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The MAGNET 2^D



RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!



BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Remove Rag!

SQUEAK!
 "He, he, he!"
 Billy Bunter chuckled.
 But every other face in the Greyfriars Remove remained grave.

Squeeeccccak!
 It was a prolonged, painful, almost agonised squeak. It was quite an unusual sound to be heard in a class-room at Greyfriars School; though in the French master's class-room, sounds were often heard that were never heard in the Form-rooms.

In their own Form-rooms, the Remove never banged desk-lids, or dropped books on the floor. Accidents of that kind did not pay under the gimlet eye of Mr. Quelch. But in the French class they relaxed considerably.

Monsieur Charpentier was a master who could be "ragged"; and with the unthinking exuberance of youth, the Remove often ragged him.

Few of them meant any harm thereby. Most of them liked Mossoo. But pulling Mossoo's leg was more entertaining than French. And if ever a master was born to have his leg pulled, it was Henri Adolphe Charpentier, the French master of Greyfriars.

Monsieur Charpentier had the "Henriade" in his hand when that sudden and horrible squeak interrupted him. He was explaining some of the beauties of that great poem to the juniors—beauties which were quite lost on most of the Removites. There was really only

one fellow in the Remove who quite appreciated the beautiful French language. That was Dupont, the French junior.

Monsieur Charpentier ceased to expound, and gave a sudden start, and stared at the class, startled by the strange sound that proceeded from some unknown source.

"Vat is zat?" he ejaculated.
 It sounded like the last utterance of an expiring mouse, only more so. Obviously, however, no mouse would have chosen the French class-room as a suitable place to expire in. Mossoo was puzzled.

"He, he, he!" gurgled Billy Bunter. Mossoo's accusing eyes turned on the Owl of the Remove.

"Buntair!" he rapped.
 "Oh! Yes, sir! No, sir!" gasped Bunter, ceasing suddenly to cachinnate. "It wasn't me, sir! I didn't even hear that squeak, sir."

"You laff viz yourself," exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier. "It is zat you play vun trick, Buntair! Ozzervise, vy for you laff?"

"I—I wasn't laughing, sir," gasped Bunter. "I—I was coughing! I wasn't laughing because Skinner—"

"Shut up, you fat owl!" hissed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
 "Skinnair!" Mossoo's eyes turned on Harold Skinner. "Is it zat you play vun shoke in zis class?"

"I, sir! Oh, sir!" exclaimed Skinner. Squeak!

It was another prolonged and agonised squeak; and it came from nowhere near

Skinner. Evidently Skinner was not the culprit this time.

"Smeet! Zat vas you!"
 "Oh, no, sir!" said Vernon-Smith. "I couldn't possibly squeak like that, sir."

Monsieur Charpentier breathed hard. He knew the signs of a "rag." He was going to have trouble with the Remove that windy March afternoon.

Squeak!
 "Mon Dieu!" ejaculated Mossoo.

How that squeak was produced was rather a mystery. It could scarcely have come from any human throat. There had been three separate prolonged squeaks, each from a different direction. Had Mr. Quelch been in charge of his Form the first squeak would also have been the last! But Henri Adolphe Charpentier was not of the stuff of which Mr. Quelch was made.

Squeeeccccak!
 It was a fourth squeak, from a fourth direction. But this time Mossoo noted that it came from suspiciously near Peter Todd; and that Todd's hands were under his desk.

"Todd!" hooted Monsieur Charpentier. "Zat you stand up."

"Yes, sir!" Peter Todd stood obediently up.

"Vat is it zat you have in ze hand, Todd?"

"Nothing, sir!" Peter Todd held up empty hands as a proof of that statement.

"Zen you leave zat squeaker under ze desk!" exclaimed Mossoo. "Vat is zere under your desk, Todd?"

Peter glanced under the desk.

"There's the legs of the desk, sir!" he answered demurely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Taisez-vous! Silence!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier. "Let zere be no more of zis! I vill keep ordair in zis class, or I vill know ze reason vy not! Ve vill proceed, et je vais expliquer—"
 Squeeeek!

"He, he, he!"
 "Mon Dieu! Zat vas you, Bolsover!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier, greatly exasperated, and he made a jump among the forms. "Debout—upright viz you."
 "Oh!" gasped Bolsover major.

He was fairly caught! He rose in his place, with a deflated coloured carnival balloon in his hand. It was one of those balloons which, after being blown up, emit a prolonged and painful squeak as the air escapes. The mystery of that mysterious sound was explained now.

Monsieur Charpentier stared at the balloon and glared at Bolsover major. "You are vun bad garcon, Bolsover!" he exclaimed. "You vill take vun hundred lines of ze Henriade."

"Yes, sir!" murmured Bolsover. As Mossoo seldom asked for the lines which he handed out in exasperated moments, Bolsover was not greatly perturbed.

Squeak!
 The squeaking came from behind Mossoo, and he spun round, fuming. Another coloured carnival balloon had been inflated while his back was turned. Johnny Bull had a hand under his desk, and Mossoo guessed what was in that hand—it was the squeaking balloon.

"Bull! You take two hundred lines of ze Henriade!" roared Monsieur Charpentier. "Vous écoutez!"

"Oh, my hat! I mean, yes, sir!" gasped Johnny.
 "If zere is any more of zis, I varn you zat I lose me ze tempair!" declared Monsieur Charpentier, as he went back to his desk.

At which the Removites grinned. Unfortunately, they found Mossoo most amusing when he lost his temper.

"And now," said Monsieur Charpentier, "ve vill—" He was interrupted again.

Squeak! Squeak! Squeak!
 Mossoo fairly gasped.

Evidently it was a "rag" that had been planned on an extensive scale. All, or nearly all, the Form seemed to be provided with coloured carnival balloons that squeaked as they deflated. From all directions came squeaks.

"Ciel! Zis is too mooch—it is a zing too mooch!" exclaimed the French master. "I vill not sit zis—zat is to say, I vill not stand him! Wharton, you bad boy, you vill take t'ree hundred lines of ze Henriade."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "But, sir, I never—"

"Assez! Enoff! Taisez-vous!" roared Mossoo.

Wharton made a grimace. It was rather like the excitable little French gentleman to pick on the wrong man. Harry Wharton, as head-boy of the Remove, had felt that it was up to him to keep out of the rag, and he was almost the only fellow in the class who was not provided with a squeaking balloon. But Mossoo, when he hit out, was liable to hit out rather wildly.

"If zere is any more of zis—"
 Squeak! Squeak! Squeak!

The Removites were warming to the work now, as it were. Fellow after fellow blew up a coloured carnival balloon and let it squeak. The class-room sounded as if it swarmed with alarmed mice. Monsieur Charpentier gesticulated with both hands, and raved.

"Enoff! Assez! Zat you stop to play ze trick! I zink zat zis class he is ze verree vorst in ze ecole—ze school! Mais

oui! Assez! All of you zat have ze balloons, you bring zem to me at vunce—at vunce, and place zem on my desk! Ecoutez! At vunce!" roared Monsieur Charpentier.

"Got it, you men!" murmured Skinner. Skinner was the originator of that entertaining rag. "Let him have them!"

The Remove fellows rose as one man. Every fellow who had a coloured carnival balloon—and nearly every fellow had—stood up—and inflated it! That was not what the French master intended them to do! But that was what they did!

"Here you are, sir!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Here's my balloon, sir!" said Squiff.

"Here's mine!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Here's mine!"

"And mine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Balloon after balloon floated through the air towards Monsieur Charpentier. Inflated and tied, they squeaked no longer; they sailed and floated. Many and varied were the shapes of the carnival balloons. There were pigs' heads, caterpillars, sausages, hideous-looking men and women, and others too numerous to mention.

Twenty balloons, at least, sailed through the air, all converging upon the French master.

Mossoo waved his hands; he almost waved his feet. He gesticulated, he shouted, and he roared. Balloon after

Whether they want to enter for Sir Hilton Popper's prize or not, the Remove fellows have got to swot. For the first prize is £5—and the next prize is a whacking!

balloon floated round him, over him; he was surrounded by coloured balloons, smothered with balloons. There were balloons to the right of him, balloons to the left of him, balloons in front of him, balloons all over him. And the Removites chortled.

It was the happy culmination of a glorious rag. Mossoo, dancing and shrieking in a sea of balloons, made the Removites almost weep.

But there is always a fly in the ointment. It was at this moment of happy climax that the class-room door opened, and Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, looked in!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Heavy Hand!

"QUELCH!"
 "Oh crumbs!"
 "Ware beaks!"

The roar of laughter died away at once. The angular form, the grim face, the gimlet eyes of Henry Samuel Quelch had a damping effect on the hilarious Removites. His sudden appearance in the doorway had rather the effect of that dread figure that drew Priam's curtains at dead of night.

"Mon Dieu! Zat you cease! Zat you play not ze trick! Zat you stop!" Monsieur Charpentier was shrieking, as he clawed the air with gesticulating hands. "Name of a name! Zat you—"

"Boys!" said Mr. Quelch's deep voice.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows— Oh lor'!"
 Mossoo spun round towards Mr.

Quelch. He smote and smacked at balloons, which burst and popped round him, with a series of sharp reports, as he smote and smacked. Mr. Quelch surveyed him with a grim eye. There was no doubt that Henri Adolphe Charpentier looked rather absurd. Mr. Quelch did not approve of a master looking absurd.

"Zoso verree bad boys!" gasped Mossoo. "Zey play ze trick! It is vun shoke—vat zey call vun rag!"

"I regret, Monsieur Charpentier, that my Form should be giving you trouble this afternoon!" said Mr. Quelch.

The Remove regretted it, too, as they caught the steely glint in the gimlet eyes. They felt that they were going to have reason to regret it. Skinner was rather sorry that he had thought out that gorgeous rag. He wished that he hadn't, and the other fellows wished that he hadn't. It had been fun while it lasted; but after the feast, as usual, came the reckoning. But who could have foreseen that Quelch would barge in like this? It was no business of Quelch's to barge into a French class—at least, so the juniors considered. Quelch himself, apparently, considered otherwise.

He had brought his cane under his arm—just as if he fancied that it might be needed. Very likely he did.

"Who brought these balloons into the class-room?" inquired Mr. Quelch.

There was no answer. Nearly every fellow in the Form had brought in a carnival balloon—that had been the game! But nobody was eager to tell Mr. Quelch all about it.

"Tous, tous!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier. "Zey all have ze balloon—chaque garcon—each boy he have a balloon!"

"Every boy who brought a balloon into the class-room will stand out before the class!" said Mr. Quelch, slipping his cane down into his hand.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was the first fellow to step out. The Bounder never feared to face the music. He lounged out before the class, with as impertinent an air as he dared to assume. After him came Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh. Harry Wharton hesitated. He had not been in the rag, though no doubt he had enjoyed the fun as much as any other fellow. But his hesitation was brief. Guilty or not guilty, he was not going to stand back when his chums went under the chopper. So the captain of the Remove followed the Co.

Skinner sat tight. So did Billy Bunter. Tom Dutton remained where he was. But the rest of the Form came forward. Mr. Quelch eyed them grimly, and then eyed the three who remained in their places. It was rather cool of Skinner, as he was the originator of the rag. But Skinner did not like being caned. Neither did Billy Bunter. As for Tom Dutton, he stayed where he was because he was deaf, and had not heard what Mr. Quelch said. He only wondered what the fellows were going out from the forms for.

"Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch.

"It—it wasn't me, sir!" gasped Bunter, in a great hurry. "I never had anything to do with it, sir! I never brought any balloons into the room, sir, and I haven't one in my pocket now!"

"What!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"I—I really haven't, sir!" gasped Bunter. "You can ask Skinner, sir! He gave it to me!"

"Upon my word! Step out before the class, Bunter! You will do the same, Skinner!"

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter, as he rolled out.

And Skinner gave the fat Owl a homicidal look, and followed him. "Fibs" cost Skinner very little; but after what Bunter had said, it was not much use to tell fibs.

"Dutton!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Eh—did you speak, sir?" asked the deaf junior, putting a hand to his ear.

"Were you not concerned in this prank?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"Did you say blank, sir?"

"I did not say blank, Dutton; I said prank!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "I have no doubt you were concerned in it with the rest!"

"The best what, sir?"

"Will you answer—'Yes' or 'No'?"

"I think not, sir," said Dutton, staring.

"You think not?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I think it's too late in the spring for snow, sir!"

"Snow!" repeated Mr. Quelch, almost dazedly. "What do you mean, Dutton? I said nothing about snow!"

"I thought you asked me if it was going to snow—"

"Bless my soul! Stand out at once!"

"Oh, sir, I'm as good at French as any other fellow in the Form, excepting Dupont, of course. I don't see why you should call me a dunce!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "I did not call you a dunce, you stupid boy! I told you to stand out at once! Stand out before the Form!"

"Very well, sir," said Dutton, looking astonished. "I don't see why; but if you say so, sir, very well."

Dutton rose and came out; but instead of joining the culprits ranked before the Remove master, he walked to the door. The juniors stared after him; Mr. Quelch glared after him.

"Dutton!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Where are you going?"

Tom Dutton looked round.

"I'm going to the dormitory, sir."

"You—you—you are going to the dormitory!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. You told me to go to the dorm—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did not tell you to go to the dormitory!" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "I told you to stand out before the Form! Bless my soul! Were you concerned in this outrageous prank with the others?"

"Yes, sir; two—"

"What? Two what—"

"Brothers, sir," answered Dutton innocently. "I've a sister as well."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Remove.

Mr. Quelch gave it up at that. Dutton was afflicted with deafness; but, really, his Form master was more afflicted by it than Dutton was.

"It appears," said Mr. Quelch, "that the whole Form has been concerned in this outrageous prank! I shall cane the whole Form!"

This was rather wholesale, even for Quelch. But Mr. Quelch was the man to deal with a riotous Form. There was only one comfort for the juniors. With so many fellows to cane, Mr. Quelch could hardly hand out many swipes to each individual fellow. As a matter of fact, Mr. Quelch handed out only one each. But that one was tough. The Removites passed before him in turn, and each captured a single swish; but there was a lot of beef in that single swish. "Six" from Mossoo would not have done so much damage.

Monsieur Charpentier looked on, calm

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again, and with a sorrowful countenance. The kind-hearted French gentleman disliked the infliction of punishment—which was no doubt one reason why he was so mercilessly ragged.

Mr. Quelch was breathing a little hard when he had finished, and tucked the cane under his arm again.

"I think, Monsieur Charpentier, that my Form will give you no further trouble this afternoon!" he said.

"J'en suis sur!" murmured Mossoo.

"I shall consider," continued Mr. Quelch, with a glinting gimlet-eye on the Remove, "what further steps to take. For the present I shall leave you to Monsieur Charpentier, and I trust there will be no further disorder."

Mr. Quelch left the class-room, leaving a dismayed Remove behind him. Apparently the matter was not at an end; Mr. Quelch was going to consider "further steps."

That was a rather disconcerting prospect. Having canded the Remove all round, he might very well have let the matter drop, in the opinion of the Remove. But that did not seem to be Mr. Quelch's opinion.

At all events, Mr. Quelch's "trust" that there would be no more disorder was well founded. One swipe from Quelch's cane and the prospect of "further steps" sufficed for the most hilarious Removite. For the rest of that lesson Monsieur Charpentier had a very orderly class; the juniors had a suspicion that their Form master was not very far out of hearing. Nobody wanted Mr. Quelch to come back. And when Mossoo at length dismissed his class the Remove fellows were rather serious and thoughtful as they marched out. They were wondering what those "further steps" were going to be.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Rough on Bunter!

"WHAT about Popper?"

Harry Wharton asked that question the following afternoon, which was a Wednesday and a half-holiday.

Four voices replied in unison:

"Blow Popper!"

The person thus "blowed" unanimously by the Co. was no less a person than Sir Hilton Popper, Baronet, of Popper Court, and a member of the Governing Board of Greyfriars School. Sir Hilton Popper was a gentleman of great importance—though not, perhaps, of so much importance as he believed.

"The blowfulness of the esteemed Popper is terrific," added Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

"They call it Popper's Island," said Bob Cherry. "But it's no more Popper's Island than it's Billy Bunter's island. We haven't been on the jolly old island this term, and we're going this afternoon—and old Popper can go and—and—and pop! See?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's a go then," he said. "Old Popper's been having a lot of trouble with poachers lately, and that may keep him busy. There's nothing to poach on the island in the Sark, unless it's eggs for tea. It's a go!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Blow away, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! I say, if you're going up the river I'll come," said Bunter, blinking at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "It's a glorious day for a pull up the river. I'll give you fellows some tips about rowing, too, if you like."

The chums of the Remove gazed at

Bunter. That kind and generous offer almost took their breath away. When Bunter was handling an oar he generally looked as if he was trying to dig up the bed of the river. Harry Wharton & Co. did not really want to learn how to row like that.

"I mean it," said Bunter. "And the fact is I'd like your company this afternoon; you're such nice chaps to spend a half-holiday with."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Not like Toddy," said Bunter. "Toddy's got the manners of a bear. You'd hardly believe that he kicked me—hard, too—because he couldn't find his toffee in the study. He made out that I'd had it. Sheer, rotten suspiciousness, you know! He never saw me; I'd finished it before he came in. He refused to take my word that I hadn't even seen it—"

"Oh crikey!"

"I've turned Toddy down for to-day," said Bunter. "I'm sticking to my old pals to-day."

"You look as if you might stick to them!" grunted Johnny Bull. As a matter of fact, there were considerable remnants of the toffee plastered round Billy Bunter's capacious mouth, which was perhaps the reason why Toddy hadn't taken his word on the subject.

"The stickiness is terrific," grinned Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

"If you're sticking to your old pals, old fat bean, go and stick to them, and give us a rest!" suggested Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! When are you starting?" asked Bunter. It appeared that the Famous Five were the old pals to whom Bunter was sticking that afternoon.

"The whenfulness is preposterous."

"Oh, really, Inky! I suppose you want me to come?" said Bunter with dignity. "I've refused to go out on the razzle with Smithy; Smithy's got a car out this afternoon. He begged me to come, almost with tears in his eyes, you know, but I said— Don't walk away while I'm talking to you, you beasts!" Billy Bunter rolled after the juniors as they moved off towards the House. "I told Smithy that it couldn't be done—"

"You mean Smithy told you that he couldn't be done?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows, if you don't want my company—" said the fat Owl with a great deal of dignity.

"No 'if' about it!" said Johnny Bull. Johnny was a plain-speaker—quite painfully so sometimes.

"He, he, he!" Bunter decided to take Johnny's remark as a joke. "I say, old fellows, let's be off. I'll carry the basket."

"What basket?"

"Well, if you're going on a picnic, I suppose there'll be a basket," said Bunter. "I'll carry it. Nothing slack about me, I hope. Never mind the weight; the more the merrier." Billy Bunter's little round eyes twinkled behind his big round spectacles. Bunter was not, as a rule, an active, industrious, or energetic fellow. But he was always ready to carry a picnic-basket for anybody, and he had no objection to raise to the weight of the contents. Like Aesop's burden in the fable, the weight was likely to diminish before Bunter had carried it far.

"You fat villain!" said Johnny Bull. "How did you know we were going on a picnic?"

"Oh, I didn't!" explained Bunter. "That isn't why I'm palling on to you for the afternoon, you know. I never heard Wharton mention to Dupont that



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you were going to picnic up the river, and ask the French chap if he'd like to come. I wasn't near the spot at the time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, you fellows, I suppose you'd rather have me than that Froggy! Let's cut before Dupont comes along, shall we? Leave him hunting for you, what? Rather a jest! Ho, he, he!"

"You pernicious porker—"

"Oh, really, Bull! Look here, if you want me to carry the basket I'll look after it while you fellows are getting the boat out—"

"Not a bad idea," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully.

"You silly ass!" roared Johnny Bull. "Don't you know that if we trust Bunter with the tuck he will send with it?"

"Think so?" asked Bob.

"I don't think so—I know! So do you, you fathead!" growled Johnny.

"You shut up, Bull!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. "Bob knows when he can trust a pal! Don't you, Bob, old chap?"

"Well, look here, Bunter," said Bob slowly, "if I hand you the basket, can we trust you to bring it down to the boat?"

"Yes, rather, old chap!" said Bunter eagerly.

"It's a go then!" said Bob.

"Look here—" exclaimed four voices at once.

Bob Cherry closed one eye at his chums—the eye that was farthest from Bunter.

"Leave it to me," he said. "I know when a fellow's to be trusted. I'll go

and get the basket ready now; Bunter will lend us his basket. Won't you, old bean?"

"Certainly, old fellow!" said Bunter, beaming. "It's in my study. I'll come and help you pack it if you like."

"Don't trouble—that's all right! Wait here for me," said Bob. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

Bob Cherry walked into the House. Billy Bunter grinned with satisfaction. The Co. grinned, too. Apparently there was some joke on—though the fat Owl was happily unaware of it. Napoleon Dupont, the French junior, was in the school shop just then, making the necessary purchases for the picnic, and packing them into a parcel to be carried down to the boat. So what Bob Cherry was going to pack into Bunter's basket was rather a mystery.

Unaware of that mystery, and in a state of happy anticipation, Billy Bunter grinned gleefully. Bob Cherry did not keep him waiting long. He came out of the House with a picnic-basket in his hand, the lid closed and fastened. Billy Bunter gave it a gloat-ing look.

"Ready?" asked Bob cheerily.

"Hand it over, old chap!" gasped Bunter.

"The fact is, it's rather heavy," said Bob. "You needn't trouble to carry it, old fat bean, unless you like."

"But I do like!" gasped Bunter. "A—a fellow likes to make himself useful, you know. I—I really want to carry that basket for you fellows. I hope I'm not a slacker."

"Well, if you really mean it—"

"Oh, yes! Rather!"

"Here you are then. But, mind—it's heavy," said Bob.

And he handed over the basket to Billy Bunter.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bunter.

The basket was heavy—there was no doubt about that. It was packed full, and Billy Bunter's mouth fairly watered at the thought of so much tuck.

"Too heavy for you?" asked Bob.

"Oh, no! No fear! It's all right! I say, you fellows, you'd better start," said Bunter. "You've got to get the boat out, you know."

"We're waiting for Dupont," said Harry.

"I shouldn't wait for him, old fellow! You don't want him! The fact is, I saw him go out of gates ten minutes ago—he's forgotten all about you."

As the Famous Five were aware that Napoleon Dupont was in the tuckshop, they were not likely to believe that statement. Likewise, they were quite well aware why Bunter wanted them to get out of sight. The fat Owl had nefarious and felonious designs on that well-packed picnic-basket.

"We'll wait till he comes in," said Bob. "But, look here, as you've got the basket to carry you start first. Wait for us on the raft."

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter.

And he started. That arrangement suited William George Bunter equally well. All he wanted was to get out of sight of the Famous Five.

Heavy as the basket was, Bunter rolled away with it at great speed. He was haunted by a fear that the chums

of the Remove might change their minds about trusting him with it.

Once out of sight, Billy Bunter did not head for the river. If Harry Wharton & Co. expected to find him waiting for them on the school raft they were booked for a disappointment. Probably, however, they did not expect it. They knew their Bunter!

The fat Owl glanced back over a fat shoulder twice, and chuckled. The Famous Five were walking away towards the school shop. They were not following Bunter. They were laughing as they went—the Co. apparently amused by something that Bob Cherry was telling them. Billy Bunter did not know what it was—or care! It seemed to Billy Bunter that the laugh was on his side.

He turned into Friar-le Lane and fairly scudded. Gasping for breath from his unaccustomed exertions, the fat junior trotted down the lane and turned into the footpath through the wood. He did not want to be found if looked for—and it seemed probable to him that he would be looked for.

He slackened pace in the wood, gurgling for breath. The basket was heavy, and seemed to grow heavier with every step. But Bunter was going to lighten it soon!

He stopped at last, in the depths of the wood. He turned from the footpath and found a quiet, secluded spot, screened by trees and thickets. There he set down the basket with a grunt of relief.

He grinned. The beasts could hunt for him as long as they liked now; they were not likely to find him! He mopped the perspiration from his fat brow, and sat down to open the basket.

He beamed over that basket. Such a weight implied an unusual quantity of tuck! With such a quantity on hand, Billy Bunter might really have been

willing to whack it out with its owners. But Billy Bunter did not think of that. As usual, Bunter's fat thoughts were concentrated on his fat self. The prospect of such a spread was too much for Billy Bunter! He was tempted and he fell!

"He, he, he!"

It was easy enough to tell the fellows afterwards that a tramp had snatched the basket from him. He had pursued that tramp—in vain! That, Bunter considered, was good enough! "Whoppers" were Bunter's usual resource in times of difficulty. If the fellows turned out to be suspicious beasts, and did not believe him, it did not matter very much! Bunter would have had the tuck—and that was the chief thing!

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

With happy anticipation, his fat hands unfastened the lid of the basket and opened it. Then his expression altered. As the poet put it, a change came o'er the spirit of his dream!

He gazed into the basket. His eyes almost bulged through his spectacles as he gazed. He gasped.

"Beasts!"

He groaned.

"Beasts! Pulling a fellow's leg! Beasts!"

The picnic-basket was packed to the brim. But it was not packed with tuck. There were no cakes, no sandwiches, no doughnuts, no bottles of ginger-pop. There were none of the gorgeous things that Billy Bunter had expected to see. There was nothing in the basket of an edible nature!

There was a Latin dictionary! There was a Latin grammar. There was a French grammar! There was a school geometry book! There was a pair of slippers! There was a lump of coal! There was a clock—that didn't go!

There was a box of mathematical instruments! There was a duster! There were several other such things—none of them edible!

Bunter gazed at them.

Bunter could eat almost anything! But even Bunter could not have eaten the weighty contents of that picnic basket!

"Beasts!" he gasped.

He knew now what the fellows had been laughing at when he looked back!

"Rotters!"

The fat Owl rose to his feet. There was no picnic for Bunter! The beasts had known that he would scud with the picnic-basket—that was why they had trusted him with—this! And while he was legging it, with this valuable prize, they were clearing off—to the genuine picnic! Bunter saw it all now!

He was tempted to kick the basket and its contents far and wide. But even that solace was denied him. The basket was his own. So were the contents! Bob had not only borrowed the basket in Bunter's study, but its contents also! Unless he was going to lose his property, Bunter had to carry it back to Greyfriars!

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

Carrying that basket to the wood had been a heavy, but welcome task. Carrying it back was heavier—and not at all welcome. Billy Bunter's fat face was crimson with rage and exertion as he lugged that heavy basket back to the school.

He was gasping for breath and bedewed with perspiration, when he reached Greyfriars at last. And his feelings could not have been expressed in any known language as he tottered wearily into the House.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Up the River!

"MES amis—"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
"Ready, old French bean?"

"Mais tout a fait!" said Napoleon Dupont amiably. "Ze grub and ze ozzor sings, he is all packed down—"

"Packed up!" grinned Bob.

"Mais oui—he is pack up!" agreed Dupont. "Allons donc!"

"Let's alley by all means, before Bunter blows home!" chuckled Bob.

And the Famous Five and the French junior walked down to the river, Dupont carrying a rucksack that was packed with edibles and with cooking utensils. They arrived in a cheery bunch on the school raft.

There were a good many Greyfriars fellows on the water that afternoon. The Famous Five ran their boat down and launched it, and the rucksack was dropped in and the juniors jumped aboard.

Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth were pushing off in Coker's handsome boat, which rocked in the wash as the Remove boat plumped in, Horace Coker, who was standing, nearly toppled over as his boat rocked, and he roared wrathfully to the juniors.

"Here, you keep clear, you cheeky fags! Do you hear me?"

"Do we hear him, you men?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Horace Coker's roar could have been heard across the river. But Bob Cherry playfully put his hand to his ear, as Tom Dutton sometimes did.

"Did you speak Coker?" he called out.

Coker glared.

"I told you to keep clear!" he roared.

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"Eh?"

"Keep clear!" bellowed Coker.

"Say it louder!"

"Keep clear of my boat!" shrieked Coker.

"He's saying something," said Bob Cherry gravely. "I'm sure he's saying something! Can you fellows hear him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Potter and Greene, in the Fifth Form boat, were grinning. Coker of the Fifth did not grin. He frowned portentously.

"If you fags want a whopping——" he bellowed.

"Whisper and I shall hear!" said Bob cheerily.

"By gum! Hand me that boathook, Greene! I'll jolly well see whether a mob of measly fags are going to cheek the Fifth!" gasped Coker.

"Shove off!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

Bob Cherry stood up, oar in hand. It was time to shove off, before Coker got busy with the boathook. Bob had intended to shove off from the raft. But he changed that intention now. The burly figure of Horace Coker was handy for the purpose, and served equally well.

The end of the oar clumped on Horace's manly chest. Bob shoved hard. The Remove boat rocked away. So did Coker!

There was a roar as he landed. Potter and Greene seemed hurt. Coker seemed rather damaged. Three voices were raised in unison and anguish. Three fearful yells blended into one.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites, as Coker and Potter and Greene mixed in the Fifth Form boat.

"Give way, you men!" chuckled Bob. "No good waiting till Coker sorts himself out. Looks to me as if he's cross about something."

"The crossfulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Four oars were put out, and the Remove boat shot away. Coker & Co. were still sorting themselves out and telling one another what they thought of one another, when Harry Wharton & Co. vanished along the winding banks of the Sark.

The chums of the Remove were in a cheery mood that glorious spring afternoon. Nugent steered, and Dupont sat beside him with the rucksack between his knees. The other four fellows rowed, and they made good speed. There was a strong current on the Sark, but the boat pulled merrily against it. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth, appeared in the offing—slacking, as usual, their boat moving at the pace of a tired snail.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "What will you give for a tow, you wrecks?"

Cecil Reginald Temple turned up a lofty nose. Lounging in the stern, in beautiful flannels, spotless as a new pin, Cecil Reginald was feeling very elegant, and very natty and nice. He felt that he made a pleasant picture. He was worth looking at, if not as an oarsman, at least as a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. So he gave the merry Removites his most supercilious glance.

"Steer clear of those dashed hooligans, Dab!" he said.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Bank Holiday crowd!" remarked Temple.

"Frightful crew!" agreed Dabney.

Splash! Perhaps it was by accident that Bob Cherry's oar crashed into the water by the Fourth Form boat! Perhaps it was not by accident!

Accident or not, there was quite a waterspout, followed by a frantic yell

from Cecil Reginald Temple! His elegant flannels were drenched.

"Oh gad!" gasped Temple. "You—you—you— Oh gad! You—you——"

He spluttered with fury.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Splashed, old bean?" asked Bob.

"You—you—you dashed ruffian!" shrieked Temple.

"Well, what can you expect of a Bank Holiday crowd?" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove boat pulled merrily on, leaving Cecil Reginald dabbling himself frantically with a cambric handkerchief.

Farther up the river, boats were fewer. The strong current discouraged any but hefty oarsmen. There was no craft in sight when Popper's Island came into view. The little island, glistening with the green of sunny spring, lay almost in the middle of the river. On the bank ran the towpath, bordered by thick woods, that belonged to the extensive Popper Court estate. Little shady paths opened into the woods, which no one was allowed to tread, by behest of Sir Hilton Popper, lord of the manor.

Here and there notice-boards peeped out of the greenery, pleasantly announcing that trespassers would be prosecuted. It was rumoured that Sir Hilton would have enclosed the towpath itself if he could have done so; but even the autocratic lord of Popper Court had had to stop short of that. But on the island in the river, three or four notice-boards could be seen, every one of them repeating the hospitable warning that trespassers would be prosecuted with the full rigour of the law.

Nobody—except Sir Hilton Popper—believed that the testy old gentleman had a right to keep the public off that island. But it was placed out of bounds for Greyfriars fellows, to avoid disputes with a landowner who was also a governor of the school. Harry Wharton & Co. had perhaps forgotten that the island was out of bounds. Or perhaps they did not choose to remember. Anyhow, they were chancing it.

Nobody was to be seen on the banks or the island. The juniors scanned both keenly as they approached. They considered that they were exercising their undoubted rights, as members of the great British public, in landing on the island. Still, it behoved them to be wary.

"Coast's clear!" said Bob. "Barge on!"

And the boat ran on the grassy shore of the island, under wide-spreading branches of ancient, massive trees.

Napoleon Dupont jumped lightly ashore. Harry Wharton handed him the rucksack. The Famous Five remained in the boat. It had been arranged for Dupont to land on the island, and get the feed ready, while the chums of the Remove went on for a long pull up the river. "Nap" did not care much for rowing—and the Co. certainly did not care much for cooking. So the arrangement suited both parties admirably. Napoleon Dupont, like many of his countrymen, had a natural turn for cookery, and there was no man in the Remove equalled him in that line, unless, perhaps, it was Billy Bunter, whose tastes were similar. In the study in the Remove, which he shared with Bolsover major, Nap often cooked delicate suppers. Bolsover frequently complained of the smell of cooking in the study, but he never failed to dispose of the lion's share of the result.

"Allez, donc, mes amis!" said Dupont, with a beaming smile. "Ven zat you

come front—zat is to say, back—you say back, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Bon! Ven zat you come back viz you, ze grub he vill be ready—vous aimez—you vill like ze so beautiful cookery zat I make. Vat?"

"What-ho!" agreed Bob Cherry heartily.

After a long pull, and a strong pull, on a windy March afternoon, there was no doubt that the juniors would be prepared to do justice to the cookery when they returned to the island.

"Go it, Nap!" said Nugent, laughing.

And the Famous Five pushed off the island, and pulled onward into the upper reaches of the Sark.

Napoleon Dupont waved a hand after them, and then carried his baggage through the trees, into the interior of the little island. It was necessary to keep out of sight from the banks of the river.

There was a clear space near the big oak in the middle of Popper's Island. There the French junior camped.

Three long sticks were fixed, from which a pot was suspended. Under it a fire was lighted; there was plenty of firewood about. Dupont proceeded to unpack the rucksack, unpacking many things that the English juniors would never have dreamed of taking on a picnic. But sandwiches and cake were not good enough for a fellow who knew how to cook! Nap's amiable Gallic face beamed over his task. He sliced vegetables, he cut up meats, he selected herbs, he added all sorts of things to the simmering pot. And the scent that rose from the pot made him smile and smack his lips. Nap was enjoying his afternoon quite as much as the fellows who were pulling up the river. And no doubt, when those fellows came back, fearfully hungry, they would be glad that there was something of a more solid nature than sandwiches and cake.

So deeply engrossed was Napoleon in his task that he forgot time and space. Minutes passed like seconds. The Gallic junior did not hear a footstep on the island—did not hear a brushing in the foliage. Beaming over the simmering pot, he was cheerfully unaware that someone else had landed on the island and was blinking at him through the trees, with a fat grin on his face.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Awful!

"I SAY, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter.

Hobson and Hoskins of the Shell stared round. Billy Bunter was standing on the towpath by the Sark, opposite Popper's Island. The two Shell fellows, who had been up the river, were coming down on the current, between the island and the shore, when the Owl of the Remove spotted them and hailed them at the top of his voice.

Billy Bunter was still on the trail of that picnic!

He had had a rest after getting back to Greyfriars with the basket. He had needed one! But after resting his weary, fat limbs for a time in Toddy's armchair in Study No. 7, Bunter once more followed the example of the lion who roamed up and down, seeking what he might devour!

He rolled down to the river, where he soon learned that the Famous Five and the French junior had departed long ago, in a boat; and he had no doubt of

their destination. Bunter had no fancy for rowing himself up the river. Exertion did not appeal to him. Two or three fellows whom he had requested to row him as far as Popper's Island refused, quite rudely. So Bunter started to walk.

He plugged on, with weary, fat limbs, up the towpath till he came opposite Poppers Island. He stared across the arm of the river, but could see no sign of the campers there, and the smoke of Dupont's fire was lost among the tree-tops. But the fat Owl had no doubt that the beasts were there! The problem was to get across! He blinked up and down the Sark in the hope of seeing a craft. It was sheer good luck for Bunter that Hobby and Hoskins were coming back from their row. He shouted and waved excitedly.

"I say, you fellows! Pull in!" shouted Bunter. "I say, give a fellow a lift, will you?"

Hobson grinned, and shook his head. "You'd sink us, old fat man," he answered. "This boat won't carry a ton."

"Oh, really, Hobson—"

"Catch us lifting your weight as far as the school!" grinned Hoskins.

"Only across to the island!" gasped Bunter.

"That island's out of bounds," said Hobson. "You'll have old Popper after you. Stick where you are."

"Look here, you cheeky beast! I—I mean, hold on, dear old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the fact is some pals of mine are on the island, and I—I want to warn them that old Popper's coming!" gasped Bunter. "You can't leave a Greyfriars man in the lurch, you know."

Hobson and Hoskins were not proof against that appeal. They pulled in to the bank, and Bunter flopped into the boat. A few strokes of the oars carried him across to the island.

He clambered out on the greensward under the trees with a grunt of satisfaction.

"I don't see anybody here," said Hobson, staring about him. "No boat that I can see. Sure they're here, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Buck up and tip them, then, if old Popper's coming. There'll be a fearful row if the old bean finds anybody on his island."

Bunter grinned.

"That's all right," he answered. "Old Popper isn't coming, that I know of."

"Eh—what? You said—"

"Only pulling your leg, old chap," said Bunter affably. "You see, I wanted a lift across. He, he, he!"

And Billy Bunter rolled into the trees—rather hastily, as Hobson was lunging with an oar. The Shell fellows pushed off again, and glided down the river, leaving the fat Owl on the island. Bunter grinned as he threaded his way among the trees. A glimmer of fire-light came to his eyes, and a scent—a lovely scent, an appetising scent of cooking.

Billy Bunter peered through the thickets at Napoleon Dupont, and grinned a fat grin. The Famous Five were not there. He could guess that they had gone on up the river. They were just the kind of silly asses to be exerting themselves for nothing. But the cook and the cookery were there, and that was all that Billy Bunter cared about.

"Bon!" Nap was murmuring, as the fat Owl blinked at him. "Tres bon! Zey vill like zis, I zink—mais oui! Now he is ready, and I zink zat it is

time zat zey come to eat. Yes, I zink it—"

"I say, old chap—"

Dupont jumped as Billy Bunter rolled from the trees. He stared at the fat junior—not a welcoming stare. Fellows ought always to have been pleased to see a fascinating fellow like Bunter. But very often they weren't. Very often indeed, in fact. Bunter could not flatter himself that the junior from la belle France looked pleased at his unexpected arrival.

Still, that did not matter much. Bunter was not keen on a hearty welcome. It was the provender that Bunter was keen on.

"Vy for you come?" demanded Dupont.

"I knew you'd be glad to see me, old chap."

"Vous vous trompez," contradicted Dupont. "You delude yourself, mon ami! I am not a small portion glad to see you."

"Oh, really, Froggy—"

"Allez!" said Nap.

"Eh! I don't see any alleys here," said Bunter. "What do you mean—talking about alleys, you ass?"

"I mean zat you part—vat you call depart. Zat you go away viz yourself."

"That looks a good stew," said Bunter. "You French chaps know something about cooking. I'll say that! Where's the plates and the spoons? Oh, here they are! Don't trouble about helping me, old fellow. I'll help myself. I'm not a fellow to want waiting on."

Billy Bunter took a large tin plate, and a large spoon. He proceeded to help himself at a liberal rate.

Dupont eyed him, not hospitably. For some reason unknown to Bunter, he did not enjoy Bunter's fascinating society. Also he did not like being called "Froggy." However, he held his peace, and Bunter proceeded to demolish a large plateful of the stew, which really was good. Having cleared the plate, Billy Bunter refilled it, and cleared it again. Dupont did not remonstrate till he came back a third time.

"Assez, mon ami!" said the French junior. "Zere are six of us to eat—and zere must be somezing."

"Well, you've got a cake," said Bunter. "I like this stew, old chap. I'll leave the cake for the other fellows—what?"

"You vill leave zat stew alone, Buntair!" exclaimed Dupont, showing signs of excitement. "Zink you zat I cook all zis time, zat you eat him all, and leave nozzing for mes amis? Non! Mille fois non! Leave zat alone, or I punch you ze nose, and I punch him verree hard!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"I'm going to finish that stew!" he said.

"Et je vous dis non!" exclaimed Dupont. "I punch you ze nose—"

"Oh, all right," said Bunter. "I'll go! Old Popper's not far off. I—I saw him walking on the bank. You'd like him to spot you here, perhaps?"

"He see nozzing from ze bank."

"If he asked me whether there was anybody on the island. I should be bound to tell him, of course," said Bunter. "I could hardly tell an untruth, Dupont. You might, but I really couldn't. I'll go. For your sake, I hope I shan't run into old Popper. But I think it's very likely."

Napoleon Dupont gazed at the fat junior, and clenched his hands. Billy Bunter's fat little nose was in great danger at that moment.

"Better not," said Bunter coolly. "Old Popper's not far away. He would hear a fellow yell from here."

Napoleon unclenched his hands.

"Vous etes! You are vun fat peeg!" he said.

"Oh, really, Froggy! You treat me as a pal, and I'll treat you as one," said Bunter. "I'm going to finish this stew, so yah!"

And Bunter helped himself again.

Dupont watched him grimly. Billy Bunter had the whip-hand, and he was not scrupulous about using it. The French junior did not want to be spotted on Popper's Island. And at any moment his friends might return, to fall into Sir Hilton's hands if the old baronet's attention was drawn to the island. And it was quite probable that the lord of Popper Court was not far away. He was very likely to be keeping an eye on his island on a half-holiday at Greyfriars. Sir Hilton Popper was a gentleman of leisure with time on his hands, and he spent a good deal of it in making himself disagreeable.

Bunter ate.

There was one excuse for the fat Owl—the stew was really delicious. Its component parts were so beautifully blended that Bunter hardly knew what they were, but he knew that they were nice. That stew had been intended for six fellows. But Billy Bunter, when he was on his mettle, was equal to six other fellows as a trencherman. He ate, and he ate, and he ate. Again and again he helped himself, and the dismayed Dupont saw his delightful stew grow smaller by degrees, and beautifully less. And still Bunter ate!

Bunter was having the time of his life.

His fat face grew shiny. He unfastened a couple of waistcoat buttons. He breathed hard. But he ate and ate!

"Mon Dieu!" murmured Nap, almost in alarm. "Zat peeg, how he eat! Buntair, I zink zat you go to burst!"

"Yah!"

Bunter ate and ate. But even Billy Bunter could not quite finish. He had done his best—and it was a wonderful best! But there was no more room inside Bunter; he was loaded to capacity. At long last Bunter left off eating. He leaned back against a tree, and breathed stertorously.

"I won't finish it, old chap," said the fat Owl. "Dash it all, let the other chaps have a whack! I never was greedy."

"Zere is verree leetle left," said Dupont sorrowfully. "Aftair I take all zat trouble! All zose lofely frogs—"

Bunter gave a start.

"Those—those what?" he ejaculated.

"Zose lofely frogs," said Dupont, "and zose delicious snails—"

"Snoo-snoo-snails?"

"And zose beautiful slugs—"

"Sl-sl-sl-slugs!" stammered Bunter faintly.

"All zose lofely frogs and snails and slugs!" said Nap.

"Oooooogh!"

"Vat is ze matter, Buntair?"

"Grooogh!"

"You have eat too mooch?" asked Dupont.

"Urrrrrrgh!"

Billy Bunter groaned. Apparently there had been more in that gorgeous stew than met the eye. It had been delicious—to taste, at least. Bunter had enjoyed it. But after taking was different from before taking—now that he knew. He had forgotten the strange and weird things that French people consider eatable. Frogs and snails and slugs! Bunter groaned in anguish of spirit.

"Oooo-er! Ooooh! You—you beast!" gasped Bunter. "You—you—groooh!—you filthy foreigner! Ooooh! Woogh!"

"But vat is ze matter?" asked

(Continued on page 10.)

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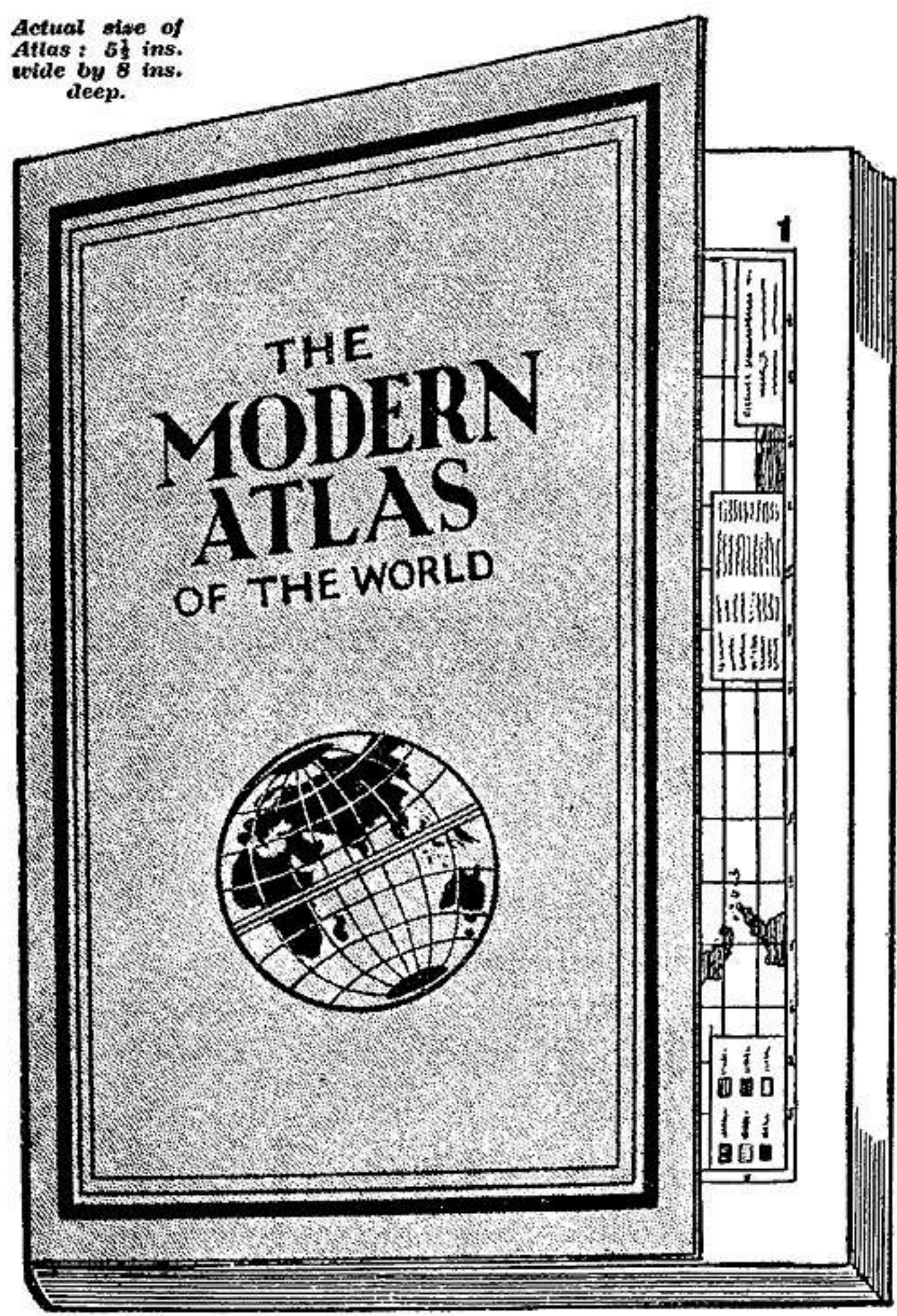
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THE EDITOR.

THERE IS A COUPON—VALUE 5 POINTS—ON PAGE 27, CUT IT OUT AND KEEP IT BY YOU!

POPPER'S UNPOPULAR PRIZE!

(Continued from page 8.)

Napoleon innocently. "You like not ze lofely frog?"

"Grooooooogh!"

"You like not ze snail?"

"Ow!"

"You like not ze slug?"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

Billy Bunter collapsed in the grass.

Horrid sounds came from Bunter. A stormy day on the Channel was nothing to this. His fat face had turned pale, with a shade of green. His eyes bulged behind his spectacles, and had a look like boiled gooseberries. And the inside of William George Bunter heaved like the mighty ocean in a gale.

He had left a little—a very little—of that gorgeous stew for the other fellows. Now he wished he had left a lot. He wished that he had left it all. He wished that he had never set foot on Popper's Island. He wished all sorts of things. Most of all, he wished that his fat equator was not surrounding that stew!

But it was. And Billy Bunter heaved and gasped and groaned and gurgled—in a state of horrid misery. The way of the transgressor was hard!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Ruotions on the River!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Keep your weather eye open, old beans!"

"What?"

"Pirates in the offing!" grinned Bob. Harry Wharton & Co. looked round. They had pulled some miles up the Sark, and the boat was gliding between banks clothed with thick woods. It was rather a lonely spot. The towpath was deserted, and there was no building in sight. No other craft were to be seen on the stream, till Bob Cherry called attention to a rather dingy boat that pulled out from the bank.

Three men were in that boat, and they looked rather tough characters. And they were pulling directly towards the schoolboys. Two of them pulled—the third, a stocky, thickset man, with a black patch over one eye, stood up, with a boathook in his hand. His single eye watched the schoolboys, and there was a rather unpleasant grin on his stubbly face.

"Looks a rough crew!" murmured Nugent. "Better keep clear!"

Harry Wharton nodded. He had never seen the three before; but there was no doubt that they looked a rough crew—the roughest he had ever seen. And that reach of the Sark was very lonely.

Of late, a gang of poachers had been busy in the vicinity, coming from nobody knew where—probably some district that they had made too hot for themselves. The schoolboys had heard of an affray between them and some of Sir Hilton Popper's keepers—and that the leader of the gang had been "run in," after a desperate fight in the wood.

Sir Hilton, who was a magistrate, had given the captured ruffian the longest sentence that it was in his power to give—Sir Hilton on the bench was a very severe gentleman. But in this case there was no doubt that his severity was deserved, and the man who had been "put away" was certainly safer between stone walls. If these three fellows were members of the gang, it was rather awkward to meet them in a

lonely place, where there was no help at hand.

Avoiding the trio, however, was rather difficult on the narrow upper reaches of the river. The juniors pulled on; but the boat came across with a rush, and the one-eyed man hooked on with the boathook.

"Old on, young coveys!" he said.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Harry Wharton quietly, though his heart was beating rather fast. It was scarcely possible to doubt that the three were footpads, as well as poachers.

The one-eyed man grinned.

"Wot do we want?" he repeated reflectively. "Well, we was looking along this 'ere river for somebody else, and we'd be very glad to meet him; but we're 'appy to meet you young gents, all the same. What we want is what we can get, see?"

"Not 'arf, Squinty!" said one of the rowers, with a nod.

"You'll get nothing from us!" snapped Wharton.

"The getfulness will not be terrific!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Squinty stared at him.

"Eh? Wot do you say, darkey?" he ejaculated.

"I remarkably observed that the getfulness would not be terrific, my esteemed and squint-eyed friend!" answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Blow me tight!" said Squinty, evidently surprised by the nabob's flow of English. "Blow me up a gum-tree!"

"Sheer off, please!" said Harry.

"Not 'arf!" said Squinty. "We're poor men, sir—'ard up, and you can lay to that. These are 'ard times, sir! We ain't exactly looking for work, 'cause why, we might find some if we did." Squinty was evidently a rather humorous gentleman. "But we'd like to be 'elped on our way. Wot about it?"

"Nothing about it!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Sorry to 'ear you say so, sir!" said Squinty politely. "'Cause when a gent don't 'elp me on my way, being asked perlite, I generally give him a jolt to the jaw! I should 'ate to knock your 'ead off, sir—but if you will 'ave it, you will, and that's that!"

The Famous Five drew together in their boat. Three tough ruffians were rather a handful for five junior schoolboys. But the chums of the Remove had no idea of being robbed, if they could help it. Four of them grasped oars, and Bob Cherry a boathook.

"Better sheer off, and save trouble!" said Harry.

Squinty shook his head.

"I'm a bloke what likes to save trouble!" he declared. "Treat me perlite, and I'll feed out of your 'and! Ain't that so, George?"

"Not 'arf!" said George.

"Make it a quid each all round, and let's part friends, all 'appy and perlite," suggested Squinty. "Ain't that a fair offer, Fred?"

"You can lay to that!" agreed Fred, with a grin.

"Wot about it?" asked Squinty.

For answer, Harry Wharton grabbed suddenly at the one-eyed man's boathook, unhooked it, and shoved it away. Nugent shoved with an oar, and the two boats rocked apart.

"Blow me tight!" ejaculated Squinty. "Arter them! My eye, if they're asking for trouble, I ain't the bloke to say 'No.' Never was!"

The boats crashed together the next moment, and Squinty grasped the gunwale of the Remove boat, with his hands this time, to clamber on board.

Crack!

"Ooooooh!"

There was a fearful yell from

Squinty, as Bob brought his boathook down on the ruffian's head.

At the same moment Wharton and Johnny Bull fended off with their oars, and the boats separated once more.

Squinty let go the gunwale to clasp his damaged head, yelling frantically, and as the boats separated, he went in. There was a plunge and a splash, and the one-eyed man vanished into the Sark.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Nugent.

Squinty came up the next moment. He was no longer in a humorous mood. There was a lump on his head, and a pain in it, and he was gasping and glaring with rage. He plunged furiously after the Remove boat, while George and Fred closed in again. Harry Wharton's oar came down on Squinty's head, and again he plunged under, gurgling.

The boats crashed, and George and Fred clambered over the gunwales—to be met by lunging oars and lashing boathook.

Squinty & Co. did not seem to have expected such a warm reception from a boat's crew of schoolboys. They were taken rather by surprise.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Give 'em beans!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Give them terrific socks!" gasped the Nabob of Bhanipur.

George and Fred yelled, as they captured the oars and the boathook, and scrambled back hurriedly into their own craft. Squinty came up, spluttering, and grasped at the Remove boat, with a murderous expression on his stubbly face. Bob Cherry's weapon came down with a crash on his knuckles, and Squinty howled and let go.

"Pull!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Down the river, with the current, went the Greyfriars boat. Squinty was dragged into his own boat by his comrades. The remarks they hurled after the schoolboys almost turned the atmosphere blue. But they did not follow on. They seemed to have had enough of the Famous Five at close quarters. Squinty sat with his head clasped in both hands, rocking himself to and fro, and gasping—evidently damaged.

"Our win!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The winfulness is terrific!"

"Hurrah!"

The Famous Five were the victors in that brief but exciting combat. Squinty & Co. had been left with more than they had bargained for. All the same, the chums of the Remove considered it judicious to quit the scene of action. They pulled away down the river, glad to be rid of Squinty & Co., and the winding banks of the Sark soon shut off the ruffians from their sight.

"We're well out of that!" remarked Harry Wharton. "Anyhow, it's about time we turned back! I'm ready for Nap's spread."

"Same here!" agreed Bob.

The juniors pulled cheerily, and Popper's Island came in sight again. Looking back, they saw nothing of Squinty & Co., who did not seem to be following them—yet, at all events. They cheerfully dismissed the footpads from their minds as they ran down to the island.

The boat glided to the landing-place under the spreading branches. The Famous Five jumped ashore, and the boat was drawn into the cover of a clump of drooping willows, to conceal it from the bank.

Then the chums of the Remove went through the trees and thickets towards the big oak in the middle of the island, where Napoleon Dupont was camped. And as they came a startling sound

reached their ears—a deep, horrid, hair-raising groan!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's that—"

Groan!

"Something's happened to Nap!" exclaimed Harry. "Come on!"

And the juniors ran on quickly, quite alarmed by that sound of woe and anguish that echoed through the thickets of Popper's Island.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Picnic on the Island!

GROAN!

It was a dismal sound of woe! Harry Wharton & Co., arriving at a run, stared!

"Bunter!" ejaculated Wharton.

"The esteemed and absurd Bunter."

"What's the row?"

Groan!

The chums of the Remove were surprised to see Bunter there, though really his presence was not very surprising. On the trail of a picnic Bunter had the nose of a bloodhound.

Still, they were relieved to find that awful groaning did not proceed from Napoleon Dupont. They had feared some accident. But Dupont was not groaning—he was grinning! He seemed amused by the woe that had overwhelmed William George Bunter.

"What's the matter with Bunter?" asked Harry, staring at the fat junior, who was squirming in the grass in a state of collapse.

"Zat fat Buntair eat too mooch!" grinned Dupont.

"Ow!" Bunter sat up feebly, and blinked at the Famous Five. "I say, you fellows! Oooogh! I—I—I'm dying! Wow!"

"No need to make that fearful row about it!" Johnny Bull pointed out. "A considerate chap would die quietly!"

"Beast! I say, you fellows, I—I'm awfully ill! That beast Dupont—Ow! Grooogh! Wooooogh! I thought it was a nice stew—ow! It—it tasted all right—oooogh! Oh crikey!"

"Zat Buntair he eat up nearly all ze lofely stew zat I make," explained Dupont. "Zero is verree leetle left my shums!"

"You ass! Why did you let him do it?" demanded Nugent. "We've come back as hungry as hunters!"

"Or Bunters!" grinned Bob.

"Zat fat Buntair he say he give us away to ze old Poppair if I punch him ze nose!" explained Napoleon. "So zat I let him scoff all zat lofely stew! He eat and eat and eat—mon Dieu, how zat Buntair eat! After zat he eat up ze stew, I tell him zat I make zat stew of ze frog, ze snail, and ze slug, and zen Buntair—"

"Oh crikey!"

Bob Cherry, looking into the pot and sniffing its fragrant contents, had been rather dismayed to see so little left. Now he backed away from the pot. If there were frogs and snails and slugs in that stew, the little that was left was quite enough—too much, in fact.

While appreciating French cookery, the juniors did not appreciate the kind of materials sometimes used therein. Frogs, from the French point of view, were a delicious article of diet. But the mere idea made the Greyfriars fellows feel queer.

Bunter groaned.

He was suffering for his sins, and his sufferings might have moved a heart of stone.

"I say, you fellows, I—I want to see a doctor!" groaned Bunter. "Take me back to Greyfriars at once—ow! I think I'm going to—woooogh!—die! I feel awful! I—I hope Dupont will be hanged! That will be a comfort! Oooogh!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Harry. "You ought to be kicked off the island! Are you going to finish the stew? You can, if you like."

"Oooogh! Beast! Grooogh!" Bunter shuddered. "Shut up! Wooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Groan!

"Now, mes amis, all is roady," said Nap. "Zero is verree leetle of zat so lofely stew left, but zero is sandwich and cake and ze doughnut. Zero is a leetle of ze stew for all of you—"

"No, thanks!" said Harry Wharton hastily.

"You have it, old chap!" said Bob Cherry. "I—I don't care a lot for stew!"

"The fact is I rather prefer a sandwich!" said Nugent.

"Same here!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"The samofulness is terrific!"

Groan!

"But zat is a lofely stew," said Dupont, grinning. "Is it zat you do not like ze stew of ze chicken?"

"Chicken!" repeated Bob.

"Mais oui!" Nap chuckled. "In my country, mes amis, ve eat ze frog, and ve zink zat ze snail is verree good—but in zis country, no! You like him not! Je sais bien! I cook not ze frog for mes amis! Non! Vous voyez—you see—I pull Buntair ze leg!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Zero is no frog, no snail, no slug!" chuckled Nap. "Zero is ze chicken, zat is verree nice! Vat you zink? I know zat you lofe not ze frog to eat! Oui! Zat is all right! It is ze nice chicken!"

The Famous Five stared at the French junior. Then they burst into a roar of laughter.

Billy Bunter sat up.

He blinked at Nap through his big spectacles.

"You—you—you beast!" he gasped.

"You were pulling my leg—"

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

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" roared Bunter. "That beast made me believe I'd been eating frogs and snails—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter staggered to his feet. He had been feeling bad—awful, in fact! Now he was feeling better. He realised that it was, after all, a chicken stew—it contained none of the weird concomitants which, in his own happy land, Nap might have put into it. Nap had been long enough at Greyfriars to learn that frogs and snails were not liked on the menu.

"Oh, you beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up that cackling!" roared Bunter. "I've been taken in!"

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

"Zat Buntair he is van peeg, and I pull him ze leg to punish him," said Nap. "I zink zat he suffair verree mooch ven he zink zat he eat ze frog—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, do shut up!" howled Bunter. "Of course, I knew that the beast was spoofing all the time! He never took me in! I—I was just playing up, you know, letting him think—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows can have the rest of the stew, though," added Bunter, perhaps feeling a lingering doubt. "I'll have the tarts."

Napoleon Dupont served out the stew. There was not much left, but it was good; and the Famous Five—reassured on the subject of the ingredients—were not long in disposing of it.

Billy Bunter started on the tarts. He found that he had a little room left. There were a dozen tarts. Three of them went down like oysters. As Bunter took the fourth Johnny Bull reached over, grasped a fat wrist, and jammed the tart on Bunter's fat nose. There was a suffocated howl from Bunter.

"Oooogh! Beast! Wharrer you up to? Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Owl of the Remove scrambled up, his fat face plastered with jam. Johnny Bull's action was a hint to Bunter that other fellows liked jam-tarts. The fat junior gave the grinning picnicers a jammy and infuriated glare.

"Ow! I'm all sticky! Look here, if you're going to be mean about those tarts—Grooogh! You beast, I've got jam all over my specs! Lend me your handkerchief, Bob."

"Use your own, fathead!"

"I don't want to make my hanky all sticky. Don't be a selfish beast! You lend me your hanky, Wharton."

"I'll lend you my boot!" answered the captain of the Remove.

And he did—eliciting a loud howl from Billy Bunter, who did not seem at all grateful for the loan.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

And he scrambled away through the thickets, to wash the jam from his face in the river. The juniors chuckled, and went on with the picnic.

Billy Bunter came back—newly washed. He was in time to see the last sandwich, the last doughnut, and the last tart vanishing. He glared at the picnicers with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"Of all the greedy rotters!" he gasped. "Catch me coming to a picnic with you fellows again! Not if I know it!"

"Or if we know it, either!" chuckled Bob.

"Beast!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's a boat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the sound of oars came through the trees. "If that's Squinty and company—"

"Better Squinty than old Popper!" said Harry. "We can handle Squinty! Get those things out of sight—if it's Popper on the pop, we shall have to hunt cover."

The juniors listened. They heard the sound of a boat bumping on the island—evidently somebody was going to land there.

Hastily the camping things were shoved out of sight in a thicket. If the new arrival was Squinty, bunting for vengeance, the chums of Greyfriars were quite prepared to deal with him, and give him all the trouble he wanted, and a little more. But if it was Sir Hilton Popper or some of his keepers, that was a different matter! That meant a report to their headmaster at Greyfriars, and serious trouble. The trees and thickets screened the newcomer from their sight—and they sagely resolved to keep out of sight.

"Hunt cover!" said Bob.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, fathead—you'll be heard! Got out of sight!"

Bunter grunted, and rolled into the

thickets. The Famous Five and Nap promptly took cover. Hidden deep in the thickets and brambles that grew round the clearing under the old oak, they listened to the sound of footsteps approaching the spot.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Asking for It!

SIR HILTON POPPER snorted. Sir Hilton stood on the towpath, staring across at the wooded island in the river—a tall, angular old gentleman, in shooting-clothes, with an eyeglass screwed into his eye. Sir Hilton's brows knitted over the eyeglass. His eyes gleamed with wrath.

Somebody was on "his" island! In spite of notice-boards, warning trespassers that they would be prosecuted with the full rigour of the law, some lawless spirits were trespassing there! And they were Greyfriars fellows—boys belonging to the school of which Sir Hilton was a governor! He was sure of that.

Walking down the towpath—with a suspicious eye on the island—the lord of Popper Court had seen—seen with his own eyes and eyeglass—a fat schoolboy stooping over the water, washing jam from his face.

Sir Hilton, coming to a halt, had stared at that fat schoolboy, with a deadly stare, and watched him vanish into the trees again.

Bunter, too short-sighted to see anything across the arm of the river, had not noticed Sir Hilton on the towpath. But Sir Hilton had noticed Bunter!

He snorted!

He had recognised Bunter—but he had no doubt that others were there, Bunter was not likely to be there alone. He could not see the boat—but, of course, there was a boat. Probably a crowd of young rascals—trespassing on Sir Hilton's island—regardless of notice-boards and the full rigour of the law. No wonder the lord of Popper Court snorted.

This was setting his authority at naught! This was disregarding him as if he were a trifle light as air!

Prosecution, and the full rigours of the law, were rather doubtful; and Sir Hilton might have had difficulty in proving his right to keep the public off this island. Like many landowners in rural regions, Sir Hilton enclosed land which was not covered by his title-deeds; and as it was nobody's special business to go to law with him about it, he—so to speak—got away with it. There were many broad acres on the Popper Court estate which, according to local gossip, were in reality common-land, to which Sir Hilton had no more right than Mr. Joyce, the woodcutter, or any villager in Friardale. But if trespassers on that island could not be prosecuted, they could—if they belonged to Greyfriars—be reported to their headmaster and flogged! The island was out of

school bounds, and Sir Hilton was a governor of the school.

But before they could be reported, they had to be identified. Sir Hilton had only seen one of them, so far. He had to see the others. He was not disposed to swim across the arm of the river that separated the island from the towpath. But if he walked back to the Popper Court boathouse, which was a considerable distance, it was very probable that the young rascals might take the alarm, and clear off before he could return—unidentified!

So the lord of Popper Court snorted, and flashed his eyeglass up and down the river, in the hope of seeing a boat which would ferry him across.

He was in luck.

A boat was coming down the stream, with two rough-looking fellows pulling at the oars, and a man with a patch over one eye sitting in the stern, steering with one hand, and rubbing a bruise on his head with the other.

Sir Hilton waved his stick to the boat.

The three men in the boat stared at him. They exchanged a quick glance as they recognised the lord of Popper Court.

"Blow me tight!" whispered Squinty, "It's 'im!"

"'Im, and no error!" agreed George.

"'Im, what put Bill away for six months?" said Fred.

Squinty grinned.

With his single available eye, he stared up and down the river. No other craft was in sight—nobody was to be seen on the wooded banks, excepting Sir Hilton Popper.

And Sir Hilton was waving and beckoning. So far from wishing to avoid the three men in the boat, he evidently wanted them to come to him.

That suited Squinty & Co. exactly.

Had Sir Hilton been less angry and irritated, less concentrated on the subject of the trespassers on his island, he might have regarded these rough characters with suspicion. He might even have suspected that they were the "gang" whose leader he had sent to hard labour.

But he did not think of that now—and certainly it never crossed his lofty mind that Squinty & Co. had been roaming up and down the Sark that day in the hope of seeing him—in the hope, in fact, of just such a meeting as was now happening. "Bill" having been landed in the "stone jug," Squinty & Co. had decided to seek fresh ground for their activities—but they had a natural desire to "bash" Sir Hilton before they left. For several days they had been hanging about the neighbourhood of Popper Court, looking for a chance to "bash" Sir Hilton. Now he was offering them the chance.

They pulled in to the bank. The lord of Popper Court was asking for it; and Squinty & Co. were more than ready to hand him that for which he asked.

"Here!" rapped Sir Hilton. "Pull in, please!"

"What - h o, sir!" answered Squinty, with a wink of his single eye at his comrades. "Coming, sir!"

The boat ran into the rushes.

"Please ferry me across to that island!" said Sir Hilton, pointing with his stick. "I will pay you for the service."

Squinty almost gasped.

The three ruffians had been prepared to jump ashore, and set on the old baronet on the spot. But there were keepers in the wood—and anyone might have come along the towpath. It was a risky business! Just as if Sir Hilton was doing his best to make it easy for them, he had asked to be taken across to the island!

Squinty & Co. were only too willing to oblige,

"That there island, sir?" gasped Squinty, scarcely believing in his good luck. "Why, yes, sir, cert'nly, sir! 'Appy to oblige, sir! Step in, sir!"

Squinty vacated the stern seat for Sir Hilton. The old baronet sat down, and the boat pushed off.

Grinning, the three ruffians pulled across to the island.

The boat's nose bumped at a little distance from the spot where the Remove boat was screened by the drooping willows. They did not see that boat, or suspect that it was there. So far as Squinty & Co. knew, there was nobody on the island.

"'Ere you are, sir!" said Squinty, holding on to a branch, and keeping the boat steady for the lord of Popper Court to step ashore.

Sir Hilton rose.

"Wait here for me!" he rapped, and he stepped on to the island.

To the further satisfaction of the three hooligans, Sir Hilton tramped through the trees, towards the centre of the island. Squinty grinned almost sarcastically at his comrades.

"Jevver see a covey asking for it like this 'ere?" he inquired.

"Not 'arf!" said George.

Squinty tied up the boat, and they stepped ashore. Sir Hilton had already disappeared through the trees.

"Foller on!" murmured Squinty. "We'll get 'im out of sight of his blinking keepers, wot? Fair asking for it!"

"Begg'in' for it!" chuckled Fred.

"Collar 'im when I gives the word!" said Squinty. "Get 'im down. And you, George, you sit on his 'ead, while we give him nuts. Sit on his 'ead, and keep him from 'owling. See? Might be blokes about to 'ear him if he 'owls."

"Leave it to me!" said George.

"This would make Bill 'appy if he knowed," said Squinty. "We'll tell 'im when he comes out of the stone jug. If we leave a 'ole bone in 'im it won't be my fault! Asking for it, that old covey is! Come on!"

And the three ruffians, grinning and gripping their cudgels, trod through the thickets on the track of the lord of Popper Court.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Removites to the Rescue!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Quiet!" hissed Bob Cherry.

"There's an ant or some-thing—"

"Shut up!"

"In my neck—"

Bob Cherry clapped a hand over Billy Bunter's mouth. Bunter gurgled, and was silent.

Footsteps were close at hand.

Peering through the brambles, the juniors had a view of a tall, bony figure in shooting-clothes, and the gleam of an eyeglass.

It was Sir Hilton Popper who was coming, and they were deeply thankful that they had taken cover.

Squinty & Co. had no terrors for them. But a report to Dr. Locke meant a "whopping" all round from their headmaster for breaking bounds. To which

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Whether by accident or not, Bob Cherry's oar crashed into the water near the Fourth Form boat, sending up quite a water-spout. There was a frantic yell from Cecil Reginald Temple. His elegant trousers were drenched. "Oh gad!" he gasped. "You—you—you—you— Oh gad! You—you—" He fairly spluttered with fury.

they had a natural and strong objection.

Even Billy Bunter remained silent as the tall baronet strode into the open space round the big oak. The ant that had crawled on to his fat neck was left to its antics. It was uncomfortable, but it was not so bad as "six" from the Head of Greyfriars.

There was a loud snort from Sir Hilton Popper. Campers and camping outfit had vanished, but unavoidable signs had been left in the glade. There was a burnt patch, where the remnant of the fire smouldered. The juniors had not had time to stamp all the embers out. There were paper bags and other odds and ends. Only too plainly there had been a picnic on this spot. But the picnickers had disappeared. And had not Sir Hilton seen Bunter on the island he might not have guessed that they were still in the offing. As it was, he knew.

"By gad! Young scoundrels!" The old baronet's bark fell on listening ears only a few yards from him. "Young rascals! Lawless young villains! Good gad!"

The lord of Popper Court stared round for the delinquents. Knowing that they were on the island, he knew, of course, that they had hunted cover. It would not take him long to root them out.

There were footsteps and a brushing of foliage, and Sir Hilton spun round, with a glittering eye behind his eye-glass.

"You—"

He broke off. He had expected to see the schoolboys, but what he saw was something quite different. He saw three grinning ruffians, with cudgels in their hands, closing in on him under the big branches of the oak.

He stared at them angrily. Sir Hilton was rather slow on the uptake, and he did not realise yet that he was "for" it.

"What do you want?" he snapped. "I told you to wait for me. Go back to your boat. I do not want you here!"

"He don't want us 'ere, mates," said Squinty. "But we want the old party, wot?"

"Not 'arf!" said George.

And as the three came at him, Sir Hilton Popper realised at last what was booked to happen. He stepped back, grasping his stick.

"Good gad! What— Stand back!" he exclaimed.

"Not 'arf!" said Squinty. "You're the old covey what sent Bill up for six montas, you are! We're Bill's pals, we are! See? We was looking round, 'oping to meet you, old covey, when you so kindly walked into our 'ands like this 'ere! Now we got you!"

"Good gad!" panted Sir Hilton. "Scoundrel! If you dare—"

"If we leave a ole bone in you, old covey, I'll eat this 'ere stick!" said Squinty, with a ferocious leer. "Pinch 'im, mates."

Sir Hilton flourished his stick as the three jumped at him. It was knocked from his hand by Squinty's cudgel, and flew into a thicket, narrowly missing Bob Cherry's head as it landed there.

The next moment Sir Hilton Popper was in the grasp of Squinty. His foot caught in a root, and he staggered back and went down. Squinty crushed him into the grass.

"Now, then, 'ere, George!" panted Squinty.

And George, as per programme, sat on the baronet's head, grinning, to pin him down and keep him quiet, while Squinty and Fred grasped their cudgels.

Harry Wharton & Co., from the thickets, had watched that startling scene in wide-eyed amazement. They were taken as much by surprise as the old baronet, by the proceedings of Squinty and George and Fred. But they realised that the lord of Popper Court was in actual danger, that the ruffians intended to "beat him up" with a reckless disregard to the damage they did, in revenge for the sentence passed on their associate. Keen as they were to keep their presence on the island a secret, the Greyfriars fellows were not likely to look on idly while such an outrage proceeded.

There was no love lost between the heroes of the Remove and Sir Hilton Popper. But to let Squinty & Co. get on with it was impossible.

"We've got to chip in, you men!" whispered Harry Wharton.

"You bet!" said Bob, and he grasped the baronet's stick, which had dropped within his reach.

"Come on!" said Johnny Bull, between his teeth.

"En avant!" chirruped Nap. "Allons!"

And the Famous Five and their French ally rushed from the thickets into the glade with a suddenness that quite surprised Squinty & Co., who had never dreamed that there were spectators to the scene.

They were only just in time, for in another moment two brutal cudgels would have descended on the helpless baronet, with serious results to his bony limbs.

Squinty's cudgel was actually coming down when Bob Cherry landed a blow with his stick across the ruffian's arm,

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(Continued from page 13)

and Squinty yelled in surprise and rage, and his swipe, fortunately, missed Sir Hilton.

The other fellows had no weapons, but they rushed right at the enemy and grappled with them. They were at close quarters in the twinkling of an eye, taking the roughs quite by surprise. And George was dragged off Sir Hilton's head and Fred was dragged over in the grass almost before they knew what was happening.

Wharton and Nugent had hold of Fred, Jonny Bull and Hurree Singh grappled with George, and they all went in the grass together, struggling.

Squinty, yelling, brandished his cudgel and spun round on Bob, who handled the baronet's stick well, warding off furious blows.

But the combat was unequal till Napoleon Dupont weighed in. Nap had the cooking-pot in his hand, and he hurled it at the one-eyed ruffian with deadly aim.

It crashed on the stubby chin, sending Squinty staggering backwards, and he fell crashing in the grass.

Before he could struggle up, Bob, with a flying leap, landed on his chest, planting his knees there and pinning him down.

He grasped the ruffian's wrist and kept the cudgel off, and yelled to Napoleon. But Nap did not need calling. He was on Squinty with the spring of a cat on a mouse, and the cudgel was wrenched away. The French junior whirled it up in both hands, and brought it down on Squinty's head.

"Wooooop!" roared the hapless ruffian. Squinty had already had some hard knocks that day, but this was the hardest knock of all.

Up went the cudgel again in the excited Gaul's hands.

"Hold on!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Don't brain him, Nap, old bean!"

"Ow! Keep off!" roared Squinty, in anguish. "I gives in! Don't you crack a covey's 'ead! My eye! Keep off!"

Sir Hilton Popper had sat up, and he was staring at the scene like a man in a dream. He groped feebly for his eyeglass, jammed it into his eye, and stared. He gasped and gurgled for breath, his head swimming. He was able to give no aid. But the Greyfriars fellows did not need assistance. They had the enemy down, and were keeping them down. Like Cæsar of old, they had come, and seen, and conquered.

There was a rustling sound in the thickets. It grew fainter in the distance. Billy Bunter had not rushed on with the rest. Billy Bunter was rushing in the other direction. But nobody heeded Bunter or remembered his fat existence.

"Good gad!" spluttered Sir Hilton.

He staggered to his feet.

"Good gad!" he repeated. "You—you boys! Greyfriars boys! Really trespassers! Good gad! See you

them! Hold them fast! Don't let them go! What? What? Good gad!"

"We've got 'em, sir!" said Bob.

"The gotfulness is—"

"Preposterous!" chuckled Bob.

"They—they dared to attack me!"

gaspd Sir Hilton. "Me! Good gad! I might have been—I should have been severely injured—but for you boys—their intention was to injure me—good gad—hold them—secure them!"

He gasped and gasped. Most of the lordly wind had been knocked out of the lord of Popper Court, and it was slow to come back.

Squinty and George and Fred struggled. But with two juniors grasping each of them, and their cudgels torn away, they had their hands full—more than full! The revengeful ruffians were not thinking of vengeance on the lord of Popper Court now! They were thinking only of getting away.

"Hold them!" gasped Sir Hilton. "I—I will summon my keepers—they shall be taken into custody—they shall go to prison, by gad—"

The happy prospect indicated by the baronet's words seemed to inspire the three ruffians with renewed energy. They struggled desperately, and two to one as the juniors were, they had hard work to hold the enemy. George jammed an elbow into Hurree Singh's ribs, and the nabob gasped and relaxed his grip—and George hurled off Johnny Bull and scrambled up. He bolted like a rabbit through the thickets.

Fred scrambled up, with Wharton and Nugent clinging to him like cats. He tore himself loose with desperate efforts and bounded away.

But there was no chance for Squinty. As he struggled, Napoleon landed another swipe; and the one-eyed ruffian howled and gave in—in earnest this time! A splashing was heard as George and Fred pushed off their boat in hot haste and fled—leaving their comrade in the hands of the enemy. Squinty's game was up. The whole party of juniors gathered round him, and more hands were laid on him than Squinty could count.

"Secure him!" boomed Sir Hilton.

"We've got this rotter, anyhow!" gasped Bob. "Tie his paws, you men, and keep him safe."

Squinty's neckcloth was jerked off, and his "paws" tied with it. Then he was allowed to rise to his feet, gasping and gurgling.

Sir Hilton eyed him grimly.

"Take him away!" he rapped. "You have a boat here, I presume—"

"Hom! Yes, sir!"

"Take him to it!"

"March, old bean," said Bob, taking Squinty by one arm; and the ruffian was marched down to the Greyfriars boat. Sir Hilton Popper followed, still panting.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, as they came in sight of the boat. "Hold on! Stop, you fat funk! My hat! Stop!"

Billy Bunter was in the boat. He had cast off the painter, and shoved the boat out from its hiding-place under the willows. He had an oar in his fat hands and was about to shove off the island. He blinked round through his big spectacles.

"Oh! You fellows!" he gasped. "I—I—I wasn't going—"

"Bring that boat back, you fat villain!" roared Johnny Bull.

"I—I wasn't going!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I was only going for—for help! I—I thought you—you'd want help—"

Harry Wharton grasped the boat and dragged it in—rather two suddenly for Bunter, who tottered, missed his footing, and sat down. The boat rocked as he landed.

"Yaroooh! Beast! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! I say, you fellows— Wow!"

squeaked Bunter. "I say— Ow! Beasts!"

Squinty was pushed into the boat. Billy Bunter squirmed as far away from him as possible. He did not like Squinty's looks at close quarters.

"Take me across to the bank," rapped Sir Hilton. "I will see this scoundrel handed over to the police!"

He sat in the boat, and the juniors followed. The Remove boat was fairly well crowded, as Harry Wharton & Co. pushed across to the towpath. There Squinty was shoved out, and the baronet followed him on shore.

"Anything more we can do, sir?" asked Harry Wharton meekly. So far, Sir Hilton's attention had been taken up by Squinty & Co., and he seemed to have forgotten the dire offences of the trespassers on whose account he had gone across to the island. The juniors hoped that he would go on forgetting!

"Eh! What? No! I will see this man safely disposed of! You may go! But—" Sir Hilton glared at the juniors through his eyeglass. "You were trespassing on my island! What?"

"Hem!"

"Oh, really, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I wasn't trespassing, sir! I—I just went there—to—to—to tell these fellows how very wrong it is to trespass, sir— Ow! Wow! Leave off kicking me, Bob Cherry, you beast!"

"I shall call at Greyfriars!" rapped Sir Hilton Popper. "For the present, you may go!"

And the lord of Popper Court marched Squinty away up the towpath, and took no further notice of the existence of the juniors.

They looked at one another.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob, with a deep breath. "We got him out of an awful scrape—and he's going to call at Greyfriars! Is that the Popper brand of gratitude?"

"The esteemed old bean might forgive our absurd selves in the ridiculous circumstances," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Catch him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Let's get off! This means a Head's whopping all round! Br-r-r-r!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

The juniors pushed the boat off, to row down the river home. They were not feeling bucked. All of them dusty, dishevelled, and more or less damaged after the struggle with the gang of footpads. They had saved the lord of Popper Court from serious injury. Even Sir Hilton might have been expected, in the circumstances, to let the matter drop. But it seemed that he was not thinking of letting it drop.

Bunter blinked at the boat's crew.

"Look here, you fellows, I had nothing to do with it! I expect you to tell Quelch so! If we go up to the Head, I expect you to say— Yarooooooop!"

An oar clumped Bunter, and he wound up with a yell. After which, the fat Owl remained wrathfully silent as the boat pulled home to Greyfriars.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

"POOR little dears!" said Skinner.

Skinner seemed amused.

Skinner was one of those agreeable fellows who could always find something amusing in the misfortunes of others.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not find the

situation amusing. Neither did Napoleon Dupont! Still less did Billy Bunter.

Most of the Remove fellows were in the Rag after tea; and had heard what had happened on Popper's Island that afternoon. Skinner & Co. found it amusing; but most of the fellows were sympathetic and indignant. Now, from the window of the Rag, the tall, bony figure of Sir Hilton Popper was seen, striding towards the House from the gates. The culprits had hoped against hope, as it were—that on second thoughts the lord of Popper Court would let the matter drop. But that hope was knocked on the head by the appearance of the irascible old gentleman at the school.

Really, they had done Sir Hilton a considerable service. Really, he might have called it quits! But here he was! "Bother him!" growled Bob Cherry. "You're for it!" remarked the

Bounder. "You were rather asses to show up! You should have let old Popper take what was coming to him!"

"How could we?" granted Wharton. "Those brutes were going to beat him up—damage the old duffer—"

"The damage would have been terrific!"

"Well, that was his look-out!" said Vernon-Smith, shrugging his shoulders.

"He doesn't seem frightfully grateful."

"Blow him!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"I fancy it's all right, you men," said Lord Mauleverer. "Old Popper's a bit of a peppery old bird! But he can't get you whopped for trespassing on his jolly old island, when you saved him from being whopped himself."

"What's he here for, then, fathead?" said Nugent.

"I give that one up—but believe me,

he's not on the warpath!" declared Mauly. "It wouldn't be decent."

"Catch old Popper boin' decent!" grinned Skinner. "Best thing you fellows can do is to pack some exercise-books in your bags!"

"And pack 'em thick!" said Snoop. "Quelch hates being worried by old Popper, and he will take it out of you."

"I say, you fellows, I'm not going to be whopped by Quelch, or the Head, because of you!" roared Billy Bunter. "I wasn't there—"

"What?"

"I mean, I never went with you—you never asked me to the picnic—you jolly well know you didn't—so—so practically, I wasn't there—it comes to the same thing! If you fellows tell Quelch I wasn't there, it will be all right! I dare say old Popper never noticed me—"

(Continued on next page.)

ARE TRIAL MATCHES WORTH THE WHILE?

THE big events of the football season are being worked off one by one. Immediately after the semi-finals for the English Cup there is an International Trial match at Portsmouth. And that Trial match, of course, is by way of preparation for the last International game of the season—Scotland v. England, at Hampden Park, Glasgow. This International game, by the way, falls this year on April 1st, and as a side-line it will be interesting to note for which side this is really "All Fool's day."

One of my readers asks me the rather pointed question as to whether I think Trial matches, as preliminaries to International games, serve any useful purpose? In trying to answer that question I would not go quite so far as to put in a complete negative. I think certain things can be learnt from Trial matches, but whether the selectors ever learn from them as much as they hope to do is another matter.

One of the possible advantages of a Trial match is that certain players, gathered together from different clubs, get to know something of each other's ideas in the tactical sense. The experience of playing together should be helpful, but the big difficulty is to get what might be called the real match atmosphere into a Trial game.

The attitude of many of the players is something on these lines: We must not treat the game as if it were a League contest or a Cup tie, but rather should we try to show what scientific footballers we are.

Men who look on the Trial matches in this light do not put the same physical effort into their play; the tackling is not so vigorous, or so quick, with the result that certain players look better, in a Trial game, than they appear when they play in a match in which every man is all out.

THAT FRIENDLY FEELING!

ONE of the big mistakes which the selectors of Trial match teams have made in the past—and which I do hope they won't make again—is to put two players from the same team in opposition to each other.

Suppose a wing half is opposed to a wing forward from the same side. You can't expect that wing half to put quite the same amount of vim into his work to stop a colleague as he might put in if asked to stop a comparative stranger.

In this connection I may tell a story of a case which I know to be true. Some time ago a famous half-back who had played

YOUR SOCCER QUERIES ANSWERED HERE.



Come on, you footer fans, shoot your Soccer queries in to "Linesman," c/o the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. The more intricate the problem the better he likes it!

many times for England, was picked for a Trial match to play against a club colleague of his who had not been capped. The half-back, knowing how anxious his pal was to be chosen for an International game, allowed his club-mate plenty of scope. Being allowed that scope, the wing man was very prominent in the Trial game.

He was duly chosen to play for England on the strength of the Trial match, but meeting much more serious opposition, he was a failure.

Every footballer worthy of his salt aspires to play for England against Scotland, for it is an honour regarded by footballers as second only to being on the winning side in a Cup Final. There are some very interesting and little-known facts about the "rewards" which are given to players who do play for their countries which I should like to pass on.

In the first place, the monetary reward for an International player is £6, and that, of course, is a nice little addition to the week's wages. Then the players also get a shirt given to them with the emblems of the country for which they play woven into it.

STRANGE, BUT TRUE!

IN one sense goalkeepers are the luckiest people who play in an International match. They not only get an ordinary shirt like the other players, but they also get a sweater. Then, of course, it is literally true to say that a player who plays for his country is "capped," because he does get a cap in addition to the other rewards. How many of you have seen an International cap? Very few, I fancy. These caps are not worn on the field, and they are not even presented to the players immediately after each International game.

What happens is that when the game has been played each player tells the responsible official the size of the cap he wants, and in due course the cap reaches him through the post.

In due course, also, it is put away into a drawer—as a rule—and is only brought out on rare occasions when the "relics" are shown to friends.

Every time a player turns out for England in an International match he gets one of these caps. In this respect he is more fortunate than the players of Ireland and Wales, for these countries only give one cap to one player in each season. That is to say that a player who represents Ireland or Wales three times in a season only receives one cap. The caps for the England players differ according to the countries against which they play. There is a purple velvet cap for playing against Scotland, a red cap for the match against Wales, and a white cap for the game against Ireland. On the peak of each cap the year is embroidered in gold.

Medals are often given to the players, too. During his playing career Charlie Buchan gained many mementoes, but he now has only one medal left, and the story of this one medal is a strange one. Soon after he had finished playing, Buchan lent his football trophies to a friend for a shop-window exhibition. While these trophies were in the shop window the whole collection was stolen, and none of them have ever been traced. There was just one which Buchan did not lend to his friend. It was a medal given to him after he had played for England against Scotland, although on the back of it are the words "reserve player." In handing out the medals a mistake was made, and the one given to Buchan, who actually played, was the one which should have been given to the reserve man.

"LINESMAN"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,500.

"I'll bet he never noticed you in the scrap!" chuckled Smithy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, do the decent thing," urged Bunter earnestly. "All of you swear that I wasn't there at all, and it will be all right for me."

Evidently that was the only detail that worried Bunter. It did not matter whether it was all right for anybody else.

Wibley of the Remove strolled into the Rag.

"I say, old Popper's just gone into Quelch's study," he said. "Is anything up?"

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Skinner. "These giddy heroes are up—for whoppings! Poor dears!"

"So he's gone to Quelch!" said Harry Wharton. "I'd rather he'd gone to the Head! Quelch hasn't got over that rag on Mossos yesterday!"

"It never rains but it pours," said Bob Cherry dismally. "We haven't heard yet about those jolly old further steps that Quelch was going to take! Mossos yesterday—and Popper to-day! Quelch will be frightfully waxy!"

"The waxfulness will be preposterous!" groaned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!" roared Bob.

"But as I really wasn't there—at least, practically wasn't there—you're bound to own up that I wasn't there!" yelled Bunter. "I think I have a right to ask you fellows to tell the truth!"

"The truth! Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you all say the same, Quelch is bound to take your word," argued Bunter. "He might not take mine—he's doubted my word before, as you know! But if all you fellows swear——"

"Well, you're enough to make a fellow swear, and no mistake!" said Bob. "But I'll lick you instead."

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh crikey! Here's Wingate!" groaned Nugent.

Wingate of the Sixth looked into the Rag. The chums of the Remove could guess what he wanted.

"Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, Bull, Hurree Singh, Dupont—Quelch's study!" said the Greyfriars captain.

"Not me?" gasped Bunter.

"You! Quelch didn't mention you," said Wingate, staring at the fat Owl. "Popper's there—I suppose some of you young sweeps have been trespassing. If you were there, too, Bunter——"

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter, sorry that he had spoken. "Not at all, Wingate! I wasn't there—I was in my study at the time. I—I was doing lines, you know—I had some lines for Mossos. I was in my study doing lines all the time I was on the island—I mean all the time I wasn't on the island——"

"You'd better shut up, you young ass!" said Wingate. "Quelch didn't mention you! The others are to go at once!"

And Wingate left the Rag, much to Bunter's relief. Harry Wharton & Co., with glum looks, marched to the door, followed by Nap. Billy Bunter rolled after them anxiously.

"Hallo hallo, hallo! Coming?" asked Bob.

"No fear! I—I say, you fellows, don't mention me while you're with Quelch!" gasped Bunter. "That's rather important, you know! If you mention me, old Popper might make out that I was there with you—— Ow! Leggo my ear, you beast!"

Bob Cherry gave a hefty pull at the

fat ear before he let it go. Then he followed his comrades to the door, leaving the fat Owl yelling.

"Don't forget to pack in those exercise-books!" called out Skinner.

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now!" remarked Wibley, who was always ready with a Shakespearean quotation.

Unheeding, the six juniors left the Rag and repaired to Mr. Quelch's study. They were feeling sore and angry and indignant, almost disposed to wish that they had left the lord of Popper Court to his fate—but not quite. Leaving an elderly man to be beaten up by a gang of roughs was an impossible thing. Still, it was rather hard to be "whopped" themselves as a consequence of having given him the aid he sorely needed. They were not feeling amiable towards the lord of Popper Court as they filed into the Form master's study.

Mr. Quelch was sitting at his writing-table. Sir Hilton Popper was standing beside it, stiff as a ramrod. His eyeglass glittered at the six delinquents as they came in.

"These are the boys!" barked Sir Hilton. "I know the names of five of them—and the other was a foreign boy." He glared at Napoleon Dupont. "I recognise him! There was another—a very fat boy—but he had nothing to do with it—never mind him!"

"Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch. "It appears——"

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "We were there—we own up, sir!"

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"You own up?" he repeated. "I fail to understand you, Wharton. There is no question of owning up, as you call it, when Sir Hilton Popper has called to inform me of the very great service you rendered him——"

"Eh?"

"And to thank you personally——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry involuntarily.

Mr. Quelch stared at the six. Then he smiled. He could read in their faces that they had not expected this—that they had, in fact, expected something quite different.

"It appears," said the Remove master, "that some ruffianly characters attacked Sir Hilton this afternoon, and that you boys very courageously came to his assistance——"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"Sir Hilton naturally desires to acknowledge this service——"

"Oh!" murmured Nugent.

Six faces brightened up at once. Evidently it was not a complaint and a report from the lord of Popper Court—it was not a whopping. Manly had been right, after all!

"Certainly!" boomed Sir Hilton. "I felt it my duty to acquaint your Form master with your very gallant conduct—worthy of the best traditions of my old school!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"You saved me," pursued Sir Hilton, "from serious injury. The ruffian now in custody has confessed—indeed, boasted—that it was his intention to inflict serious personal injury upon me, in revenge for his associate being sent to prison. From this you boys saved me—and I am sorry to see that you appear to have sustained some slight injuries yourselves——"

"Oh, that's nothing, sir!" said Nugent, rubbing a swollen nose.

"And I desire," boomed Sir Hilton, "to bestow some reward——"

Had Billy Bunter been present, undoubtedly Sir Hilton's desire would

have been gratified on the spot. Bunter, later on, felt inclined to kick himself. But, fortunately, Bunter was not present.

"Oh, no, sir!" exclaimed Harry.

"Mais non, certainement non!" said Napoleon. "Pas du tout, monsieur! Oubliez tout cela, je vous prie, monsieur."

"Eh, what—what? Mr. Quelch, it is my desire to reward these boys——"

"Your approbation, sir, is a sufficient reward for these boys of my Form!" said the Remove master.

"Oh, quite, sir!" said Bob Cherry, trying to look as if he valued Sir Hilton's approbation far above rubies.

"I will not press the point," said Sir Hilton. "Nevertheless, I desire, I insist, upon making some acknowledgment. I have received a great service, sir—a very great service! I am proud of these boys who belong to my old school! They are splendid lads, sir—splendid!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had never thought very highly of Sir Hilton Popper. But they began to think now that he was, at least, a gentleman of very good judgment.

"Something in the nature of a reward," insisted Sir Hilton. "What do you say, sir, to a prize—a prize for which the boys of the Form to which these lads belong may compete——"

Mr. Quelch looked approving at once.

"That, sir, is a suggestion I can readily accept!" he exclaimed. "In fact, the suggestion is most opportune in connection with a matter I already had in mind——"

"Excellent, sir!" said Sir Hilton. "A prize, let us say, of a five-pound note, open to the whole Form——"

"I will gladly discuss the matter with you, sir," said the Remove master cordially.

And he signed to the juniors to leave the study, which they promptly did, leaving Sir Hilton and Mr. Quelch to their discussion.

In the passage they looked at one another, and grinned.

"Not a bad old bean!" murmured Bob.

"The badfulness of the esteemed old bean is not terrific," agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"We're well out of it, anyhow!" said Harry.

And his chums agreed that they were, and they walked back to the Rag to tell the good news in very cheery spirits.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

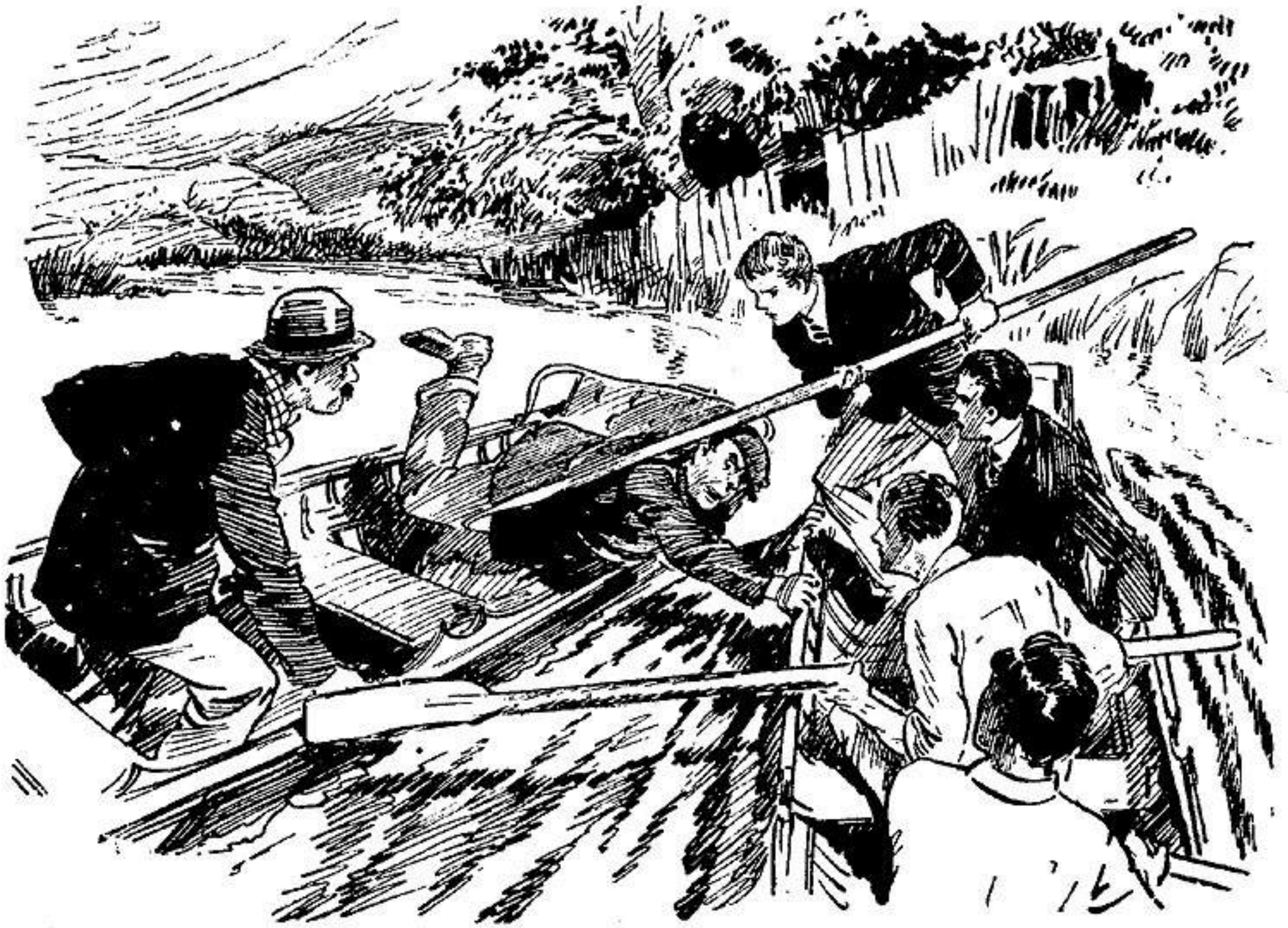
Two Birds with One Stone!

HERE was considerable expectation the following day in the Greyfriars Remove.

A prize was naturally rather interesting, and especially a cash prize! Cash was always useful. Fellows like Lord Mauleverer and Smithy had plenty of that useful article, but most of the fellows could always find uses for a little extra cash.

It was agreed in the Remove that "Old Popper," with all his faults, was not a bad old bean. Left to Quelch, the prize would probably have taken the form of a new Latin dictionary, or a volume of Horace's Odes, or even a Greek lexicon! Old Popper, evidently, had common sense.

Skinner remarked that he might have put up more than a fiver, but it was like Skinner to look a gift-horse in the mouth. Fivers were not so common as blackberries in the Lower Fourth; few fellows had them, in fact. And Sir



The boats crashed together, and Squinty grasped the gunwale of the Remove boat to clamber on board. Crack! "Oooooooh!" There was a fearful yell from Squinty as Bob brought his boathook down on the ruffian's head. At the same moment, Wharton fended off with his oar!

Hilton, though an extensive landowner, was not really rich. Most of his rent-roll went to pay the interest on mortgages, and the rest in income-tax. Most fellows considered that it was quite handsome of Sir Hilton to put up a liver as a special prize for the Remove.

The really interesting question was—what form would the competition take? "Something in the athletic line, I hope," said Bob Cherry.

"I hope so," agreed Billy Bunter. "Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "You hope so, old fat bean, do you?"

"Well, yes, rather!" said Bunter. "That's where I come in rather strong, you know. In fact, I'm rather a demon at it."

A statement which added considerably to the gaiety of the Remove.

Bob Cherry rather hoped that it would be boxing. Nugent favoured running, being good at sprinting. Several fellows liked the idea of swimming. Mark Linley would have been glad if it was Greek. Bunter, undoubtedly would have jumped with joy had the competition taken the form of eating—and in that line there was no doubt that Bunter would have beaten all comers. But that, alas, was improbable.

The fact was that that competition was not likely to take an athletic form. Quelch's mind ran rather to brain than to body. Ten to one, the Bounder declared, it would be a Latin paper.

The Removites could not help feeling that Smithy was very likely right. In which case, interest in the Popper Prize was certain to diminish very considerably.

Boxing, swimming, running, jumping, rowing—all had their adherents. But hardly a man was enthusiastic about

Latin. "Swotting" appealed to very few fellows in the Remove.

Many fellows kept an eye on the notice-board during the day, hoping to see a paper there from Quelch. But the Remove master seemed to be taking his time to consider the matter.

Howsoever it turned out, there was one aspect of the matter that pleased all parties. With this affair on his mind, very likely Quelch would forget about those "further steps" he had promised to take after the rag in the French class.

Nothing had been heard so far about those further steps, and the Remove, of course, did not want to hear anything about them.

Indeed, Bolsover major and Skinner and some other choice spirits were planning another "rag" for the next French class, which they hoped would make Monsieur Charpentier fairly tear his hair.

Bolsover knew a rat-catcher at Friardale, and from that valuable acquaintance he was going to get a supply of rats, to be surreptitiously introduced into the French master's desk.

This, quite a lot of fellows thought, would make the French lesson much more interesting than Mossoo could possibly have made it by his own unaided efforts.

Really, it was quite time for Quelch to take those "further steps" if Mossoo's life at Greyfriars was to be worth living!

A rumour spread in the Remove that Quelch was going to make some announcement about the Popper Prize after class. So, for once, the Removites were not anxious to bolt out of the Form-room the moment lessons were over.

When the time for dismissal came all eyes turned on Mr. Quelch, and as he did not dismiss them the juniors realised that something was coming, so they were all attention.

"My boys," said Mr. Quelch, "most of you are aware that Sir Hilton Popper, a governor of the school, has offered a special prize to be competed for by this Form. The prize is a cash one, and Sir Hilton has placed a five-pound Bank of England note in my hands for the purpose."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I have given a considerable amount of thought to the matter," continued Mr. Quelch, "and have decided the form that the competition will take."

There was a murmur of deep interest.

"At the same time, I must touch upon another matter. On Tuesday, in the French class, there was a disgraceful disturbance."

"Oh, rot!" murmured the Bounder—not loud enough for Mr. Quelch to hear. "Cut it out, old bean!"

Many fellows wondered why Mr. Quelch was dealing with the two matters together. They soon discovered!

"I have on several occasions received serious complaints from Monsieur Charpentier," went on Mr. Quelch. "And I may tell you also that the headmaster has referred to the subject of disorder in the French sets. This must cease!"

Bolsover major grunted. Quelch evidently was coming to those "further steps," and Bolsover realised that he would have to cancel that order to the Friardale rat-catcher, after all.

"As I mentioned at the time," resumed Mr. Quelch, "I intended to consider what further steps to take in the matter. I have now decided."

There was a pause.

"Disorder in the French class, inattention to the very valuable instructions of Monsieur Charpentier, may have very serious results. Monsieur Charpentier is not satisfied and I am not satisfied with the progress of this Form in the French language."

Some of the juniors suppressed yawns. This was not what they had expected, and Quelch was beginning to bore them.

Regardless of the fact that he was beginning to bore his Form, Henry Samuel Quelch barged on.

"I have, therefore, decided to require every boy in my Form to write a French essay. The maximum number of marks will be one hundred. Sir Hilton Popper's prize will be awarded to the boy producing the best essay. In the event of only one boy attaining the maximum number of marks the prize will be awarded to him. In the event of more than one competitor attaining the maximum number the prize will be divided."

"And the Editor's decision will be final, and no correspondence can be entered into!" murmured the Bouncer—a remark that caused a chuckle to break from the fellows near Smithy.

The chuckle died away at a glare from Quelch.

"Sir Hilton's kind offer of a prize will thus be usefully employed," said Mr. Quelch. "It is most opportune. But I have something more to add."

"The sting's in the tail!" murmured Smithy, and there was another chuckle immediately suppressed.

"There will be a minimum number of fifty marks," continued Mr. Quelch. "I hope and trust that every boy in the Form will attain at least this minimum."

"What a trusting nature!" murmured Smithy.

Five-sixths of the Form at least had already decided that the Popper Prize could go hang! Swotting at French was, they considered, too thick.

But they had not heard all yet! The sting, as Smithy said, was in the tail!

"Every boy who does not attain at least fifty marks will be severely caned—"

"Oh!" The Remove gasped.

"And will be detained for one half-holiday and given a task in French to occupy the time."

"Oh!" The Remove gasped again.

"Thus," said Mr. Quelch cheerfully, "I hope to impress upon the more thoughtless minds in my Form the fact that boys are sent to school to learn—not to indulge in horseplay. I have only to add that Dupont, as a French boy, will be required to furnish an English paper, instead of a French one. Dismiss!"

And the Remove marched out, grouching.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Nap Says "No!"

"ROTTER!"

That was the verdict of the Remove.

"Quelch is a downy old bird!" grinned Bob Cherry. "It's a little dodge to kill two birds with one stone. Still, it's better than it might have been. We had to have it; and now there's a prize as well as a whopping."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,309.

"Who's going to swot at French?" growled Skinner.

"Well, I jolly well am, for one!" said Bob.

"You fancy you'll bag a hundred marks?" jeered Skinner.

"No fear! But I'm going to try hard for fifty-one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, it's a swindle!" grunted Billy Bunter. "I'm not going to swot! I'm rather a dab at French, but I'm not going to swot!"

"Bunter will get six marks!" grinned Skinner. "Only they'll be the marks of Quelch's cane!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So these are the jolly old further steps!" said Peter Todd. "I knew Quelch had something up his sleeve! Fact is, we do rather rag Mossoo, you know, and the beaks were sure to come down heavy sooner or later."

"Blow Mossoo!" said Bolsover major.

"French masters are born to be ragged!" declared Skinner. "Ain't they always ragged?"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's a tradition, really—Quelch is upsetting the ancient traditions," said Skinner.

"Only he means business," said Harry Wharton, "and we'd better dig at French for a bit. No ragging in the French class to-morrow."

"Nunno—I suppose not!" growled Bolsover major. "I don't want a whopping and detention. I'm going to get fifty marks somehow."

"You'll be all right, with a French pal in your study," said Snoop. "You can get Dupont to help."

"Oh!" Bolsover major brightened. "I hadn't thought of that. Froggy will be jolly useful in this!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Squiff. "Fair play, you know. You can't get help from a French chap in a French essay."

"Can't I?" snorted Bolsover major. "I jolly well can, and I'm jolly well going to! Froggy's my pal, ain't he?"

"I say, you fellows, 'tain't fair!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Draw a line, old bean!" said Bob. "If Dupont does your essay for you, it's a swindle if you bag the prize!"

"I don't see it! If I get the prize, I'll stand a spread for the whole Form with it! Can't say fairer than that."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Billy Bunter promptly. "I say, you shut up, Bob Cherry—you let Bolsover alone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Bolsover—" exclaimed Wharton.

"Rats!" retorted Bolsover.

And he marched off in search of Napoleon Dupont—leaving some of the fellows laughing and some frowning.

Mr. Quelch, downy bird as he was, had probably not thought of that.

There were some fellows in the Remove very good at French—Mark Linley was the best, but five or six others were good. Half a dozen, perhaps, were in the running for the prize; the best that the rest could hope for was to score fifty marks, and get out of lickings and detentions. Bolsover major was one of the worst at French, and it was extremely doubtful whether he would "attain the minimum," as Quelch expressed it, by his own efforts. But if a French fellow did the essay for him there could be little doubt of the result. The fellow who was very best at French could not hope to compete with a fellow who was French himself and born to the language. For that reason Mr. Quelch had excluded Dupont from the competition. But if Nap wrote the essay, to be copied out by Bolsover, and signed with his name—

It wasn't fair, and it wasn't cricket! It was, in fact, rather a swindle; though Bolsover was too headstrong and obstinate to admit it, or even to realize it. Bolsover regarded it as "one in the eye" for Quelch, and that was good enough for Percy Bolsover.

He was rather pally with Nap, who was in his Study—No. 10, in the Remove. Bolsover was a burly fellow, rather a bully in his ways, but he was generally kind and considerate towards Nap, whom he loftily took under his protection.

The bully of the Remove had his good points, and his treatment of Nap, who was no fighting-man, was one of them.

Probably Bolsover liked him all the more because he could have lifted him across the study with one punch. Bolsover bullied any fellow who would stand it; but he was never heard to bully Nap. And it was known that Nap liked his study-mate—though what he saw to like in Bolsover other fellows could never guess.

In these circumstances, Bolsover major looked on the matter as settled. He was grinning as he came into his study and found Dupont there.

"All serene, what, old French bean?" he said.

"Mais je crois non!" said Nap, with a shake of the head. "I zink zat my essay in ze English vill not be mooch better zan yours in French, mon cher."

"Mine in French is going to be all right!" grinned Bolsover.

"You zink so?" asked Nap dubiously. He knew what Bolsover major's French was like.

"You see, you're going to do it for me," explained Bolsover.

"Comment?"

"You'll write it for me, and I'll copy it out in my fist. See? Easy as falling off a form!" said Bolsover, beaming.

Nap stared at him.

"But ze good Quelch—" he said.

"Pull his leg a treat, what?" chuckled Bolsover.

"Non! Non! If it vas only ze pull of ze leg, yes—but zere is a prize—"

"That's all right—I'm going to whack it out with the whole Form, in a spread!" explained Bolsover. "Fair play all round!"

"But zat is not fair play!" objected Dupont. "Zink again, mon ami."

Bolsover major ceased to grin, and began to glare. He was pally with Nap and really like him. But he was not the fellow to stand argument.

"You cheeky ass!" he said.

"Mon cher ami," urged Dupont, "I vill help you all I can, but I must not vin ze prize for you. Zat is not vat you call in English, to play ze game."

"Why, you cheeky tick!" roared Bolsover major, much incensed. "Do you think I want a dashed foreigner to teach me to play the game?"

"Mais oui. Zink again, mon ami."

"So this is what you call being pally, is it?" roared Bolsover. "Didn't I punch Coker of the Fifth for calling you a frog-eater?"

"Oui, oui. et je vous remercie—I zank you! But—"

"You can wash out the buts! You're going to write that rotten essay for me in French, see?"

"Jamais!"

"What do you mean by jammy, you ass? Who's jammy?"

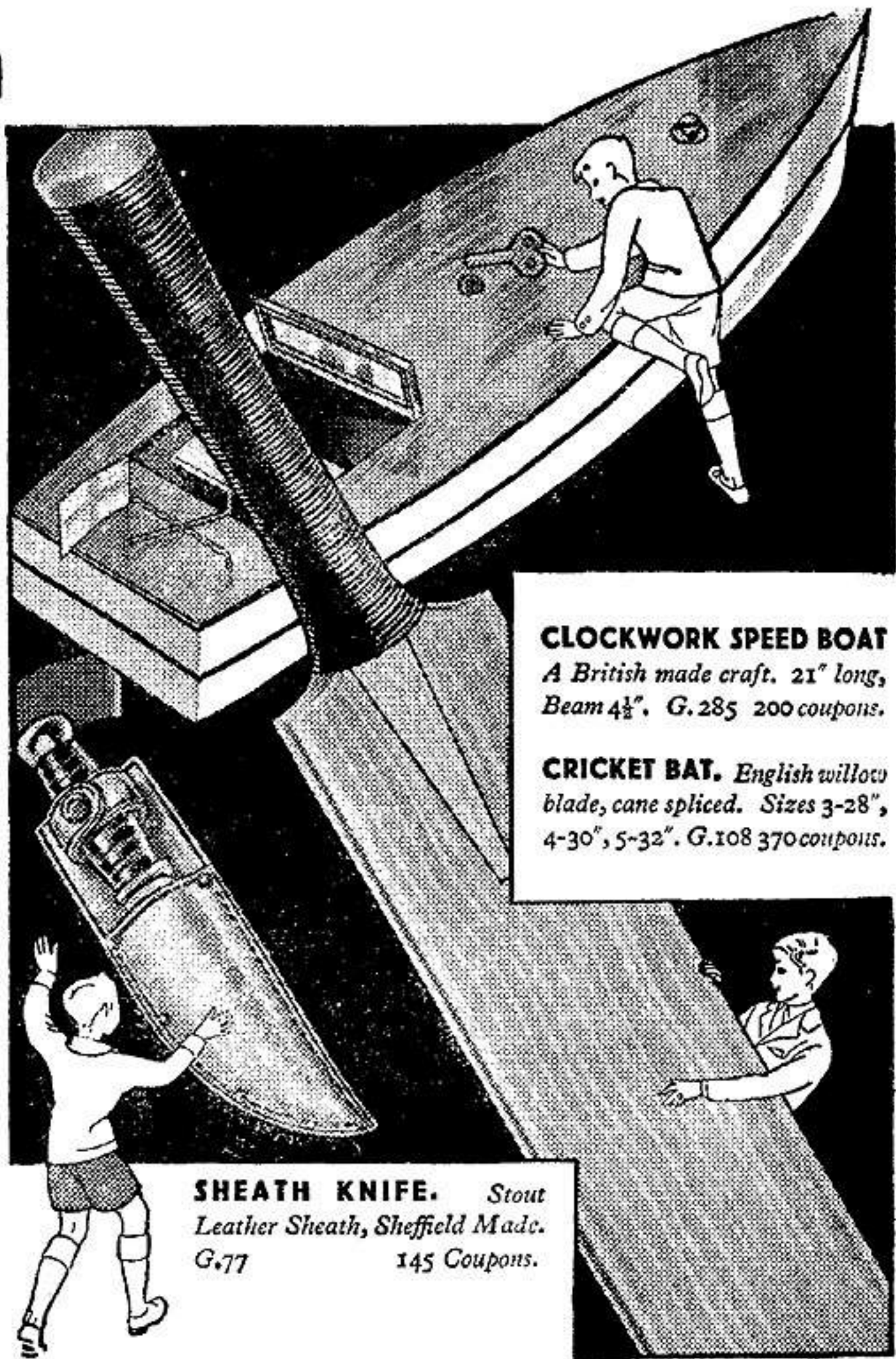
Nap grinned. That question rather indicated what chance Bolsover had of bagging the Popper Prize by his own efforts!

"I mean not jammy—I say jamais!"

(Continued on page 22.)

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POPPER'S UNPOPULAR PRIZE!

(Continued from page 20.)

Zat is nevair!" explained Nap. "You are my shum, mon ami, but even for my shum, I vili not do zis zing!"

"Oh, jammy means never, does it?" snorted Bolsover. "Rotten silly language, if you ask me! Well, if that's what you call pally, I don't agree! See? And if you don't help me out, I'll jolly well whop you!"

"You vill whop me?" exclaimed Dupont, his eyes flashing.

"Yes, rather, and jolly well boot you out of the study, too."

Napoleon jumped up.

"On en a assez!" he exclaimed.

"Who are you calling an ass?" bawled Bolsover major.

"Mon Dieu! Vat I say is, zat is enoff—one has enough of zat! Assez—enoff! Zink you zat I have fear?" exclaimed the French junior indignantly. "Non, non! I vill not do zis zing, and you can go and eat coal!"

That was enough for Bolsover major—more than enough! He jumped at Napoleon Dupont, quite forgetting that he was a pal!

"Ciel!" gasped Nap, as he whirled round the study in Bolsover's powerful grasp. "Laissez-moi! Mon Dieu!"

Bang!

A Gallic head smote the study table, and Napoleon Dupont gave a fearful yell.

"Now what about it?" roared Bolsover major.

"Yaroooh!"

Bang!

"Now, you cheeky tick—Oh, my hat!" gasped Bolsover, as the French junior turned on him, hitting out wildly.

Taken by surprise, Bolsover went over with a crash to the floor. He sprawled and gasped.

"Zat you come on!" yelled Nap, as excited as Bolsover now. "You zink zat I have fear? Mais non! Zat you come on viz you!"

And he danced round the fallen bully, brandishing his fists. Nap had heaps of pluck, at least.

Bolsover major was not long in coming on. He scrambled up, crimson with fury, and hurled himself at the French junior.

Nap faced him boldly; but he might as well have faced a typhoon. He was knocked, gasping all round the study. Napoleon Dupont would have had the time of his life, but for the arrival of Harry Wharton & Co. The din from No. 10 brought a crowd of fellows to the spot—and the Famous Five were the first to arrive.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Collar him!"

And five pairs of hands collared Bolsover major promptly, and dragged him off the gasping Gaul.

"Hands off!" yelled Bolsover.

"Hands on!" chuckled Bob. "I fancy I can guess what the trouble is! Nap's a good little French bean, and you're not going to bully him, you rotter! Frog's-march, you men!"

"What-ho!"

Bolsover major, struggling frantically, was swept out of the study, in the grasp of the Famous Five.

Up and down the Remove passage he went, in the frog's-march, wriggling and roaring.

But his wriggles and his roars availed him not. When the Famous Five were done with him, Bolsover major was a gasping, gurgling heap. When he was finally pitched back into his study he did not look at Dupont or speak to him. He sprawled and gurgled. For

quite a long time Bolsover's attention was concentrated on getting his second wind—and he was a long time getting it.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Nap Knows How!

"PARLEZ vous francais?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter groaned.

The Owl of the Remove had a deep-rooted hatred for anything in the nature of work. French was work!

It was not so awfully rotten as "maths"; not quite so rotten as Latin! But it was work—so it was rotten!

But there it was! Bunter, like every other man in the Greyfriars Remove, was swotting French.

Monsieur Charpentier, formerly the most thoroughly ragged master in the school, had a very attentive class when he took the Remove.

So far from putting rats in his desk, Skinner & Co. fairly hung on his words!

Quelch's "further steps" were known now; and the matter was serious. A

whopping and a detention was to be the reward of any fellow who slacked. While a cash prize awaited fellows who did really well. If Mr. Quelch's object was to stop the ragging in the French class, he succeeded.

Probably for the first time, his Form gave that lesson serious attention and profited all they could from Mossoo's instructions. Most of them wished that they had started sooner. They had a week in which to prepare an essay—in French! Fellows who wanted to escape whopping had to work hard! There was a lot of lost time to make up. Rats in Mossoo's desk, obviously, were out of the question, with Quelch in this warlike mood! Two or three fellows kicked Skinner for having originated the great balloon stunt. They had enjoyed it at the time; but the outcome they did not enjoy.

Billy Bunter, who had confidence in his own wonderful abilities, had a hope of bagging the prize. After all, as he told Toddy, what it needed was brains—just brains. And that, according to Bunter, was his long suit!

Bunter's nope was brief. Whether Bunter had brains or not—most fellows thought not!—he had no industry, no taste for work. His hope faded away; but he still hoped, for a time, to get the marks to escape whopping. But even that hope grew faint! It meant work. Not so much work as bagging the prize, but still—work! It was borne in on Bunter's mind that all the marks he would get would be those, as Skinner suggested, left on his fat person by Mr. Quelch's cane!

It was a painful prospect!

Meanwhile, Napoleon Dupont seemed to be becoming a very popular fellow in the Form.

Most fellows had always rather liked Nap, who was polite and affable and obliging. But he was unusually sought after now. Fellows would talk French to him who had never dreamed of doing so before. They would drop into his Study at odd times. They would ask him questions about his beautiful language. They would take exercises to him. Nap hardly ever failed to oblige; and in these days he was a second Mossoo to the Remove, only more so.

But he was on the worst of terms with the fellow who had been a pal to him—Bolsover major.

Study No. 10 in the Remove was not a pleasant study now.

After the frog's-march from the Famous Five, Bolsover major kept his heavy hands off his study-mate. But his back was up, and his temper was bad, and he was like a bear with a sore head.

In the study, he scowled and sulked, and pitched things about, and called Nap all sorts of uncomplimentary names. He could not, or would not, understand that Nap was only playing "ze game," as he called it. His view was that he had been a good pal to Nap, and that Nap had ungratefully turned him down.

He led Nap a dog's life in Study No. 10. For two or three days Nap was kind and patient, trying to make him see reason. But resentment supervened at last, and Nap was as angry as Bolsover. And the bully of the Remove made no secret of the fact that if Nap persisted in refusing his unreasonable request he was going to give him the hiding of his life. If Bolsover got six from Quelch, Nap was going to get six from a fives bat.

There was no doubt that the bully of the Remove could, if he liked, give Nap six—or sixty, for that matter. And he was too obtuse to realise how deeply he wounded the French boy's pride.

Plenty of fellows were ready to intervene to stop Bolsover's bullying. But Nap did not want any fellow's protection. Mr. Quelch would have come down on Bolsover like a thunderbolt, if he had known. But Nap was not the fellow to complain to a master.

"I say, you fellows, it's too jolly thick!" Billy Bunter told the Famous Five a day or two before the examination. "I've asked that beast Dupont to write my paper for me, and what do you think he said? He called me a coshong—that's something unpleasant in French."

"Cochon—pig!" translated Nugent. "Nap knows you, you see!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! Well, if he's going to write a paper for Bolsover he can write one for me, I suppose," grumbled Bunter. "I don't want a whopping, any more than Bolsover does, see?"

"Fathead! He's not doing anything of the kind," said Harry. "That's why that hooligan has cut up so rusty with poor old Nap!"

"That's all you know!" jeered Bunter. "I jolly well heard him tell Bolsover he would write a paper for him—so there! He doesn't want the beast to pass on Quelch's licking to him."

Harry Wharton's face became grave. If Nap had surrendered to Bolsover's threats to that extent it was a matter for the captain of the Remove to look into.

"Fair play all round—what?" said Bunter. "I could do with that prize. I've been disappointed about a postal order I was expecting! Anyhow, I want to get fifty marks, at least. I say, you fellows, what about bagging that beast Dupont and holding his head under the tap—"

"What?"

"And making him write papers for all of us—what?" suggested Bunter. "I think that's rather a neat idea! What do you fellows think?"

Harry Wharton & Co. did not tell Bunter what they thought of that neat idea—in words! They seized him and bumped him in the quad, and left him to guess, from that proceeding, what they thought.

Then the captain of the Remove



"Collar them!" As one man, Harry Wharton & Co. rose from cover and leaped on Sir Hilton Popper's assailants, taking them completely by surprise. But Billy Bunter had no fancy for a scrap of this sort. He took to his heels and bolted for the boat!

looked for Nap. He found him under the elms, walking, with a frowning brow and glinting eyes.

Wharton tapped him on the arm.

"Nap, old man," he said, "if there's any trouble in your study, you've got friends to stand by you. I'm sure you won't do a rotten, mean thing—"

Nap's eyes flashed.

"Zat Bolsover, he go to zrash me if I do him not!" he said. "I am insult! I am verree angry—vat you call mad as one hatbox!"

Wharton grinned. But he became grave again.

"Does that mean that you are going to do as Bolsover has asked you?"

"Mais oui! I tell him I write zo paper! Vy for not? But I tell you vun secret." Dupont glanced round and lowered his voice. "Zat Bolsover, he zink he make me vin him vun prize unfair! He zink I fear to be zrash. He zink he make me not to play zo game! Nous verrons! I pull him zo leg."

"Eh? How?" asked Harry.

"You keep ze secret, isn't it?" asked Dupont. "I pull him zo leg to punish him, because I am insult! You say nozzings?"

"Not a word!" said Harry. "But how—"

He was quite puzzled.

The subject selected by Mr. Quelch for the Remove essays was "La Henriade," the French poem, that was used very much by Mossos in the French class.

Every fellow had to write—in French—a short essay on that subject. Which meant that they had to "swot" considerably over that poem.

It would have been easy enough for the French junior to turn out quite a good paper for Bolsover. But how he was going to pull Bolsover's leg in the matter was a deep mystery.

Evidently, some scheme was working in his active Gallic brain. The captain of the Remove was feeling quite curious.

"Vous voyez! You see!" said Nap, with another glance round, to make sure that none were within hearing. "I write ze paper; but all zat I write I take from ze book—"

"From the book?" repeated Wharton blankly.

"Ze preface in zo book!" explained Nap.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Bolsover know nozzing. Do you zink he read a preface? Non! Jamais! He zink I write zo paper for him to vin prize! Mais non! I make not up zat paper. I copy him out of zo book! From ze preface! Vous voyez? Comprenez? Monsieur Charpentier examin zo papers! He read Bolsover's paper. He find in it vat he know by heart—"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Wharton.

He stared blankly at the French junior as he caught on.

Bolsover major, having bullied Nap into writing a paper for him, would be provided with a paper—copied from an essay written two hundred years ago by the author of "Henriade"!

Monsieur Charpentier was to judge the papers. What he would think of Bolsover's paper was quite interesting to contemplate!

"I zink zat he deserve it. Vat you zink?" asked Dupont.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He ask for it—vat? He make me write zat paper. Vell, I write him. But he not ze paper he zink! But you say nozzings!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Wharton.

Nap laughed, too.

"Bolsover zink he make me vin him vun prize! He zink on ze ozzer side

ven Monsieur Charpentier see zat paper, hein?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton, having promised Nap to say nothing about that remarkable wheeze, said nothing. But when he saw Bolsover major again, and saw the satisfied grin on his face, he chuckled. Bolsover major's belief was that he had brought Nap to reason, and that with Nap's aid he was going to bag the Popper Prize. He was counting his chickens before they were hatched, and was far from suspecting how unlikely it was that they ever would be hatched.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Maste.-Stroke!

BILLY BUNTER grinned. Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, his study-mates, looked at him. Why Bunter grinned was a mystery.

It was the last day before the examination of the French paper. On the morrow every man in the Remove had to show up his paper, for better or for worse.

There was a rumour in the Remove that Bolsover major had succeeded in bullying Dupont into writing a paper for him. If that rumour was true, there was little doubt who would bag the Popper Prize.

But who would bag the prize was a less pressing question than who would bag the whoppings. The French master was to examine the papers and award the marks, and two-thirds of the Remove, at least, felt very uneasy about the result. Few fellows could count on getting over fifty marks out of a possible hundred, with Mossos as the judge. And every fellow who failed to

get fifty was irrevocably booked for a whopping and a detention.

So on that particular evening few fellows were disposed to grin. And as Bunter was the most hopeless case of all, he might have been least of all expected to be enjoying life.

Yet he was grinning, almost from ear to ear.

"Feeling merry and bright?" asked Toddy sarcastically.

"Well, the fact is, I feel pretty safe about the prize," said Bunter. "You know what a dab I am at French."

"Ye gods!"

"Well, you'll see what you'll see," said Bunter. "I rather fancy I shall pull it off. What's fair for one fellow, is fair for another, ain't it?"

"If that means anything—what does it mean?" inquired Toddy.

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter hastily. "I'm not the fellow to pass off another fellow's work as my own, I hope."

"What?"

"Still, if one fellow can get a fellow to write an essay for a fellow, a fellow's entitled to butt in," argued Bunter. "What do you think, Toddy?"

"I should think you were wandering in your mind, if you had any to wander in," answered Peter Todd.

"Yah!" retorted Bunter elegantly.

Prep was over, and Billy Bunter proceeded to adorn the doorway of Study No. 7 with his fat person.

The Remove men came out of their studies—some of them. Others remained to put in a little more swotting over their French papers. Of late the Removites had been mugging up French as if they loved it, though few of them did.

Billy Bunter watched the juniors going down, through his big spectacles. His little round eyes gleamed behind those spectacles when Bolsover major and Napoleon Dupont left Study No. 10, and he watched them down the stairs.

After they were gone the Owl of the Remove strolled carelessly along the passage. He stopped at Study No. 10 and blinked up and down the passage, to make sure that he was not observed.

Then he whipped into Bolsover's study, and shut the door after him.

He turned on the light, and blinked round the study.

He had not far to look for what he wanted. On the study table lay a paper written in French, in the handwriting of Napoleon Dupont.

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed at it. This evidently was the essay Nap had written, to be copied by Bolsover in his own hand, and passed off to-morrow as Bolsover's own work.

Bunter chuckled.

Billy Bunter had a very proper contempt for a fellow who bagged a prize by such methods as Bolsover's. But he was prepared to use similar methods himself. He was prepared to stretch a point in his own favour. Bunter had a conscience! But it was rather an elastic one, and would stretch to almost any extent.

"That's it," murmured the fat Owl. "Rotten cads, the pair of them! If there's anything I despise, it's a fellow taking a mean advantage!"

He blinked at the French paper. He had to make sure. But there was no doubt about it. Bunter could read French, and he read:

"Le sujet de 'la Henriade' est le siege de Paris, commencee par Henri de Valois, et Henri le Grand, achevee par ce dernier seul.

"Le lieu de la scene ne s'etend pas plus loin que de Paris a Ivry, ou se donna cette fameuse bataille qui decida du sort de la France et de la maison royale."

There was a lot more of it, but Bunter did not take the trouble to read further. Evidently this paper dealt with the "Henriade," and was written out by Dupont for Bolsover major to copy.

Billy Bunter slipped it under his jacket, turned out the light, and left the study.

Bolsover apparently had not copied it out yet. Billy Bunter was going to save him the trouble.

Toddy and Dutton had gone down to the Rag when the fat Owl rolled back into Study No. 7.

Bunter shut the door and locked it, and sat down at the study table.

For some time Bunter worked hard. Work did not agree with Bunter, but for once he put his beef into it. Word by word, sentence by sentence, that French essay was copied out in Billy Bunter's sprawling hand.

It was a weary task; but Bunter kept at it doggedly till the whole paper was copied.

Then he rose from the table with a grunt of relief.

"Thank goodness that's done!" he gasped.

Bunter's essay was ready now. Dupont's paper he dropped into the study fire, and stirred it there with the poker till it vanished in ashes.

Bunter gave a fat chuckle.

Tired as he was from unaccustomed labour, the Owl of the Remove was grinning when he rolled down to the Rag. He grinned still more broadly when he heard an argument going on in that apartment. Three or four fellows were talking to Bolsover major, pointing out to him the error of his ways. Fellows who considered that they had a chance at the Popper Prize, naturally did not like the idea of Bolsover walking off with it by foul play. And it was very strongly suspected in the Form that that was what was going on.

The bully of the Remove looked sullen and restive, and perhaps a little uneasy. If he had not realised before what he was doing, the plain speaking of half a dozen fellows made it fairly clear to him.

"Wharton ought to interfere as head boy," declared Frank Nugent. "It's up to you, Harry. If Nap's really made up a paper for Bolsover, it's simply foul play for him to bag the prize with it."

Harry Wharton laughed. He was the only fellow who knew the exact value of the paper Nap had made up for Bolsover.

"That's all right," he said. "I've advised Bolsover not to use any other fellow's work. Leave it at that."

"That's all very well," said Peter Todd, "but—"

"It's foul play," growled Johnny Bull. "If it's true, it's foul play."

"Nap isn't a fellow for foul play," said Harry. "Bolsover may be, but Nap isn't. No need for anybody to butt in."

"Well, that's so," agreed Bob Cherry. "But it looks—"

"Never mind how it looks; leave it at that," said the captain of the Remove. "It's all right—take my word for it!"

Bolsover stared at him. As Nap had actually written out the paper for him, it seemed to him that Wharton's faith in the French junior was rather unfounded. He did not know what Wharton knew.


"You can all jolly well mind your own bizney, anyhow," growled Bolsover; and he stalked away with a sullen face.

Three or four fellows hissed him as he went, and he flushed crimson, and went out of the Rag.

Bunter's fat grin followed him. If Bolsover had gone to his study to copy out that paper, he was booked for a disappointment. Bunter wondered what he would do when he missed it.

If Bolsover missed that valuable paper, he said nothing on the subject. In the Remove dormitory that night Billy Bunter blinked at him curiously. Bolsover was silent and sullen, and turned in without a word to anyone in the dormitory.

Bunter was rather perplexed. As Bolsover had counted on Nap's paper to win the Popper Prize, it was rather extraordinary that he did not seem to



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care what had become of it. He had to copy it out in his own hand, if he was to make any use of it, but obviously he had not done so.

It was puzzling; still, it was all the better, from Billy Bunter's peculiar point of view. There was hardly time now for Dupont to make up that essay all over again. Still the later it was left, the safer it was for Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove grinned as he laid his bullet head on his pillow. The Popper Prize was as good as in his fat hands! The prospect of expending five pounds on tuck was dazzling!

Bunter dreamed of it! The five-pound note, and the enormous quantity of tuck it represented, haunted his slumbers.

A procession of pork pies, plum cakes, jam tarts, cream puffs, and doughnuts, marched, as it were, through Bunter's dreaming brain—and the Owl of the Remove smiled in his sleep.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Alas!—For Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON stared. It was the following day, after third school.

Wharton was coming along the Remove passage, and he passed the door of Study No. 10 which was open. He could not help staring at the unexpected sight that met his eyes in that study.

Bolsover major was there—sitting at the table. There was a pen in his hand, a smudge of ink on his nose, an expression of concentrated thought, almost of anguish, on his rugged brow. A French grammar, a French dictionary, and a copy of the "Henriade" were open on the table before him. He was working hard!

He groaned dismally as Wharton looked in. Then, glancing up, he caught the surprised stare of the captain of the Remove, and coloured.

"Swotting?" asked Wharton. Snort, from Bolsover major. "I've left it jolly late!" he growled. "The rotten papers have got to be handed in this afternoon! Oh lor'!"

"Oh, my hat! I—I thought—" Another snort from Bolsover. "You thought that Nap had made up a paper for me? Well, so he did—it's about the study somewhere. But I ain't going to use it, see?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton. "I thought it would be fair if I whacked out the prize in a spread for the Form!" growled Bolsover. "But the fellows don't seem to think so. I—I was rather a brute to poor old Nap, too."

"Oh!" repeated Wharton rather blankly

Evidently Bolsover major had been doing some thinking. The plain speaking in the Rag seemed to have enlightened him a little.

"I never meant to cheat, of course!" growled Bolsover major. "I didn't look at it like that. Still, I suppose that's how it would look. Anyhow, I've chucked it, and—and I'm writing the rotten thing myself. I suppose I shall get about ten marks—and a whopping! Blow!"

"Better get a whopping than do a rotten thing!" said Harry

Grunt from Bolsover.

"All very well for you—you're safe for a share in the prize! I'm safe for a licking from Quelch! I wish I'd tackled it before!"

"Better late than never!" "Oh, rats! Don't jaw. Just sheer off—unless," added Bolsover sarcastically, "you feel inclined to come in

and lend me a hand with this muck. My French is awful!"

Wharton hesitated a moment. He had been going to join his chums in punting about a ball till dinner. But he stepped into the study

"I'll lend a hand with pleasure," he answered. "No harm in lending a fellow a hand."

Bolsover looked relieved. "Pile in, then," he said more cordially.

And the captain of the Remove sat down to help. Bolsover's French was, as he had said, "awful"—in fact, it might have been called frightful. Without aid, he had little chance of escaping the whopping due to all who failed to obtain fifty marks.

Bolsover's spelling in English was not good. In French it was perfectly weird. But with Wharton's help, the

he was so indifferent to the loss of that French paper.

Bolsover, as a matter of fact, had not even missed it. He supposed, as he had told Wharton, that it was about the study somewhere. He had no interest in it now, and did not care where it was.

When the Remove went in to afternoon school, every fellow had his paper with him. They were piled on Mr. Quelch's desk before the juniors went to their places. Monsieur Charpentier came in and took the stack of papers away, for examination in his study. The result was to be made known after class.

Plenty of fellows in the Remove were feeling uneasy that afternoon. But the fellow who might have been expected to look the uneasiest of all, was very merry and bright. Bunter's fat face beamed.

For some reason utterly unknown to the rest of the Remove, Billy Bunter expected to come through with flying colours.

Class was over at last. Monsieur Charpentier came into the Form-room, with the French papers in his hand.

"Now for the chopper!" murmured the Bouncer.

Billy Bunter grinned. He, at least, was not expecting the chopper.

He noticed that Mossoo glanced at him very specially as he came in. He concluded that Mossoo had been impressed by the excellence of his paper.

The French master joined Mr. Quelch at his desk, and spoke to the Remove master for a few minutes in a low voice. Then Mr. Quelch glanced at Bunter in a very expressive way.

"Something's up!" murmured Skinner.

"I zink zat somezing is up!" murmured Napoleon Dupont. "I zink zat you be verree sorry soon zat you make me write zat paper, Bolsover."

Bolsover stared at him.

"I never used your rotten paper, you fathcad," he grunted. "I changed my mind about it. I've put in a paper of my own!"

Nap jumped. "Mon Dieu! But zat paper—he is not in ze study! Vat you do viz it?"

"Haven't seen the rotten thing!"

"And you use him not?" exclaimed Nap.

"No, ass!" growled Bolsover. He grunted: "Look here, Nap! I'm sorry! I was rather a beast—and—and I'm sorry! Can't say more than that!"

"Mon Dieu!" Nap beamed with friendship and forgiveness. "Zat is my shum vunce more! Nous sommes toujours bons amis, n'est-ce-pas? Vunce more ve are verree good friends, isn't it? I kees my shum—"

"Silence in class!" rapped out Mr. Quelch, much to Bolsover's relief. He was glad to be on friendly terms with Nap again; but most decidedly he did not want to be kissed by his chum!

"Monsieur Charpentier will now make an announcement," said Mr. Quelch, and once more his gimlet eye glittered at Billy Bunter. "Silence!"

Mossoo smiled at a very uneasy Remove.

"All zese papers zat are here, zey are bettair zan I have expect!" he announced. "Zere are five papers zat take ze hundred mark. Wharton, Linley, Penfold, Todd, and Brown vill divide ze prize."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry. Billy Bunter jumped.

"I—I say, sir—" he gasped. "You will be silent, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice.

"But—but, I say, sir—I—I—I think

(Continued on page 28.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,300.

WHO WANTS A POCKET KNIFE?

Tell an amusing yarn like the following, which has been sent in by Cedric Pledger, 47, Woodlands Avenue, Wanstead, E.11, and the postman will bring you one!



Wille (to greengrocer): "Four pounds of potatoes with eyes in, please."
Greengrocer: "Why with eyes in?"
Wille: "Well, mother says they've got to see us through the week!"

All efforts to be sent to:
"Limericks and Jokes" Editor,
c/o MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street,
London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

orthography, at least, was right, and a few suggestions in phrasing saved him from egregious blunders

The two juniors worked together till the dinner-bell rang. Then Bolsover grunted and rose

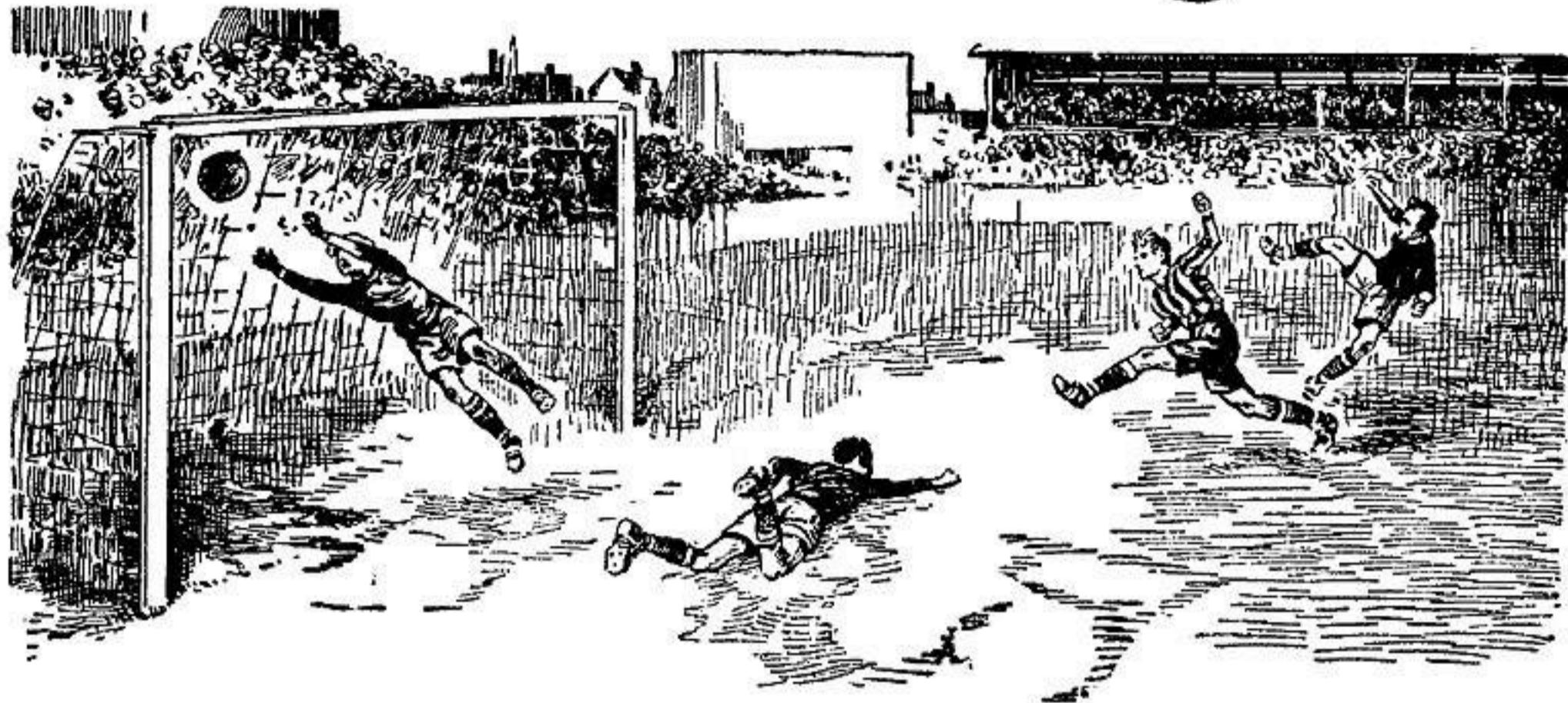
"That will have to do!" he said. "If it's a whopping, it's a whopping, and that's that! Anyhow, the fellows can't say that I haven't played the game!"

Wharton smiled as he went down. Bolsover had decided, at long last, to play the game, and he little dreamed from what it had saved him. For a fellow who handed in the paper Dupont had drawn up, was booked for something more than a mere caning! Wharton was glad, for Bolsover's own sake, that he had made up his mind to do the right thing.

At the dinner-table, Billy Bunter blinked at Bolsover through his big spectacles more curiously than ever.

Knowing nothing of his change of heart, Bunter could only wonder why

NOBBY, the 'Shooting Star'!



HOW THE STORY STARTED.

Having run away from Don Carlos' circus, Nobby, a sixteen-year-old wail, meets Ferrers Locke, the detective, who introduces him to Lord Douglas Weatherstone, chairman of the Perriton Rovers F.C. From ground-boy, Nobby soon becomes professional, only to fall foul of Lord Douglas' rascally nephew, Daniel Willoughby Thundersley, who, in league with the Don, determines to bring about his downfall. Later, to avoid exposure by his bookmaker, to whom he owes a large sum of money, Thundersley rifles his uncle's safe. While escaping over the wall, he drops on Nobby, who is walking by, and bowls him over!

(Now read on.)

A Ghastly Mistake!

NOBBY hardly knew what had happened.

One moment he had been walking sedately along the pavement; the next he was sent crashing on all-fours, with his face uncomfortably close to the gutter. As through a haze, he heard a muffled ejaculation, saw a human shape rise almost atop of him, and became conscious in the same second that the human shape clawed and scrambled to an upright position and scudded into the darkness with the speed of a mouse seeking its hole.

Yet, brief as the whole incident was, Nobby did more than imagine that he knew the owner of those scurrying feet. A flaming mop of red hair, very similar to this own a glimpse of a face, set his thoughts running along obvious channels. Thundersley!

The while Nobby pondered this and scrambled to his feet, gulping in deep breaths of air, for he was half-winded, two faces appeared at the top of the wall. Both of them lit up with excitement as they viewed Nobby.

"That's the blighter!"

"Collar him, Alphonse!"

Two of Lord Weatherstone's most zealous footmen had no doubt that here was the audacious villain who had rifled his lordship's safe. From the window of the raided library they had

caught a fleeting glimpse of the marauder; had seen him dart across the grounds and had sped in pursuit, what time the remainder of the servants had followed a false trail. Alphonse and his companion did not waste time. They were up and over that wall like a couple of monkeys. Then—

Crash!

The pair of them landed squarely atop of the amazed Nobby. Down he went again in a smother of arms and legs.

This time, however, young Nobby hit out. If this was game, he told himself, it was time to take an active part in it. His clenched right fist took the excitable Alphonse clean under the chin, whereat Alphonse subsided into uncanny peacefulness.

His companion, however, was a hefty individual. He took a hearty wallop under the ear, returned the blow with interest, and yelled for help at the top of his voice.

A passing policeman was quick to oblige. He drew out his truncheon as he ran towards the squirming figures, reached them, and being undecided as to which was a law-breaker and deserving of the truncheon, promptly banged both Nobby and the footman over the head to lie on the safe side. Nobby joined Alphonse in a temporary realm of unconsciousness. The footman, whose head must have been nearly as solid as the truncheon, shook himself like a dog, scowled blackly at the police officer, and gasped:

"That's the burglar, you fool! Not me!"

The policeman murmured something intended to convey an apology, hauled the drooping Nobby to his feet, and then switched his lantern on him.

"What's 'e done, mate?"

The footman was inclined to be sarcastic.

"Pinched some salt off a pigeon's tail!" he returned crushingly. "But if you let him go you'll be for it. Lor' knows what he's taken out of his lordship's safe." He eyed Nobby's listless

figure appraisingly. "Young, ain't he, to start the burglar business?"

The policeman sniffed deprecatingly.

"Looks to me to be an old 'and at the game," he remarked, just to be contrary. "I knows the type. Can smell 'em."

"Is that so?" The footman was an argumentative fellow. "Pity you didn't smell him before he did the job! Best bring him along to his lordship." He became the superior footman again. "This way, officer. Follow me!"

With his head high in the air, he led the way to a side gate, rang a hearty peal on the bell, and frowned his impatience while he waited to be admitted.

"Follow me, officer," he said again, as the gate was opened, "and don't let that dangerous fellow escape."

"You leave 'im to me," answered the constable, "and don't 'old your bloomin' head so 'igh, or you'll bump it on the sky."

The man in blue half-dragged, half-carried Nobby across the lawns to the lighted french windows of the dining-room. Somewhere in the rear of him staggered Alphonse, rubbing his hand on an aching jaw.

The footman headed straight for Lord Weatherstone, who was hobbling about in the dining room cursing his gout, his inefficient servants, and the burglar who had dared to disturb his dinner. But his lordship nearly exploded when he identified the "capture" the footman had made.

"What the devil's this, Waters?" he thundered. "Who—what—why—"

The footman bowed.

"Alphonse and I caught sight of the burglar from the window, my lord," he explained, "so we immediately gave chase. We managed to drop on him just as he scrambled over the wall. Alphonse, my lord, is following us. He—ahem—got a murderous blow from this wretch as we tried to overpower him."

"You fool!" snapped his lordship, his eyes nearly starting out of their sockets

as they beheld the familiar face of Nobby. "You dense, wooden-headed fool! D'you think this young man is a burglar—"

Before the surprised footman could reply, the police officer took up the tale. "It's him all right, m'lord. I saw him a-struggling with the servants as I came up. I gave him a wallop with the truncheon—soon settled 'im, m'lord."

His lordship made a helpless gesture, dragged the now-blinking Nobby to an armchair, and proceeded to force a little stimulant between his lips. Whereupon the man in blue gaped, coughed, and swore under his breath, while Waters, the footman, blinked until he began to look like an owl.

This was a strange way of treating a burglar.

Like a male chorus in a review the various footmen gathered in the spacious dining-room and gazed towards Lord Weatherstone and the "burglar." The eyes of the latter were opening now. First, puzzlement shone in their blue depths, next anger at the amazing rough treatment to which he had been subjected, then friendly recognition as Nobby became aware of Lord Weatherstone bending above him.

"My dear boy," remarked his lordship, much distressed, "I don't know exactly what's happened, but I'm sure there's been a ghastly mistake. Now, now—don't attempt to explain just now. Rest awhile."

Nobby leaned back in the comfortable chair, his head clearing rapidly. Then, as he caught sight of Waters, the hefty footman, he half-started out of the chair with the intention of giving that very superior person a thick ear.

"He's the fellow—one of them, at any rate—who barged into me, sir!" he exclaimed. "I'd know his ugly mug even in pitch darkness."

The footman blushed, coughed, and then looked at his lordship inquiringly.

Lord Weatherstone returned him a look that made Waters begin to wonder whether he would be seeking a new job soon—a strange "reward," indeed, for having caught his lordship's burglar!

"You smug-faced idiot!" said his lordship at length. "So you think this young man, a friend of mine, is the burglar, eh?"

Waters nearly froze.

"A friend—a f-friend of yours, my lord? But—"

Nobby began to piece things together at mention of the word "burglar." The first fellow who had sent him sprawling was obviously the burglar. The fellow who had been in a hurry. Nobby's heart beat uncomfortably fast. The fellow with the red hair. The fellow he instinctively recognised, or thought he had recognised, as Thundersley!

Lord Weatherstone mistook the flitting changes of expression in Nobby's face for indignation. He hastened to mollify the youngster.

"I'll soon explain things, Nobby," he said hurriedly. "My safe was burgled a few minutes ago, and the alarm was set ringing. My servants naturally went burglar-hunting, and the blamed idiots have brought back you as the burglar. I'm deuced sorry. Really, my boy—"

His lordship felt his position keenly. Not for a moment did any suspicion rest in his mind that here was the marauder who had upset the entire household, ruined the dinner and brought on another attack of gout, as Waters fondly imagined.

"It's quite all right, sir," said Nobby, beginning to smile. "I think I can see things clearly now. Just before your

two footmen popped over the wall some other johnny had dropped down. But he dropped directly on me and knocked me spinning. Half-winded me, too. I was just scrambling to my feet when your footmen biffed me over again. I assure you, sir, I am not your burglar!" he added, with a smile.

"Of course—of course!" said his lordship. "I knew these fellows had made a mistake. I must apologise, Nobby—"

"That's quite all right, sir," returned the youngster. "There's no damage done—so far as I'm concerned, anyway."

The police officer looked at him in dismay, glared savagely at Waters, and then coughed.

"Ahem! I think, my lord, that I'll get on to the station and report. Did the burglar get away with any loot, sir?"

"About two thousand pounds in cash and bonds," replied Lord Weatherstone. "He didn't have very much time to explore the safe, otherwise things would have been worse. Get on to your station, by a'l means. We are wasting time here."

The policeman lingered, drew his notebook from his pocket, and then confronted Nobby.

"Excuse me, sir," he said half apologetically. "but I suppose you wouldn't be able to give me a description of the man who knocked you over?"

Nobby stifled an inward tremor. In his own mind he knew who the burglar was, but some instinct prompted him to keep his suspicions to himself. He gave the police officer a disarming smile.

"Well, do you think you would be

able to give any description if a man had dropped on you from out of the blue?"

"Spose not," admitted the constable. "But might I inquire what you were doing walking along the pavement just at that time?"

His lordship nearly exploded afresh. "What the devil do you think he was doing?" he rapped. "It's a public highway."

"Exactly, sir," said the officer stubbornly. "But it's a question my inspector will put to this gentleman, anyway."

"That's all right, officer," said Nobby. "I was actually on my way to see his lordship. I've a letter from Sandy, sir," he added for the benefit of Lord Weatherstone.

As he spoke Nobby drew a letter from his pocket and handed it over. His lordship put it into his own pocket without troubling to open it.

"Well, my lad, now that you are here perhaps you will honour me by taking dinner." He caught sight of the waiting servants, who still stood about like a male chorus in a revue. "Get out of it! Serve dinner—at once!"

The chorus bowed and made itself scarce. The constable returned his book to his pocket, squared his shoulders, and was ushered to the telephone by the outraged, elderly butler. And while four plain-clothes men from the police station hunted for clues and found them not, young Nobby joined his lordship at dinner.

(Now look out for next Saturday's MAGNET and further exciting chapters of this powerful story, chums!)



**COME INTO
THE OFFICE, BOYS!**

WELL, chums, it is three weeks now since I first made the announcement concerning our stupendous **FREE GIFT OFFER** of a 32-PAGE ATLAS in full colours simply for collecting eight coupons. If you have been getting the MAGNET regularly since then you should now have three coupons towards your collection. To qualify for this wonderful free gift you must collect another five coupons by the time the scheme ends—which is three weeks hence. Three of these coupons you will get from the next three issues of the MAGNET while the remaining two can be obtained by purchasing copies of our companion papers, "Gem," or "Modern Boy"—both of which are participating in this great scheme. The point to remember is this: That to become the proud possessor of one of these splendid Atlases you must collect eight coupons, taken either from MAGNET, "Gem," or "Modern Boy." If you have not

already started collecting these coupons do so now, for this is an offer no boy can afford to miss. Do your chums a good turn by telling them all about this wonderful free gift offer. They'll thank you for the tip.

By the way, I strongly recommend all "Magnetites" to read "Smuggled to School!" the topping, long, complete school yarn of the chums of St. Jim's which appears in this week's "Gem." Tom Merry & Co. are the smugglers, and a weird and wonderful character in 'Erbert Rags is the smuggled one. Sensation follows sensation in this spanking school story by Martin Chifford. Get a copy of the "Gem" to-day You'll thoroughly enjoy its contents and, incidentally, be able to add another "Atlas" coupon to your collection.

There's a rattling fine school yarn in store for you next week, chums, by Frank Richards. It's entitled:

"THE SCHOOLBOY IMPERSONATOR!"

and the title alone should assure you of something extra good. All your favourite characters play prominent parts in this magnificent story, which contains an ideal mixture of humour and thrills. Frank Richards' stories of Grimslade School now appearing in the "Ranger" are proving a great "hit." Why not sample one? Hedley Scott seems to be gaining more popularity with every story he writes. Gee, you'll enjoy his next chapters of "Nobby, the 'Shooting Star'!"—I did. The issue of the "Greyfriars Herald" for next week is well up to standard, too. Order your copy of the MAGNET early and thus make sure of adding another coupon to your collection.

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Magnet 18/3/33

YOUR EDITOR.
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,309.

POPPER'S UNPOPULAR PRIZE!

(Continued from page 25.)

Mossoo's made a mistake!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm sure that my paper was the best of the lot! It stands to reason that a paper written by a French chap—"

"What?"

"I—I—I mean—"

"What do you mean, Bunter?"

"Oh! Nothing!" gasped Bunter.

"But—"

"Silence!" barked Mr. Quelch.

Bunter sat silent, blinking, his fat brain almost in a whirl. Something had gone wrong, somehow. Mossoo restarted after the interval.

"All ze ozzer papers, excepting vun, take fifty marks or more!" he announced, and there was a gasp of relief in the Remove.

"Good old Mossoo!" chuckled Bob.

"Good old French bean!" grinned the Bounder.

The Remove grinned cheerfully. Whoppings and detentions faded from their minds! But for the presence of Mr. Quelch they would have given Mossoo three cheers!

"But zere is one paper zat take no marks at all!" added Mossoo.

There was a buzz of interest. Every Remove wanted to know who was the unfortunate fellow who had scored no marks at all!

"Buntair—"

"Oh lor'!"

"Buntair take no marks at all; and I leave him to you, Monsieur Quelch."

"Quite so!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter sat blinking! This really seemed too awful to be true! Like a fellow in a dream; or, rather, in a nightmare, the fat Owl sat and watched the rest of the proceedings. To each of the five prize-winners a pound note was handed, much to their satisfaction. Then the Remove was dismissed—with the exception of the hapless Owl.

"You will follow me, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch.

Taking Bunter's paper in his hand, Mr. Quelch rustled away to the Head's study, with a dismal fat junior at his heels.

What it all meant Bunter's fat brain could not grasp!

He followed Mr. Quelch into the Head's study. Dr. Locke laid down his pen, and gave the Remove master an inquiring look.

"I have a somewhat serious matter to report to you, sir!" said Mr. Quelch.

"An examination for a prize has taken place in my Form; and this boy, Bunter, has been guilty of nefarious trickery!"

Bunter's fat knees knocked together.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"What—"

"Here is the paper, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "Kindly glance at it! That paper was handed in by Bunter, and signed by him, as his own work."

Dr. Locke glanced at the paper. He gave a start of surprise. Then his brow grew grim.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated again.

"This boy, sir, has had the audacity, the effrontery, to pass off that composition as his own, or, rather, to endeavour to do so," said Mr. Quelch. "With a stupidity equal to his rascality, he appears not to have known that it would be recognised as a section of the preface to the 'Henriade,' written two hundred years ago by the author of the poem."

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "Such stupidity—and such unscrupulousness—"

"I do not think, sir, that a mere caning will meet this case!" said Mr. Quelch. "I suggest that a flogging—"

"I entirely agree!" said the Head.

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter did not agree! But Bunter was not consulted in the matter! Dr. Locke rose and sorted out his birch. And then—

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What on earth's that?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in the quad.

"That" was a fearful yell from the Head's study.

Fellows in the quad listened and stared.

Yell after yell floated from the Head's study window.

"That's Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "My hat! What a row!"

Yell followed yell! Evidently William George Bunter was going through it!

There was rather a crowd in Study No. 1 at tea-time. Harry Wharton's share of the Popper Prize had been nobly expended in a study spread. The Famous Five were there, and Bolsover major and Dupont—now the best of friends again—and five or six other fellows.

The cheery talk in the study was interrupted by a deep groan from the

passage, and a woeful face looked in at the door, and two woeful eyes blinked through a pair of big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows— Wow!" groaned Billy Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ow! Wow! I've been flogged!" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows— wow! The Head laid it on like—like—like beating a—wow!—carpet! Ow! It's all that beast Dupont's fault! Wow!"

"Mon Dieu! How is zat?" ejaculated Nap, in astonishment.

"Ow! Beast! That paper was a spoof!" groaned Bunter. "I thought you had made it up for Bolsover, and it turned out that it was only copied from the preface to the rotten book—wow! And Mossoo knew it—wow!—and Quelch knew it—ow!—and the Head knew it—yow—ow! I thought I was going to bag the Popper Prize with it instead of Bolsover, and—ow!—all I've bagged is a whopping—ow!"

For a moment the tea-party in Study No. 1 stared blankly at Billy Bunter. Then, as they understood, they burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Wow! I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you bagged that paper!" roared Bolsover major. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"So zat vas vat became of him?" gurgled Dupont. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, for goodness' sake don't cackle!" groaned Bunter. "I've been done! How was I to know that that beast Nap was spoofing that other beast Bolsover with that beastly paper?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, if—if I'd won the Popper Prize, I was going to stand you a spread. So—so, as you're standing a spread, I don't mind if I join you—"

Billy Bunter rolled in hopefully.

The next moment he rolled out again. The door slammed on Bunter, and he groaned his way down the Remove passage! The way of the transgressor was hard, and from the bottom of his fat heart Billy Bunter repented him of his nefarious attempt to bag the Popper Prize!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Saturday's MAGNET and another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "THE SCHOOLBOY IMPERSONATOR!" It's one of Frank Richards' specials, chums! Look out also for another "Free 'Atlas' Offer" Coupon, value five points.)



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COAKER'S HEALTH
Anxious inquirers after Coaker's health, following on his sudden descent of the Remove stairs yesterday (assisted by a dozen Remove boots), are hereby informed that he is quite himself again. Coaker is so full of "bounce" that he can stand any amount of this treatment!

THE NEW
Greyfriars Herald
EXTRA GOOD EDITION
No. 24 (New Series).
EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.
March 18th, 1933

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AS OTHERS SEE THEM

What I Think of Tom Dutton
By Micky Desmond

It's meself that would be after feeling sorry for anyone that's hard of hearing, but begorrah!—it's meself that feels more sorry for meself when I start talking to Tom Dutton.
Sure, and you'd think a fellow who couldn't hear what you said to him at all at all would be after using his reason to make up what he lacked. But the way Dutton uses his reason is more unreasonable than Barney's bull!

Says I to the spalpeen the other day: "Sure, and it's a lovely morning!" What should he turn round to me and say: "Warning, indeed! And who's you to be warning me? For two pins I'd give you a punch on the nose—without warning!"

"Sure, and you've misunderstood me," I says. "I was just saying it was nice weather."
Dutton: "Oh, my fiddle's like leather, is it?" smorts like.
Can you feel this?
With which words he ups with his fist and gives me a tap on the chin!

What would you be after saying you could do with a fellow like that? Naturally, I'm after him, and plants meself in front of him before I'd get far behind.

"Before I dot your eye for you I'm going to give you an explanation!" I yells.
Dutton glances.
"You think you're above my station, do you?" he yells back. "I'll jolly soon show you I'm a cut above you at boxing, anyway!"

And the spalpeen squares up for a scrap, and for about two minutes we fight like Kilkenny cats. Sure, and if it hadn't been that he gave me the knock-out, I should have won that scrap easily!

Well, if you expect me to say after that that Dutton's the broth of a boy and I like him a lot, it's yourself that's going to be wrong entirely. Dutton's handiwork's a bigger handiwork to himself than to others, I'll admit; but, at the same time, it's a bigger handiwork to others than it is to himself.

It's meself that would be after hoping I'd made meself clear!

(Now we're going round with a megaphone to get Dutton to write a reply for next week. If he doesn't make Mickey's hair stand on end, we'll cut the giddy megaphone!—Ed.)

Fearful Crime Foreseen

Conjuror to Pay Penalty

The lifeless body of a well-known conjurer will shortly be found lying around in a quiet corner of Greyfriars. The body will be generally recognized as that of Oliver Kippis of the Remove.

For this ghastly tragedy you can blame an innocent trick performed by that celebrated sleight-of-hand merchant. He was demonstrating scenes of his latest wizardry in the Regent the other evening, and, in accordance with a quite common practice of his, asked for the loan of a tea-stilling note.

Bolsover was the Christmas



"Well, now that you've seen me burn it, kindly look in your trousers pocket and you will find the note entirely unharmed!" smiled Kippis.

Bolsover plunged a hand into his trousers pocket, and drew out a slip of paper. But instead of a banknote the fellow found themselves gazing at a conjurer's imitation note.

Kippis looked at it. He blinched. He rubbed his eyes. "M-m-my hat!" he cried. "Something wrong?" asked Bolsover.

"Oh, erkey! I should just think so! I must have set light to the genuine note! That's an imitation note you've got there!"

Bolsover roared. "Well, that's what I call funny!" he said. "That means you'll have to make it good out of your own pocket then! Ha, ha, ha!"

Kippis rubbed his chin rather nervously.

"I'm—I'm afraid that's impossible!" he stammered. "You see, I've spent all my pocket-money for the rest of the term on conjuring, and the installment system!"

Bolsver stopped laughing. "You—you spluttered."

Then he made a rush. Kippis hasn't been seen since, and we're told he's in hiding. But Bolsver will get him, mark our words! The lifeless body of a well-known conjurer will be found lying around in a quiet corner of Greyfriars all right, before long!

Residents in the Fifth Passage are warned that an earthquake may be expected shortly. Coaker says he's going to put his foot promptly consumed.

TABLE HOCKEY FINAL SENSATION

League Newcomers Lick Cracks

The Final of the Table Hockey Championship, played in Hall this week, provided a staggering sensation, Bolsover's Bulls a team new to the League. This season, beating the Famous Five by 3 goals to nil.

From the start it was obvious that Bolsover's Bulls lacked in defence. But what they lacked in that direction they made up for in brute force. Leg-break Theory, Body-line Shooting and Rabbit Punching were freely indulged in, and whenever the Bolsover goal was threatened the defenders used their hockey-sticks with telling effect on their opponents' nappies!

Alonso Todd the referee, made a feeble protest on one or two occasions, but he half-Bolsover disposed of his objections by leading him away from the table and informing him that any more protests would result in his being pulverised and sent back to Uncle Benjamin in little pieces!

Interviewed after the game, Wharton said he had no wish to offer excuses, but they preferred to lose the game rather than lose their lives!

Bolsover said that his Bulls were proud to have won a clean and sporting game on their merits by fair and sportsmanlike means, and he hoped that Greyfriars would recognise them as a great scientific team who would add lustre to the sport.

HOT JAZZERS' WHOOPEE PROGRAMME

Fans Cheer Rake's Crooners

Something new in the entertainment line was provided in the Rag on Wednesday evening when Dick Rake's Crooning Quartette gave a whoopee programme that sent a frenzied audience into ecstasies.

The quartette consists of Rake, Morgan, Wibley, and Russell, and when we tell you we defy any other four on earth to equal their performance, you'll get a faint idea of what we thought of the show! Great wasn't the word for it; it was stupendous, and then some!

What a gifted lot these hot-jazzing crooners are! When they let fly with a top-note, Chalmers grasps his teeth with rage; when a "hot" syncopated number leaves their twisted lips, Jack Hylton breaks his button and buries his head in a bucket of fire-extinguishing sand out of sheer jealousy!

The beauty of their show is that they invent all the tunes themselves—and what tunes! The Rag fell for them with a will; that was heard on the other side of Courtfield.

Stomp! fished the fans on their feet, kicking over the chairs in their wild excitement. "Band Over Take Six Blues" set the whole room sobbing with its plaintive meaning and heart-rending melancholy. "Easter Holiday's Jazz" got a delirious audience rocking and tapping, and raising the roof with the chorus!

It's only fair to mention that not everybody is so enthusiastic as we are our- selves. Wingate looked in



half-way through the show to ask who was torturing a cat, and Walker is said to have fainted in his study under the impression that a gang of dangerous mental patients had escaped and were holding a jamboree prior to indulging in a general massacre.

But after all, they're only seniors. Critics may sneer, anyway, highbrows may scorn, and lofty Sixth-Formers may nominate.

Thirty Third-Formers simultaneously yelled out their nominations. Fitzgerald patiently pointed out that since there were definite limits to his powers of memory, it would be as well if the nominations were made one at a time. He called on George Tubb to make the first nomination.

Tubb's nomination was George Tubb. After that, Bolter nominated Bolter, Conrad nominated Conrad, Paget nominated Paget, Bolsover minor nominated Bolsover minor, Wingate minor nominated Wingate minor, and Lunn nominated Lunn!

And so it went on. Altogether there were thirty nominations; and in each case the nominator nominated himself!

"Look here, you silly young asses," said Fitzgerald, when he had got all the names on paper. "I hope it's distinctly understood by all of you that you each have one vote and one vote only. If it isn't—"

"That's all right, Fitzgerald," said Tubb. "We're all clear on that."

"Right: then we'll start the voting, which will be by show of hands. Will all those who are voting for Tubb kindly hold up one hand?"

(One hand went up. It was Tubb's.)

"Same applies to Bolter," said Fitzgerald.

(One hand went up for Bolter. It was Bolter's.)

Well, we're not proposing to turn the "Greyfriars Herald" into a Third Form directory this week, so we won't weary you with a full account of the peculiar election. It's sufficient to say, anyway, that every voter present voted for himself, with the possible exception of those who had the casting vote.

In view of the deadlock he awarded this to Tubb, who was there-upon declared the winner of the election by a majority of one over every other candidate! And that was that!

We understand that the political differences in the Third which led to the most extraordinary election on record have now been settled, and the Third are now united under Tubb's leadership.

We wish you joy in your task, young Tubb!

THIRTY CANDIDATES DEAD-HEAT

Third Form Election Result

The election for a new captain of the Third, which took place amid scenes of wild excitement and enthusiasm in the Third Form Room last night, resulted in the most amazing dead-heat ever known in the history of elections!

Thirty Third-Formers turned up to vote. Fitzgerald of the Fifth, who presided, succeeded in securing enough order to enable the voice to be heard after about half an hour, and then proceeded to ask for nominations.

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'Lonzy's Little Letters

Dear Editor.—The tendency to ornatecapious among juveniles, even of the mental ability of such juveniles as my Cousin Peter, who may be termed embryonic juriconsults, while possibly symptomatic, is nevertheless lamentable. For example, the utilisation of the superlative "blow" as a substitute for "blow" is to me personally a deplorable terminology, and I regret to see it appearing in your column on the sensitive gymnasium.

To proceed to a slight amplification on complimentary lines—

(Sorry, Lonzy, but the printers have threatened to go on strike if we carry on beyond this point!—We know you take exception to the use of slang words, Lonzy, but they're more to the point than your long wind-up ones, any day.—Ed.)

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

Dicky Nugent's Weekly Wisdom

An Italian schoolmaster recently called on the Head. He said he had more artists and poets among his boys than we had in the whole of England because Italian boys were more romantic.

"Well, he's jolly well welcome to em, anyway. If someone'll lend me the fate, I'll go to romantic him off!"

SIMPLE

Follows often ask us the meaning of those mysterious letters "O.Z.A.C." which sometimes appear after William Foster's name.

"Owner of a Nasty 'Aching Cough," of course!"

The station bank at Farnhale has been on duty for 25 years— and the engine sweat that Dobbin, the horse, has pulled it all that time.

One of the things Bunter has never done is to lurch his legs without bonking his knees. And the engine sweat that Dobbin, the horse, has pulled it all that time.

The Girl House girls have a strong hockey eleven, and the Remove game is a recent friendly.

At a high-fiving contest open to all the junior school, H. Vernon-Smith carried off the trophy—a silver cup.

William Wibley states that he would like a broadcast artist, but Mr. Quelch thinks he should stick to his studies a little longer.

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

We say that Mr. Lazarus, of Courtfield, whose collection of antique china ornaments is so famous, owns the ugliest mug in the district. We always thought Bolsover major had that distinction!