

GRAND FREE GIFTS COMING SOON—See Inside.

The MAGNET 2^D





Come Into The Office, Boys!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd. Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

THE other day I had a letter from a staunch MAGNETTE living down Torquay way telling me that I am always planning pleasant surprises for my readers! He's right, and just at this moment I have finished planning yet another first-class, gilt-edged, top-hole surprise for you fellows. That it will cause a great sensation I'm thoroughly convinced; that it will please every present reader is a certainty.

You will call to mind my words of last December that I had some good things up my sleeve for 1933. That's true—but the "best of the good things" I'm keeping a secret until next week. Don't miss my important announcement then, as it will affect every single one of you. In the meantime, BROADCAST THE GOOD NEWS that something extra-good and extra-big is on the way to MAGNET readers.

THERE is still adventure to be had in the world—and still buried treasure to be found! For instance, how would you like to pick up

800 PRICELESS EMERALDS?

That's what a young explorer and archaeologist has just found in Egypt! "Some" find, eh? And with them he found jewellery set with garnets and carnelians—a hoard worth untold wealth! He dug them up in Egypt, from the ruins of Cleopatra's summer palace, near Alexandria. And these jewels are believed to have belonged to Cleopatra herself, 1,983 years ago! For all those centuries they have remained buried under the ruins of the ancient palace.

At one time there must have been vast treasures buried in Egypt, but successive bands of robbers throughout the ages have taken most of them. Even so, the amount of wealth which still remains to be discovered there must be enormous.

There is another part of the world where vast hoards of treasure are said to be still hidden, and that is in the Republic of Panama, in Central America. A tribe, known as the San Blas Indians undoubtedly possess much gold, and the place from which they get it has remained a secret. But it is believed that it is

THE BURIED WEALTH OF BUCCANEERS,

which was hidden in Panama in the days of warfare on the Spanish Main. The San Blas Indians are very hospitable—especially to Englishmen—but they will never reveal the secret of where they obtain their gold! In fact, strangers who visit their territory are always conducted to the borders at sunset, and not allowed to remain during the hours of darkness, lest the secret of the gold hoard should become known.

Their friendship with the English dates back to the days of the buccaneers, for the San Blas Indians resisted the efforts of the Spaniards to colonize their country, and as the buccaneers were the enemies of Spain they were always sure of a welcome in the San Blas districts. The Indians didn't do so badly out of that friendship if, as a result, they now possess the buried treasure hidden by Sir Henry Morgan and his merry men!

Ready for a yarn? This one has been sent in by Clifford Musk, of 159, Croydon Road, Anerley, S.E.20, who gets a pen-knife for it:

Old Lady (watching revolving light of lighthouse):



"How patient sailors must be!"

Coastguard:



"In what way, ma'am?"

Old Lady:

"Well, they must be. The wind has blown out that light six times, but still they keep on lighting it!"

NOW FOR SOME RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

which I have to pass on to my readers: The Publisher of Longfellow's Poems? (K. E., No Address).—As these poems are now out of copyright anyone may publish them. You can get a complete volume of them for a shilling or two at any good booksellers.

A "Boys' Friend Library" Query (V. R., of Nantwich).—No. 550 of the "Boys' Friend Library" was published in January, 1921.

National Anthems of the World (C. Rice, of London).—It is impossible to state exactly how many National Anthems there are in the world. Every country has one, and even semi-civilised and barbaric tribes have their "chants," which are the same as a National Anthem.

To Join the Grenadier Guards (J. B., of Cosham).—Write to the Recruiting Office, The War Office, Whitehall, S.W.1, for all particulars of how to join this and other regiments.

Several Queries from a "Staunch 'Magnetite'" (No Address).—Billy Bunter often uses his ventriloquism to get out of scrapes, but he is such an arrant idiot that he doesn't think about it sometimes! (2) Don't worry if you do look younger than your age—you'll be pleased about it later on! (3) Youths should not smoke until they are fully grown. It might have an effect upon their growth. Don't take chances!

A Job on a Rubber Plantation ("Interested Reader," of Cambridge).—Write direct to the head offices of the company you prefer. Java plantations are generally

owned by Dutch firms. The Crown Agents for the Colonies, 4, Millbank, Westminster, S.W.1, may be able to give you information concerning rubber plantations in British colonies.

A Film Studio Inquiry (A. W. J., of Peckham).—Shepherd's Bush station is the nearest to the Gaumont-British studios, and trams and buses pass the end of the street in which it is situated. Elstree Studios (which are really at Boreham Wood) are reached by rail from Moorgate, St. Pancras, or King's Cross. It is not easy to get permission to visit the studios unless you have influence. Apply direct to the companies using the studios.

Joining the Army (F. C., of Horsham).—Weak eyesight will probably debar you. Ask at your local post office for a pamphlet giving particulars.

By the way, will readers please remember that I cannot answer their queries in the following week's issue? As I have explained before, the MAGNET goes to press several weeks before it is on sale, and therefore a few weeks must elapse before a printed reply can appear. I am always ready to send a reply by post if it is required urgently, providing a stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Where answers are of interest to many readers, however, I much prefer to answer them on this page.

THERE is just space to answer one more query, which comes from

ONE OF MY GIRL READERS.

At least, I think she is a girl reader, because she wants to know how to "slim"! There's only one way to do this without interfering with one's health, and that is to take regular exercise, and to attend strictly to one's diet. Plenty of fresh fruit should be taken, and lots of orange juice. Chocolates and sweets generally are fattening, so my fair reader will have to avoid these. Hard luck—but there it is!

In reply to her other query regarding promoting the growth of hair and eyebrows, coconut butter is said to be a useful thing for this purpose.

Limericks and jokes are still rolling in. There is no lack of budding poets amongst you fellows. Here's another prizewinner—this time from: Jack Crawford, 3, Hares Mount, Shepherd's Lane, Leeds, who gets a wallet for his winning effort.

Eavesdropping is Bunter's great sport: It's an art that he's never been taught.

At keyholes he'll stand,
For he's an "old hand,"
And I warrant he rarely gets caught!

And now let us see what is in store for next week!

Frank Richards "kicks off" with

"GREYFRIARS CHUMS AFLOAT!"

a yarn that you'll enjoy! It's full of fun, and has a rattling fine plot, too. All your favourite characters appear in it, and it is certainly one of the best yarns we have ever published from this versatile author's pen—beg pardon, I mean "typewriter"! And that's saying something, as you know. So don't miss it!

There'll be another fine instalment of our serial, packed with thrills, and some excellent "light relief" in the shape of a "Greyfriars Herald" that would bring a smile to the face of a brass monkey!

YOUR EDITOR.

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

Billy Bunter's Easter Cruise!



BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Baffling Bunter!

EASTER—
 "No!"
 "What?" ejaculated Billy Bunter.
 "No!" repeated Harry Wharton.
 "Wharrer you mean, you silly ass?" demanded Bunter. "I said Easter—"
 "And I said no!"

There was a chuckle from the Co. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh, seemed amused. Billy Bunter, on the other hand, seemed perplexed and irritated.

Greyfriars School was about to break up for the Easter holidays. Harry Wharton & Co. were discussing that very matter when Billy Bunter rolled up to them in the sunny quad. Bunter, evidently, was also thinking of Easter. But the Famous Five of the Remove did not appear to want Bunter's help in the discussion. They did not want Bunter at all.

"I was going to say—"
 Bunter got going again.
 "The speech may be taken as read!" interrupted Wharton.
 "I was going to ask you—"
 "I know! Don't!"
 "Whether you're fixed up for Easter—"
 "I guessed that one!"
 "And whether you'd like me—"
 "No!"
 "Do let a fellow speak! Whether you'd like me to—"
 "No!"
 "The no-fulness," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "is terrific! The esteemed company of the absurd Bunter is not a boonful blessing."
 "You see, old fat man," explained

Bob Cherry kindly, "you're superfluous! You're a bother! You're a nuisance! You're too much of a bad thing! You can only make a party a success by keeping away from it. And the farther away, the better! Do I make myself clear?"

"Beast!"
 "Now run away and play!" said Johnny Bull. "About Easter, you fellows—"

"Give us a rest!" implored Frank

They knew—or at least, they had no doubt—what he was going to say.

Bunter, when the school broke up for holidays, was generally at a loose end. He never seemed keen on going home to that great and glorious mansion, Bunter Court. When the "hols" came, and other fellows considered what they were going to do, Bunter was generally considering whom he was going to do! Nobody seemed to yearn for Bunter's society in the hols.

There were two hundred fellows a, Greyfriars; and of these one hundred and ninety-nine found no pleasure whatever in the fascinating society of W. G. Bunter.

Bunter had spent the Christmas vacation at Wharton Lodge. He had not made himself popular there. Instead of longing to see him there again, Harry Wharton was determined that he wouldn't! So that was that!

It was, therefore, quite unnecessary to listen to what Bunter had to say; and as he seemed bent on saying it, the Famous Five turned round and walked off. Bunter was left blinking at a row of five backs, through his big spectacles, with a wrathful blink.

"I say, you fellows!" he bawled.
 Ten deaf ears were turned to Bunter. The Famous Five walked on.

Billy Bunter rolled in pursuit. The Famous Five accelerated. Bunter broke into a trot. Grinning, the Famous Five broke into a trot also. They trotted, grinning, across the quad, with the fat junior panting in the rear.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter, breathlessly.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Will you stop, you silly chumps?" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,312.

Billy Bunter's doing the grand: he's inviting Harry Wharton & Co. aboard his cousin's wonderful yacht—for a free Easter cruise! As usual, however, there's a catch in the artful Bunter's invitation, but the Greyfriars Chums only discover the catch when it's too late!

Nugent, as Bunter's mouth opened again.

"Look here—" roared Bunter.
 "About Easter," said Harry Wharton, turning a deaf ear to the fat Owl of the Remove. "It's settled that wherever we go, we all go together! We've got to fix it up—"

"Will you let a fellow speak?" bawled

Bunter. "No!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

So far as the Famous Five could see, it was unnecessary for Bunter to speak.

wanted to say— Oh, I'm out of breath!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter put on a spurt.

The Famous Five put on a little more speed. They turned into the path under the old elms at a rapid trot. Bunter raced after them, his little fat legs fairly flashing. Bob Cherry glanced over his shoulder.

"My hat! He's putting it on! Go it!"

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

It seemed quite a merry jest to the chums of the Remove to give the fat and breathless Owl a run. Sprinting was not in Billy Bunter's line at all. He had too much weight to carry. He gasped and he panted, he puffed and he blew, as he pursued the chuckling juniors. They were prepared to keep up this game as long as Bunter did. It was quite an entertainment.

"Oooh!" panted Bunter. "Groogh! I say, you fellows— Oooh! You beasts—I mean, dear old chaps— Wooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked back at the fat and panting Owl as they ran, and laughed merrily. Unluckily, they all looked back at the same moment, and as a natural result they did not see a fellow standing in the path under the elms ahead of them.

That fellow was Fisher T. Fish, of the Remove—and he did not see them coming.

Fisher T. Fish had a little account-book in his hand, and his sharp, narrow eyes were fixed on a column of figures in that book, with deep attention.

Fishy was going through his accounts for the term—and there was a halfpenny he could not trace—a halfpenny missing! What had become of that halfpenny the American junior did not know; but he was going to know, if he burst a boiler over it! It was unlikely that he had lost it—impossible that he could have given it away—and his keen, cute, spry brain was concentrated on the problem of what had become of it.

Thus it was that Fisher T. Fish did not see the Famous Five come racing up the path under the elms.

He remained in blissful ignorance of their approach—till they crashed!

It was some crash!

"Jerusalem crickets!" yelled Fisher T. Fish, as he went spinning, his account-book flying in one direction, his pencil in another, and his hat in a third.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton, as he sprawled.

Fishy sprawled first—and Wharton sprawled over him. Unable to stop in time, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull added themselves to the heap. Nugent and Hurree Singh just missed it, swerving to right and left. But Billy Bunter did not miss it. Coming on like steam, the Owl of the Remove crashed before he knew what was happening.

"Oh crickey!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh lor!"

"Ow!" came in agonised tones from Fisher T. Fish, at the bottom of the pile. "Aw! Gerroff! Carry me home to die! I guess I'll make potato-scrappings of you! Ooooooooooooooh!"

"I say, you fellows— Wow—wow!" spluttered Bunter.

Billy Bunter scrambled wildly up. He rested a fat knee on Bob Cherry's neck, and a fat hand in Johnny Bull's eye, and heaved himself up. There was a simultaneous howl from Bob and Johnny.

Bunter staggered against an elm, winded. Wharton and Bob and

Johnny Bull picked themselves up, breathless. Fisher T. Fish lay extended where he had fallen, gurgling. All the wind had been knocked out of Fishy's bony person. He gasped and gurgled and guggled.

"Aw! Wake snakes and walk chalks! Wow! What the Abraham Lincoln do you guys figure you're up to? Ow! Groogh! Ooooooh! Can't you jays see where you're running? Oooh!"

"What the thump did you get in the way for?" gasped Bob.

"Oooh! You pie-faced piccan— Wooh!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. He sat up, spluttering. "Oh, Jerusalem crickets! Wooh!"

"It's all Bunter's fault," said Frank Nugent. "Let's bump Bunter!"

"Good egg!"

"I say, you fellows—" yelled Bunter.

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat on the path and roared.

"Ow! Beasts! Now I won't take you on an Easter yachting cruise, so there! Beasts!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Surprising If True!

WHAT! Five voices in unison uttered that astonished ejaculation.

The Famous Five had been about to

**Something
Extra-Good in
FREE GIFTS
Coming Shortly
Watch Out for Further
Particulars!**

pursue the even tenor of their way. But they stopped. They stared at Bunter. They were quite astonished. They had taken it for granted that Bunter, as usual, was seeking for a victim to "plant" himself upon for the holidays. Knowing their Bunter as they did, how could they have doubted it?

But it appeared that they had taken too much for granted. For once—apparently—William George Bunter was not on the make!

"Take us—"

"A yachting cruise—"

"For Easter!"

"My hat!"

"Gammon!"

"Ow! Give a fellow a hand up!" gasped Bunter. "I'm w-w-winded! If this is how you thank a fellow—ow!—for inviting you to a splendid yachting cruise—groogh!—I can only say—oooooooooh!"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry grasped the fat Owl by either fat arm and heaved him to his feet. Fisher T. Fish still sat and spluttered. But nobody heeded Fishy! Bunter was the centre of attraction. Bunter had succeeded in astonishing the natives!

He blinked at the staring five through his big spectacles with a reproachful blink.

"I say, you fellows, I mean it! If you'd let a fellow speak—ow! What did you cut off for when I was just

going to ask you—ow!—to join me in a yachting cruise for the vac? Wow! Bumping a fellow—ow! I've a jolly good mind not to take you now. Ow!"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," he said, "if Bunter's got a yacht up his sleeve, Bunter's a man to be encouraged. I always liked Bunter—if he's got a yacht for Easter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows, listen to a chap! I've got the yacht all right! I want you fellows to join me in a cruise. Splendid steam-yacht—latest thing—you'll enjoy yourselves no end. Trip to the Mediterranean, and all that! What?"

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull tersely.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"You silly ass!" said Harry Wharton. "Are you talking out of the back of your fat neck, or what?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"The yachtfulness is probably not terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Ow! I swear!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I've got a pain! Wow! You all-fired, slabsided jays—"

"Shut up, Fishy!"

"I've got a pain!" yelled Fishy, rubbing bony places.

"No objection to your having a pain, if you don't make a row about it! Shut up! Now, Bunter, you ass—" said Harry Wharton.

Snort, from Johnny Bull.

"You silly ass, it's only gammon! You know Bunter!"

"If you call that civil, Bull, when a fellow's inviting you to a splendid and expensive cruise for the Easter holidays, I—"

"Well, where's the jolly old yacht?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"It's coming to Pegg! You'll be able to see it to-morrow!"

"The seefulness is the believefulness!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We can go straight aboard when the school breaks up!" said Bunter. "Make all arrangements beforehand, you know. Splendid accommodation—every fellow will have a separate state-room—best of cookery—grub splendid—I've asked specially about that—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! That's important, of course. You can rely on the grub."

"Well, my hat!" said Harry Wharton blankly. "Is—is—is there really a yacht, you fat piffler, or are you trying to pull our leg, or what?"

"What's the name of the yacht?" grinned Bob.

"The Sea Nymph!" answered Bunter.

"Oh!" said Bob, rather taken aback. He had expected the fat Owl to pause, to invent a name for an imaginary yacht. But the answer came quite pat.

"And whom does it belong to?" asked Nugent.

"My cousin George."

"Who's he?" asked Bob. Bunter's answers came so promptly that the chums of the Remove were almost beginning to believe that there really was a yacht—well as they knew their Bunter!

"Eh! He's Captain Cook!" said Bunter.

"Captain Cook! I've heard of Captain Cook—he discovered the South Sea Islands, or something," grinned Bob.

"Not that Captain Cook, you ass—"

"Oh! Not that one?" chuckled Bob.

"No, you fathead!" My cousin, Captain George Cook! Not on the



Vernon-Smith brought the photograph down with a crash on Bunter's bullet head. The cardboard mount in the centre split, and Bunter's head came through, with quite a surprised expression on the fat face as it emerged. The next moment the Bounder planted a boot on Bunter's tight trousers. "Whooop!" roared the fat junior.

Bunter side of the family," explained the fat Owl. "To tell you the truth, we haven't had a lot to do with the Cooks—it's the Bunter side that's the aristocratic side of the family, you know—"

"Oh crikey!"
 "But Cousin George is all right!" said Bunter. "Not an aristocrat like the Bunters—"

"Phew!"
 "But all right! A splendid chap, in fact! He's asked me for the Easter cruise, and asked me to bring my friends—as many as I like! I thought of you fellows at once."

"Well, my only summer bonnet!" said Harry Wharton blankly. "Blessed if he doesn't sound as if he's telling the truth! Is he?"

"Does he ever?" grunted Johnny Bull. "Well, no; But—"

"You'll see the yacht to-morrow," said Bunter. "It's putting in at Pegg Bay, only a few miles from here, and you can go aboard and look over it, if you like. Will you come?"

Billy Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove quite seriously. They could only blink at him in return. Really, he was taking their breath away.

They had, like all fellows in the Remove, heard a great deal about the wealth and magnificence of the Bunter family. Like other fellows in the Remove, they had not seen any of that wealth and magnificence. They had heard about Bunter Court—but they had seen Bunter Villa! Seen close at hand Bunter Court dwindled to a detached villa! What was the Bunter yacht likely to dwindle to?

Yet the fat Owl seemed in deep earnest. Really, he seemed to be telling

the truth! But that was improbable! The age of miracles was past!

"Will we come?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes, old chap! I'm going to ask some more fellows, too—but I specially want you chaps to come. After all, we're pals, ain't we?"

"But—but is there really a yacht?" stuttered Wharton.

"Haven't I just told you there is?" hooted Bunter.

"Well, yes; but that makes me think there isn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you cheeky rotter—I mean, look here, dear old chap—"

"Oh, cut the gammon!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Can't you fellows see the game? The yacht won't turn up, and then Bunter will propose coming with us, instead of us going with him!"

"Oh," said Harry, "I suppose that's it."

"Of course!" assented Nugent, with a nod. Johnny Bull's explanation seemed the most probable one.

"That's a cert!" said Bob Cherry.

"The certfulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows, if that's what you call pally, when a fellow's asking you on an expensive cruise—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, old fat bean, you see, we don't quite swallow it. The Bunter yacht might turn out to be first cousin to Bunter Court! Chuck it!"

"If you mean that you can't take a fellow's word, Wharton—"

"Yes—that's exactly what I mean, old fat tulip!" assented the captain of the Remove. "I don't know why you're trying to pull our leg—but there's nothing doing, anyhow."

"Beast!"

"Now Bunter's done his funny turn, we—" began Bob.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Chuck it, Bunter!"

"Look here," roared Bunter, "the yacht will be here to-morrow. You'll be able to see it from the dorm window. I want you to come! I want my old pals with me these hols. You see, I want you to enjoy yourselves! Will you come if you see the yacht anchored in Pegg Bay to-morrow?"

"You fat spoofer!" roared Johnny Bull. "There isn't any yacht, and you jolly well know there isn't!"

"That's what you call gratitude for a generous invitation, I suppose!" said Bunter. "Look here, Wharton, you'll believe in the yacht when you see it, I suppose!"

"When!" said Harry, laughing.

"Then you'll come?"

"That's a safe offer; I'll come if there's a yacht!" said the captain of the Remove, with a chuckle.

"Done, then!" said Bunter.

He extracted a grubby little notebook from his pocket, extracted a stump of pencil, and scribbled five names on a grubby page. The Famous Five stared. Bunter was evidently making a list of the guests for the Easter yachting cruise. They wondered for a dizzy moment whether there really was a yacht, and whether there was going to be a cruise.

"That's settled!" said Bunter.

He slipped the notebook back into his pocket and rolled away towards the House, Harry Wharton & Co. stared after him. They could only stare.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Too Particular!

"HEARD?" asked Skinner of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a chortle in

the Rag.

A crowd of fellows were there after tea, and there was evidently some joke on when the Famous Five came in.

"Heard which and what?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Bunter—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And his jolly old yacht—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was quite a roar. The news of Bunter's yacht seemed to have spread and to be causing general hilarity. The Famous Five grinned.

"Oh, we've heard that one!" said Bob. "In fact, we're asked to join in the cruise!"

"You're going?" yelled Vernon-Smith.

"Well, we're not exactly going," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You see, there isn't any yacht. That's a bit of a drawback in a yachting cruise."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter's asking fellows up and down the Form," said Squiff. "Blessed if I can make him out. What's the game?"

"Only bunkum, anyhow!" said the Bounder. "He asked me! He asked me to cash a postal order at the same time. I said 'No' to both."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we've said 'Yes,' if there's a yacht," said Harry Wharton. "I feel quite safe about it."

"Safe as houses!" chuckled Bob.

"It's takin' a risk, dear men," remarked Lord Mauleverer. "If you don't want the vao with Bunter—"

"We jolly well don't!"

"No fear!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific!"

"Then it's takin' a risk," said Mauly, shaking his head. "Bunter's asked me, and I've declined. I'm not takin' any risks."

"Well, if there was a yacht, and Bunter asked me, I'd jolly well go," said Skinner. "But there isn't! It's just gas—rather more gaseous than usual! You jolly well know there isn't a Bunter yacht, Mauly, you ass!"

"Most likely not!" agreed his lordship. "But I'm takin' no risks."

And Mauly shook his head again very seriously. Remote as was the possibility that there really existed a Bunter yacht, there was, as he said, a risk. A fellow who accepted an invitation had to stand by it; a fellow couldn't let a fellow down. And the idea of passing the holidays with Billy Bunter had quite a jarring effect on Mauly's nervous system. He had been there before, so to speak, and knew what it was like.

Harry Wharton's face became grave. Lord Mauleverer was popularly supposed, in the Remove, to be an ass. But Wharton was well aware that his lazy lordship had a lot of common sense and judgment. He realised now that there was, as Mauly said, a risk.

If there really was a yacht, and a cruise to come, no doubt it was very kind of Bunter to ask the chums of the Remove. They were bound, in that case, to thank him very politely for his kind invitation. But they didn't want to accept it. They didn't want the "hols" with Bunter, and certainly not as his guests. As his guests they could hardly tell him what they thought of him, or kick him when he asked for it. And Bunter had to be kicked at times. "Look here, Mauly, you don't think

there's anything in it, surely?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

"Might be!" said Mauleverer.

"Fathead!" said Johnny Bull. "Haven't we heard all about Bunter Court? It turned out to be a villa when we saw it. The Bunter yacht is on the same lines as the Bunter mansion."

"Yaas, but—"

"But what?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Please yourselves, but I'm not takin' any risks!" said Mauly. "The fact is, I rather fancy there's somethin' in it this time."

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

Lord Mauleverer smiled and subsided into an armchair. He was quite accustomed to such rejoinders when he stated an opinion. But it had often transpired that Mauly was right after all. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the jolly old yachtsman!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Billy Bunter rolled into the Rag.

All eyes were turned on Bunter. Whether there was a Bunter yacht or not, the fat Owl had succeeded in awakening general interest in the Form. Billy Bunter's descriptions of the wealth and magnificence of the Bunter tribe were well known, and most of the fellows had no doubt that the Sea Nymph was one more item in a list of imaginary possessions. It was, as Skinner put it, just one more whopper, and a bigger whopper than usual. Nobody was likely to believe in that yacht till he saw it with his own eyes; and even then they were likely rather to think that it was an optical delusion.

Bunter had a large sheet of cardboard under his fat arm as he entered the Rag. It was a mount, with a large photograph on it. Taking no heed of the surprised stares of the juniors, Bunter proceeded to bang a nail in the wall and hang up that photograph.

"What on earth's that?" asked Hazeldene.

Bunter blinked round.

"That's the Sea Nymph," he explained. "I thought you fellows might like to see a picture of my cousin's yacht."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gammon!" snorted Johnny Bull.

There was a rush to look at the picture. Bunter stood aside with a fat smirk on his face. The juniors stared at the photograph. It represented quite a handsome steam-yacht. Under it was the name Sea Nymph.

"Where did you get that, Bunter?" exclaimed Wharton.

"My Cousin George sent it to me," answered Bunter calmly. "It's a photograph of his yacht."

"Oh crickey!"

"Looks a decent old tub, what?" said Bunter complacently. "The fact is, it was built for a nobleman, but he had to sell it to pay his surtax, and George got hold of it, see?"

"He didn't pinch it?" asked Skinner.

"No!" roared Bunter.

"Then it isn't his! Whose is it?" asked Skinner. "They ought to put the name of the owner on the picture."

"It's my cousin, George Cook's—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You spoofing bounder!" exclaimed Johnny Bull indignantly. "I suppose you've bought that photograph at Court-field specially to spoof us!"

"That's it, of course," assented Wharton.

"I guess they never bought that yacht under some thousands," said Fisher T. Fish. "If your Cousin George has got all that dust, Bunter, you can sure

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borrow a bob of him and square that bob you've owed me for whole terms." "You haven't asked me yet, old fat bean!" grinned Skinner.

Bunter shook his head.

"I'm not going to ask you, Skinner."

"I shall miss that cruise!" said Skinner sadly. "What a loss!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, I don't want you, Skinner," explained Bunter. "You've got no money."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Skinner. "Is there really a yacht, and are the Bunter family getting fellows on it to borrow their money? Blessed if that doesn't make it look probable!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors. "Oh, really, Skinner! What I mean is—"

"Well, what do you mean, you fat oyster?" asked Harry Wharton, with a rather sharp look at the Owl of the Remove.

"I—I mean, I don't want fellows like Skinner," stammered Bunter. "You see, you're not much class, Skinner, if you don't mind my mentioning it. I'm getting up a decent sort of party for this cruise, and you would hardly do."

"Why, you cheeky, fat Owl—"

"I have to be a bit particular, you know," said Bunter. "I've stretched a point in asking Smithy—"

"What?" yelled the Bounder, while the other fellows roared.

Bunter blinked at him.

"It's all right, Smithy—I'll take you, if you care to come. As I've said, I'm stretching a point. You've got plenty of money, if you've got no manners, and you'll pass with the rest. Of course, you'll behave yourself a bit better than you do here—not so much of your swank, you know, and none of your loud waist-coats and diamond tiepins, and all that—"

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

The Bounder looked at Bunter. His face was quite a study.

"Isn't he nice?" said Peter Todd. "Isn't it a pleasure to listen to him? Go it, Bunter!"

Bunter blinked at Todd.

"Fraid I shall have to leave you out, old chap," he said. "Sorry, and all that, but you're too poor to keep your end up on such a cruise as this is going to be. Hardly up to it socially, if you know what I mean."

Todd's face became as interesting a study as the Bounder's.

"The fact is, I've got to be a bit particular whom I ask," explained Bunter. "I can't take more than a dozen fellows, and George wants a decent lot—he's made a point of that. So you see—"

Herbert Vernon-Smith made a stride forward. He grabbed down the big photograph from the wall. Bunter gave a yell.

"Here, let that alone! Give that to me, you beast!"

"Here it is!" snapped Smithy.

He lifted it with both hands, and gave it to Bunter—with a crash on his bullet head. It was a terrific crash, and it split the cardboard mount in the centre. Bunter's head came through, with quite a surprised expression on the fat face as it emerged.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—Wow!"

Billy Bunter stood with the cardboard mount round his fat neck like a necklace, and the shattered photograph of the Sea Nymph straggling round his fat features. He stood and roared.

He roared still more loudly when the Bounder slewed him round, and planted a boot on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars.

"Whoooop!"

Bunter flew towards the doorway. Toddy and Skinner—fo, reasons unknown to Bunter—rushed after him, and each added a kick. Bunter flew out of the Rag, and there was a bump in the passage outside. A yell of laughter followed him.

"Ow! Wow! Ow!" A fat and furious face blinked in over the necklace of cardboard. "Ow! Beast! I won't take you now, Smithy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder made a jump towards the door. Bunter made a jump along the passage, and vanished, leaving the Rag in a roar.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Whose Yacht?

"GREAT Scott!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"What—"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

Bob Cherry fairly yelled.

It was morning, and the rising-bell had ceased to clang. All the Remove had turned out of bed, excepting Billy Bunter, who was snatching a few extra minutes. Bunter often got a few extra

for a yacht to put in there. It might have been merely a coincidence that one was there that morning. But it was more than a coincidence. For this yacht, unmistakably, was the one depicted in the photograph Bunter had hung up in the Rag, and which the Bounder had burst over his head. It was the Sea Nymph, and there was no mistake about it!

"What the thump!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, staring up at the junior at the window. "Ship on fire, or what?"

"The yacht!" gasped Bob.

"The what?"

"The yacht—the Sea Nymph!"

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"What's the good of trying to pull our leg, fathead?"

"Chuck it!"

"I tell you it's there!" roared Bob, in great excitement. "Come and look!"

There was a rush of half-dressed juniors to the windows. They clambered up in a crowd, and stared. There was the yacht!

Harry Wharton rubbed his eyes, as if he doubted their evidence.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated.

"It—it—it—it's a yacht!" stuttered Nugent.

"Might be any old yacht!" said Skinner.

"It's the one in the photograph!" said Bob. "That's a cert."

"The certfulness is terrific!"

"It's the jolly old Sea Nymph!" said Johnny Bull blankly. "How could Bunter have known it was coming here to-day?"

"Well, if it's really his cousin's yacht, dear men—" drawled Lord Mauleverer,

"Rot!"

"The rotfulness is preposterous!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry.

Snore!

"Wake up, you fat slug!"

Snore!

"Turn him out, somebody!"

Bolsover major turned Bunter out. There was a howl as the fat junior landed on the floor in a tangle of bed-clothes.

"Yaroooh! Beast! Wow! I'm not getting up yet! Wow!"

"Here's the jolly old yacht, old fat man!" roared Bob.

"Eh? What about it?" snapped Bunter. "Wharrer you wake me up for, you beast?"

"Don't you want to see your cousin's yacht?" jeered Skinner.

"I'm not going to clamber up to that window to see the thing!" growled Bunter. "I shall see it when I go on board presently, I suppose."

"When!" chuckled Skinner.

"The whenfulness is terrific!"

"But how on earth did Bunter know that that yacht was coming here?" said Harry Wharton, as he resumed dressing.

"Oh, really, Wharton, I had it from my Cousin George—"

"Rats!"

"Easy enough," said Skinner: "I dare say it was in the papers. Movements of ships are reported in the papers. Bunter saw it in the newspaper, of course, and fancied he could spoof us!"

"Why, of course! That's it!"

"That isn't it!" yelled Bunter. "I told you the yacht was coming, and it's come! I shall go on board this afternoon."

"I don't think!" chuckled Skinner.

"As you can't possibly know anybody on board that yacht, even you won't have the nerve to butt in there!"

"I tell you that yacht belongs to my Cousin George!" roared Bunter.

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One of this week's USEFUL PRIZES

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Said Fishy to Cherry one day:
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jay!

I've heard that your feet
Will fill up the street
And block up the traffic each
way!"

GET BUSY ON YOUR EFFORT, CHUM!

minutes in bed by cutting down the time other fellows devoted to washing.

Early as the-hour was, it was bright and sunny, a fine spring morning. And Bob Cherry had clambered up to one of the high windows, which looked seaward, to look out. Bob certainly did not believe in the Bunter yacht, or that that magnificent vessel was going to drop anchor in Pegg Bay. But he thought he would give the bay a "squint," and when he bestowed that squint on it, he was amazed at what he beheld.

He almost fell down from the broad window-shelf in his astonishment. According to Bunter, the Sea Nymph was coming there that day, and might arrive very early. Nobody believed a word of it. But—

"Holy smoke!" gasped Bob.

There, in the rays of the rising sun, was a handsome steam-yacht, at anchor out in the bay, about a quarter of a mile from the old wooden pier opposite the Anchor Inn. Even at the distance it was clearly seen from the high window of the dormitory, across the intervening trees and cliffs. Polished metal-work gleamed back the rising sunlight. Figures, tiny in the distance, could be seen moving on the deck.

The presence of a yacht in Pegg Bay was not surprising—it was not unusual

"You can tell us till you're black in the face, old bean! But you won't get anybody to swallow it!"

"Yah!" snorted Bunter.

The Removites finished dressing, and went down, quite satisfied with Skinner's explanation that Bunter had seen some report of the Sea Nymph's movements in the newspaper, and founded his latest gammon on that. Every man in the Remove seemed to be under-studying Doubting Thomas of ancient times.

The fact was that Bunter's yarns were a little too well known, and the yacht story seemed a little steeper than usual. Obviously the Sea Nymph was a very expensive vessel, and had cost a large sum to build. Even if it had been sold by some hapless nobleman, whom a kind and thoughtful Government was taxing out of existence, still, it must have cost a lot of money to buy. And if the Bunter clan were so well provided with cash, it was odd, to say the least, that none of it ever came so far as Greyfriars School.

Billy Bunter snorted as he rolled out into the quad. It is said that seeing is believing; but now that the fellows had seen the yacht, still they did not believe. They only supposed that Bunter was keeping up his fairy-tale with more than usual impudence.

Two Sixth Form men were walking in the quad—Wingate and Gwynne, who had been down for an early bath. Bunter caught their words as he passed them.

"Topping yacht!" Wingate was saying. "I'd like to be the lucky bargee that owns her."

"Lucky bargee, and no mistake!" assented Gwynne.

"I say!" Bunter halted, and blinked at the great men of the Sixth through his big spectacles. "I say, Wingate, that's my cousin's yacht!"

Wingate and Gwynne came to a halt. They stared at Bunter.

"What did you say, Bunter?" asked the Greyfriars captain.

"That yacht belongs to my Cousin George!"

"Does it?"

"Oh, yes! Look here! I'll take you over her after class, if you like," said Bunter breezily. "I say—Oh lor! Wharrer you up to? Leggo my ears!" shrieked Bunter.

Evidently the Sixth Form men were doubting Thomases, too. Wingate took hold of one of Bunter's fat ears. Gwynne took hold of the other. Both of them pulled—hard. The Owl of the Remove yelled frantically.

"Ow! Leggo! Wow! Whoop!"

Having pulled Bunter's ears, the Sixth Form men walked disdainfully on. Bunter rubbed his ears, and glared after them. He decided not to tell any more Sixth Form men about the Bunter yacht. The result was altogether too painful.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Keeping It Up!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Still keeping it up?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The yacht's still in the bay, Bunter," chuckled Frank Nugent. "Going aboard?"

"Eh? Yes, of course."

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull.

Morning school was over, and Bunter came out of the House and looked for the Famous Five. They smiled as he came up. Somebody's yacht had anchored in Pegg Bay, and Bunter was taking advantage of that fact to bolster up his latest and steepest yarn. That

was how the chums of the Remove looked at it. And they were quite interested to see how long Bunter would keep it up, and what excuse he would make for not going on board.

As they did not believe for one moment that Bunter had any connection whatever with the yacht, or the people on board, he would have to make some excuse, for even Bunter could hardly butt into a strange vessel among strangers. But there was a limit even to Bunter's impudence.

"We've got lots of time to run down to the beach before dinner," said Bunter, blinking at the grinning five. "You fellows coming?"

"Taking us on board?" grinned Bob.

"Yes, old chap. I want to introduce you to my Cousin George, as you're coming on the Easter cruise."

"Doesn't he do it well?" said Bob admiringly. "Wouldn't any fellow, who didn't know him, fancy he was telling the truth?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, will you come?" snapped Bunter. "A boatman will take us off to the yacht for a couple of bob. One of you fellows can pay."

"Yes; I can see myself butting into that yacht!" said Harry Wharton. "What should we say when they asked us who we were, and what the dickens we wanted?"

"My Cousin George will expect me to—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here! I'm going aboard, anyhow! Are you coming or not?" hooted Bunter.

"He's going down to the beach, and he's going to tell us he's been aboard when he comes back," chuckled Bob. "Look here! A walk won't hurt us before dinner. Let's go. It will be frightfully interesting to see what whopper he tells us when we get to the pier."

"Let's," grinned Nugent.

And the Famous Five, laughing, walked out of gates with Bunter. It was quite a pleasant walk through the woods and along the cliffs to Pegg—more enjoyable to Harry Wharton & Co. than to Bunter. Billy Bunter was gasping before he had covered half the distance.

"I say, you fellows, let's stop and rest a bit!" gasped Bunter, at last.

"And turn back," chuckled Bob.

"Is that it?"

"It's coming now," said Johnny Bull.

"No!" hooted Bunter. "Just a few minutes' rest."

"Oh, all right!"

The juniors halted, and Bunter sat on a stile to renew his supply of wind, always rather short. The Famous Five leaned on the stile, smiling. They fully expected that, now they were in sight of the bay, Bunter would find some reason for turning back, after that rest, instead of keeping on. They waited to hear the fib.

Bunter stirred at last.

"Come on, you fellows," he said.

To their surprise he dropped from the stile on the Pegg side. Apparently he was still "keeping it up."

"Follow your leader!" chortled Bob.

"He's putting it off till we get to the pier. What lie are you going to tell, Bunt?"

"Beast!"

Bunter rolled on. The Famous Five sauntered. They were quite willing to walk as far as the pier. That was the limit. Bunter could go no farther than that without going on board the yacht, or walking into the sea. And one seemed as likely as the other to the Famous Five.

Puffing and blowing, the fat Owl arrived on the old wooden pier. There

were plenty of boats for hire, and several men in jerseys glanced in anticipation at the Greyfriars fellows. The Famous Five watched Bunter in great amusement. Now that he had reached the limit they waited to hear what was his excuse for not going aboard the yacht.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Here it comes!" chortled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want a couple of bob for the boatman. I've been disappointed about a postal order."

"You'll be disappointed about two bob, too, old fat man," grunted Johnny Bull.

"So that's the game," grunted Johnny Bull. "We've been brought here to lend Bunter two bob for ginger-pop and buns."

"It's for the boat!" yelled Bunter. "You can pay the boatman yourselves, if you like."

"Done!" said Harry Wharton. "Call a boatman, and tell him to take you out to that yacht, and I'll give him the two bob on the spot."

That, to the juniors, seemed a very safe offer. To their amazement Billy Bunter waved a hand to one of the boatmen, and the man held on to the pier with one hand, and touched his ancient hat with the other.

"Two bob to take me out to that yacht," said Bunter.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Bunter clambered into the boat, the five Removites watching him in astonishment. He blinked back at them.

"You fellows coming?" he demanded.

"Coming? No fear! Moan to say you've really got the nerve to butt into a yacht where you don't know anybody?" yelled Bob.

"You silly ass! I've told you—"

"Rats!"

"The ratfulness is terrific!"

"Yah! You jolly well pay the boatman, then, and see!" snorted Bunter.

He sat down in the stern.

Wharton made a grimace. But what he had said, he had said, and he handed the Pegg boatman the two shillings. The man shoved off from the pier, sat down in his oars, and started pulling for the anchored yacht.

"Well, my hat!" said Nugent, with a whistle. "Has that fat villain really cheek enough to butt in there, just to pull our leg? I suppose they couldn't chuck him into the sea if he did?"

"Rot!" growled Johnny Bull. "He's gone for a row, that's all. He will tell the man to pull back before he reaches the yacht."

"That's it," assented Wharton. "I've been done!"

"The donfulness is terrific!"

Leaning on the wooden rail of the old pier the juniors watched the receding boat. Every moment they expected it to change its course, and pull round the bay, or else back to the pier.

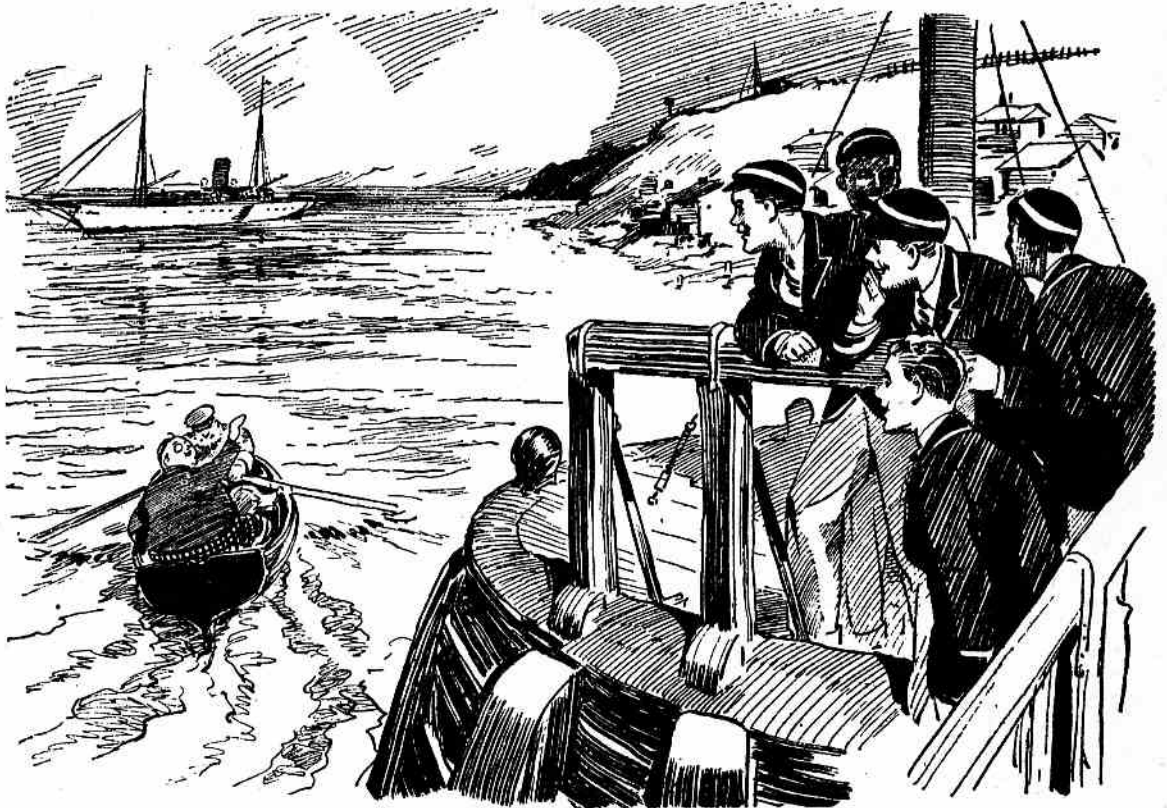
But it did neither. The boatman pulled on steadily, and the boat drew nearer and nearer to the yacht. Now a man in a yachting-cap was seen to lean over the rail, looking towards Bunter. He was too far off for the fellows on the pier to see much of him, but they could see that he had a round, red face, and that he was watching Bunter. They saw him make a gesture with his hand as the boat closed in, whether of welcome or not they could not make out. In more and more surprise they watched.

"My hat! They're putting out the ladder!" exclaimed Bob. "Look!"

"He's going aboard—"

"The cheek!"

"Well, my only Aunt Maria!" ejaculated Wharton, as he watched the boat pull in, hook on, and saw the accommodation-ladder let down for



Bunter clambered into the boat, and the boatman started pulling for the anchored yacht. "Well, my hat!" said Nugent, with a whistle. "Has that fat villain really cheek enough to butt in there, just to pull our leg?" "Rot!" growled Johnny Bull. "He's gone for a row, that's all—he will tell the boatman to pull back before he reaches the yacht!"

Bunter. "Does he really know anybody on that yacht, I wonder?" "They think he's got a message, perhaps," suggested Johnny Bull.

"Yes, that may be it." "Anyhow, there he is—on board!" said Nugent. "If he's spoofing he's jolly well keeping it up to the finish! Of course, he may have pitched some yarn to get on board—he's as full of artful tricks as a monkey. Made out he had a message from somebody, or something."

"If that's so he will be coming back pretty soon."

"You'll see him coming in a minute!" granted Johnny Bull.

The juniors watched. But they did not see Bunter coming in a minute. They did not see him coming at all. The boat pulled off from the yacht, the boatman returning alone. Bunter was staying on the Sea Nymph.

"He—he—he's not coming back!" stammered Bob.

"Coming off in the yacht's boat later," said Johnny Bull.

"That looks as if he knows the people on board."

"I—I suppose it does! More likely he stuffed them somehow!"

Johnny Bull was not going to believe Bunter unless he had to.

The boat pulled in to the pier. The Pegg boatman stood up and called to the juniors. Apparently Bunter had sent a message back.

"The young gent said don't wait for him, sir!"

"Right-ho!"

"Then he's staying there!" said Harry Wharton. "Well, if it's all spoof I'm blessed if I know how he's wangling it. Time we got back, anyhow, or we shall be late for tiffin, and Quelch will bite! Come on!"

The chums of the Remove walked off the pier and took their homeward way to the school. They went in great astonishment. Either Bunter was telling the truth, and there really was a yacht in the Bunter family, or else there was a mystery about it that the juniors could not fathom. It was improbable that there was a yacht in the Bunter family, still more improbable that Bunter was telling the truth. Yet, otherwise, what did it all mean? So far, all the fat Owl's words had been borne out by his actions—they had to admit that. They were still in a state of great astonishment when they arrived at the school and joined the fellows going in to dinner.

"Watched him all the time," said Bob Cherry.

"How on earth did he wangle it?" "Blessed if I know! But they let him on board, and let him stay—must have stood him lunch, too!"

"I can't make it out," said the Bounder. "Anybody ever heard of the Sea Nymph before, or know whom it belongs to?"

Nobody had! Unless it really belonged to Captain Cook, the cousin of William George Bunter, nobody knew anything about the ownership. And nobody believed that, even yet.

"I fancy I can spot it!" said Skinner sagely. "Bunter knows a steward on the yacht, or something of that sort, and the man's taken him on."

"Or a stoker!" suggested the Bounder. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it looks as if he knows somebody there," said Harry Wharton. "Of course, Bunter might know the people, whoever they are. But if there was a yacht in the Bunter family we should have heard of it before. We've heard of the Bunter family mansion, the Bunter money, the Bunter titled relations, the Bunter villa at Cannes, and the Bunter shooting-box in Scotland, and a lot more things, so it stands to reason we should have heard of the Bunter yacht—if any!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "That's it," assented Johnny Bull. "May belong to some City man who knows his pater—his father's in the City. Bunter happened to hear that it was putting in at Pegg, and started a yarn on the strength of it." "Ten to one!" agreed Wharton.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Sammy!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Bunter mi. will know if there's a"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

PLENTRY of fellows noticed that Bunter cut tiffin.

They could hardly help noticing that. It was so very uncommon for Billy Bunter to miss a meal.

When the fellows went out after dinner the fat Owl was not to be seen. He had not returned yet.

Apparently he was still on board the Sea Nymph.

In that case he must have lunched there. It was impossible to imagine that Bunter was cutting out a meal entirely. Missing dinner at the school could only be explained by lunch on the yacht.

A dozen fellows inquired of the Famous Five what had become of Bunter. They stared when they were told.

"On the yacht!" ejaculated Skinner. "You saw him?"

yacht in the Bunter clan! Here, young Bunter!"

Bunter minor, of the Second Form, blinked round at the group of Removites. There was a grin on Sammy Bunter's fat face, a twinkle in the little round eyes behind the big spectacles that made him look so like his major. He came up to the Removites.

"Seen the yacht in Pegg Bay, Sammy?" asked Bob.

And all the fellows looked with inquiring interest at the fat fag. Certainly, if the Sea Nymph was a Bunter yacht Sammy ought to know.

"Yes, I saw it this morning," answered Sammy.

"Ever seen it before?"

"Not that I know of."

"What did I tell you?" granted Johnny Bull.

"You see," went on Sammy calmly, "my Cousin George hasn't had it long. I believe he only bought it last year."

"What?" roared Johnny Bull. "Has Billy been standing you a stick of toffee to back up his yarn?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Sammy, tell the truth, if it's possible for a Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "Is there really a Cousin George?"

"Of course there is, fathead!"

"Does that yacht really belong to him?"

"Of course it does!"

"Is Billy going on a cruise in it this Easter?"

"Of course he is!"

"Are you going?"

"No fear!"

"And why not, if Billy's going?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"George hasn't asked me, for one thing," said Sammy, "and I jolly well don't want to go, for another! He, he, he!"

"I should think you'd be jolly glad to get an Easter cruise for nothing!" said Bob Cherry.

"For nothing?" repeated Sammy. "Eh? Oh, yes! Still, I don't want to go. But Billy's going all right—taking a party, I hear! He, he, he!"

Apparently Sammy seemed to see something funny in the idea of Billy Bunter taking a party for the Easter cruise. He giggled and sniggered, like a fellow in possession of a good joke.

"Well, what's the joke, you young ass?" demanded Bob.

"He, he, he!"

"Gammon, of course," said Johnny Bull. "Bunter guessed that we should ask Sammy about it, and he's fixed it with him to back him up! Kick him!"

"Good egg!"

"Yaroooooh!" roared Sammy, as he was duly kicked; and he departed from the spot in haste.

When the bell rang for class Billy Bunter had not come in. The Remove went into their Form-room, and Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye immediately detected the absence of the fat Owl. It was ten minutes later that Billy Bunter rolled in, puffing and blowing after a walk. The gimlet eye fixed on him at once.

"Bunter!" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir! Sorry I'm late, sir!" said Bunter breezily. "I've had to walk back from Pegg, sir!"

"You were absent from dinner, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir. I lunched with my cousin on his yacht, sir," answered the Owl of the Remove.

The Remove listened and stared. If it was all spoof, Bunter was certainly displaying a remarkable nerve. It was

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not a light matter to pull the majestic leg of Henry Samuel Quelch.

"You lunched——" repeated the Remove master.

"Yes, sir. My cousin's yacht is in Pegg Bay, sir, and he pressed me to stay to lunch when I went off to see him, sir, and I hope you'll excuse me, sir, as I haven't seen my cousin for a long time."

Mr. Quelch looked fixedly at Bunter. He looked as doubtful a doubting Thomas as any fellow in his Form.

He had seen that handsome steam yacht in Pegg Bay. Obviously, it was a very expensive vessel. There were fellows in the Remove whose people had such vessels. Lord Mauleverer had one of his very own. The Bounder's father had one twice as large, that was like a floating hotel. Newland's father had one. But such magnificent possessions were, of course, rare. Anybody might have had a little sailing yacht.

But a handsome, ocean-going steam yacht was quite a different affair. And Mr. Quelch, as Bunter's Form master, had the best of reasons for knowing that the Bunter clan did not roll in wealth. He was aware that Mr. Bunter, of Bunter Villa, was exceedingly slow in parting with the cheques for his sons' fees at Groyfriars. Sometimes they came along at the end of the term instead of the beginning; sometimes they did not arrive till the next term. That sort of thing did not seem to fit in with expensive steam yachts.

"Your cousin's yacht, Bunter?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. The Sea Nymph."

"What is your cousin's name, Bunter?"

"Cook, sir—George Cook."

"And you have been to see him on his—his yacht?"

"Yes, sir."

There was a brief pause.

"Very well, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch at last. "If the matter is as you state, you are excused."

"Thank you, sir!" said Bunter brightly. "And—and my cousin sent a message for you, sir."

"Indeed!"

"He thought you might like to walk down and look at his yacht, sir, as some of the fellows are going for a cruise this Easter."

The Remove could only gaze. They gazed almost open-mouthed. If this was spoof, if this was nerve, it was the limit!

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch again.

"I'm taking a party on the yacht this vac, sir," explained Bunter calmly, "and if you'd care to look over the yacht, sir, any time to-day, my Cousin George would be glad to show you over, sir."

"Bless my soul! I mean, very well, Bunter. I—I will think about it," said Mr. Quelch, in quite a gasping voice.

And the Remove settled down to lessons. But they did not give a lot of attention to the lessons. Amazing as it was, miraculous as it was, it was borne in upon their minds that the yacht in Pegg Bay really was a Bunter yacht, that there really was a Cousin George, and that the Sea Nymph belonged to Cousin George, and that Billy Bunter was really, truly, and seriously taking a party of fellows for an Easter cruise in a magnificent steam yacht. For after what he had said there was little doubt that Mr. Quelch would go down to look over the yacht, and that Bunter would dare to pull his leg to the extent of causing him to make a fool of himself was unimaginable.

It was amazing, it was staggering, it was overwhelming. But Bunter had

told the truth all the time, and the Famous Five were booked for an Easter cruise with Bunter. Even Johnny Bull admitted it, though Johnny averred that there must be a catch in it somewhere.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Settled I

"**W**ERE landed!" said Harry Wharton.

"Looks like it."

"The landfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh.

"Can't make it out," said Bob Cherry, "but—it's so."

"There's a catch in it somewhere," said Johnny Bull.

"Where, ass?"

"Ask me another! Somewhere," said Johnny.

The Famous Five had gathered in Study No. 1 for tea. Over tea they were discussing the amazing happening. It had to be admitted now that the Bunter yacht had a local habitation and a name. It was a real yacht, not a happy figment of Bunter's fertile fancy, like Bunter Court, the vine-clad Bunter villa at Cannes, the Bunter shooting-box, and the rest of the Bunter list of imaginary possessions. And the Famous Five had accepted Bunter's invitation to a cruise on that yacht—if there was a yacht. And there was!

It needed thinking over.

An Easter cruise in a splendid steam yacht was rather attractive. They admitted that. They had not met Cousin George yet; but if he was a fellow who gave a schoolboy carte blanche in inviting his friends to a cruise, it looked as if he must be a large-hearted man, quite a decent sort of chap. According to Bunter, there was accommodation for a dozen fellows on the yacht, and he was going to fill up all the accommodation with friends invited from Groyfriars. Cousin George, it appeared, was going to run that yacht for two or three weeks purely for the benefit of Bunter and his friends. It looked as if he must be a rather generous sort of man—quite the sort of man that a fellow would like to know.

Still, there was a fly in the ointment. The chums of the Remove liked the idea of a cruise; in fact, they were rather inclined to jump at such a chance. They already had a high opinion of Captain Cook, but—

There was a "but."

They really did not want to be Bunter's guests. All the more because they had been determined that he should not stick on to them for that vac they felt awkward about it. And Bunter was not the sort of fellow to whom they wished to be under an obligation. At the same time they did not want to seem ungrateful. It was really an awkward situation.

"Well, we can cry off if we want to," said Harry Wharton slowly. "Now it seems to be clear that the thing is genuine, Bunter will be able to pick up all the guests he wants—"

"And a few over," grinned Bob.

"I've noticed that Skinner is jolly civil to him since class this afternoon," said Frank Nugent. "Snoop seems to have taken a liking to him, too."

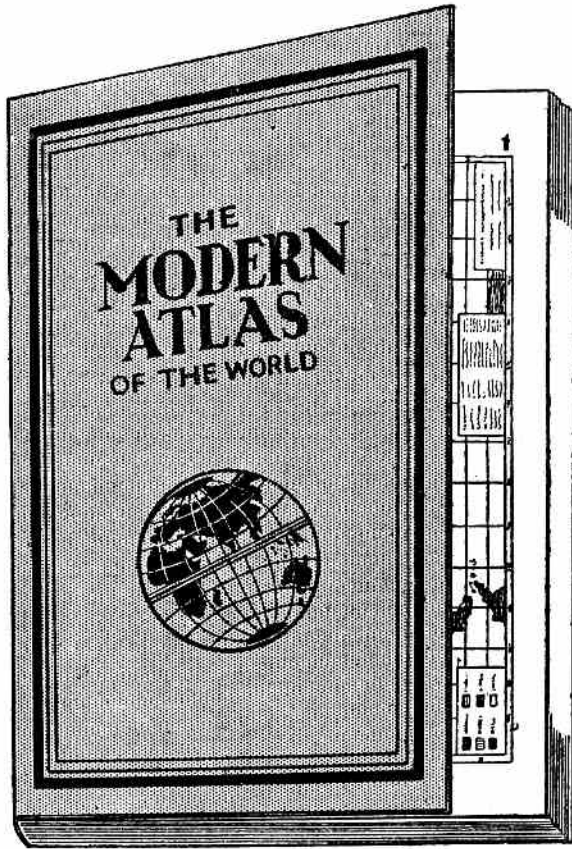
"And the esteemed Fishy is terrifically attentive to the absurd and fatheaded Bunter," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Old Mauly's got a lot of sense," said Harry. "We're landed if Bunter holds us to it. But, after all, why should he? He can't really want us specially. Why should he?"

"Well, we're awfully nice chaps!" said Bob, with a chuckle. "Still, Bunter's never noticed that before."
 "Might want to borrow money of us during the cruise," said Johnny Bull.
 "Well, his cousin must be fearfully rich if he can afford to run a yacht like that just to give schoolboys a holiday," said Harry. "It costs something to run a steam yacht. With a rich relation standing him a holiday, Bunter won't want to touch his guests for little loans, I should think."
 "N-n-no!" Johnny Bull had to admit it.
 "Well, then, if we don't want to go, we needn't," said Harry. "Bunter will wash it out—especially as he's getting so jolly popular now."

ham. I'm rather hungry. I say, you fellows, Quelch has gone down to look at my cousin's yacht."
 The juniors had seen Mr. Quelch walk out of gates after class. They had no doubt where he had gone. It banished the last lingering doubt. Obviously, Bunter would not have dared to let him start if it was only to discover that his leg had been pulled when he reached the yacht. It was impossible to doubt further.
 The fat Owl tucked cheerfully into the foodstuffs. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances, and Wharton proceeded to break the ice.
 "Well, it seems all right about the yacht, Bunter. Sorry we didn't take it

"You'll make up a party easily enough without us, old fat bean."
 Bunter ceased eating for a moment and blinked across the table at the captain of the Remove.
 "Without you?" he repeated.
 "Wharrer you mean?"
 "Yes. You see—"
 "But you're coming!" said Bunter.
 "We thank you for the kind invitation," said Bob Cherry solemnly. "But owing to circumstances over which we have no control, we are obliged to decline it! Thanks and all that."
 "Exactly!" said Johnny Bull.
 "The thankfulness is terrific," declared Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "But the declinefulness is also a sine qua non!"



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"But don't we?" asked Nugent.
 "Well, I'd rather not," said Harry.
 "It would come in useful, in a way, as my people are abroad for Easter, and that washes out Wharton Lodge. But we were thinking of a hiking tour, or something. I can't say I want to take favours from Bunter, after kicking him all through the term."
 "Can't very well," assented Nugent.
 "It would be ripping—a cruise for Easter!" said Bob. "But, dash it all, we can't do it. We can't take it from Bunter. Wash it all out!"
 "I say, you fellows!"
 A fat face and a large pair of spectacles looked into Study No. 1. For once there was not a chorus of "Buzz off, Bunter!" The Owl of the Remove rolled in, and nobody said him nay.
 "Might have told me you'd come up to tea!" said Bunter, pulling a chair to the table and sitting down. "Pass the

in. But you know what a spoofer you are!"
 "Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "We hope you'll have a jolly cruise," said Harry. "And you'll get a dozen fellows to go with you—two dozen, if you like."
 "Only accommodation for a dozen," said Bunter, with his mouth full. "I'm asking some Fifth Form men—Coker, you know. He's got money."
 "What on earth has money to do with it, you ass?"
 "Oh, nothing! Pass those poached eggs."
 "Is Coker going?" asked Nugent.
 "I think so. You fellows will get on all right with Coker, what? He's a bit of a fool and a bit of a swanking ass, but he's all right so long as you pull his silly leg a bit. I don't want you rowing with Coker on my cousin's yacht, of course. That wouldn't do."

"Oh, really, you fellows! You're not proposing to let me down, after you've accepted my invitation and I've told my cousin George that you're coming?"
 "You—you see—"
 "George has put your names down on the passenger list already! I've told him you're coming! Precious ass I shall look if you don't."
 "Well, that's nothing new!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You always do look a precious ass!"
 "Beast!"
 "You—you see, Bunter—" Wharton hardly knew what to say.
 "I don't!" contradicted Bunter. "I call it rotten if you let me down. Mean! Not at all the thing!"
 "It's not letting you down, old bean! You can make up a party easily enough—there's Skinner and Snoop quite keen—"

"I don't want Skinner and Snoop."

"Well, you don't want us, if you come to that!" said Harry.

"I jolly well do!" said Bunter.

"Well, why?" demanded Wharton.

"Because you're such nice chaps!" said Bunter.

"Oh crikey!"

"And we're pals, ain't we?"

"Hem!"

"This is rather thick, I must say!" said Bunter, more in sorrow than in anger. "I get up a party for an expensive cruise in a magnificent steam yacht—you engage to come—then you tell me almost at the last minute that you're not coming! Do you call that playing the game?"

The chums of the Remove were silent and uncomfortable. Obviously, if Bunter looked at it like that, they had to stick it. Yet it was puzzling why Bunter specially wanted them. Now that it was known that the yacht and the cruise were solid facts, he had plenty to choose from. Plenty of fellows had turned on quite a lot of civility. Fellows like Skinner and Snoop were prepared almost to bow to the ground before him. Bunter liked flattery, he liked soft sawder, he liked being made much of. He would get nothing of that from the Famous Five: Yet for some mysterious reason he preferred them to fellows who would give him lots and lots of it. Really, it began to look as if the fat Owl entertained hitherto unsuspected feelings of attachment for the Famous Five.

There was a long silence in Study No. 1. Bunter filled it in by attention to the foodstuffs. They disappeared at a great rate.

"Any more cake?" asked Bunter, when the last crumb and the last plum had vanished.

"No!"

"Any more tarts?"

"No!"

Grunt from Bunter.

"Well, I think you fellows might stand a rather more decent spread than that, when a fellow's taking you on an expensive cruise for weeks and weeks," he said.

"Look here, Bunter, we're not coming!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You can't possibly want us—"

"I jolly well do!"

"Well, why, you fat ass?"

"Because I like you so much, old chap," said Bunter affably.

"Oh crumbs!"

Bunter rose from the table. There was no more tuck; so naturally there would be no more Bunter!

"Look here, you fellows, you're coming!" he said. "A promise is a promise! It's all fixed and settled. I want you to come! I'm going to give you a magnificent time—an expensive cruise—really expensive! You can't back out now, and leave a fellow in the lurch: Now can you?"

"Well, if you put it like that, Bunter—"

"I do!" said Bunter promptly.

"If you really want us—"

"Couldn't do without you! I shouldn't enjoy it a bit!"

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton glanced round at his comrades. They nodded. Really, there was nothing else to be done but assent.

"Well, it's settled, then," said Harry.

"That's right, old chap! You'll have a great time!" said Bunter. "Expense no object—remember that! It's settled." And Bunter rolled out of the study—perhaps in search of another tea further up the passage.

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"Blessed if I make him out!" said Bob.

"Same here! But—after all, as he puts it so decently, I don't see why we shouldn't go!" said Frank. "The fat oyster doesn't seem to be on the make, as usual, at any rate."

"There's a catch in it somewhere!" grunted Johnny Bull. "I don't see where, or how, but there's a catch in it."

"Well, it's settled, anyhow," said Harry.

"Oh, yes, I suppose it's settled."

And settled it was!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Tipping Coker!

"IT'S a bit of a problem!"

Coker of the Fifth made that remark to his pals Potter and Greene, in "break" the next morning. Coker had a shade of thought on his rugged brow; and his pals could see that he was thinking, and wondered what he was doing it with.

"A senior man," Coker continued, "has to consider his position. Here, at school, I could not possibly have anything to do with a fag in the Lower Fourth. You see that?"

"Oh, quite!" yawned Potter. He did not, as a matter of fact, know what Coker was driving at. But he did not

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want to know, so he did not ask Coker to explain. Coker, however, proceeded to explain.

"In the hols, it's different! A man might take up a fag, to a certain extent, in the holidays. Here it's impossible! But away from Greyfriars, you know, things are rather different. What?"

"Um!" said Greene.

"And a yachting cruise is rather a catch!" said Coker. "No good denying that it's rather a catch, because it really is."

"Anybody offered you a yacht for the vac?" inquired Potter.

"Bunter—you know young Bunter, of the Remove—has asked me to go on a cruise for Easter, in his cousin's yacht. Check, if you like—asking a Fifth Form man! I know that, and told him so! I came near kicking him," explained Coker. "But I'm bound to say that he put it very decently. He said a lot of juniors were going, and that the presence of a senior man—a senior generally looked up to in the school—would keep them in order, and so on. Unusually thoughtful way of looking at it, for a fag, you know."

Potter and Greene could only wonder why young Bunter of the Remove had been taking the trouble to pull Coker's leg. But they did not say so.

"The fact is, I've thought of taking it on," said Coker candidly. "I like the idea of a yachting cruise. The yacht seems a decent sort of a tub. I heard Quelch telling Prout he'd been on it—the skipper showed him over it yesterday—and Quelch seemed to think it

rather decent. Bunter's cousin, a man named Hook, or Snook, or Cook or something, seems to have given him leave to ask all the fellows he chooses, up to a dozen. It's rather sensible of him to want a few seniors in the party, to keep the young sweeps within bounds, you know. He knows I've a short way with fags."

Potter closed one eye at Greene. Coker's short way with fags did not really make him popular among the fags. They wondered more than ever why Billy Bunter was pulling Coker's leg. It could hardly be because he liked Coker's company, and looked forward to enjoying it through the Easter holidays. For how could a fellow enjoy Coker's company? That was too steep to be believed for a moment. As Coker's pals, Potter and Greene knew!

They were going to spend that vac with Coker if he asked them. But they frankly admitted—between themselves—that Coker's company was a drawback.

"Still, it's a bit of a problem," Coker confessed. "I can't know Bunter here, but I might know him—for a time—away from Greyfriars! But would that encourage him to put on airs of familiarity at school again next term? You see, it wants some thinking out."

"Some problem!" said Potter, with great gravity. "Nothing in Euclid to equal it, so far as I know."

Greene suppressed a chuckle. Coker did not like frivolity, when he was considering deep and serious problems.

"Those cheeky young sweeps are going!" went on Coker, with a nod towards five cheery Removites who were sauntering in the spring sunshine in the quad. "I hardly like the idea! They're cheeky here at school—you've noticed it—"

"Oh, quite! Didn't they roll you down a staircase the other day?" asked Potter. "Hardly the thing for them to roll you about Bunter's yacht!"

"Might roll you into the stokehold," remarked Greene. "You wouldn't care for that, Coker."

"I should keep them in order, of course," said Coker. "In fact, I think I should take a cane with me for that very purpose. A few thrashings would teach them to toe the line."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Potter and Greene, simultaneously and involuntarily.

The idea of Horace Coker taking a cane on the Easter cruise for the purpose of keeping the Famous Five in order, quite overcame them.

Coker stared at them.

"What are you sniggering at?" he demanded. "Nothing to snigger at, that I can see! Don't cackle like silly geese, you fellows. It may not be necessary to thrash them. I shall speak to them seriously before we start, and I dare say they will see that they will have to play up. On the whole, I think I shall accept Bunter's invitation, as he put it so decently. The kid seems very sensible and respectful. And if he puts on airs next term on the strength of having had me for the holidays I can jolly soon kick him into behaving himself. What?"

"Oh, quite."

"Well, then, we'll go!" said Coker. "Bunter's put it to me very decently, and I shall accept. You fellows are included, of course. He wants the three of us. You'll like it all right."

Potter and Greene looked dubious. Coker, in his high-handed way, had decided the matter for them. Having decided that he would go on the cruise himself, he took it for granted that Potter and Greene would go. Coker's word was law—or he fancied it was.



"Here, wharrer you doing?" yelled Coker, as five pairs of hands grasped him and up-ended him. "You gave us a tip," said Bob Cherry, "so we're giving you one!" "Lemme go!" yelled Coker. The Removites released Coker, and for a fraction of a second he stood there on his head, his long legs extended skywards.

"Look here," said Greene, "that's all very well, but a Fifth Form man accepting invitations from a fag— Well, really, you know—"

"I've thought that out," said Coker. "I've decided that I can do it without loss of dignity. That's all right."

"Well, we haven't thought it out," said Greene, rather tartly.

"Don't be an ass, Greene!"

"You see—?" said Potter.

"Don't be a dummy, Potter!"

"Um!" said Potter and Greene.

"I shall go down to the yacht and look it over, and meet Bunter's cousin," continued Coker. "Then it will be settled. But it's practically settled now. So you fellows can get on with making your arrangements for the trip. Now I'll give those cheeky young sweeps a tip about what I shall expect from them."

Coker walked off towards the Famous Five. Potter and Greene were left staring at one another.

"Blessed if I quite make it all out!" said Greene. "It seems straight that that ripping yacht in the bay belongs to Bunter's cousin, and he's got carte blanche in asking fellows for the cruise. His cousin must be rolling in oof, I should say."

"Blessed if I can make it out, either," said Potter. "But old Quelch has been on the yacht and seen the man, Cook, so it must be square. Come to think of it, Greeney, an Easter cruise is a bit of a catch. You don't often get a yachting cruise for nothing."

"That's so," agreed Greene. "Can't say that I want a holiday with a mob of fags, but, as you say, we get it for nothing. You got anything better on if we chuck Coker for the hols?"

"Well, no! And you—"

"No. So far as I am concerned, it's

hols with Coker or with an aunt at Worthing."

"Oh, my hat! Stick to Coker then," advised Potter. "Keep the aunt in reserve, in case we can't stand Coker—what?"

"That's what I was thinking. Dash it all, I don't see why we shouldn't enjoy the cruise, even with Coker on board! We'll try, at least."

And Coker's chums decided loyally to stick to Coker.

Meanwhile, Horace Coker bore down on the Famous Five. That chery and select company were also discussing Easter and the cruise in the Bunter yacht. Now it was settled, the Famous Five had a few misgivings, but, on the whole, they were rather pleased. Easter cruising in a splendid yacht was, as Bob Cherry said frankly, not to be sneezed at. And undoubtedly it was very decent of Bunter to be so keen on their company. It was flattering, to say the least.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's jolly old Coker!" said Bob. "Line up. I know that look in his eye. Coker's hunting trouble."

The chums of the Remove grinned and lined up to receive Coker. If the great Horace wanted trouble Harry Wharton & Co. were not the fellows to say him nay.

"I've got something to say to you kids," said Coker, getting down to brass tacks at once, as it were. "I'm going on Bunter's yacht for Easter. I understand that you kids are coming, too."

"You do?" exclaimed Bob, with an air of great astonishment. "You don't say so, Coker! You surprise me, old bean!"

"Well, isn't it so?" asked Coker, puzzled.

"Oh, yes; it's so."

"Then what are you surprised at, you young ass?"

"I'm surprised at your understanding it."

"Eh?"

"I didn't know you could understand anything," explained Bob. "It's a bit of a change for you, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker frowned grimly. This was the sort of cheek he was accustomed to from these bright young spirits in the Lower Fourth. It had to be made clear that this sort of thing would not do on the Easter cruise. Coker felt that he had to make that quite clear.

"Now, I don't want any cheek!" said Coker. "That's why I'm speaking to you now. I should be sorry—really sorry—to have to begin the cruise by whopping you on the deck of the yacht and—"

"You would!" agreed Harry Wharton, with a nod. "If you started it you would soon be frightfully sorry."

"The sorrowfulness would be truly terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Coker!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Will you shut up when I'm speaking to you?" roared Coker, beginning to show signs of excitement. "I want to make it clear that you fags will have to behave yourselves. In the first place, you'll keep your distance, and not put on airs of familiarity because I'm on the same cruise. Got that?"

"Agreed!" said Wharton gravely. "But only on condition that you keep your distance—"

"What?"

"And don't put on airs of familiarity because we're on the same cruise."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co., quite

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

entertained by the expression on Horace Coker's rugged countenance.

Coker of the Fifth breathed hard and deep.

"I'm warning you for your own good," he said. "I don't want to be whopping you all the time. I shall keep an eye on you and keep you in order, of course. And you'd better remember that I've a short way with fags. Any Lower Fourth cheek or impudence will be put down with a firm hand. You'd better get that clear at the start. See? It may save trouble. As I've said, I've a short way with fags. That's a tip for you."

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" said Bob Cherry. "You hear what Coker says? He's got a short way with fags. Now, my idea is that one good turn deserves another, and what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. What about a short way with Coker? Shall we give him a tip, too?"

"Hear, hear!"

What happened next came so suddenly that Coker was taken quite by surprise. Five pairs of hands gripped him, and before he knew what was happening he was tipped over and up-ended.

"Ooooh!" gasped Coker, as he spun, earth and sky spinning round him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

Coker's head landed on the earth. His legs flourished in the air. His arms waved wildly in the folds of his coat, which fell about his neck. Holding to Coker's long legs, the hilarious juniors kept him in that inverted position, amid yells of laughter from various directions.

"Ooooh!" spluttered Coker. "You young—oooh—sweeps—leggo! Whoop! Urrrrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're warning you for your own good, Coker!" said Bob Cherry. "We don't want to be whopping you all the time, so we're giving you this tip! Any Fifth Form cheek or impudence will be put down with a firm hand!"

"Urrrrrgh!" gurgled Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd better get that clear at the start, Coker. It may save trouble. This is a tip for you!"

"Yurrrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ooooh! Leggo! Woooh!"

"The tipfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurre Jamset Ram Singh.

Gurgle from Coker!

"Ware prefects!" yelled Smithy.

Wingate of the Sixth came striding up.

"You young sweeps, what's this game?" he demanded.

"Only giving Coker a tip!" said Bob.

"He gave us a tip, so we're giving him one!"

"Let him go at once," said Wingate, laughing.

"Oh, all right!"

The Removites released Horace Coker.

For a fraction of a second Horace stood there on his head, his long legs extended skyward. Then he crashed.

"Ooooh!" spluttered Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! I'll smash 'em! I'll spifficate 'em— Oooh! I'll pulverise 'em— Ow!" gurgled Coker, as he sat up.

"Come away, you men," said Bob. "Coker seems to be cross about something! Ta-ta, Coker! Come to us when you want another tip!"

And the Famous Five, chuckling, departed at a trot. Potter and Greene kindly came along to give Coker a hand up. He leaned on them and spluttered for breath. Over his spluttering head they exchanged a cheery smile. It was Coker's way to ask for these things, and his pals hoped that he enjoyed them.

"Ooooh! Woooh! What are you grinning at, Wingate? What are all those silly asses cackling at? Croogh! I'll smash 'em! Urrrrrgh!"

Coker was still in a spluttering state when the bell rang for third school. He went in with the Fifth, still gurgling a little. It was clear to Coker that the tip he had given the Removites had been a sheer waste. It was only too plain that the young sweeps did not intend to behave themselves. It was now decided, in Coker's mind, that he would take that cane when he started on the Easter cruise. He could see that it would be needed. There would have to be whoppings on board the Sea Nymph. Coker knew that! But he did not yet know who was going to get the whoppings! Fortunately, the veil of the future hid that from Coker.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Fierce for Fishy!

FISHER T. FISH stood in the doorway of the school shop, at Greyfriars, and hesitated. From where he stood he could hear a fat voice within—the voice of William George Bunter, addressing Mrs. Mimble.

Billy Bunter's voice was persuasive. But Mrs. Mimble's heart seemed as hard as the nether millstone, and she did not listen to the voice of the charmer.

Long experience of Billy Bunter had caused the good dame to deal with him only on a strictly cash basis. Bunter would willingly have been Mrs. Mimble's best customer—on a system of extended credit. But it was in vain that Billy Bunter pointed out to Mrs. Mimble that all modern businesses were built up on a system of extensive credit. Either Mrs. Mimble did not want to build up a big business, or she suspected that there was a catch in it somewhere. Anyhow, there was no credit for Bunter.

Bunter was hungry!

That was his usual state. It was not yet tea-time, but Bunter liked a few meals between meals. At tea-time he counted on landing himself on some of the fellows he had invited for an Easter cruise. They could hardly refuse, in the circumstances.

But an arid desert stretched between Bunter and tea-time, which could have been bridged over by a bag of tarts and a few doughnuts—if only Mrs. Mimble could have seen the advantages of building up a big business on credit lines. But Mrs. Mimble couldn't—or wouldn't!

"I told you I was expecting a postal order, ma'am!" Bunter was saying. "It will come by the next post!"

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Mimble. She had heard of Billy Bunter's postal order before.

"Oh dear!" sighed Bunter. Like Tantalus of old, he famished in the midst of plenty. And Fisher T. Fish, in the doorway, hesitated.

Fishy was in doubt, on the horns of a dilemma. Bunter had not asked him to join the party for the Easter cruise. Fishy wanted Bunter to ask him. Had Fishy only known in advance that there was a Bunter yacht and that there was to be a cruise he would have treated the Owl of the Remove very differently that term. But how was a fellow to know—even a cute, spry galoot who had been raised in Noo York?

As a matter of fact, Fishy had treated Bunter rather unpleasantly that term. Bunter owed him a shilling from some ancient date. All through the term Fishy had hunted him for that shilling. In pursuit of money Fishy was, like Nimrod, a mighty hunter. But he had hunted Bunter in vain.

According to Bunter, it was an "old account." And, according to Bunter, an old account was an account which nobody could reasonably expect to be paid!

But that shilling was still fresh in Fishy's mind. It began to look, to Fishy, that he never would get that shilling. When he left Greyfriars to go back to his own great country he would go a shilling to the bad! If that was not enough to get a guy's goat, if it was not the bee's knee and the elephant's side-whiskers, Fishy did not know what was!

Still, he wished now that he had not been so earnest, so ardent, in pursuit of that shilling.

If he had only foreseen that Easter cruise— But who can read the future? Who could have guessed, reckoned, or calculated that the impecunious Owl of the Remove would ever have anything to give away?

Not Fishy, with all his cuteness! But there was a way to Bunter's heart, an open avenue to his deepest affections, if Fishy took the plunge and chanced it! Standing Bunter a feed was the way!

An Easter cruise was worth a lot! Fishy had seen Easter cruises advertised in the papers, and they charged you pounds and pounds. You got your board and lodging and the sea air thrown in. Fishy generally spent his vacations at the school—his happy home being too distant for return in the holidays.

Loading about a deserted school, meals with the House dame, nobody to talk to but Gosling, the porter, was no cinch, Fishy guessed. Obviously, a cruise on that handsome yacht now anchored in Pegg Bay was more desirable. It cost nothing if a fellow went as a guest, and if Bunter figured that he was going to borrow pocket-money from his guests— Well, he might be able to touch soft jays like Wharton and his friends, but if he succeeded in borrowing anything off Fisher T. Fish, Fishy would have liked to be there to see him do it!

If a guy horned in and stood Bunter the feed for which his fat soul yearned, surely the fat clam would ask him on the cruise! It would be a sprat to catch a whale—a small sprat for a large whale!

On the other hand, if he stood Bunter a feed, and was not asked on the cruise, it would be a useless expenditure of cash!

That, naturally, made Fishy shudder at the thought of it!

He was torn by doubt!

"I say, Mrs. Mimble—" came Bunter's persuasive voice again.

"Don't bother, Master Bunter!" Mrs. Mimble's tones were quite sharp.

"Oh lor'!"

Fisher T. Fish drew a deep, deep breath. He was going to chance it! After all, suppose it ran to a bob—even two bob—it was worth it! Losing two bob for nothing would hurt Fisher T. Fish more than losing two teeth. But if he cinched that Easter cruise—

It was neck or nothing! Taking his courage in both hands, as it were, Fisher T. Fish walked into the tuckshop.

Bunter blinked round at him hopefully. But the hope died out of his fat face as he saw that the newcomer was Fishy. Even Bunter did not think of trying to get anything out of Fishy.

To his surprise Fishy gave him a genial grin.

"Have some tarts, bo!" said Fishy.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"And a ginger-pop?"

Bunter blinked at him. It was the first time on record that Fisher T. Fish had ever offered to pay for anything for anybody else. Fisher T. Fish was making history!

"Oh! Yes, rather!" gasped Bunter.

Three jam-tarts and a bottle of ginger-pop came over the counter for Bunter. Fisher T. Fish paid for them. It wrung

his transatlantic heart, but he paid for them!

Bunter tucked in. Long before Fisher T. Fish had finished suppressing his inward groans over the payment Bunter had finished the tarts and the ginger-pop. He blinked hopefully at Fishy. In this new and extraordinary mood it was possible that Fishy might be good for more!

"I say, Fishy, old chap, those tarts are good!" said Bunter. "Aren't you having some yourself? I—I'll help you—"

"Tarts cost money!" answered Fishy. "I mean, nope, I don't care for tarts! But, look here, you—you have a couple more! I—I mean, one micro!"

(Continued on next page.)

HE WANTS TO BE A REFEREE!

A LITTLE story to start off this week, which may or may not be new to my readers. A man went to the booking-office at Huston Station, and said to the clerk: "I want to go to Wigan." The clerk looked at him and replied: "I don't believe you. You don't want to go to Wigan. You have to go."

That story is, of course, a libel on a Lancashire town, and perhaps you will wonder why I have recalled it. Well, I have a letter from a London reader who says: "I want to be a football referee." I might be facetious in replying and say that this seventeen-year-old reader of mine doesn't really want to become a referee. But perhaps he does. There's no accounting for tastes. So all I can do is to reply seriously, and tell my friend how to become a referee.

The first step should be to write to the secretary of the local Football Association—in this case the London Football Association, whose address is 21, Woodhouse Grove, Manor Park, London, E. 12., for information concerning referee's examinations. These are held periodically, and the candidates who are successful, so far as written and oral questions are concerned, are then tried out in real matches played under the auspices of that association. The rest—promotion and that sort of thing—depends on the fellow himself.

In order to pass the examination, the budding referee must be fully conversant with the rules of the game, and in this connection I would advise him to get a copy of the official referees' chart, which not only gives the rules, but the official interpretations of those rules.

Perhaps a hint or two in general might be helpful, and these hints can be taken to heart by any other of my readers who are asked to control matches as referees. It takes more than a mere knowledge of the rules to control a football match properly. Firmness in the control of the players is a first necessity.

The best referees have always had the easiest jobs in big football, because they have had reputations for being firm, and the players have treated them with all due respect.

Jack Howcroft was one of the best referees we ever had in first-class football. He has admitted to me that he made mistakes. No referee can hope to be correct all the time. But the point about Howcroft was that he gave his decision so promptly, so firmly, that he always made people feel that he was right even when the first impressions were that he was wrong.

Get a reputation for firmness is one bit of advice I should give to would-be referees.

SOCCER QUERIES ANSWERED HERE!

"LINESMAN CALLING!"



Our special sporting contributor offers all "Magnetites" the benefit of his knowledge and experience in first-class football. If you've a Soccer problem that wants solving write to him: c/o THE MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

THE OFFSIDE TRAP!

MY letter-box this week contains several letters which I regard as rather flattering. The writers seem to assume that I am a walking encyclopedia on football matters. For instance, a keen follower of the Hull City side asks me which player has scored most goals for Hull City in the course of a single season during their long history. I have done some looking up with a view to answering this question, and while the records right from the beginning may not be complete, I think the correct answer is that Jack Smith, a centre-forward, tops the list with thirty-two League goals scored during the season of 1909-10.

Mention of Hull City reminds me that this team has made a good show in the Northern Third Division this season, and that it seems quite likely that they will be back in the Second Division next term. I wish them luck for my enthusiastic correspondent's sake.

Hull have introduced new defensive ideas into their game this season which have been freely criticised, but which have certainly brought them a measure of success. The defenders have been setting the offside trap very skilfully. The method is for the full-backs to go well up the field, almost in line with the half-backs, and for the goalkeeper to be ready to rush out if the offside trap thus set does not succeed.

There are people who do not think it quite fair that defenders should try to put opponents offside in this manner, but I do not agree. Offside is a part of the game, and in my view quite legitimate tactics. After all, it is up to the attackers to use their brains to counteract this move.

In the old days, before the offside rule was changed, there was the same sort of criticism about the methods of Newcastle United, for example. But while it was true that by offside methods the old

Newcastle side often upset their opponents' it is equally true that clever opponents used to turn these methods against Newcastle from time to time. That is the way to stop teams playing the offside game: use brains and make it a source of weakness rather than of strength.

STAR PLAYERS AND INTERNATIONAL MATCHES!

WHO is the tallest player in Scottish League football? That is another question. Strangely, Scottish footballers, generally speaking, are on the small side; stocky rather than long. The tallest Scottish League player I have seen this season is T. G. Smith, the goalkeeper of Queen's Park, who is six feet one and a half inches. This, of course, is a long way below the record, for I remember a goalkeeper of Notts County, Albert Iremonger, who was six feet five inches; so tall, in fact that he used to remark, jokingly, that he daren't stand under the bar for fear he would hit it with his head.

In reply to another question. Alex. James, the Arsenal inside-left, has played in seven International matches for Scotland. This fine player would, of course, have had many more caps if the English clubs for which he has played had always been ready to release him from League engagements. Indeed, it is said that one of the reasons why he desired to leave Preston when he went to Arsenal was that the North End officials were not always ready to allow him to play for his country.

The club should not be too severely criticised for such an attitude, however. Points are very important in League football, and when a team is struggling, badly in need of points, it is quite understandable that they should not want to be without the services of star players.

"LINESMAN."

amended Fishy hastily. Flesh and blood could not stand too much.

Bunter had one more! It went down like an oyster. Fishy had intended to talk to him while he ate it. But it vanished in a twinkling.

Billy Bunter fixed a hungry eye on a large stack of the same across the counter. Fishy affected not to see that yearning look.

"Say, bo, finished making up your party for Easter yet?" drawled Fishy casually.

Bunter blinked—and then grinned! He understood now! It was not a sudden attack of insanity that had made Fishy part with money. Fishy was after that Easter cruise!

"Eh! Oh, no!" said Bunter. "I've asked Wibley—he makes nine. I fancy I shall keep it at that—don't want too big a crowd."

"Lots of guys would like to come!" remarked Fisher T. Fish, in the same casual way.

"Oh, lots!" agreed Bunter. "But a fellow has to be particular. I might take one more, though! After all, the more the merrier! What are you doing this vac, Fishy?"

Fishy's bony face brightened. This looked like business!

"I guess that ain't fixed yet," he answered affably. "Have—have another tart. Have a couple of tarts, Bunter. Like a ginger-pop?"

It was worth it. Fishy calculated and reckoned that it was worth it, yet he felt severe twinges. Suppose he did not cinch that cruise, after all? Then this was a sheer waste of money. That would be fierce; it would give Fishy a pain from which he was likely never to recover. To Fishy, money was the beginning and the end of all things. Parting with money was parting with all that made life worth living. It was painful to Fishy to part with money even for value received. But to part with it for nothing—that was fierce!

But he risked it! Suppressing his emotions, he risked it! With a feeling of anguish, he watched the tarts and ginger-pop disappear on the downward path. Bunter blinked at a dish of doughnuts. Bunter wanted more! Bunter always wanted more.

"I say, Fishy——"
"Waal, look here, what about that cruise?" Fishy felt that it was time to get it clear. "I guess you got room for another guy, Bunter?"

"Lots!" said Bunter cheerily. "And, come to think of it, I'm going to make it ten chaps! George said I could ask up to a dozen. I've got nine so far. I'll jolly well make it ten, and chance it! I say, they look jolly good doughnuts, Fishy!"

"Sample 'em!" said Fishy.

"I will!" said Bunter.

And he did!

He sampled them at a great rate. Mrs. Mimble gave Fisher T. Fish an expressive look. She wanted it clear, as well as Fishy. The transatlantic junior laid a ten-shilling note on the counter.

"What about some cream puffs, Fishy?" asked Bunter breezily.

"I—I—I guess——" Fishy's heart failed him. "I—I guess not, Bunter."

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter loftily; and he turned towards the door.

Fishy made the necessary effort.

"Have—have some!" he gasped.

Bunter had some!

Fishy eyed him, almost in agony. Bunter had practically said that Fishy was to come on the cruise—but he had not actually said so. Fishy wanted it in plain English. Meanwhile, his money was going! The rate at which Billy

Bunter bolted cream puffs made Fishy feel quite bad. There would not be much left of his ten-shilling note at this rate!

"When do we go on board, Bunter?" he asked. That was putting it plain.

"Eh?" Bunter gobbled another cream puff. "I shall go the day we break up, Fishy. The other fellows can please themselves."

"Yep! But——"

"Some of them may have to go home first." Bunter gobbled another cream puff. "Aren't you having any of these, Fishy? They're good!"

"Nope!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "Oh, nope! Look here, I'll come on board the day you do, Bunter—what?"

"Eh?"
As Bunter had no intention whatever of including Fisher T. Fish in the cruising party, he did not want to come to the point in a hurry. Fishy, on the other hand, was eager to come to the point.

"I guess I shall be glad to come on that cruise, Bunter!" said Fishy. "I'll say I'm much obliged to you for asking me!"

Bunter was driven into the open at last.

"Eh—I haven't asked you, Fishy!" he answered.

Hurriedly he crammed in another cream puff. He realised that it would be the last.

"What!" gasped Fishy. "Didn't you say you were going to make it ten fellows?"

"Yes. I'm going to ask Mauleverer again."

"You fat clam!" roared Fisher T. Fish.

"Oh, really, Fishy, you see, I couldn't take you!" explained Bunter. "You're so jolly stinky, you know!"

He backed away in alarm. The expression on Fisher T. Fish's face was quite terrific. He had fed Bunter—for nothing! It was a sheer loss!

"Four - and - sixpence!" said Mrs. Mimble, counting out the change.

Fisher T. Fish had quite a stunned look. He had spent four-and-six—for nothing! He had coughed up the dough—for nix! He had been done! He—a cute guy raised in New York—had been played for a sucker! Words could not have expressed Fishy's feelings. Fortunately, actions could! He proceeded at once to actions.

Billy Bunter made a hurried, strategic movement towards the door. Fishy made a still more hurried movement towards Bunter.

Bunter jumped for safety, but not so fast as Fishy jumped for Bunter. A bony arm was flung round a fat neck, and Bunter's head went into chancery.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

"Oh crickey! Leggo! Yaroooooogh!" roared Bunter.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

"Whoooooop!"

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Bunter struggled frantically, and they waltzed round the tuckshop, Mrs. Mimble watching them in surprise and alarm. Fishy was bent on taking his four-and-six worth out of Bunter. He took it, with interest.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

"Urrrrgggh!"

They struggled and reeled and staggered and jazzed. Bunter made a terrific effort, and whirled Fishy off. The American junior staggered back, caught his foot on the edge of a box of eggs, and sat down—in the eggs!

Crunch! Smash! Crash! Smash!
"Jerusalem crickets!" gasped Fisher T. Fish.

"Beast!" yelled Bunter.

"Aw! Carry me home to die!"

Bunter darted out of the tuckshop before Fishy could get out of the eggs. He vanished into space.

Fishy extracted himself from the egg-box. He gazed down in horror at his trousers, streaming with yolk and broken shells.

"Aw!" gasped Fishy. "Them trousers is ruined! I guess this will set me back four dollars! Great gophers!"

"You will have to pay for those eggs, Master Fish!" gasped Mrs. Mimble.

"What!" yelled the hapless Fishy.

"I will count up how many you have broken!"

"Forget it!" howled Fisher T. Fish. "You can sure ask Bunter! You can put it up to that fat pie-can, I guess!"

"It was you broke the eggs, Master Fish, and if you do not pay for them I shall speak to Mr. Quelch! There will be no change out of this ten-shilling note!"

"Wha-a-a-t!"

"Perhaps a few pence——"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"I will see——"

Groan!

Fisher T. Fish forgot the sticky eggs on his trousers, and groaned in sheer anguish of spirit. Mrs. Mimble, with a grim face, handed him threepence. That was all the change from his ten-shilling note. Broken-hearted, Fishy tottered from the tuckshop. In all the history of the United States there had been no disaster to equal this! Undoubtedly it was fierce for Fishy!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Meeting George!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Oh dear!"

"Had your tea?"

"H'm!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five.

"Anything the matter?" he asked.

"H'm!"

"You're not looking very bright!"

"H'm!"

The chums of the Remove had been looking bright enough before William George Bunter joined them. Now they were not looking so bright.

Follows who had accepted a fellow's invitation to an Easter cruise could hardly be anything but pally with a fellow. Prospective guests could not keep a prospective host at armslength. Harry Wharton & Co. had seen quite a lot of Bunter lately, especially at tea-time and when they happened to be in the tuckshop. And there was no doubt that Bunter's fascinating society had palled. No doubt it was a good thing. But a fellow could have too much of a good thing. In this case, they had a lot too much.

"About tea——" said Bunter.

"Oh, all right!" said Harry Wharton resignedly. "Let's get up to the study."

"Eh? Nothing to go up to the study for," said Bunter. "I'm asking you fellows to tea——"

"Which?"

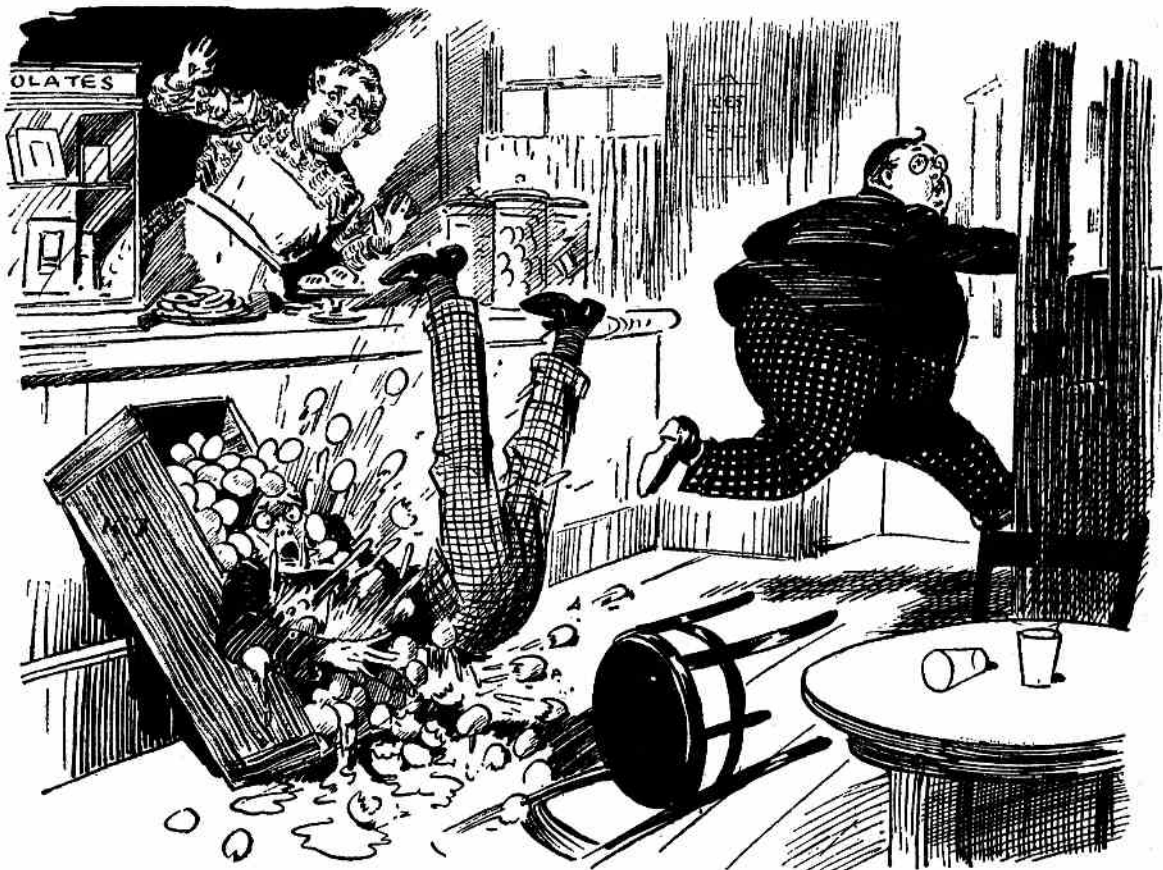
"On board the yacht——"

"Oh!"

"Come on!" said Bunter.

The juniors looked and felt quite sheepish. Once more they had done Bunter wrong. But Bunter these days was so strange and surprising that a fellow might be excused for misunderstanding him a little.

"You want to meet my cousin, you know," said Bunter, "as you're sailing with him this Easter. And you'll be



Billy Bunter and Fisher T. Fish struggled and reeled and staggered round the tuckshop. Bunter made a terrific effort, and hurled Fishy off. The American junior staggered back, caught his foot on the edge of a box of eggs, and sat down—in the eggs! Crunch! Smash! Crunch! Smash! "Jerusalem crickets!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "Beast!" yelled Bunter.

able to sample the grub on the yacht, and see that it's up to the mark. What?"

"Oh!"

"George has to go to Dover," went on Bunter. "He's got some arrangements to make about other guests. I want you to meet him before he goes, see?"

"Pleasure!" said Bob Cherry.

"The pleasurefulness will be terrific."

"Let's, by all means," said Frank Nugent, "George seems to be a jolly good sort, Bunter."

"Fine!" said Bunter, "Wait a tick—I'll cut in and phone a taxi! Proud's gone out—I can use his phono."

Without waiting for a reply, Bunter rolled into the House. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another rather uncertainly. They were ready to walk down to Pegg, but Bunter preferred to go on wheels. In the circumstances, they could hardly say him nay. A taxi from Courtfield came rather expensive—far too expensive for the juniors to think of it for themselves. Bunter had kindly thought of it for them!

"We're in for it!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Whack it out, if Bunter doesn't pay!" said Harry.

"If!" snorted Johnny Bull. "Lot of it' about it!"

Bunter came out cheerily, and rejoined them. They strolled down to the gates. Before long, the taxi came buzzing along the Courtfield road, and they piled into it, and rolled away to Pegg.

They got out in the old cobbled street, opposite the quay. Billy Bunter started

off at once, apparently forgetful of the driver.

"Seven-and-six on the clock, Bunter!" said Johnny Bull, very distinctly.

Bunter blinked round.

"Four extra—that makes nine-and-six!" said Nugent.

"Give him a ten-bob note," said Bunter. "No—dash it all—sixpence tip isn't enough for such a crowd. Make it twelve bob."

And Bunter rolled on, leaving it to the Famous Five to make it twelve bob. He rolled cheerily on to the quay.

As a rule, Bunter did not believe in tipping. But circumstances alter cases! In these circumstances, Bunter had no objection to the taxi-driver getting a half-crown tip.

Having paid the driver, the Famous Five followed Bunter to the quay, and if Bunter had blinked at them again, he might have remarked once more that they were not looking very bright! Really, Lower Fourth fellows could not afford to throw money about like this.

"I say, you fellows, there's George!" exclaimed Bunter.

A boat was coming off from the Sea Nymph. In the stern sat the man with the round, red face, whom the juniors had seen greet Bunter on his first visit to the yacht. They watched him rather curiously as the boat pulled in.

George—otherwise Captain Cook—was in yachting outfit, and looked red and plump and well-fed and good-natured. Except for his clothes, he did not seem to the eyes of the juniors to have much of a yachting cat. He looked, indeed, more like an hotel-keeper in

holiday garb. Still, there was no doubt that he was the owner of the yacht, Sea Nymph, and that was that! Plump as his face was, there were some sharp lines in it, and his eyes were quite keen. But there could scarcely be any doubt that he was a large-hearted, generous sort of man, if he was allowing his young schoolboy cousin to ask a dozen fellows for a holiday cruise on his yacht. The Famous Five felt that they ought to like him, and they manfully resolved to try.

They were, in fact, rather anxious to make the acquaintance of the skipper with whom they were to sail. Bunter, so far, had not seemed very keen on bringing them into contact with George. It was a little odd that now he was taking them to the yacht, it was at a time when George was going away to Dover. It was really almost by chance that they were meeting him now. However there he was.

George landed on the quay, and gave his cousin Billy a nod. The fat Owl proceeded to present his companions, and George shook hands with them in turn, in a very hearty way.

"Glad to meet you!" said George, "What? Take it from me, you'll have a good holiday on the Sea Nymph! What?"

"I'm sure we shall!" said Harry politely, "It's awfully good of you—"

"I say, you fellows, we can take the boat back to the yacht," interrupted Bunter.

"Certainly," said George, "Like to look over the yacht? By all means! I

hope you'll find everything satisfactory, what?"

"Eh! Oh! Yes, rather," said Harry. "Everything on the Sea Nymph," said George, "is first-class, quite modern and up-to-date! You can rely on that. But see for yourselves."

"Oh! Ah! Quite!" stammered Wharton.

"The food——"

"Eh?"

"The food is unexceptionable," said George, "I make it a point to engage a first-class cook for every cruise. You can rely on that."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!"

"Don't let us delay you, George," said Bunter hurriedly. "You've got to catch your train, you know."

"Electric lighting, and a bath-room to every cabin," said George. "I may say that expense is no object on board the Sea Nymph."

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Oh!"

The juniors hardly knew what to say in reply to these unexpected remarks from George. They were quite surprised and taken aback.

George waved a plump hand towards the yacht.

"See for yourselves!" he said, "Anything you find to complain of, just mention it."

"Not at all! We——"

"Mention it!" insisted George. "In every way, I desire to meet your wishes."

"Oh, my hat! I mean——"

"I say, you fellows, let's get in the boat—George has to catch a train, and——"

"Try the food while you're on board!" said George.

"Oh! Ah! Yes! We——" stammered Wharton, "Your cousin has asked us to come on board to tea——"

"Fine!" said George. "Glad of it! You'll see what it's like! The best of everything—that's guaranteed!"

"I say, you fellows——" Bunter's anxiety to break off this extraordinary conversation was plain. It leaped to the eye.

"It will be an extra, of course," added George.

"Eh?"

"I mean, it will go down!"

"Of course," said Harry, amazed. He did not need telling that if the fellows had tea on the yacht, it would go down! What else could it do?

"Well, nothing like making a thing clear," said George. "Make yourselves at home! See you later, Billy."

Bunter's relief, as George started off from the quay, was evident. It was a puzzle to the juniors, but they could not help seeing it.

"I say, you fellows, let's get going, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Bunter. "We're wasting time."

The juniors stepped into the boat. The boat's crew pushed off from the quay, and pulled out to the anchored yacht.

Harry Wharton & Co. sat silent, in astonishment, as the seamen pulled. George had surprised them. If he had been an hotel-keeper, pointing out the attractions of his hotel, they would not have been surprised. But George's remarks, from a wealthy yachtsman, were really surprising. Billy Bunter, too, was eyeing them rather uneasily through his big spectacles. Why he was uneasy they did not know, but it was clear that he was.

Had it been possible to suppose such a thing, they might have suspected that there was some secret that Bunter had been afraid George might blurt out!

But that, surely, was impossible!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Fishy Guesses He Knows How!

"STEWARD!"

"Sir!"

"More jam!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"And more cake!"

"Yes, sir!"

Billy Bunter gave his orders royally. It might really have been Billy Bunter's yacht, instead of Billy Bunter's cousin's yacht.

The Greyfriars fellows were at tea in the saloon.

They had rambled over the yacht;

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taking great interest in inspecting it. The Sea Nymph was a large vessel for a yacht; and rather roomy. There was a good deal of accommodation. State-rooms, the juniors found, had already been assigned for them. They looked over them. The furnishings were all that were needed, but not at all luxurious. They did not want luxurious furnishings, if it came to that; but they could not help observing that the fitting-up of the interior was hardly in keeping with the quality of the vessel itself.

The vessel was really a splendid one. The nobleman for whom it had been built, evidently knew something about yachts. The juniors felt quite sorry for that nobleman, who had had to part with so handsome a craft, to meet the insatiable demands of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

But, judging by appearances, it looked as if the vessel had passed into the hands of a much less wealthy man, whose expenditure on its outfit was strictly limited.

Handsome panelled walls in the state-rooms had evidently been put in at the order of the original owner. Cheap chintz curtains, cheap chairs, cheap beds and towels and things had obviously been furnished by George. A fine mahogany dining-table was plainly part of the original outfit; its soiled and scratched surface, sadly in need of re-polishing, had to be attributed to George.

The juniors, of course, were not disposed to be critical. They were not the fellows to look a gift-horse in the mouth. But they did not go about with their eyes shut, so they could not help noticing these discrepancies.

To all appearance, the handsome and expensive yacht, probably bought at a bargain, was run by a man who spent as little as he possibly could on it.

That was odd, to say the least, for surely a man who could afford to take a crowd of fellows on a cruise for weeks must have plenty of money.

Cruising cost money; there was the coal bill and the wages bill and all sorts of overhead expenses. George appeared to be undertaking all this with a light heart; yet the very towels were not only of the cheapest kind, but extremely well worn, the crockery of the plainest description, and many little things that needed renewal or repairing were left unrenovated and unrepaired. It was a little puzzling.

The food, at all events, was good. No doubt any member of the Bunter tribe could be undertaking all this with a light heart; yet the very towels were not only of the cheapest kind, but extremely well worn, the crockery of the plainest description, and many little things that needed renewal or repairing were left unrenovated and unrepaired. It was a little puzzling.

George had told them on the quay that the food was unexceptionable—a queer remark for a wealthy yachtsman to make to his guests. But it was, at least, well founded. It was ample and it was good.

George had said, oddly enough, that the tea would "go down." It was going down—in great style.

Most of it went down Bunter's neck, but the Famous Five did quite well. The sea air gave them a good appetite, and they enjoyed tea on the yacht. The steward waited on them and looked after them efficiently. Billy Bunter kept him very busy.

Bunter was packing away the food-stuffs at a great rate, as Bunter always did when they were free of charge. He really seemed to be packing them away for a wager.

His face grew pink and shiny, and he breathed hard with his efforts. The juniors saw the steward eye him a little uneasily at intervals, as if the man

feared to see him burst over the floor. Fortunately, Bunter stopped short of that point.

On the whole, Harry Wharton & Co. were not regretting that they had, after all, agreed to go with Bunter for Easter. There were some odd things about the yacht and about the owner, but there was no reason why they should not thoroughly enjoy the cruise. They had to admit that it was decent of Bunter—and it was still more decent of Captain Cook, who had never met them before. When it was time to go, they went back in the boat in a very cheery mood and were unusually polite to Bunter.

The fat Owl was gasping a little as he landed on the quay. The chums of the Remove affected not to see that his pockets were bulging. Having packed all he could inside, Bunter had packed a few extras into his pockets—with an eye to supper in the dormitory. The juniors could not help thinking that George must be a very tolerant and good-natured man if he managed to get on with a relative like Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, we'll walk as far as the Anchor," squeaked Bunter; "we can phone for a taxi there."

"After the feast comes the reckoning," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Look here, Bunter, let's walk," grunted Johnny Bull. "We haven't got another twelve bob to chuck away."

"If you're going to be mean, Bull, after I've stood you a ripping spread on my cousin's yacht—"

"We'll have the taxi," said Harry Wharton hastily.

"I should jolly well think so!" said Bunter warmly. "I can tell you fellows that I jolly well think—"

"Come on!" said Bob.

They had the taxi.

Tea on the yacht with Bunter had proved rather expensive, after all. Still, it had been a ripping tea, and perhaps worth as much as the juniors paid for the taxicabs.

Fisher T. Fish met the party when they came in at the gates of Greyfriars. He eyed Billy Bunter with an evil eye. That little bill he had had to meet in the tuckshop haunted Fisher T. Fish—it haunted his thoughts by day and his dreams by night. It weighed on his mind like lead. Fisher T. Fish had been thinking and pondering and reckoning and calculating how he could indemnify himself for that loss. And an idea was working at the back of Fish's mind.

"Been on the yacht, you guys?" he asked, joining the juniors on their way to the House.

"You've said it!" answered Bob playfully, answering Fishy in his own language.

"What's it like?"

"Oh, fine!"

"I hear that Coker and his pals are joining up at Dover, after going home," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "They ain't sailing from Pegg when you do."

"We shan't miss them an awful lot."

Billy Bunter gave a sniff.

"That's rather rotten of Coker," he said. "I've as good as told George that the whole party would sail from Pegg."

"What difference would it make to George?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! It means that there won't be a full list of passengers from the first day of the trip."

"Well, that won't worry George, will it?" asked Bob, staring.

"Eh? Oh, no!" Bunter seemed to remember himself. "No! Oh, no! Of—of course not! Why should it?"

"I guess I'll come down and see you off when you start," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "Like me to?"

"Oh, do!" said Harry politely. Nobody was keen to be seen off by Fisher T. Fish; but as the American junior was to stay at the school over the holidays, the juniors were quite willing to let him see them off if he liked.

"It's a cinch, then!" said Fishy, with a nod.

He dropped behind as the juniors went into the House. There was a peculiar gleam in Fishy's keen, cute eyes.

"You fat clam!" murmured Fisher T. Fish, addressing Bunter's podgy back, as the Owl of the Remove rolled on. "You done me out of nine-and-nin-pence! I guess you ain't getting away with it a whole heap! There'll be some empty cabins in that pesky yacht when it pulls out of Pegg—and I guess one of them won't be so empty as you reckon, you pie-faced piecan, if I can manage to dodge out of sight! I guess this baby knows how!"

Fisher T. Fish had the big idea! If it worked, Fishy was not going to be left out of the cruising party, after all. But that big idea the cute youth from New York kept strictly to himself.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

What's the Joke?

"HA, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner. It was the last evening of the term, and a crowd of fellows were in the Rag. That sudden yell of merriment from Harold Skinner made a number of fellows turn their heads and look at him.

Skinner had a newspaper in his hand; he was looking over some advertisements. Newspaper advertisements, as a rule, do not cause a fellow to burst into a hilarious yell. But one advertisement, at least, had that effect on Skinner of the Remove. He fairly howled.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the jolly old joke?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Skinner.

He almost wept.

Fellows gazed at him in astonishment. There were tears of merriment in Skinner's eyes.

It was all the more surprising because of late Skinner had been rather morose. For some days Skinner had exerted all his powers to "butter" Billy Bunter, in the hope of being asked to join the yachting party. He had bestowed his company on Bunter, listened with deep interest and respect to his fatuous conversation, and even stood him several little feeds at the school shop. And it had all been in vain. Bunter had been blind and deaf to the plainest hints. And when Skinner at last came out into the open, it was only to meet with a refusal. Bunter didn't want Skinner on the Sea Nymph for Easter, and he told him so. Which, of course, was very annoying to Skinner.

Finding that there was nothing in it, Skinner had turned quite rusty. He had turned rusty to the extent of kicking Bunter when he came across him, and even banging his head on the wall.

This was satisfactory to Skinner, but not to Bunter. Harry Wharton & Co. naturally chipped in and induced Skinner to leave the fat Owl alone. They induced him by the simple method of holding his head under the tap at the end of the Remove passage.

Since then Skinner had left Bunter in peace; but he had been very morose. It was very irritating to have buttered Bunter for nothing; to have fished for

an invitation, and to have been turned down. Skinner had regarded the whole yachting party with a jaundiced eye.

Now he had evidently recovered his spirits. He sat and roared with mirth. He seemed quite unable to restrain his merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he yelled. "Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Something funny in that paper?"

asked Harry Wharton, quite surprised.

"Funny!" gasped Skinner. "I should say so! As funny as holding a fellow's head under a tap."

"Well, cough it up!" said the Bouncer. "Let's all have the joke."

Instead of which Skinner hastily folded his newspaper, and slipped it under his jacket.

"I'll tell you to-morrow," he said.

"And why not now?" asked Smithy, staring.

"You'll enjoy the joke better to-morrow."

And evidently to stop further questioning, Harold Skinner walked out of the Rag.

"Is the esteemed Skinner off his absurd rocker?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in wonder.

"Must be, I should think," said Peter Todd. "He was reading a page of holiday advertisements. Nothing funny in that, I should think."

"Silly ass!" said Bob; and the matter dropped.

But a little later fellows in the Remove passage heard yells of laughter from Studv No. 11, which was shared by Skinner and Snoop and Stott. Skinner, it seemed, had told his pals what the mysterious joke was. Their merriment told that they were extremely tickled by it.

But what it was they told no one else. For some reason, hard to guess, Skinner was keeping it dark till the morrow—break-up day at Greyfriars School.

There was no prep on the last night of term. After packing the Famous Five gathered in Study No. 1 for a doughnut supper. William Wibley, who was also of the cruising party, joined them. All arrangements had been made now by the Easter party, and they were to go on board the Sea Nymph in Pegg Bay when they left the school on the morrow.

Coker & Co. were joining up later at Dover—a circumstance which did not depress the Remove fellows. They could do without quite a lot of Coker's company. Indeed, they could not help wondering why Bunter had asked Fifth Form seniors. What he could want them for was rather a mystery. Still, that was Bunter's own business, and it was not for them to butt in.

There was a tap at the door, and Skinner, Snoop, and Stott looked into Study No. 1 with grinning faces.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at them rather grimly. What the mysterious joke was they did not know, but they had a feeling that it was somehow up against their worthy selves. Indeed, Skinner & Co. hardly made a secret of that. Though what Skinner could have seen in a page of newspaper holiday advertisements, which had any connection at all with Greyfriars fellows, was a deep mystery. He had carefully kept the paper out of their sight.

"Oh, here you are!" said Skinner.

"All ready to go on board to-morrow—what?"

"Quite!" answered Wharton.

"You've met Captain Cook?" asked Skinner.

"Yes."

"Had a talk with him?"

"Only a few words. He was just off to Dover. Why?"

"Well, I wondered," said Skinner. "You only saw him for a few minutes?"

"Yes."
"That accounts, then."

"Accounts for what, you silly ass?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"What are you getting at?"
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner & Co.

"Look here! You can go and cackle at some other study," said Bob Cherry gruffly. "It's not musical, and we're not amused—see?"

"But didn't Cook tell you fellows anything?" asked Snoop, with a giggle.

"What was there for him to tell us?"
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Snoop.

"Look here! You chortling chump I'll—"

"Cook can't be in it," said Stott, shaking his head. "Bunter's pulled their leg, that seems pretty clear. But Cook can't be in it."

"In what?" demanded Wharton.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cook doesn't know what they think. And they don't know what Cook thinks," said Skinner. "There'll be a surprise on both sides when they compare notes to-morrow—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"What's the joke?" demanded Wibley, staring blankly at the hilarious three.

"You fellows are," chuckled Skinner. "I wondered why Bunter was picking out fellows with money. I thought at first he was picking them out to borrow their money on the yacht. Now I know."

"Well, if there's anything to tell, tell us," said Harry.

"No fear! I wouldn't spoil your surprise for worlds!" chuckled Skinner. "You'll find out all right."

"They'll find out all right!" roared Snoop. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wish you joy of your cruise!" gurgled Skinner. "Bunter told you it would be an expensive cruise. I heard him. It will."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Fancy letting that fat chump take them in like that, though!" said Snoop.

"How has Bunter taken us in?" roared Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"If you can't do anything but cackle, you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Skinner & Co.

"Let's give 'em something to yell for!" suggested Johnny Bull.

That suggestion was adopted nem. con. The Famous Five made a rush out of the doorway. Skinner & Co. were yelling with merriment, but the next moment they were yelling in quite a different way.

"Ow! Keep off! Oh crikey! Wow! Ow! Oh! You rotters! Yah! Oh! "Yoo-hoo! Whooop!"

Skinner & Co. were rolled along the passage, and bundled headlong into their own study. They were piled there in a breathless, gasping, gurgling heap. Their merriment was a thing of the past. They howled with anguish.

.....
Here's a ripping school yarn you'll enjoy reading, chums:—

"THE MYSTERY OF EASTWOOD HOUSE!"
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Blake & Co. of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, set out as the guests of their chum, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, for a week-end vacation at the house of Lord Eastwood. Although uninvited, Tom Merry & Co. and Figins & Co.—their rivals at the school—also "drop in" as do some of the inky-fingered lags. A mystery is unravelled, and then— But read all about it in this week's

GEM

You'll be more than satisfied with this topping tale!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,312.

Leaving them to howl, the Famous Five returned to Study No. 1 and the doughnuts. They had dealt faithfully with Skinner & Co., but they could not help feeling a little uneasy. What on earth was it that Skinner knew about that yachting cruise—which they did not know? What was the surprise he predicted for them on the morrow? They asked themselves those questions without being able to find answers. Johnny Bull had declared all along that there was a "catch" in it somewhere. But what was the catch?

It looked as if there really was a catch, and Skinner had found it out. But what—and how?

That was a mystery.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Off to Sea!

"HAPPY to see you!" said George.

George looked very merry and bright. His fat, red, round face fairly beamed under the peak of his yachting cap on the deck of the Sea Nymph. Baggage was being handed on board, and Captain Cook was greeting his guests. Everything looked very cheery in the bright spring sunshine. Harry Wharton & Co. were looking, and feeling, cheery enough, though they were rather haunted by their last sight of Skinner & Co. Skinner & Co. had stood in a group at the school gates watching them start, almost doubled up with merriment. But they tried to forget Skinner & Co. and their mysterious joke.

Skinner had predicted a "surprise" for them on the Sea Nymph, but there was no surprise, so far. George greeted them with plump heartiness. He seemed pleased to see Fisher T. Fish, who had kept his word, and come down to the bay to see the party off. The juniors had not expected Fishy to come off to the yacht, but he had done so, and was now on the deck, peering about him with his sharp eyes.

"Happy to see you, sir!" said George, for the seventh time, shaking hands with Fishy in his turn. "That makes seven, Billy."

"Fishy's not coming," said Bunter. "He's only butted in."

"I guess—"
"Fishy's come to see us off," explained Wharton.

"Quite welcome," said George affably, though he evidently lost his interest in the American junior at once when he learned that he was not to be a member of the party.

"I guess I'll give the shebang the once-over, now I'm here," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "No objection, what?"

"Not at all," said George affably. "Look over the yacht, if you like—but don't miss your boat back, if you're not sailing."

"That's all right," said Fisher T. Fish.

He went below with the juniors. He inspected the state-rooms with great interest, especially the rooms that were reserved for Coker & Co. later. The Famous Five, Bunter, and Wibley looked after their baggage, and they were busy in their rooms when Fishy called to them:

"I guess I'll be getting, you guys. So-long, and a good time!"

"Oh, going, Fishy?" Harry Wharton came out of his room, and glanced round for the American junior.

"Hallo! Gone already?"
Fishy had disappeared.

Wharton glanced round, rather puzzled by the sudden and abrupt departure of Fisher T. Fish. However,

he was not deeply interested in Fisher T. Fish, and he went back to his unpacking, and soon forgot his existence.

The engines began to buzz. The Sea Nymph was getting steam up. Captain Cook called down the saloon stairs to the juniors a little later:

"Time for your friend to go ashore, if he's not sailing."

"He's gone!" called back Wharton.

"I didn't see him go."

"Yes; he went about a quarter of an hour ago."

"Oh, all right!"

Fisher T. Fish, in an empty state-room which he had carefully locked on the inside, grinned. Nobody on board the Sea Nymph was aware that there was a stowaway on the yacht. Fishy did not intend anybody to know till it was too late to put him ashore.

How this stunt was going to turn out Fishy did not know. But he did not see how he could lose by it, and that was all that mattered.

They couldn't chuck him overboard. They could hardly refuse him meals when he made his presence known, which he was not going to do in a hurry. A man who seemed so generous and large-hearted as George, would surely take it as a joke, and let him stay for the cruise! Anyhow, he would surely consume provender to the value of his lost nine-and-ninence, at least. Fishy was chancing it, anyhow.

The juniors heard the clanking of the anchor coming up, and went on deck. George gave them a cheery nod and a grin.

"Like your rooms?" he inquired.

"Yes, rather!" said Harry.

"Topping!" said Bob Cherry.

"The topfulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Anything you want, don't fail to mention it," said George. "Anything in reason, of course."

"Eh? Oh! Everything's ripping," said Harry. "And I must say it's awfully kind of you, Captain Cook—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"I want you to be comfortable," said George. "I want you to enjoy the cruise. If you enjoy it, you might like another in the summer, what?"

"You're awfully good—"

"And you will tell your schoolfellows about it?" suggested George. "Lots of them might like a cruise on the Sea Nymph, if you tell them that you've had a really good time, what?"

"I've no doubt of that," said Harry, smiling, but puzzled. George, apparently, was prepared to take all Greyfriars cruising in his yacht, if they cared to come. It was really a little perplexing.

"Good!" said George heartily. "Recommendation is the best kind of advertisement, what?"

"I—I suppose so."

"Cheaper, too," said George sagely. "Newspaper advertisements cost a lot of money!"

"D-d-do they?"

"They do! Later on, I shall cut out newspaper advertisements entirely, and run the whole thing on personal recommendation."

Captain Cook turned away to attend to his duties, after making that most extraordinary remark. What he meant by it, the juniors could not even begin to guess. They wondered a little whether Bunter's Cousin George was quite right in his head. Some of his remarks were absolutely weird.

"I say, you fellows, we're moving!" said Bunter. "Lucky the sea's calm, what? You fellows would be seasick. He, he, he!"

The shore was receding, the chalky cliffs fading. The beach and the quay



The infuriated juniors crashed into George and bowled him over. "Ow!" roared the plump skipper. "What the thunder—whoop!" Assisted by the mate, George stood gasping, while Billy Bunter sagely dodged behind him and grinned at the infuriated Removites. "Ragging, what?" gasped George. "Well, boys will be boys! But just look where you're going next time!"

dropped into the distance. Far away over the trees the grey old tower of Greyfriars School sank from sight.

The juniors breathed deep in the keen salt air, as the yacht glided out into the North Sea. The waves rolled and glistened in the bright sunshine. There was no doubt that it was ripping to be at sea. Like most healthy British boys, the chums of the Remove loved the sea, and had a secret hankering after a life on the ocean wave, a home on the rolling deep. Really, this Easter cruise was a tremendous stroke of luck, and beat liking hollow.

The fact that they owed it to Bunter was a perpetual surprise to them. There was a tacit agreement that they were going to be very nice to Bunter, and tolerate his rather troublesome manners and customs with unvarying good humour. It had to be admitted that the fat Owl was playing up remarkably well for once; and, as Bob Cherry put it, if Bunter stood the cruise, it was up to them to stand Bunter.

But—as a novelist might say—they little knew!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Surprise!

"O H, really, George—"
 "Look here—"
 "There's no hurry—"
 "Short reckonings make long friends, Billy."
 "Yes, but—"
 "Leave it to me."
 "But, I say—"
 "I don't make you out, Billy! The rule is, cash in advance!"
 "Yes, but—"

"With friends of yours, it's all right, of course. But business is business. I don't get you, Billy!"

"Oh lor!" mumbled Bunter. Harry Wharton & Co. were in the saloon and the state-rooms adjoining. Some of them were sorting out belongings. William Wibley was unpacking a stack of amateur theatrical gadgets, which he had brought with him. All of them heard Billy Bunter's squeak, and the deep, fat voice of George, on the saloon stairs—but politely affected to hear nothing. What that colloquy between Bunter and his cousin could possibly mean they had no idea.

George, it appeared, had something to say to his passengers, and Bunter wanted to put it off. But there was no putting off George, and the juniors heard the fat Owl go back to the deck, mumbling, while Captain Cook came down.

The yacht was gliding on an even keel, over a bright sea, red in the setting sun. Land was far out of sight. The Greyfriars fellows were in great spirits. The Sea Nymph was going to touch later at Dover, and pick up Coker & Co. there, and later at Margate; after which she was running south to sunnier skies and bluer waters. It was a cheery prospect.

George came down, with his heavy, plump tread, and his usual good-humoured grin on his round, red face. But the grin did not disguise a certain sharp and businesslike expression. George looked like a man who had come down to talk business, though what business he could have to talk with his guests the juniors did not know.

But as he evidently had something to say, the juniors gathered to hear it.

George sat down on the edge of the cabin table, pushed back the yachting cap from his plump, red brow, and swung his plump legs.

"Settling down, what?" he inquired cheerily.

"Oh, yes! Fine!" said Bob.

"Comfortable quarters, and all that?"

"Ripping!" said Nugent.

"The ripfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Good!" said George heartily. "We aim to give complete satisfaction. That's our motto—satisfaction. Make a man comfortable, and he comes again, what?"

"Ye-c-es!" said Harry, puzzled once more by George's conversation. "I—I—I suppose so."

"It's awfully good of you!" said Nugent.

"Eh? I don't see that!" said George. "If I don't make 'em comfortable, where do I come in, in the long run? That's how I look at it!"

"D-d-do you?"
 "Exactly!"

"Well, if you'd like us to come again," said Wibley, with a grin, "I fancy you won't be disappointed. I'd be jolly glad to come, for one."

"Glad to hear it!" said George. "I'll be pleased to book you for the summer. I dare say friends of yours at school will like the idea, too, when you tell them about the cruise."

"What-ho!" said Wibley.

"If I fill up for the summer cruise with Greyfriars boys, of course, it will simplify matters," said George.

"W-w-will it?"

"Oh, quite! Reduced terms may be possible."

"Eh?"

"It will save the whole cost of advertisements."

"Advertisements," said Harry blankly. Somehow at that moment the recollection came into his mind of the advertisement that had made Skinner yell with merriment in the Rag the previous evening.

"Of course, a man has to advertise," said George, looking a little surprised himself. "Otherwise, how would anybody know about the cruise?"

"But—but I don't catch on!" gasped Wharton. "You surely don't mean that you advertise that you're taking fellows on an Easter cruise?"

"I surely do," answered George.

"Well, my hat!"

"It's the only way," said George, seemingly surprised by the surprise of his passengers. "I've had several advertisements out, naturally."

The juniors could only gaze at him.

"That, of course, was before I thought of Billy," explained George.

"Be-before you thought of B-B-Billy?"

"Yes; but when I remembered my young cousin, at a Public school, I said to myself: 'Gad! That's the game!'"

"D-d-d-did you?"

"Just the thing!" explained George. "School breaking up for Easter, fellows with money to spend looking for a really good holiday on reasonable terms—what? So I put it up to Billy."

"But—but what—what—"

Harry Wharton & Co. were mystified. But they felt that they were on the verge of elucidating the mystery. They remembered that Bunter had been rather particular in picking out fellows who had money, or whose people had money. All the yachting party were fairly well provided in that line, though he had failed to bag Lord Mauleverer and the Bounder. But what on earth had money to do with it?

"And I'm bound to say that Billy has played up and done quite well," went on George. "To be quite frank, I had no idea that Billy had such a very nice and pleasant set of friends in the school. I'm bound to say that I'm pleased to see it."

This was very flattering; but the juniors were so surprised and mystified that they could only stare at George.

"Now to come down to business," added George.

"Bib-bib-business."

"Well, there are a few business details to settle, you know," said George, with his hearty laugh.

"Are there?" gasped Wharton.

"Naturally"

"But—but what—"

"Well, the cheques, you know."

"The chick-chick-cheques!" stuttered Wharton.

George raised his eyebrows. The juniors were amazed, but there was no doubt that George, too, was surprised. He did not seem to make them out, any more than they made him out.

"Of course, I don't suppose that you boys have your pockets full of cash," said George. "The cheques will naturally come from your parents."

"From our pip-pip-parents?" gurgled Bob.

George looked quite puzzled.

"Yes. If you prefer to pay cash, it's all right, of course. But the usual way is a cheque."

"If we prefer to pi-pip-pay kik-kik-cash!" said Frank Nugent, like a fellow in a dream.

"Yes. If you have the cheques with

you, you may hand them over to me now, and I will give you the usual receipts."

"We're dreaming this!" said Harry Wharton.

George looked at him.

"Otherwise, the cheques may be sent direct from your parents to my office," he said. "But I'm bound to mention that the rule is cash in advance."

"Kik-kik-cash in advance?"

"Invariably," said George.

"But—but—but what—" stammered Wharton helplessly. "What—what—what do you mean, Mr. Cook?"

"I should think it was clear," said George, with a stare. "I trust you, of course. As Billy's friends, I know you're to be trusted. I know it from your looks, too, if I may say so. But business is business, and cash in advance of the cruise is the invariable rule. People might forget to settle afterwards. I don't say you would—I don't think you would—far from it! But cash in advance of the cruise is the invariable rule."

The juniors looked at George. They looked at one another. There was a dreadful silence in the saloon of the Sea Nymph.

The awful truth was filtering slowly into the astounded minds of the chums of the Remove.

They knew all about holiday cruises at sea, for which you paid so much a

Wharton was first to find his voice. "Let's have this clear!" he gasped. "Let—let's understand how it stands. P-p-put it plain, please."

"Haven't I put it plain?" George's tone was a little sharp. "I hardly make you out, Master Wharton. I suppose Billy told you the terms."

"The—the terms!"

"You don't mean to say that Billy never told you the terms?" exclaimed George.

"N-n-no!"

"That was careless of him. But didn't you ask?"

"Ask? Oh, my hat!"

"Schoolboys are generally rather careless, I believe," said George. "But surely that is carrying carelessness to excess—to arrange to go on a cruise without inquiring the terms."

"Oh crikey!"

"But your people," said George—"your fathers, guardians, or what not—they surely asked the terms when you told them you were going?"

"Oh, Jemima! Hardly!"

"Well," said George, "I've come across some unbusinesslike people in my time, but I'm bound to say that this takes the biscuit. If this is the Public school training I don't see how any Public school man will ever handle business in this world! Mean to say that not one of your parents asked the amount of the cheque he had to draw?"

"Oh crumbs! No! You—you see—"

"I don't see," said George. "It's unbusinesslike—I'm bound to say that. Still, there's no harm done. My terms are reasonable and well known—they are stated in my advertisements in well-known papers. I stand by them! Twenty-one guineas for the cruise is the figure—and reasonable!"

"Twenty-two guineas!"

"That is the figure. I hope," said George, with dignity, "that you don't think I'm charging you too much! I thought, of course, that you knew the terms—how was I to think otherwise? Unless I got a full passenger list it won't show a lot—I can tell you that. And Billy, of course, comes free—that's understood, as his consideration for getting me clients."

"Oh!" gasped the juniors.

They saw now where Billy Bunter came in.

"That's not a small item, either," said George. "So far as food goes, he counts as two passengers, if not three—I might say four!"

There was a call from the deck from George's mate. The skipper of the Sea Nymph slipped off the table, set his yachting-cap straight, and went to the door. But he paused a moment there.

"It's rather awkward," said George—"a very disagreeable misunderstanding. Very careless—I'm bound to say that! But you can post letters home at Dover, and you will, of course, mention that the cheques will be expected at my office without any undue delay."

And George went on deck, leaving the Greyfriars fellows staring at one another blankly. Skinner had told them that they were going to have a surprise. Undoubtedly, they had had one!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"THAT villain Bunter—"

"That scoundrel Bunter—"

"That fat pig Bunter—"

"We'll scalp him!"

"The scalpfulness will be terrific!"

"The—the—the worm! Didn't I tell

Don't Forget!!!

Wonderful

FREE GIFTS

coming in the

MAGNET shortly!

head. The papers were full of advertisements of such things. But never for a moment had they dreamed of such a thing in connection with Billy Bunter's invitation to a cruise on his cousin's yacht. How could they?

They had to think of it now!

Skinner had told them that they would have a surprise on board the Sea Nymph. They were getting it!

And now, of course, they jumped to it, what Skinner had been yelling at in the Rag! They knew now what advertisement he must have seen in the newspaper—the advertisement of an Easter cruise in the Sea Nymph, at a fixed charge for the cruise. And he had not told them. That rotter, that worm, had guessed at once how Bunter was spoofing them when he had discovered, from the advertisement, that Captain Cook was running the Sea Nymph as a business proposition—as a sort of floating holiday boarding-house. He had left them to find it out after they had started. Now they were finding it out.

In horrified amazement they gazed at George.

George was no longer smiling. He seemed to realise that there was something wrong somewhere.

George, of course, was no party to the deception. All his strange remarks—strange at the time—were explained now—now that the guests on board the Sea Nymph realised that they were expected to pay for the cruise. Even that tea with Bunter on the yacht, which George said so oddly, would "go down"—he had meant that it would go down on the bill!

you fellows there was a catch in it?" snorted Johnny Bull.

"We'll burst him all over his cousin's yacht—" hissed Bob Cherry.

"Twenty-one guineas—"

"A cruise you pay for—"

"Pulling our leg all the time—"

"And getting his own trip-free, by landing us in it—"

"No wonder Skinner was cackling—Skinner knew— My hat! Won't I punch his head next term for not telling us!"

"Where's the fat villain now?" gasped Wibley. "I want to wallop him."

It was quite a chorus. Harry Wharton was the first to grow calm. Scalping Bunter, or even bursting him, would have been a solace; but more important than that, was to decide what was going to be done.

"We'd better think this out!" said Wharton. "It's our own fault really—we ought to have known Bunter better. We jolly well knew that his people can't afford to keep yachts, and take cruising parties for holidays. We oughtn't to have let him pull our leg like this."

"I told you there was a catch in it—"

"Oh, rats! You didn't know what the catch was," grunted Bob Cherry. "You were daddled like the rest of us, Johnny."

Snort, from Johnny Bull.

"The question is, what's going to be done?" said Harry.

"Looks as if we are!" grinned Bob. "There'll be a bill run up already—we've been on board some time, and had some meals—"

"It's rough on us, but it's rough on Mr. Cook, too, if we turn him down," said Harry. "He as good as told us, only we never understood."

"That's so! But—"

"He's running this cruise as a business, and he asked Bunter to let Greyfriars fellows know, to get passengers for the cruise," said Harry.

"It's all fair and square as far as Cook is concerned. He never dreamed that that fat villain would spoof us, and invite us on a cruise—making out that it was an invitation for the hols— Oh, my hat! We've been a lot of asses!"

"I told you there was a catch—"

"Oh, dry up, old man! Of course, we shouldn't have come if we'd known, but—we're here now—"

"And old Coker!" gasped Bob. "Coker's coming on board at Dover, and he doesn't know any more than we did! There's a surprise in store for Coker, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter in the saloon. The thought of the surprise in store for Coker, caused general hilarity for a few moments. They could picture the face of Horace Coker when he learned the truth.

"But what are we going to do?" asked Nugent. "Ask Cook to turn back and land us, and go home, after all—"

"We can't do that!" said Harry decidedly. "Everything's fixed up now. Nobody expects us at home. The fact is, that fat villain has got us on a string. He knew we couldn't back out after getting on board—that villain Skinner knew it, too, blow him—"

"Are we going to be done?" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Well, let's look at it," said Harry. "George is right about the terms being reasonable—our people wouldn't kick at twenty-one guineas for an Easter cruise, if we'd known, and asked them. Holidays cost money, wherever you have them. If we stick to it, we're getting our money's worth, if you come to that."

"That's so," agreed Wibley. "But—"

"And we shall look a lot of fools, going back after we've started—"

"Well, we are a lot of fools!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Prize fools, if you ask me, for believing a word from Bunter."

"The foolfulness was terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But we do not want to look such esteemed fools as we idiotically are, my esteemed Johnny."

"After all, we might have done worse for the hols," said Harry. "It's more than we meant to spend—but we can make it up in one way or another. The fact is, now we're landed in it, I think we'd better see it through. And—there's one thing—we're under no obligation to Bunter, if we pay our way. That's something."

"I'd rather pay my way, if you come to that!" growled Johnny Bull.

It was all very well for the party to make up their minds to "stick" it and make the best of it and see it through! That did not alter the fact that they had been thoroughly done—done brown—absolutely fooled and spoofed by the swanking and unscrupulous Owl. He had bragged all over Greyfriars of the Bunter yacht—gathered all the kudos of asking a crowd of fellows for a glorious holiday—swanked to his fat heart's content—and all the time he was landing the fellows in—this! And he had got away with it!

Obviously he had meant to postpone the painful explanation as late as possible—the juniors might not have learned the truth for days, but for George's desire to get down to business. Scalping Bunter was too good for him—something lingering, with boiling oil in it was more suitable. They gave him almost wolfish looks.

Bunter eyed them warily. He plainly expected trouble of some sort, now that they knew.

"You fat scoundrel!" said Johnny Bull. "We know now! And we're going to burst you into small pieces."

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"You spoofing, lying, deceiving, bamboozling porpoise—" hissed Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Collar him!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows, keep off!" gasped Bunter. "I say, there's nothing to rag about. What have you got to complain of, I'd like to know?"

"What?" yelled Wharton.

"You're going for a jolly good cruise," said Bunter warmly. "You're getting it cheap. You've got my company for nothing—"

"What?" shrieked Bob.

"My company!" said Bunter. "George is standing me the cruise, of course, for getting him so many customers—I mean, clients! He wouldn't have taken me for nothing. Well, as the matter stands, you've got my company for the vacation. You mightn't have had it otherwise."

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter. "Did you tell us we had to pay!" roared Johnny Bull. "You spoofing porker, you took us in."

"You can't say I took you in! I told you plainly that it was going to be an expensive cruise! Now, didn't I?"

"You fat idiot, we thought you meant—"

"I can't help what you thought! I'm not to blame if you're a set of duffers," argued Bunter. "I told you it was going to be an expensive cruise, as plain as I could speak! Well, twenty-one guineas each is expensive, ain't it?"

"Kill him!" gasped Bob.

"I must say it's a bit thick, making out that I've taken you in," said Billy Bunter. "It's practically accusing a chap of being deceitful."

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"I don't like it!" said Bunter. "Some fellows wouldn't mind, I dare say—chaps like you fellows, fr'instance. You're not so particular as I am in such things. You might be deceitful. Not me!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"If you're going to cut up rusty," said Bunter, "I shall be sorry I brought you on this ripping cruise. Calling a fellow names is a bit ungrateful. I'm always doing things for fellows, and I've almost given up expecting gratitude—still, there's a limit!"

"There is!" gasped Bob Cherry. "There's a limit, Bunter—and you're the limit! Bag him, you men!"

The juniors made a rush.

(Continued on page 28.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,312.

HEARD THIS ONE?

Shop Assistant: "What can I get for you, madam?"
 Old Lady: "A pair of leggings for my son, please."
 Shop Assistant: "What size, madam?"
 Old Lady: "I don't know, but I've brought one of his puttees!"

Leonard Owen, of 1, Bentley Road, Oxtou, Birkenhead, who submitted the above winning rib-tickler, is now in possession of a splendid pocket-knife.

STEP IN AND WIN ONE, CHUM!

"Well, I think we'd all rather," said Harry.

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"I think we'd better stick it out, then," said Harry. "But we'll jolly well rag Bunter bald-headed for spoofing us."

"What-ho!" That was unanimously agreed to at once.

"The spoofing rotter!" said Bob. "Making out he was inviting fellows on a holiday cruise in a relation's yacht, and—and it turns out like this! If we'd wanted to pay for a cruise, we could have done it without Bunter. Why, I'll spifficate him—"

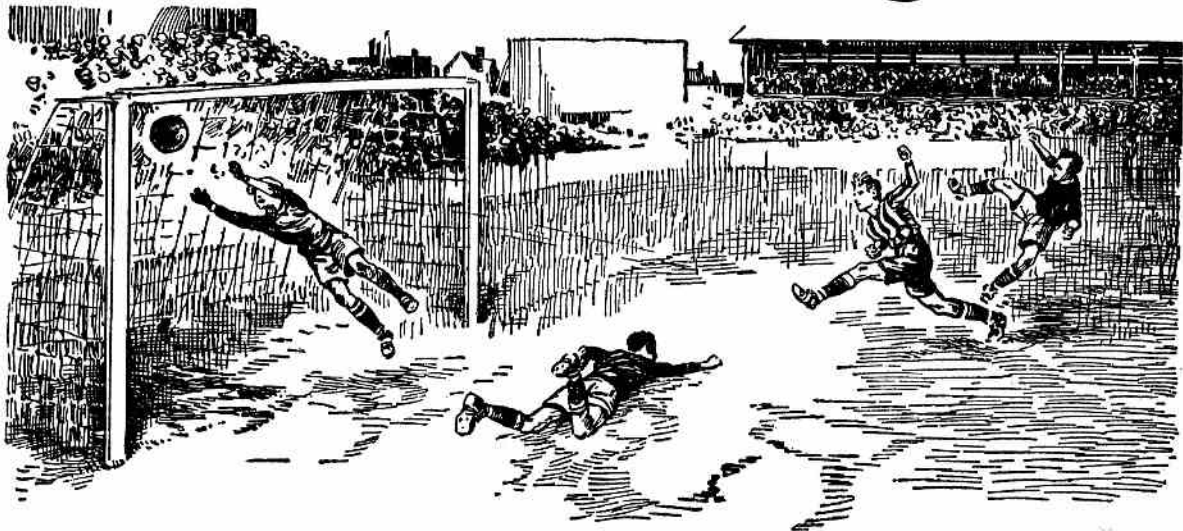
"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter blinked into the saloon with an uneasy blink. He did not come near to hand, however. He was keeping open a line of retreat. He seemed to realise that he might need one.

Six savage glares were fastened on the fat Owl.

LEDLEY SCOTT'S SMASHING SOCCER AND 'TEC THRILLER!

NOBBY, *the* 'Shooting Star!



HOW THE STORY STARTED.

A fugitive from Don Carlos' circus, Nobby, a sixteen-year-old waif, meets Ferrers Locke, the detective, who introduces him to Lord Douglas Weatherstone, chairman of the Perriton Rovers F.C. Nobby very soon becomes professional, but falls foul of Lord Douglas' rascally nephew, Daniel Willoughby Thundersley. Hard pressed for money, Thundersley rifles his uncle's safe, only to bump into Nobby whilst escaping with his loot. Fearing that Nobby—who is later legally adopted by Lord Douglas—might talk, Thundersley plots with the Don to remove the youngster. By means of a faked message, Nobby is lured to a disused garage where he is bound and gagged and placed in a large packing case. "All O.K. now, boss!" says the Don's "secretary." "I'll go and see about the removal of the case."

(Now read on.)

Revenge!

THE "secretary" shook hands with the Don and strode out of the garage. At a sign to the chauffeur he drove to the nearest village, stopped at a carter's office, and intimated that he wanted a packing-case collected from the garage farther along the road and dispatched to the address on the label.

He paid for the job handsomely, gave his name as Daniel Willoughby Thundersley, and drove off, leaving a muddle-headed carter wondering whether the treasury-note given him was a good one, and why on earth a packing-case had been left at a garage which had been deserted for three years or more.

But the carter was an honest man himself. He called for that packing-case an hour later, took it away in an old Ford truck, and just as three o'clock was chiming from a near-by church tower, pulled up outside the lodge gates of Weatherstone Court.

An ancient retainer ambled out of the lodge, muttered under his breath when he saw the size of the packing-case, and grudgingly helped the carter unload it from his van.

The van drove off, the lodgekeeper phoned through to the servants, and informed them that a large packing-case, addressed to Mr. "Nobby" Thundersley, was awaiting collection at the lodge, and the sooner it was "collected" the better he would like it.

And so young Nobby, still unconscious, arrived back at the place from which he had started. Hefty footmen shouldered the packing-case, and dumped it in a first floor box-room to await the young master's arrival, little dreaming that the "young master" was a fast prisoner inside it.

Meanwhile, the telephone-bell was ringing in Daniel Thundersley's flat. The Don's voice came through silkily to the eager Thundersley.

"Did you get him?" asked Thundersley impatiently.

"We did," replied the Don. "He walked into the trap like a mouse after a bit of cheese—yes."

"Oh, good!" There was a world of relief in Thundersley's voice. "And he won't come back, Carlos?"

There was a harsh, unnatural chuckle over the wires.

"I hardly think so, my young friends. He has gone on a long journey—a very long journey!"

"I don't know how to thank you!" came Thundersley's vibrant tones to the listening Don. "Man, you've done me the biggest turn in the world!"

The Don laughed harshly again and snapped down the receiver.

"The poor fools!" he hissed. "He doesn't know the good turns I have done him! Ho, ho, ho!"

The showman was so tickled to death at the grim picture his evil imagination conjured that he opened a bottle of liquor and proceeded to empty it, chuckling the while with fendish glee.

Long into the evening he sat thus, picturing to himself the consternation and horror of those who eventually saw fit to open the packing-case. For inside,

according to the Don's calculation, they would find the lifeless body of Nobby—victim of a slow and terrible fate. Then would come investigations, and the discovery of Daniel Willoughby Thundersley's neckerchief wrapped tightly around the victim's jaws; also a cardcase, unmistakably Thundersley's, too—just as if it had fallen out of the waistcoat pocket of a man bending over the packing-case.

"Ho, ho, ho!" chuckled the Don. "He will be arrested, ho, ho! It will be proved that he hates the brat like poison! It will be proved that the neckerchief and the cardcase belong to him. Ho, ho, ho!" He paused in his maniacal laughter and thumped his fists fiercely across his chest. "Revenge—complete revenge, Don Carlos! You have not waited all these years in vain! Ho, ho! He will be sent to trial. Circumstantial evidence will be too strong for him. He will hang. And the Don—the great Don who has brought all this about—will be gone! Ho, ho—he will disappear!"

The showman's maniacal laughter attracted the circus employees to his caravan, but not one had the temerity to step inside the caravan to see what it was all out. They knew their taskmaster and his varying moods. When he was in his cups he was indeed a dangerous man.

But the Don seemed conscious of their presence, for suddenly he appeared at the doorway of the caravan, whip in hand. His face was livid, his eyes unnaturally bright.

"Back, you scum!" he roared, lashing about him with the whip. "Don't you know better than to gape at your masters! Away with you! Ho, ho, ho!"

And the circus employees melted away like shadows, some of them yelping as the Don's whip lashed against them furiously.

Foul Play!

WHERE'S Mr. Thundersley?" His lordship looked displeased as he rapped the question at the butler. Tea was served, and Lord Weatherstone had looked forward to young Nobby's company.

"He's gone out, my lord," replied the butler. "I understand the chauffeur took him to the Arcadia Club."

"The Arcadia Club? What the devil for?" asked his lordship irritably.

"I cannot say, my lord. Mr. Thundersley received a message by a district messenger just before he departed, so I presume that had something to do with it, my lord."

"H'm! Ah! Very well!" Lord Douglas Weatherstone waved a dismissal to the butler. "What the devil are you hanging about for?"

"I wish to inform your lordship that a packing-case has arrived for Mr. Thundersley. Is it your wish, my lord, that the servants should unpack the case in readiness for Mr. Thundersley?"

"Certainly not!" he snorted. "Most certainly not! If Mr. Thundersley needs any assistance in unpacking his case he will assuredly commission it when he comes in. I don't expect he wants the servants nosing into his property. Now get out!"

With grave, expressionless face, the butler withdrew. His interest in the packing-case had been merely that of a servant eager to anticipate his master's wishes. Thereafter the arrival of the packing-case held no place in his mind.

But if only Lord Douglas Weatherstone had known the extraordinary nature of the contents of that case, all the servants in the household would have been engaged on tearing its wooden planks apart.

The hours passed. The gong for dinner resounded through the great house. But still there was no sign of young Nobby. Lord Douglas Weatherstone was in a raging temper by the time dinner was cleared away. At least, Nobby might have left a message with the servants if he had intended to absent himself like this. It was discourteous, to say the least. Like the prophet of old, his lordship felt that he did well to be angry.

But as the hours went by, and still Nobby did not put in an appearance, a feeling of uneasiness began to overtake his lordship. So uneasy was he, in fact, that he had a telephone call put through to the Arcadia Club. No information awaited him there. Nobody answering Nobby's description had either "tea'd" or dined at the club.

Alarmed now, Lord Weatherstone rang up his old friend, Ferrers Locke.

"Can't make it out, old chap," he informed the detective. "The youngster goes out early this afternoon—yes, just after lunch—and I haven't seen him since. Not even a phone message from him. Strange? Yes, I should say it is. Got a rotten feelin' somethin' has happened to the boy. What's that? You'll come over? Oh, good man!"

His lordship mopped his brow as he replaced the receiver. Once the thought had taken root in his mind that Nobby had met with foul play, it grew and grew to alarming proportions. But he felt more comfortable when Ferrers Locke was announced.

Once again his lordship explained all he knew of the boy's strange absence. The butler was called in to give his version, likewise the footman, who had brought the message to Nobby, and the chauffeur, who had taken him to the Arcadia.

Ferrers Locke heard them all out in silence.

"Can you describe how he was dressed?" This to the chauffeur.

"Oh, yes, sir!" And swiftly came the description of what Nobby had been wearing, to which the footman added that Nobby had made a lightning change on receipt of the message.

"Perhaps we may find the message which called him away if we examine the suit of clothes he was wearing when the footman here delivered it," said Ferrers Locke, after a pause.

"Alphonse!" barked his lordship. "Bring the clothes. Hurry, you idiot!"

And Alphonse hurried. Methodically Ferrers Locke went through the pockets of the suit the footman valet handed him, looking for the message. But a search revealed nothing—nothing beyond a thumbled envelope, which contained a single sheet of notepaper, and both envelope and paper were blank.

For a long time Ferrers Locke regarded them, noting the torn edge of the envelope. Then he faced the footman.

"Would you recognise this as the envelope you handed to Mr. Thundersley this afternoon?"

The footman studied it for a while, and then shrugged.

"I could not say for certain, sir," he said. "It—it looks uncommonly like it. But it wasn't a blank envelope, sir. You see, it was addressed to Mr. Thundersley."

"Thank you. I shall not require the servants any longer, my lord."

His lordship dismissed them, and then turned to the detective.

"You've discovered something?"

The wish was father to the thought. But, to Lord Weatherstone's delight, the detective nodded in the affirmative.

"Yes. Take a look at this envelope and paper through my glass."

"Blessed if I can see anything," began his lordship incoherently. Then he jumped. "By Jove, I can! There's a faint impression on the paper—"

"You're right," broke in Locke. "Just as if a finely pointed pen had scored into it rather heavily. Watch!"

With a finely pointed pencil, and by means of the magnifying glass, he traced the impression left by the pen until a complete message, with signature, was revealed. At sight of it Lord Weatherstone jumped.

"Why, it's signed in my name!" he ejaculated wrathfully. "Deuced like my awful scrawl, too. How—what—"

Ferrers Locke held up his hand.

"Not so loud, my lord. There's been foul play here. The letter, signed with your name, was written, obviously, in vanishing ink—an old trick. But, thanks to the nature of the pen used, we are able to resurrect the message, such as it is."

"But it doesn't help us," groaned his lordship. "We know the kid went to the Arcadia. The chauffeur took him there. Where has he disappeared to since then?"

"That's what we are going to find out," said Ferrers Locke grimly. "Bear up. I promise you I won't give up until

I find young Nobby. I won't even sleep."

"Bless you, old chap!" said his lordship gratefully. "Are you going?"

"At once," replied Locke. "I'll make a few inquiries myself at the Arcadia. See you soon. You turn in and get some sleep. I'll bring back Nobby, never fear."

But Lord Douglas Weatherstone felt a sinking of the heart as he watched the tall figure of the detective depart, despite his encouraging words.

Meanwhile, behind the closed door of the box-room, came muffled sounds from the interior of the packing-case. Nobby, almost stifled, asphyxiated, was struggling for breath—for life itself!

A Narrow Squeak!

HOW deep is the ocean"—deep breath—"How wide is the sky?"

At the top of his youthful voice, Jack Drake, Ferrers Locke's boy assistant, asked those questions of the world in general and nobody in particular, in an attempt to sing the popular song which Miss Gracie Fields has made famous. But although there was power behind Drake's vocal effort, there was a paucity of musical talent.

Least it should be imagined that Ferrers Locke's clever young assistant was really concerned as to the depth of the ocean and the width of the sky, it should be mentioned with expedition that he didn't care a rap. Truth to tell, Drake was bored, bored and fed-up with driving Locke's powerful Rolls-Royce.

For over a week now, the youngster had been away from London, from England, for that matter. He had been pursuing a line of investigation in France and its provinces concerning something of importance to Nobby. That job done to his complete satisfaction, Drake, naturally, was all afire to get back to his beloved chief.

Locke's Rolls-Royce car had gone across the water with Drake, and between them they had covered three thousand miles. In the circumstances, therefore, it was not surprising that Drake should now find the few remaining miles to Baker Street somewhat monotonous.

He started to sing again.

Away behind the speeding Rolls lay the spacious air port of Croydon. Drake had spotted the evening mail-plane to Amsterdam loading up as he had flashed by. In front of Drake the road stretched greyish and shadowy in the gathering dusk, whilst an almost uninterrupted stream of cars passed him.

While he warbled, Drake kept his keen eyes on the road well ahead, anticipating more than once the foolish approach of a novice motorist from a side turning by the shadows cast across the road. But he was not prepared for the big Daimler car that suddenly, and without any warning, twisted out of a side avenue at a ridiculous speed and out across his track broadside.

A crash seemed inevitable. Drake saw his peril, exclaimed his thoughts aloud of the fool driver of the Daimler, and swung the wheel over.

The driver of the Daimler, in turn, saw his peril, accelerated, and his car shot straight for the low hedge bordering the main road, climbed it, and crashed over on its side with a rending of woodwork and a screeching of metal.

Drake brought the Rolls to a straight course with a mastery effort and clapped on his brakes. In a flash he was out of the car and racing towards the overturned Daimler.

(Look out for next Saturday's MAGNET and further thrilling chapters of this powerful story, chums.)

FINAL Coupon.



BILLY BUNTER'S EASTER CRUISE!

(Continued from page 25.)

But Billy Bunter was very watchful. He skipped up the stairs like a fat, but active kangaroo. He skipped swiftly out on deck.

With a whoop, the juniors rushed after him.

Billy Bunter fairly bounded on deck. "I—I say, George—" he gasped. Captain Cook glanced round. "Hallo! What—" He came towards the breathless Owl.

From the companion six infuriated juniors burst in a bunch; and before they—or George—knew what was happening, they had crashed into George. Crash! Bump!

"Ow!" roared George, as he was distributed along his own deck. "What the thunder—Whoooop!"

"Oh crickey! I say, you fellows—" "Oh, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton, staggering from the shock.

George sat up. "What the dooce—" he stuttered. "What the dickens—Ooooh! Ow!" "Sorry!" gasped Bob. "But we—"

Mr. Pycroft, the mate, came and picked up his plump skipper. George stood gasping, and Billy Bunter sagely dodged behind him. From that safe refuge he grinned at the infuriated Removites.

"Ragging—what?" George recovered his plump good-humour. "Well, boys will be boys! What? Only don't bump me over again, please—ooohh! I'm a bit winded! Ooooh! Never mind—no harm done! Look where you're going next time, what?"

"The sorrowfulness is terrific!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Don't mench!" said George. "All right!"

George undoubtedly was a very good-tempered man. In George's presence it was impossible to deal with the Owl of the Remove as he deserved. Bunter had to wait! No doubt he was satisfied to wait—and the longer he waited the better he would be pleased!

Billy Bunter haunted his cousin, George, like a fat ghost after that. Under George's wing he was safe—away from that shelter he knew what to expect.

At supper George presided at the table, and Billy Bunter, still under the protecting wing, devoted his attention to parking the foodstuffs.

With the fall of night there was a wind, and a swell on the North Sea. The Sea Nymph began to roll a little.

Billy Bunter did not notice it. Whatever might be the drawbacks of that Easter cruise, the tuck was good and ample—and the juniors made a good supper; and Bunter made several, one after another. Bunter, in fact, was having the time of his life.

He was not finished when George went back to the deck, having only eaten enough for four or five fellows. But he seemed very shy of remaining with the juniors without George, so he left his supper unfinished and rolled on deck after his cousin.

"We'll get him later!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Yes, rather."

George came down presently and went to his cabin, leaving Mr. Pycroft in charge of the deck. Rather to the surprise of the Famous Five, Bunter did not come down with him. This was their chance!

They cut up to the deck. They felt that they could not give Bunter his deserts in George's presence; but the mate did not matter. Billy Bunter was for it now!

"Where is the fat scoundrel?" asked

Johnny Bull, peering round in the starlight.

"Bunter!" howled Bob.

Groan!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That sounds like Bunter."

Groan!

"Got you, you fat frump!" hissed Nugent.

Groan!

The juniors surrounded Bunter. He was stretched in a deckchair. He made no attempt to escape. He did not even blink at them. He only groaned.

"Now, Bunter—"

Groan!

They peered at him. His face was ghastly. A basin was by his side. He groaned and gurgled and groaned again. Supper and the swell on the sea had done it! Billy Bunter was in the deadly grip of sea-sickness. If he had been going to be boiled in oil, the fat Owl could not have made a movement to save himself.

"Oh, my hat!" said Harry.

Groan!

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob.

Groan!

"I—I say, you fellows," came in a faint moan from Bunter. "I—I say, g-g-go and tell George—grooh!—to turn back! Tell him to be—ooohh!—be quick! T-t-tell him I don't want to go to—ooohh!—sea! I—I think I'm dud-dud-dying! Oooohh!"

They did not rag Bunter! They left him to groan—hair-raising groans. Really, there was no need to rag the fat Owl! He was paying dearly for his sins!

THE END.

(Don't miss: "GREYFRIARS CHUMS AFLOAT!" the next yarn in this wonderful new series dealing with the exciting Easter holiday adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. aboard the Sea Nymph. It's full of rousing fun!)



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Edw. O'Brien THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER, DEP. 1, COVENTRY.

OUTFIT FREE! Album, Mounts, Perf. Gauge, Detector, Libertia Pkt. 5d. diff. Send 2d.; ask Approvals.—WILKINSON, 25b, Lawson Road, Colwyn Bay, Wales.

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I promise you Robust Health, Doubled Strength, Stamina, and Dashing Energy in 30 days or money back! My amazing 4-in-1 Course adds 10-25 lbs. to your muscular development (with 2 lbs. on Chest and 1 lb. on Arm), also brings an Iron Will, Perfect Self-control, Virile Manhood, Personal Magnetism. Surprise your friends! Complete Course, 5/-. Details free, privately.—STEBBING INSTITUTE (A), 28, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2

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STOP STAMMERING! Cure yourself as I did. Particulars Free.—FRANK B. HUGHES, 26, HART STREET, LONDON, W.C.1.

S.O.S.
Sow Our Seeds!
 Amateur Gardeners! Get busy right away with Tom Brown's Unique Seeds! The results will astound you. Sweet William seeds become splendid dandelions, Lupine seeds turn into fine string-beans, and each day in your garden will bring forth some new and delightful surprise. Send for an assorted pecked (price 1s.) and watch your garden change into a tropical jungle in no time!—
 TOM BROWN (Seeds) Ltd., Remove Passage.

THE NEW GREYFRIARS Herald

EXTRA GOOD EDITION

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

No. 27 (New Series).

April 8th, 1933.

STUDY SWAP WANTED!
 Advertiser, slightly hard of hearing, seeks change of study. Reason: present study-mates don't possess "sound" principles. Write, TOM DUTTON, Study No. 7, Remove.

MAULY'S HIKING CLUB

"Lazy Earl's" Amazing Reform

The news that Lord Maudslayi, the one-time armchair champion of the Remove, has started a hiking club bursts on us like a giddy thunderbolt this week. It seems almost incredible that his son, no less a lordship than at last wakened to red-blooded life, but we assure you it's absolutely true!

Interviewed in his study yesterday, Mauly was enthusiastic about his new enterprise.

"Is it true that you're starting a hiking club?" our interviewer asked.

"Yass!"

"I suppose you've come to the conclusion that you haven't been taking enough exercise, your lordship?"

"Yass!"

"Would you mind telling our readers what route you intend taking on your first hiking expedition?"

"Yass—I mean, we shall take a hike over Courtfield Common."

"A delightful open space," our interviewer remarked. "It's quite a nice walk before you get there, too."

"Yass—I mean, we shan't walk there, you ass. We shall have the Rolls to take us there."

Our interviewer jumped.

"How far will the Rolls take you then, your lordship?"

"Oh, as far as the pond, I suppose," yawned Mauly.

"Great pip! And what route will you take after you leave the Rolls?"

"Yass—that is to say, we shall walk round the pond."

"And then get back into the Rolls?"

"Yass!"

"But you won't have to walk more than fifty yards then!" roared our interviewer.

"Is that what you call a hike?"

"Yass! Do you mind if I close my eyes while you go on talking?"

Our interviewer had intended asking several other questions, but Mauly had fallen fast asleep before he could ask them. So we're afraid that's all we can tell you this week about that vigorous, bustling organisation, Maudslayi's Hiking Club.

PET PARROT BLOWS GAFK

Riot in Remove Study

Owing to the danger of parrot-disease, the pet parrot which Skinner brought back with him at the beginning of this term has come under the ban of the authorities. Mr. Quetch trotted round to Skinner's study to explain this, the other evening. He was in a kindly mood. The discovery that Skinner, the Bad Lad of the Remove, was an animal-lover, was quite a pleasant one.

"It is pleasing to me to know that you cherish a pet for members of the animal kingdom, Skinner," he remarked, with an approving nod. "It reveals a characteristically I had not

patting Skinner's head approvingly. "You will have thought that you will be able to see it during the holidays. Have you taught the parrot to speak, my boy?"

"Oh, not specially, sir," said Skinner modestly. "He talks quite a lot, though—picks up the things he hears me say most often, you see, sir."

"Pretty! Poll! Blow Quetch!" squeaked Skinner's parrot at that moment.

"What—what—?"

"Pretty! Poll! Quetchy's a rotter; I'd like to scrag him!" squeaked the parrot.

"Upon my soul—! Blow Quetch! Blower



hitherto suspected in you, my boy."

Skinner smiled an angelic smile.

"I always was fond of animals, sir," he said meekly. "It will almost break my heart, sir, to have to part with my pet."

"A truly noble sentiment, Skinner!" said Mr. Quetch.

LONZY'S LITTLE LETTERS

Dear Editor.—To what base maltreatment do we subject the ebullient scientific expressions of this wonder-working age!

Take witness, dear Editor. Surely this marvellous instrument for the transmission of auditory phenomena through the atmosphere from a concentric origination to the individual tympanum of each auricular communitant in a vast circle of historians offers a unique opportunity for bringing moral and politico-economic-sociological enlightenment to the community. But do we seize that opportunity? One cannot avoid the logical if lugubrious responsive asseveration, "NAY."

For what purpose instead do we utilise this scientific triumph? Indeliciously, the answer is transparently evident: We utilise it for the indiscriminate dissemination of that cacophonous conglomeration of dissonant, mechanical, rhythmical punition, strident tithimbalation and unintelligible caterwauling known as Jazz!

Contrapunctually yours,

ALONZO TDDP.

(We quite agree with what Lonzy says, and to prove we mean it, we're going to put Coker's wireless out of action to-night. Coming along to help, Lonzy?—Ed.)

FIFTY YEARS AGO—

School Yarns Were Like This—

"Sir," sobbed Wharton, in a voice broken with emotion, as the tears streamed unheeded down his sorrowful young face, "I gave your indulgence for trembling violently, 'my life has been a living hell.'"

"Do you go on, my boy?" urged Dr. Locke, tears in his honest eyes.

"On my first day at Greyfriars, sir, groined Wharton, "I was assailed by temptation, and, weakling that I was, alas, I succumbed! How heavily my sin has lain on my soul since that dread day, sir, I can scarce convey to you."

"Do you describe the nature of your sin, Wharton," urged Dr. Locke, in a voice faint with emotion.

"Almost I fear to do so, sir, yet I must bear myself with fortitude and reveal the worst to you. Sir, I can keep my foul secret a secret no longer—ON MY FIRST DAY AT GREYFRIARS I STOLE A JAM-TART!"

Sir, sir, what has come over you? I speak to your unworthy scholar, I pray you!

But the boy's piteous cry fell on deaf ears. The shock had been too great. Dr. Locke had swooned.



study of Smith minor, with astonishing results. We've found that when there's a deep depression over Iceland, Smith minor has a habit of rubbing his upper lip and thinking with the right eye.

If there's a thunderstorm in the offing, he runs round in circles, emitting a noise like a lost sheep.

On the approach of a large anti-cyclone from the Azores, he leaps on to the nearest table and balances on the back of his neck.

Goodness knows what happens when he scents an earthquake.

We don't like to ask him!

Human Barometer in Remove

Tom Brown, the Remove wicket-keeper, holds a record in having dismissed 7 batsmen in one innings—3 stumped and 4 caught—when the Remove played Highcliffe.

FIFTY YEARS HENCE—

We May Get to This—

"Trot in, Locke, old scout!" called out Wharton ebulliently, as the Head looked into his study.

"Take a pew, Cigars in front of you. What's the trouble?"

"Nothing much, old bean!" Dr. Locke replied, with a slightly sheepish grin. "I was just thinking of that new monoplane of yours, Usual little machines, eh?"

"Knocked up two thousand miles an hour out of bar to New York and back yesterday afternoon!" said Wharton.

After all the nice things Dupont said about me last week, I should be a pretty ungrateful kind of cat if I said anything particularly unpleasant about him. But I couldn't think of anything unpleasant to say if I wanted to, anyway!

Young Napoleon happens to be a particularly pleasant chap, you see—one of the best, in fact!

Like his famous namesake, he is of small stature. But that's about the only thing in common between the two; not in your wildest dreams could you imagine the Greyfriars Napoleon as a world conqueror on the lines of Bonaparte!

But don't run away with the idea that young Nap's not a fighter. He can fight like a bantam-cock when occasion demands, as his study-mate Bolshover major will testify. But occasion doesn't demand so often in the case of young Dupont, as it does for some of us.

Dupont fills rather a minor role in the Remove; he's content to hide his light under a bushel. In spite of this, however, I fancy we should all miss the patter of his little feet if he went. Certainly the characteristic smell of Study No. 10 would be absent without the odour of the garlic and the frying-oil he uses in that French cooking of his. But, joking apart, all except the rank outsiders recognise that in Dupont's keen faldie wit, sanguine outlook, and cheery disposition, we have something we can ill afford to lose.

A voice, Napoleon Dupont! May your shadow never grow less!



AS OTHERS SEE THEM

What I Think of Napoleon Dupont

By Frank Nugent

Removites are hereby warned that as from April 1st, 1933, they must remove their hats when addressing Coker. This is our answer to Coker's recent allegations (that we're not polite to him).

BY ORDELL.

II. WHARTON, Captain.

N.B.—Ripe tomatoes and over-ripe eggs for chucking at Coker when you've finished addressing him may be obtained free of charge from the Editorial office!

KNIFE POLISH WANTED
 Owing to our unfriendly attitude towards them, the "blades" of the Remove are cutting up "rusty."

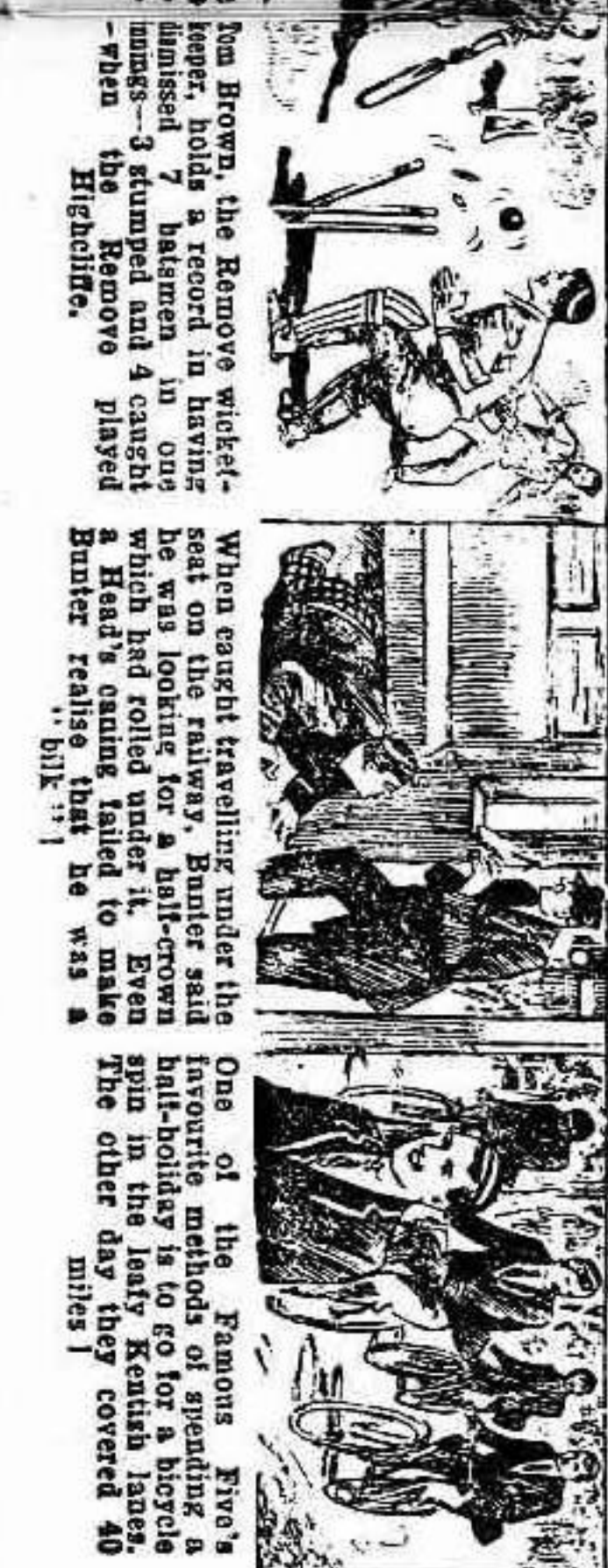
Someone's just told us "the fat's in the fire," and we can't allow Bunter to die that way!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

Oliver Kripps claims to be able to tell fortunes. But he failed to foresee the imposition which Mr. Quetch gave him for casting horoscopes in the Form-room.

Micky Diamond is never tired of rehearsing the Remove Dramatic Society's one of William Whyte's "banishes" which haunt his old home in Ireland.

When caught travelling under the seat on the railway, Bunter said he was looking for a half-crown which had rolled under it. Even a Head's cunning failed to make Bunter realise that he was a "dick"!



GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

Tom Brown, the Remove wicket-keeper, holds a record in having dismissed 7 batsmen in one innings—3 stumped and 4 caught—when the Remove played Highcliffe.

Someone's just told us "the fat's in the fire," and we can't allow Bunter to die that way!

Dicky Nugent's Weekly Wisdom
 Literary Note: To selllybrate the coming of spring, the Head has stopped porridge for breakfast and offered us toasted wheat instead.
 This grade new "goreal" will be continued in our "necks."



In a learning bout last week Vernon-Smith cut Nugent on the face. We always thought Smithy had an awful cheek, but now Nugent's got one, too!

