

Going Up and Up!

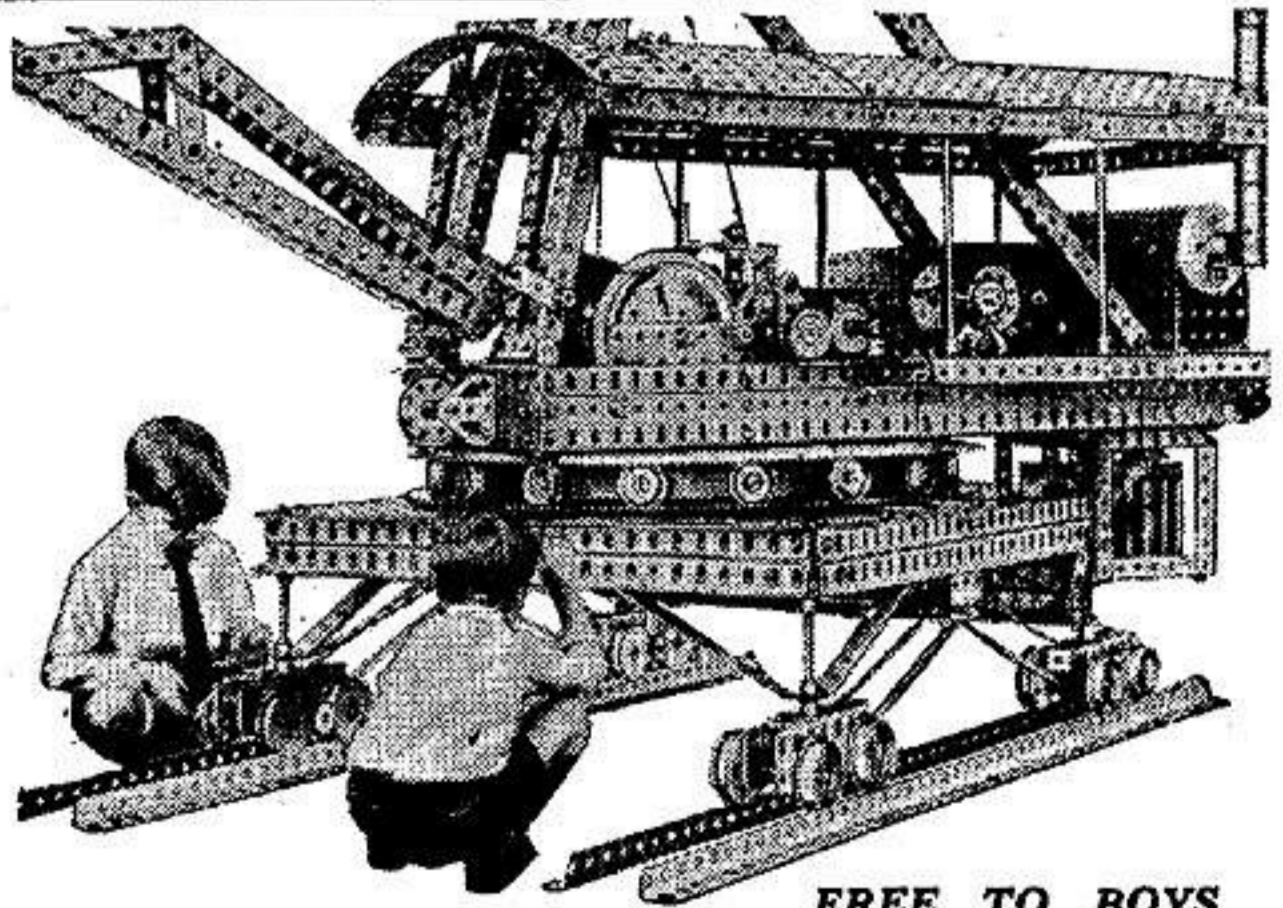
THE midweek match against Heddenford United was a stiff one, inasmuch as the United had yet to be defeated on their own ground. With Jimmy in the line-up once more, the Rovers were at full strength; but it was the general opinion

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of supporters and papers alike that if they came back from Heddenford with one point out of the two they would be going well.

At the start of a "needle" game, it looked as if they would be disappointed of even that one point; for the United, possessing a star left-winger and a Welsh international at centre-forward, went off at a tremendous pace. Within ten minutes they were two goals up. And the home crowd, in the intervals of chiding Jimmy Brennan and his youthful comrades in the front line, were yelling jubilantly for more.

Flushed with success the Heddenford defence backed their forwards up grimly. Jimmy, still feeling his injury a little, had not settled down; Tim was being bottled up by a fast and decidedly rough centre-half, and so the Railton attacks were shaky. However, half-time came at last with the United still leading two-nil.

But oh, the second half! "Sorry, chaps!" granted Jimmy during the interval. "I must wake up a bit."

"And I," murmured Tim blandly, "will make that centre-half talk Greek!"

To a derisive cheer mingled with a rallying shout from a tiny handful of loyal Railtonians, the slim centre kicked off to Jimmy. A United forward charged in all legs and elbows, but the youthful star slipped past him like a shadow, trickled in and out of the halves, slipped the ball to Tim, got it back and stabbed it out to Payton. Ten yards in front of goal the winger's centre came right to his instep, but, feinting to shoot, Jimmy jumped over the ball and let it run on to Tim. A shot like a streak of lightning thundered low and hard into the corner of the net.

"Goal!"

From then on, there was only one side in it. Looking more schoolboyish than ever, Tim Osborne proceeded to make the United centre-half talk Greek—usually on his knees or the flat of his back, while Tim swayed daintily away in another direction—and Jimmy, fast and dashing, with glorious passes from either foot, ran the home defence ragged. The Railton attack suddenly became a glittering blade, slicing its way through to goal, the five speedy youngsters dazzling even the partisan home crowd by the brilliance of their baffling raids and deadly shooting. By seven goals to two Railton shattered the United's ground record, and of that total Jimmy and Tim scored one each. Miller, Payton, and Atkins gleefully shared the rest.

And now, confident and triumphant, the Rovers began a sensational march of victory that drew the eyes of the football world upon them. Their programme for the next four weeks was a crowded one, and every game added to their startling renown. Nicknamed the "Galloping Five" by the Press, the forwards swept over every defence they met, averaging four goals a match and every one a gem. After three consecutive 4-0 victories, a clever set of Everton defenders pegged them down to a 2-1 success, but they made up for this by trouncing a strong Burnmouth side by five clear goals in the next match away from home. The end of November found them lying second in the League.

Every lad was fighting fit, and inspired. Miller, sound, dour, and thrustful, rarely wasted a shot at goal, Atkins improved with every game, and Payton, the thunderbolt winger, moved up

into stardom himself. But, as every one knew, the heart and brains of the scintillating line was the hefty, elusive, red-headed streak at inside-right, and the lean, skinny centre-forward, who looked like a beanstalk and played like an angel.

During that period there was no happier fellow in Britain than Jimmy Brennan. Scared perhaps by the failure of their murderous plan on the Black-holt, his enemies were biding their time in the background. Meanwhile, there was football—fast, glorious football—with the Rovers going up and up. Truly his cheery grin grew broader every day, and a deadly unstoppable brilliance crept into his play that slammed him into the front rank of English forwards—and kept him there!

The day came—a great one for the Rovers—when at long last he was able to lead his team out for the match against the League leaders from the new stand, finished after weeks of work. In honour of the occasion George Harvey had resigned the captaincy for once; and Railton Town, jammed like sardines on every seat, post and perch in the ground, rose to "Young Jimmy" in a solid roar that almost stunned him.

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about the place, motionless as statues, while their blue-hued lords and masters crack nuts and jokes, drink sham pain and suffer real pain, and, in the case of the younger members of the family, stuff Christmas puddings, mince pies, seed cakes and chocolate.

On Boxing Day, the tenants and villagers and local peasantry present themselves in front of our ancestral castle and lawn and grove and cringe, while we Bunters carelessly fling them handfuls of gold and silver. And right through the countryside ring humble tributes to the condescension and generosity of the Bunter line!

Of course, we welcome a change now and again and I am quite willing to honour with my distinguished presence any friends who invite me to their less pretentious abodes during the coming week. Needless to say, such friends will get an invitation back, to taste for themselves the glories of Bunter Court—but not this Christmas!

What They Said on Breaking-up Day!

Dr. Locke: Now for an uninterrupted month of Sophocles!
Mr. Quelch: Ha! ha! Here's a chance of turning out another 50 chapters of the "History of Greyfriars"!
Fancy Bolsover: Here's to the best day of the year—Boxing Day!
Harry Wharton: Good-bye, Coker! Please accept these few snowballs as a token of our esteem!
Horace Coker: Yawooooooop!
William Gosling: Thank goodness they've "broke up" in time to save me from swin' a "break-down"!
Two hundred juniors: Hurrah!

PANTO IN A DORMITORY

DICK WHITTINGTON

GREAT TRIUMPH

BEATS OTHERS HOLLOW

Dear Readers,—First and foremost, a Merry Christmas! I only wish I could invite every one of you to partake of the hospitality of Bunter Court. That is unfortunately impossible owing to an outbreak of mumps among the father's enormous staff of retainers. If any readers feel like inviting me to their places instead, I shall be pleased to consider such invitations in their strict order of merit! Apply early and avoid the rush!

Since my appointment as Editor of this Special Number of the "Herald," a host of congratulations have poured into the editorial office. A selection is given beneath:

Dr. Locke: The "Greyfriars Herald" has needed a new Editor for a long time. I am delighted to see that the job has now been given to the most brilliant journalist in the School. Bunter, my boy, Greyfriars is proud of her gifted son!

Harry Wharton: For once in a way I will confer my jellous and admits that Bunter as an editor beats me hollow!

Lord Bunter de Bunter: You bring fresh honour to an honoured family name!

If anyone doubts the genuineness of these messages, I shall make a broel, but dignified reference: Yah! I feel that that will silence the voices of the karping critics! Chin-chin, dear readers! May your shadows never grow less!

Your Editor,
W. G. BUNTER.

BE ATHLETIC WITHOUT DISCOMFORT!

When you want to win a 100-yard sprint, a cross-country run, a hurdle-race, a boxing-match or a sculling championship, I guess there's no need to go into training, or worry about diet. All you have to do is, take a dose of Doctor Fish's Gingerdope, the Magic Energizer! Thousands delighted! "Sportsman" writes: "After taking a dose, I won the 100-yard race by 99 yards. 'Under-sized' writes: 'With-out any previous knowledge of boxing, I gave Carrera 25 stone and knocked him out in the first minute.'"
Send P.O. 1a, to Doctor Fish, Study No. 14.

MISER HAUNTED BY GHOSTS

"O-O-O-O!"

TOPICAL STORY

By Dicky Nugent

Klan! Klan! Klan! What was that weird, blundering sound that rang through the silence of Christmas Eve? Sir William Oldboy, the meek and miserly owner of Oldboy Manor, peered on the stairs, hid candle in hand. His teeth had never been known to talk before, but as he listened to that awful noise, they fairly chattered. "What—what is that?" he cried, hoarsely. "If you are a yeoman being, speak!"

Suddenly, a skeleton appeared at the top of the stairs, grinning all over his face and clanking chains as he walked.

"Yarooooo!" yelled Sir William.

The lord of Oldboy Manor was no coward; but he took the bull by the horns and fled on this occasion.

At the bottom of the stairs, a garishly black shadow suddenly swooped down on him from the ceiling and caught him a fearful smack on the nape with its outstretched wings. It was a giant bat!

"Ow-ow!" shrieked Sir William. "This is not cricket!"

Mean! What was that heart-rending moan he could hear? Sir William soon knew. Searce had the question left his trembling lips before a headless specter advanced towards him, carrying its head in its hands.

"Oh, crickey! If this goes on, I shall lose my head altogether!" gasped Sir William. "I don't know what to egg-specter see next!"

The headless specter vanished. And then—

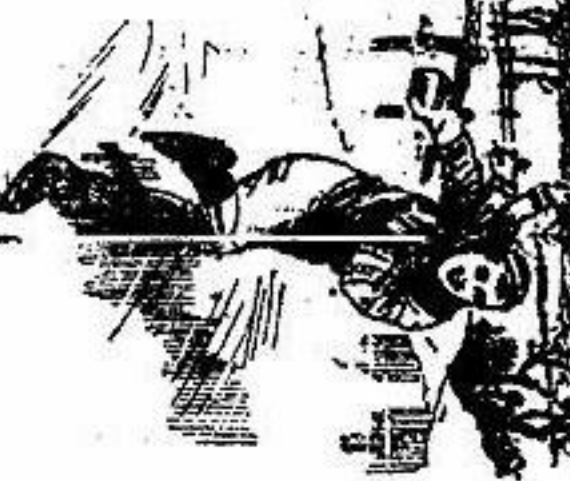
What was that blind-curdling peal of feendish harter that suddenly echoed through the house?

It was the war-whoop of half-a-dozen skeletons and a couple of demons that came running down the corridor soon after!

"Yaroo! Lemme alone!" growled Sir William. "Why are you ghosts harvering me like this? I've never done anything to you, but me if I have!"

There was a bust of feendish harter from the specters then one of the skeletons answered the question.

"Look here, guv'nor," he said,



MY IDEAL XMAS

Snoozing
Eating
Skating
Boxing

Bob Cherry: Skating, tobogganing, snowballing and anything else calling for 100 per cent activity!

Lord Maulverer: Snoozing! Bolsover Major: Watching after fights out. Owing to a fault in the cord, it came down two seconds later, on the heads of the players, but when they had sorted themselves out once more, the pantio soon got going in real earnest. The show certainly went with a bang from start to finish; in fact, there were a good many bangs towards the finish when Skinner & Co. started discharging jumping crackers on the stage!

Wibley, who was producer and leading actor, deserves great credit for the ingenious way in which he overcame difficulties.

The set in which Dick decides to turn again and become the scurrilous Mayor of London, to the accompaniment of a peal of frying-pan and sartinetin bells was a masterpiece. As to the scene where Dick's ship sails across a sea made up of rolling sheets, it was so realistic that several of the audience had an attack of sea-sickness!

There was a moment when things turned out too realistic, pulling the "boat," pulled too hard and jolly nearly wrecked it. But as the audience thought this was another piece of realistic stage-effects, we got another cheer when this actor's feet froze any-thing previously known on the stage (two concealed jokes!), amounting in all to the considerable sum of five pennies, two half-pennies, ten tin-tacks and several hundred over to the Schoolboy Actors' Old Age Pension Fund.

TWO POINTS OF VIEW

MY MINOR BY BILLY

MY MAJOR BY SAMMY

Who is the meekest little beast That'er pinched tuck without the least Idea of asking me to feast?

My minor!

Who is it when his brother yanks Hun out of barn when fags play pranks, without a word of thanks?

My minor!

Who, if he chuckles his life of shame And emulates his brother's fame, May yet prove worthy of his name?

My minor!

Who is the fat and lazy loon Whose face is as the harvest moon And figure like a great baboon?

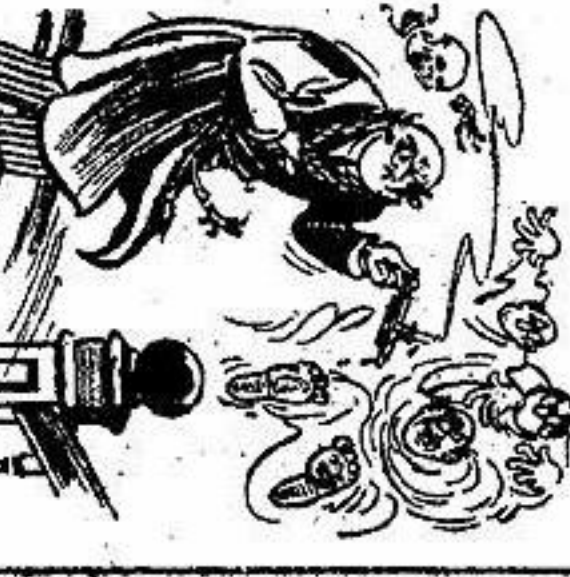
My major!

Who, at the slightest sound of stile, Rather than save his minor's life, Will fly ere you can murmur "Knif!"?

My major!

Who is a hollow friend and sham thoughtless he tries to cram into his blameless brother, Sam?

My major!



CO-OPERATIVE POETRY

(Alternate lines in the following poem are written by Coker and the Editor, respectively.)

I love to skate upon the ice, Beware, you reckless bouncer! I cross the river in a trow, You mean you flop and flounder!

The girls all stop to look at me, Your large-size feet surprise em!

They like the way I skate, you see, Your movements paralysed em!

The man's an optimist who'd seek a brain contained in that head!

A sport like Coker, the Uniquus, The world's unrivalled fat-head!