The Best School Story of the Week is Inside!

The MAGNET 2D

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GOT TIME FOR A POW-WOW? THEN—

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.

I MUST say that the readers of the MAGNET are an adventure-loving lot of boys, because every week I get dozens of letters from chums who want to take up some particularly thrilling occupation. This week, for instance, I have received a large number of inquiries for information concerning

JOBS FOR BOYS ABROAD.

One reader, H. Philips, who gives no address, asks me if there really is a Foreign Legion, and how to go about joining it. Yes, there is a Foreign Legion, all right, but you cannot join it in England. The principal recruiting office is in Paris, and anyone who wishes to join must pay their own fare to Paris—and run the risk of not being accepted when he gets there!

I cannot advise any British boy, however, to join the fighting force of another country. I have visited Algeria myself, and I know something about the conditions under which the Foreign Legion exists. Apart from the gruelling climate, the iron discipline, and the hard work, the wages paid to a legionnaire are hardly likely to appeal to boys from this country. A few years ago a legionnaire was paid the magnificent(?) salary of one halfpenny per day! And he is not paid much more nowadays!

For that, the legionnaire has got to undergo hardships which only the very strongest of men can stand without "cracking up." Is it any wonder, therefore, that the Foreign Legion is generally composed of men who wish to hide themselves from the world? Any British boy worth his salt can find something better to do within the British Empire, and if this particular reader takes my advice, he will leave the Foreign Legion severely alone!

I know two men who were in the Foreign Legion. One was lucky enough to be transferred to the British Army during the Great War. The other did what many legionnaires do when they discover the truth. He deserted and got away from Algeria on a British ship. Although he is what is known as a "hard nut," the Legion almost cracked him!

Still they come! This time it is "A MAGNET Reader," who gives no address. He wants to know

HOW TO BECOME A JOCKEY.

I gather from his letter, however, that he is rather tall and heavy, and that, of course, is a serious drawback. He asks if I can advise him how to stop growing. I am afraid I can't! I certainly wouldn't advise him to start "monkeying around" with his physique! To become a jockey he must first of all have a knowledge of horses. Then he must write to the owner of a training establishment and ask if there is a vacancy for a stable-boy. After that it depends on himself. If he shows sufficient promise he will be apprenticed, and after "serving his time" in the stables, he will be given an opportunity of showing what he can do. The names and addresses of the principal training establishments can be obtained from sporting reference books, which can be consulted at most public libraries.

Now for one of this week's prize-winning efforts. It is a joke which has been sent to me by Dermot Foley, of 166, Botanic Road, Glasnevin, Dublin, I.F.S. He gets a magnificent prize for it.

Tramp: "Please, mum, I'm very thirsty."

Kind Old Lady: "Just wait a minute, my poor man, and I'll get you a glass of water."

Tramp (indignantly): "I said I was thirsty, ma'am, not dirty!"

THE next question concerns

FOREST RANGERS.

"Reg," of Northampton, wants to know what the prospects are of getting a job as a Forest Ranger. Well, first of all, he'll have to take up a course in Forestry. The Canadian Government may help him in this if he wishes to settle in Canada. He should write to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company (Emigration Dept.), Charing Cross, London. "Reg," however, tells me that he would prefer Africa or South America. So far as Africa is concerned, he should write to the Crown Agents for the Colonies, 4, Millbank, Westminster, S.W.1. He must give them full particulars of his capabilities, and ask if they can give him any information concerning jobs for which he would be suitable.

South America is an entirely different proposition. There are more unexplored regions awaiting development in South America than in any other part of the world, but the countries of South America prefer to assist their own population rather than to encourage people from other countries.

Technical specialist knowledge is essential for a job in South America, and an applicant must speak either Spanish or Portuguese perfectly. Application should be made to the Consulate or Embassy of the country in which it is desired to settle. The addresses can be found at any public library.

By the way, this reader asks me to break

ONE OF MY CAST-IRON RULES.

He asks for the address of another reader who wrote to me for advice recently. I am very sorry, but I cannot oblige. When a reader writes to me in confidence, I destroy his letter after I have answered it, and do not keep a record of his address. That is so that my readers may have no hesitation in approaching me upon any subject that they may require advice.

Of course I publish the names and addresses of readers who win prizes, for that is entirely a different matter. For instance, Peter Wells, of 263, Stafford Road, Wallington, Surrey, has won a topping real leather pocket wallet this week, for sending along the following Greyfriars limerick:

When Coker once played for his school,
He charged about like a mad bull.
The opposing side won
By seven goals to one,
Of which Coker kicked six—the great fool!

Well, that's enough for the time being. Now to deal with the tip-top programme that is in store for you next week. You'll find all your Greyfriars chums on the top line, as usual, in

THE BOUNDER'S FOLLY.

By Frank Richards.

You won't be able to put your copy down until you've read every line of this story, for it's a "winner," I can tell you! So don't start reading it until you've got plenty of time to finish it in, for you won't like to be interrupted in the middle of it!

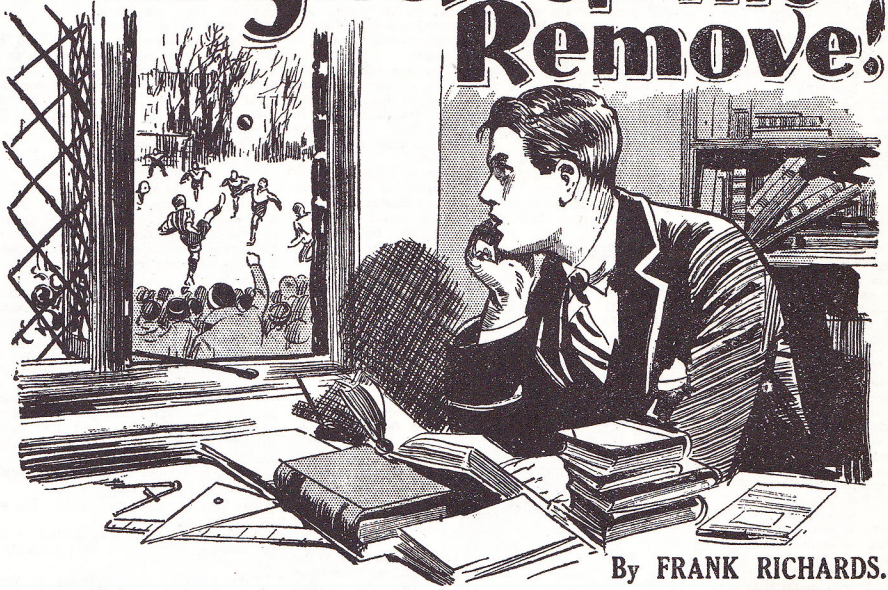
How do you like "Wings of War!"? It's real good stuff, isn't it? Well, Hedley Scott's written an extra-fine instalment for next week's issue. Talk about thrills! Just wait until you read it!

And, of course, there'll be another full-of-chuckles' issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," together with our shorter features, while, in my chat, I will answer a number of readers' queries which I have had to leave over this week.

Cheeri-ho, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

The 'Swot' of the Remove!



By FRANK RICHARDS.

Latin and Greek are subjects that give Harry Wharton a headache, but for all that he chooses to "swot" at them instead of joining his pals on the football field. Why—?

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Bounder Means Business!

"WHERE'S Wharton?"

"Not here!"

"Fetch him!"

"Eh?"

"Fetch him!" snapped Herbert Vernon-Smith irritably.

Bob Cherry stared at the Bounder of Greyfriars for a moment, and then turned away without answering.

The Bounder gave him a black look—which was rather wasted on the back of Bob's head.

It was a windy March day. A cold wind from the sea whistled over the football ground, and more than one Remove fellow would have been glad to cut games practice that afternoon.

But it was a "compulsory" day—and, willy-nilly, fellows had to turn up. Bob Cherry and his friends turned up willingly enough; Skinner & Co., the slackers of the Form, unwillingly. But they had to come. Even Billy Bunter, the fattest and slackest fellow in the Lower Fourth, was there, looking as if he would burst out of his footer rig, and also looking as if he would have liked to punch his Form captain's head—hard! Even Lord Mauleverer was there, though his lordship certainly would have preferred his study sofa.

Of all the Greyfriars Remove, only one member was missing—and that was Harry Wharton, lately captain of the Remove, but captain no longer.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was captain in his place, and, as Form captain, he was in charge of the practice—and Smithy, it was evident, intended to exercise his authority to the full.

"Nugent!" he rapped out, as Bob swung away.

"Hallo!" said Frank Nugent.

"Why isn't Wharton here?"

"He's swotting this afternoon," answered Frank curtly.

"Well, cut off to the House and tell him to chuck swotting and come down to the ground at once."

"You can find somebody else to take that message, Smithy!" answered Nugent.

"I say, Smithy, I'll go!" exclaimed Billy Bunter eagerly. "I'll go with pleasure, old chap!"

"Shut up, you fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

There was no doubt that Billy Bunter would have gone with pleasure. But had the fat junior escaped from the football ground it was exceedingly doubtful whether he would have reappeared there. Games practice, or any other form of exertion, did not appeal to William George Bunter.

"I'll go if you like, Smithy," said Skinner.

"You might lose your way back!" sneered the Bounder.

And Skinner scowled.

Skinner and his friends were looking glum and savage. They had backed up Smithy with enthusiasm in the Form election, nothing doubting that they would have an easier time under Smithy's rule. Instead of which, the slackers found Smithy an exceedingly hard nut to crack. They found his hand, in fact, heavier than Wharton's had ever been, and if they had disliked Harry Wharton as captain of the Form, they were beginning to loathe Smithy.

The Bounder knitted his brows.

Possibly he saw in Wharton's absence a contemptuous disregard of his new authority. Anyhow, he was on the worst of terms with the former captain, and not in the least inclined to make the slightest concession.

"Well, he's got to come!" he said. "I remember the time when he rounded me up for games practice."

"That was rather different," grunted Johnny Bull. "You were slacking. Wharton isn't slacking; he's swotting for a schol."

"The swotfulness is terrific, my esteemed Smithy," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gently. "The temperfulness of the wind to the shorn lamb is the proper caper."

"Get going, you men!" said the Bounder, unheeding. "I'll go and fetch the fellow myself, if nobody else wants the job."

"Smithy, old man——" said Tom Redwing.

"Get going!" repeated the Bounder. "You're in charge here till I come back, Cherry."

He walked off the field.

Tom Redwing followed him hastily. He caught the Bounder by the arm.

"Smithy——"

"Well, what?" rapped the Bounder irritably. He was in no mood to listen even to the voice of his best chum.

"Let it drop, old fellow," said Tom

in a low voice. "Wharton's up against it these days—you know that as well as I do. From what we hear, he's got to bag that schol, or he can't come back to Greyfriars next term. He's no slacker; he'd rather be on the footer ground than in his study. You jolly well know it, Smithy!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"You can go easy with the chap," said Redwing. "He's got to face a tough exam in a few weeks, and he hasn't left himself a lot of time to prepare for it. He's putting up a struggle to keep on at Greyfriars. Give him a chance."

Vernon-Smith's lip curled.

"Do you think I'm keen for him to keep on at Greyfriars, Reddy?" he asked sarcastically.

"Smithy! You don't mean——"

"I mean that I shan't put on mourning if he doesn't turn up next term," said the Bounder coolly. "I scraped in as captain of the Form, with Wharton and his friends all against me. Plenty of the fellows would be glad to have him back——"

"But, old chap——"

"If there were a new election this week, how do you think it would go?" sneered the Bounder. "Half the fellows who backed me would be on the other side. All the slackers who fancied that I was going to let them frowst—all the duds who fancied I was going to play them in matches—— I shouldn't have a dog's chance, Reddy."

"But, Smithy——"

"I scraped in on the odd vote—and gave Wharton and his gang a fall. So long as he's here I'm captain by the skin of my teeth. That's not good enough for me."

"If you mean that you want Wharton to go——"

"Of course I want him to go! I don't believe he will bag that schol; but I'm not ass enough to help him, anyhow. And he used to round me up for games practice when I wanted to cut," added the Bounder, with a bitter sneer. "Now the dear man is goin' to get some of his own medicine."

"But——"

"Oh, rats!"

Vernon-Smith swung on towards the House, leaving his chum staring after him rather blankly.

Slowly Redwing walked back to the footer ground.

His face was clouded. That glimpse into what was in the Bounder's mind troubled him sorely. He had backed up his chum loyally in the struggle for the captaincy, with a lingering doubt as to whether he was doing the right thing. Now he could not help feeling that he had done the wrong thing.

Heedless of his chum, and of what he might be thinking, Herbert Vernon-Smith walked into the House, tramped up the stairs to the Remove passage, and stopped at the door of Study No. 1.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Smithy Loses His Temper!

HARRY WHARTON was seated at his study table.

Four or five books were open round him, and "Titus Livius" was propped open against the inkstand.

Pen in hand, with a wrinkle in his brow, Wharton was concentrating on Latin.

Certainly he would rather, as Redwing had said, have been on the football ground than in his study.

In fact, it was only by an effort of will that he remained indoors with his books, instead of joining the footballers.

He had—or believed he had—no choice in the matter.

He was dependent on his uncle, and he believed—he had reason to believe—that Colonel Wharton had come to regard him as a burden.

The merest hint to that effect would have been more than enough to rouse Wharton's pride and to fill him with a bitter, stubborn determination to accept nothing further from his guardian. And he had what seemed to him indubitable proof.

Wharton Lodge was no longer a home to him. He had resolved to remain at the school during the Easter vacation, now close at hand. It would be dismal enough, dreary enough, but it was better than going where he was not wanted; and at least, he would have plenty of time to work for the examination for a Founders' Scholarship, which was held during the holidays.

If he won that "schol," he could stay on at Greyfriars, independent of all the world, like Mark Linley and Dick Penfold, of the Remove. If he failed—well——

But he would not think of failure. If hard work could see him through, he would win. Everything else had to go—games, and schoolboy frolics—everything but the steady grind. The task he had set himself was hard and weary, but it was necessary, and he was the fellow to put his back into it.

Concentrated on his work, he heard, without heeding, footsteps in the Remove passage.

They stopped at his door, and the door was flung open. Then he looked up irritably. He was working against the grain, and he did not want interruptions.

Herbert Vernon-Smith strode into the study.

He glanced, with a sardonic sneer, at the books on the table. "Swots" were not popular in the Remove, and Smithy never concealed his contempt for a swot. Neither had he, at any time, much sympathy to waste on a "lame duck." A fellow who was hard up was likely to excite the Bounder's derision, rather than his sympathy. The Bounder was a millionaire's son, and he always had plenty of money—too much, in fact. He had only contempt for fellows who were less well provided.

Yet it was the fact that, when Wharton was first down on his luck the Bounder had felt a generous impulse to help. He had been friendly with the captain of the Remove then. Wharton, with his temper sore and his pride up in arms, had thrown back his good intentions in his teeth. From that hour the Bounder had been his implacable enemy.

"Swotting!" sneered Smithy.

"Yes. Don't come bothering me, for goodness' sake! What the thump do you want?" snapped Wharton.

His manner was far from agreeable.

"You seem to have forgotten games practice," said Smithy. "I've come here to round you up—as you used to round me up, if you remember."

"Oh! Is that it?"

"That's it. Chuck swotting at once and go down to the changing-room. I'll wait for you."

The Bounder's manner was as offensive as he could make it. He was captain of the Remove, and he intended to leave no doubt on that point. They were enemies now, and old sores and old scores, half-forgotten, had revived in the Bounder's mind. He had authority in his hands, and he was going to rub it in.

Wharton rose from the table. His face was cool and contemptuous.

"I'm not coming down to games practice this afternoon, Smithy," he said, with quiet distinctness.

"Your mistake—you are!" said the Bounder. "Do you think you're to be allowed to frowst in your study because you were captain of the Remove once upon a time? If that's your idea, the sooner you cut it out the better. Get a move on!"

Wharton did not stir.

"I'm working for an exam——"

"Not this afternoon, old bean."

"This afternoon and every other half-holiday for the rest of the term," answered Harry. "As you're captain of the Remove now, Vernon-Smith, it's time you took the trouble to learn what a Form captain can do, and what he can't do."

"One thing he can do is to round up slackers for games practice," grinned the Bounder, "and that's exactly what I'm going to do, my pippin!"

"Not this time," said Wharton. "You can call me a slacker, if you like; your opinion doesn't worry me very much. But a man who is working for an exam can get leave from compulsory practice. And I've asked Quelch for leave—and got it. So that's that!"

Wharton turned to his books again, dismissing the subject.

The Bounder breathed hard. He was rather taken aback.

"This is the first I've heard of it," he snapped. "You've said nothing to me——"

"No need to say anything to you," answered Wharton coolly. "All you've got to do, as Form captain, is to report a man to the Head of the Games for cutting practice, if you're not satisfied."

Wharton picked up his pen. The Bounder stood staring at him. The wind was taken out of his sails, so to speak. He had come there to exercise his authority, and he had none to exercise. It was a defeat for the Bounder, and a bitter pill for him to swallow. He stood silent for a full minute, with a black brow, while Wharton bent over his books, apparently immersed in Latin.

"So that's the game, is it?" said the Bounder at last. "You're goin' to make swottin' an excuse for frowstin', and hide yourself behind Quelch! Greasing up to a beak to get let off games, by gad!"

"Shut the door after you!" said Harry.

"You won't get away with this, Wharton. If you've got Quelch on your side it's no good reporting you for slacking. You've got me there. But there are more ways of killin' a cat than chokin' it with cream. I'll find some other way of handlin' you."

"I believe you walked Bunter down to Little Side with your paw on his collar," said Harry, over his shoulder. "You can try that with me, if you like. You're welcome——"

"By gad! I've a jolly good mind to——"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Better get out of this study," he said. "This isn't the place for you to throw your weight about, Vernon-Smith. You haven't a leg to stand on, and you know it."

"You slackin', frowstin', swottin', smug——"

Wharton rose to his feet again.

"That will do. Get out!" he said.

It was too much for the Bounder. He had come there to order his old rival out—and he was ordered out himself! Wharton's face was cool and contemptuous, and there was a gleam of mockery in his eyes. The Bounder's fist came lashing out at the contemptuous face.

Crack!

Wharton's hand came up like lightning, knocking the blow aside, with a crack on the Bounder's wrist that made him utter a gasp of pain.

"Oh! By gad, I'll——"

Vernon-Smith sprang at him, forgetful of everything but his desire to hammer that contemptuous face. Wharton guarded swiftly and grasped the Bounder and whirled him to the door.

For a few moments they struggled. But Wharton had the upper hand. The Bounder was whirled into the doorway and flung headlong into the Remove passage.

He went down with a crash.

"Oh gad!" he gasped as he landed.

He scrambled to his feet.

Wharton stood in the study doorway, his hands up, his eyes gleaming over them. He was ready for more; and for a moment it seemed that the new captain of the Remove would rush upon him.

But he checked himself.

"This will keep!" he muttered thickly. "I'll deal with you after games practice, you rotter!"

"When you like!" answered Wharton coolly.

The Bounder turned and tramped away. Wharton shrugged his shoulders and returned to his task.

Smithy's brow was black when he arrived on Little Side again. All the footballers looked at him, and some of them grinned. He had gone to round up the slacker, but he had returned alone. Evidently there had been nothing doing.

"Is Wharton coming?" called out Skinner.

The Bounder did not answer.

But the Removites soon knew that Wharton was not coming, for he did not come. Games practice on Little Side continued, and finished, without him.

Vernon-Smith sprang at Wharton, forgetful of everything but his desire to hammer that contemptuous face. Wharton guarded swiftly, then grasping the Bounder firmly, he whirled him to the door and flung him headlong out into the passage!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Tries It On!

BILLY BUNTER sniffed.

It was a sniff of contempt—indeed, of overwhelming scorn.

His fat lip curled. His fat little nose turned up even further than Nature had intended—though Nature had started it well on its way. His little round eyes gleamed through his big round spectacles. And he sniffed.

Harry Wharton stared at him.

"Slacker!" said Bunter.

"What?"

"Frowster!"

"You fat idiot!"

"Yah! Who dodges games practice? Slacker!"

Games practice was over, and Harry Wharton had joined the Co. for a stroll before tea.

The Co. were bright and cheery, after healthy exercise in a keen wind. Wharton looked tired. Several hours of concentration on Latin had had their effect on him.

Wharton was rather silent, and very thoughtful. He was thinking of the Easter holidays—a troublesome matter in his present circumstances. Billy Bunter rolled up to the Famous Five, halted in their path, and proceeded to explain to the late captain of the Remove what he thought of him.

Bunter was indignant.

Many and many a time, as he had told the other fellows, in tones of thrilling indignation, Wharton had rounded him up for games when he was Form captain. And now the cheeky rotter, the frowsting slacker, was cutting games himself.

Was it fair, Bunter had demanded in the changing-room, that fellows should have to turn up on a beastly cold day while other fellows frowsted in their studies?

Skinner and Snoop, and the other slackers of the Form, agreed that it wasn't. They shared Bunter's indignation.

Billy Bunter had done his best to dodge practice that day. He had told Smithy that he was ill. He had told him that he had sprained his ankle. He had told him that he had to go to a relative's funeral. In spite of these excellent reasons for giving football a miss, Bunter had been marched down to Little Side, and there was no doubt that he was all the better for it. But he was thrilling with indignation. Smithy had

refused to let him off, but had, apparently, let Wharton off. Bunter had failed to keep away; Wharton had kept away. Having, much against the grain, played up, Bunter felt that he was entitled to slang a fellow who hadn't! And he proceeded so to do.

"Slacker! Frowsting over a study fire!" snorted Bunter. "Slacking in a study! Yah! Worm!"

Wharton coloured. It was not pleasant to be denounced as a slacker, even by a fat and fatuous ass like Billy Bunter.

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Get out, you fat chump!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Yah! I can jolly well tell you——"

"That's enough!" said Wharton curtly. "Cut!"

"I can jolly well tell you—— Oh, my hat! Oh crikey!" roared Bunter, as Wharton grasped his collar and sat him down suddenly in the quad.

Bump!

"Ow! Beast! Wow!" roared Bunter.

The Famous Five walked on, and left him to roar. Wharton's face was red and angry as he went out at the gates with his chums.

Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet, crimson with wrath. Sitting him down in the quad had not diminished his indignation; rather, it had increased it.

He glared after the Famous Five as they turned out at the gates, with a glare that might have cracked his spectacles. Then he rolled into the House, with an indignant snort. He was looking for Vernon-Smith, and he found the new captain of the Remove in the Rag, looking anything but good-tempered. Tom Redwing was with him.

"I say, Smithy——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped the Bounder irritably.

"That's all very well!" hooted Bunter. "But I can jolly well tell you, Smithy, that this jolly well won't do—see? Fair play's a jewel! If you let one fellow off, you can let another fellow off—see? If Wharton's going to cut, other fellows are going to cut, and I can jolly well tell you——"

"Wharton's got leave to slack!" said the Bounder, with a sneer. "He's greased up to Quelch, and got leave."

"That's rotten favouritism, then!" snorted Bunter.

"I know it is!"

"Look here, that's rot, Smithy!" exclaimed Redwing. "Bunter, you fat dummy, Wharton's got leave to cut games while he's working for an exam. You know he's in for the Founders' Scholarship."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

"Any excuse is better than none!" sneered the Bounder.

"Oh, rubbish!" grunted Redwing. "You don't like the chap, and you won't give him fair play. For goodness' sake chuck it, Smithy!"

"I say, you fellows, can a fellow get excused from games, if he goes in for a schol?" asked Bunter.

"Yes, ass!"

"Oh!" said Bunter again.

He rolled away, leaving Smithy and his chum engaged in a rather hot argument. Bunter was not interested in the argument, neither was he now thrilling with indignation. Other thoughts were now working in the powerful intellect of William George Bunter.

"I say, Toddy." He came on Peter Todd in the passage, and stopped him. "I say, Toddy, old fellow——"

"Stony!" answered Peter sadly.

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"Try next door!" said Peter.

"You silly ass, I don't want to borrow anything!" hooted Bunter.

"What did you call me 'old fellow' for, then?"

"Beast! I mean, I say, old chap, do you know anything about the Founders' Scholarship?" asked Bunter. "Is there still time for a fellow to put his name down?"

"I believe so, up to the end of the term," answered Toddy.

"Oh, good!"

Peter stared at him.

"I suppose I'd better see Quelch," said Bunter.

"Not about the schol?" gasped Peter.

"Yes, rather! Why shouldn't I go in for it?" asked the fat Owl. "Wharton has!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I suppose a fellow can go in for a schol if he likes," said Bunter warmly. "What sort of stuff does a fellow have to do for it, Peter?"

"Pretty stiff!" grinned Toddy. "Wharton's got a last year's paper to work at, and it made my head swim to look at it. You couldn't touch it in a hundred years, old fat bean."

"Perhaps I could, and perhaps I couldn't," said Bunter, with a fat grin. "But I hear that Wharton's got off games on the strength of it. See?"

And Bunter rolled on, leaving Peter staring.

A few minutes later the fat junior was tapping at the door of Mr. Quelch's study. The Remove master's voice bade him enter, and Bunter rolled hopefully in.

"Your lines, Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch.

Bunter, as usual, had lines on hand, which he had left till the latest moment —and a little later.

"Oh, no, sir!" stammered Bunter. "I—I haven't done my lines yet, sir."

He had, as a matter of fact, forgotten them. Mr. Quelch's memory was better in such matters than Bunter's.

"Then why are you here, Bunter? And why have you not done your lines?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"The—the fact is, sir, I—I've been—been working rather hard, sir. I—I came to see you about—about another matter, sir. I—I want you to put my name down for the Founders' Scholarship, sir."

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"For what?" he ejaculated.

"The—the Founders' Scholarship, sir! Wharton's gone in for it, and—and I'd like to do the same, sir. Of course, I know I should have to work jolly hard, but I should have the time for it, sir, if I were excused games, like—like Wharton, sir."

Mr. Quelch gazed at Bunter.

Really, any Form master ought to have been pleased by a fellow in his Form showing keenness to enter for a difficult examination. But Henry Samuel Quelch did not seem pleased, somehow.

On the contrary, Bunter saw the signs of wrath gathering on his brow.

"Bunter! You desire to enter for an extremely difficult examination——"

"Yee-es, sir."

"Although you are the most backward, the most obtuse, and the most incorrigibly idle member of my Form."

"Oh, really, sir——"

"Although," went on Mr. Quelch, his voice deepening, "although I have had to give you an imposition to-day for mistakes in your construe that a boy in the Second Form should not have made."

"I—I—I——" Bunter stammered. "I—I should work jolly hard, sir—awfully hard—if—if I didn't have to waste any time at games, sir."

"I understand," said Mr. Quelch.

He rose from his chair, and glanced over the table. He seemed to be looking for something. Bunter did not, for the moment, guess what it was.

"I—I'm glad you understand, sir! Then—then you'll put my name down, and—and give me leave from games practice for the rest of the term, sir?" asked Bunter hopefully.

"No, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, grimly, "I shall not put your name down, and I shall not give you leave from games practice for the rest of the term. I shall cane you for your impudence, Bunter!"

"Eh?"

Mr Quelch found what he was looking for. It was the cane. He swished it in the air.

"Bunter!"

"I—I—I say, sir——" stuttered Bunter.

"Bend over!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh lor'! I say——"

"Bend over!" repeated Mr. Quelch, in a voice like unto that of the Great Hugo Bear.

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter, in the lowest of spirits, bent over the chair.

Whack!

"Ow! Wow!"

Whack!

"Whoooooooop!"

Mr. Quelch laid the cane on the table.

"You may go, Bunter!" he said.

Bunter was glad to go.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry's Cousin!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry uttered that ejaculation suddenly.

The Famous Five were sauntering down Friardale Lane. Harry Wharton was silent; and some of the cheeriness had faded out of the faces of his companions.

Wharton realised that he was rather a wet blanket; and more than once he tried to talk cheerily, in the old careless way, but it was not to be done. He was tired after hard study; and the harder he "swotted" for that dismal exam, the more he realised how difficult a task he had set himself.

Wharton was no more a slacker at school work than at anything else; he was one of Mr. Quelch's best pupils, and he had a natural taste for the classics, which was rare in the Lower School. But "swotting" did not come easily to him at all; and the exam for the scholarship was a particularly hard nut for any fellow to crack.

He was letting everything else go; yet he could feel by no means sure of success; and if he did not succeed, his future was a problem he could not begin to solve. All the time the trouble at home, the break with his uncle, weighed on his mind.

It was no wonder that, in these clouded days, his temper was a little irritable, that he was sometimes even morose; and found it difficult to enter into the careless, cheery life of the Form. Since he had seen those bitter words, written in his uncle's hand, life had been dark for him—it was as if his little world had fallen in pieces round him.

His chums understood, and they were patient and tactful, but at the same time, he was aware that they believed that he was in error—that he had allowed his passionate temper to lead him astray. Johnny Bull, with his usual bluntness, had told him so, which had not added to the harmony in the Co.

Wharton had fallen into a gloomy reverie, almost forgetful that his friends were with him, when Bob Cherry's sudden exclamation recalled him to his surroundings

On the stile at the side of the lane, a young man was seated, smoking a cigarette.

Bob Cherry evidently recognised him.

"Somebody you know?" asked Harry.

He looked at the young man on the stile. There was something familiar about the rather handsome, dissipated face. Wharton had seen the man before, though he could not remember where.

"Yes," grunted Bob.

"I've seen him somewhere," said Harry. "Who——"

"My cousin, Paul Tyrrell!" grunted Bob.

"Oh!" Wharton remembered.

Once or twice, long ago, he had seen Bob's scapegrace cousin, Paul Tyrrell. He had heard that the fellow was a wastrel, who had put a severe strain on the kindness and patience of his uncle, Major Cherry—Bob's father. The young man's looks were certainly not in his favour. A casual glance would have discerned the plain traces of late hours and reckless living.

Tyrrell had seen the juniors. He removed the cigarette from his mouth, and waved his hand, with the cigarette in it, at Bob, with a smile.

Bob Cherry did not smile. He frowned. It was clear that the meeting was not agreeable to him.

He came to a pause.

"Look here, you men, let's turn back," he said, "I—I'd rather not speak to that chap, though he's my cousin. He's a bad egg, and the pater doesn't want me to have anything to do with him."

"He looks it!" grunted Johnny Bull, "let's clear!"

Tyrrell jumped from the stile, and came quickly towards the juniors as they turned back.

"Hold on, Bob!" he called out.

Bob hesitated.

He was a good-natured fellow and hated to be unpleasant to anyone—even to a waster and scapegrace like his cousin Paul. The young man came up, as he hesitated. He gave the Co. a careless nod, and held out his hand to Bob. There was a moment's pause before Bob touched it.

"You don't seem frightfully glad to see me, Bob!" grinned Tyrrell.

"I'm not!" said Bob, bluntly. "Look here, Paul, what are you doing here? You know jolly well that the pater wouldn't like me seeing you."

"I've been looking for a chance to speak to you, Bob."

"You could have come up to the school, if you wanted to speak to me."

"I'd rather see you here. I knew I should drop on you sooner or later. If your friends would walk on for a few minutes——"

Bob frowned, and looked uncomfortable. The Co. exchanged a glance, and strolled on, leaving Bob alone with his cousin.

"Look here," said Bob abruptly, "cut it short, Paul. What is it?"

"Only a few words, kid," said Tyrrell. "I dare say you know that I'm in your father's black books."

"I know you deserve it!"

Tyrrell laughed.

"Very likely!" he said. "Still, the major has always been a good friend to me, up till quite lately——"

"Better than you deserved," grunted Bob. "You've been sucking the pater for money for donkey's years—and it all goes the same way—and you know jolly well that my father's not rich, and can't afford to shell out for a lazy waster."

"I'm in a hole, Bob——"

"Is that anything new?"

"Well, perhaps not. Still, I'm in a hole, and the major has turned me down—right down—with a bump! That meddling old fool, Colonel Wharton, is at the bottom of it," added Tyrrell.

"If you speak of my pal's uncle like that, Paul, I'll jolly well punch your nose!" growled Bob. "Cut it out! If Colonel Wharton advised the pater to shake you off, he gave him jolly good advice. He knows you'll never do any good so long as you've got a relative to keep you. Why the dickens can't you get a job, I'd like to know. You've had a dozen, one after another, and chucked them all."

"The major would never have turned me down, if the old colonel hadn't butted in with his dashed advice!" growled Tyrrell.

"That's rot!" snapped Bob. "If Colonel Wharton gave advice, it was because he was asked. He's the pater's old pal, they were in the War together. Anyhow, it's no good telling me about it."

"I want you to put in a word for me, Bob! Your father would listen to you. He's cut me off—returned my letters unopened. But if you put in a word for me——"

"I can't interfere. Don't be an ass!"

grunted Bob. "Do you think I'm going to set up to give my father advice?"

"He would listen to you, I tell you!" said Tyrrell sullenly. "I—I don't want you to mention that I came down here to see you. That would only make him ratty. But look here, Bob, I'm in a hole, and you could help me out, if you liked. A small sum—a hundred pounds—would set me on my feet again. If the major would give me a chance——"

"A hundred pounds is a jolly big sum to my father! And what do you want it for?" grunted Bob. "One of your precious geegees that was a dead cert till the race, and came in eleventh?"

"Never mind that, Bob! If you'd put in a word with your pater, he might come round. It's that old fool Colonel Wharton who's keeping him against me. I know the major asked his advice, and he was down on me——"

"What the dickens could you expect? As for putting in a word for you, it wouldn't be any use, if I had the cheek to do it—and I haven't."

"You mean you don't want to?"

"Well, yes, if you want it plain!" said Bob. "You're a bad egg, Paul, and the pater's fed-up. You've given him no end of trouble; and I'm jolly glad he's kicked at last—and that's that!"

"Look here, Bob——"

"Oh, chuck it!" exclaimed Bob. "If you want the pater to come round, I can tell you how to work it—give up backing horses and hanging round night clubs, and put in some work at a job. And now leave me alone!"

And before Tyrrell could speak again Bob Cherry tramped on after his chums, leaving the scapegrace staring after him rather blankly.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

"Shipping" a Study!

"CHUCK it, Smithy!"

"Rats!"

"Well, I won't have a hand in it!" snapped Redwing.

"You needn't!"

"And I tell you——"

"Ring off!" interrupted the Bounder.

Tom Redwing, with a dark brow, walked out of the Rag. The Bounder shrugged his shoulders as he went.

Redwing was the only fellow in the Remove who had any influence over the wilful Bounder. But that influence was gone now. The new captain of the Remove was taking the bit between his teeth, as it were.

There was a crowd of Remove fellows in the Rag. Most of them were gathered round Vernon-Smith.

"Never mind Reddy, old bean," said Skinner. "Get on with it, Smithy!"

The Bounder got on with it.

"You men know how the matter stands," he said. "The fellows have elected me captain of the Form, and a Form captain's duty is to see fair play all round!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We had a games practice to-day," went on the Bounder, "I have to see that all the men turn up, or else get ragged by the Head of the Games. One fellow cut——"

"Rotten slacker!" said Bolsover major.

"It's no good reporting him to Wingate, because he's been greasing up to a beak and got leave," went on the Bounder.

"Shame!" said Snoop.

"I say, you fellows, it's simply rotten!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I had to turn up, though I had a pain, and there was Wharton frowsting in his study all the time!"

"'Tain't fair!" said Stott. "Wharton was always jolly keen on making the fellows turn up when he was Form captain!"

"He's rooted me out often enough," said Skinner.

"And me," said the Bounder. "It never occurred to me to grease up to a beak. Well, Wharton's not getting away with it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's a matter for the Form to deal with," went on the Bounder. "If a fellow slacks, and gets round a beak to back him up, it's for the Form to show him what they jolly well think of him!"

"Hear, hear!"

It was a chorus of approval from Skinner & Co. Skinner & Co. were slackers of the first water; and they had been bitterly disappointed to learn that the new captain of the Remove did not intend to close his eyes to their slacking.

But that only made them more indignant. They had had to put in an hour at footer, in a keen, cold wind, while another fellow was let off. It was, Skinner declared, too thick; and his friends agreed with him. It was a case of rank favouritism, and the slacker who had "greased" up to a beak ought to be jolly well ragged.

Billy Bunter's fat squeak was the most emphatic of all. Bunter having "tried it on" with Mr. Quelch, and failed lamentably, all his indignation had revived at once.

"I say, you fellows, it's a rotten shame!" squeaked Bunter. "Quelch gives one man leave from games, and gives another a whopping for asking for it! Call that fair?"

"The Form isn't standing it!" said Vernon-Smith.

"No fear!"

"Oh, cut it out, Smithy!" called out Squiff, across the Rag. "Wharton's swotting for an exam, and a lot depends on it. You know jolly well he's no slacker."

"If that's your opinion, Field, you can keep it to yourself," answered the Bounder. "I'm taking this matter up, as captain of the Form, to see fair play all round!"

"Yes, you care an awful lot for fair play!" grunted Squiff. "The way you got in at the election shows that, doesn't it?"

"You shut up, Field!" roared Bolsover major. "We're not going to have slackers in the Remove greasing up to the beaks!"

"The Form is going to deal with this matter," went on the Bounder. "When the Form is down on a man they ship his study, as a hint. That's what we're going to do!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!"

"Every man in the Remove is called on to lend a hand!" said Vernon-Smith. "Now follow me!"

The Bounder walked out of the Rag, with a crowd at his heels. A dozen fellows followed him up to the Remove passage.

"I say, you fellows, is Wharton out?" squeaked Bunter.

"You fat ass, what does it matter whether he's out or not?" growled the new captain of the Remove.

"Well, you see——" The indignant Owl was quite prepared to lend a hand at "shipping" Wharton's study. But there was no doubt that he preferred to make sure that the victim was off the scene.

"He's out," said Skinner. "I saw the whole gang of them going down to Friardale."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "I mean, I'm not afraid of the fellow, of course. I don't care whether he's out or not!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" growled the Bounder.

The crowd arrived at Study No. 1. The Bounder kicked the door open, and tramped in, followed by his supporters.

Other Remove men looked on, some approving, some disapproving, but none disposed to intervene.

The new captain had, from the point of view of many of the Form, a strong case. A "swot" was not popular at the best of times, and a "swot" who got round a master to get him leave from games was most unpopular.

It could not be denied that the Bounder was taking up his duties as Form captain vigorously; he had roused the resentment of all the slackers by rounding them up, though they had voted for him in the election with very different expectations.

One fellow defied him, and was backed up by a master. It was true that there were special circumstances in Wharton's case; but most of the fellows knew little and cared little about them. He had been captain of the Remove—he refused to toe the line now there was a new captain, though he had made others toe the line in the days of his authority. Many of the fellows considered that Smithy could not be blamed for making an example of him.

"Shipping" a study was a way of hinting to an unpopular fellow that it was time to mend his ways. It was a way of showing him that "favouritism" would not go down at Greyfriars.

"Rotten swot!" said Skinner, staring at the books and papers on the study table, which were as Wharton had left them.

"Putrid smug!" sneered Bolsover major.

"Gammon, you men!" said Vernon-Smith. "Wharton doesn't mean to toe the line if he can help it; and swotting's an excuse."

"Just to get a beak to back him up!" growled Stott.

"Greasing up to Quelchy!" snorted Bolsover major.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Get going!" said the Bounder.

The raggers lost no time. On the table lay a last year's paper of the Founders' examination, at which Wharton had been working. Mr. Quelch had given it to him as a test. If he could deal with that paper he had a chance for the exam when it came along. It was a difficult paper, and sheets covered with notes showed how hard Wharton had been working at it.

Vernon-Smith coolly gathered up the old exam paper and the sheets of notes, crumpled them in his hands, and tossed them into the study fire. Those notes represented hours, or rather days, of hard work on the part of the former captain of the Remove. The loss of them was a heavy blow to the "swot." The Bounder was well aware of that, and all the more because of that he rejoiced to see them devoured by the flames.

"That's a beginnin'!" said the Bounder. "Now pile in, all hands."

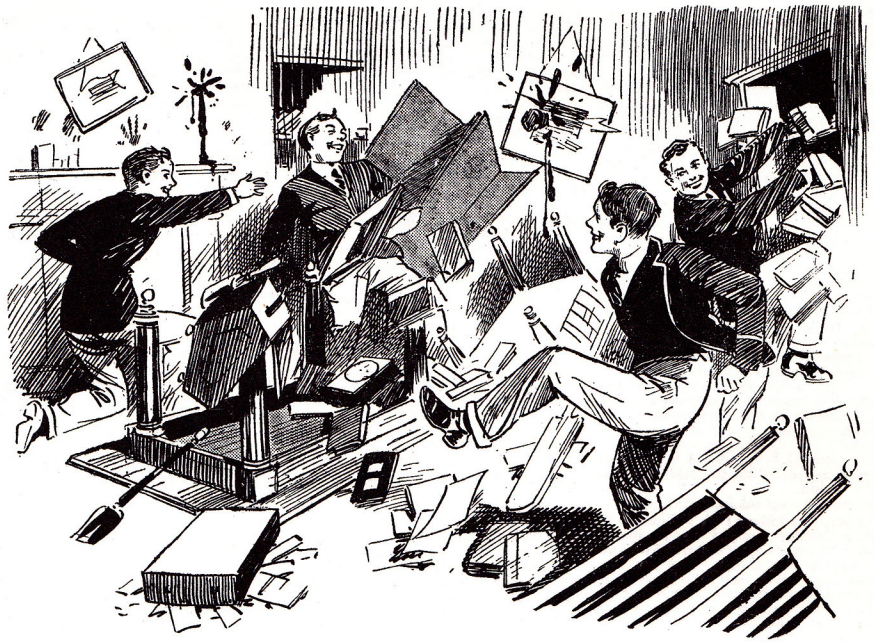
"What-ho!"

"I say, this is Nugent's study, as well as Wharton's," remarked Hazeldene.

"That's Nugent's look-out, if he chums with a slacker who stands up against the Form."

"Nugent can go and eat coke!" said Bolsover major. "We're jolly well going to ship this study."

"Yes, rather!"



"Get going, you fellows," said Vernon-Smith, "we'll teach Wharton whether he can refuse to toe the line or not!" The raggers set to work in deadly earnest, and in a few minutes Study No. 1 was a scene of wreck and ruin.

"Go it!"

Crash! Clatter! Bump! Bang! The raggers set to work in deadly earnest. The table went over with a crash, the fender was hurled upon it, the hearthrug draped over the fender; books and papers piled on the heap, with chairs and crockery-ware, and all sorts and conditions of things.

In a few minutes No. 1 in the Remove looked as if a cyclone had struck it.

The raggers warmed to the work, hurling things right and left, with crash on crash.

Seldom, or never, had a Remove study been so thoroughly and efficiently shipped.

The Bounder grinned as he glanced round over the scene of wreck and ruin.

The raggers had indeed done their work well. It would take some considerable time to make the study look presentable again. Vernon-Smith was pleased, to say the least.

"I fancy that will do!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, Wharton will kick up a row about this."

"Let him!" said the Bounder. "He will deal with me. I fancy he will find that I can handle him. If you fellows haven't had your tea, come along to my study."

"Good old Smithy!"

There was a hilarious tea-party in the Bounder's study. Only Tom Redwing's face was grave and thoughtful. Most of the fellows were wondering how Wharton would take it when he came in and found that his study had been "shipped." It was certain that there would be trouble; but it was equally certain that the Bounder was ready for it—in fact, keen on it. And it was not long in coming.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Roland for an Oliver!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. entered the school gates, and walked across to the House.

Wharton was looking brighter, and a good deal more cheerful; a long ramble in the keen March wind had done him good, blowing away the cobwebs, as it were. Bob Cherry, in his turn, was looking very thoughtful; the meeting with his scapegrace cousin was on his mind, and it worried him a little. Still, it was a cheerful party that came into the House, and came up the Remove passage, quite ready for tea in Study No. 1.

Squiff, Peter Todd, and Tom Brown were on the Remove landing, and they looked rather curiously at Wharton as he came up with his chums. But they did not speak; there was no need to tell him what had happened in his study, he was to discover that soon enough.

"Tea in our study, you fellows!" said Harry, as the Famous Five came along to No. 1.

The door was closed, and Harry threw it open.

The next moment he jumped.

Study No. 1 in its wrecked and ruined state burst on him all at once. Wharton stared into the room as if he could hardly believe his eyes.

"What—who——" he ejaculated.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, what's the jolly old trouble?" asked Bob. Then, as he glanced into No. 1, he gasped: "Oh, my hat!"

"What the thump——" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"The esteemed study has been terrifically ragged!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton stood in the doorway looking into the room. His face set hard, and his eyes glinted.

"Oh crumbs!" said Frank Nugent in dismay.

"What awful rotters——" said Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton stepped into the room. The study was a wreck—a good deal of time and labour would be required to set it right again. But that was not his first thought. He was thinking of the papers he had left on the table—the outcome of long, hard, and weary swotting. There was no sign of the papers in the dismantled room, but there was a remnant of charred paper in the grate. He understood.

He breathed hard.

"Somebody's shipped the study!" said Bob Cherry blankly.

"The shipfulness is truly terrific."

"Somebody's going to pay for it!" said Wharton grimly, and he stepped out into the passage again. "Toddy!"

"Hallo!" said Peter Todd uncomfortably.

"Do you know who's been ragging here?"

"I—I fancy it's a Form ragging, more or less," answered Toddy. "They've shipped your study because you cut games practice."

"So that's it, is it?" said Wharton, his eyes flashing.

"It's rather rotten, old bean," said Squiff. "But——"

"But what?"

"Well, I wouldn't kick up a row about it. Fellows have had their studies shipped before for the same reason—Skinner, last term—I know the case is different," he added hastily, "but—most of the fellows don't see it."

Wharton gave him a look.

"I suppose it was Smithy?" he said.

Squiff did not answer. He had disapproved of the ragging; but he did not regard the captain of the Form as being wholly in the wrong. He intended to take neither side in the dispute.

But an answer was not needed. Wharton had no doubt on the subject, and, anyhow, the Bounder was not the man to deny what he had done. Right or wrong, Smithy was the man to stand by his own words and actions, quite reckless of the consequences.

Wharton turned and strode away up the passage to Study No. 4. His comrades exchanged troubled glances, and followed him. The Bounder was in the wrong, they knew that. He had chosen to regard Wharton as a slacker, a fellow like Skinner or Snoop, who cut games from sheer laziness or frowstiness—and he knew that he was nothing of the kind. Still, there was no doubt that the Bounder's view would find a great deal of support in the Remove. Why shouldn't Wharton toe the line like any other man in the Form—was what the Removites asked one another—and not only Skinner & Co., but much better fellows.

Crash!

The door of Study No. 4 was hurled open, rather startling the hilarious tea-party within.

There was a squeak from Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows! It's Wharton!"

Billy Bunter jumped up in haste. Bunter had quite enjoyed taking a hand in ragging the study. But he was rather like the ancient character who did good by stealth and blushed to find it fame. He preferred to keep his own share in the transaction dark; and to keep out of the way of the fellow who stood in the doorway with blazing eyes. Bunter scrambled into a corner of the study in great haste.

Skinner and Snoop, and Stott, Hazeldene, and Wibley, and Micky Desmond, looked rather uneasily at Wharton's pale, furious face. But other fellows in the study were made of sterner stuff. Bolsover major gave a scoffing laugh. The Bounder fixed his eyes mockingly on Wharton.

"Hallo," he said calmly. "Is that how you were taught to open a door in the slum you were brought up in?"

"You've ragged my study."

"Oh, is that the trouble?" drawled the Bounder.

"That's it! I want to know who it was! Was it you?"

"Your study was ragged by the Form, as a warning to a slacker!" said the Bounder calmly. "No man in the Remove is going to be allowed to dodge games, and if he greases up to a beak and gets leave, the Form will deal with him every time. As captain of the Form I shall take the lead."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Skinner.

"So it was you?"

"I was leader, certainly, as the captain of the Form was bound to be, in such a case!" answered the Bounder. "You were leader when Skinner's study was shipped last term for slacking."

"I won't argue that with you," said Harry quietly. "I think you can see the difference between a man working for an exam and a sneaking rotter frowsting in his study smoking cigarettes. You've ragged my study, Vernon-Smith, and I'm going to deal with you."

"Pleased!" yawned the Bounder.

"Look here!" roared Bolsover major. "Don't you come riding the high horse here, Wharton! You're a rotten slacker, a swot, and games dodger! You've seen what the Form thinks of you. Smithy's right, and I'm backing him up."

"And a week ago you were ragging the cad for pulling your leg at the election, and letting you down afterwards!" said Wharton contemptuously.

"I know that! That doesn't make any difference. Remove men ain't allowed to dodge games, and hide behind a beak."

Wharton took no further heed of the bully of the Remove. He fixed his eyes on Vernon-Smith.

"There's rather a crowd here," he said. "Will you step out into the passage, Vernon-Smith?"

"What for?" drawled the Bounder.

"I'm going to thrash you!"

"Are you?" smiled Smithy. "May I point out that I've acted as captain of the Form, and backed up by the Form? Are you going to thrash all the Form?"

"I'm going to thrash you; and I'm not waiting! And that isn't all," said Harry. "You've shipped my study. I'm going to ship yours. And that's the beginning."

He grasped the study table by the edge.

With a jerk he swung it up, and the contents of the tea-table went over in a shower, with a terrific crashing and clattering and smashing.

There was a wild chorus of yells in the study.

Smithy's table was well laden. There was plenty of crockery-ware. There were good things galore. There were jugs of milk, jugs of lemonade, and a teapot full of tea, which was hot. Crockery and cakes, jam-tarts and meringues, milk and lemonade and hot tea swamped over the fellows seated round the table. Bolsover major got most of the tea as the teapot landed on his knees, and he leaped up with a howl that would have done credit to a hyena.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Skinner.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Why, you cheeky rotter——"

"You sweep——"

"Oh, jiminy!"

The Bounder sprang to his feet, his face flaming. Wharton twisted the table over on its side, and the tea-party, yelling, scrambled frantically out of the way. Then he let go and put up his hands as the Bounder came at him with lashing fists.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Face to Face!

"OH, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton came backing out of Study No. 4, under the furious rush of the Bounder. But he was backing only to get room for the scrap.

His face was set and savagely determined. Form captain or not, Herbert Vernon-Smith had to pay the price of what he had done. And the "swot" of the Remove meant to exact that price to the uttermost.

His chums cleared back to give him room. The Bounder followed him into the passage, attacking with the fierceness of a wild cat.

There was wild confusion in the study.

Bolsover major was roaring as he mopped his trousers, soaked with hot tea. The floor was littered with cakes and tarts, broken crockery, and overturned chairs. Hazeldene was extracting a sticky tart from his waistcoat; Skinner wringing milk out of his jacket. It was quite an unpleasant ending to a happy and hilarious tea-party.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

In the Remove passage Wharton and the Bounder were fighting furiously. The Co. stood looking on, and other Remove fellows had come out of their studies, attracted by the uproar.

"Give him jip, Smithy!" howled Skinner. "Give the cheeky cad beans, old man!"

"Go it, Smithy!"

The Bounder did not need urging on. He was fighting the fight of his life. All his old rancour against his old rival in the Remove was at white heat now. And he knew, too, that if he got the best of the desperate scrap, it would be a very material leg-up for his new authority in the Form.

And he had a good chance. He was at least Wharton's equal physically. He was a good boxer, and he had unlimited pluck and determination. And he was hard as nails, able to take severe punishment without turning a hair. He was spurred on, too, by the obvious fact that most of the onlookers were in sympathy with him.

To most of the juniors it seemed that Wharton was a fellow who had exercised authority while he had it, and refused to bow to it when his turn came to obey. And, worst of all, he had got a "beak" to back him up against his Form captain. And that, in the general opinion, was not good enough.

Wharton gave little thought to what the fellows were thinking or saying. He gave attention only to his enemy.

At the back of his mind was the thought of all the work that was wasted—the hours of dismal swotting that had gone for nothing. The long, weary, difficult paper that had to be worked out again from the beginning. He had been hard enough pressed, without that. Troubles had been thick enough upon him without malicious persecution from his enemy. His face was set and bitter as he faced the Bounder, and every blow came home with all his strength behind it.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

"Pile in, Smithy!"

"Go it!"

"Give him jip!"

But it was the Bounder who went down, stretched on his back by a terrific drive. He fairly crashed on the floor of the Remove passage.

Wharton stood panting, his eyes flashing, waiting for him to rise.

The Bounder lay gasping.

"Look here, you men, if this is going on, you'd better have the gloves on!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Rot!" snapped Wharton.

"This isn't a prize-fight, old chap! Cut off and get the gloves, Franky!"

Frank Nugent fetched the boxing-gloves.

Redwing came out of Study No. 4 and helped the Bounder to his feet. Smithy leaned breathlessly on his chum.

His face was almost distorted with rage.

For the damage he received Smithy cared nothing, or less than nothing. But it was borne in on his mind that he was not going to win that fight. More than once before he had measured strength with the former captain of the Remove, but he had never succeeded in getting the upper hand. The reckless Bounder was always willing to put it to the test again, but he felt that he would never get away with it.

"Here's the gloves!" said Nugent.

(*Continued on page 12.*)

FOOTBALL FAVOURITES!

No. 22.

TOM BRADSHAW

Scottish International and centre-half of LIVERPOOL F.C.

A Splendid Pivot!

EARLY next month—on the ninth of April—there is a every important match due to be played at Wembley, —England *v.* Scotland. In the minds of English people there is only one game in a season more important than this—the Cup Final, which is also played at Wembley. But in the minds of Scottish people *the* game of any football campaign is the contest between the chosen of Scotland and England.

I am not in a position to tell you who will play for Scotland in the coming game at Wembley. But I can tell you of one player who will certainly receive the consideration of the Scottish selectors for the position of centre-half. This is Tom Bradshaw. The Scottish selectors have been to look at this player, and recently I asked a member of the selection committee, who had just seen Tom play at centre-half for Liverpool, what he thought of him. "Good enough for me," was the reply. And the form of the Liverpool centre-half has been, right through this season, not only good enough for this Scottish selector, but good enough for everybody else, too.

Take it from me, there is nothing big Tom, who is called "Tiny," would like better than to play for Scotland again. He has done it once—in that never-to-be-forgotten game at Wembley, in 1928, when Scotland trounced a very fine English eleven to the tune of five goals to one. Because the forwards of Scotland were so splendid that day we have talked about them quite a lot, but it should not be overlooked that the half-backs played their part. Have you ever seen forwards play really good football unless the half-backs have been really good? I haven't. On that day at Wembley Tom Bradshaw dominated the centre of the field, and it is surprising, in a way, that he has not been chosen since then.

Perhaps the trouble with this big boy Bradshaw is that he is too modest. I guarantee that if you went up to him now and suggested that it would be possible he would play for Scotland again this season he would just laugh. And with his still pronounced Scottish accent he would say: "Gang awa' with ye! You're pulling ma lag!" Tom is just like that—no side or swank—just an honest to goodness footballer, in his own opinion, who does his job, does his best for his side.

A Sheer Fluke!

THIS modesty of Bradshaw's is plainly illustrated in the story of his "discovery," which is one of the many romances of the football field. About ten years ago Bury were managed by a Scotsman named Cameron. I knew he was a Scot because he was known to all his friends as "Kilty" Cameron. Now this manager of Bury knew what perhaps some of my readers do not know—that the game of "fitba'" is played in Scotland all the year round. The League matches stop with the arrival of the month of May, of course, but the lads go on kicking the ball all through the summer. They never take to cricket like the English boys do. Incidentally, the fact that these Scottish boys play football all the year round may have something to do with their ability when they grow up. However, that argument has nothing to do with the story of Bradshaw.

Managers of football clubs don't take real holidays. When they go to Scotland in the summer they are always on the look-out for promising boys. One day in the rosy month of June, Manager Cameron went to a match about which he had heard in Renfrewshire. But for some reason or other the match was not played, and the manager was of the opinion that he had made a fruitless journey.

On the way back to the nearest town in a taxicab the then Bury manager noticed a lot of boys having a game on their own in a rough field. The taxicab was stopped, and the manager decided to have a look at these rough-and-ready boys. His attention was immediately attracted by a youth who simply could not be overlooked because of his size. This strapping lad was playing at centre-half and making the opposing forwards look little in more senses than one. Due inquiries were made by the Bury manager concerning this player, introductions were arranged, and the manager passed on an invitation to tea. "I'll come if my brother can come wi' me," said Tom Bradshaw in his broadest Scotch, which I have not tried to print.

At the tea-party the leading question was put: "How would you like to come to Bury for a trial when the new season starts?" The eyes of the big boy bulged. "I canna' play fitba'," he said. "I have na' done any except just kicking aboot to enjoy mysel'." However, the manager of Bury would not be denied, so in due course big Tom, as well as his brother Kenneth, went to Bury for a trial. He was an awkward lad, as well as a big one, with his long legs getting all over the place, as his new manager said.

Although Tom had not played any real football before he arrived at Bury, he soon settled down, and at the end of a month's trial was duly signed on. The feet of the modest boy were on the ladder of fame; placed there by a sheer fluke of having been seen by the manager of an English club who happened to spot a game in which Tom was playing, from the window of a taxicab. All that Tom Bradshaw cost Bury—in addition to the charge on the taximeter while the manager was watching the game—was a £10 signing-on fee. In due course Bury transferred this player to Liverpool for a transfer fee of something like £7,000—the biggest fee, incidentally, that Livepool have ever paid for a player. But that is letting the story of Bradshaw run a bit ahead of itself.

Novel Training!

THERE was a very real problem awaiting the Bury officials in regard to this big boy. The question was how should he be trained? He was so big and strong that ordinary training methods which suited the other players were not sufficiently strenuous for the Scottish laddie. One day Tom himself solved the difficulty. He started pulling the heavy roller round the ground at Gigg Lane. Even to-day, if there is a bit of rolling to be done, Tom takes a sheer delight in "doing a horse out of a job," as he puts it.

During the season of 1925-6 Bradshaw played in every match for Bury, and in each of the following seasons was only absent twice. Then, however, came trouble—trouble of the sort which footballers do not like—to one of his knees. A cartilage operation was necessary, and a spell of idleness, too.

This was extended in rather a peculiar way. While Tom was recovering after the operation he thought he would have a little amusement at a cinema. As it happened there was a bit of a crush at the doors, and Tom got rather a bad knock on the knee which had just been operated upon. There were people who thought that the playing career of Bradshaw was at an end, but the officials of Liverpool, badly in need of a big centre-half to play for the side, decided to take a risk. And as I have said they paid their biggest fee for Bradshaw. He has proved to be well worth it, for it is doubtful if there is a centre-half-back in football to-day who is more difficult to beat than the fourteen-stone-something "Tiny" Bradshaw.

One of the things I like about this weighty half-back is that he does not use his weight unfairly. He has developed from the clumsy laddie into a real footballer.

THE 'SWOT' OF THE REMOVE!

(*Continued from page* 10.)

"Hang the gloves!" snarled the Bounder.

"Put them on, Smithy," said Tom Redwing anxiously. "Wharton's doing the same. Don't be an ass!"

The Bounder snarled again, but he yielded the point. The adversaries had the gloves on when they faced one another again, and Lord Mauleverer was keeping time. Evidently the fight was going on to a finish, and it was going on according to rules.

The Bounder had reason to be glad of it before long. Three minutes later only the call of time saved him from collapsing under Wharton's grim attack.

"Time!" yawned Mauly.

Wharton dropped his hands and stepped back. The Bounder almost reeled to the chair that Skinner brought out of the study.

Tom Redwing fanned his burning face. He did not speak, but the Bounder knew what was in his mind.

"I'm goin' on," he muttered thickly. "I'm not licked, you fool! Do you think I'm licked?"

"I wish you'd chuck it, old man!"

"Oh, shut up!"

The Bounder said no more; he needed to save his breath.

"Time!"

"Go it, Smithy!"

Hammer and tongs they went again. The Bounder was putting every ounce into it now.

Wharton had to give ground. Twice and thrice the Bounder's savage blows came home on his set face. A brief hope flickered up in Smithy's breast. He was going to win! He would win! He should win! Harder and fiercer he pressed on; but almost on the call of time Wharton rallied, and came back at him, hitting out right and left.

Crash!

"Man down!"

"Time!"

The Bounder lay and panted.

Redwing helped him to the chair. Smithy could not have got on his feet unaided.

His head was spinning. He sat in the chair and gasped.

"I say, you fellows, he's licked!" came a fat squeak.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—— Yaroooh!"

There was a bump in Study No. 4 as Bunter sat down under the heavy hand of the bully of the Remove.

Harry Wharton stood waiting. He was breathing hard and deep; but he was still steady as a rock. The Bounder, in the chair, gasped and gasped; and Skinner murmured to Snoop that it was a case of too many cigarettes, and Sidney James Snoop grinned and nodded. There was no doubt that, now the Bounder needed every ounce of his wind, the cigarettes were telling their tale.

"Time!"

Vernon-Smith staggered from the chair.

"Go it, Smithy!"

The Bounder was licked, and he knew it. But he was not the fellow to give in so long as he could stand.

He came on again, fiercely, savagely, perhaps still hoping against hope; determined, if he could, to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. But that hope was brief.

Crash!

The Bounder was down again.

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Lord Mauleverer's eyes were on his watch. He counted.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight——"

"Smithy, old bean!" yapped Skinner encouragingly.

"Go it, Smithy!"

The Bounder made a fierce effort to rise. He sank back again as Lord Mauleverer's voice went on:

"Nine—out!"

"Counted out," said Bob. "Well, it was a jolly good scrap!"

"The scrapfulness was terrific!"

Wharton quietly peeled off the gloves. The fight had been hard, and it had told on him; but he was good for another round or two, if they had been wanted. But they were not wanted.

Vernon-Smith staggered up, with Redwing's aid. His face, crimson, streaming with perspiration, was almost convulsed.

"I'm goin' on!" he panted. "I'm not licked—I'm goin' on——"

"You're counted out, old bean!" said Lord Mauleverer gently.

"You fool! I——"

"Come away, Smithy!" said Redwing; and he led the panting, staggering captain of the Remove into Study No. 4.

The door closed on the buzzing crowd in the passage.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Straight Tip!

"MAULY old chap!"

Lord Mauleverer of the Remove came out of the House a few days later and glanced round the quad, apparently in search of somebody.

It was not, apparently, Billy Bunter of whom he was in search, for he did not heed the fat squeak of the Owl of the Remove. He walked on without glancing at Bunter.

"I say, Mauly old chap, hold on!"

Mauly did not hold on. He accelerated.

"Beast! I mean, I say, old fellow! Mauly!" roared Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer grinned faintly and accelerated still more, as he heard the pursuing footsteps of the fat Owl behind him.

But Billy Bunter was not to be denied. Bunter had a rather important matter to discuss with his lordship.

He broke into a run, and his fat little legs twinkled, as he dashed in pursuit of the elusive Mauly. Mauly had nearly reached the path under the elms, when Bunter reached Mauly and grabbed him by the arm.

"Hold on, old chap!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh dear!" groaned Mauleverer.

He held on. Bunter was holding on, so his lordship had to hold on. The fat Owl gave him a reproachful blink through his big spectacles.

"I say, Mauly old chap, you know I wanted to speak to you! I waited for you after class, and you went the other way!"

"Yaas."

"It's about Easter, old chap," said Bunter.

"Yaas, I knew it was!" groaned Mauly.

"Well, what about Easter?" asked Bunter.

"Nothin'!"

"I had rather a jolly Christmas at your place, Mauly. Not perhaps the really glorious time I should have had at Bunter Court—still, it was jolly. I suppose you'll be taking a pal home for Easter."

"Yaas."

"Well, the fact is, I'm not booked up for Easter yet," said Bunter, blinking at him. "Toddy wants me to go with him; but I can't very well put in the hols in Bloomsbury, can I? Smithy's rather keen; but he's got so jolly swanky since he's been captain of the Form, that I can't stand him—I really can't, Mauly. What are you grinning at?"

"Was I grinnin'?"

"Wharton, of course, would be glad if I went with him," said Bunter. "But I can't stand his temper these days. Like a bear with a sore head, you know, ever since he's been swotting for that beastly exam. Besides, he's hard up—I hear that they've got the bailiffs in at Wharton Lodge——"

"You fat ass!"

"It's true, old chap," said Bunter cheerfully. "I hear that Colonel Wharton's been sold up for his Income Tax. That's why Wharton is swotting for a schol: the old bean can't afford his fees here any longer. Hard lines on him, of course, though I can't say I like a swot——"

"Let go my arm, fathead!"

"Well, as the matter stands, I'm still free for the Easter holidays, Mauly," explained Bunter.

"Stick to that!" said Mauly.

"Eh?"

"But for goodness' sake don't stick to me!"

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

Lord Mauleverer regarded Bunter thoughtfully. He was a youth of polished manners—rare in the Remove. He hated kicking a fellow, even Bunter.

But Bunter had hold of his sleeve, and evidently did not intend to let go till that important question of the Easter holidays was settled. So—after thinking it out—Mauly decided that there was nothing for it but to kick Bunter.

"Well, you will have it, old bean!" said his lordship. "It's rather rotten to give a man such a lot of trouble—but here you are!"

"I say, Mauly—— Oh, my hat! Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as his lordship took him by the collar and slewed him round.

Bunter guessed what was going to happen next. He guessed right! Lord Mauleverer's foot landed on his tight trousers.

"Ooooh!" roared Bunter. "Why, you beast——"

"Have another?" asked Mauleverer gently.

"Yah!" Bunter evidently did not want another. He jumped away in great haste. "Why, you slacking, drawling, fatheaded, frabjous tailor's dummy, I wouldn't come home with you for Easter if you asked me on your bended knees! Yah!"

"Good man!" said Mauly approvingly. "Keep to that, Bunter, and I shan't have to kick you again! It's a lot of trouble!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer smiled and walked on; this time unpursued by William George Bunter.

It was clear to Billy Bunter that he was not going to spend the Easter vacation at Mauleverer Towers. The impact of Mauly's boot had made it clear. Somebody else was to have the pleasure of Bunter's fascinating company that vacation. Before this could happen, it was necessary for a victim to be found! Mauly had made it plain that he was not going to be the happy victim.

Dismissing Bunter from his mind,

Lord Mauleverer walked on under the elms. He had sighted the fellow he was looking for—Harry Wharton.

Wharton was walking under the trees, his hands in his pockets and a moody frown on his brow. His face still showed signs of his fight with the Bounder; but he was not thinking of that. He had been swotting, and was taking a walk in the fresh air to clear his head after weary hours of work.

The "shipping" of his study had set him back a good deal in his hard task, as the malicious Bounder had been well aware that it would.

He had had to ask Mr. Quelch for a new copy of that old exam paper, and Mr. Quelch had raised his eyebrows very expressively when he heard that the former copy had been destroyed by "accident." Plainly he had been of opinion that such an "accident" should not have happened; and Wharton could not tell him of the ragging of his study. It was already said in the Remove that he was "greasing" up to a beak; and certainly he could not draw a master into Remove rags and rows—that was against all the laws and customs of the Lower School.

The laborious notes he had worked out, all had to be worked out once again. He had none too much time to prepare for the examination, which was to be held during the Easter vacation; and it meant a serious loss of the time he could ill spare.

And all the while he was up against the Bounder's enmity. Since the fight, in which Vernon-Smith had been so signally defeated, the new captain of the Remove had been bitterer than ever. He had kept clear of Wharton—never speaking to him, and hardly ever seeing him if he could help it. But his enmity was felt. His influence was strong in the Form, especially among the fellows who had always been against Wharton in his days as captain of the Remove. "Swot" and "smug" and "sap" were words freely applied to Wharton now, and plenty of fellows were ready to take a hint from the Bounder, and make things unpleasant for the "swot," the "slacker" who dodged games and "greased" up to the beaks.

Fellows would start a shindy outside his study door when he was at work. Books and papers would be missing, and have to be searched for. A hard task was made unnecessarily harder.

Wharton was almost looking forward to the time when the school would break up for the holidays, and he would be left alone, or almost alone, in the deserted place.

At least, he would be able to work in peace, and make the best of what chance he had of success.

He was thinking of it, with a moody brow, when Lord Mauleverer came along. For some moments he did not observe his lordship, and Mauly hesitated to speak. Mauly had the kindest heart in the world, and he liked Wharton, and sympathised with a fellow who was down on his luck. But he realised ruefully that a fellow had to be wary in sympathising with Wharton these days. He was touchy, and only too quick to take offence—even where none was really meant. That, indeed, was at the bottom of his trouble with the Bounder, the first fault had been on Wharton's side, though it had been unintentional.

Wharton glanced up, and smiled faintly as he saw Mauleverer. Perhaps he read the schoolboy earl's dubious thoughts in his face.

"Hallo, Mauly, old bean!" he said, as cordially as he could, though, as a matter of fact, he did not want Mauly's company, or anybody else's, just then.

"Lookin' for you, old chap," said Mauleverer. "We're breakin' up for Easter soon, Wharton."

"Yes," said Harry.

"We had rather a decent time at my place at Christmas," said Mauly. "At least, I hope you had, old bean."

"Topping!" answered Wharton.

"Well, what about Easter?" asked Mauleverer. "I'd be jolly glad if you'd come along, Wharton. I'll ask your friends, too, if you'll come."

The smile faded off Wharton's face.

"You've heard the tattle in the rag," he said quietly. "You know I'm staying at the school over the holidays?"

"Yaas, I've heard so," assented Mauly. "But if you want to work, old man, you can work all right at the Towers. I'll fix you up——"

"It's very kind of you," said Wharton dryly. "But since Bunter nosed out my affairs, and made them the talk of the Form, you know how I stand as well as any other man in the Remove. A fellow who can't give invitations can't accept them, and I'm not a fellow like Bunter to be patronised. Thanks, all the same."

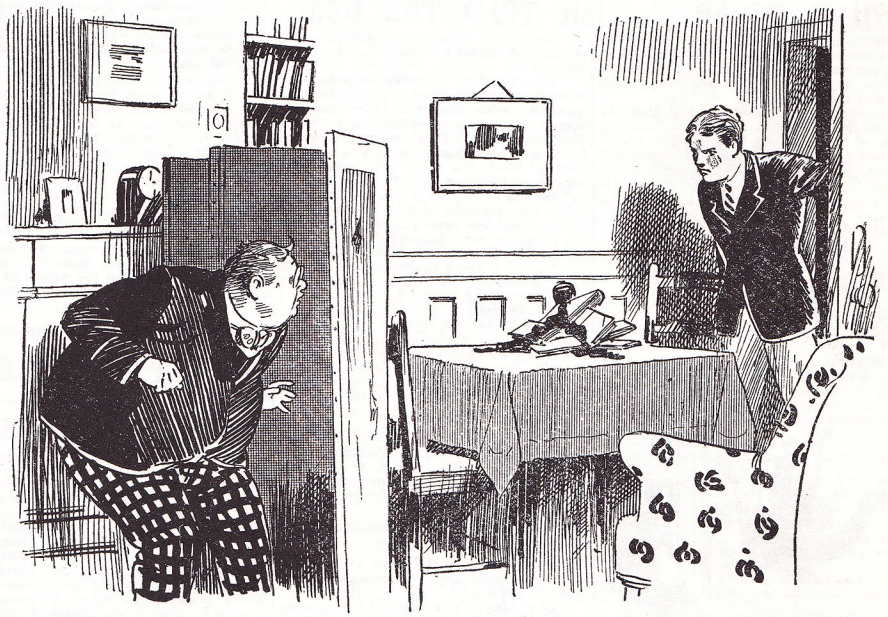
Lord Mauleverer stood very still.

Wharton's cheeks were flushed with rising anger. His lordship was a little angry, too.

"That's rather rotten, Wharton," he said at last. "I'm sorry to see you takin' things like this. I know that all the Form knows that you're down on your luck. But that's no reason to be touchy and offensive."

"I don't mean to be either. But——"

(*Continued on page 16.*)



Bunter had just up-ended the inkpot over Wharton's books when there came the sound of approaching footsteps. He darted behind the old screen just in time and, blinking through one of the holes in it, watched Wharton enter the study.

Greyfriars Herald

Edited by HARRY WHARTON, F.G.R.

LATEST EXTRA GOOD EDITION

No. 91. LAUGH AND GROW FAT. April 2nd, 1932.

"AMERICAN LANGUAGE SHOULD BE TAUGHT!"

WHAT FISHER T. FISH TOLD THE HEAD

Pedestrians in the vicinity of the Head's study one day this week were surprised to see the door suddenly open and an untidy bundle of clothing fly out and land on the floor of the passage.

Investigation revealed the fact that the bundle was Fisher T. Fish of the Remove, late of Noo York. Fish, having sorted himself out and ascertained that he was still intact, ju..ped to his feet and shook his fist in the direction of the door—now closed.

"Doggone my cats!" he was heard to remark. "If that old galoot ain't the elephant's hind legs!"

A "Greyfriars Herald" representative, who happened to be passing, promptly took out his notebook and proceeded to interview Fish.

"Little spot of bother with the Head, Fishy?" he asked.

"Say, do you figure I came out that way because I liked it?" retorted Fishy, sarcastically. "If you wanna know, Big Boy, I jest got the works!"

"The works?"

"That guy Locke surely was a bouncer in some tough joint one time!" said Fish, rubbing his injured bones reminiscently. "I'm through, now; I went there to put him wise how he could make easy money, an' this is how I'm served! I'll tell the world, I'm through!"

"But what happened, old bean?"

Fisher T. Fish snorted.

"I went there to fix a hook-up. It was the niftiest idea that old bonehead ever heard, I guess: but could he see it? No, siree!"

"What was the idea, then?"

"To add another subject to the curriculum of this educational establishment!"

"Fathead! Don't you think we've enough afready?"

"Too many!" agreed Fish. "But this subject is different, I'll say. It's completely neglected hyer, yet it's the most important subject in the world to-day. In a word, it's the American language!"

"Great pip! You actually had the nerve to ask the Head to teach the American lingo?"

"You've said it! Not that I expected him to teach it himself. That old sap's the most ignorant schoolmaster I ever met—he doesn't know a word of American!" said Fish scornfully. "That's where I came in. I told him I was agreeable to hook up with him an' teach the whole school American for one sawbuck per day!"

"My hat!"

"I told him the dollars would simply roll in when the news got round—that all the big shots would be sendin' their sons to Greyfriars. I made it clear that he'd make the biggest rake-off in his natural!" said Fish, bitterly. "Yet what does he do? Jest gives me the works!"

"Astonishing!"

"Yeah?" sneered Fish. "I got my own opinion about that, I guess. I warn't born yesterday, an' I got my eye-teeth cut, I reckon. Fact is, that guy Locke may not be such a sap as he looks. I sorter figure there's a bit of skulduggery goin' on somewhere!"

"Indeed?"

"That guy's gonna take my nifty idea and get the rake-off all for himself!" snorted Fish. "Either that, or else he's cuckoo. Whichever it is, I'm through!"

And the disgusted American citizen tramped away.

IGNORAMUS

The boy gripped the sides of his desk with a convulsive grip. There was a deadly pallor in his cheeks.

Around him he was aware of the sneering glances of the rest of the Form-fellows who, up to a minute or two ago, had been his friends. Never again could he mix with them on the same friendly footing as before. A barrier stood between them and him now.

The Form-master addressed him again.

"You are sure you do not know?"

"Quite sure, sir!"

His tone was dead and lifeless. Only a faint quiver in it betrayed the emotion that he felt.

The Form-master drew a deep breath.

"I can only say that I am amazed—astounded! You may sit down. We will resume the lesson."

And the lesson was resumed, to the accompaniment of mocking laughter from the entire Form over the Boy Who Didn't Know on what day Easter Monday falls.

SECRETS OF NATURE

STUDYING WILD LIFE AT GREYFRIARS

In the spring, a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of botany, ornithology, and the study of insect, animal and reptilian life. Merrie he prances round hedgerows with butterfly-net, jam jar and fishing-tackle, and generally has a high old time.

Which reminds us that Mr. H. Vernon-Smith, the noted explorer, has just strolled into the editorial office, his bronze complexion bearing eloquent testimony to the fact that he has washed this morning. He tells us that he has been taking photographs of some of the lesser-known specimens of wild life in the vicinity of Greyfriars, securing many excellent results.

Mr. Vernon-Smith, like all true heroes, is modest about his own exploits, but he very willingly talked about his nature studies.

He informed us that anyone who cares to take the trouble to disguise himself as a clump of gorse and stand still in the middle of a field can study the habits of Nature's lesson-known specimens.

He did so himself last Wednesday with gratifying success. Within half-an-hour a small flock of Blades had settled down near by, and were playing a queer little game of their own to the accompaniment of occasional squawks of "Nap!"

They scattered in alarm at the approach of a couple of Black Sheep of a larger and older variety, and it was amusing to see how the two newcomers calmly helped themselves to what the Blades had left behind.

Later on a Beak came hovering around, and as was the turn of the Black Sheep to gallop away over the brow of the hill. The Beak eyed the clump of gorse somewhat suspiciously, but departed without examining it closely. Which was just as well for Mr. Vernon-Smith tells us, Beaks are ferocious animals, uncertain of temper and liable to bite at any time.

Isn't it awfully refreshing for us over-civilised creatures to hear about the wild primitive life that goes on under our very noses? It sort of brings in a puff of air from the wide, open spaces, and all that kind of thing, doesn't it?

FANCY DRESS ON WHEELS

CYCLE PARADE HELPS HOSPITAL

It was Wingate's idea to aid the Courtfield Cottage Hospital by means of a Fancy Dress Cycle Parade. Jolly good idea, too, we must say, and we're pleased to be able to add that the wheeze worked out very successfully.

The Parade took place last Thursday afternoon, the Head kindly allowing the school to cease work after first afternoon lesson to give the entrants time to don their costumes and get into formation.

A prize was awarded for the best fancy costume in the parade, and there was never much doubt as to who would be the winner. Bob Cherry's original "rig-out" as an aeroplane being everybody's fancy. The judges selected him for premier honours without the slightest difficulty.

Bob's costume was undoubtedly the "hit" of the day, but many others were almost equally startling. Vernon-Smith, for instance, was disguised as a telephone receiver and Brown as a portable wireless-set! There were, of course, plenty of clowns, cavaliers, prehistoric men and other types usually met on carnival occasions. They made a colourful collection by the time they had all assembled in the quad.

After being inspected by the Head and the staff, the Cycle Parade set off in the direction of Friardale, preceded by the Courtfield Town Band. The entire population of the village turned out to greet the procession, and there was tremendous excitement. The official collectors made the most of their opportunity, and reaped a fine harvest for the hospital.

Having passed through Friardale, the Parade proceeded to Highcliffe, outside the walls of which the school had assembled. The Highcliffians responded generously to the collectors' appeals, and it was evident, from their cheering, that they were delighted with the spectacle.

Turning back again, the procession headed for Cliff House and Pegg, the last two objectives of the afternoon. Needless to say, the Cliff House girls contributed nobly to the deserving cause for which the Parade had been started and Pegg Village followed suit on a smaller scale, though not less sincerely.

As a result of the Parade a sum of £35 10s. has been realised, and the Head has graciously promised to make this up to the fine, round figure of £40.

It certainly cannot be said that Greyfriars is lagging behind in the task of supporting the hospitals!

SLINGING THE SLEDGEHAMMER

ENTHUSIASM OVER NEW CRAZE

Slinging the Sledgehammer threatens to rival in popularity even footer and cricket at Greyfriars just now. It's good, clean fun. You just take a sledgehammer, raise it above the napper, and then bring it down with the maximum amount of energy on the top of a stake which your friend is holding all ready to be driven into the ground.

If you miss the stake and hit your friend's knuckles instead, it's hard on both of you. You lose a point, and he loses interest in the game.

Advocates of Sledgehammer Slinging say that it's a fine, manly pastime, and develops that sportsmanlike outlook which is so necessary in the future captains of industry in our land. They say that it gives a fellow an aim in life and teaches him to give and take hard knocks.

The masters are enthusiastic. Mr. Prout of the Fifth tried his hand one day this week, and gave himself a terrific blow on his big toe. He remarked, with a smile, that he hadn't enjoyed himself so much for a long time. Mr. Quelch, while watching an exhibition by Bolsover major, got hit on the nose, and laughed heartily at the little occurrence.

It is sad to relate at this early juncture that differences of opinion have already crept in amongst adherents of the new sport. At a stormy meeting of the Sledgehammer Slinging Society in the Rag, acute controversy raged as to the permissible size of the hammer and the rules governing the

championship. A split in the society is threatened.

We sincerely hope that members will somehow patch up their differences. They must remember what is at stake. It would be a tragic thing for Sledgehammer Slinging if the dissenting members decided to go on strike.

LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE

COKER'S NEW CAMPAIGN

Coker of the Fifth thinks we don't treat each other with enough kindness and consideration.

He adds that there is far too much bullying at Greyfriars.

He has started a campaign to improve matters. His motto is "Let brotherly love continue."

His first chance occurred last Monday when he found Tubb of the Third tweaking young Paget's nose.

Coker promptly stepped in and thrashed Tubb in order to teach him to love his brethren.

On Tuesday, Coker noticed Bolsover major pulling his minor's nose.

He gave Bolsover major a terrific punch that knocked him down the School House steps.

On Wednesday, Coker observed Temple kicking Bunter. He kicked Temple all round the Hall to impress him with the necessity of being kind. So as to make sure that the lesson was not lost on Bunter, he concluded by kicking Bunter, too.

On Thursday, in an effort to make others kind and gentle, Coker gave out three lickings with a cricket stump, five black eyes, and about a dozen thick ears.

We haven't received Friday's figures up to the time of going to Press. But, whatever they are, we think the time has come to remind Coker that one can, after all, have too much kindness and consideration. It would be awfully nice, of course, if we could all be as gentle and kind as Coker; but as that's impossible, doesn't he think it would be just as well to be content with a gradual conversion?

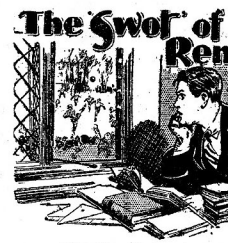
To begin with, we suggest that Coker limits his kindness to others to about ten lickings a day. Gradually, as we become more accustomed to the idea of being gentle, he can increase it to twenty or thirty.

That seems much more sensible than trying to do it all at once.

Don't you think so?

Awful Neck

Hoskins has taken up the 'cello, and gave a recital one evening this week, wearing for the occasion a dress suit and a GREEN TIE! We didn't mind his recital, but we really felt that that awful tie was a bit thick.



(*Continued from page* 13.)

"You're both," said Lord Mauleverer calmly. "Feelin' friendly to wards you, old bean, I'm goin' to speak plainly. Nobody wants to patronise you. You started that row with Smithy, because——"

"I did!" exclaimed Wharton angrily.

"Yaas, you did. Your pal Cherry auctioned your bike in the Rag, to raise the wind. Fellows bid high for it, to do you a good turn. Nothin' wrong in that—any fellow might. It's not uncommon, when a fellow has to sell his things, for other fellows to weigh in and make it a success for him. I ran up the biddin' myself; but Smithy bid higher. You refused to take his money, and called the sale off. Smithy meant well—and you practically insulted him. You couldn't expect him to like it."

Wharton looked grimly at the schoolboy earl. But grim looks had no effect on his placid lordship.

"That started your trouble with Smithy," went on Lord Mauleverer. "You were in the wrong."

"Look here——"

"Smithy's been in the wrong ever since, I know that. But the blame was yours in the beginnin'. Smithy might have gone easier, knowin' how you were fixed; but he's not a forgivin' chap. I am, you know!" added Lord Mauleverer, with a grin. "You've been jolly offensive to me, but I'm goin' to forgive you, and I've given you a tip over and above. That's the lot."

And with that, Lord Mauleverer turned and walked away, before Wharton could reply.

Harry Wharton stared after him as he went. His brow was dark, and his eyes were gleaming.

But the anger faded out of his face. Somehow or other, Mauly's quiet words had produced an effect upon a mind that was irritated, morose, and a little obstinate—made so by an accumulation of unexpected and undeserved troubles.

Wharton continued to pace under the elms, after Mauly had left him, thinking. His own friends had thought him to blame in that quarrel with the Bounder which had produced such far-reaching results in the Remove. He had known that, and it had only irritated him. Somehow, simple old Mauly's opinion produced a different effect. Troubles were piling high and heavy upon him—the Bounder's enmity not the least of them. If he owed that to a touchy, passionate, and unreasonable temper——

It was not a pleasant reflection.

"Hallo, here you are!" Frank Nugent came up. "Tea's ready, old bean."

They walked back to the House together.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Too Late!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH looked in the glass, in his study, and passed a hand tenderly over his eye.

He scowled at his reflection.

The Bounder's face had never been handsome, and it was less handsome than ever since that fierce fight in the Remove passage.

Several days had passed, but he was still very visibly marked, and likely to remain so for some time. He had a decorated countenance to take home for the Easter holidays. That was bad enough, but worse, much worse, was the rankling sense of defeat.

He turned from the glass, and dropped into a chair at the table. Tom Redwing was sitting there at tea.

"It's getting better, Smithy, old man," he said.

"I've got to show my father a black eye when I go home," said the Bounder savagely.

"Well, it's not quite black, and there's a few more days yet——"

"I'll make that smug pay for it!" said Vernon-Smith venomously. "Precious state of affairs when a Form captain can't round up a slacker without goin' through a prize-fight afterwards."

Redwing made no reply to that. It was useless to argue with a fellow who was determined to take an unreasonable view.

Smithy gave him a dark look.

"You're sympathisin' with the swot!" he sneered. "It's like you."

"The chap's down on his luck, Smithy," said Tom mildly. "I wish you'd go easier with him. I know he's not agreeable lately, but if you'd try to fancy yourself in his position——"

The Bounder gave a scoffing laugh.

"I'm no such fool," he sneered. "He's got a quarrel on with his uncle. His uncle's one of the best. There's precious few men I've ever respected—but Colonel Wharton is one of them. The fool's got his back up over nothing—his dashed pride and temper. He thinks that he's up against the world, and got to fight his own way—when the truth is, that he's an ungrateful and disrespectful rotter, treating a man badly that's always been splendid to him."

"He must have some reason——"

"Rot! He fancies he has—just as he fancied that he had a reason for rowing with me, over that auction in the Rag. Do you think he was in the right over that?" snarled the Bounder.

"No; he was in the wrong. But a man might make allowances——"

"Oh, rot!"

The Bounder, evidently, was in no mood to make allowances.

"I'll make him sit up!" he growled. "I'll muck up his swotting all I can—I'll queer his pitch for the school. Let him get out of Greyfriars, and be hanged to him! I'd be glad to see the last of him—and so would most of the Form, I think. By gad, I've a good mind to try it again and give him an eye to match this, for the holidays."

"My dear chap——"

Tap!

"Oh, come in!" snapped Vernon-Smith, as a knock came at the study door.

The door opened, and the Bounder and Redwing stared in surprise at Harry Wharton. He was about the last fellow in the Remove who might have been expected to call at that study.

Smithy jumped to his feet.

"What the thump do you want? If you've come here for another scrap, you won't have to ask twice, you cheeky rotter."

Wharton breathed rather hard.

It was the reception he might have expected, as matters stood. But he had come to Study No. 4 determined to keep his temper.

"I haven't come for a scrap, Smithy," he said. "I—I've come"—the words came out with an effort—"I've come to tell you I'm sorry."

Vernon-Smith stared at him in utter astonishment. Redwing, equally astonished, could only stare, too.

"What game's this?" asked the Bounder at last. "Have you got to understand at last that you can't lick your Form captain, or what?"

"No. Not that! But——"

"If you're goin' to toe the line, well and good——"

"Let a fellow speak," said Harry, still quietly. "It's about a matter of some weeks ago—that auction in the Rag. You bid more for the bike than it was worth, Smithy, and I—I——"

"And you chucked my money back at me," said the Bounder, between his teeth, "I remember."

"I—I've been thinking it over, and I'm sorry," said Harry, in a low voice. "I took offence—I thought you were—were—well, I suppose I thought you were patronising me because I was hard up."

"That's what you would think!" sneered the Bounder.

Wharton coloured.

"I'm admitting that I was to blame," he said. "I can see now that you meant to do me a friendly turn, and—and I took it badly. I'm sorry."

There was a pause.

Redwing's face had brightened. He saw, or hoped he saw, in this an end to the bitter feud in the Remove.

Perhaps, for a moment, the Bounder's hard heart was touched. He knew what an effort it must have cost Wharton's proud and unbending nature to come to his study and make such an acknowledgment.

But if Smithy relented it was only for a moment. Like Pharaoh of old, he hardened his heart.

The quarrel had gone too far and too deep to be mended by words—even words of contrition. The division was too wide and too bitter to be bridged now. Smithy, now, was in Wharton's old position of Form captain, and he did not believe that Wharton meant to leave him peaceably in it, and not for a moment would he have dreamed of giving it up. Smithy's face was marked by fierce blows; the rancour of defeat was bitter in his breast. Wharton's words a few weeks ago would have mended matters, for the Bounder was not ungenerous. Now they had come too late.

"I—I thought I'd come here and say so, Smithy," said Wharton, breaking the grim silence. "A fellow can't do more than own up that—that he's been in the wrong."

"It's taken you a long time to find it out!" The Bounder's tone was hard and jeering. "Have you found out at last that you can't play the mighty Panjandrum in the Remove? Have you got it into your head at last that you're up against a man who's goin' to call you to order, and make you toe the line?"

Wharton looked at him.

"So that's how you take it, Smithy!" he said, very quietly.

The Bounder gave a scoffing laugh.

"You've found out that you've tackled a man over your weight," he said contemptuously. "You started the row, and now you'd like to call it off because you're getting the worst of it."

"Smithy!" exclaimed Redwing.

"Don't you butt in, Reddy! Wharton can take his soft sawder to some other study—it won't go down here."

Wharton's lip curled.

"I suppose I might have expected that—from you, Vernon-Smith," he said. "Well, I've said what I came to say—that's all."

He turned to the door.

"You could have saved your breath," jeered the Bounder. "You've wasted it here, I can assure you. Shut the door after you."

Wharton glanced back at him. His eyes were gleaming now; already he was sorry that he had come, and feeling a strong desire before he went, to plant his fist in the Bounder's mocking, jeering face.

But he restrained himself and left the study, closing the door quietly after him.

The Bounder sat down again, with a sneering grin.

"That's that!" he said. "By gad—did the fellow think he could pull my leg so easily as all that? Gad! If he's at Greyfriars next term I'll give him a high old time in the Remove!"

"Look here, Smithy——"

"Oh, rats!"

And the subject dropped in Study No. 4.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Sees It All!

"OH crikey!" ejaculated Billy Bunter.

Bunter jumped.

There was a footstep in the Remove passage, approaching the door of Study No. 1.

Bunter was in that study, where certainly he had no business to be.

He blinked round at the door in alarm.

He had cause to be alarmed if it was Wharton who was coming. For Bunter, though he had no business in Wharton's study, had been busy there.

He had an inkpot in his hand which he had just up-ended over several Latin books.

The fat and fatuous Owl had joined in the game of ragging the swot, and this was his contribution.

There was a fat grin on his face, but it vanished as the footstep came along to the door. Obviously, if the swot found him there, with the ink flowing over the books, it would not be a grinning matter for William George Bunter.

Bunter set down the inkpot in haste. He gave one desperate blink round the study in search of a hiding-place, and plunged behind the old, rather tattered screen that stood in the corner.

He was none too soon.

The door opened, and Harry Wharton came in. Bunter, blinking through one of the rents in the screen—of which there were a good many—watched Wharton come in, and tried to still his breathing.

He could not help feeling that, if Wharton found him there, he would suspect him of having inked his books, and would refuse to take his word that he hadn't!

He was glad to see that the beast was alone. If the whole mob had come in, Bunter could hardly have remained undiscovered. Wharton closed the door and came towards the table.

Bunter, still as a fat mouse in the corner, watched him anxiously. Short-sighted as the Owl of the Remove was, he could see the tired, harassed expression on the handsome face. Under the public eye Wharton kept up a countenance of cool indifference. He was not a fellow to wear his heart on his sleeve. But alone, or believing himself to be alone, he relaxed.

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton suddenly.

He saw the ink streaming over the books.

Bunter quaked.

He expected an outbreak of temper—bad temper. And if the beast suspected that the chap who had upset the ink was still in the study——

But there was no outbreak. Wharton, after that ejaculation, stood looking at the inky mess on his table, with a bitter, weary expression on his face. It was one more act of thoughtless persecution, of which he had experienced many of late. For several minutes Wharton stood there, evidently without a suspicion that the ragger was still on the spot. At last he stirred, and, taking a duster, wiped up the ink and cleaned the books as well as he could.

Then he sat down.

Bunter suppressed a groan of dismay. The beast had apparently come there to swot, and if he was going to swot he might stay in the study an hour or more. Which was extremely uncomfortable for the fat Owl.

But Wharton did not touch his books. If he had come there to swot, he seemed to have lost heart.

What the dickens the beast thought he was up to was a puzzle to the hapless Owl blotted out of sight behind the screen.

Wharton sat at the table, one elbow resting on it, his chin cupped in his hand, his profile to Bunter, evidently deep in painful thought.

Thinking of the hols, perhaps, Bunter considered; dismal enough hols for the fellow who was to remain behind in a deserted school, when all his friends would be scattered far and wide. Friends and enemies would be gone. And even the latter would have been better than the weeks of solitude; even the constant friction with the Bounder better than the silence and the loneliness. Whatever Wharton was thinking of, he sat a long time in silence, while Bunter watched him through the hole in the screen and longed for him to go.

He stirred at last.

Bunter quaked again. If the beast had spotted him——

But Wharton was thinking of anything but the Owl of the Remove. He drew from his pocket an envelope. From the envelope he took a fragment of paper—a charred fragment that was evidently the remnant of a letter that had been burned.

Bunter's eyes opened wide behind his big spectacles.

Something was written on that charred fragment, though the fat Owl could not see what it was.

Whatever it was, it brought a blacker and blacker look to Wharton's face.

His eyes glinted under his knitted brows, his lips set in a hard line. Plainly, what was written on that charred paper stirred him deeply.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. He almost forgot—though not quite—the necessity of keeping quiet in his intense curiosity.

What on earth could be written on that charred bit of paper to stir Wharton so deeply? Certainly it was no affair of Bunter's—but Billy Bunter's interest had never been confined to his own affairs. He would have given a great deal to read that paper.

The black look faded from Wharton's face.

Anger seemed to give way to other feelings—deep sadness and despondency. The changing expression on his face excited Bunter's curiosity to burning point. The fat Owl almost jumped as he saw Wharton pass the back of his hand across his eyes.

Was he blubbing?

Wharton—blubbing!

Bunter could not have been more astounded.

He fairly goggled at the unconscious junior.

Wharton uttered a sudden, impatient exclamation and rose to his feet. Again Bunter quaked. But obviously it never occurred to Wharton that a fat Owl was blotted behind the screen in the corner. He moved about the study with restless steps, his face almost haggard. He had thrown the charred paper on the table, and it lay there as the unhappy junior paced and paced the room.

Fortunately—for Bunter—he did not come near the screen. Relieved of his terrors, the fat Owl blinked at the paper on the table. He had a full view of it, and, short-sighted as he was, he could see it clearly enough at the short distance.

It was part of a letter, and it was in the hand of Colonel Wharton, which Bunter knew well enough. And the words on it ran:

" . . . certainly no man can be expected to bear for ever the burden of a thoughtless, selfish, utterly ungrateful nephew——"

That was all. The rest had been consumed by the fire. But it was enough—more than enough—to enlighten Bunter. That was why Wharton was up against it. It was not, as Bunter had cheerily supposed, a case of the bailiffs in at Wharton Lodge. It was that letter from his uncle that had wrought so great a change in the captain of the Remove.

Thoughtless, selfish, ungrateful, a burden. No wonder Wharton had got his "rag" out! No wonder he had refused to accept an allowance from his uncle after that! Had determined that if he stayed on at Greyfriars he would stay at his own charges! Had even cleared out the day the colonel came to see him! Had resolved to stay at school for the vacation! Bunter saw it all now.

Certainly those words—or any other words—would not have produced such an effect on Billy Bunter himself.

But on a hot-headed, passionate, proud, touchy fellow—in fact, a silly ass like Wharton—Bunter could quite understand it.

Bunter, thanks to his keyhole methods of acquiring information, had already learned something of the trouble, and told every fellow who would listen to him. Now he had it, as it were, officially. It was not a case of the silly ass getting his silly back up about nothing,

(*Continued on next page.*)

as Bunter—and other fellows—had supposed. There it was in black and white.

Wharton walked up and down the study. The fat Owl wondered desperately whether he would ever go.

But he did not go.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Bunter could have groaned. Instead of the beast going, the other beasts were coming.

The door was hurled open.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry's cheery hail thundered in the silent study, and he tramped in, followed by the rest of the Co. Bunter saw Wharton hastily throw a blotting-pad over the charred paper on the table.

"Not swotting?" exclaimed Bob.

"N-no. I was going to work, but——" Wharton stammered.

"Well, don't begin now; it will be prep soon," said Bob. "And we've got something to say about the hols. So give jolly old Livy a rest and listen to your Uncle Robert."

Behind the screen in the corner Billy Bunter glared with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. There was no escape for Bunter now.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

HARRY WHARTON looked at the Co., his face setting. The four juniors had serious faces, and he could guess that they had consulted together before coming to the study. The question of the holidays had to be settled. From Wharton's point of view, it was settled already, but evidently the Co. did not think so. Evidently they were going to tackle him on the subject all together—a frontal attack, as it were, in force.

"Now," said Bob, "we've been talking it over, Harry. We've come here to put it to you plain."

"The plainfulness is to be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a nod.

"Straight from the shoulder," assented Johnny Bull.

"I wish you'd let it drop!" exclaimed Wharton. "I've got to stay at the school over the hols. That's settled. Do chuck it!"

"I don't see it," said Nugent.

"You ought to see it more than the other fellows, as I've told you exactly how the matter stands."

"Look here, Harry, I don't see it! Even if you can't go home to Wharton Lodge——"

"That's no longer my home."

"Well, even then, you can go with one of your pals—with me, or with Bob, or Johnny. We'd all be glad——"

Wharton shook his head.

"I've got to work—but that isn't all! I tell you I'm not going to begin sponging. I've no home now to ask a fellow to, and I'm not going to stick other fellows. Once I began that I should jolly soon get like Bunter! I suppose you wouldn't like that."

A fat fist was shaken behind the screen in the corner. It was said of old that listeners hear no good of themselves!

"That's rot!" said Johnny Bull, but he spoke slowly.

"I think not," said Harry. "Now I'm done with my—with Colonel Wharton, I'm on my own, to sink or swim. I've hopes of keeping on at school by getting that dashed schol—paying my own exes, like old Linley. If I fail I'm done for. But, whatever happens, I'm not going to begin sponging."

"Now we're coming down to brass tacks," said Bob. "Wharton, old bean, you're up against your uncle for some reason. Nugent knows, but you haven't told us. Now, we all know your nunky. We know he's a splendid man; he went through the War from start to finish; he's always been the real goods. Don't yap out that it isn't our bizney; it is our bizney to see that you don't act the goat, as your friends——"

"I've said once," said Johnny Bull, "that you were in the wrong, Wharton. I say so again. I know it."

Wharton's face flushed. An angry answer trembled on his lips.

But he calmed himself at once.

Wharton was in a subdued mood now. His friends would soon be gone; and it was as likely as not that he would be missing from Greyfriars when they gathered again next term. It all depended on his success in the examination—and his success was problematic.

He was resolved that no angry words should be spoken before they parted. He was anxious, too, to justify himself in their eyes. If they were parting for good he did not want them to leave him in the belief that he was an obstinate, hot-headed fellow, who had thrown away his chances in life and his duty to his guardian from motives of passionate pride. That he was acting rightly he was assured, and he would have been glad of the approval of his friends.

So, when he answered, it was quietly and calmly.

"If you knew the facts, you fellows, I think you'd see that I can do nothing else."

"Nugent knows the facts—and he doesn't think so!" said Johnny Bull.

Wharton started a little.

"I'm bound to say so, Harry!" said Nugent. "I know how it looks to you, but I can't help thinking there's some horrible mistake somewhere."

"And I'm sure of it!" said Bob.

"The surefulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh solemnly. "My esteemed and absurd chum, let the smile of sweet reasonableness replace the terrific frown of ridiculous wrath."

"I'll tell you what Nugent knows, and you can judge," said Harry quietly. He removed the blotting-pad, revealing the charred letter. "Look at that! You know Colonel Wharton's handwriting, I suppose?"

"But—but what——" ejaculated Bob.

"Look at it!" repeated Wharton.

The juniors looked at the charred paper. Nugent had seen it before, but it came as a surprise to the other fellows.

"By gum!" said Bob blankly. "Do you mean to say——"

He broke off.

"Colonel Wharton wrote that letter to you?" asked Johnny Bull.

"No. I don't know. He wrote it. You can see that it's his fist. The letter was never posted."

"Then how the thump——"

Wharton made a weary gesture.

"You remember Colonel Wharton was here weeks ago. He missed me, and waited in this study. That idiot Bunter butted into him, and he dropped some papers——"

"I remember that," said Bob. "I picked them up for him. But——"

"Later, Bunter was lighting the fire for tea and he found an old letter under the armchair. It must have been one that the colonel dropped and you overlooked when you picked up the papers."

"I remember all that; but what——"

"Bunter used it to light the fire. I snatched it off, thinking it might be one of my uncle's papers. That's all that was left of it."

"Oh!" said Bob. "I—I remember you seemed knocked over when you saw it. I recall it now——"

"Enough to knock any fellow over, I think," said Harry, his lips quivering. "A fellow doesn't like to be called selfish and ungrateful, and spoken of as a burden——"

"I don't catch on to this," said Johnny Bull, in his slow way. "If the old bean had the letter about him and dropped it here it could never have been posted. It couldn't have been written to you. Man wouldn't write you a letter when he was coming to see you, and carry it in his pocket."

"No. Whether he wrote it intending to send it to me, and changed his mind, or whether he wrote it to somebody else, I can't say. But he wrote it. It's in his hand—what's left of it. I could not help seeing what was on it, of course, when I picked it up. Now you know——" Wharton breathed hard and his face was pale. "I've told you fellows this because I may never see you after you leave. I don't want you to go, thinking that I've played the fool! I can't be a burden on a man——"

He broke off, choking.

There was silence in the study.

Johnny Bull broke it.

"I don't get it," he said. "This isn't like your uncle. He's a decent man; he's been as good as a father to you. He can't have changed his mind like that—no decent man would!"

"He's rather up against it, financially," said Harry. "He's been hard hit, like most people, these days. I suppose he feels the burden now. That may be the reason."

"Sure that letter referred to you at all?"

Wharton stared.

"I'm his only nephew," he answered curtly.

"Well, it looks—it looks——" Johnny Bull paused. "But I don't get it. Anyhow, you're wrong!"

"How do you mean, ass?"

"Colonel Wharton can't know that he dropped that letter here. He would naturally expect you to return to him any paper that he might have dropped by accident in your study. There isn't much left of it, but what there is you ought to have sent to him. It's his, not yours."

"I—I know that. But—but it was too beastly. I couldn't let him know that I knew how he had spoken of me—how he thought of me——" Wharton's face crimsoned. "Put yourself in my place, you ass! Can't you understand?"

"I understand all that," said Johnny. "But right's right. You ought to have sent that bit of paper back to him, explaining how it got burnt by accident. Then, if there's any explanation of what he's written, you'd have got it."

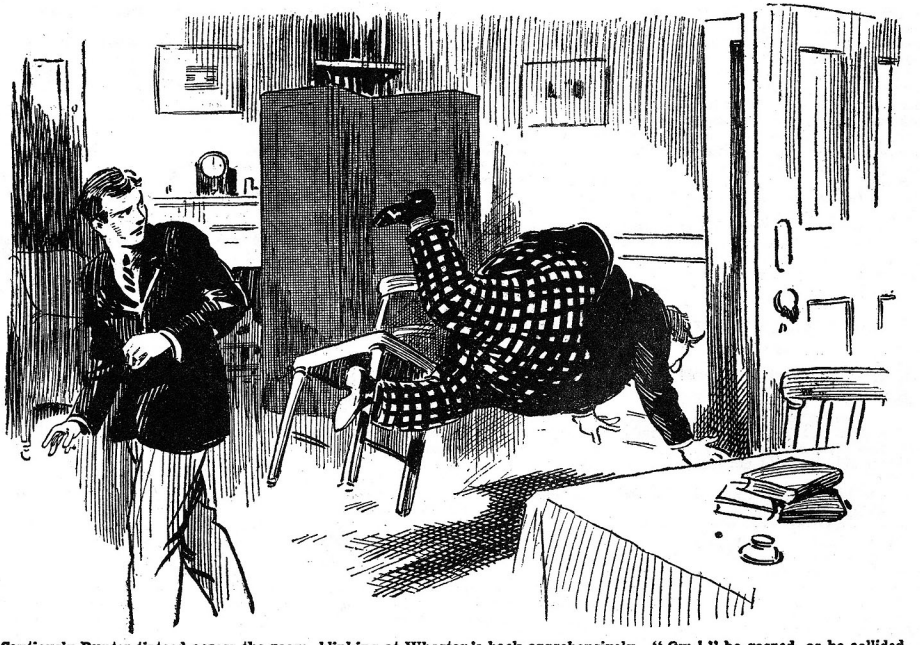
"Rot! What's the use of a fragment of burnt paper to him, you fathead? He never meant me to see it; and I saw it by accident. He's let me down, but I don't want to rub it in. I've always respected him, always liked him. Do you think I want to tell him what I've got to think of him now——"

"Right's right!" repeated Johnny Bull stolidly.

"Oh, rats!"

There was another silence.

"Well, you know now," said Harry at last, speaking very quietly. "Whether I let my uncle see that paper and let him know that I know, or



Cautiously Bunter tiptoed across the room, blinking at Wharton's back apprehensively. "Ow!" he gasped, as he collided with a chair. Wharton turned round quickly, just in time to see the hapless Owl stumbling forward.

whether I chuck it into the fire, makes no difference. I'm on my own now—and that's that! Surely you can see I've no choice."

"If you're right, yes," said Bob slowly. "But——"

"If the letter really meant——" said Nugent.

"What could it mean but what it says?"

There was no answer to that.

So far as any of the juniors could see, the matter was clear enough. Yet four of the fellows felt that there was some ghastly mistake somewhere. They recalled Colonel Wharton's grave, kind face. They had seen a good deal of their chum's uncle, but never had they seen a hint of a mean thought or a mean action. Willingly he had taken his dead brother's son on his hands; always he had been a father to him. He was not the man to crumple up when difficulties came along, to regard the nephew, who had trusted him like a father, as a "burden." They could not reconcile this with what they knew of the man.

Neither could Wharton, for that matter. But the bitter wound to his pride, the bitter sting of humiliation, prevented him from feeling the doubt that was in the minds of his friends.

And how could there be a doubt?

"Well, that's that!" said Wharton, at last. "Let it drop!"

"Not yet," said Johnny Bull. "If Colonel Wharton has treated you like this he's a real rotter—there's no mistake about that. But he's not a rotter! There's some mistake somewhere."

"I've had that from Nugent," said Harry dryly.

"Now you're getting it from me," said Johnny calmly. "If what's written here means what you think——"

"What else can it mean?"

"I don't know. It's got me beat. But if it means what you think, you should have it out plain with your uncle. Go to him——"

"I've said so, Harry," urged Nugent.

"I—I think so, too!" said Bob. "I admit I can't see where any mistake could come in. But—but it's an awfully serious matter, Harry. If—if it's not as you believe you're acting badly to a good and generous man."

"The thinkfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "Go to the esteemed and idiotic colonel and put it plainfully——"

Wharton's lip curled.

"Go to him—tell him I know he's fed-up with such a burden—sneak round him like a cadging poor relation—that might do for a fellow like Bunter. It won't do for me!"

"Look here, old man——"

"Oh, let it drop!" said Wharton wearily. "I've told you because I wanted you to do me justice. If you can't, or won't, it can't be helped. Anyhow, my mind's made up. I'm not going to Wharton Lodge; I'm not staying at Greyfriars unless I can bag that schol and stay on my own. But I shall never see Colonel Wharton again, if I can help it!"

"But look here——"

"Let it drop, I tell you!"

Wharton slipped the charred fragment into the envelope and placed it in his pocket. His lips were set hard. Right or wrong—and his firm belief was that he was right—his mind was made up. There was nothing more to be said.

The Co. exchanged a dismal look and left the study. They had come there to clear the matter up, to make their chum see reason, as they regarded it. But they had had to leave matters as they found them.

Wharton was left alone again.

He stood at the window, looking out into the dusk of the quad.

He was thinking of the days, soon to come, when his friends would be gone—when all the school would be gone—and he would be left alone at Greyfriars, with only a hard and laborious task to keep him company.

A fat face peered out from behind the screen in the corner.

Billy Bunter was getting desperate.

It would be prep soon, and then Nugent would come back to the study. Wharton, standing at the window, had his back to the room. If the fat Owl was to get away at all he had to take the chance.

Cautiously, on tiptoe, Billy Bunter stepped out from behind the screen. In almost an agony of caution he tiptoed across the room, behind the back of the unconscious junior at the window.

His fat heart thumped.

If Wharton turned round!

Bunter blinked at his back in apprehensive anguish as he tiptoed towards the door.

Really he would have done better to look where he was going.

Bump!

"Ow!" gasped the hapless Owl, as he collided with a chair.

Wharton uttered an exclamation and turned.

He stared blankly at Bunter.

"What——"

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter made a frantic leap for the door. At the same moment Harry Wharton made a leap for Bunter.

There was a yell from the fat Owl as his collar was grasped.

"Ow! Leggo! I—I wasn't there! Ow! I wasn't listening, old chap! I—

I never upset the ink over your books! Honour bright! I—I never touched the ink! Honest Injun! I—I—I—— Yaroooooh!"

"So that was you——"

"Ow! No!" yelled Bunter. "It—it—it was the—the cat! Mrs. Kebble's cat, you know. I—I saw it on the table, upsetting the ink—— Oh crikey! Oh crumbs! Leave off kicking me, you beast! Yooop! Whoooooop!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter landed in the Remove passage. He roared as he landed. But he did not stay there. Wharton was following him from the study, with gleaming eyes. The Owl of the Remove picked himself up and fled for his life.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Left!

"DOESN'T seem to care!" remarked Snoop.

"He's the chap to keep a stiff upper lip!" said Skinner, with a grin. "But I'll bet you he jolly well does care, all the same!"

Harry Wharton did not look as if he cared.

It was break-up day, and the fellows were going.

In all Greyfriars only one fellow was remaining behind. Even Fisher T. Fish was going, having landed himself on some fellow for the holidays. Harry Wharton was to have Greyfriars School to himself, with the more or less enjoyable company of Mrs. Kebble, the House-dame, and old Gosling, the porter. The Head and his family and his staff would be going soon; not that "beaks" would have been much company for a junior left at the school. The prospect could not have been a pleasant one, and more than one fellow looked curiously at Wharton, expecting to see a long and dismal face.

But Wharton's face was calm, sedate, impassive. Whatever he was feeling, he was not likely to display it to curious eyes.

"I wish you'd come along, old bean," said Lord Mauleverer, before he climbed into the big car that had called for him.

Wharton smiled and shook his head.

"Thanks, old chap! Forget what I said the other day. I know I was a touchy ass——"

"Not at all! I've forgotten already," said his good-natured lordship. "But look here—hop into the car and come! I'd be jolly glad—honest Injun!"

"You're a good chap, Mauly. But I'm sticking it out! Good-bye, old man—and jolly hols!"

And Lord Mauleverer rolled off in his car, followed by a longing blink from Billy Bunter.

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent lingered a little. Any or all of them would have been glad to take Wharton along. But it was not to be, and they said good-bye and went.

Wharton watched them go, with a heavy heart.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had not come to say good-bye. He wondered why; but he did not see the nabob.

The dusky junior from India's coral strand generally spent his vacations with Harry at Wharton Lodge. That was impossible on this occasion, and it was understood that he was going home with Nugent. Wharton expected to see him before he went, but he did not appear.

Vehicles rolled away to the station, crammed with juniors and seniors. Cheery voices called good-byes, and the old quad grew more and more silent. Herbert Vernon-Smith came out of the House with Redwing. A car was waiting for the Bounder.

He gave Wharton a mocking, sarcastic look.

Wharton did not seem to see him. He had no desire for bandying words with Smithy. Indeed, he would have been willing to part friends even with the Bounder, had that wish been shared by him.

But it was not; it was far from that. The Bounder paused, his eyes mockingly on Wharton, and Redwing pulled at his arm.

"Come on, Smithy!"

"Aren't you goin' to say good-bye to Robinson Crusoe, Reddy?" grinned the Bounder.

"Yes, if you'll keep clear," grunted Redwing.

"I'm goin' to say good-bye, too!"

"Look here, Smithy——"

"Bow-wow!"

The Bounder walked across to Wharton.

"Hangin' on, what?" he said.

Wharton looked at him.

"Good-bye, Wharton!" said Redwing hastily. "Best of luck!" He dragged at the Bounder's arm.

"Good-bye, Redwing!"

"And no farewell for me?" sighed the Bounder. "Well, stick to your swottin', old bean; stick to it! You'll enjoy yourself here, alone with jolly old Livy! Nobody to rag your books, or kick up a row while you're smugging! Stick to it, and see if you can pinch the schol. And look out for squalls if I find you here when I come back next term."

Wharton made no reply. He turned his back on the Bounder in silence.

"Still as proud as jolly old Lucifer!" grinned the Bounder. "Well, let him keep his beggarly pride; it's about all he's got left. What?"

"Oh, come on, Smithy!" said Redwing, in disgust. "Is it decent to hit a man when he's down?"

"Rats to you!" said the Bounder.

And he laughed as he got into the car. The Bounder's holiday was going to be very different from Wharton's, and he was looking forward joyously to next term—cock of the walk in the Remove, and his rival and enemy down and out!

The car rolled away with him. Hardly anybody was left now, and Wharton walked back to the House.

"I say, old chap——"

It was Billy Bunter.

"Not gone yet, old fat bean?" asked Harry, with a smile.

"Well, Mauly's let me down. I mean, I decided not to go with that ass Mauleverer," said Bunter; "and Toddy seems to have disappeared, and—and Smithy wanted me to go with him. But I can't stand Smithy, old fellow! I say, old chap, it will be rotten for you here on your lonely own."

"It might be worse," said Harry gravely.

"Eh! How could it be worse?"

"Well, you might be staying here, too, you know."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Well, roll off, old barrel," said Wharton. "I hope you'll have a ripping time at Bunter Court, with all the nobility and princes and things."

"Hold on a minute, old chap," said Bunter. "The fact is, you know, a fellow gets rather fed on those things. I never was a chap to care much for the whirl of Society, you know. What are you grinning at, you beast? I mean, if you were going home I'd rather put in the vac under your humble roof, old chap, than——"

"Well, I'm not going home. Good-bye!"

"Don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you. Look here, Wharton, I'm going to give you a word of advice," said Bunter impressively.

"Don't be an ass!"

"As your friend, I'm bound to give you the tip, when you're making a silly fool of yourself," exclaimed Bunter, blinking seriously at Wharton through his big spectacles. "I know all about it, you know—your uncle's treated you rottenly——"

"That's enough."

"But you've a right to stick him for the hols," argued Bunter. "If you

march in, same as usual, what can he do? Can't turn you out, can he?"

Wharton stared at the fat junior.

"You benighted ass——" he began.

"Well, look at it!" said Bunter. "He's fed-up with you—can't say I'm surprised at that, if you don't mind my saying so. Any man might be, mightn't he? But he simply can't get shut of you, if you stick. Well, that's my advice! Stick, stick tight! I would!"

"I've no doubt you would!" said Harry.

"Exactly! Stick like a jolly old limpet, and he's simply got to stand it," said Bunter impressively. "Put your pride in your pocket, you know! Chap can't afford to be proud when he's down on his uppers. Beggars can't be choosers, can they?"

"Are you going?"

"I haven't finished yet! Take my tip and get off to Wharton Lodge for the hols—and I'll tell you what, I'll come with you! There!"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"I'll see you through—right through!" said Bunter. "I'll jolly well stay the whole vac, if you like! What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Now, what about it?" asked Bunter. "Let's go together—and I'll stand a taxi to the station, if you'll lend me the fare. I say, Wharton, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you—I say, you beast—look here, old chap—yah! Rotter!"

Wharton disappeared into the House, leaving Billy Bunter to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

And he rolled off disconsolate. His last hope had failed him, and it looked like Bunter Court or nothing!

Harry Wharton went slowly up the stairs.

All the fellows were gone now. The great House seemed strangely silent. Form-rooms were deserted; passages no longer echoed to footfalls. A sense of solitude, of deep depression, came over him. Even one of his friends had forgotten him—Hurree Singh had not even come to say good-bye. In the public eye, Wharton had kept up a calm, if not very cheerful, face; but as he came up the lonely Remove passage, alone, unseen, the deep sadness in his heart was reflected in his looks.

Quietly he opened the door of Study No. 1 and entered. How was he going to stand it? He had to keep a stiff upper lip—he was going to keep a stiff upper lip. But——

"My esteemed and venerable chum——"

Wharton jumped.

From the study armchair a dusky face grinned at him.

He stared blankly at the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Inky! You're not gone yet?"

"The gonefulness is not terrific," assented the nabob. "It is a boot on the other esteemed leg, my absurd chum. The stayfulness is the proper caper."

"Inky—you ass—you don't mean——"

"Exactfully!" smiled the nabob, "I have received permission from esteemed Quelch to pass the execrable holidays at school with absurd chum."

"You can't!" exclaimed Wharton. "You shan't."

"The kickfulness out is not the esteemed possibility, my absurd Wharton. But if you do not like my absurd company——"

"Oh, Inky, old man!" said Harry. "You know how glad I should be—I was just wondering how on earth I could stand it. But—but you can't—it's too rotten for you——"

"On the other hand, the enjoyfulness will be terrific," asserted the nabob of Bhanipur, "and anyhow, the stayfulness is the foregone conclusion, and sine qua non, so you can put that in your pipe smokefully."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Inky, old bean, it's too decent of you, but—but I'm jolly glad, as you jolly well know—but——"

"The butfulness is superfluous; and my own gladfulness is terrific and preposterous! And that, my esteemed chum, is that!"

And that was that!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Butts In!

WELLS, the butler at Wharton Lodge, coughed.

He looked across the library curiously at the tall figure that stood by the windows.

Colonel Wharton did not hear his cough.

He was standing with a thoughtful, frowning brow, looking out into the spring sunshine of the morning.

Wells coughed again.

"Sir!"

The colonel turned his head.

"What is it, Wells?"

"A young gentleman, sir, of the name of Bunter!" said Wells.

Colonel Wharton compressed his lips for a moment. Apparently he had no keen desire to see a young gentleman of the name of Bunter.

"If he has called to see my nephew——"

"I have mentioned, sir, that Master Harry is not home from school," said Wells. "But the young gentleman states that he desires to see you personally, sir."

Grunt from the old military gentleman.

"Very well, you may show him in, Wells."

Wells withdrew.

Colonel Wharton turned to the window again. The bright spring sunshine without was not reflected in his bronzed old face. His brows were dark.

Two or three days had elapsed since Greyfriars School had broken up for the Easter holidays. Harry Wharton had not come home for the holidays; all that had come had been a curt note stating that he had permission from his headmaster to remain at the school over Easter. It was a very puzzled, a very perplexed, and a very offended old gentleman who was thinking it over. It was not by any means an old gentleman who desired to be bothered by a fatuous fat junior like William George Bunter; and as Wells showed Bunter in, and the colonel turned from the window again, the expression on his face did not indicate anything like a cordial welcome.

Bunter blinked at him.

Even Bunter could not imagine, from the colonel's look, that the old soldier was delighted to see him.

Still, that did not matter very much to Bunter. He was not there to afford delight to the old colonel. Bunter was there for reasons of his own—good reasons.

The joys of Bunter Court had already palled on Bunter.

The detached villa in Surrey, which Bunter glorified by the title of Bunter Court, was not, as a matter of fact, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Mr. Bunter, like many of the stock-broking fraternity, was not in a state of prosperity in such uncertain times. Mrs. Bunter was chiefly occupied in calming, so far as possible, the irritable temper of Mr. Bunter. Sammy Bunter had asked Billy, not once, but many times, indignantly, why the dickens he couldn't have landed himself, as usual, on some Remove fellow for the vac. Bessie Bunter, who was home from Cliff House School, had almost only one topic—and that was a half-crown that Billy owed her from two terms ago—which Billy had never paid, and which Bessie seemed extremely anxious that he should pay. Billy Bunter was absolutely fed-up with hearing about that half-crown; and it really seemed that he would never hear the end of it, unless he paid it—a resource which did not occur to him.

Altogether, Bunter could not help realising that he was not prized at home as such a really nice and fascinating fellow ought to have been.

Hence his visit to Wharton Lodge. Bunter had several times spent a vacation at Wharton Lodge. He was prepared to spend another, if it could be wangled. But that was not how the fat Owl put it to himself. Bunter seldom succeeded in deceiving others, but very often he deceived himself. Bunter's view was that he was going to put in a word for poor old Wharton, who was left at the school all on his lonely own. As the fellow's friend, he felt bound to do it. Likely enough, Wharton might be ungrateful. Bunter was used to ingratitude. Likely enough, the silly ass might prefer Bunter to mind his own business. But Bunter never had minded his own business, and he was not going to begin now. Bunter was going, if he could, to get Wharton home for the holidays, and console him for all his troubles with his—Bunter's—delightful company.

"Well?"

Colonel Wharton shot that word out like a bullet. The old colonel was only

one of the many people who failed to appreciate Billy Bunter at his true value.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Bunter breezily. "Nice morning for the time of the year, what?"

"That is not what you have called to tell me, I presume?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh! No! The fact is——"

"Kindly be brief!" said Colonel Wharton. "I am somewhat occupied this morning, Bunter."

"It's about Harry——"

"You do not mean that you have a message from my nephew?"

"Oh! No! Catch him sending a message with his back up to such a tune! He doesn't know I've come!" grinned Bunter. "He's sticking at the school with his silly back up! The silly ass——"

"What?" It was another bullet.

"I—I mean—well, he is rather an ass, you know," said Bunter. "I gave him some good advice the day we broke up. He hasn't taken it. That shows what an ass he is, doesn't it?"

Grunt.

"You see, sir, I'm Harry's oldest pal—I may say, his best pal," said Bunter. "We had the same study when he first came to Greyfriars, only I couldn't stand his temper and changed out. Still, I've always been his friend. I don't like the idea of his sticking at the school like this through the holidays. It's rough on him. I'd ask him home, only—only——"

"What have you come here to say to me, Bunter?"

"I—I hope you're not going to be waxy, sir——"

"What?"

"Waxy!"

Colonel Wharton stared at the fat junior. His stern, grim face relaxed somewhat. Bunter was blinking at him rather apprehensively.

"You see, you might think it a cheek, me butting in," said Bunter. "But I'm bound to put in a word for poor old Wharton——"

"I should be glad to know what you can possibly mean, Bunter."

"Well, sir, look at it! Turning a chap down like this—chucking him, dropping him like a hot potato! It's not done, sir!"

"W-what!" stuttered the colonel.

"It's not done, sir!" said Bunter firmly. "I feel bound to tell you, sir, that it's not done."

"You impertinent little donkey——"

Bunter backed away a little. The old gentleman was looking quite unpleasant; why, Bunter did not know.

"I—I say, sir, d-d-don't get your rag out, you know——"

"My—my what? You young ass! What do you mean?" Colonel Wharton strode towards the fat junior and grasped a fat shoulder. "Now, sir——"

"Yarooooh!"

"Explain your words!"

"Ow! Leggo! I never said anything! I mean, I won't say anything! Yow-ow! Leave off shaking me! Whoooop!"

Bunter was sorry he had called.

"What do you mean, sir?" roared the colonel. "You speak of turning someone down—dropping him. Are you wandering in your mind, or is it possible that my nephew has some such foolish idea in his head, and that you are aware of it? Speak!"

"Oh crikey!"

"What have you to say?" hooted the colonel.

"Yarooooh!"

With an impatient snort, Colonel Wharton released the fat shoulder. He glared at the hapless Owl like a basilisk.

"Bunter! Explain yourself at once! If you know why my nephew has, of late, acted disrespectfully, if you know why he has chosen to remain at the school instead of coming home for the holidays, tell me at once!"

"Oh crumbs! Well, I like that!" gasped Bunter. "You jolly well know as well as I do——"

"What?"

"After he saw your letter——"

"What letter?"

"The one where you called him ungrateful, and said he was a burden——"

Colonel Wharton almost staggered.

"Are you mad, boy? I wrote no such letter. What do you mean? How dare you utter such a wicked untruth?"

Bunter fairly gogged at him.

As he had seen the words written in the colonel's own hand, and knew what their effect had been on Harry Wharton, he had cause for astonishment.

"Answer me!" hooted the colonel. "What do you mean? There is no such letter—there never was any such letter!"

"But I've seen it!" shrieked Bunter. "You have seen it!" gasped the colonel.

"I jolly well have! And I can tell you, sir, that it's jolly thick!" said Bunter indignantly.

"What? What?"

"Thick!"

"If you are in your right senses, boy, explain!"

"Well, you remember what you wrote, I suppose," said Bunter. "I'm not saying that Wharton isn't a bit of a trial. Bad-tempered, and all that! Still, I do think you might have left it till after the hols. I must say I think that."

Colonel Wharton gazed at Bunter, seemingly bereft of speech.

"I—I—I thought I'd suggest," went on Bunter, "giving the chap a chance over the hols. It's beastly, sticking at the school all on his own! Rotten, in fact! He's rather keen on—on having me for the vac. Well, sir, why not let him come home——"

"Let him come home!" repeated the colonel dazedly.

"Yes—for the holidays. That isn't much, is it?" argued Bunter. "You could do that."

"Good gad!"

"He mayn't be a nice chap," said Bunter. "He's got his faults—lots of 'em, in fact. A bit of a nuisance about the house, I dare say. I quite understand. Still, think of him stuck at the school with nobody there—mouching about the quad on his lonely own—going down to old Gosling's lodge just for the sake of speaking to somebody—pretty rotten, you know."

"Boy, have you any reason to suppose, for one moment, that my nephew is so foolish, so utterly misguided, as to fancy that he is not welcome in my house?" gasped Colonel Wharton.

"Oh crikey!"

"Answer me!" roared the colonel. "If you can enlighten me as to my nephew's extraordinary conduct, do so at once!"

"But—but you jolly well know!" gasped the amazed Owl. "I shouldn't have taken it as he did; but he's touchy, you know. Why, he was jolly near blubbing when I saw him in his study, looking at your letter. Never saw such a miserable blighter—fairly knocked over! He keeps up a grin in public, but I can jolly well tell you he looks down in the mouth when he thinks nobody can see him——"

"There was no such letter!" roared the colonel.

"Oh, really, sir——"

"What mistake—what horrible and foolish mistake—can that headstrong boy have made?" said Colonel Wharton, calming himself. "Certainly there was no such letter——"

"Look here, sir, if you're sorry you wrote it, that's all right," said Bunter cheerfully. "Let him come home——"

"I tell you there was no such letter——"

"Well, that's rather rot, sir——"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Rot! You see, I've seen the letter——"

"Wells!" roared Colonel Wharton.

The butler appeared.

"Sir?"

"Show this boy out!"

"Very good, sir!"

"I—I say—— Oh crikey!"

Bunter was shown out.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

"MY esteemed and ridiculous chum——"

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Go it, Inky!"

"The swotfulness," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, "is the stern and direful necessity, in the ridiculous circumstances. But the too-muchfulness is as bad as the under-donefulness. Chuck it!"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

It was a bright and sunny morning, and certainly it was against the grain to settle down in the study with Latin books.

Greyfriars School was almost completely deserted now.

The Head was gone; the masters were gone. Mr. Quelch, before he went, had kindly furnished Wharton with a number of difficult exercises, extremely useful for the purpose of preparing for the scholarship examination, but not enjoyable in themselves. The examination was to take place during the holidays, after the Head's return, the competitors gathering at the school for the purpose.

"Time's getting close now, Inky," said Wharton. "I've got to slog at it! I—I haven't a lot of hope, anyway! I started the thing too late, and I've had a few set-backs, in one way and another."

"There is no more esteemed ragfulness now!" remarked the nabob.

Wharton made a grimace.

"No! I almost wish there was, for a change! I'd almost rather see the Bounder about, than nobody! It's rotten for you, Inky."

"The satisfaction of my honourable self is terrific!"

"Well, old chap, it makes a lot of difference to me. I—I hardly think I could have stuck it out if you hadn't stood by me," said Wharton frankly. "If I get through, I shall owe it to you!"

He picked up his pen.

"Cut out, Inky, and leave me to slog!" he said. "I've got to stick it—it's my last chance! It's the schol, or getting out of Greyfriars! If I get through, I shall see all the fellows here next term. It's worth putting one's beef into it."

The nabob nodded.

"Go it, my absurd chum; I will leave

you to the ridiculous stickfulness," he said.

And the nabob closed the door of Study No. 1, and went. Wharton was quickly immersed in his work.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh descended the stairs, and walked out into the sunny quad.

It seemed strangely desolate in vacation-time.

The nabob did not regret for one moment that he had cast in his lot with his chum; only too well he knew how much his cheery company meant to the fellow who was left on his own.

But for his company Wharton would probably have fallen a victim to the despondency which, as it was, he had to fight hard to keep at bay.

As he had said, he had started late on his task, and there had been many difficulties in the way—the Bounder's enmity the chief of them.

The feeling that he would fail, that all his hard work would go for nothing, was discouraging; but in the moments of discouragement, of failing hope, there was always the cheerful dusky face of the nabob, always the cheery voice, the unchanging good-humour and patience to buck him up again.

But though Hurree Jamset Ram Singh did not think of regretting that he was sharing Wharton's solitary lot, he could not help feeling the effects of the silence and solitude of the deserted school.

His dusky face was grave as he walked in the sunny quad. While Wharton was at work—which was most of the day—Inky was left on his own, and he found his own company rather tedious.

He strolled down to the gates. Gosling was standing there, looking out into the road. In the deserted state of Greyfriars even the crusty old porter was somebody to whom to speak.

"A preposterously fine morning, my absurd Gosling!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh affably.

Grunt from Gosling.

"The bluefulness of the esteemed sky is terrific!" went on the nabob.

Grunt!

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled and lounged out of the gateway. From the direction of Courtfield a taxi was whizzing down the road.

The nabob gave a jump at the sight of a bronzed face in the cab. He knew that face.

"Oh, my esteemed hat!" he ejaculated.

The taxi stopped at the gates, and Colonel Wharton alighted and beckoned to the dusky junior.

Hurree Singh came up.

"Is my nephew in the school, Hurree Singh?" he rapped.

"Quitefully so, my esteemed sahib."

"What are you doing here, in vacation time?"

"I have stayfully remained to keep my ridiculous chum company," explained the nabob.

"Where is Harry?"

"He is performing the absurd swotfulness in his study, sahib. I will tell him that you have arrivefully come——"

"You need not trouble!" said the colonel grimly. "On a previous occasion my nephew deliberately avoided seeing me, and he might repeat the action. I will inform him of my arrival myself."

Colonel Wharton strode in at the gates. Gosling touched his hat, blinking at him curiously. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stared after him in dismay. The arrival of the colonel was utterly unexpected, and Inky would have been glad to give his chum the tip. But that was impossible now; the colonel was striding away towards the House with long strides.

"I've been a fool," muttered Wharton, "to think that you took me for an ungrateful nephew. I—I'm sorry, uncle." "Nonsense!" said Colonel Wharton. "The whole wretched business is to be forgotten. I want you to come home and see your Aunt Amy—she's anxious to see you."

Harry Wharton was deep in Latin, in Study No. 1 in the Remove, when there came a heavy tread on the Remove staircase.

He did not heed it.

The tread came on to the study; there was a sharp rap at the door, and it was thrown open.

Wharton glanced round impatiently.

Not for a moment had it occurred to him that his uncle was coming down to the school. After the day when he had gone out of gates to avoid a meeting, the colonel had written, curtly and grimly, that he did not intend to repeat the visit.

The junior stared blankly at the tall, soldierly figure in the doorway, utterly surprised.

He jumped to his feet.

Colonel Wharton strode into the study.

"Harry!"

For a moment or two Wharton stared at him. Then quietly he stepped back, keeping his eyes fixed on his unexpected visitor with a hard, dogged look on his face. The meeting was unexpected; it was bitterly unwelcome, and Wharton's look left no doubt on the subject.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Clouds Roll By!

COLONEL WHARTON stood as stiff as a ramrod, his eyes fixed on his nephew. His grizzled brows were knitted.

"Is this how you greet me, Harry?" he asked, at last.

"I did not expect to see you, sir!" said Harry quietly. His manner was respectful, but cold and hard as ice.

"Neither would you have seen me, but for a hint I have received that you are under some strange delusion," said the colonel sternly. "The last time I came you intentionally avoided me. You have not chosen to come home for the vacation. Certainly I should not have come to see you; I should have left you, sir, to your pride and sulks!"

Wharton crimsoned.

"But"—the colonel went on, in gentler tone, "I have seen Bunter this morning——"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Harry.

"Why Bunter meddled in the matter I do not know, but he made certain statements, amazing to me, that seemed to throw some light on your extraordinary conduct. I determined to see you and inquire into the matter. If you are under some error——"

"I am not!" answered Harry.

"I have not seen you since the day I came to tell you of the change in my circumstances—a change that I expected you to face with courage, without complaint, all the more because it is merely a temporary embarrassment. Since that day you have acted strangely, sulkily, disrespectfully, having taken offence, so far as I can see, at my request that you should keep within your allowance—a reasonable request that I expected you to take in a proper spirit——"

"Nothing of the kind!" broke out Harry passionately. "As if I cared for that!"

"Then what else is there?" boomed the colonel. "For what reason, sir, have you refused to take any further allowance, avoided seeing me, and remained in this deserted school, instead of coming home? Now I am here, what have you to say?"

"Nothing!" answered Wharton stubbornly.

"Nothing, sir?"

"Only that I don't mean to be a burden on you any longer—that I will sink or swim on my own, and be a burden on no man!"

"Have I ever given you any reason, the slightest reason, to use such words to me, Harry?"

"You should know that best, sir!"

"I have been angry and offended," said the colonel; "but I have been perplexed also. This morning I gathered from Bunter's rambling talk that possibly you were under some misapprehension. I came here determined to clear up the matter. Bunter spoke of a letter, some letter that certainly never was written by me, yet which, according to that obtuse boy, you have received, and which has produced this strange effect on you. This must be explained. What letter is this?"

"That meddling fool——"

"Bunter stated that he had seen such a letter——"

"That's true," said Harry. "He was spying, as usual——"

"There is some strange, some unaccountable mistake here," said Colonel Wharton. "Never in any letter to you have I used any expression that could wound even your obstinate pride. If such a letter exists, let me see it!"

Wharton breathed hard.

"What's the good of talking, sir? I——"

"I command you to show me that letter, sir, if such a letter exists!" roared the colonel.

"Certainly it exists——"

"Show it to me."

"I'd rather have said nothing," said Harry. "But if you insist, here it is."

He took the envelope from his pocket, drew from it the charred fragment of paper, and laid it on the table.

Colonel Wharton looked at it.

He started slightly.

Wharton watched him bitterly.

"That is in my hand," said Colonel Wharton. "It was never written to you. It is part of a letter that I lost weeks ago. I had no idea that it was here. Explain how it came into your hands."

"It was one of the papers you dropped in this study, Bunter used it to light the fire—I saved it—that is all that was left." Wharton's lip curled, "I had to look at it to see what and whose it was——"

"I understand that! I missed the letter some time afterwards, and rewrote it," said Colonel Wharton. "It did not occur to me that it had been lost here. The matter is of no moment, however. Is this the letter to which Bunter referred?"

"Yes!"

"Well?" rapped out the colonel. "What do you mean? How does a letter written by me to my old comrade-in-arms, Major Cherry, affect you in any way?"

Wharton stared at him.

"You did not think—you cannot have thought—that the words used in this letter referred to you?" boomed the colonel.

"What?" gasped Wharton.

"Did you think so?"

"What else was I to think?" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "I am your nephew—you have no other——"

"Good gad!" said the colonel. "You young idiot!"

Wharton stood there silent. Nugent had told him—all his friends had told him—that there must be some mistake somewhere. Was there some mistake? How could there be?

"So that," said the colonel, "is the cause of your foolish, obstinate, disrespectful conduct? A foolish, thoughtless mistake——"

"What mistake?" panted Wharton. "There it is, in your own hand—you have no nephew but me——"

"You young donkey! Major Cherry has a nephew!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"You must have heard of him, your friend Bob's cousin, Paul Tyrrell."

"But—what——" stammered Wharton.

"Major Cherry asked my advice regarding his wastrel nephew—a young rascal and spendthrift, who had been a burden to my old friend for years, and showed no signs of amendment or repentance. My advice was asked—and given. I told Major Cherry in my letter what I thought—that no man could be expected to bear, for ever, the burden of a selfish, ungrateful nephew."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"If you had seen the whole of the letter, you would have been aware that it was in answer to a communication from the major, asking my counsel in dealing with Paul Tyrrell."

"Oh!"

Wharton almost staggered. He put his hand on the table for support, and stared blankly at his uncle.

"If you had sent this to me—if you had seen me—if you had asked me—you would have discovered your error immediately. Why did you not do so?"

Wharton could not reply.

"Why?" boomed the colonel.

Wharton found his voice.

"Nugent advised me to, but I—I—I—I suppose I was a fool—a sulky fool! I—I thought——"

The colonel was staring at him grimly. But the utter distress in the schoolboy's face touched him, and his look relaxed.

"Harry! You young ass! You fancied——"

"Oh, I've been a fool!" muttered Wharton miserably. "I—I thought—you know what I thought, uncle. I—I—I'm sorry."

"You should not have thought anything of the kind, Harry. You should have thought anything but that."

"I—I know—now——"

"And this is all?" asked Colonel Wharton. He crumpled the fragment of paper, and threw it into the fire. "That is all?"

"Ye-e-es."

"Good gad! And but for that meddlesome boy, Bunter, you might have continued in your error—the mistake might never have been explained, It is a mistake that you ought never to have made, Harry—and one that could have been explained at once, but for your obstinate and foolish pride."

"I—I know! Oh, uncle, I—I—I'm sorry! I've been an ungrateful brute, and—and all the time——" Wharton choked.

"Come, my boy," the colonel's voice was gentle now. "You have acted foolishly, and hurt me very deeply, but——"

"I've been a fool!" muttered the junior. "They all said it must be some horrible mistake—I couldn't see it—I never dreamed—I—I suppose I was obstinate and sulky—if I'd only taken Franky's advice—and they all said the same, and I wouldn't listen——"

His voice broke.

"Let us be thankful that the matter is cleared up," said Colonel Wharton. "Let us forget all about it, my boy. I will dismiss it from my mind—and you must do the same. Now, my taxi is waiting. Your Aunt Amy is anxious to see you—she knows nothing of this, and need not know—the whole thing must be forgotten. Come!"

"You—you want me to—to come home—after——" Wharton stammered. "It would serve me right if—if——"

"Nonsense! I tell you the whole wretched thing is to be forgotten at once. Pack up your things. Hurree Singh will come with you The taxi is waiting, and you know——" the colonel smiled, "I cannot afford to keep taxicabs waiting these days."

"Oh, uncle!" gasped Wharton.

"Go and tell Hurree Singh at once."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, downstairs, was waiting in a worried and anxious frame of mind. He looked up anxiously as Harry Wharton came down the stairs—three at a time.

"Inky, old man!"

To the nabob's utter astonishment Wharton collared him, and waltzed him round. Wharton's eyelashes were wet; but his face was as bright as the spring sunshine.

"My esteemed chum——" gasped the nabob.

"It's all right, old bean!" gasped Wharton. "I was an ass—just as you thought, old chap—all a silly mistake. I'm going home, and you're coming. Anybody who likes can have that dashed schol—— Hurrah!"

"The understandfulness is not great, but the rejoicefulness is terrific," chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I'm going home—and you're coming—and we'll get the other fellows along to-morrow, and—and that fat idiot Bunter. I owe it all to that benighted chump, and — and —— Hurrah!"

The clouds had rolled by at last.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Landed at Last!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bunter!"

Billy Bunter waved a fat hand.

It was the following morning, and Billy Bunter was taking a walk abroad. He was not looking merry or bright.

Home, sweet home, had palled on Bunter, and there was no doubt that Bunter had palled on home, sweet home.

Wharton Lodge had been drawn blank, and it seemed that home, sweet home was all that was left for the Owl of the Remove, and the glories of "Bunter Court" had no attraction whatever for him.

After a row with Sammy, and another argument with Bessie over that half-crown, Bunter was taking a walk abroad, when he sighted a car packed with fellows, and recognised the Famous Five of the Remove.

He yelled, and waved his hand; and rather to his surprise, the car came to a halt. For once, it appeared, the chums of the Remove were as keen to see Bunter in holiday-time, as he was to see them.

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

"Here's the fat bounder!" said Johnny Bull.

"Fatter than ever!" grinned Frank Nugent.

"The fatfulness is terrific!"

"Here you are, Bunter, old bean!" said Harry Wharton. "Jolly glad to see you, old podgy pippin!"

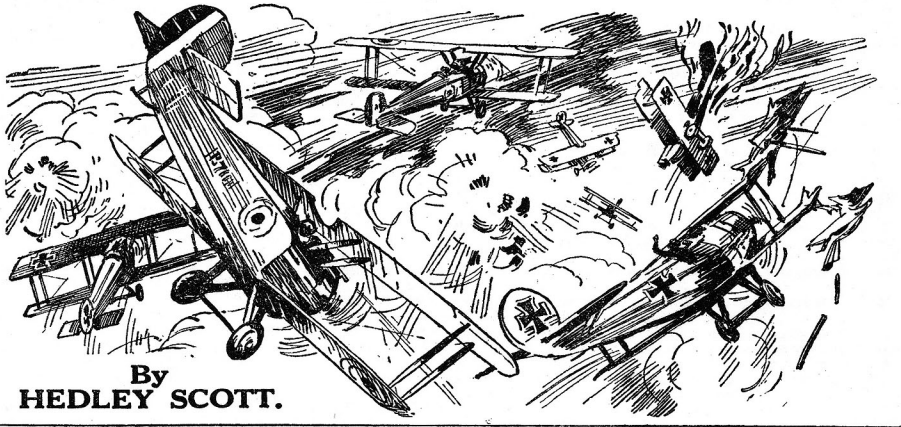
"I say, you fellows, fancy meeting you!" said Bunter, grinning cheerfully.

Why the chums of the Remove greeted

(*Continued on page 28.*)

YOU'LL BE THRILLED BY THIS GREAT FLYING STORY, BOYS !

WINGS of WAR!



By HEDLEY SCOTT.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

BRUCE THORBURN, A YOUNG BRITISH FLYING OFFICER OF 256 SQUADRON, SHOT DOWN OVER GERMAN TERRITORY, FINDS HIMSELF BEFRIENDED BY ADOLPH MENILLE—A PEASANT—WHO IS, IN REALITY, FERRERS LOCKE, A BRITISH SECRET SERVICE AGENT. LOCKE HIDES THORBURN IN THE LOFT OF HIS FARMHOUSE, WHERE THE YOUNGSTER OVERHEARS TWO GERMAN FLYING OFFICERS DISCUSSING PLANS TO FLY A CAPTURED BRITISH PLANE BEHIND THE BRITISH LINES AND BLOW UP THE ENEMY HEADQUARTERS. THE TWO GERMANS ARE MADE PRISONERS, HOWEVER, AND LOCKE AND THORBURN IMPERSONATE THEM. THEY ARE SCARCELY ABOARD THE BRITISH PLANE WHEN THE ALARM IS GIVEN. IN AN EFFORT TO THROW OFF PURSUIT, LOCKE AND THORBURN SWEEP THE GERMAN AERODROME WITH MACHINE-GUN FIRE. THEN SUDDENLY A HAIL OF LEAD COMES WINGING TOWARDS THEM FROM A MACHINE-GUN EMPLACEMENT MANNED BY THE AERODROME KOMMANDANT HIMSELF !

Running the Gauntlet !

BY sheer instinct, Bruce Thorburn swerved in his flight, and the swerve undoubtedly saved their lives.

The German machine-gun was silenced next moment, however, for Locke made no mistake.

Ratatatatatatatat !

Thorburn, continuing his dive, peppered the remaining machines until his gun jammed. Three of the Albatross' had started to take off. Doubtless their pilots had a hope of getting into the air and getting on equal terms with the raider. But such hopes were doomed. When Thorburn's gun became silent again three German planes were standing grotesquely on their noses in various parts of the aerodrome.

Ratatatatatatatat !

It was Locke's final gesture of defiance as he turned the machine-gun on the offices and buildings with a swivel movement and sent everyone within range scuttling for cover.

A lucky bullet found a store of bombs in the armoury. There was a blinding flash, an explosion that shook the British plane just as if a giant's hand had smitten it, and the crimson streaks of dawn, brilliant as they were, lost their vividness in the mighty blaze that spread with lightning-like rapidity from building to building.

"Home, John !" sang out Thorburn. "This little lot will keep our sausage-eaters busy for the next few days !"

He zoomed in a dizzy movement, gave the engine all the throttle she would take, and once again set a course for the Allied lines. In five minutes Haraschel Aerodrome was a speck in the distance, a brilliant speck of flame for all that, which set the German Intelligence telephones working at high pressure.

* * * * *

Meantime, the lone British plane forged across the heavens, having created as much havoc as it generally took a whole squadron of bombers to do.

Yet reprisals were soon on the way—reprisals in the form of fleecy white clouds of bursting shrapnel sent up by every German anti-aircraft battery within that region.

Whoooof !

A well-directed shell burst a matter of forty feet below the port wing, and a chunk of shrapnel smashed its way through the fabric and left an ugly scar. But Thorburn only laughed; all the batteries in the Fatherland held no terrors for him, for a direct hit was more a matter of luck than judgment.

In the back seat Locke was scanning the treacherous banks of clouds that hovered above their tail. If any German scouting planes were out on early morning "straffe," he knew they would not let the chance of bagging a lone Britisher before breakfast pass without a fight.

Whooof ! Whooof ! Whooof !

The sky around them was now dotted with bursting shrapnel clouds as the perspiring gunners below loaded and fired their cumbersome weapons as fast as human hands and machinery could accomplish it.

Again the port wing ripped and shuddered as another piece of shrapnel sizzled through it, and, looking to see what damage had been done, Thorburn noted that a strut seemed to be hanging together by something approaching a miracle. The gunners were getting his range now, so he turned the nose of his plane and zoomed towards the sun.

Under its glare he would be safer, for the gunners below would find him more elusive a target than ever with the sun striking full into their faces. The trick worked; the shrapnel bursts were now more infrequent and less dangerously near.

Only five miles ahead now lay the Front line. In the dim distance Thorburn's straining eyes made out the black silhouettes of three British planes, obviously out on their early reconnaissance patrol.

Thorburn began to sing the well-known Scottish song that suggested that, although it was nice to get up in the morning, it was better to lie in bed.

He had just reached the last note, and was priding himself that he could sing that song almost as well as Harry Lauder, when Locke's gloved hand smote him on the shoulder.

Turning his neck to straining point, he followed Locke's outstretched arm.

About a mile away, rushing to intercept them before they crossed the "line," came at least fifteen German planes.

Thorburn's interest in Harry Lauder's song died a sudden death. It was quite evident that all available machines in the sectors through which he must pass

had been ordered into the air. Never had the youngster seen such an assortment. The sun's rays showed glitteringly on three Fokker triplanes, no more than a thousand feet below him and climbing like meteors. Closely in their wake came five Hanoveranas, five Albatross scouts, and a flight of Fokker biplanes!

"Phew!"

Thorburn whistled, and straightway he settled himself to give the enemy a run for their money. His gun which had jammed while over the Haraschel Aerodrome was in working order again, but he gave it a short, sharp burst to satisfy himself for all that; Locke did the same with the Lewis gun.

There was a strained expression on his face, for he knew that the odds of emerging alive from an encounter with fifteen enemy planes were about a million to one.

The anti-aircraft batteries from the German side of the line had ceased, for there was a danger in the attack that was imminent of their own planes suffering.

But the British observation posts had not been idle. Telephones were whirring: Fifteen enemy planes were attacking, or about to attack, a lone Britisher. Send 'em up hot and fast! The British gunners got busy. Shell after shell sped after the avenging German planes, sending them out of their course and giving their pilots anxious moments. But the leader of the attack, in a giant Fokker triplane, from the struts of which long streamers fluttered, bravely denoting the rank of its pilot, was a wily hand in the grim business of war in the air. His phosphorous signals sent the German planes wheeling in a circle which entirely enclosed the lone Britisher, and that effectively silenced the anti-aircraft gunners. The danger of hitting the British plane was too pronounced to continue.

Rtatatatatat!

The leader of the German attack was the first to open fire. Zooming high up into the blaze of the sun he gained the height he required for the death dive, and then, with engine roaring, he rocketed towards the Britisher with twin, synchronised guns belching flame and destruction.

Thorburn saw the start of the dive, threw his bus into a wild, vertical bank, and heard a stream of whistling lead slash by him.

Ratatatatat!

As he came out of the bank, Ferrers Locke steadied himself and swung his Lewis gun sights on to the Fokker triplane. As every eighth bullet in his drum of ammunition was a "tracer" he was able to follow the luminous trail it sliced in the air, and cursed his luck when he saw that his shooting was yards out.

Up and over went the Fokker triplane in a perfect loop, what time the remainder of the German planes scorched and screamed towards their human target with guns aflame.

A spatter of glass showered over Thorburn's face as bullets spanged and crashed into his instrument board and shattered it. A deluge of clinging liquid shot out as the oil-gauge was severed and swamped him in a blinding shower. A stinging pain in his right foot told him that a bullet had found him. Instinctively he threw the plane into a zigzagging dive that threatened to buckle his wings at any second, and clawed the treacly-like oil from his eyes and mouth.

Ratatatatat!

Bullets by the score shattered and smashed through the fabric of the plane under the concentrated attack, but when Thorburn pulled out of the dive he whooped with joy. From the back seat came the steady drum of Locke's Lewis gun, proof enough that he was alive. More than that, Locke was now a menace to the enemy planes, for he was "getting his eye in," so to speak, with the Lewis, and had already accounted for two Fokkers who had ventured within his ring sights.

Quickly the detective had realised that to fire dead straight on to his fast-moving targets was a sheer waste of ammunition, unless the plane was coming for him head on. The correct method of sighting was to aim just in front of the attacking machine so that it would "fly" into the burst of lead.

But odds of thirteen to one as they were now were too formidable to hope for immunity for long. And Locke became painfully aware of the fact when two Albatross fighters, engaging his attention above, enabled their companion planes to dive under the Britisher's tail. Here the enemy were out of sight of the lone defender in the back seat.

Almost standing on their tails the German planes sent burst after burst into the under side of the fuselage, raking it from stem to stern. A hail of lead smashed through the fabric no more than a foot from Locke's upright figure, sent his extended Lewis gun swinging helplessly out of his hand as the bullets rang upon it and completely put it out of commission. By a miracle the wholesale barrage of bullets missed the petrol tank, but it seemed to pierce every other part of the labouring plane.

The note of the engine died away in a gurgle, for it was already overheated from lack of oil, and Thorburn, almost swooning now from loss of blood, once again pushed his joystick forward and went into a dive. Out of the corner of his eye he saw three British-marked planes roaring to his assistance; the same three, he told himself, he had seen mere specks in the distance a few moments earlier.

Locke saw them, too, and wondered idly whether their arrival would be in time. It was luck, and only luck, that had enabled them to run the gauntlet of that concentrated attack up to now.

The sky seemed alive with roaring, snarling German planes, and now that the engine had clattered to a state of idleness the hail of flying bullets could be heard. The wooden coping of the cockpit was splintered and jagged, the gun-mounting was pitted and jammed, the fabric seemed reminiscent of a sieve.

The Lewis gun was useless; it would never fire another round. But Locke felt for and found the Very light pistol. At a pinch it would do to keep the enemy mindful that he was still alive if they came to too close quarters.

He did not know it then, in the heat of the battle, but his leather flying-suit was "creased" in a dozen places where German bullets had slashed across it. But the coming of the three British planes—Bristol Fighters—Locke told himself, would alter the complexion of things. With engines screaming at full throttle the three dived into the heart of the attack, and seconds after a German plane scuttled earthwards in a flaming mass, with a pilot huddled lifelessly over the controls. Another survived that head-on dive, but it was compelled to turn tail and limp for home; whilst a third, coming within range of the observer's gun in the rear cockpit, reared up like a stricken horse, rolled over into a nose-dive, and then spiralled earthwards, an ominous trail of black smoke belching in its wake.

Ratatatatat!

Lewis guns and Vickers guns mingled their shrieks of defiance with the German Mausers, and a regular dog-fight ensued. In the meantime, Thorburn was gliding for the shelter of the British lines. He knew that his height was sufficient to allow him to glide to his own aerodrome. Fighting grimly to ward off the blanket of unconsciousness that threatened to engulf him, he struggled on, turning now and again to watch the progress of the dog-fight, and praying fervently that the three gallant rescuers would emerge unharmed.

The three Bristols in question, having upset the morale of the enemy with their shock methods, covered the retreat of the stricken plane until the "line" was crossed. This was the signal for the German planes to wheel for "home." Fighting with the odds in their favour and over their own territory was one thing, but carrying the fight into the enemy territory was another.

Three to the Rescue.

RELUCTANTLY the leader of the German mixed squadron gave the signal to retreat, and wondered what sort of "straffing" he would receive from his kommandant when he reported his failure to intercept and shoot down the "pig Englander" who had caused such damage at Haraschel, and also the casualties.

The three Bristols sent a defiant burst of bullets after the scuttling Germans, and then flew round and round the gliding Britisher in steady circles like a parent bird watching its young making a first attempt to fly.

Those three Bristols were piloted by none other than Captain Douglas Oakley, Jim Daniels, and Ron Glynn, of Squadron No 256. Since the death, as they thought, of their chum, Jim and Ron had become the most reckless members of that celebrated squadron. Already each had five "Huns" to his credit—shot down in three dog-fights since the occasion Bruce Thorburn had last been seen by them. It was due largely to Captain Oakley's fine leadership that they had so far survived, for he tempered their boyish enthusiasm with an old hand's craft and cunning.

Locke watched the three escorting planes circling about him idly. The battle was over now, so he seated himself in the narrow cockpit and waited. Thorburn had given him no indication that he had been wounded, so there was every reason to think that all was well. True the engine had failed, but a good pilot, as Thorburn obviously was, could make a safe landing, providing he chose the right place to "squat" in.

Locke's thoughts were bright. No man could have wished for greater luck in a series of tight corners than he had

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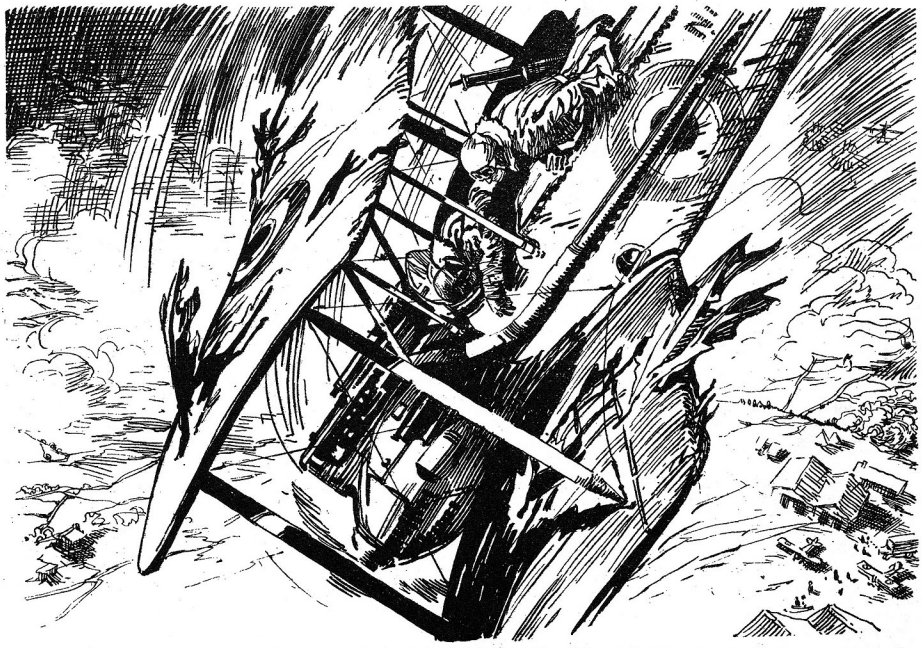

Suddenly Thorburn's head lolled stupidly, then his whole body fell forward. "Poor kid!" muttered Locke. "He's out!" As he spoke, the plane dipped from its gliding angle and hurtled earthwards in a nose-dive.

experienced. It was good to be hovering over Allied territory again, he reflected; good to be among Britishers. Then he found himself eyeing the identification markings of the three Bristols.

"By jingo—two five six! Thorburn's own squadron! I say——"

Locke jumped to his feet again and tapped Thorburn on the shoulder, eager to tell him the news. There was no response.

"Young 'un!" Locke bawled, and at the same time shook Thorburn vigorously.

The youngster's head lolled stupidly on his shoulder, then his whole body fell forward over the control stick.

"Poor kid! He's out!"

As Locke murmured the words, the plane suddenly dipped from its gliding angle and fell into a vertical dive. The weight of Thorburn's sagging body over the control stick had pushed it forward to its extremity.

The earth rushed up in a dizzy, blurred mass as the plane, now thoroughly out of control, hurtled earthwards in a spiral nose-dive, and well nigh shot Locke out into space.

Overhead, the three escorting Bristols saw that ghastly manœuvre, and their occupants cursed their inability to do anything but watch two comrades plunge to a horrible doom, five thousand feet below!

Was this to be the inglorious end of two gallant airmen who had survived that nightmare encounter with fifteen of the enemy?

There was a strained, mirthless smile creasing Locke's lips as he saved himself from being catapulted into space as the plane fell steeper into that unexpected dive. He grabbed hold of the battered gun mounting.

His roving eyes sighted the altimeter midst the oil-splashed dashboard in the pilot's cockpit and noted, with usual precision, that less than 5,000 feet below the earth was rushing to meet them. Growing larger with every hundred feet the plane dropped, he saw the outlines of numerous hangars, and reflected a little bitterly on the ironical turn of Fate that had pulled them through untold dangers only to smash them to pulp on the very ground that would normally have offered them safety.

Yet, despite the impossible odds of emerging alive from that death-dive, Locke braced himself and leaned well over into the pilot's cockpit.

Exerting all his strength, he tried to move Thorburn's inanimate figure from off the control stick; but the youngster's body seemed to have become wedged, and all Locke's efforts only shifted him a matter of an inch or two.

It was then that inspiration came to Locke. He remembered that the De Haviland was fitted with dual control. If he could wrest that control stick out of the pilot's cockpit and jam it into the corresponding socket in the back seat there was a chance of saving both of them from certain death.

It seemed hours before he succeeded in pulling the joystick out of its socket in the front seat and plunged it into position in his own cockpit, yet in reality it was done in a second.

Gently, like a jockey nursing a novice over its first steeplechase course, he brought the plane out of its headlong dive to a more comfortable gliding angle. He was just congratulating himself that in the months which had elapsed since he had flown a bus last his hand had not lost its cunning, when the shrapnel-damaged strut on his port wing buckled completely and flew back with a crash against his head.

"It never rains but it pours!" Locke muttered to himself, and kept a very anxious eye on the port wing. "But there's a chance yet!"

With chin squared to meet the crash that seemed imminent, Locke settled himself at the back seat controls and brought the plane lower and lower in long glides, all the time gauging his run in to the aerodrome. Around him circled the three Bristol Fighters intending to give him moral support.

First came Captain Oakley, with a smile of reassurance and good luck combined, plus a cheery wave of the hand. His expert eye had seen what had happened, and his admiration went out to the man who was making such a gallant fight of it.

In Oakley's wake came Jim Daniels and Ron Glynn. Both of them smiled their encouragement, yelled greetings which were lost in the roar of the engines, and waved a free hand vigorously. What their feelings would have been like had they known the identity of the huddled figure in the pilot's cockpit it is impossible to tell. But this fellow in the back seat, they told themselves, was the real Mackay; he had presence of mind, obviously knew something about flying a bus, and stood a gambler's chance of getting away with his life when he crashed a landing.

That a crash was a certainty, they took for granted. Landing a plane without engine power was a ticklish business for an experienced pilot, let alone a novice observer operating from the back seat with a limited view of the rushing ground beneath.

Many a time and oft during those stirring days of War had an observer

brought his wounded pilot safely home, but few of them had achieved a landing without wrecking the bus and breaking a few bones.

Locke smiled his acknowledgments as the three Bristols swept past him, their undercarriage wheels almost scraping his upper wing, then found himself trying to fathom the meaning of various energetic signs Captain Oakley was making to him with his gauntleted hand.

Then Locke tumbled to it at last. Oakley was asking him to follow his movements, to copy his approach to the aerodrome, to sideslip the plane when he sideslipped, and put the nose down when he did. Locke remembered then that it was customary in the Air Force for an old hand at the game of flying to do this sort of thing if a comrade was in difficulties. It was thoughtful of Oakley, and very much appreciated. Move for move, the Bristol and the De Havilland sideslipped, with bracing wires singing a merry tune, until the former, but a few yards above the aerodrome, pulled up gently on to an even keel, and then dipped her nose a degree for the final glide in.

Locke was grateful. Oakley knew the aerodrome—its best approach and flattest surface. Then, when just that burst of engine power is needed which completes the perfect landing, Oakley gently stalled his plane and watched to see if Locke followed suit.

The wheels of the De Havilland touched a trifle heavily, sprang the plane up a few feet in the air, shot forward a few yards, and then touched again. A brief, excited rush across the short-cropped grass of the aerodrome, and slowly the plane lost speed, and finally came to a halt.

Already mechanics and the familiar ambulance of the depot came careering across the grass from the direction of the offices and hangars.

By the time they arrived, Locke was tenderly hauling Thorburn out of the cockpit and laying him on the grass. That done, he felt his own senses reeling.

Through a mist he heard the hearty congratulations of the mechanics, saw the medical officer and his orderlies carry Thorburn into the ambulance on a stretcher, then Captain Oakley, Jim Daniels, and Ron Glynn were around him and offering their arms.

(Jim Daniels and his chums of 266 Squadron are in for a pleasant surprise—what? Be sure you read next week's exciting chapters of this great flying yarn, chums!)

THE SWOT OF THE REMOVE !

(Continued from page 24.)

him so cordially was a mystery to Bunter; but he found it grateful and comforting.

"Just coming along to your place, to call for you," explained Wharton. "If you'd like to come with us for the vac——"

"Eh?"

"We'd all be glad——"

"Oh!"

"The gladfulness would be——"

"Preposterous!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Hop in, Bunter!"

Bunter blinked.

It was astonishing. And it was very welcome. But Bunter was always Bunter.

"Well, the fact is," he said thoughtfully, "I've rather a lot of engagements for the hols. I've got to see my old pal, D'Arcy, of St. Jim's—and Lord Mauleverer's rather anxious for me to go to the Towers, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I'll try to give you a few days, Wharton, if you make a point of it."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Not at all, old fat bean. I won't deprive D'Arcy of such jolly company, and it would be a shame to disappoint old Mauly. Good-bye!"

"I say, you fellows, hold on!" yelled Bunter. "I say, I'll come! What I meant to say was, I'd be jolly glad to come with my old pals. The fact is, I've missed you—and I knew you would miss me—and—and I'll come! Make room for a chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter clambered hurriedly into the car.

"We'll call at your place, and tell them," said Harry.

"No need," said Bunter promptly. "Let's get off to Wharton Lodge at once." In these new and surprising circumstances, Bunter did not mean to give the chums of the Remove time to change their minds. "I'll phone from the Lodge, see? That will be all right."

"Right-ho, then! But you'll want some things——"

"That's all right—I can borrow what I want from you fellows—I don't mind at all." Whether anybody else minded was a trifle light as air to William George Bunter. "Let's get off!"

The car buzzed away.

"I say, Harry, old chap, you're looking jolly chippy," said Bunter, blinking at Wharton. "You're not sticking at school after all, to swot for that schol——"

"No, old fat bean."

As Bunter knew too much about the affair already, it was only judicious to tell him the rest. So Wharton explained. And the fat Owl understood, at last, how it was that he had become so suddenly popular.

"It was like your cheek to butt in," concluded Wharton. "But it's turned out so jolly well——"

"Oh, really, wharton. The—the fact is, I knew there was some mistake, and I—I stepped in to set it right. Tact, you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's my long suit—tact," said Bunter. "Friend in need, you know—right man in the right place, and all that. You see, I knew you were a fool——"

"Thanks!"

"Not at all, old fellow. Knowing what a fool you were, you see——"

"Isn't he nice?" said Bob. "Isn't he the chap to make a holiday a real success?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Glad you can see it, old fellow," said Bunter affably. "I say, Harry, what have you got for lunch?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a bright and merry party that arrived at Wharton Lodge. Brightest of all was Billy Bunter, popular for the first time in history, and safely landed, at long last, for the Easter holidays.

THE END.

(Next week's topping yarn: "THE BOUNDER'S FOLLY!" deals with Harry Wharton & Co.'s exciting Easter holiday adventures. Avoid disappointment, chums, by ordering your copy in good time.)

THIS WEEK'S PRIZE LIMERICK WINS A FINE POCKET WALLET

for J. Flitcroft, of "Aldersley, Barrack Road, Christchurch. Here's his winning effort:

Billy Bunter, when once in Marseilles,
Became madly addicted to snails.
He paid heaps of chaps
To catch them in traps,
And ate them with salt on their tails!