

"BUNTER'S NIGHT OUT!" Special Long Complete Story
of Harry Wharton & Co.

The **MAGNET** 2^D



Bunter's Queer Acquaintance!



Come Into the Office, Boys!

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

WHO says there isn't treasure still to be found in this world? I've just heard a most romantic yarn of

HIDDEN TREASURE

in a ruined abbey on the Franco-Belgian frontier. Up to the time of writing, the treasure hasn't actually been dug up, but a gold diviner claims to have discovered its whereabouts. He worked his way along a forgotten underground passage in the ruins, and, by means of the divining rod which he carried, he claims that he can lay his hands upon the spot where the treasure was hidden nearly a thousand years ago. It is estimated that it will be worth at least £2,000,000.

But here's the snag! The abbey is on French territory, but the underground passage goes into Belgian territory, and the spot where the treasure is said to be is directly under a beet field owned by a Belgian. To whom, then, does the treasure belong? That is a question which the international courts will have to settle if the treasure is brought to light, and I can foresee some very amusing arguments concerning it!

Here's a prize-winning limerick, which comes from C. Monro, of "Westmoreland," Cluny Crescent, Old Swanage, Dorset. It well deserves the prize of a dandy pocket wallet which I have sent off to this reader.

Old Wiggins, who bosses the Third,
The wrath of his class has incurred.
Says Paget to Tubb:
"We'll give him a snub
To show him how much he has erred!"

CUP FOR STAMP COLLECTORS.

There's a great treat in store for you fellows who are stamp collectors, and who chance to be in London between the 6th and 23rd of January. For a great Pageant of Postage Stamps is to be presented at Dorland Hall, Lower Regent Street, within one minute of Piccadilly Circus.

A Schoolboys' Stamp Exhibition forms part of the pageant, and our companion paper, "Modern Boy," is putting up a topping Solid Silver Cup for competition. If YOU have a worth-while collection of stamps, buy a copy of this week's "Modern Boy," price 2d., and find out what you have to do to enter for that splendid cup.

"Modern Boy" has also arranged to have Saturday, January 16th, set aside as "Modern Boy's" day at the pageant. On that day all readers of "Modern Boy" will be admitted FREE instead of paying the usual entrance fee of 1s. If you'd like to share in this free admittance scheme, rush round to the newsagent and buy a copy of this week's "Modern Boy," which contains full particulars and the FREE ADMITTANCE COUPON.

AN interesting letter comes this week from H. A. Woodon, of Norwich, who tells me

HE WANTS TO BECOME AN ARTIST,

and asks how he can achieve his ambition. He sends along a colour sketch of his, which is very well done, and shows great promise. Well, there's only one thing for him to do now, and that is to take up a course at an Art School. He should write to the local educational authorities and ask for particulars of any art schools in the vicinity. A course at a reputable art school is essential for any amateur who wishes to embrace art as a profession. Later on he may send specimens of his work to commercial art studios, and ask if there is a vacancy on their staff for a beginner.

He must not expect to be paid much at first, but as he gets to know the ropes he will be given more responsible work, and when he is fully fledged he will be able to decide whether to continue as a staff artist or whether to become a free-lance, and specialise in such things as magazine illustrating or advertisement drawings, both of which offer great scope to an artist who can do the work properly.

The next letter comes from a Wimbledon reader who has evidently got what is known as

WANDERLUST!

He wants to get a job in West Africa, and asks what the life of a police officer out there is like? There are not many white police officers out there, and I am afraid that unless he has had a Public school education and can count upon a little influence, he is doomed to disappointment. Most of the police officers are former Army officers, used to the handling of natives—for the ordinary policemen in West Africa are all natives, of course. The climate is not so bad as it is painted. I have been in "The White

Man's Grave" myself, and I didn't get malaria! He also asks

IS ELEPHANT HUNTING PROFITABLE?

I should say it is! A good elephant is worth a thousand pounds if captured alive; while, of course, dead elephants produce ivory, which is very valuable. But one cannot become an elephant hunter unless he has a large amount of money to invest. The native "boys" have to be paid, decoy elephants have to be bought, and the cost of elephant rifles and ammunition also runs away with a lot of money.

Elephants are trapped by means of "koomkies," or animals specially trained to betray their fellows. These tame elephants are sent out into the jungle to make friends with wild elephants, and then to entice them into a strong stockade which has been built for their reception. As soon as the wild elephants are in the stockade, the "koomkie" trumpets and gives the signal to the natives to close the gates which keep the wild elephants prisoners.

A splendid pocket-knife goes this week to "Magnet Reader," of The Den, Chase Road, Southgate, N.14, who has sent in the following amusing story. Good for him.



Micky: "What is the brightest city in the world?"

Freddy: "London."

Micky: "No —Electri—city!"



And now, what about you following the above reader's example, and winning a prize that is sure to make your chums envious?

I NEVER realised how many lady readers I had until recently. Now letters are pouring in to me from "girl" readers from all parts of the world. One very interesting letter has come to me from

FISHER. T. FISH'S COUNTRY,

but the reader who sends it signs herself "A True Scots Reader," although she has been living in New York for ten years now. Ever since that time she has received the MAGNET and "Gem" regularly each week, and she tells me how much the companion papers are enjoyed "over there." That's just another example of the wonderful loyalty which bands together MAGNET readers, no matter what part of the world they live in.

MODEL RAILWAYS.

Every model railway owner aims at realism—he wants his layout to be a real railway in miniature. The Hornby programme for 1932 makes possible greater realism than ever before. Hornby Locomotives have always been famous for their strength and reliability. The 1932 designs

(Continued on page 28.)

LIKE A PRIZE of A Dandy Leather Pocket Wallet or a Useful Pocket-knife?
These handsome prizes are offered for Storyettes and Snappy Greyfriars Limericks. All efforts to be sent to: c/o MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C. 4 (Comp.).
These Prizes are Well Worth Winning, Boys!



Bunter's Night Out!

Featuring Harry Wharton & Co. in further Exciting Adventures at Mauleverer Towers.

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Lost in the Fog!

"PUZZLE—where are we?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Echo answers, where!" said Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows—"

"The wherefuteness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, shivering, and peering about him in the clinging, dank fog. "Our absurd whereabouts are wrapped in idiotic mystery."

"Don't you know where we are, Mauly?"

Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"Haven't the foggiest!" he answered.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Do you know where we are, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! How the dickens should I know, in this beastly fog? I know I'm jolly cold! And tired! And hungry!"

There were seven fellows in the party. They came to a halt in the frosty lane, and peered about them. Dimly through the mist loomed frost-rimed hedges, and the leafless branches of ghostly trees. They had lost their way in the fog—there was no doubt about that. They knew that they were somewhere in Hampshire, between Winchester and Mauleverer Towers. But that was about all they knew.

It had been a fine, frosty afternoon. It had looked like keeping fine. But in the British climate you never could tell.

Lord Mauleverer and the Greyfriars fellows who were staying with him for the holidays, had walked out cheerfully to watch a football match between two

village teams a few miles from the Towers. They walked back in cheery spirits, with good appetites for tea—especially Bunter. The way lay by winding Hampshire lanes, easy enough to negotiate under ordinary circumstances. And then the fog came drifting over hedges and meadows, wrapping the landscape as in a garment.

And that did it!

Lord Mauleverer, who knew the locality, was at a loss. The other fellows, who were strangers in the land,

Bunter starts the New Year well by promising to do a homeless waif a good turn. And, wonder of wonders, Bunter actually keeps his word!

were naturally at a loss also. So they halted to consider.

"I know we're somewhere," said Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully. "If we could get back to the Winchester road we should be all right. It runs past the gates of the Towers, you know. We may be only a dozen yards from it—"

"Or a dozen miles!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Yaas," assented his lordship. "There's the jolly old difficulty!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" urged Bob. "If you don't know where we are, old fat bean, your brilliant conversational efforts are superfluous."

"I'm hungry!" said Bunter indignantly.

"We've had that, old fat man! Don't repeat yourself."

"Beast!"

"We mustn't waste time, if Bunter's hungry!" remarked Johnny Bull, with deep sarcasm. "Sure you can't find the way, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"Well, you must be an ass! We can't be more than a mile from your house. Don't you think you're a silly ass, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"The jolly old visibility isn't good," said Bob Cherry, staring round at dim fog and ghostly branches. "But I suppose if we keep on we shall arrive somewhere—sometime—somehow! What about it?"

"I say, you fellows, what about shouting for help?" asked Bunter. "Somebody might hear, and come. You've got a voice like a megaphone, Bob—"

"What?"

"Or a foghorn! You shout for help. Anybody within a mile will be bound to hear!" said Bunter.

"You silly owl!" grunted Bob Cherry, while the other fellows grinned.

"Well, what's going to be done?" demanded Bunter peevishly. "I've told you I'm hungry! We shall be late for tea. If you fellows think I'm going to stand here and perish with cold and hunger—"

"Is it colder for you than for any other fellow, you fat frump?" demanded Johnny Bull, with a glare at the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

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"The coldfulness is preposterously terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shivering.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob. "Somebody's coming!"

"I can't hear anybody!" grunted Bunter.

"Use your ears instead of your chin, old fat man!"

"Yah!"

The juniors listened.

They really were in serious need of guidance, for the fog wrapped the whole horizon from view, and signposts—if any—were quite invisible. Spectre-like branches and frosty hedges all looked the same in the mist. And the early January dusk was already falling, darkening the fog. They simply did not know what direction to take, and they might have wandered for hours before finding their way.

So the sound of footsteps was extremely welcome to their ears.

Along with the shuffling footsteps there came the sound of whistling—a sort of hissing whistle through the teeth. It was not tuneful, in fact, it was shrill and unmusical, but it sounded cheerful.

Footsteps and whistling came nearer and nearer, approaching the spot where the group of juniors stood at the crossing of two foggy lanes. They watched for the newcomer to appear.

A figure loomed through the mist.

It was that of a boy, smaller and younger than any member of the Greyfriars party, and very different indeed in appearance—as soon as their eyes fell on him.

His appearance, in fact, was so unusual that the juniors might have given him a second glance whenever they had encountered him.

He had a round, chubby face, exceedingly in need of washing, a mop of thick hair under an ancient tweed cap, which had belonged to a full-grown man at some time, and which, on the boy's head, descended to his ears, and seemed in danger of slipping over them. Wisps of untidy hair protruded all round it. He wore a tattered coat, under which showed a pair of large trousers, considerably rolled up at the ankles to keep them from swamping over his tattered boots.

With his hands stuck in the pockets of the old coat, this rather singular youth came swinging cheerily along, whistling through his teeth, and he almost ran into the schoolboys in the fog before he saw them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, swipes!" ejaculated the stranger, and he came to a sudden halt, and peered at the Greyfriars fellows. "You made me jump!"

"Sorry, old bean! If you're a native of these parts, can you tell us the way to anywhere?" asked Bob.

The untidy youth gave a sniff.

"Native of these 'ere parts!" he retorted. "Do I look it?"

The juniors smiled. Certainly the untidy youth did not look like a rural native of Hampshire. It would have been difficult to say exactly what he did look like, unless it was a scarecrow.

"Well, you seem to know your way about, anyhow," said Bob.

"Know my way about anywhere," said the unwashed youth cheerfully. "You blokes lost your way?"

"That's it."

"Like me to 'elp you find it?"

"Yaas, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "We'll be frightfully obliged if

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you can tip us how to get to Mauleverer Towers."

"Never 'eard of it."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter! Look here, kid!" said Harry Wharton. "If we get on the main road we shall be all right. Can you show us the way?"

The untidy youth eyed the party. He had a very keen pair of brown eyes, with a twinkle in them.

"Ow much is it worth to you?" he asked. The young stranger seemed to be of a business-like turn of mind.

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "If you can show us the way I'll tip you with pleasure, dear boy."

The boy extracted one hand—an exceedingly grubby one—from the old coat and held it out.

"Money talks!" he remarked laconically.

Lord Mauleverer smiled, and felt in his pockets. He drew out his handsome Russia-leather wallet. The tattered youth's eyes sparkled at the sight of a wallet stuffed with currency notes. His eyes fairly glued on it. Probably the hapless lad had never seen so much money before in all his young life.

"Swipes!" he ejaculated.

"I believe I've got a ten-shillin' note here!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I—Oh, great gad! Yoooooop!"

It happened so suddenly that his lordship was taken utterly by surprise, as well as the other fellows. The untidy youth made a sudden jump, snatched at the wallet with one hand, and with the other dealt the schoolboy earl a sudden blow on the chest which sent him staggering back.

Lord Mauleverer sat down, with a bump.

The young stranger leaped away.

Before one of the juniors could lift a hand to stop him he had vanished in the fog—and Lord Mauleverer's note-case had vanished with him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Knows Best!

"GOOD gad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Stop him!"

"Stop thief!"

There was a sound of running footsteps. The sound faded rapidly in the mist.

"After him!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh gad!" Lord Mauleverer staggered to his feet. "That young scoundrel's pinched my wallet! The awful young rogue! Oh gad! Hold on, you men! No good goin' after him—you'll only lose yourselves in the fog!"

Bob Cherry had started to run in pursuit. But he stopped. It was obviously useless to pursue the thief. Pursuit was hopeless in the clinging blanket of mist.

"Well, my only hat!" said Bob, with a deep breath. "The cheeky young scoundrel—right under our noses! He's gone!"

"The gonefulness is terrific."

The running footsteps had died away into silence. The Famous Five gathered round Lord Mauleverer, in angry dismay.

His lordship did not seem to be greatly disturbed, however. Mauly had plenty of that useful article, cash, and he had never learned the value of it.

"Was there much in it, Mauly?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Oh, no!" answered his lordship reassuringly. "Not more than ten pounds, old bean, or fifteen at the most."

"Oh crumbs!"

"You'll have to set the police looking for that young rascal," said Harry, frowning. "You can't lose all that money."

"It's all right, old chap—I can get some more from the bank," said his lordship innocently. "But we're as badly off as we were before we met that sportsman. How are we goin' to find the way home?"

"I say, you fellows, I'm hungry!"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Beast!"

"Hallo, that's the sound of a car!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer cheerfully, as a distant honking came through the fog. "Listen! That must be on the main road!"

Honk! Honk! Honk!

The sound came faintly from the distance, echoing through the mist over fields and hedges. But it was not easy to determine from what direction it came.

"I say, you fellows, come on!" exclaimed Bunter impatiently. "This is the way! Follow me!"

"Hold on, ass, that's not the way!" said Nugent.

"Look here—"

"Shut up, ass, and listen!"

The honking came again and again. Somewhere in the distance a car was feeling its way through the mist, honking as it went. But the fog multiplied the echoes with a baffling effect. The lost schoolboys had four ways to choose from. One of the dim lanes led to the main Winchester road—but which?

"It's coming from the right!" said Harry Wharton, bending his head to listen with a strained ear.

"The rightfulness is terrific."

"Left, you ass!" said Bunter.

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter!"

"Look here, it's from the left!" snorted Bunter. "Come on, and don't waste time! I keep on telling you I'm hungry."

"Listen, ass!"

The juniors listened intently. There was a final distant honk, and then the sound was heard no more. The car, wherever it was, was gone.

"I say, you fellows, are you coming or not?" howled Bunter. "I'm cold—I'm hungry—I'm—"

"Come on, ass!"

"That's not the way!" roared Bunter, as the Famous Five took the turning to the right. "This way, you dummies! I'm not going to wander all over Hampshire in the fog to please you!"

"Follow on, idiot!"

"I tell you—"

"Come on, chump!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "You can go and lose yourselves if you like! I'm going this way!"

"Look here—"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled off into the turning to the left.

Harry Wharton & Co., who were starting in the opposite direction, stopped. They shouted after Bunter in unison.

"Bunter, you ass!"

"Come back, you frabjous freak!"

"This is the way, you burbling bandersnatch!"

"You'll lose yourself, you silly fat-head!"

But answer there came none! Billy Bunter, convinced that he was on the

right track, was not to be called back. He trudged on, vanishing in the fog, without even a backward glance.

"Come back, you born idiot!" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Oh gad," said Lord Mauleverer. "That silly ass will lose himself. Hadn't we better go after him?"

"And lose ourselves as well!" grunted Johnny Bull. "We shall get a night out at this rate."

"We can't leave him to it, old bean." "We jolly well can if he won't come back!" growled Johnny Bull. "Shout to him again, and if he doesn't come let's get on."

The juniors united their voices once more in a shout that rang and echoed far and wide in the mist. But only the booming echoes answered them. If Bunter heard, he did not heed—and it was probable that he was already out of hearing.

They ceased to shout at last, and looked at one another, in intense exasperation.

"Look here, let's get on!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You men get on, and I'll look for Bunter!" said Lord Mauleverer. "You needn't bother; but he's my jolly old guest, you know."

"Blow him!" "Bother him!"

"Let him rip, Mauly, you ass!" Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"You know, he's an exasperatin' ass, but he did root me out when that kidnappin' johnny had hold of me!" he said. "Can't forget a thing like that."

"Bunter's not likely to let you forget it!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You fellows get on to the road—" "Oh, rats!" said Harry Wharton crossly. "We'll stick together! If you go after the howling idiot we'll all go. And we'll jolly well kick him when we get him."

"The kickfulness will be terrific."

And with frowning faces the six juniors plunged through the fog in the direction taken by the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove.

But though it was easy enough to go after Bunter, it was not easy to recapture him.

They groped along dimly in the fog till they came to another cross-roads, where they had to halt.

Which direction Bunter might have taken was a mystery.

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Better shout!"

They shouted. But only the echoes answered. The winter darkness was added to the fog now, and even the ghostly trees above the hedgerows had disappeared from sight.

"Well, this tears it!" said Bob Cherry. "We can't find Bunter—and we want finding ourselves now."

"What a day!" sighed Lord Mauleverer.

"Let's try to get back!" growled Harry Wharton.

There was evidently nothing to be done, so far as Bunter was concerned. They could only hope that the fat Owl would find his way somehow on his own. They retraced their steps, picking their way by inches in the blinding mist, tired and cross and weary. It seemed an age before they emerged from the dim lanes into a broad high-road.

Lord Mauleverer peered about him.

"We're all right now," he said. "I know this road; we're not a quarter of

a mile from the Towers! Put it on! I hope Bunter will get in all right!"

"Oh, blow Bunter!" "Bless Bunter!"

The tired juniors tramped along the foggy road. Dimly through the mist the ancient turrets of Mauleverer Towers loomed up at last. They tramped up the avenue to the house.

Porson, the butler, admitted them. "Has Mr. Bunter got in yet, Porson?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"No, my lord!" "Oh gad! Well, I dare say he'll blow in some time! You men ready for tea?"

"What-ho!" answered five voices in unison.

And Lord Mauleverer and the Famous Five sat down to tea before a crackling log fire, wondering what had

the mist, after jumping back, but he could see nothing.

"You silly ass!" snapped Bunter. "Running into a fellow! Can't you see where you're going?"

It was some time since Bunter had parted company with the Greyfriars fellows. Bunter had no doubt that he was right and that they were wrong; Bunter never doubted in such matters. So when he found that the juniors were not following him, his idea was that it served them jolly well right to stay lost. If they hadn't sense enough to follow a fellow who knew the way, they could wander about in the fog as long as they jolly well liked, and be blowed to them.

It was quite some little time before the fat Owl realised, slowly, that perhaps he was wrong, after all. Certainly



The vagrant peered at Bunter in the flickering flame of the match. "You'll be froze by mornin' if I don't look arter you," he said. "But you won't give a bloke away for pinchin', will you?" "No!" gasped Bunter. "Honour bright!"

become of Billy Bunter, but little dreaming of what was happening to the fat Owl of the Remove.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter On His Own!

"OOOOOH!" Billy Bunter made that remark quite suddenly.

He made it as his fat, little nose established abrupt contact with some unseen obstacle in the fog.

He jumped back, with a pain in his nose, and blinked.

"Beast!" he gasped.

For the moment he supposed that he had run into somebody in the fog—or that somebody had run into him. He was annoyed and indignant. He rubbed his nose, and blinked through

he seemed a long time getting to the road where the unseen car had honked.

How many corners he turned he never knew, nor how many winding, frosty lanes he traversed. It seemed to him that his weary, fat legs had covered leagues and leagues. Slowly it dawned on his fat mind that he was hopelessly lost; but he plugged on desperately, in the hope of arriving somewhere.

Now he stood and rubbed his nose, which had had a nasty jar, and his eyes gleamed through his spectacles. He was angry and indignant. Things were bad enough, without some silly ass bumping into him in the fog and nearly knocking his nose through his bullet head.

He rubbed the damaged proboscis, and glared.

"You dummy! You jolly well nearly knocked me over!" hooted

Bunter. "Rushing along in a fog like this, you silly chump! You needn't make out that I ran into you—you jolly well ran into me, and you know you did! Ow!"

There was no reply from the dim mist. Bunter blinked round in vain, and listened equally in vain.

"Look here, where are you?" he hooted. "Can't you speak, whoever you are? Look here, I'm lost! Where does this rotten lane lead to?"

No answer.

Billy Bunter breathed hard through his damaged nose. Really, after running into him, the fellow might have said that he was sorry, and directed him on his way! But there was no sound.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter.

And he tramped angrily on again.

Bump!

"Ooooooogh!"

For the second time Bunter uttered that ejaculation as his nose established contact with an obstacle unseen.

"Ow! You rotter!" he roared. "Playing tricks on a fellow! I'd jolly well punch your silly head if I could see you! Ow!"

He groped in the fog. His fat hand came into contact with something—but it was not a human form! It was a wooden bar.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He groped round, and blinked closer, and made the interesting discovery that a gate was stretched across the lane. He blinked at it, speechless.

It was the gate he had bumped into in the fog! Evidently, it was this gate that he had accused of rushing along and running into him! Even Bunter had to admit now that it was he who had done the colliding!

"A—a—a blinking gate!" gasped

Bunter at last. "Oh crikey! A—a—a gate!"

It was a gate—a country gate—merely that, and nothing more. It closed further progress up the lane that Bunter had been following. Had the fat junior been able to see his surroundings he would have observed that the lane had dwindled to a mere cart-track. He could see nothing, but he realised that he had come to a full stop. Beyond the gate was misty pasture land.

With feelings that were really too deep for words, Billy Bunter leaned against the gate, to rest.

Where was he? He had not the faintest idea. The mist seemed to be thinning off a little; but the January darkness had set in, and he could see less than ever. He blinked dismally about him. Not only was he lost—hopelessly lost—but it was past tea-time! That was the most serious aspect of a serious matter.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

He stirred at last. He was tired; but something had to be done. He started back the way he had come. But whether he went the same way, or whether he turned winding corners, he never knew. All he knew was that he trudged and tramped, and tramped and trudged, through a foggy, dismal solitude, bumping every now and then into a frozen hedge, or a frost-rimed trunk. All the time he did not meet a soul, and only occasionally heard a faint, distant sound of cattle in the fields.

If there were any farmhouses in the vicinity, their lights did not reach him through the foggy blackness. And no native of those parts seemed to be taking a walk abroad in such weather.

The fat Owl grunted and groaned and groused.

It really began to look as if he was going to have a night out! It was not only past tea-time, but it was past dinner-time at Mauleverer Towers.

It did not occur to Bunter to wonder whether the other fellows had got in. All his thoughts were concentrated on his fat self.

He tramped wearily on.

He might have been only a dozen yards from the park wall of Mauleverer Towers, or he might have had his back to that palatial residence, tramping away from it, leaving it miles behind. He could not tell. He tramped and trudged and stumbled dismally on.

"Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter.

He became aware that it was no longer a road or a lane that he was following. Hugo trees loomed round him in the dark, thick branches meeting overhead. He bumped into trunks, into thickets, and realised that he was on a woodland track, and that it was growing narrower as he went on.

In sheer despair the fat Owl stopped at last, leaned on a tree, and groaned. He was in a wood or a park, or something of the sort, obviously far from any human habitation. He had a feeling that he was lost in the vastness of a huge forest.

His fat legs were almost doubling under him with fatigue. In spite of the cold, perspiration ran down his fat face.

"Oh dear! Beasts! Leaving a fellow to it like this!" groaned Bunter. "After all I've done for 'em! Oh crikey!"

Standing still, he soon found it uncomfortably cold, though he had, with his usual thoughtfulness in such matters, put on Lord Mauleverer's fur coat that afternoon.

But he could not go on. He was too fatigued to tramp farther, and it was useless to wander at random in the misty darkness. The hapless Owl had quite given up the hope of finding his way anywhere now. He might be a dozen miles from the Towers, or he might have wandered along one of the paths that led into the woody depths of Mauleverer Park itself! There simply was no telling.

Only one resource remained to the fat Owl, and that was to shout for help, in the faint hope that someone might hear. It was but a faint hope, but if Bunter could not get help, he was inevitably booked for a night out—in January! He shuddered at the thought. By this time he was not merely hungry—he was ravenous. His legs had given in, but he could still use his voice! He proceeded to use it, on its top note.

"Help! Help!"

His howl rang and echoed among the misty trees.

"Help! Oh dear! Help! Oh crikey! Help!"

He howled and howled.

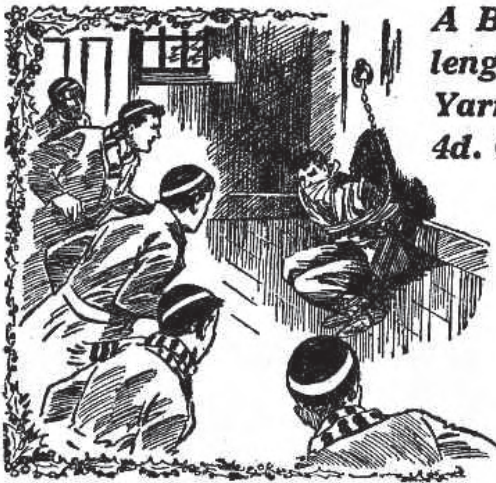
But only the echoes answered for quite a long time. Then suddenly, to the fat Owl's intense relief and joy, a voice came from the darkness.

"Swipes! Who's that, and what's up? 'Old your row, covey, and tell a bloke what's the blooming trouble!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Friend in Need!

BILLY BUNTER blinked through the misty gloom. Never had the sound of a voice—even his own—given him such intense pleasure. He could see nothing, but he knew that there was someone at hand.



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"I say—this way!" he gasped. "I say, come on! Here I am! I say, I'm lost, you know! For goodness' sake, come this way!"

He heard a rustling and groping, and a figure loomed up dimly in the gloom. Dim as it was, there seemed to be something familiar about it to Bunter's eyes, he had seen it before somewhere. The voice, too—as well as its accent and pronunciation—seemed familiar. Dimly he made out a large tweed cap on a head too small for it, and a tattered coat several sizes too large for the wearer.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "You!"

It was the tattered, untidy youth who had robbed Lord Mauleverer of his note wallet. But Billy Bunter was glad to see him, all the same—he would have been glad to see any human being in those dreadful moments, and a pick-pocket was better than nobody.

The strange youth peered at him. A match was struck, and in the glimmer of its flickering flame, the boy evidently recognised Bunter in his turn. An expression of alarm came over his unwashed face. The match went out.

"One of them blokes!" Bunter heard him mutter. "Swipes! I'm off!"

Bunter yelled in dismay.

"I say, stop! Stop, you beast! I mean stop, old chap! I'm lost! I shall perish of cold and hunger here! Help me, you rotter! I mean, help me, there's a good chap!"

The retreating footsteps in the mist stopped again.

"Ain't the other coves with you?" asked the voice.

"Ow! No! They've lost me, the silly idiots! Lot they care whether I freeze and starve!" groaned Bunter.

The odd figure of the vagrant loomed near him again. The strange youth seemed to be undecided. Thief as he undoubtedly was, with his plunder in his pockets at that very moment, it seemed that the milk of human kindness had not been left out of his composition.

"Well, you look done-up, old covey!" he sat commiseratingly. "But, look 'ere, a bloke don't want the coppers set arter him, you know! See?"

"Help me," groaned Bunter. "I—I'll ask Lord Mauleverer to let you off—he's a friend of mine—a close pal, in fact! Help me to get to Mauleverer Towers."

"Ain't never 'eard of the show," said the untidy youth, "and you're a good mile from the nearest 'ouse 'ere!"

Bunter groaned deeply. If the nearest house was a mile off, the case was hopeless. His fat little weary legs could not have covered a quarter of the distance after his long wanderings.

"'Ere, keep your pecker up, covey!" said the vagrant. "I'll stick to you, and chance the coppers, blow it! I've dodged 'em since I was two foot 'igh, and I can dodge 'em again!"

"Oh crikey!" murmured Bunter.

Even in his deep concern for his important self, Billy Bunter could not help wondering who and what this strange youth was. He was younger than the Owl of the Remove, yet apparently he was used to a life of combined dishonesty and danger. In a city slum, doubtless, there might have been many like him, but he was strangely, weirdly out of place in the rural depths of Hampshire.

Again the vagrant seemed to hesitate. He scratched another match, and peered at Bunter by its flickering flame, and stood for some moments in thought after it had gone out.

"Look 'ere," he said at last, "I'm stickin' to you! You'll be froze by mornin' if I don't! But look 'ere,

arter a bloke's 'elped you, you ain't giving a bloke away! What?"

"No!" gasped Bunter. "Honour bright!"

"You're a gentleman, you are, ain't you?" pursued the strange youth.

"Oh, yes! Rather!" gasped Bunter.

"Well, I'll take a gentleman's word," said the vagrant. "You being a gentleman, I'll take your blooming word, and trust you!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him. The fellow was unwashed, tattered, and a pick-pocket. But Bunter felt quite a kindly glow towards him. Nobody at Greyfriars School ever dreamed of taking Bunter's word. Bunter and truth were complete strangers, they had not even a nodding acquaintance. But this tattered fellow trusted him!

"I ain't 'ad much' to do with your sort, sir, 'cept pickin' their pockets," went on the cheerful voice of the vagrant. "Only one gentleman ever come my way—and he's a thirsty gent, he is, my word! Wouldn't 'ave come my way if he hadn't been! That's old Brandy Face, what taught me to read!"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bunter.

He wondered rather dizzily what sort of a "gentleman" it was who was

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"Do you know why I am going to spank you, Willie?"

"No, dad. Why?"

"Because you hit a smaller boy than yourself."

"Oh, I thought p'r'aps it was 'cause I'm smaller than you!"

It's easy to win one of these useful prizes, boys!

PILE IN NOW!

known by so extraordinary a name as "Brandy Face."

"You come with me, sir!" A grubby hand grasped Bunter by the sleeve of Lord Mauleverer's fur coat. "This 'ere is the way!"

"I—I can't walk a mile!" groaned Bunter.

The vagrant chuckled. "It ain't far, sir, where we're going! I'm camping out in this 'ere park. That's where I'm taking you. 'Tain't much of a place for a gentleman like you, sir, but it's warm, and there's something to eat if you're hungry!"

"Hungry!" groaned Bunter. "I'm famished! I could eat a horse! Oh dear!"

"Come on, then, sir!"

Billy Bunter gave himself up to the guidance of his queer new acquaintance. The grasp on his arm led him through the wood—not by a path, but through trees and thickets, the vagrant picking his way by magic, as it seemed to Bunter.

"Careful 'ere!" said the voice at last.

Bunter could see nothing in the darkness, save a looming of bare wintry branches. But he felt himself led through a clinging thicket, and a warm glow, mingled with an earthy smell, greeted his fat little nose. There was a glimmer of a low fire in the gloom. Evidently he had reached the "camp" of the young outcast.

"Jest stand still a minute, sir, while I get a light!"

A match scratched, and was applied to a fag-end of a candle. Light flickered round Bunter.

He blinked round him through his big spectacles in amazement.

He was standing in an earthy cave—a hollow in the side of a steep acclivity. The entrance was screened and blocked with thickets, leafless, but thickly tangled. On the ground were the embers of a fire, glowing faintly red. The candle-end was stuck on the floor.

"My hat!" gasped Bunter.

"This 'ere is my camp, sir," said the vagrant, glancing about him, with something like pride. "I been 'ere weeks—all through Christmas, sir. There's been keepers pass only a dozen yards off, but they ain't seen nothing. I don't light a fire in the day-time. You sit down on that straw, sir! I pinched that straw from a barn, the fust night arter I found this 'ere place and camped 'ere!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He was glad to sit down on the bundle of straw which apparently formed the vagrant's bed, and rested his weary limbs.

There were other things in the earthy cave—cooking utensils, odds and ends of crockery, several old coats, and other things—which Bunter hardly needed telling had been "pinched" like the bundle of straw.

His new friend was evidently a young Ishmael—his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him. Yet it was plain that he had a kind and feeling heart, and a simple faith in human nature, for he was trusting his secret to Bunter's keeping, for no reason except to help the fat junior in his distress. In helping the helpless Owl, he was taking the risk of being handed over to the representatives of the law.

While Bunter sat on the straw and gasped and grunted, the vagrant stooped over the fire and stirred the embers to a flame. He added wood that had been gathered and stacked to dry. In a few minutes there was a bright and cheerful fire burning, the smoke eddying upward and escaping from the opening of the cave.

The firelight illumined the strange den, and the vagrant blew out the candle. He gave Bunter a cheery grin.

"Ome-like, ain't it?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" gasped Bunter.

"And nobody don't know I'm camping 'ere!" grinned the unwashed youth.

"There's a tremenjus big 'ouse not more'n a mile away that this 'ere place belongs to; 'eaps of servants and a lot of keepers. But they don't know nuffin about this. Swipes! I tell you I'd rather be 'ere than in Puggins' Alley!"

He sorted among the cooking utensils.

"If I'd knowed I was going to 'ave a gentleman like you 'ere, sir, I'd 'ave pinched a chair from somewhere," he said.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm all right, thanks! I—I'm quite comfy on this straw!"

"'Ungry, sir?" asked the vagrant.

"Starving!" said Bunter, his voice almost breaking. "Famished!"

"I'll soon 'ave some supper for you, sir."

"Oh, good!"

The young vagrant greased a frying-pan, which certainly was not his own property, and tossed in sausages, which very improbably belonged to him. An appetising odour spread through the earthen cave as he cooked the sausages, and Bunter gave a deep, appreciative sniff. He did not know, and hardly cared, whether his new friend had "pinched" those sausages along with

the rest of the things in the woodland cave. He was hungry—famished—ravenous—and the smell of frying sausages tickled his little fat nose ecstatically. Pickpocket, "pincher," unwashed, ill-kempt, lawless young rascal and rogue—this strange youth was a friend in need, and Bunter was deeply thankful that he had fallen in with him.

And as the sausages browned, and the delightful odour perfumed the woodland cave, Bunter watched the cooking process, fascinated, in a sort of silent ecstasy.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

"THE silly owl!"
"The howling chump!"
"The terrific fathead!"
"Blow him!"

"Bother him!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were discussing Bunter. They were intensely exasperated with the exasperating Owl of Greyfriars—and all the more exasperated because they were growing anxious.

It was late in the evening, and Billy Bunter had not turned up at Mauleverer Towers. Bed-time was at hand, and every moment the juniors hoped to hear Bunter at the door. But the fat Owl did not come.

They looked from the windows into winter darkness and swirling mist. Mist was thick over the gardens and the great park beyond, thick on roads and meadows and woods. Darkness unrelieved by a single star was over the grey mist; and through the dim vapour snow was falling once more in light, feathery flakes. It was going to be a freezing night of mist and snow—and Bunter was out in it!

The chums of Greyfriars could not blame themselves; it was Bunter's own fault. But they were anxious and worried. Bunter, it was likely, would arrive somewhere and obtain shelter; but if he did not, the result of staying out on such a night might be serious. And he was duffer enough to wander about all night without finding a refuge—he was, in fact, duffer enough for anything!

"The silly ass!" growled Bob Cherry, for the twentieth time.

"The frabjous chump!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The chumpfulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "He will be preposterously hungry by this time."

"It's rotten!" said Lord Mauleverer dismally.

His kind-hearted lordship was deeply worried. Billy Bunter was not, perhaps, a guest whom the schoolboy earl delighted to honour. But though Bunter had arrived at Mauleverer Towers for the Christmas holidays without bothering about the trifling formality of being asked, there was no doubt that his coming had turned out very fortunate for Mauly. And Mauly was not the man to forget an obligation, even if Bunter would have allowed him to forget it—which was improbable.

It was a fact that a designing rascal had kidnapped Mauly to extort money from him, and that Billy Bunter had been the means of bringing rescue to the imprisoned schoolboy earl. No doubt it was by chance that Bunter had been able to render that service; nevertheless, the fact remained that, but for Bunter, Mauly's New Year would have been far from a happy one.

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Since that incident, if not before, Bunter had been an honoured guest at Mauleverer Towers. Before that he had been in imminent danger of departing, with a boot behind him to give him a start. Since, he had been given his head, and he was not likely to depart until the latest possible moment.

Harry Wharton & Co. were staying only a few more days with their noble pal, but Billy Bunter was staying to the end of the vacation. It was not, perhaps, an exhilarating prospect for Mauly, but in the peculiar circumstances he bore it with fortitude.

Bunter had affectionately assured him that he wouldn't leave him; that he would, in fact, cut all his other numerous engagements for Mauly's sake. So Mauly might have felt rather pleased than otherwise had Bunter got lost and stayed lost, but for his anxiety for the fat Owl's safety.

"Just like the howlin' ass to tumble into a snow-drift and stay there!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, he'll turn up!" said Harry Wharton.

"The esteemed Bunter always turns up, like an excellent and execrable bad penny," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"He will have to be searched for," said Mauly.

"Not much good searching in this fog," said Frank Nugent. "The fat duffer may be miles away."

"The howling ass!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The burbling bandersnatch!"

The juniors stared dismally from the hall window into the mist.

Mauly's uncle, Sir Reginald Brooke, came into the hall.

"Has Bunter come in yet, Herbert?" he asked.

"Not yet, uncle," answered Mauly.

The old baronet frowned.

"He may have found shelter," he said. "But if not, we must organise a search. The boy appears to be little better than a fool, but we cannot forget the great service he did you, Herbert."

"Just what I was thinkin' of, uncle," said Mauleverer. "He's a howlin' ass, and an exasperatin' fathead, but—"

"Let's get lanterns and things and go and hunt for the pernicious porpoise," said Bob Cherry. "It would be like him to lose himself only a couple of yards from the gates."

"Just like him!" agreed Harry Wharton. "The fathead may be quite near home all the time. Let's!"

"I will speak to Jardine and tell him to call some of the keepers to help," said Sir Reginald.

Nobody was feeling inclined to turn out in the mist and snow at bed-time, but the juniors were really anxious about Bunter by this time. Any other fellow might have been trusted to take care of himself, but the Owl of the Remove was the fellow to butt into any trouble that might be available.

So the chums of the Remove muffled themselves in coats and scarves and started, with lanterns or electric torches, accompanied by Jardine, the head keeper, and some of his men.

For three long, weary hours they tramped and trudged through mist and falling snow, calling to Bunter, up and down and round about the frosty lanes where the fat Owl had last been seen.

But there was no sign of Bunter to be found.

It was midnight when they tramped back at last to Mauleverer Towers, tired out and unsuccessful.

They had a faint hope that Bunter might have rolled in during their absence.

But Bunter had not rolled in.

Every face was very grave now. If Bunter had not found shelter, he was out for the night in the mist and snow; and the terrible thought was in their minds that he might be found, in the winter morning, frozen in some snow-drift.

But there was nothing more that could be done, and the juniors could only wait for the morning and hope for the best. They went dismally to bed at a very late hour.

"The howling ass!" said Bob Cherry. "He may be safe somewhere all the time, and he wouldn't even think of trying to let us know! He's not worth being anxious about. Only—"

"Only—" said Wharton ruefully.

And the juniors went dismally to bed. Late as was the hour when they turned in, they were up at the first gleam of daylight, anxious for news of Bunter.

But there was no news. The winter dawn came, but not Bunter, and the juniors had no doubt now that something had happened to the Owl of the Remove. If he had had a night out in the snow they were deeply sorry and concerned; while if he was safe and sound somewhere, they wanted to kick him. Which really was a rather distressing mixture of feelings.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Supper in the Cave!

"LIKE sosses?"
"Don't I just!" grinned Bunter.
"And spuds?"

"What-ho!"

"Well, 'ere you are!" said Flip.

The untidy youth had told Bunter that his name was Flip; apparently he owned no other name.

Billy Bunter sat on the bundle of straw, with a tin plate on his knees, knife and fork in his fat hands. His podgy face beamed.

Bunter always enjoyed a feed. A study spread at Greyfriars was the one thing that made life at school worth living, in Bunter's opinion. His stay at Mauleverer Towers had been happy and glorious, owing to the remarkably good and ample fare provided at that establishment. But never in all his fat life had William George Bunter enjoyed a feed so much as he enjoyed this supper in the earthy den of the tattered outcast.

He fairly revelled in it.

Flip could cook. Bunter himself was a good hand at cooking; it was one of the few things he could do, and do well. But he had to admit that Flip was his equal in that line. The "sosses" were done to a turn; they were excellent, magnificent, beatific! The "spuds" were equally good; wonderfully fried in plenty of fat, just as Bunter liked them. And the supply was ample.

Bunter beamed over his plate.

He cleared it rapidly, and the hospitable vagrant filled it again and again and yet again. The untidy youth ate well himself; he had a good appetite. But his appetite, compared with Billy Bunter's, was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine. His hospitality was unbounded, for he seemed really to enjoy seeing Bunter do justice—and more than justice—to the supper in the cave.

"I say, this is prime!" said Bunter a dozen times at least.

There was home-made bread and



Bob Cherry plunged through the bushes and crashed into somebody on the other side as he emerged. "Got him!" he gasped. "Yaroooh! Ow-wow! Wharrer you rushing into a fellow for?" "Oh, my hat!" panted the astonished Bob. "It's Bunter! Have you seen that pincher, fathead?"

fresh butter, and a pot of home-made jam. Bunter did not ask where they had come from. In the circumstances, it was more judicious not to know.

There came at last a time when even Billy Bunter could eat no more. He rested from his labours, and leaned back contentedly on the earthy wall of the cave—not improving Lord Mauleverer's fur coat thereby. But as the coat was not Bunter's that did not matter.

While Bunter rested after his exertions the vagrant stepped out of the cave, through the tangled thickets, to look at the weather. He came back to the fire shivering.

"It's coming down!" he remarked.

"Eh! What is?" yawned Bunter.

The fat Owl was feeling lazy and warm and comfortable and well-fed, and disinclined to move.

"Snow, sir!" answered Flip. "It's snowing 'ard! 'Tain't so foggy as it was, but it's still pretty thick. I'm ready when you are, sir."

"Ready for what?"

"See you 'ome, wherever that is, sir," answered Flip. "Trust me to find my way orlright! I've found my way in London fogs thicker'n pea-soup. This 'ere country mist ain't nothing to it."

Bunter blinked at him.

He was not of a grateful nature, but he could not help feeling that it was uncommonly kind of this tattered, unwashed fellow to be willing to leave his warm and comfortable den to guide a stranger through snow and darkness. But if the vagrant was willing to make the venture, Billy Bunter was not. He shuddered at the prospect of trudging

wearily through miles of snow and damp mist and winter blackness.

"Look here, I can't get home to-night," said Bunter. "I'm all right here."

"Like to camp 'ere with me, sir?" asked the vagrant.

"Yes, rather!"

"'Tain't much of a place for the likes of you, sir!" said Flip dubiously.

Bunter smiled genially. Bunter was a snob to the very marrow of his bones, and had he met Flip in any other circumstances, certainly he would have turned up his little fat nose at him with ineffable contempt. But circumstances alter cases. That glorious feed, when he was simply ravenous, had roused all the kindness there was in Bunter's fat nature.

The way to Billy Bunter's heart was through his stomach. And the deep respect with which Flip treated him, which was evidently sincere, flattered the fat junior. The hapless little vagrant evidently regarded Bunter as a sort of superior being—which, of course, he was! It was very grateful and comforting after what he was used to in the Greyfriars Remove.

"My dear chap," said Bunter, with ineffable condescension, "that's all right. I can sleep on this straw, with those old coats over me, if you keep up a good fire all night."

The straw was Flip's bed, and the old coats evidently were his bed-clothes. What the vagrant was going to do if Bunter appropriated them, Bunter did not know; but, as a matter of fact, he gave no thought to that trifle.

Neither, indeed, did the untidy youth seem to give any thought to it. He seemed pleased and flattered by Bunter's desire to share his camp.

"Well, sir, I'll make you as comfortable as I can," he said. "I dessay you'll be all right 'ere, sir. Only p'r'aps your friends might be anxious about you."

"Fat lot they care!" grunted Bunter. "Still, I s'pose they'll guess you got shelter somewhere," said Flip.

"Oh, yes," yawned Bunter. He certainly was not worrying about that. "It's all right, kid! I'll stay here."

"That's very kind of you, sir," said Flip simply, as if under the impression that Bunter was doing him a favour; in which Bunter fully agreed with him. "I ain't never 'ad a gentleman like you camping with me afore, sir, and p'r'aps you'll excuse my ways, sir, me being a rough bloke and knowing no better. I can tell you, sir, it's a pleasure to be talking to a bloke like you, familiar-like."

"Is it?" said Bunter.

It was the first time in Bunter's experience that anyone had ever found pleasure in his conversation. His fat heart quite warmed to this curious youth.

"You bet it is!" said Flip. "Never talked familiar-like to a gentleman afore, sir, 'cept old Brandy-Face at Puggins' Alley, and he's tippy 'arf the time. You been to school, of course, sir?"

Bunter grinned. "I'm a schoolboy," he said. "A Greyfriars man. I'm staying for the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,247."

school holidays with my friend Lord Mauleverer."

"You know lords and such," said Flip, evidently impressed. "Maybe you're a lord yourself, sir. I shouldn't wonder."

Bunter coughed.

"Not exactly," he said. "I've got a lot of titled relations, though. My name's Bunter—William George Bunter. One of the oldest families in the kingdom. The Bunters came over with the Conqueror."

"Swipes!" said Flip, impressed. "Well, I ain't been to school, sir; the School Board inspector don't get much chance in Puggins' Alley. Old Brandy-Face taught me to read and write, and a lot of other things; me being keen on it, and him knowing everything. He was a schoolmaster afore he took to drink, and he's got letters after his name."

"But what are you doing here if you live in London?" asked Bunter curiously.

The vagrant winked.

"I 'ad to clear," he said. "I 'ad to give the coppers a rest."

"Oh crumbs!"

"I pinched a ride on the Great Western, under a seat," said the vagrant, with a grin. "I didn't care much where the train went so long as it went quick. When the porters found me they 'ooked me out and kicked me off. You see, a cove like me has to get out of sight sometimes. But, bless your 'eart, I make myself at 'ome anywhere. I slept in a barn the first night, and the farmer set a dorg on me in the morning. Arter that, I found this 'ere place and camped. I been 'ere weeks. Pinching right and left—" Flip broke off suddenly and coloured, the red showing through the grime on his face. "But I hadn't ought to speak of that to the likes of you, sir! You'd be down on that."

"Oh crumbs! I should jolly well think so!" gasped Bunter. "Look here, kid, you've been awfully decent to me, but you pinched Mauleverer's wallet. Don't you know it's wrong?"

"Well, I s'pose it is, sir," admitted Flip. "But it seems different when a cove's brought up to it. I've pinched ever since I was 'igh enough to get at a pocket."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

"Don't you be afeared, sir," said the vagrant hastily. "I wouldn't pinch nothing from you, sir, you being so kind, and trusting me. I'd 'ave my 'and cut off sooner."

Which was rather a relief to Bunter. Since the service he had rendered to Lord Mauleverer, he had borrowed considerably from his lordship, and he was in an unaccustomed state of affluence. The fat Owl, for once, had whole pounds in his possession. It was a great relief to learn that they were safe from his queer new friend.

"You like to turn in now, sir?" asked Flip, catching Bunter in the act of yawning portentously.

"Well, I'm rather sleepy," said Bunter. "I'll turn in. You'll keep up the fire?"

"Leave it to me, sir."

Bunter stretched his fat limbs on the soft straw, making a pillow of a smaller bundle. The vagrant covered him warmly with the old coats. The fat junior lay blinking at the fire, which Flip stirred to a brighter blaze. He noted that the boy took a book out of some recess, and sat by the fire reading it, or, rather, conning over it, and

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then began to make pencil notes on a grubby paper. Bunter was sleepy; but his curiosity was aroused.

"What are you up to, kid?" he asked. Flip glanced round at him, grinned, and coloured.

"Learnin'!" he answered. "I'm keen on it, sir, and I gets a lesson from old Brandy-Face every time I can when he's sober. Master of Arts, he was, once upon a time, though I don't rightly know what that is. He gave me this 'ere book, and 'elped me with it."

He held out the book, and Bunter, blinking at it, discovered with amazement that it was Latin. It was the first book of "De Bello Gallico."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bunter. "Latin! That's what I did in the Third Form. You! My hat!"

The vagrant's colour deepened.

"I s'pose you'd think it a cheek, sir, in the likes of me?" he said humbly.

As a matter of fact, Bunter did! But the fat Owl was under the influence of very kindly feelings now.

"Not a bit, old bean!" he answered genially. "Why shouldn't you? Look here, I'll see you again some time, and lend you a hand, if you like—that stuff's pie to me. Virgil's a beast—we do Virgil in the Remove at Greyfriars, you know—but Caesar's easy as falling off a form. Go it—while I go to sleep. Only don't forget the fire."

Bunter closed his eyes in slumber. And the strange youth, pilferer, pick-pocket, and vagrant, sat by the fire mugging Latin, with intent eyes and great keenness, what time the deep snore of William George Bunter rumbled through the earthy cave and echoed in the snowy woods outside.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Boots for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. turned out in the early winter dawn. They had hurried breakfast. It was a bright, fresh, clear morning, sparkling with frost, hardly a wisp of the fog remaining. The snow had ceased to fall, leaving earth and roofs and sills covered with a spotless white mantle. A bright sunshine was reflected on the dazzling snow when the Greyfriars fellows came out into the keen air.

It was a healthy, invigorating morning, and the juniors would have been in the cheeriest spirits, but for their anxiety on Billy Bunter's account. But they could not help thinking of the possibility that some serious mischance had happened to the Owl of the Remove.

Mauleverer's uncle had already been busy on the telephone, inquiring in various directions. Messages had been sent to various farmhouses and cottages, up and down and round about, to ascertain whether the fat Owl had taken shelter during the night.

Sir Reginald Brooke was deeply perturbed, and the juniors were worried; but all the time they were well aware that in all probability Bunter was safe and sound—and if he was, all the Co. yearned to kick him for causing so much anxiety and trouble.

"Ten to one the fat boulder is all right, and hasn't taken the trouble to let us know!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Still, we'd better hunt for him. Anyhow, it's a ripping morning for a tramp!"

And the Greyfriars fellows started out to tramp the lanes in search of the missing Owl. In the bright wintry sunlight it was easy to find the place where they

had been lost in the fog the day before. They made inquiries of every native they met in lanes and fields and foot-paths. But no one knew anything of Bunter. Nobody, apparently, had set eyes on him in his wanderings in the dark.

As for picking up any "sign," that was out of the question, as the fresh fall of snow during the night had covered the whole countryside—and the juniors had a lurking dread that it might have covered Billy Bunter, too.

In one spot they came on a farmer and his men digging out lost sheep that had been buried in a drift, and shuddered to think that a frozen, fat junior might have to be dug out in the same way.

Lord Mauleverer's face grew more and more grave, and the Famous Five were silent and anxious.

For three solid hours they kept up the hopeless search, and then turned their footsteps towards Mauleverer Towers again. Bob Cherry remarked that very likely Bunter had come in by that time; indeed, it seemed fairly certain that he must have, unless some disaster had happened to him.

"May find him at the house," said Bob hopefully.

"Let's hope so," said Lord Mauleverer. "This way—we'll go back through the park and save time."

They followed a lane, which dwindled to a footpath, and finally into a track under tall, leafless trees. This part of the park was unenclosed, and open to the public, ancient rights-of-way existing there. In the distance, through openings of the tall old trees, they could see the turrets of Mauleverer Towers, high against a steely sky. In silence they tramped along the path, in six inches of snow.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

"What—?"

"Somebody's been this way!" exclaimed Bob.

He pointed to tracks in the snow ahead of them.

The party gathered eagerly to examine the tracks. A glance showed that they were the footprints of a boy, not of a man. In the thick, soft snow they were plainly marked.

"Might be Bunter!" said Nugent hopefully.

"But what the dooce—" said Lord Mauleverer, glancing about him, with a very perplexed expression.

On the left of the juniors was a high, steep acclivity, screened by trees and tangled thickets. It was from those thickets that the tracks in the snow emerged, going on towards the distant house. Whoever had left those footprints had come through the thicket, pushing his way through tangled undergrowths where there was no path. It was rather a mystery why anyone should have scrambled and struggled through rough thickets instead of keeping to the paths in the park.

"If it's Bunter, he can't have been here all night," said Harry Wharton, puzzled. "He would be frozen stiff. Let's go on and see who it is."

The juniors hurried on.

The footprints led them onward by the winding path, towards the distant mansion. They were quite fresh, and clearly marked in the thick, soft snow; so deeply marked, in fact, that it was clear that whoever had made them was of a good weight. More and more it seemed likely that it was Bunter's trail. Though, if it was Bunter's trail, it seemed certain that he must have spent

(Continued on page 12.)

FOOTBALL FAVOURITES!

No. 11.

**Alfred
William
SOLLY,**
of
**ARSENAL
F.C.**



The ex-amateur goalkeeper of Dulwich Hamlet, who has thrown in his lot with the famous London team.

A "Pane"-ful Story!

A FEW weeks ago I was informed by somebody who is very high up in the world of football that amateurism had received a severe blow through the action of one man, Alfred William Solly, the famous Dulwich Hamlet goalkeeper, who had gone over to the ranks of professionalism by signing on for Arsenal. Why this should be regarded as a "severe blow" I cannot imagine. True, amateurism is the foundation of football, but *only* the foundation, for with the tremendous growth of the game and its millions of adherents there follows a craving for the best, and the best can only be attained by the complete study and practice of methods and tactics to the exclusion of all other interests. And this means professionalism!

Football is no longer a mere game; it is a part of the fabric of our great and glorious empire. And Solly has done the right thing in relinquishing a commercial career, which held little promise, in order to swell the ranks of those outstanding athletes who do so much in providing the masses with healthy recreation in their leisure time.

Solly is now twenty-four years of age, and ever since he left school at the age of sixteen he has been identified with the Dulwich Hamlet Club, first of all with the junior team, then with the "Strollers," or "A" team, and eventually with the first eleven, which has become such a force in amateur football.

As a small boy at Clapham Central School, he showed excellent form at outside-right, and, in his second year, was chosen to represent South London in the English Schools' Championship Competition. To the best of my recollection he was thirteen when the first of these honours was thrust upon him, but even then he stepped upon the field of play in that quiet and unassuming manner which has ever been his chief characteristic.

Yet behind young Solly's quiet nature there lies a sense of humour which adds to his charm. His old schoolmaster told me of an instance when he had to reprove another small boy for kicking a football through the windows of a school-room. One sash was drawn down as far as it would go, in consequence of which the ball made its way through *two* sheets of glass. "Haven't I told you a thousand times to practice in order to kick accurately?" asked the schoolmaster in tones of wrath. And then Solly's meek tones came out with this: "Well, at any rate, he took 'panes' with that one, sir!"

Solly tells of another time when he and some other lads were playing on Clapham Common, where they "borrowed" a youngster from a crowd of onlookers to keep goal. This boy was very shabby, the seat of his trousers being absolutely ragged, and when one of the players remarked: "The next time your mother mends your trousers get her to use a patch more like the other material," they were surprised and delighted at the reply: "That's not a patch you can see. *That's me!*"

"Safe-as-Houses" Solly.

WHEN young Solly left school he entered an office in the City of London in the capacity of junior clerk, eventually taking over a clerical position in a rubber broker's business. But he had a craving for some kind of a career which would keep him in the open air. To be chained by the leg to a desk seemed irksome to one who excelled in most branches of outdoor sport. Not only did he improve in his football, but, in the summer months, he began to build up quite a good reputation as a cricketer, two of his colleagues being Barling, who now plays for Surrey, and Todd, the left-handed batsman, who is play-

ing for Kent. Now that Solly has thrown up his job in the City it is quite likely that he will join the staff at Kennington Oval, or will obtain an engagement which will permit him to qualify for another county.

Solly was eighteen years of age when he first occupied the position of goalkeeper, and was then playing for the "Strollers" or "A" team of Dulwich Hamlet. This came about as a result of the regular goalkeeper having lost his train. Solly took the absentee's place, and from that afternoon has never played anywhere but between the uprights. He tells a good story about the first game as a "goalie." Just before half-time the opposing centre-forward scored with a fast shot, and, as the two teams rushed off the field, he ran to his young lady friend, who was one of the spectators, and asked: "Did you see me score that wonderful goal?" "I'm awfully sorry, old thing," replied the girl, "but I wasn't looking! Do it again, will you?"

From that day honours began to fall upon Solly. His goalkeeping was something better than that of the average amateur player. He jumped into the first team, and as week followed week there came invitations to play in big matches, the climax being reached when scouts of professional League clubs waited for him at the conclusion of matches and made him tempting offers to sign professional forms.

The Topmost Rung!

QUITE recently I asked Solly how many representative games he had played in, and his reply was typical of his nature. First of all, he is exceptionally modest, and, next, he doesn't think of the many honours that have befallen him. He thought for several moments, and then said, with a laugh: "It seems silly, but I really don't know." As I have no books of reference at hand, I can merely state the fact that I have looked on at very many games in which he has represented England, the Isthmian League, London, Surrey, and the Amateurs v. Professionals. In all these games he has displayed remarkable skill in a most unobtrusive manner, so that the onlooker who appreciates the finest points of the game realises that the goalkeeper is a genius, while the more ignorant spectator imagines Solly has had an easy time in dealing with shots that have come straight at him. But it is Solly who makes them straight.

Some three years ago, or when he was twenty-one, he asked me to come and see three games in which he was playing. They stand out in my memory because these matches were not only played on three successive days, but they represented three of the four topmost rungs of the football ladder. On the Saturday the game was, I believe, an Amateur Cup tie v. Leytonstone. After the match we travelled to Amsterdam, where Solly kept goal magnificently for the Middlesex Wanderers on the Sunday. And on the next afternoon I was in the stand at Millwall looking on while he performed miracles in goal for the Amateurs v. Professionals of England. He reached the topmost rung when he was selected to play for England during the following season.

It was either after the England v. Wales, at Brighton, or England v. Ireland match, at Belfast, in both of which Solly kept goal magnificently, that one of the players on our side failed to do himself justice, and, while I was present, said, "I suppose you have seen worse players than I am in your time, Solly?" The Dulwich Hamlet man didn't reply, for he didn't want to hurt the other player's feelings, yet he was too honest to find an excuse for the fellow's bad exhibition. "I suppose you have seen worse players than I?" repeated the man. Solly scratched his head and vouchsafed a laconic reply. "I heard you the first time," he remarked, "and I'm still thinking!"

BUNTER'S NIGHT OUT!

(Continued from page 10.)

the night in the park, in which case they would hardly have expected him to be in a state to get going in the morning.

They broke into a trot.

They came out of the trees at last, on the border of the frozen lake. Then there was a yell from Bob Cherry:

"Bunter!"

In the distance, following the path round the lake, was a fat figure, in a fur overcoat.

The juniors had only a back view of it, but there was no mistaking the ample circumference of William George Bunter; and Mauleverer's fur coat which enveloped the ample form, was also familiar to their eyes.

"Bunter!" repeated Wharton.

"The fat villain!" growled Johnny Bull. "I jolly well knew he was all right all the time! I'll jolly well kick him!"

"The kickfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

The juniors ran on by the edge of the frozen lake, rapidly overtaking the Owl of the Remove. Bunter was plodding on towards the distant house at his usual leisurely pace.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob.

Billy Bunter glanced round.

He blinked at the juniors through his big spectacles as they came breathlessly up.

"I say, you fellows—"

"You fat villain!" roared Johnny Bull wrathfully.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Where have you been all this time?" demanded Wharton. "Do you know that you've made everybody anxious, you fat fraud, and we fancied that you must have been buried in the snow or something of the sort?"

"Fat lot you cared!" grunted Bunter.

"You frabjous owl!" exclaimed Frank Nugent indignantly. "We went out hunting for you last night up to midnight—"

"He, he, he!"

"And we've been hunting all the morning—"

"He, he, he!"

"And Mauly's uncle has telephoned all over the place, and all the keepers are searching for you—"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

Apparently the fat Owl found it amusing. The Famous Five glared at him as if they could have eaten him.

"You—you—you—" gasped Bob Cherry.

"What are you cackling at, you fat dummy? Do you think it funny to make everybody upset and worried for nothing?"

"Rot!" said Bunter. "I suppose I'm a fellow able to take care of himself. If it had been one of you fellows it would have been all up. But I'm not a silly ass, like you chaps, you know. I can look after myself all right."

"Kick him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Hold on!" said Lord Mauleverer mildly. "Look here, Bunter, we've all been frightfully worried about you—"

"Well, so you ought to be, after all I've done for you!" said Bunter. "Considering that I rescued you from a kidnapper, Mauly—"

"Well, I'm glad you're safe. But where have you been?" demanded Mauleverer. "It's jolly nearly midday. Even if you couldn't get in touch with us last night you could have let us know you were safe before this. Where have you been all night?"

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"That's telling!" grinned Bunter.

"What?"

"Don't you be inquisitive," said Bunter, wagging a fat forefinger at his astonished lordship. "If there's one thing I've always been down on it's inquisitiveness and curiosity."

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer blankly.

"You've had shelter for the night, you fat rascal!" said Harry. "There's nothing the matter with you except that you want a wash."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Why didn't you come in?" snorted Johnny Bull. "Where have you been all the morning?"

"If you think I was going to get up early on a freezing morning like this, Bull—"

"You've only just got up?" yelled Bob. "While we've been scouring all over Hampshire hunting for you?"

"He, he, he!"

"I'm going to kick him!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Beast! I've been up an hour!" said Bunter. "But I suppose I had to have some brekker. Think I was coming out without brekker?"

"Well," said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath, "perhaps you couldn't help staying the night; but you could help leaving us to worry over nothing all the morning. We've agreed to give you a jolly good kicking if it turned out that you were safe—"

"Look here, you beast—"

"And now you're getting it! Turn round!"

Billy Bunter gave the juniors an alarmed blink. He had seemed rather amused to learn that the juniors had been anxious, and had been hunting for him night and morning. Harry Wharton & Co. did not find it amusing in the least. Anxiety had changed to wrath, and all the Co. agreed that a kicking was due—indeed, overdue.

As Bunter realised what was coming to him he turned and ran. The Famous Five rushed after him.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

"Yaroooh! Beasts! Stoppit!" yelled Bunter, as active boots landed on the tail end of Lord Mauleverer's fur overcoat. "Oh crumbs! Oh crikey! Wow!"

"Dribble him home!" roared Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh! Help! Beasts!"

Billy Bunter fled for his fat life. After him whooped the Famous Five, taking kicks in turn. Lord Mauleverer followed at a more leisurely pace, grinning. As Billy Bunter was his guest his lordship did not feel that he could join in the kicking, but undoubtedly the sight of Bunter being dribbled home was grateful and comforting.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

"Oh, my hat! Stoppit! I'll lick the lot of you!" yelled Bunter. "Look here, if you kick me again I'll— Yarooop!"

Billy Bunter did not slacken speed till he reached Mauleverer Towers. He rolled in, puffing and blowing, grunting and gasping. Harry Wharton & Co. followed him in, grinning cheerfully. It had been quite an enjoyable run, for the Famous Five, though Billy Bunter had not enjoyed it. But in an imperfect universe it was impossible for everybody to be satisfied.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Keeping The Secret!

"UTTER rot!"

"The rotfulness is terrific!"

"Mauly, you're an ass!"

Lord Mauleverer smiled and shook his head. His lordship was

stretched elegantly in a deep chair before the log fire in the old armoury, which was Mauly's den. The Famous Five stood in a group by the fire, all talking to Mauly at once, and rather emphatically. Billy Bunter reposed in another armchair—not elegantly. His fat little legs rested on a footstool; his fat thumbs rested in the armholes of his waistcoat—or, rather, Lord Mauleverer's waistcoat—one of his lordship's many garments which Bunter had borrowed. A large lunch was packed away inside Bunter, and he was taking his ease in a state of fat and lazy contentment, apparently having fully recovered from his night out.

Where Bunter had spent that night out, and how he had spent it, he had not explained. He was keeping Flip's secret, as he was in honour bound to do. The juniors knew that he must have found a shelter for the night, and why he kept the details dark rather puzzled them.

But no one was keen on Bunter's conversation, and the less he talked the better they liked it. So as the fat junior did not seem to want to go into details the other fellows left it at that—and, in fact, dismissed the matter from their minds.

Quite another matter was occupying their attention now. The famous Five were all strongly of opinion that something ought to be done about the theft of Mauly's wallet the previous day. Whether the trifle that Mauly had lost was ten or fifteen pounds, or whatever it was, his friends did not want him to lose it if it could be recovered. And Bunter, who had been nodding off to sleep, pricked up his fat ears as the talk turned on the subject of the untidy youth who had bagged the wallet.

"You can't let the matter drop where it is, Mauly," said Harry Wharton warmly. "That young rogue ought to be found and run in; at least, he ought to be made to give up the loot."

"Yaas!" assented Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, then, you ought to mention the matter to your uncle, and let him phone up the police station."

"I don't want to worry nunky, old bean; and the bobbies have had a lot of trouble over me already, over that kidnappin' bizney!" said his lordship, "And—and—and—"

"And what, fathead?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, I was rather an ass to give the young beggar a chance of snatchin' the wallet," said Lord Mauleverer. "And—and—he looked in rotten hard luck, and—and I dare say he was badly brought up, you know, and—and— Dash it all, I'm not goin' to be hard on him!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, dry up, Bunter! Look here, Mauly," said Harry Wharton seriously, "that young scamp wouldn't be sent to prison at his age—he would be sent to a home of some sort—Borstal, perhaps. Better for him than loafing about, picking pockets, surely?"

"Yaas; but—"

"You can't let a fellow steal and get away with it," grunted Johnny Bull. "It's not right, Mauly."

"It is what the lawyers call confounding a felony, my esteemed Mauly," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

Lord Mauleverer chuckled. "If you mean compounding a felony, old black bean—"

"I say, you fellows, you shut up and let Mauly alone!" said Billy Bunter. "Mauly's right, and I'm backing him up. Chuck it!"

The Famous Five all looked round at



Porson opened the door and stared blankly at the sight of Billy Bunter, drenched and dripping, staggering under the weight of the tattered little figure on his shoulder. "Here, take him, you fathead!" gurgled Bunter. "Can't you see I'm nearly dropping?"

Bunter. Billy Bunter's opinion on any subject did not carry much weight with the famous Co. But they certainly would have expected Bunter to agree with them that the "pincher" ought to be dealt with. The chums of the Remove were far more likely than Bunter to make allowances for the wretched youth, and to let him off easily. It was rather a surprise to find Billy Bunter on the side of extreme leniency.

Bunter blinked at them severely.

"Give the kid a chance!" he said.

"What do you mean, you fat piffler?" grunted Johnny Bull. "Are you backing up a thief?"

"Well, the kid never had a chance," said Bunter. "If you'd been brought up the same way I dare say you'd be pinching for a living."

"You cheeky, fat porpoise!" roared Johnny Bull, greatly incensed. "If you want me to heave you out of that chair and bang your head on the floor—"

"Hold on, dear man!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Keep cool, dear old bean. You're wrong, Bunter. A bad trainin' doesn't excuse thievin'—every fellow knows it's wrong to steal; a fellow knows it in his bones. Fellow ought to starve sooner than steal."

"I know that! But that kid never had a chance, all the same," said Bunter, "and he's a good chap in a lot of ways."

"How the thump do you know?" demanded Bob Cherry, staring at the Owl of the Remove. "You know no more of him than we do."

Bunter started.

"Oh! I—I mean—I don't know anything about him!" he said hastily. "I haven't seen him, of course. I shouldn't know him if I did."

"You've seen him since he pinched

Mauly's wallet?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

"I've just said I haven't!" snorted Bunter. "Can't you take a fellow's word? If you think I've seen anything of him in the park you're jolly well mistaken, see?"

"You've seen him in the park?"

"No!" roared Bunter. "Besides, I never knew it was Mauleverer Park when I wandered into it last night. I never found out till I came out in the morning and found that the Towers were in sight."

"Came out of where?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Oh! Nowhere!" said Bunter. "Nowhere at all! I—I wasn't there, you know!"

"You weren't where, you benighted ass?"

"Oh! Anywhere! Not near the place at all."

"What place?" shrieked Bob.

"I say, you fellows, don't ask questions!" said Bunter peevishly. "I'm jolly well not going to tell you. Besides, there's nothing to tell. I don't know anything about Flip—"

"Flip!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "Who's Flip?"

"Oh! Nobody! His name isn't Flip—at least, if it is, I don't know anything about it. His name may be Smith or Jones or Robinson, for all I know. How should I know anything about it?" argued Bunter.

Attention was concentrated on Billy Bunter now. Bunter was keeping the secret—in his own remarkable way. That he had met the "pincher" during his wanderings over-night, and found out that he was called Flip, was clear; but why the fat Owl was making a secret and a mystery of it was far from clear.

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer, gazing at Bunter. "You've met the chap, and his name's Flip. But what—"

"If you can't take a pal's word, Mauly—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"If he's hanging about the park here we can jolly well root him out, and get Mauly's wallet back," said Bob Cherry. "Mauly can let the young sweep off, if he likes; but we're bound to get the stolen goods back if we can."

"The boundfulness is terrific!"

"What part of the park did you see him in, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, eyeing the fat Owl very curiously.

"Oh, really, Wharton! It wasn't in the park at all—it was miles away—a dozen miles at least! Besides, I never saw him! You needn't think of rooting about the park. Mauly's keepers have never spotted it, and you might hunt for a month without finding it. Leave the kid alone, you fellows! If you found him he might think it was through me. Not that I know anything about him, you know!" added Bunter cautiously. "I never met him last night, and he wasn't camped in the park, or—or anything! My belief is that he's gone away—right away—hundreds of miles by this time, very likely. In fact, I know he caught a train for—for Edinburgh!"

"Oh, great gad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"You benighted fat idiot!" said Harry Wharton. "Why you're sticking up for the young rascal I can't imagine—you're the last fellow in the world, as a rule, to help a lame dog over a stile. But whatever you mean—if you've got

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Bunter's Night-Out!

(Continued from page 13.)

brains enough to mean anything—you know jolly well that that young thief can't be allowed to keep Mauly's money. Tell us where you saw him camping in the park, and we'll go and get Mauly's wallet back."

"Yaas, that's all right," agreed Lord Mauleverer. "We'll make him hand it back, and let him go. Might stand him a quid to help him on his way."

"Now, where is he, Bunter?" demanded Wharton.

"I haven't the faintest idea, old chap! All I know is that he caught a train for—*for Glasgow*—"

"Is the fat duffer off his rocker, or what?" asked Bob Cherry, in wonder. "Why can't he tell the truth—for once?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I—I say, you fellows, what about going to the pictures?" asked Bunter. "I'll stand treat."

And the fat junior rattled quite a considerable amount of Lord Mauleverer's money in the pocket of one of Lord Mauleverer's best pairs of trousers. "We're going after Mauly's wallet," said Harry.

"Yes, rather!" agreed Nugent. "The ratherfulness is terrific."

"I—I say, you fellows!" Bunter heaved his ample bulk out of the armchair. "I—I say, you'll only waste your time, you know. There isn't any cave in the park—nothing of the kind. If there is, that chap isn't camped in it. You can take my word for that."

"Ye gods!"

"He's hundreds of miles away by this time—after catching an early train for Penzance—"

"Come on, you men!" said Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Rats!"

The juniors went for their coats. Billy Bunter rolled after them, in a state of great alarm. Somehow—Bunter didn't know how—they seemed to have jumped to it that the vagrant who had robbed Mauly was camped in Mauleverer Park. Bunter could not help feeling that if they found Flip, the vagrant might believe that his guest had ungratefully betrayed him. That was very unpleasant.

"I say, you fellows," urged Bunter, "look here! You can take my word for it that that fellow is in Southampton by this time—"

"After catching a train to Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Penzance?" asked Bob Cherry sarcastically.

"I—I mean—"

"Fathead!"

"Well, if you fellows are going out I'll—I'll go for a stroll!" said Bunter, blinking at them. "I'm not coming with you chaps! I'm just going to take a stroll! Don't you follow me, you know! I don't want your company! I'm not going to warn that chap that you're after him, or anything of that kind. Nothing of the sort!"

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And Bunter rolled away.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed after him, as he rolled down the snowy avenue, blankly for some moments, and then gazed at one another almost in stupefaction.

"What the merry dooce—" said Lord Mauleverer.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I can't make it out," he said; "but it's plain enough that Bunter knows where that pincher is, and we've only got to follow the old barrel wherever he rolls! Come on!"

And the juniors walked out, on the track of Billy Bunter. Amazing as it was, there could be no doubt that the fat Owl knew where the "pincher" was, and had started first to warn him. All they had to do to find the "pincher" and the stolen wallet, was to keep Bunter in sight. And they grinned when Bunter, at a considerable distance ahead, blinked back through his big spectacles to ascertain whether he was followed.

Anyone but the short-sighted Owl of the Remove would certainly have seen the six juniors on the track. But Billy Bunter's range of vision was limited, and he did not pick out the half-dozen figures from the snow and the trees. Satisfied that he was not pursued, the fat Owl rolled on, and the grinning juniors followed on his trail.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Hunted!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry suddenly.

He lifted his hand and pointed.

The juniors had passed the frozen lake, and were going on by a path through the leafless park, when Bob sighted a figure among the trees at a distance.

All the Greyfriars party recognised it at once—there was no mistaking the tattered coat, the baggy trousers, and the old tweed cap jammed down over the ears. It was the untidy youth who had snatched Mauly's wallet in the fog. They knew him at a glance—and they did not need to follow Bunter farther.

The fat Owl was still plodding on ahead. But the Famous Five gave him no more heed. Bunter, it was clear, was heading for the vagrant's hidden camp in the park, to put him on his guard; though how he knew anything about it was a mystery. But it was, after all, unlikely that the vagrant would remain in that den, wherever it was, in the daytime, and evidently he had not done so. For there he was, in full view for the moment, threading his way among the trees—heading, from a different quarter, in the direction Billy Bunter was taking. Apparently he was returning to his camp, after an absence, and the Greyfriars fellows had come along in time to intercept him.

He sighted them at the same moment and stopped. For a moment or two he stood staring at them from a distance, then he turned and ran.

"After him!" shouted Bob.

"Yaas, begad! Put it on, dear boys!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer.

And the half-dozen juniors went racing in pursuit, trampling and plunging through frosty thickets.

Flip ran like a deer.

He had recognised the party, and among them, the schoolboy he had robbed, and whose wallet was still in his pocket. He knew what to expect if

he was caught—indeed, he probably feared much more than was really coming to him. He would like an el through thickets and among trees, with the juniors whooping in pursuit.

Harry Wharton & Co. ran hard, their breath streaming like steam on the frosty air. The fugitive disappeared, appeared again, and disappeared once more. But when he was lost to sight, they picked up the trail in the trampled snow.

"We shall get him!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The getfulness will be terrific!" panted the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Bob Cherry plunged through a mass of bushes, and crashed into somebody on the other side as he emerged.

"Got him!" he gasped.

"Yarooooooh!"

"Oh, my hat! It's Bunter!"

The juniors had lost sight of Bunter, and forgotten him, in the excitement of the chase. Now they had found him again.

"Ow! Wow! Yow!" roared Bunter. He staggered from the collision, sat in the snow, and roared. "Yarooooooh! Beast! Wharrer you rushing into a fellow for? Knocking a fellow over—"

"Seen that pincher?" panted Bob.

"Eh, what?"

"This way!" roared Johnny Bull. "Here's his tracks—he's cut off towards the lane. This way!"

"I say, you fellows—"

But the juniors were already tearing away again, heedless of Bunter. The fat Owl picked himself up out of the snow, and blinked after them.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

"They're after him! He can't be in the cave—those beasts have spotted him! Oh dear!"

The juniors were out of his sight in a few seconds, but he could hear them shouting to one another in the direction. The shouting died away in the direction of the lanes, where Bunter had wandered into the park the night before. Apparently the fugitive was heading for the open country.

Bunter stood irresolute.

It was useless to keep on to the cave, as Flip obviously was not there. The fat Owl was feeling quite worried. Certainly, he would have liked Lord Mauleverer to recover his wallet from the thief; but at the same time, he felt concerned for the vagrant who had taken him in and sheltered him, and cooked that scrumptious supper for him.

It was quite unusual for Billy Bunter to feel concerned about anybody but his own fat self; but undoubtedly he felt a kind and friendly interest in Flip. A fellow who cooked sausages like Flip was a fellow Bunter could like.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bunter suddenly.

Through an opening of the underwoods he had a glimpse of a tattered figure, running. It was Flip, and he vanished again among the trees.

Bunter grinned.

Apparently the fugitive had doubled back, and eluded the pursuit, leaving Harry Wharton & Co. hunting on a false scent. He was running now in the direction of the distant house, while the Greyfriars fellows were hunting him in the opposite direction.

"I jolly well hope he'll get away!" murmured Bunter, and he turned to retrace his footsteps to the Towers. It was cold in the park in the snow and the wind; and Bunter was thinking of a comfortable armchair and a crackling

fire. And snow was beginning to fall again.

He came out of the trees, and followed the path along the border of the frozen lake.

A wide expanse of ice glistened in the sunshine. Snow was falling on it in feathery flakes.

Bunter shivered.

Though the weather had turned milder since Christmas, it was fearfully cold. Billy Bunter trotted to keep himself warm, his fat little legs twinkling as he trotted. He saw, without specially noting, a dark object far out on the ice; but suddenly his attention became fixed on it. It was Flip again.

Bunter halted, staring at him.

It was Flip, and he was sliding swiftly across the frozen lake. Harry Wharton & Co. were a good half-mile away, hunting for traces of the fugitive, obliterated by the fresh-falling snow. Evidently they had no idea that he had doubled back towards the lake, for there was no sound or sign of them.

"The young ass!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at Flip in alarm.

During the hard frost the Greyfriars fellows had skated on the lake, and the ice had been perfectly safe. But Bunter knew that they had not skated for several days now, as the ice was no longer firm, and showed dangerous cracks in many places.

Flip was skimming across the frozen surface as lightly as a bird; but Bunter watched him in keen anxiety.

In the still air, a long, rending crack came to his ears, across the lake.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

His eyes almost bulged through his spectacles as he watched the vagrant.

Flip slid swiftly on.

Once across the lake, he would have thrown his pursuers far off the track, and could easily have found his way out of the park. But he was not across the lake yet.

Crack!

Bunter heard it again and shivered.

Flip had almost reached the farther side—not more than six yards separated him from the bank. Bunter stood quite still, heedless of falling flakes and cold wind, eager to see the outcast leap ashore. He gave a gasp of horror as the sliding figure suddenly pitched over, the ice cracking right and left.

"Oh!" panted Bunter, in horror.

With starting eyes he watched the outcast crash through the ice. Far in the distance across the lake, almost beyond Bunter's range of vision, dark water welled up in a circle of broken ice, and in that dark pool the vagrant had disappeared.

Bunter stood almost frozen with horror.

He suddenly woke to action. Crossing the ice was impossible. Bunter's weight would have cracked the ice at once. He started to run round the lake to reach the spot.

But the distance was great. The lake was extensive. Bunter panted and puffed and blew and gurgled for breath as he ran. He had to help the hapless vagrant if he could. There was no other help. Tall trees shut off the lake from the distant house, and in the other direction Harry Wharton & Co. were far away out of sight. Billy Bunter ran as he had never run before. It seemed to him that his fat little legs would drop off as he ran and ran, and his breathing came in gasps and gulps. But still he kept on.

He reached the spot at last. Not more than four yards from the bank was the

gap in the ice, and in the gap, clutching at the broken edges with fingers blue with cold, the vagrant struggled in the dark, welling water. His face, white as chalk, was turned towards Bunter as he came panting up, and from his frozen lips came a faint cry:

"Elp!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter on His Mettle!

BILLY BUNTER gurgled for breath. He blinked in horror at the white face over the dark water in the gap in the ice.

Flip's old tweed cap had floated away under the ice. His thick mop of hair was drenched. Every vestige of colour was gone from his face as the cold of the water penetrated to the very marrow of his bones. While Bunter had been panting round the shore of the lake, Flip had been struggling to drag himself out. But his efforts had only broken lumps of ice from the jagged edges of the gap.

He was at his last gasp now, the clutch of his frozen fingers slipping from their hold.

Bunter found his voice.

"Hold on!" he squeaked.

"Elp!"

It was little more than a husky whisper that came from the stiff, frozen lips of the vagrant.

Billy Bunter blinked round him wildly. No one was in sight, no one was in hearing. There was no help.

Either he had to save the hapless boy or see him drown under his eyes. And he could not save him. The bare thought of venturing on the cracking ice sent a thrill of terror to his heart. Bunter groaned in sheer horror. He could not—he would not—and yet he knew that he must.

"Elp!"

Bunter hardly heard the exhausted whisper. He made a step towards the ice, and stopped again. It had not borne Flip, who was less than half Bunter's weight. It could not possibly bear Bunter.

Billy Bunter's powerful intellect generally worked very slowly—when it worked at all. But in the horror of those moments the fat junior was spurred into unusual mental activity.

"Hold on!" he squeaked again.

He rushed to the nearest tree, grabbed a low branch, and threw his weight on it. Crack! went the branch, and it sagged down. But it did not break off, and Bunter dragged at it frantically. All his strength and all his weight were thrown into the effort, and the branch was torn from the trunk at last. It was a slim branch, but it was long, and it sufficed for the purpose if only he was in time.

With the branch in his fat hands, he rushed back to the lake edge. His boots cracked through the shore ice as he extended the branch towards Flip.

"Catch!" howled Bunter.

The vagrant understood. The leafless twigs at the end of the branch scratched

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS HEROES.

No. 14.

GEORGE TUBB.

This week's clever effort by the Greyfriars Rhymester is written around the hero of George Tubb. If Robin Hood knew—what wouldn't he do!!!

WHEN Tubby looks at history books
They can't do him much good;

We find this-out when he talks about
His hero—Robin Hood.
Poor Robin's laid in the twilight shade
Of his dear-beloved greenwood tree,
But when Tubb talks his spirit walks
And groans in agony.

Small wonder, too. For what would you
Think of this kind of talk?
"I like to read of that great deed—
Bold Robin's ride to York.
Say, I can tell his story well,
So gather round, my boys,
And you will get a clout, Paget,
If you make any noise!

"Now, Robin's pa and mater are
Well known to every lad—
His mater was Red Riding Hood,
Cock Robin was his dad;



When he grew old a crown of gold
He lost within the Wash,
And then was sent to Parliament,
Where he looked very posh.

"He thought the mace looked out of
place,
And soon began to scoff;
In accents clear he cried, 'Look here!
Just take that bauble off!'
It didn't go, so he tried to blow
The whole affair sky-high;
And now we all that deed recall
By burning of his guy.

"He had nine lives and seven
wives,
Which must have been great fun;
He liked them, but he had to cut
Their heads off one by one!
Then he observed, 'If I had served
My king and not my queen,
I should be rich instead of which
I haven't got a bean!'"

Poor Robin, to give him his due,
Should be most highly praised;
But Tubby's tale may turn us pale
And leave us all amazed.
We may rejoice at Tubby's choice
Of hero—but we blub
And feel appalled at what Swift called,
"One more Tale of a Tubb!"



on his face. He caught at it and held on. He was only half-conscious now, but he held on to the branch in a death-grip.

Bunter dragged with all his strength. Flip was pulled half out of the gap. Then the ice cracked under him, and he plunged in again.

Bunter gave a squeak of terror. But the frozen fingers of the vagrant were still clutching the branch, and his head came up again. Bunter dragged and dragged.

His feet slipped, and he gave a gasping howl as he went through cracking ice. The water was deep up to the bank. In a moment Bunter was in to his fat waist, his fat legs swamped in freezing water. But he held the branch; and Flip, with a despairing effort, dragged himself along it, the ice cracking under him as he came. He reached Bunter, passed him, and scrambled ashore through cracking ice and welling water.

It was Bunter who needed help now. As he strove to clamber out he sprawled in broken ice and washing water, in imminent danger of slipping away into the lake.

"Ow! Help!" gurgled Bunter. Flip had sunk down, exhausted, on the bank. But he dragged himself up somehow, caught at Bunter, and dragged him ashore.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He rolled over, spluttering. Flip sank down again, utterly exhausted, streaming with water. Bunter scrambled to his feet.

He was wet and chilled, and he blinked dizzily through wet spectacles. He wiped them and jammed them on his fat little nose, and blinked at the boy gasping on the ground.

"Oh crikey! Here, get up!" gasped Bunter. "You'll freeze to death! Get a move on—sharp!"

He grasped Flip and dragged him to his feet. The boy stood unsteadily, leaning on him.

"I—I—I'm all right, sir!" panted Flip, the words coming indistinctly through his stiff, frozen lips. "I'm all right! Oh, sir, you've saved me from drowning!"

"I've jolly well saved your life!" said Bunter. Bunter was not the fellow to disclaim any credit that was his due. "But, look here, you've got to get dry and warm. You'll have to come to the house. Come on! Trot!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Flip. He stared at the tall turrets of Mauleverer Towers, visible over the trees. "Me, sir? I can't!"

"You silly ass, I'm freezing!" hooted Bunter. "I've got to get changed, and I can't leave you here. Come on, I tell you!"

"I'll do anything you tell me, sir!" said Flip submissively.

"Come on, then, blow you!" said Bunter.

He started for the house, Flip tottering after him. Bunter blinked back in exasperation.

"Hurry up!" he yapped.

"I—I'll try, sir!"

But the exhausted boy reeled as he answered, and Bunter grabbed at him in time to save him from falling.

"Come on! I'll help you," said Bunter not very graciously. It was quite a new experience for the fat Owl to be bothering about anyone but his own important self. "Buck up!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Flip.

"Come on, fathead!"

With the help of a fat arm, Flip tottered onward. Bunter helped him and dragged at him, and somehow they got on their way. But Flip's strength

failed him as they came in sight of the house, and he hung, a heavy weight, on Bunter's fat arm, barely conscious.

"Oh, my hat!" grunted the exasperated Owl.

He glared at Flip through his spectacles. He was strongly tempted to leave him and hurry in for the warmth he needed, but he resisted that temptation. It was clear that if Flip was to go on he had to be carried, and that was a task almost beyond Billy Bunter's powers. But he made up his fat mind to the effort. Fortunately, Flip was a light weight, and Bunter found himself equal to the task.

He heaved the boy on a fat shoulder, and, staggering under the weight, plunged on.

A dozen times at least Bunter almost collapsed under his burden. But he struggled manfully on, and, after what seemed to be a century, he was banging at the door. It was opened at once by Porson, who stared blankly at the sight of Billy Bunter, drenched and dripping, with a drenched, dripping, and tattered little figure on his shoulder. In all his career as a butler, Porson had never been so astonished.

"Here, take him, you fathead!" gurgled Bunter, staggering into Porson and butting his burden against the butler's portly form. "Take him! Can't you see I'm dropping, you idiot? Oh crikey!"

Porson, like a man in a dream, received the half-conscious vagrant, and set him on his feet and held him there.

"Take him up to my room!" hooted Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Porson. "Yes, sir! Certainly!"

"Buck up, then!"

Bunter rushed for the stairs, and headed for his room, leaving Porson to follow with Flip. Porson called a footman to his aid, and between them Flip was carried up the stairs and landed in Bunter's room. A big log-fire was crackling on the wide hearth in that apartment, and Bunter was already crouching over it. He blinked round at Porson and the footman as they came in with Flip.

"He's been in the lake," explained Bunter. "I saved his life."

"Yes, sir. Did you, sir?"

"I jolly well did—at the risk of my own!" said Bunter impressively.

"Indeed, sir!"

"Get those wet clothes off him! Towel him down! Get a move on! Do you want him to perish of cold and pneumonia and plumbago under your eyes?"

"Oh! Yes, sir! I mean no, sir!" gasped Porson.

"Shove him in my bed! Stick a lot of blankets over him! Get a hot-water bottle—quick! For goodness' sake get a move on."

Porson, still like a man in a dream, obeyed.

Flip lay warm and comfortable, tucked up in Bunter's bed, wondering—like Porson—whether he was dreaming. Billy Bunter towelled himself down before the fire, and changed into another suit of Lord Mauleverer's clothes. Then he came over to the bed, and gave the vagrant a grin.

"Feeling better?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Flip, in an awed voice. "But it don't seem sort of real. Is this big 'ouse yours, sir?"

Bunter coughed.

"Not exactly," he answered, resisting a temptation to reply in the affirmative. "It belongs to Lord Mauleverer—a pal of mine. But it's all right. Mauly likes me to do exactly as I choose here.

We—we're like brothers, you know. I'll look after you."

"Mauleverer?" gasped Flip. "Ain't that the bloke what—what—?"

"The chap whose wallet you pinched, you young sweep!" said Bunter. "I'll give it back to him. I suppose you've still got it?"

"Yes," said Flip. "It's in my rags, sir, jest as it was when I took it. I ain't touched it, sir. I wouldn't want to pinch anything from a friend of yours, sir, if I knowed."

Billy Bunter sorted through the waif's tattered garments, and found the wallet, which he slipped into his own pocket. From the window he had a view of six schoolboys coming back towards the house from the direction of the park, and, with a cheery grin on his fat face, he went down to meet Harry Wharton & Co. as they came in.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Most Mysterious!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!" grunted Bob Cherry.

The chums of the Remove had not returned in the best of humours. They had had a long hunt for the elusive vagrant, and had failed to find him, and they were tired and damp and cold.

Bunter grinned cheerfully.

"Look here, you fat piffler!" said Harry Wharton. "You jolly well know where that young rascal hides himself! We should have had him this time if the snow hadn't come on again and smothered his tracks. But we know that he doubled back somewhere. Where is he?"

"He, he, he!"

The juniors little dreamed how near the hunted pickpocket was! Bunter had no intention of telling them.

"Do you know where he is, Bunter?" asked Lord Mauleverer quietly.

"That's telling!" grinned Bunter.

"He knows!" growled Johnny Bull. "I don't know how he knows, but he jolly well does! Let's bump it out of him!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"The bumpfulness is 'the proper caper!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Billy Bunter backed away.

"I say, you fellows, no larks!" he exclaimed. "You're not in the Remove passage at Greyfriars now, you know. Behave yourselves! I don't know anything about that fellow Flip—"

"Then how do you know his name's Flip?" demanded Nugent.

"Oh! I—I mean—"

"Bump him!"

The Famous Five advanced on Bunter. The fat junior dodged promptly round Lord Mauleverer.

"I say, Mauly, keep those beasts off!" he gasped. "I—I don't want to alarm your uncle and aunt by thrashing them all round—"

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Mauleverer. "I say, let him rip, you men! He can't help bein' a howlin' ass. Asses are like poets, you know—born, not made. A born fool is a born fool! It's a misfortune really, not a fault!"

"Why, you cheeky fathead!" roared Bunter indignantly.

"We're jolly well going to bump it out of him!" said Johnny Bull determinedly. "He knows where that pick-pocket is. He could help us get back your wallet if he liked. We're going to make him."



As the door flew open Bunter sat down with a bump, and roared. "Ow! Beasts! I say, you fellows, there's nobody here!" But the Famous Five, catching sight of the figure that sat up on the bed, yelled: "The pickpocket!"

"The 'esteemed Bunter is practically confounding a felony," remarked Hurreo Janset Ram Singh.

"Hold on!" said Mauleverer. "Look here, Bunter! You're bound to play up, you know. I don't want to be hard on that young scoundrel, but he's got my wallet, and I want it back, of course. Now, play up, or these chaps are goin' to bump you on the jolly old floor, and I'm goin' to lend them a hand!"

"If that's what you call being civil to a guest, Mauly, after I saved you from kidnapping—"

"Can it!" interrupted Wharton. "We've heard more than enough about that, fatty. We're going to get Mauly's wallet back, and you're going to help us. Now, where is that young pick-pocket hiding?"

"I—I haven't the faintest—"

"Collar him!"

"Keep off, you beasts! I say, keep them off, Mauly!" howled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, chuck it, you silly asses!"

"Bag him!"

Billy Bunter dodged round Lord Mauleverer again, and the chums of the Remove pursued him. Mauleverer grinned cheerfully. He saw no reason why Bunter should not reveal what he knew of the pilferer, and he was not disposed to intervene.

"Got him!" chuckled Bob Cherry, as he fastened a finger and thumb on a fat ear.

"Yaroooh! I say, Mauly—"

"Bump him!" said Lord Mauleverer cheerfully.

"Beast!"

"Give him beans!" chuckled Mauleverer.

"Look here, Mauly! If that's how

you thank a chap for getting your wallet back for you—"

"Eh?"

"What?" howled the Famous Five.

In sheer astonishment they released the fat Owl. Billy Bunter set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose and glared at them.

"You've got it?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Yes, you beast! I came down to give it to Mauly, but you wouldn't give a fellow a chance to speak!" gasped Bunter.

"Gammon!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Bump him!"

"The gammonfulness is terrific!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

Billy Bunter groped in his pocket. His fat hand came out, with the Russia-leather wallet in it.

"Great gad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer.

"My only hat!"

"There it is, you beast!" gasped Bunter, and Lord Mauleverer, with quite a dazed look, received the wallet. "I got it back for you. And if this is what you call gratitude—"

"How on earth did you get hold of it?" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

"I—I found it—"

"You found it?" repeated Wharton. "You mean you've seen that pilfering young rascal, and got it back from him!"

"Nothing of the sort! I haven't seen him, and he wasn't hiding in a cave in the park last night," said Bunter. "He never told me his name was Flip. In fact, I don't know his name. If you fellows think I'm going to give him away, you're jolly well mistaken. Besides, I don't know anything about him, not having seen him!"

The Famous Five eyed Bunter

blankly. Lord Mauleverer glanced at the contents of the wallet, and found them intact. He slipped it into his pocket, and stared at Bunter.

"Where did you find it, Bunter?" he asked quietly.

"Miles away!" said Bunter promptly. "You needn't fancy that it was in my room here, Mauly—"

Lord Mauleverer jumped. "In your room here!" he stuttered. "How could you have found it in your room here, you fooling ass?"

"I didn't! I've told you I didn't!" hooted Bunter. "The fact is, it was lying in the park—I mean, it was lying in the road miles away from the park. I—I saw it lying—"

"We can jolly well see you lying!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Beast!" yapped Bunter. "I tell you it was lying—"

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

"Well, we've got it back!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm much obliged to you, Bunter! Blessed if I see why you can't tell us how you got it back, though."

"I've told you!" hooted Bunter. "I saw it lying in a ditch, covered with snow!"

"You saw it through the snow?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I mean it wasn't covered with snow. In fact, it was lying in the middle of the road. Miles away!"

"You fat villain, you haven't been outside the park to-day!"

"I—I—I mean—"

"Well, tell us what you mean!" said Bob sarcastically. "Think a minute first—you haven't brains enough to roll

out whoppers on the spur of the moment. Think one out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! The—the actual fact is that—that I saw it sticking in a bush, in the park. Thinking it might be Mauly's wallet, I—I hooked it out, and—and it was, you know."

"Well, my hat!"

"I give it up!" said Lord Mauleverer, shaking his head. "Bunter can't help telling crammers, of course—it would give him a pain to tell the truth—but—"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"But why is he lying now?" said Wharton blankly.

"Goodness knows!"

"I say, you fellows, if you can't take a fellow's word—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm not accustomed to having my word doubted!" said Bunter, with dignity. "It's rather low, you know. The fact is, you fellows are rather a low lot. I decline to discuss the matter with fellows who doubt my word. You can go and eat coke, the lot of you."

And Billy Bunter rolled away, leaving the chums of the Remove staring.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Astounded!

"PINCH me!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Eh?"

"I'm dreamin'!"

Lord Mauleverer, standing before the fire in the old armoury, with his hands in his pockets, had an almost dizzy expression on his face.

It was evident that his lordship had received a shock, and was in a state of dazed astonishment.

Harry Wharton & Co. had been out for a tramp in the snow, after tea. They came in to find Mauleverer in that astonished state.

"I must be dreamin'," continued Lord Mauleverer. "Unless Porson's wanderin' in his mind it must be a giddy dream! Pinch me and let me see if I'm awake!"

"Pleased!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ow! Wow!" roared Mauleverer, as Bob Cherry obliged—perhaps with a little too much vigour. "Wow!"

"Sure you're awake now?" grinned Bob.

"Ow! Yaas! Ow!"

"I'll give you another pinch, if you like!"

Lord Mauleverer backed away.

"Keep off, you ass! But I'm dreamin', all the same. You men will think you're dreamin', too, when I tell you!" gasped his lordship.

"Unfold the jolly old tale!" said Bob. "What's happened? Has Bunter's postal order come?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's not so startlin' as that!" chuckled Lord Mauleverer. "But it's frightfully startlin', all the same. Did you fellows know that Bunter had brought somebody into the house?"

"Eh? No! Has he?"

"Yaas—and he's got him in his room!"

"What the dickens—"

"It was while we were hurtin' for that pilferer in the park," said Lord Mauleverer. "Porson says that Bunter came in drenched and dripping, carrying a fellow on his shoulder—Bunter, you know!"

"Great pip!" gasped the Famous Five, in astonished chorus.

"A kid, Porson says—or, to use his exact words, a young person! Must have been a small young person, I imagine, for Bunter to be able to carry him. It seems that the kid, whoever he is, had fallen through the ice on the lake, and Bunter fished him out!"

"Draw it mild!"

"And lugged him into the house and looked after him like a man an' a brother!" said his lordship dazedly.

"Gammon!"

"He hasn't said a word about it to me. Might have mentioned it, you know, what? Of course, I've no objection to a guest bringin' a friend in, but a man might mention it! He hasn't told me, and he hasn't told nunky or auntie. I shouldn't have heard of it if Porson hadn't mentioned it, I fancy

Porson thought I ought to know! Queer, ain't it?"

"The queerfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh blankly.

"More than queer," said Bob Cherry. "If Bunter's pulled a fellow out from the ice, Bunter's the man to shout it all over the shop—and make out that he risked his life doing jolly old heroic stunts! That's Bunter."

"Just what I was thinkin'!" confessed Lord Mauleverer. "I ask you men, is Bunter the chap to 'do good by stealth and blush to find it fame'?"

"No fear!"

"Or is he the man to shout it from the house-tops if he did anythin' decent?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is preposterous."

"Well, then, it must be a giddy dream!" said Mauleverer. "You needn't pinch me again, fathead—but I'm convinced I'm dreamin'. Or else Porson is! Or else there's more in Bunter than meets the eye."

"But—but what the thump can it mean?" asked Harry Wharton, in amazement. "Bunter could hardly bring a stranger into your house without telling you. Is the fellow still here?"

"Yaas! Bunter had tea in his room, you know—and it seems that this jolly old rescued person had tea with him. Peter took up the stuff, and he told Porson that the merry stranger was sittin' up in Bunter's bed, havin' tea with Bunter. Accordin' to what Porson says, Bunter got wet all over, fishin' the chap out of the lake, and he's brought him in, and is lookin' after him like a man an' a brother—which proves that somebody must be dreamin'!" said Lord Mauleverer, with a shake of the head.

"Where's Bunter now?" asked Nugent.

"In his room, Porson says—keepin' his jolly old guest company, I suppose! Doesn't it beat the band?" asked Mauleverer.

"It jolly well does!" said Wharton. "And you'd better see that jolly old guest and see who and what he is, and what's happened. Bunter's got nerve enough for anything—but bringing a stranger into the house without mentioning it is outside the limit, I should say. If he really fished out some fellow who had fallen through the ice and brought him in he would naturally mention it at once as soon as we got back. And he never said a word."

"It's all doocid queer!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Too jolly queer!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Let's go up and see Bunter, and see what the potty hippopotamus is up to."

"Perhaps we'd better!" agreed Lord Mauleverer; and he left the old armoury with his friends, and they ascended the staircase.

They arrived at the door of Billy Bunter's room in a state of great astonishment and considerable curiosity. Bunter's conduct that day had been queer and mysterious—but this—if it was true—fairly put the lid on.

There was a murmur of voices in the room as they arrived outside. Plainly Bunter was not alone there. Lord Mauleverer tapped on the door, and the murmur ceased at once.

The door opened about a foot, and Billy Bunter blinked out through his big spectacles. It opened no farther, as the fat Owl kept a boot jammed against it.

"I say, you fellows, what do you



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want!" asked Bunter peevishly. "Can't you let a fellow rest? There's nobody here, you know."

"You fat chump!" said Harry Wharton. "Who's in the room?"

"Only me!" said Bunter. "Nobody else, of course."

"You piffing porpoise, we heard you talking!" hooted Bob.

"Oh! I—I was talking to myself!" said Bunter. "I—I was just—just running over some—some Latin verbs, ready for next term at Greyfriars, you know! I mean, I was going through my holiday task! Saying it over to myself, you know!"

"Oh crumbs!"
"Porson's told me about the fellow here, Bunter," said Lord Mauleverer. "You didn't expect him to keep it dark, did you?"

"Oh, the beast!" ejaculated Bunter. "Well, who have you got there?"

"Nobody, old chap! Porson's pulling your leg," said Bunter. "The fact is, Mauly, you shouldn't take any notice of what Porson says. My belief is that he drinks."

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer.

"Like a fish," said Bunter. "Don't you take any notice of Porson, Mauly. If he says he carried the kid up here when I brought him in, you can take it from me that it's all gammon. You can ask the footman who helped him carry the kid up, you know."

"Oh gad!" gasped Mauleverer.
"Besides, I wasn't going to leave him to freeze, I suppose!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "I can tell you he was blue with cold."

"Who was?" shrieked Bob Cherry.
"Oh, nobody!" said Bunter hastily. "There's nobody here, you know. I'm quite alone in this room."

"Look here, Porson says—"
"I suppose you're not going to take a servant's word against mine, Mauly!" said Bunter, with dignity. "I keep on telling you there is nobody here. Besides, I suppose I can ask a friend in if I like. After the way I saved you from the kidnapper—"

"You can ask all Hampshire in, if you like, old fat bean," said Lord Mauleverer. "But a fellow wants to know, you know."

"That's all very well," said Bunter. "But I'm not going to have him run in—"

"Run in!" gasped Mauleverer.
"I—I—I mean—"

"Shove that door," said Johnny Bull.
"Goodness knows who Bunter's got there, but there's something jolly fishy about it!"

"Keep off, you beasts! You're not coming in here!" exclaimed Bunter. "There's nobody here—nobody at all!"
"We know there is, you howling ass!" roared Wharton.

"Well, suppose I've got a friend here?" said Bunter argumentatively. "Mind, I'm not admitting it, but, for the sake of argument, suppose I had a friend here? I suppose I can do as I jolly well like."

"Who is it, Bunter?" asked Lord Mauleverer quietly.

"Well, his name's—his name's Vavasour," said Bunter cautiously—"John James Vavasour."

"John James Vavasour!" repeated Mauleverer.

"Yes; an old friend of mine. John James William Vavasour!" added Bunter. "Not Flip, you know—nothing like that!"

"Flip!" gasped Wharton.
"G-great gad!" spluttered Lord Mauleverer. "Is it possible—"

"I say, you fellows— Oh crikey!"
Harry Wharton & Co. shoved on the door together. It flew open; and as the door flew, Bunter flew. The fat Owl sat down with a bump that almost shook Mauleverer Towers, and roared.
"Owl! Beasts! I say, you fellows, there's nobody here! You're not going to have him run in, you rotters! I say— Wow!"

The Famous Five tramped in. And they gave a yell at the sight of the figure that sat up on the bed.

"The pickpocket!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. Something Like a Surprise!

FLIP stared at the juniors with a scared face. Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at him, speechless. They knew the vagrant at once, though they had only seen him for a few minutes in the fog the previous day. It was the young rascal who had stolen Lord Mauleverer's wallet who sat up on Bunter's bed, staring at them with alarmed eyes.

Billy Bunter scrambled up. His fat face was red with wrath.

ANOTHER POCKET WALLET WON!

Here's a clever Greyfriars limerick for which Miss E. D. Barker, of 80, Brixton Hill, S.W. 2, has been awarded a useful leather pocket wallet.

Once Alonzo, whose surname is
Todd,
Gave a lecture, and thought it was
odd
When the fellows, with glee,
Said: "We're off for a spree;
We'll come back when your head
starts to nod."

Try your hand at writing a
limerick. It's good fun, and the
prize is worth winning.

"I say, you fellows, leave that kid alone! He's not here—I mean, you're not going to have him run in! I—I'll jolly well whop you if you lay a finger on him!"

The fat Owl jumped between the Famous Five and the bed. His little round eyes glared defiance through his big, round spectacles. Harry Wharton & Co. stared at him dumbfounded.

"G-good gad!" stuttered Lord Mauleverer. "It's that young pincher! The sportsman who bagged my wallet! Good gad!"

"I've give it back, sir!" came from Flip.

"Oh, my hat! That was how Bunter got it?" exclaimed Bob. "I knew he hadn't found it, but I couldn't imagine—"

"Bunter's brought that pickpocket into Mauly's house!" gasped Johnny Bull. "Is the fat idiot off his rocker?"

"I say, you fellows—"

"What do you mean by it, you fat dummy?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Better telephone to the police station, Mauly!" said Johnny Bull. "They want that merchant!"

"I—I say, Mauly, you wouldn't be such a beast!" gasped Bunter. "You've got your wallet back, you know. The kid gave it up when I asked him. I'd have told you he was here, only I didn't

want him run in! You shut up, Bull, or I'll jolly well punch your head—see?"

"Go it!" grinned Johnny.

"Beast! I say, Mauly—"

"Tell us what it all means," said Lord Mauleverer dazedly. "If we're not dreamin' this, what does it all mean?"

"Don't you blame Mr. Bunter, sir!" came from Flip. "I'll go to the police station, sir, and willing, rather than get him into any trouble. After all his kindness, sir—"

"His kindness!" murmured Bob. "Bunter's kindness! We're all dreamin' this together!"

"I'd have been drowned in the lake, sir, if that young gentleman hadn't got me out!" said Flip eagerly. "Then I'd 'ave died of cold if he hadn't brought me in 'ere, sir—and 'im carrying me on his back, sir, because I couldn't walk! Don't you blame him, sir! It's all my fault. You let me out of here, and I'll go to the police station like a bird, sir!"

"Bunter got him out of the lake!" said Bob Cherry dizzily. "Bunter carried him in on his back! Bunter! Great Christopher Columbus!"

"Don't you worry, kid," said Lord Mauleverer. "You're not goin' to be run in! You seem to have given up the plunder—"

"Mr. Bunter told me to, sir! I'd do anything that he told me to!" said Flip. "Him saving my life, and being so kind to a bloke what ain't fit to black his boots, sir!"

The Greyfriars fellows looked at one another. They looked at Bunter. They looked at Flip. They were trying to understand this; but it was hard to assimilate.

"Bunter got you out of the lake?" asked Wharton, at last.

"Yessir! You see, I dodged you in the park, and out across the lake, to get off another way," said Flip. "Then the ice broke and let me through. And I'd 'ave been a goner, but for Mr. Bunter, sir."

"Why didn't you tell us this, Bunter, you ass?" asked Mauleverer.

"Well, I didn't want the kid run in, after the way he took me in last night and stood me a supper in the cave," said Bunter. "It was a topping supper—fried sosses and chips—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter warmly. "I can tell you I wanted that supper! I was starving—famished—"

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

They understood now how the hapless waif had touched Billy Bunter's fat heart.

"So that's where you were last night!" said Lord Mauleverer. "That's what you were makin' all the mystery about."

"Well, I couldn't give the kid away, I suppose, after he'd taken me in and sheltered me, and stood me that supper—sosses and chips—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I've saved his life!" said Bunter. "Plunged into a freezing lake at the risk of my life, and all that! Not a thing that you fellows would have done!"

"Why, you fat frump—"

"And he's jolly well not going to be run in," said Bunter. "After all I've done for you, Mauly—"

"Bunter, old man, you're a giddy surprise-packet!" grinned Lord Mauleverer. "There's more in you than

meets the eye—though there's a lot that meets the eye, by Jove! Flip—if his name's Flip—isn't goin' to be rua in."

"Chokey's the proper place for a thief!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Yaas, but there's such a thing as temperin' justice with jolly old mercy, and all that, you know!" said Lord Mauleverer. "If Bunter's started doin' good deeds in his giddy old age I'm not the man to stop him. Bunter, old bean, I'll tell Porson to fix up a room for your friend, and you can keep him here till the end of the vac. if you like."

"He won't stay so long as that," said Johnny Bull sarcastically. "He will bunk in the night, with anything he can lay hands on."

"Oh gad!"

Flip's face was crimson.

"Oh, sir, I wouldn't go for to pinch anything here!" he exclaimed. "Not from a friend of Mr. Bunter's, sir."

"Stick to that!" grinned Lord Mauleverer. "Better chuck up pinchin' altogether—it's frightfully bad form."

"Honesty is the cracked pitcher that saves a bird in hand from going longest to the well, as the English proverb remarks," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

"Oh, swipes!" ejaculated Flip, apparently surprised by that proverb.

"You leave him to me," said Bunter loftily. "I've got a lot of moral influence, as you know. Look how you fellows have improved since you've known me."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Well, I think—" began Johnny Bull, with a grim look of disfavour at the vagrant.

"Can it, old bean!" interrupted Wharton. "It's a queer bizney, but Bunter seems to have acted decently for once—and it's not a bad idea to give that kid a chance."

"I jolly well think—"

"Come on!" said Bob; and he dragged Johnny away before he could state what he thought.

Billy Bunter was left with his protegee, both in a relieved frame of mind. Johnny Bull, whose ideas and beliefs were as fixed as the laws of the Medes and Persians, continued in his opinion that a pickpocket ought to be handed over to the police. But the rest of the Co. agreed with Lord Mauleverer that it was a time for tempering justice with mercy, and Johnny grunted, and held his peace.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Generous!

"H AVING saved that kid's life—"

"Sing it over again to us!" said Bob Cherry sarcastically.

"Having saved his life—"

"Give us a rest!" suggested Frank Nugent.

"Having saved his life—"

"Oh gad!" groaned Lord Mauleverer.

"Having saved his life," said Billy Bunter, for the fourth time, "it's up to me to see him through!"

"Oh!"

It was nearly a week since Flip had been landed at Mauleverer Towers. He was still there.

Lord Mauleverer had no objection, and his uncle and aunt had been very kind to the queer little vagrant.

And Johnny Bull had to admit that the waif had not disappeared overnight with valuables in his pockets.

Flip's manners and customs were hardly suited to a residence like Mauleverer Towers. The Greyfriars fellows

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took him rather as a joke. Bunter had generously supplied him with a complete new outfit of clothes—carefully selected from Mauly's extensive wardrobe. They hung rather loosely on the waif, but undoubtedly it was a change for the better. Washed and combed and decently dressed, Flip could hardly be recognised as the dingy, tattered vagrant who had pinched Mauly's wallet that foggy afternoon a week ago.

It was now the last day of Harry Wharton & Co.'s stay with their noble pal. On the morrow they were to return to their various homes, to get ready for the new term at Greyfriars.

Billy Bunter, extended comfortably if not gracefully in Mauly's most comfortable armchair before the log fire in the old armoury after lunch, with his fat thumbs in the armholes of one of Mauly's nicest waistcoats, was talking. For the umpteenth time Bunter referred to the fact that he had saved the life of the waif. But, apparently, he had also something else to say this time. Bunter had been thinking—an unusual proceeding on Bunter's part—which had led to unusual results—as the chums of Greyfriars were about to learn.

"Oh, you're going to see him through, are you?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I think it's up to me," said Bunter. "That kid's never had a chance. Well, he's going to have one! You see, he's grateful. Not like you fellows."

"What?"

"Well, look at all I've done for you chaps!" said Bunter. "Now, are you grateful? I ask you!"

"Fathead!"

"Even Mauly isn't what I should call properly grateful, though I saved him from that kidnapper—"

"Oh dear!"

"That kid," said Bunter impressively, "is grateful. Well, when the lower classes are grateful, I believe in treating 'em well."

"Idiot!"

"You can call a fellow names," said Bunter calmly. "But you're not going to stop me being kind and generous. Generosity is my long suit—and I simply can't help thinking of others. Selfish fellows like you chaps wouldn't understand it—but there it is."

"Yo gods!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Look at the kid!" said Bunter. "Dragged up in a slum, taught to steal as soon as he could walk—and at the same time he's keen on learning things. He's even picked up Latin from some boosy old Oxford man who's come a cropper and lives in Puggins' Alley. I've been helping him with Latin—at least, I've been going to. Well, why shouldn't that kid have a chance?"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob.

"Are you going to take him to Bunter Court," asked Johnny Bull, "or are you going to get him adopted by one of your titled relations?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've thought of that," said Bunter calmly. "But I've finally decided that he's going to Greyfriars."

The six juniors jumped.

"Greyfriars!" yelled Bob.

"Why not?" said Bunter. "He's keen on learning, and a school, after all, is a place where fellows are supposed to learn things. The beaks ought to be glad to have a fellow there who really wants to mug up Latin. There's no such fellow at Greyfriars at present, so far as I know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And is he going to pinch the Head's gold watch and put it up the spout to pay his fees?" asked Johnny Bull.

"And is the old bean he calls Brandy-Face going to take him there and introduce him to the Head?" asked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've thought that out," said Bunter. "Mauly's uncle can recommend him to the Head. He would do it if Mauly asked him."

"Great gad!"

"As for fees," said Bunter, "I shall see to that!"

"Has your postal order come?" asked Johnny Bull, with deep sarcasm.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle," said Bunter, "but I mean it. I'm going to see the kid's fees paid, if Mauly's uncle can get him planted at Greyfriars. In the circumstances, considering that I saved Mauly from a kidnapper who was trying to stick him for a thousand pounds, it's up to Mauly to lend me the money."

"Hundreds of pounds!" gasped Bob.

"What's money between friends?" said Bunter airily.

"On crikey!"

"Mauly's got lots of money! I'm not the fellow, of course, to ask for a reward for saving Mauly from a kidnapper. Still, there's such a thing as gratitude. After all I've done for Mauly he can't refuse, can you, Mauly?"

"Oh, holy snake!" said Lord Mauleverer, gazing at Bunter.

"That's settled, then!" said Bunter.

"That kid talks pretty queer English; but I can tell you he's all right for the Second or Third Form at Greyfriars—a long way ahead of most of the fags in a lot of things. A week with a good tutor will work wonders, to. Mauly can pay for the tutor."

"Help!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

The Famous Five stared at Bunter. Evidently the fat Owl had made up his mind to be generous—on his own lines!

"He will want a school outfit, and all that!" pursued Bunter. "It will cost money. Mauly can stand it—can't you, Mauly?"

"Oh, great gad!"

"Well, that's settled—what?" said Bunter. "Speak to your uncle, Mauly, as soon as you can, and get it fixed about taking the kid to the school. Money arrangements I leave to you."

"Thanks!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Having saved the kid's life, it's up to me to be kind and generous to him and give him a chance," said Bunter. "You fellows can cackle, but I mean it. You can jeer as much as you like, but you'll never alter my generous nature. I'm going to tell the kid now."

Billy Bunter heaved his weight out of the armchair and rolled out of the armoury.

The Famous Five looked at Lord Mauleverer. There was quite an extraordinary expression on his lordship's face.

"Well," said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath, "Bunter takes the cake—the whole sultana cake! Isn't he the jolly old limit?"

"The fact is—" said Lord Mauleverer slowly.

"You fribjous ass, Mauly!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "You're not thinking of letting that cheeky fat porpoise get away with it, are you?"

"Well, the fact is, you know, Bunter's rather surprised me," said Lord Mauleverer. "He did save me from the kidnapper, you know, and I'd do a good deal to hear the last of it. I'd have stood him a motor-bike as a reward if he'd asked me—or anythin' else. But he's askin' somethin' for somebody else, and I really think—"

"Well, it's rather a change for Bunter to be thinking of anybody but



Bump! "Yaroooh!" There was a terrific yell as Bunter landed on the platform. The next moment Johnny Bull's powerful grip was on Flip, and he went whirling after Bunter. "That's that!" growled Johnny, as there came the shriek of a whistle and the train began to move.

W. G. Bunter," chuckled Bob Cherry. "But—"

"After all, why not?" said Lord Mauleverer.

"You're not going to do it?" roared Johnny Bull.

"I'm goin' to think about it, old bean."

"Fathead!"

"Thanks!" said Lord Mauleverer imperturbably.

And when Harry Wharton & Co. left Mauleverer Towers the next day his lordship was still thinking about it. And they wondered whether, when the new term began at Greyfriars, they would see a new boy at the old school; undoubtedly the most extraordinary new boy that ever had come to the ancient scholastic foundation.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Back to Greyfriars!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's voice was not exactly musical, but it was powerful, and it rang almost from end to end of Courtfield Station.

It was the first day of term, and the platform was crowded with fellows returning to the old school.

Bob Cherry, hanging out of a carriage door at a dangerous angle, waved his cap and shouted across the crowd.

He was looking for his friends, but for the moment the Co. were not in sight. But among the swarming mob of fellows, seniors and juniors, Bob had sighted a rather diminutive form, and a face that made him jump as he sighted it. Since leaving Mauly's place he had almost forgotten Flip. He was reminded of him now.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob.

"Don't make that row, Cherry!"

"What?"

"Shut up!" said Coker of the Fifth severely. "Behave yourself, you noisy fag!"

It was just like Coker! Coker had a short way with fags, and even on the first day of term, before the fellows had reached the school, Coker had to butt in.

Bob Cherry did not reply in words.

He reached out a hand, and Coker's hat went spinning.

Coker jumped.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated. "You cheeky young sweep— Look out! Don't tread on that hat, Potter, you ass! Pick that hat up, Greene, you dummy! Leave that hat alone, Smith, you young scoundrel!"

The hat had floated to the feet of Vernon-Smith of the Remove. He promptly "passed" it, and it flew on.

Coker gave Bob Cherry a glare; but he had no time to deal with Bob, he had to recapture his hat. He rushed after it.

"Pass!" yelled Hobson of the Shell.

The hat passed on.

"Leave that hat alone!" roared Coker. "Pick up that hat! I'll jolly well whop you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's roar of wrath elicited only a roar of merriment. Fellows passed the hat on all sides. It dropped at the feet of the diminutive youth whom Bob had sighted in the crowd and shouted to. Bob shouted to him again.

"Pass that tile, Flip!"

Flip looked round, caught sight of Bob hanging out of the train, and waved his hand and grinned. Then he "passed" the hat. As it flew from his foot, Coker of the Fifth reached the spot

—too late to seize the hat, but in plenty of time to seize the new junior. And he seized him promptly by the ear.

"Ow! Leggo!" roared Flip.

"You young rascal, that's my hat!" gasped Coker. "Now go after it and pick it up, or I'll jolly well whop you! See?"

"Ow! 'Ere, you leggo!" howled Flip. "Don't you pull a bloke's ear, you blinking himage! 'Ands orf!"

Coker, in sheer astonishment, released Flip's ear. Flip, to all appearance, was a Greyfriars fag like the rest; he was clean and tidy and well-dressed, utterly unlike the Flip first seen by Harry Wharton & Co. in Hampshire. But his variety of the English language had not altered, and it came as a surprise to Coker.

"What?" gasped Coker. "What the thump— Who the dickens are you?"

"Name of Flip, old covey," answered the new junior. "Who are you?"

"Flip! Your name's Flip?"

"Jest that! What's yourn?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Coker. "I mistook you for a Greyfriars kid—"

"Jest what I am," answered Flip; "and I tell you, covey, that if you stick your blooming paws on my blinking year, I'll jolly well 'ack your blessed shins and chance it! Who are you when you're at 'ome, I'd like to know?"

"Fick up that hat!" roared Coker.

"Go and fry your face!" retorted Flip.

"Oh crumbs!" gurgled Coker. "What sort of a merchant is this they're sending to Greyfriars? What's the school coming to? Pick up that hat!"

"Rats!"

Horace Coker's grasp descended again THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,247.

on the new fag. In the grasp of a mighty man like Coker of the Fifth Flip was nowhere, but in some dexterous way that Coker did not fathom he hooked his leg in Coker's, upset him, and sat him down. Coker sat with a heavy bump, and Flip dodged away through the crowd towards the train.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "This way, kid!"

Flip reached the carriage, and Bob gave him a hand in as Coker, breathless and enraged, rushed in pursuit. Bob Cherry blocked the doorway as Coker arrived.

"Keep out, old bean!" he said. "All seats taken! Hallo, hallo, hallo! This way, you fellows!"

The Co. appeared in the crowd, cheerfully shoving and elbowing their way to the carriage.

"I—I'll smash you!" gasped Coker. "I'll——" He fairly hurled himself at Bob Cherry.

"Pile in, you men!" yelled Bob. Coker was too much for Bob on his own. But the Co. arrived in time. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Hurree Singh and Johnny Bull, grasped the great Coker as he grasped Bob, and the last state of Horace Coker was worse than his first.

Coker indeed hardly knew what was happening to him. He was rolled and bumped, and bumped and rolled, and left for dead, as it were, as the cheery Co. crowded into the carriage. The hapless Coker did not seem likely to get his second wind before the train started.

"Here we are again!" said Harry Wharton. "Hallo, who's that?" He stared at the grinning fag.

"Me, sir!" said Flip cheerfully. "Flip!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "The Flipfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "He has turned up like an esteemed bad penny."

"Ope you ain't sorry to see me, sir!" said Flip.

"Glad to see you, old bean," said Nugent, laughing.

"The gladfulness is preposterous." "You're not going to Greyfriars?" demanded Johnny Bull, staring at the one-time waif of Puggins' Alley.

"I jest am!" retorted Flip, quick to scent hostility. "Wot you got to say about it, I'd blooming well like to know?"

Johnny Bull grunted, and sat down without replying. Johnny could not forget the episode of Lord Mauleverer's wallet if the other fellows could.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Roll away, porpoise!" bawled Bob Cherry, as a fat figure arrived at the carriage, and a pair of large spectacles glimmered in. "All seats taken! Roll off!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——" "This way, Smithy!" shouted Bob. "Kick Bunter out of the way and jump in!"

"Yaroooh!" The Bounder cheerfully kicked Bunter out of the way and stepped in, followed by Tom Redwing, Peter Todd and Tom Brown, Squiff and Hazeldene, followed, and Mark Linley and Wibley. The carriage was rather full by that time—in fact, over-full. The train was always crowded on such occasions.

Vernon-Smith stared at Flip. "Chuck that fag out and make more room!" he suggested.

"Oh, let him rip!" answered Bob. "We know the kid."

"Oh, all right!" "I don't mind standin', sir, if you want to squat," said Flip politely to the

Bounder. "Take the blooming seat."

Smithy stared. "You for Greyfriars?" he asked. "Jest that, old covey."

"Great pip! Does the Head know?" "Ha, ha, ha!" "The blooming Ead does know, if you're skewries about it!" retorted Flip. "I been to the school in the 'olidays to see 'im, and it was all fixed up right and proper, and I can tell you the old bloke in the gown was werry nice to a cove, and chance it. And if you don't blooming well like it, you can blooming well lump it, see?"

"Help!" gasped Smithy. "Ha, ha, ha!" "I say, you fellows!" Bunter's fat squeak was heard at the door again. "I'm coming in! That beast Bolsover major pitched me out of my carriage—he said pigs ought to go in the guard's van, the cheeky cad! I say, you fellows, make room for an old pal!"

"Roll off, fatty! No room for porpoises!"

"Look here, you beast, I'm coming in!" roared Bunter.

"It's Master Bunter!" exclaimed Flip. "You let 'im in! Wot a blooming cheek you've got, not 'arf, keeping 'im out! 'Ere, you get out of Master Bunter's way, and blow you!"

And the waif, grasping Bob Cherry from behind by the collar, jerked him backwards so suddenly that Bob sprawled over among an ocean of feet, with an astonished yell.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter. The doorway thus cleared, Billy Bunter clambered in. There was no room to get in without treading on Bob Cherry's sprawling form; and perhaps that was why Bunter trod on him. Certainly he trod rather hard, and there was a gasping howl from Bob as he crumpled under the weight.

"Who's going to give me a seat?" asked Bunter.

"Owl Gerroff!"

"One of you blokes give Master Bunter a seat!" said Flip. "Oo the swipes are you to sit down and leave Master Bunter standing?"

Johnny Bull rose to his feet. But it was not to give Bunter a seat. He grasped Bunter with both hands and hurled him forth. There was a bump on the platform as Bunter landed, and a terrific roar.

"Yarooooh!" "Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry, scrambling up. "Owl! I'm winded! I'll jolly well——"

"Stand clear!" said Johnny Bull. Flip clutched wrathfully at Johnny, as Bunter went whirling out. The next moment Johnny's powerful grasp was on him, and he went whirling after Bunter. Bunter had fallen on the platform, which was hard. Flip fell on Bunter, who was softer.

"That's that!" growled Johnny Bull. There was a shriek of a whistle. Porters slammed doors along the train. The train began to move.

Billy Bunter and Flip sat up, side by side as it went. Coker of the Fifth, still struggling for his second wind, shook a feeble fist after it. The train rattled off for Friardale.

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter. "Oh swipes!" gurgled Flip. And the train was gone.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter the Benefactor!

"YOU young ass!" "Oh, sir!" gasped Flip. "Knocking a fellow over——" hooted Bunter.

"Oh, Master Bunter!" "And falling on him——" "It was that bloke——" expostulated Flip.

"Clumsy young ass!" Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet. He glared at Flip through his big spectacles.

Bunter had hit the platform rather hard. It had not hurt the platform; but it seemed to have damaged Bunter a little. Certainly, it was not Flip's fault. Flip had not wanted to land on Bunter's waistcoat. Still, he had landed there, and Bunter was annoyed.

"I've a jolly good mind to kick you!" growled Bunter.

"I don't mind, sir!" said Flip. "Kick me as 'ard as you like, sir!" Bunter blinked at him.

He had not seen Flip for some days, having left that hopeful youth at Mauleverer Towers when he went home. But he was aware that all arrangements had been made for Flip to pass a term at Greyfriars. Whether the waif stayed longer than that depended on circumstances—and Flip!

The fat Owl's podgy brow cleared as he blinked at the new fag. Becoming a Greyfriars fellow had not—as yet—made any difference to Flip's devotion to his benefactor—and his admiration of him. Bunter, to him, was the bountiful youth who had shown him unheard-of kindness, and had been instrumental in lifting him out of the slough of poverty and want, and placing him in new circumstances that were positively dazzling to the one-time waif of Puggins' Alley.

Exactly how Bunter had brought it about Flip did not know, and Bunter was not the fellow to tell him. For the present, at least, Billy Bunter was something like a god in the simple eyes of the little ragamuffin.

And Bunter, realising it, smiled instead of frowning. Nobody had ever admired Bunter before. The novelty of it was grateful and comforting.

"All right, kid!" said Bunter, with a gracious wave of a fat hand. "After all, it wasn't your fault. It was that pig Cherry! I'll jolly well lick him for it when I get to the school!"

"I'll 'old your 'at, sir," said Flip. "We've lost the train," said Bunter. "It's half an hour to the next. There's a buffet here. I dare say you can eat something after your journey here, kid?"

"I could peck a bit, sir," assented Flip.

"Well, I'll stand you something," said Bunter. "I'm going to be your friend at Greyfriars, Flip."

"You're very kind, sir," said Flip. "But I knowed you was the kindest-hearted bloke that ever was, sir."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" gasped Bunter. "Quite! Let's get along to the buffet; I'm rather hungry." He ran his hands through his pockets. "Dash it all! I've left my money at home."

"Ave you, sir?" said Flip. "I've got some, sir. The old bloke with the glass eye tipped me a 'ole pound note, sir."

Bunter's blink was quite affectionate as he turned his big spectacles on Flip.

"Well, the fact is, I can hardly borrow money of a fag," he said. "It isn't done in the Remove, you know. Still, just to oblige you, kid, I'll do it—for

(Continued on page 28.)

OOM, the TERRIBLE!



HOW THE STORY STARTED.

Oom, the Terrible, is a Flying-Bandit who aims to be master of the world. He finds two formidable foes in Tom Dare and his brother Rick, who have sworn to bring him to book. Tom succeeds in wrecking the special wireless apparatus which controls Oom's aeroplanes, and sets up an even more powerful one himself. In averting an explosion, however, the young inventor is injured, and Rick is left to carry on. Garbed in Tom's specially prepared flying-cloaks, Rick, together with Alf, a Cockney engineer, Ham, a huge negro, and Silas Merger, a millionaire, wades gently down into Oom's stronghold at the dead of night. They succeed in silencing two anti-aircraft guns and their crews before the alarm is raised.

"It's four against a garrison now," says Rick, "and we've got to look slippery!"

(Now read on.)

Fighting Against Odds!

THE next second a searchlight leapt into being, and Rick and his party were standing focused in the powerful white light. Then a bugle sounded, and out from the guard-room came the double guard, buckling on their weapons as they came.

The searchlight made everything as bright as day, and in a moment rifles began to crack, and a hail of bullets pattered around the intruders.

"Sufferin' crows! The half-hour's up, and the plane will be landing here in a minute!" said Rick. "They'll just focus her with the searchlights, and pot her like a sitting pheasant. If that chuckle-headed engineer will only keep away for a bit!"

But the man had conscientiously obeyed orders, little dreaming of the hornet's-nest he was flying into.

Suddenly two more searchlights sprang into position, wobbled skywards for a second, found some moving shape up in the sky, and next moment the wireless plane was outlined like a silver fish.

"Come on, boys! We've got to silence that gun, or they'll bring the plane down, and it'll be all up for us!" Rick yelled, heedless of who might hear him now.

"I see a-comin', Mass' Rick!" chortled Ham, who was in the midst of a life and death struggle with two hefty guards. "I jest gotta li'l bit ob businay hyar, den Ah'll come right along!"

He lifted the two men, one in each hand, and with a mighty effort swung

them off their feet and heaved them clean over the gun emplacement on to the rocks below, where they lay still.

Then the little party dashed out of the rays of the light back amongst the rocks, and so towards the anti-aircraft gun which was belching out shrapnel as fast as it could be loaded. But, running towards them in an attempt to cut them off before they reached the gun, came the double guard from the guard-room.

"Beat these fellers to it!" gasped Rick, as he leapt forward with a new burst of speed. "We may just do it yet!"

But no sooner were the words out of his mouth than there came a loud cheer from the other side of the basin, and a searchlight wobbled madly in the air.

Rick looked up, and, with a groan, saw that the wireless plane had been badly hit, for she was sliding down nose first, with only the madly spinning stabiliser holding her up.

"They've got her, and we're cut off!" he shouted. "Now, boys, we've got to fight all in—for we're prisoners here, and outnumbered ten to one. Let 'em have it, and fight to the death!"

Rick snapped out an order for them to scatter, and they all made a dart for cover as the searchlight wavered this way and that, trying to pick them out. He knew full well that their only chance lay in picking the guard off and giving them no chance to retaliate or drive them from cover.

The guard could only detect where their opponents were by the flashes from

their rifles, and thus had to blaze away, hoping for the best, whilst they themselves were exposed to a pitiless fire in the full glare of the great lights which made it lighter than day. Added to this, they had no idea of what force was against them, as Rick and the others kept on dodging about from one place to another. And as they were all armed with repeating magazine rifles, it sounded to the guard as if their force was ten times larger than it actually was.

"Where's Alf?" snapped Rick, as for a moment he and Ham occupied the same shelter.

"Dunno, sah. Ah hab not cast eyes upon him since we had dat li'l scrap up at dat last gun. Don' yo' go worritin' none about dat feller, sah; he hab as many lives as a Thomas cat, an' is as arful as a waggin-load ob blue monkees wid red w'iskers! Got yo', by hokey! Dat were a good shot, sah, tho' Ah says it what shouldn't!"

This was as one of the guard incautiously stepped into the full rays of the great light and next second staggered back with a bullet from the big negro's rifle through his shoulder.

It certainly was a wonderfully rapid snap-shot, and it was by this rapid and implacable snap-shooting that the concealed raiders were putting a scare up their opponents, who could have wiped them out in five seconds if only they could have seen them.

Evidently the big plane had "copped it" in either propeller or engines, as

she could no longer fly; but the Dare stabiliser kept her from nose-diving, and she was floating gradually downwards. But she hovered, twenty feet or so above the ground in the full glare of the lights, an absolutely sitting shot for the gun which Rick expected to hear go off every minute.

But instead of the sharp explosion which would crumple up the magnificent plane, there came a confused sound of shouting and fighting from the gun emplacement of that last platform.

The reason was that Alf Higgs had taken a sudden fancy to have a little private war on his own.

He had seen the big plane after being once hit come settling down like a wounded bird, making an absolutely perfect mark for even the worst gunner. This was absolutely painful to Alf, for since he had learnt all there was to learn about the great plane, had handled her engines himself, and flown her, he had formed a great affection for the beautiful piece of mechanism, and to see her knocked to smithereens was rather too much.

He dodged in and out amongst the rocks, gradually working his way towards the gun that menaced the flying craft. But just as he was within twenty feet of the gun, there was a deafening report, and a cheer came from the crew.

"Thort so!" he muttered. "Th' perishin' garlic-eatin' baboons! Got 'er like a sittin' partridge, an' they'll be as proud of it as a dorg with two tails! Gee-sakes! I wonder if I c'd do it whilst they're starin' hup inter th' bright light?"

The lean little Cockney could move with an amazing speed when he liked, and the way he got over and round the rocks was amazing. Some he took in his stride like a hurdler, some he dodged round, while others he just dived at and scrambled over in anything but a graceful fashion. Still, he got there!

The gun crew were absorbed in their latest feat, gazing intensely upwards in the brilliant light, watching their target, and all unthinking of any danger close at hand.

Alf slid on to the platform like a shadow, and before the men were even aware of his presence, he had brought the heavy butt of his automatic crashing down on the skull of the gunner himself.

The man dropped with hardly a sound, and in the noise of the firing, which Rick and the others were still keeping up, his movements were drowned.

"Give them another dose, Pedro!" cried one of the men, dancing about with excitement, and thinking he was speaking to the gunner, so intent was he on watching. "Give it to them, camarado! We have them now, dios gratia!"

"So 'ave I!" breathed Alf, bringing his automatic-butt down on the base of the fellow's neck so that he dropped like a policed bullock. "Put yer blinkin' 'ands up, th' rest o' you talkin' fish, or I'll blow yer turnip 'eads orf!"

His gun spat out as one of the men sought to turn a rifle on him, and the man dropped, with a stifled scream.

"Drop them guns, pronto, yer pigeon-toed rapsallions!" he ordered. "And reach for the sky, or I'll blow yer little tummies inter yer backs!"

He menaced them with his automatic, and hopped from one to the other like a demented flea, snatching their weapons

away under threat of his own, and urging them towards the edge of the platform, which was twenty feet or more above the floor of the basin.

"Nah, then, 'op it! Hover yer goes!" he yelled.

And, with a well-planted kick in the solar plexus, he sent each man flying over the low wall to fall on the hard ground of the basin and lie there, either cowed or unconscious.

Then he jumped for the searchlights, and deflected the one that had been focused on Rick and the others, to the huddled crowd of men who were watching from the opposite side of the basin. The other two he also swung round until the whole of the guard was standing in the intense rays, which blinded them and made them a conspicuous mark for the rifles of the raiders.

Then he jumped for the gun itself, working the levers until the muzzle was depressed, and held the crowd up, absolutely covered by their own gun.

"By hokey! It 'ud serve em jolly well right if I let 'em ave it, but I cawn't mow 'em dahn in cold blood! If they starts any funny stuff, though, they'll get it hot and proper!"

There was a megaphone lying by the side of the gun, and Alf put this to his lips and bellowed in mingled Spanish and Cockney:

"Hi, you crahd o' spiggotties, doncher try any funny business or I'll blow yer as full o' holes as a blinkin' sponge! Stand still an' do as ver told, or yer number's hup, pronto!"

"Stuff to give 'em!" came Rick's voice behind him. "That was a great move on your part, Alf, and you shall have a medal when we're out of this muddle. In another tick they'd have riddled the plane and blotted out our chaps; but I think old Joe's got her under control, and ne'll soon have things put to rights. Hallo, no you don't, my friend!"

His rifle spat viciously, and a man who had been trying to sneak back into the guard-room dropped, with a bullet through his leg.

"Wot did I tell yer?" shouted Alf through the megaphone. "If yer ain't got sense enuff to do as yer bid, yer'll git ginger served 'ot! Nah then, form single line abreast, an' look slippy!"

Another shot over their heads soon made the men realise that Alf meant business, and they hastened to obey the orders of their unseen foes. They were in a quandary, for they did not know whether the stronghold had been attacked by half a dozen or half a hundred.

Anyway, they were not taking any chances.

"Now, starting with the man on the right, advance one step and put down your weapons!" Rick ordered through the megaphone. "Keep the gun trained on 'em, Alf. One!"

The first man stepped forward and laid his rifle on the ground. Then number two followed, and so on until it came to the turn of the sixth man to step forward.

This was a big, loose-limbed fellow whom Rick thought he recognised as one of Oom's satellites. He had a bandage round his jaw, as if he had recently met with an accident, and Ham chuckled to himself as he recognised him to be the man he had kicked in the face when he was escaping with Tom.

The man cast a sullen glance towards the platform as he placed a rifle and

six-gun down; then, as he was returning to the line, Rick yelled again:

"Hi, you! Put that other six-gun down and look lively!"

"I ain't got but th' one!" replied the man.

The next moment he stepped out of the blinding rays and took a quick glance up at the platform. At the same time his hand slid up to his armpit and he bellowed:

"Come on, boys! Rush 'em! There's on'y two of 'em—they're bluffin' us!"

As he stepped forward, however, Silas Merger's rifle cracked from somewhere behind in the darkness, and the fellow fell, as a heavy Navy revolver dropped from his grasp.

"Bluffin', are we?" thundered the bass voice of the old Injun fighter. "Try somethin' else, an' see what th' bluff's like! Come on an' try somethin'—that's all!"

Rick and his companions had no further trouble with the men, for they were uncertain how many more crack marksmen might be concealed amongst the rocks, and the man who had fallen had been the only fellow with any spirit amongst them.

Ham sprang out and walked down the line collecting the weapons, gripping broadly at the men and placing the shooting-irons in the wireless plane which had now come to rest.

"Take keer ob dem, Joe," he said to the engineer. "We don't want 'em seein' we hab plenty ob our own, and dey're bad t'ings for chillun to play with. Dey might hurt demselves!"

"Now, then, where's Oom?" asked Rick through the megaphone of the nearest man.

"Dunno, boss. We ain't set eyes on him since—"

He swung round suddenly as a whirring sound came from the direction of the house and a shadowy something shot upwards into the air.

"Quick, Alf! Jump to the gun!" Rick yelled. "It's Oom!"

But Alf had depressed the gun so far down that he could not raise it in time.

Rick sprang for the searchlight and focused the small De Hay Tiger plane. But by the time Alf had swung the muzzle up the tiny bomber was off, whilst the hail of shrapnel peppered the swirling air behind it.

"Yer asked for Oom?" shouted the man satirically. "Thar he goes, as usual, savin' his own dirty skin an' leavin' us to face th' moosic. You can say good-bye to him for keeps!"

A Clever Ruse!

HOW long before we can get her into flying order again, Alf? Rick asked anxiously, as they went over the wireless plane and examined her injuries.

"Goodness only knows until we take th' blinkin' hengine dahn and thoroughly examine it," replied the Cockney glumly. "Ain't it just blinkin' stinkin' 'ard luck? But I reckon it'll take 'arf a day at least afore she can take orf ag'in, eh, Joe?"

"All that. They seem to have hit her all places at once," said the other engineer. "The wireless controls have been peppered through and through, and if it hadn't been for the stabiliser we'd have crashed. Her under-carriage is smashed, owing to the severe bumping when she landed."

"Aw, shurrup! Yer make me tired!" said the Cockney disgustedly. "Yer hunder-carriage oughter 'ave broke, too, at birth. Cheer up, Dismal Dennis. If

I cawn't put 'er to rights in 'arf a day, call me any jolly old name you like."

"That's the stuff to give 'em, old man!" cried Rick, clapping the little engineer on the back. "I know you'll do your best, and, anyway, it's not much use chasing Oom until we know where he's gone to. He's got the wide world to fly into if his petrol holds out, and I bet he's filled up from his private store—By jinks!"

From the tall mast above the power-house there came the faint, crackling sound which told of a wireless message being sent, and he was across the square and into the power-house in two shakes.

In the operating-room above he could hear the voice of Gonzalez, the operator, speaking hurriedly. As Rick swung open the door and tiptoed up the stairs in his silent-soled shoes he could hear every word distinctly.

He chuckled to himself as he remembered how Tom had taken the operator's place and fooled Oom.

"By gosh, if I could take a leaf out of old Tommy's book I might find out where Oom is bound for. It'd be a feather in my cap to lay the scoundrel by the heels, after all."

"Si, senor, it ees so," the Spanish operator was saying, almost bowing and scraping to the instrument as if his tyrant master was there in person. "It seems that they must have come in your plane and found some means of getting into el campo without our sentries seeing them. Si, senor, ver-ry bad! Eet was only by accident that they were discovered. Eet was my cousin Nachez who fire the gun that brought the plane down, senor. Si, my cousin. You were saying, senor—"

But if the "senor" had anything interesting to say, poor Gonzalez was unlucky again, for the headphones were snatched away from him, and a thundering belt under the ear laid him out on the floor.

Rick next leapt for some lengths of wire and bound the unfortunate operator tightly, rolling him under the desk, as Tom had done before him.

Then he adjusted the headphones and heard a well-known guttural voice.

"Hello, hello! Donner und blitzten, what is wrong with you again, Gonzalez? Cannot you keep contact?"

"A thousand pardons, senor, but a bullet came in through the window and shattered a wire. My cousin Nachez—"

"To blazes with your cousin! Listen to me!" howled Oom. And Rick grinned to himself at the flow and colour of the Flying-Bandit's vocabulary. "Listen, and listen carefully, or by the bones of Columbus I'll skin you alive when next we meet! Creep down to the engine-room that supplies the power for electric light and smash the dynamos, so that they'll all be in the dark. That will cause delay, so that they will not be able to get the wireless plane started again, and will give me a good start. Comprehend that, Gonzalez?"

"Si, senor!" purred Rick in the Spaniard's greasy tones. "After—"

"Then do as I told you, blockhead!" hissed Oom. "Go to my office and open the safe with the combination you know of."

"A million pardons, senor," stammered Rick nervously, "but in the excitement I have forgot the word, the combina—"

"Ach, was there ever such a dolt! The word is Beryl. Remember the name I told you of—Beryl, the daughter of Merger. Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" echoed Rick faintly. "What are you grinning at, fool?" thundered Oom. "Listen, and obey to

the letter if you value your skin. The key is in the little secret apartment underneath the top drawer of my desk. The plans I need are in the small cash-box at the bottom of the safe. Bring them with you to your brother's place. I shall expect you this day week, and see to it that you do not fail!"

"You—you veel stay at the house of my—my brozzer until I arrive, senor?" stammered Rick, playing for time.

"Blister you for an idiot ape!" howled Oom. "House? What house? Since when has Monte Pedrillo, the bandit, lived in a house? Ach, dolt, if he had as thick a skull as his brother, would Black Pedrillo be the most noted bandit in the Andes and worthy to be the friend of Oom, the Terrible? Nein, he would be in a lunatic asylum!"

"Your pardon, senor," stammered Rick, still sparring for time and information, "but since ze blow on my poor head zat ze man Tomasso Daro geove me my memory has been much at fault, and ze pain— Ah, senor, forgive me! My brozzer has so many hiding-places zat—"

"Blister your empty skull, I sometimes wish that Daro had battered it

a rat. "Shall none accompany me, senor?"

"Who should, fool?" rasped Oom. "Do you think I would share the secret of the hidden passage with any but you and Maleze? Ach, that reminds me! That monkey is past his usefulness, and must be disposed of. Listen! When you have got the plans, lock the door on Maleze, who is still ill from his wounds and cannot move. Then set fire to the house from the cellar, which is full of wood soaked with petrol. The little monster has learnt too many of my affairs, and may be dangerous. I have found out that some of the fools have been teaching him English, and he has dared to threaten—well, never mind. I have had to correct him many times. See—"

Suddenly Rick sensed a movement behind him, and did a lightning dive to his left. It was well he did so, for a billet of wood crashed on to the instrument board which would have scattered his brains had he not moved.

He twisted round to grapple with Gonzalez, who had managed to free himself from his bonds and was foaming with rage at the lad's cool impersonation of himself.

Rick was no mean wrestler himself, but he found that he was opposed by a man who had learnt all the tricks of the craft, with a few sneaking additions of his own.

The Spaniard was sturdily built, and his fury lent him strength.

But Rick had studied under a little Jap wrestler who had taught him some of the tricks of ju-jutsu, and seizing an opening, got a grip on the man that paralysed him, and next moment Gonzalez was lying on the floor, groaning with a broken arm.

"Phew, that was touch and go!" murmured Rick. "This beggar had better be locked up along with the others of Oom's gang. Now to try to find Oom's secret way out!"

Together with Silas Merger, he took his way to the big house where Oom had established himself in luxury.

Rick, of course, had been to the "office" before, and easily found his way there again.

"I reckon we'd better tread pretty warily," he whispered to Silas. "Remember what happened to Ham when he got playing about here. The wonder to me is that he didn't fire the place himself before he took off in the plane, but maybe he didn't have time."

"Wa'al, no, I guess he didn't!" said the millionaire dryly. "Gee, but he must be a nice specimen! Fancy condemnin' his poor leetle dwarf to be burnt up alive, jest as casual as thet, and him wounded in his service!"

"Yes, burning alive 'ud be too good for that skunk!" agreed Rick. "Fancy—that poor little creature must have been suffering agonies with his wounds all the time, and nobody to look after him. It 'ud only be common humanity for us to do what we can for the miserable little beast and mend him up a bit, eh?"

Silas shot a curious glance at the lad and gave him a pat on the back.

"You've sure got a heart, Rick," he said. "But have you forgotten that this sawed off freak tried to do you both in with his durned pizeded darts? That would have been a sticky kind o' death, accordin' to what th' doc said. I don't reckon he deserves much pity."

(Boys, you'll have the thrill of your life when you read next week's instalment of this powerful serial. Make a special point of ordering your MAGNER early—otherwise you may miss it!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,247.

HAVE YOU GOT YOUR PEN-KNIFE YET?

If not, see if you can cap this yarn which comes from John Stirling, of 16, Craigton Road, Glasgow, S.W.1. There's a Pocket-Knife for YOU if you can!



Magistrate: "Didn't I tell you I didn't want to see you here again?"

Prisoner: "Yes, sir; but the policeman here wouldn't believe that!"

in for keeps!" growled Oom. "I told you, oh, ass's head, that Monte has taken up his abode in the mountains above the Hacienda del Texado. We have a scheme to lift some of the wealthy Don's gold which he has acquired by means not entirely honest. Ha, ha!"

Again Rick pricked up his ears. The name of the wealthy Spanish cattle baron whose lands on the Peruvian border were larger than the British Isles was well known from end to end of the continent, and it was no secret that he had come by his vast wealth in many curious ways. So dog was going to eat dog in this case, and Oom and the Spanish brigand were out to rob the greater thief!

"At last I have persuaded your brother to have wireless fitted in his latest hiding-place, and we want you to come and operate, though I trust by that time your wits will be restored."

"Si, senor!" murmured Rick obediently, as a thought struck him. How was Gonzalez supposed to leave the basin? He was afraid to pretend ignorance lest the bandit should smell

BUNTER'S NIGHT OUT!*(Continued from page 23.)*

ounce. I'm expecting a postal order at Greyfriars to-morrow, and I'll square then—what?"

The pound note changed hands.

Flip beamed as he handed it over. He felt properly grateful to Bunter for doing him the favour of accepting it. Bunter beamed, too. He had arrived for the new term in his usual impecunious state, and he was prepared to do Flip favours like this to any extent.

In the station buffet Bunter ordered refreshments with his usual generosity. By careful calculation he made the bill come to exactly twenty shillings—his own share of the feed coming to about nineteen. He was looking happy and sticky and satisfied when he finished.

He had been busy for more than half an hour. Trains might come and go, engines shrieked, and doors slam, but Bunter was not likely to heed them when he was disposing of edibles. First things came first, second things second.

When he rolled out again with Flip the train was gone and the station was cleared of the Greyfriars crowd. Billy Bunter and Flip were the only ones remaining.

"Oh crumbs! We've lost the train!" said Bunter. He blinked meditatively at Flip. "The fact is, I generally take a taxi from Courtfield; it's only six shillings. If I hadn't left my money at home I'd stand you a taxi to the school, kid."

"I got a ten-shilling note, sir, that Mauleverer give me," said Flip.

Bunter shook his head.

"I couldn't let you stand the taxi," he said. "You see, you being a fag in a lower Form and me in the Remove, it couldn't be done."

Flip's face fell.

"But I'll tell you what," said Bunter, "you can lend me the ten-shilling note, and I'll settle out of my postal order to-morrow."

Flip brightened again.

"Here you are, sir."

Billy Bunter rolled cheerfully out to the taxi-rank, with Flip at his heels. He sat contentedly in the taxi, with Flip by his side, and they rolled off to Greyfriars School.

On the way Flip told him how Sir Reginald Brooke had taken him to the school to see the headmaster, and how the "old bloke in the gown" had been very kind; and how Mr. Twigg, the master of the Second, in whose Form he was to be placed, had also seemed a very kind old covey. To-day he had travelled from Hampshire with Lord Mauleverer, but he had lost his lordship in the crowd at Courtfield.

"Which I ain't sorry for, seeing as

I've met you, sir," added Flip, beaming. And Bunter grinned complacently.

At the school Bunter dismissed the taxi, slipping the four shillings change from the note into his pocket.

He walked up to the House with Flip, who stared round him with wide eyes. Flip had seen Greyfriars in its silent and deserted state during the vacation; but the school crowded with boys, humming with life and noise, on the first day of term was now and strange to him. He pressed rather close to Bunter as they went into the House, thankful that he had this kind and generous friend to stand by him on his first day in such new and strange surroundings.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Beast!"

Bob Cherry grinned and gave Flip a nod. Flip eyed him rather warily, but Bob seemed to have forgotten the incident in the train.

"So you've got in, fatty!" he said cheerily.

"I took a taxi," said Bunter, with dignity.

"You're late," said Bob.

"Quelch can wait!" sniffed Bunter.

"A fellow's not going to hurry himself on the first day of term."

Bob chuckled.

"I wasn't speaking of Quelch! Smithy's got a hamper open in his study—"

"Eh?"

"Tons of stuff—"

"Oh!"

"Buck up, or you'll be too late!" chuckled Bob, and he went on his way laughing.

Bunter made a bound for the staircase. If there was a hamper open in the Bunder's study the fat Owl was anxious to get on the scene. He knew Smithy's magnificent hampers.

"I—I say, sir—" stammered Flip. His kind and generous friend, who was to see him through his strange surroundings on his first day at Greyfriars, was vanishing as fast as his fat little legs could negotiate the stairs.

Bunter did not even hear.

He disappeared up the staircase, leaving Flip standing alone, shy and dismayed, in a throng of indifferent fellows.

"Oh swipes!" murmured Flip.

He stared wistfully after Bunter.

In the Bunder's study in the Remove a merry crowd had gathered round a hamper which was open, and from which Smithy handed out the good things right royally.

Billy Bunter was in that crowd—foremost in the fray, as it were. The fat Owl was too busy to remember Flip, or to wonder what had become of him. He had disappeared entirely from the recollection of bountiful Bunter.

THE END.

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!*(Continued from page 2.)*

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JUST before my space runs out, let me give you a few more examples of **THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE.**

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